

What could be said when Freddy instituted a physiological inquiry as to the uses and tightness of the episcopal apron? In fact it was a merciful release when Mrs. Wilkinson suggested an early start in consideration of the phaeton's lumbering progress.

If, in delivering his "one or two words," the Bishop felt that evening a certain recoil of his words that sensitive speakers avow when an audience is not receptive, it was because the absorbent power of his hearers was already taxed to the full.

Three-fourths of the people were wondering where he had supped, and why, and how. Also what were the feelings of his various would-be hostesses on the subject.

Mrs. Stinchcombe wore a look of squelched yet grim dignity. But then, as usual, she simply stuck to the advice of Polonius and looked character.

Mrs. Prendergast smiled in a flustered and general manner on every body, discriminating only in the cases of Mrs. Stinchcombe and the platform. In these two exceptions she found sufficient reaction to strike an average of cool indifference to the whole world.

The simple annals of Walrus Bay failed to arouse deserved interest.

Poor Mr. Wilkinson, not being given to divination, was totally unprepared for the shock, when, the meeting ended, Mrs. Stinchcombe demanded an explanation. His wife, of course, assumed all the re-

sponsibilities of his situation, and in restitution the clerics and select laity repaired to Manor Lodge with Mrs. Stinchcombe for contemplation of the hypothecated dainties.

Unfortunately the Rintouls were again unable to join them. Mrs. Rintoul's headache had returned with redoubled violence directly the benediction was pronounced.

Seeing that Mrs. Stinchcombe had been beforehand, Mrs. Prendergast determined on repaying disregard with contempt. With a refinement of vengeance she pressed into her service Mrs. Stinchcombe's nephew, who had shirked his aunt's entertainment, and succeeded in collecting the frisky and youthful majority of Verneuse straight from the missionary meeting to her gay rooms, where dancing, feasting, and junketting continued till long after the Rector and his wife returned from having installed the Bishop and Mr. Northall in Mrs. Stinchcombe's spare bedrooms.

On the whole Mrs. Prendergast had about the best of it, and could well afford to be lenient when the opportunity came of overhauling Mr. Wilkinson.

For the memory of her impromptu entertainment outlived all other impressions of that evening, so much so that it was ever after mentioned as "the night of Mrs. Prendergast's party" rather than as the occasion of the Bishop's Visitation.

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