

THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY

By Rev. F. A. SHEPARD, D. D. Author of "My New Curate," "Lake Delinquent," "Lithium," "Gleanings," etc.

CHAPTER I

AN AMERICAN WILLIAM The Very Reverend William Gray, D. D., Parish Priest of the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy, came down to breakfast one dark, gloomy December morning in the year of our Lord 18—He had risen early, like all the old priests of his generation, made his half-hour's meditation according to his rigorous rule and habit, made his quarter-hour's preparation for Mass, celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, and with the burden of years and the cares which the years will bring, came slowly down the softly carpeted stairs, and gazing with an omniscient's struggle of the shoulders at the pile of letters which lay on his writing desk, he sat down to table, broke his egg, looked out on the gloomy, wintry landscape, snatched a little, pushed aside the egg at a crust of toast rather meditatively than with any appetite for such things, drank a cup of tea, and pulled the bell. His aged domestic made her appearance.

"Has the paper come?" "No," she said. "The boy is always late these times." "These times?" he asked sharply. "Why these times?" she replied, rubbing her hands in her check apron, "everything is late. Everybody is in a hurry." "What has that to do with the daily paper?" he said. "That might be an excuse for a late post. But what has that to do with the paper? Remove those things."

He turned to his pile of letters. There were the usual rolls of bazaar tickets, red and yellow, offering fabulous prizes for sixpence; bulky letters, containing more bazaar tickets, but accompanied with pitiful appeals for help to clear off debts of \$200 to \$5,000 on convent chapels, monastic schools, etc. There were circulars from Dublin merchants offering new kinds of tea, or new brands of wine, at moderate prices. There were circulars from new companies promising immense dividends at low stock prices.

All these he promptly flung into the waste-paper basket, muttering: "What a lot of idle people there are in this world!" Then he took up what may be called his personal correspondence. (Some of these shared the fate of the circulars. He put three aside for further consideration or possible reply.) The first was an anonymous letter written in lead pencil and very imperfect in its orthography, informing him that, unless he promptly dismissed his assistant teacher from his school at Athboy the parishioners would know the reason why; and teach him that "they might be led, but would not be driven." The gravamen of this case was that the young teacher, who had been selected for the school on account of his ability and perfect training, had the misfortune to be the nephew of a man who had taken a derelict's name, which he had paid a handsome sum of money to the tenants who had been evicted, and who were doing well in America. Dr. William Gray put that letter aside, pursed his lips, and said: "We'll see."

The second was from his Bishop, informing him that he had made a change of curates for the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy; and was sending him a young priest named Henry Liston, who had been for some months chaplain to a convent in a large town in the diocese. "Humph!" said Dr. William Gray. "He might have sent me more notice or consulted me. There's no Canon Law in the Church to-day. A parish priest is a nobody. Liston! I don't care for him. A priggish little fellow, although he had a decent father and mother."

He sat musing for a while. "This poor fellow," he murmured at length, alluding to his departing curate, "is no great loss. A perfect misanthrope, without an idea of Theology in his head!" He placed the Bishop's letter in a rack for further use. The third letter was from America. There was the familiar head of Lincoln on the dark blue stamp, and there was postmark: Chicago, Ill. "Who can this be?" he said. "More trouble, I suppose; or a baptismal certificate for some old pensioner of the Civil War!"

He slit it open, and read: Chicago, Ill., 21 November, 18. Very Rev. Dear Father,—I regret to have to announce to you the sad tidings of the death of your sister, Mrs. O'Farrell, at the Consumptive Hospital, in this city. She had been in failing health for some time, and had some idea of returning to her native climate. But her disease had so far progressed that this became impossible. She had every possible attention, medical and otherwise, during the last weeks of her illness; and had received the last Sacraments from my hands. She was patient and resigned, her only anxiety being the future of her little daughter, Annie, whom she committed to your paternal care. When her affairs are wound up, and her property realized, I shall let you know her circumstances stood, and the date on which the child can leave America for her future home. I am, Very Rev. Father, Yours in Christ, GERALD FAHEY, Rector.

still stands guarding the old place where the Grays had lived for generations? Did he think of her sweet looks, her bright, girlish face, half-gypsy, half-saintlike in its perfect contour, and the dark hair that framed it irregularly and tossed riotously across her forehead without restraint of net or bodkin? And her homecomings, when she came back from the boarding-school in Dublin, and returned to her father's holidays from Mayo; and he wondered and was glad when people turned around on Sunday morning and riveted their eyes upon her? Perhaps more. But if the tear fell, and the thin, bony hand trembled—and I do not aver that they did—it might have been from another recollection, when on a certain day he had said, when others' opinions were wavering for and against her?

