

This was not a very far-seeing remark, having regard to his early demise, but notwithstanding, my mother's recollection of it was one of her most cherished possessions, and many a time did she repeat it to me. If I grieved her by unsightly stains on my pinafore, I was given to understand that I was also grieving the good Duke in heaven.

After his death, the great house was tenanted for most of the year by the widowed Duchess. She was a tall, almost gigantic woman, with a quick, abrupt manner which was terrifying to people with weak nerves. Sometimes she would call at the lodge, and her stately presence seemed to fill our little sitting-room. She used to ask me questions out of the Church catechism, which I was never able to answer, and she would shake her head at my failure, and suggest the adequate punishment in so deep a voice that my heart was sent quaking to my boots. But she rarely left the cottage without giving me a silver coin for my "missionary box." I used to be terrified lest she should discover I had no missionary box, and make me refund.

The Duchess's younger son, Oswald, had died before his father, and her only surviving son, the new Duke, was unmarried. Nor did he seem in any haste to entangle himself in matrimonial nets. His visits to the Castle