

'I wish he had staid away altogether,' said Mrs. Slowton abruptly, 'and not come here poking his nose into other people's business, and trying to steal away the hearts of the people by fair speeches, so that he may the more easily pervert them from the simplicity of the Gospel.' And the worthy lady sat erect, looking the very embodiment of evangelical meekness.

'Ah, there now, that's exactly what I was saying to Jeremiah,' exclaimed Mrs. Cryson, with an expression of great satisfaction. 'I said to him after we came home that night from Mrs. Brown's party, where the bishop made himself so agreeable to every one, that I should not be in the least surprised if he should turn out to be a Jesuit in disguise. I am *sure* he does n't believe the Gospel, and he managed so to draw one towards him, and to get such a strange hold over one, that I am sadly afraid of him. I was sure I would hear something suspicious of him, and I am so much obliged to you for coming to let us know—fore-warned, you know, fore-armed.'

'Very true, Mrs. Cryson,' returned Mrs. Slowton; 'and never was greater need of being fore-armed than in this case, for you little know what is in contemplation;' and Mrs. Slowton looked awfully mysterious.

'Bless me!' exclaimed Mrs. Cryson, excited by her curiosity almost into a kind of incipient prophanity. 'What is going to be done? Some half popish plan against the purity of the Gospel, no doubt.'

'You may say that,' returned Mrs. Slowton, 'and a deeply laid and plausible one it is, as you will see when I explain it to' —

'O, stop a moment, dear Mrs. Slowton,' interrupted Mrs. Cryson—'just a moment, till I call Jeremiah—he is only down in his office. He will be delighted to hear what you have found out, for he has been long suspicious that Mr. Crampton and Mr. Jackson have been hatching some plot between them.'

Mr. Jeremiah Cryson was accordingly summoned from his office, where he carried on the business of broker and land agent, in the pursuit of which occupation he had acquired the reputation of driving uncommonly keen bargains. When he once got scent of the probable disclosures of Mrs. Slowton, he looked as much alive as if he was about to enter upon a transaction by which he intended to clear 100 per cent.

'And now, pray, Mrs. Slowton,' he continued, after the usual greetings were over; 'what plans are these which Mrs. Cryson has hinted at as likely to be carried out to the injury of the protestantism of this parish?'

'Why, you see,' answered Mrs. Slowton, confidently, 'the bishop wishes to introduce his own opinions into this place—of that there can be no doubt; and he is evidently the more determined upon this since he has found a few under the Jackson and Crampton influence, who, corrupt as those opinions are, regard them with favor. He is fully bent, I do believe, to make Puseyites of us all.'

'Is he?' said Mr. Cryson significantly; 'don't he wish he may succeed, *that's* all.'

'Yes, that's all,' echoed Mrs. Cryson.

'At all events, he is resolved to *try*, continued Mrs. Slowton, 'but with the depth that marks these Jesuitical sort of people, he clearly sees that the great obstacle to the success of his plan is the evangelical nature of Mr. Slowton's preaching.'

'Ah, *dear* Mr. Slowton,' sighed Mrs. Cryson, 'what a blessing we have in him!'

'His object, therefore,' Mrs. Slowton continued, without much regard to such a matter of course interruption; 'his object plainly is to persecute him, and' —

'Oh!' exclaimed Mr. Cryson with a look of horror—'persecute Mrs. Slowton!'

'Well, upon my word,' said Mr. Cryson; 'we are coming to a pretty pass—we'll have the inquisition next.'

'The first step,' Mrs. Slowton resumed, 'is to neutralize his influence as much as possible, by taking away the greatest part of the parish from him and giving it to some of his Tractarian followers, and this step has been actually resolved upon.'

'Infamous!' exclaimed Mr. Cryson.

'Unpardonable!' echoed his wife.

'It is a fact, nevertheless,' observed Mrs. Slowton.

The whole party sat for a moment silent and aghast at the extent of the bishop's turpitude.

'And what's to be done?' asked Mrs. Cryson.

'That is the question,' said Mrs. Slowton.

'Done!' exclaimed Mr. Jeremiah; 'why, we won't stand it, that's all. We'll show that we are Protestants; we won't have our intellects confined and our souls enslaved; we'll stand up