"Yes! She must go. It is the law!" And it was no great crime that Helena Gray was guilty of—no violent rupture of divine or human law, demanded the ostracism of her kind. Only some youthful indiscretion—some silly letters that had been found in her trunk, revealing a little girlish frivolity, but nothing more. Yet the honest, old Grays were stern, and with the family pride that dominated them accentuated by some hundred years of such rigid and stainless virtue, that a breath would now blot and tarnish it. Motherly affection had struggled against paternal pride, and angry debates had been heard up there in the cottage where the black yew-tree flung its ominous shadow, until at last the girl herself declared that life was intolerable and she would go to her aunt in America. Then the young priest was called in.

He came. He was still a young curate, but he had already acquired the reputation of strength bordering upon harshness, and of an inexorable adherence to law, which amongst an easy-going and flexible population made him feared, and almost hated. In his own home he was also an object of dread. His stern, clear-cut, pallid features, never illumined by a smile, were to them but the index of a cold, hard, unfeeling nature, which might be respected, but could not command the reverence of great love. His dignity of bearing and his doctor's distinction added to the solemnity of his character. Probably his mother alone loved him; and next after her supreme affection, was the more pallid and sisterly affection of her on whom he was now called to utter judgment.

He read them over carefully, a certain contempt for the girlish frivolity showing itself in his stern eyes. When he came to the expressions that had challenged criticism, his thin lips drew together; his nose drew down like a beak; and two deep furrows gathered between his eyes. When he had finished reading, he folded the incriminating letters slowly and carefully, and without handing them back to his mother, he said quietly: "Helena wishes to go abroad?" "She says so," said his mother. "But she is so young, barely sixteen." "She is old enough to know the meaning of such language as this," he said, folding the letter.

"The words are not very ladylike," said his mother. "But they are not sinful." "They are coarse and vulgar," the young priest replied. Then, after a pause, he added: "Let her go! It is better!" The mother murmured something about such puritanism for mere indiscretion, and then he stopped her. "Every violation of law is punished," he said; "every error and mistake as well as sins. It is the law." Then he hastily added: "Then let her go!" "Is her own wish to go away?" "Yes! She said so hesitatingly." "Then let her go!" he said.

Some weeks later, the young exile wrote a letter to her brother asking for a farewell interview. She had no resentment toward him. She admired him too much. He was her idol—her God. He could do no wrong. It was only she, poor frail girl that could do wrong. She wanted to see him, to kneel for his blessing, to throw her arms around his neck in a farewell embrace, to implore pardon. "Her request was not judiciously formed, one or two syllogisms, and decided it were better not to see his sister. He was unwell for some days after; and, when he resumed work, some people noticed that his hair had turned gray over the ears.

From this it will easily be conjectured what manner of man was Dr. William Gray. A hard, proud, dominating disposition had been doubly accentuated under the teaching of a rigorous theological system, that approached as closely to Jansenism as orthodoxy might. The natural bias of his mind toward rule and discipline had been strengthened beneath the teaching of a school where the divinity of law predominated; and he had come by degrees to believe that of all other human certainties, this was the most certain, that Law was everlastingly and was everywhere paramount and even supreme. The Law of Nature, so unfeeling, so despotic, so revengeful; the Natural Law guiding human conscience, so inflexible toward lower instincts and desires; the Law of the Realm, with its fines and punishments; Canon Law, with its interdicts and excommunications; Ecclesiastical Law, national, provincial, diocesan, that bound as though by gossamer threads, but was as rigid as iron when you tried to break through—yes! Law was everywhere, and the slightest infraction of it was followed by a stern retribution. And yet? As the tall form bent down almost double over the seat and wood fire in the grate this gloomy December morning, was it a tear that stained the white page of the American letter? Or was his bony hand tremble and shake as he stirred the white ashes and kindled a fresh flame amongst the charred embers that lay at his feet? We know not.

