

'Why, my dear,' responded Mr. Slowton mildly, 'it has been, as you suppose, mainly about the affairs of the parish.'

'Of course it was,' said Mrs. Slowton impatiently. 'What I want to know is the particulars.'

'Oh, why, the bishop as usual was most kind and——'

'Kind!—one is sick of hearing of his kindness,' exclaimed Mrs. Slowton vehemently; 'it would be a good deal better if we heard more of his being truly evangelical. I want to know if he means to show his kindness to you by ruining you, which he will surely do if he nourishes that mad and unjust scheme of Crampton and Jackson and that set, about the division of the parish.'

'Why, my dear, you see,—and here Mr. Slowton put out the light, and, we must say, rather slunk into bed—'you see, the bishop has a great idea, an overstrained one I think, of the great importance of this place and the prospects of its increase. He thinks, too, that we have done a great deal—and he intends—ah—that is—he is'—

'The amiable Mrs. Slowton had been grimly silent while her husband went stumbling on in his search for some term whereby to soften the expression of the bishop's decision; and after apparently enjoying his difficulty for a moment, she exclaimed abruptly:

'Come, come; no shilly-shallying, Mr. Slowton, but out with it like a man. This model bishop is so impressed with the importance and advantages of Clackington, that he considers you no longer fit to have charge of it, and is therefore going to turn you out and put some of his Pusoyito pets in your place—eh?'

'Don't be excited, my dear,' said Mr. Slowton soothingly; 'pray don't, you must not allow your zeal for the truth, nor your regard for my rights to carry you away: the bishop is very far from wishing to turn me out, as you say—indeed, he could not if he wished it; but he thinks I have a great deal too much to do, and'—

'Do, indeed!' exclaimed Mrs. Slowton; 'as if it was man's *doings* that was to save people's souls. Don't you preach the Gospel to them? and if the people won't hear it, or heed it, surely it's no fault of yours. These Tractarians, with their *doings*, are always wanting to get glory to

themselves. Wretched creatures! if they only knew what it is to be evangelical, they would know that the less is done by man the more glory goes to God in the salvation of a soul; but they are always worrying about *work, work*, as if it was not the Lord that gives the increase.' And Mrs. Slowton bounced round in bed in a state of great disgust at those whom she was pleased to call Tractarians, generally, and with the Bishop in particular.

The conversation with the bishop was gone over at length, but those arguments which had a great influence upon Mr. Slowton produced no effect upon his wife when retailed to her at second-hand by her husband. She was strong in her indignation, and declared that nothing should prevent her from raising the whole parish and setting them against the project.

The next afternoon Mrs. Slowton issued forth with the full purpose of carrying her threat into execution. It was a beautiful September afternoon, but the calm beauty of the day did nothing towards tranquilizing the angry vexation of her spirit. She avoided Mrs. Brown, whose shrewd worldly sense was not sufficiently subordinated to her religious prejudices to be as easily wrought upon as she desired, and who, together with her not very brilliant but honest-hearted husband, were so wonderfully taken with the bishop that she was doubtful of her ability to alarm them by fears of his tractarianism, or to excite any feeling against him and his plans by charging him with injustice towards her husband. She resolved that such suggestion should reach them through others, and to this end she directed her steps towards Mr. Jeremiah Cryson's. The wife of that orthodox gentleman, who was, like her husband, among the ranks of the truly pious—indeed, I may say they were both in the front rank—received her with a sort of doleful gladness, which was considered spiritual.

'Good day, dear Mrs. Slowton,' she exclaimed; 'I am delighted to see you; it is so kind of you to come to see us so soon after all your late fatigues: I am sure I felt for you very much, for though bishops are all very well in their way, I would rather not have one to stay with me for a week—of course I mean nothing disrespectful towards his lordship—I'm sure he is a very agreeable person, and although'—