

humbly to protest against this injustice, and to say that this gentleman has a right to be heard."

An even more intense silence fell upon the people. The Rector stood speechless, gazing upon the little woman who had thus broken every tradition of the community in lifting her voice in a public assembly and who had dared to challenge the authority of one who for nearly twenty years had been recognized as the autocrat of the village and of the whole countryside. But the Rector was an alert and gallant fighter. He quickly recovered his poise.

"If Mrs. Gwynne, our good friend and neighbour, desires to address this meeting," he said with a courteous and elaborate bow, "and I am sure by training and tradition she is quite capable of doing so, I am confident that all of us will be delighted to listen to her. But the question in hand is not quite so simple as she imagines. It is—"

"Liberty of speech," said the voice again from the dark corner.

The Rector wheeled fiercely in the direction from which the interruption came.

"Who speaks?" he cried; "why does he shrink into the darkness? Let him come forth."

Again discretion held the interrupter silent.

"As for you—you, sir," continued the Rector, turning upon the evangelist, "if you desire—"

But at this point there was a sudden commotion from the opposite side of the room. A quaint dwarfish figure, crippled, but full of vigour, stumped up to the platform.

"My son," he said, grandly waving the Rector to one side, "allow me, my son. You have done well. Now I shall deal with this gentleman."

The owner of the misshapen body had a noble head, a face marked with intellectual quality, but the glitter in the large blue eye told the same tale of mental anarchy. Startled and astonished the evangelist backed away from the extraordinary creature that continued to advance upon him.

"Sir," cried the dwarf, "by what right do you proclaim the divine message to your fellowmen? Have you known the cross, have you felt the piercing crown, do you