He rose at length from his stooping posture, and walked up and down the dining-room, a favourite exercise of his whenever he was in a gloomy and anxious condition of mind. His hands folded slightly behind his back, grasping that ill-omened American letter. He was agitated with remorse for the past, and with anxiety for the future. The words of that letter, "your sister," seemed to rise out of the page and smite him, each with its own deadly blow; and the strong man trembled beneath their suggestions. He would not accept of a pigmy beneath its branches. Sad reminiscences woke up that had been hidden away and buried beneath the debris of the years, and he became aware of the fact, that should never be forgotten, that the human heart, however seared and shrunk, holds a terrible vitality unto the last.

Then the question would arise about this child, accustomed to a solitary life and the deeper solitude of his own thoughts, he had always shrunk from any invasion on the privacy of his home. He had grown into the habit of neither giving nor accepting invitations, and the idea of having a visitor in the house to be watched, and tended and fed and entertained was always intolerable. He had to put up with such things on the occasion of a visitation; and once or twice, when he had a mission in his parish. But it was a time of uneasiness and trouble, which he terminated as speedily as possible, and then resigned himself to the delightful luxury of being alone again. And now, here comes a cool suggestion from a priest, of whom he had never heard before, to take into his house, permanently, a girl of unknown age and disposition, and to keep her and be responsible for her during her lifetime. The idea was simply appalling. He even laughed to himself at the thought of a girl, called "your sister," "consumption," "hospital," "only child," would repeat themselves with their suggestion that now was the time and opportunity to redress and atone for the past, until the man was almost half-distracted with remorse on the one hand and nameless terrors on the other.

He stopped suddenly in his walk, and touched the bell. When the housekeeper appeared, he ordered his horse to be brought around. It was his refuge in all cases of perplexity. The exercise that drove the stagnant blood of old age bounding to the brain, cleared his mind, and enabled him to think with calmness, judgment, and force. His way lay along a narrow but perfectly level road, bordered on both sides by deep bogs or marshes, where some attempts had been made at drainage, but these were deep cuttings, filled with water, and edged with rushes and sedge, their sides lined with the black peat that gave fire to the villagers. The sea had conquered all human efforts to restrain it, and there lay outstretched a black level, seawater left by the receding tides, and bordered with dreary sand-heaps, where a coarse and tuffy grass was waving in the wind. And just beyond was a wider reach of sand, where no grass grew, and here the gray wastes of the sea commenced their dreary stretch toward the horizon.

When the horse's feet touched the firm wet sand, his rider pushed him into a trot, and in a few moments he was galloping, which he held steadily for the three miles of sandy beach that lay before him. At the end where the red sandstone cliffs closed the beach, a tiny forest of spruce and fir trees, looked like the naked ribs of some submerged and dismantled ship. Here he dismounted, and flinging his bridle over one of the upright posts, he stepped into the red-stone boulders that kept the timber, originally intended as a breakwater, in their place; and looking out over the sad and lonely wastes of the sea, he took up his problem, and tried to cast this form: "Only yesterday, I had flattered myself with the thought that my worries had ceased. That wretched money affair, that cost me nights of sleepless agony, settled itself in its own way at last. That income tax surveyor appeared to be satisfied that I am not defrauding his wretched Government. Malceay has settled his question by leaving his country for his country's good." Last night I slept a peaceful sleep, free from the petty worries of men for months. And now! here are three more worries just when I was assuring myself that I should have peace, rest, and a quiet life. The idea!

"I'll write to that fellow to-night," he said, "and tell him to mind his own business. And if he presumes to send that girl over here, I'll pack her back by the next boat." He remounted his horse and rode back by another road, that led by the outskirts of a little hamlet, consisting of two or three houses. Apart from these, and just at the angle of the road that skirted a domestic wall, was a cottage quite different from ordinary buildings of the kind, inasmuch as it was gabled and the Gothic windows were filled with diamond panes of glass, bedded in lead. It seemed as if built for lodges, but the mansion yet it was isolated and apart. It was occupied by an old woman, over ninety years of age, who had been stone-blind and bed-ridden for years, and her grandson, who supported her both by wages. Here the priest drew up his horse, and shouted, "There was no answer. He then came nearer, and knocked on the open door with the handle of his whip. The strong voice of the old woman rang down the stairs:

