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THE NEW CURATE.

CHAPTER II.—DISCORD FROM THE HARMONIUM.

“When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall;
Down comes baby, cradle, and all!”

PERIODICALLY, and with a dismal mirthfulness the refrain came up to the curate's ears from the kitchen, and although it was varied with other nursery beauties, there was something about those two lines on which the wheels of his fancy seemed to bite; and the man who had taken a “double first” surprised himself in the very act of repeating them aloud.

He might have seen in them a grim applicability to his own position, for the stipulated month had passed stormily; and when he thought of all the anomalies which had so disgusted him at first, and the changes he had effected, it seemed almost as if the whole edifice was coming down about his ears. He had gone about the reformation with a high hand. The grinding organ creaked and fell, and the church-wardens looked on in silent dismay, but agreed to let him alone. Indeed, he brooked no interference, and vouchsafed no explanation of his movements. As to respecting people's prejudices, or making allowance for old associations, he saw no necessity for that; it was a species of temporizing. If people's old associations were of such a motley character, the sooner they gave place to new ones the better. Two things were clear to the wardens, however. If he chose to abolish the grinder, he must find a substitute; and if the substitute were to be played with fingers, he, the curate, must find fingers to play it with.

For the new organ itself, it seemed to Ralph, that he had nothing to do but apply to his parishioners, which he did, not at all as though he were asking for something which might be refused, but as if he were reminding them of a privilege which they would gratefully exercise.

His way of speaking was not conciliatory. Out of that cloud-land of his wherein men and women were not a mixed assemblage of different opinions, but