

She duly ushered Mrs. Cryson into the presence of her mistress, who was sitting at work, spectacles on nose, and saved from utter solitude by the company of the very grave and respectable looking cat aforesaid.

Miss Tibbins gave one glance through her spectacles, and having thus ascertained who her visitor was, drew them off and laid them upon the table.

'How do you do, Mrs. Cryson? I am very glad to see you. I have just been doing some fine work, and really I am so short-sighted that I am obliged to wear glasses. But pray sit down; it's quite a pleasure to see you, I'm sure, and to see you look so well too.' And the worthy spinster insisted on Mrs. Cryson taking an easy chair, the cushions of which she shook up and arranged.

Miss Tibbins was by no means remarkable for quickness of perception, either physical or mental, or she would have seen that her visitor was by no means 'looking so well' as she supposed; in fact she was doing her best to look despairingly; but then Miss Tibbins was so short sighted, that *that* plan would not do; and therefore it was necessary to try another.

'Ah, dear Miss Tibbins,' said Mrs. Cryson, in a lamentable voice, 'it's a great comfort to have a friend to sympathize with one in trouble, and I know how ready you always are to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' And here Mrs. Cryson put her handkerchief to her eyes.

'Why, what is the matter, my dear Mrs. Cryson? What *has* happened? Is Mr. Cryson well?—Is—O dear, what do you allude to?' And Miss Tibbins fluttered about in a state of great agitation.

O yes, thank you; Mr. Cryson is quite well, at least in body; but like the rest of us, he is much troubled in mind about the shocking way in which dear Mr. Slowton is going to be persecuted, and all for nothing in the world but his faithfulness in preaching the Gospel and maintaining the Protestant faith.'

'Persecuted!' exclaimed Miss Tibbins, lifting up her eyes in horror; 'why that is what they used to do to the martyrs at the Reformation. Dear, dear! how shocking! But I thought it was against the law, Mrs. Cryson—I thought people were not allowed to be persecuted now-a-days. Oh dear!—only to think!' And here

the tears came up to the eyes of worthy Miss Tibbins as Mr. Slowton appeared before her mental vision (which, by the way, was a great deal shorter than her physical sight), bound to the stake and writhing in flames.

'Why it's only the other day,' she continued, 'that I was reading in some book or other, how they burnt Archbishop Cranmer, and somebody they call Servetus, and Joan of Arc, I think—or—let me see—Arc? No—Kent, I think it was—Joan of Kent—burnt them altogether, and just for the very same thing for which you say that they are going to persecute dear Mr. Slowton—for standing up for the Protestant faith. Dear! dear! whatever *shall* we do?' and the worthy lady fairly wrung her hands in the depth of her perplexity.

'Pray don't distress yourself too much, my dear Miss Tibbins,' replied Mrs. Cryson soothingly. 'The law of course protects his life, thank God; they cannot treat him in the barbarous way they used to treat good people; but still they'll turn him out of the parish if they can—and out of house and home too.'

'But they could not burn him?' asked Miss Tibbins—'Ah! I thought not. Well! that is *not* a comfort at any rate. But they are going to turn him out of house and home, are they? Why, dear me, that is nearly as bad, now that the winter is coming on. Whatever will they do? dear! dear! Couldn't some of the gentlemen see the Bishop about it, and get him to protect dear Mr. Slowton?'

'The *Bishop* protect him!' echoed Mrs. Cryson. 'Why, Miss Tibbins, it is the Bishop who is persecuting him.'

'The *Bishop* persecuting him!' exclaimed Miss Tibbins, lifting up her eyes in hopeless amazement, 'how in the world can that be? Isn't the Bishop just as much a Protestant as Mr. Slowton? Are they not both members and ministers of the same Church?'

'Protestant indeed!' said Mrs. Cryson, getting sarcastic at the idea, 'I should rather think not: he is evidently nothing but a Puseyite, or perhaps a Papist in disguise.'

'Well! well! who would have ever thought of such a thing? and only to think of the beautiful sermons he preached, and all his earnest and pleasant words, and the world of interest he took in every thing about the place! O dear