

But at last Miss Effie burst into their days, stirring the stagnant hours: disturbing, stimulating, but most welcome. She was his great niece: the granddaughter of that sister who had gone to India with a soldier-mate so many years ago. Now the years had taken all: sister, nephew, nieces; and this child of the third generation stood suddenly alone in the world. Mrs Burgoyne went to Brussels and brought her home to Uncle Richard—a black travelling companion with red eyes, who gave a spasmodic sniff as each speeding telegraph pole reminded her that they were hurrying farther and farther away from Brussels and the cemetery of Sainte Clotilde.

Effie, when the handkerchiefs became dryer, was the cause of many changes. Governesses must be procured—day governesses, and the sound of a piano broke the mid-day silence. There had been no piano in all the house, till Effie came. Then Mrs Burgoyne must take up a queer habit: she must go to church on Sundays, because the child must go there. Mrs Burgoyne was not a believer in the Christian revelation. How could she be?

On that first Sunday, the congregation scarcely tried to conceal their surprise. The vicar seemed tempted to come down the chancel steps to express his pleasure in this unexpected visit and to urge Mrs Burgoyne to make herself at home. Perhaps another day she would bring her husband. The good vicar had always wished that Mr Burgoyne would attend divine service now and then—if only for the look of the thing. Somehow he never mentioned the wish to Mr Burgoyne, but he spoke of it to everyone else. It was “disheartening”—he used to say—and he believed if Mr Burgoyne could realise *how* disheartening it was, he would not stop away.

Mrs Burgoyne could not make herself at home on this initial occasion: she could not even find her place in the sacred book. But she knelt, stood, sat, bowed at the proper moment, found herself saying the creed, and suddenly felt almost ashamed, as an impostor that even Effie must bow out before long. There was a missionary sermon that seemed to her palpably ridiculous, but one of the anecdotes made Effie cry