

importance of the thing ! That these people should absolutely threaten him, their spiritual director, with an Ebenezzer Chapel, if he presumed to do or leave undone certain things pleasing or displeasing to them ! He turned upon the clerk angrily ; he said something to the effect that their going or staying was their own concern, and perfectly immaterial to him ; a basty speech, which he would not have made if he had stopped to think about it, and which, passing through many mouths, reached the subject of it in the form of an intimation that the curate did not want them at church, and they might go where they liked for anything he cared about them.

Ralph, however, walked on through the churchyard, where there was still so much to be done, and the clerk eyeing him, muttered that it was a pity that such a fine figure of a man should be so cranky.

"Sofra-no and al-to, and tenor and bass," said the old man in a sort of caw. "I've remembered 'em all to tell old Atwell. Mean to persuade me he won't pipe up with his cracked whistle—he's years older than me—in the very middle of 'em ? I've seen the time when there was none but him to sing, and no music, at the wake time ; and to be sure the length he could keep up without fetching his breath was wonderful. It's over now ; smart's the word. And I declare if the old church doesn't look as if it was stretching its sides and yawning ; making believe to come out young and fresh again ! It won't do, old fellow ; no use to come those airs with me, I know better !"

As for the curate, he was confessing to himself that his first choral meeting had not been very successful. Perhaps, however, it was hardly fair to expect immediate success ; the second would be better. What he could not understand was, how there came to be so little knowledge or appreciation of music amongst the congregation. They seemed not only satisfied with the existing state of affairs, but actually averse to improvement. As to the old singers—if they were so foolish, he could not help it. Such discordant noises must be stopped at any cost.

It never occurred to him, though, that he might have effected the change more quietly, or in a more conciliatory manner. If he wanted something done ; it was sufficient to give orders, and get it done ; more he did not trouble himself with ; if people did not like what was proper they ought to like it. It was his business to rule, and theirs to submit. More than this, if he had been told that he was laying up for himself a store of bitterness and enmity in the parish, he would only have accepted it as a sort of martyrdom, which he must bear unflinchingly in the cause of right.

At the entrance to that court with the ugly name he paused for a moment, and then turned up into it instead of going the front way to his lodgings. There was a cottager he wanted to visit. He did visit his poorer parishioners ; but yet on their door steps or in their houses he was like an icicle, which can neither be thawed nor broken off out of the way. Their outpoured complaints met with no response, or else such a one as they could not understand. He knew nothing about them or their wants ; in this department of his office he was helpless as a child. He had never studied it ; looking upon it indeed as an irksome duty, to be done only because it was a duty. He gave away money, it is true, indiscriminately, unless where he suspected imposition ; and for a suspected imposter there was nothing, not even bare toleration. The poor people were amazed at him, not knowing what to make of him. He certainly told them their duty, but it was in some lofty hazy fashion that they could not under-