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THE NEW CURATE.

CHAPTER 5.—WHO WAS SHE? (Continued).

CONSISTENT, too, with all his thoughts of her, it was that the mother should speak to her as to an old friend, and should bid God bless her when she went away. But it was not consistent, not natural, that the widow should add, as he passed out also, "And you too, sir; and His will be done!" It fell upon him, that first word of cordiality, as something more which he owed to *her*—to her presence there and the influence of it. He was full of new and strange thoughts. It might have been the solitary and unlooked for blessing still ringing in his ear, or, he could not tell what it was, nor whence, but a new attribute was within him. He had a strange yearning to comfort that mother ever her son. Not only to tell her with that lofty coldness which falls upon a sufferer's ear with such a useless importunity, that she was not to murmur, but be thankful. Something more than that. In all his visits to the poor his pity had never been stirred as it was now. The bleak, bare thing he called "working a parish," suddenly lay before him with a new light turned upon it—the light for a possible love for the work.

He thought, too, of the last few months, with a struggling consciousness that something might be amiss with himself as well as with others. He had gone amongst the poor with the sharp points of authority alone visible; no sympathy, no compassion went to soften his stern condemnations, or make his advice palatable. Right was right, and must be urged unflinchingly, and the sorest grief ought not to find it irksome. Setting before himself, as the great desideratum, a life of asceticisms stripped of all human affections which cling to and fetter the nobler aspirations, how could he fail to carry about with him the chilly atmosphere in which he lived? He could bear, but he could not forbear.

Oddly enough, too, he began to associate his ordinary sermons with the scenes at which he had been present to-night, and to have a misgiving concerning them. A large proportion of his hearers were no better educated than that poor lad so suddenly stricken down in his prime. Was it not possible that these abstract speculations, or essays, theological and philosophical, however enticing to himself as a writer, or clever in themselves, might not be exactly what were wanted in such a parish?