

him—which? He eyed that new velvet cover disconsolately. Making no allowance for the fact that he was tired mentally and bodily with unusual work—hard because unusual—he suffered a cloud of despondency to creep over him, as the cloud from over the red chimneys up in the town came stealing over the suburb to tell him it was night.

It was not that the situation of his parish that disappointed him; it was not that he felt oppressed by the preponderance on the town-ward side of poor and miserable and uncouth; or that he disliked the style of his richer suburban parishioners, who were with a few exceptions, tradesmen retired, or non-retired, and professional men. He had no longings after the fashionable Chapel-of-ease on the right hand beyond Raventree, for the lip oratory and stage tricks of gesture of whose curate he had indeed a profound contempt. Neither was he envious of the quieter but more solid parish of St. Mark far away to the left, whose curate, Martin Thorpe, was well meaning enough, but still did not come up to his standard of ecclesiastical excellence.

Moreover, poverty had nothing to do with his depression. It was quite true that he did not rank in the catalogue of poor curates; and true also that the living of Repton Magna would probably be his before very long, but there was no comfort for him in these reflections. There had been and was still in his heart, though just now it shone less brilliantly than usual, a sort of feeling that he stood apart from and above the accidents of position and wealth. Inasmuch as he believed in his own powers of reasoning and imagination, those accidents were separate from his career, having nothing to do with his life, his duties, or his performances of them. He had a fancy for thinking of himself as a poor curate; for divesting himself of every sign that he was in reality a rich one. The small, unostentatious lodging he had chosen was in conformity with this idea, and he might even have succeeded in impressing it upon his landlady if Repton Magna had been in some distant county, instead of standing as it did within an easy distance of the Church of St. Peter. The landlady, however, knew all about him, and all about his brother Cresset, and all about the Repton Park family; but she did not know why, on this particular evening, when he must surely need it most, the curate never rang for his tea or for candles, but sat there moping by himself in the chill twilight. And as the thought of his loneliness and possible exhaustion grew upon her she took courage. It would be no harm to go in and see if anything was amiss with him, and she could profess to have heard the bell.

She carried the tray in and set it before him without attracting any notice; then she lighted the lamp, and the sudden glare produced only a quick movement of the curate's hand to screen his face from it. But when the audacious intruder proceeded to lay hands upon the velvet cover, with intent to make him speak or perish in the attempt, his look up, and his irritated, "Let that be, please," made her start and drop the touch-me-not as though it had burnt her fingers.

"The night is chilly, sir," said the landlady, glancing from the open window to the fireless grate.

"Yes," responded the curate, curtly.

He was not disposed to be talkative, and would have been highly indignant at the notion that this woman compassionated his loneliness and wanted to cheer him up. He wondered why she chose to stay there baiting him, and what possible interest he could be expected to take in the chilliness of the night.