"Who's there? And what do ye want?" "It is I, the parish priest, Betty," he said, in a loud voice. "I beg your Reverence's pardon; but what do ye want; and where's Nance?" "I'm sure I don't know where's Nance," he shouted back. "But I want to tell you that I am coming in the morning to say Mass for you, and give you your Christmas Communion." "God bless you!" she said. "But only on the old condition." "Of course," he replied, "the old condition. And I want your advice, too. Is it all right?" "Av course it is!" she said. "I'll tell Nance, and she'll have everything ready." "Very good!" he said. "I'll have the basket sent over to-night." He entered away, and after dinner he sat down to his desk and wrote a very emphatic letter to the priest in Chicago, to the effect that, although he regretted deeply the demise of his sister, and was gratified to learn that she had received all the rites of the Church, Canon Law and ancient laws forbade him personally from entertaining even for a moment the idea of opening his house to his orphan niece. It was against all precedent. He would be happy to receive her, but to describe something toward her maintenance and education in America, if her own means were not sufficient. But on no account whatsoever was she to be deported to Ireland. He would be glad to receive her, but to describe something toward her maintenance and education in America, if her own means were not sufficient. But on no account whatsoever was she to be deported to Ireland.

"This letter he posted, and dismissed that subject as one which with him he had no further concern. CHAPTER II A CHANGE OF CURATES If the good pastor of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy was much disturbed on the evening of the 21st of November in the year of our Lord 18—his future curate, Father Henry, or Harry, Liston (as every one called him) cannot be said to have been much elated on his promotion. He had a slight presumption, as he passed thereby from the condition of a chaplain to that of curate; and it was rapid, and there fore honorable promotion, for he had been but a few years assistant. Yet he was not happy. The change meant for him the translation from town-life, to which he had been born, to country-life, with which he was quite unacquainted. But that would be a slight matter, if he had not been a man of a certain degree of depression. The major cause, that which drove his spirits below zero, was the reflection that he was now to be brought into intimate relationship with a parish priest, to whom he had always looked up with a certain kind of reverential dread. As he poised the episcopal letter in his fingers and wondered what strange mental operations must pass through the mind of the curate, he remembered the singular actions, he remembered the cold shudder the day when the tall, gaunt, black figure of his future superior, suddenly stood by him, as he walked along the road, and in the sixth hour of the day, he remembered the hard rasping voice, demanding abruptly why the angle ACB was equivalent in value to DEF and GHO even though they were not connected together, and the unkind sentence: "You know nothing at all about it, I suppose," which was passed on his lips. He remembered, too, the silver of dread with which he raised the chasuble on the same gaunt figure at the elevation of the Mass; and how he cast down his eyes, not daring from his seat on the altar, to look up at the terrible apparition with the keen eagle face, and the thin lips that uttered such startling and terrible truths to the silent and awed congregation.

He remembered his first meeting on his summer holidays from the seminary, the abrupt question, "What are you reading?" the shy answer, "Greek and Mathematics." "How do you construct a perfect angle, and in proportions do its sides relate to each other?" his own repeated discomfures; and the final verdict: "You know no more of these things than you do of astronomy." He remembered, too, the silver of dread with which he raised the chasuble on the same gaunt figure at the elevation of the Mass; and how he cast down his eyes, not daring from his seat on the altar, to look up at the terrible apparition with the keen eagle face, and the thin lips that uttered such startling and terrible truths to the silent and awed congregation.

Nothing loth, Henry Liston escaped from the lion's den, and rode down to see the curate whom he was to take the place of. He was a tall, thin man, with a long, straight nose, and a pair of eyes that were as blue as the sky. He was dressed in a simple, but well-cut suit, and he carried a book under his arm. He was a man of a certain degree of depression. The major cause, that which drove his spirits below zero, was the reflection that he was now to be brought into intimate relationship with a parish priest, to whom he had always looked up with a certain kind of reverential dread. As he poised the episcopal letter in his fingers and wondered what strange mental operations must pass through the mind of the curate, he remembered the singular actions, he remembered the cold shudder the day when the tall, gaunt, black figure of his future superior, suddenly stood by him, as he walked along the road, and in the sixth hour of the day, he remembered the hard rasping voice, demanding abruptly why the angle ACB was equivalent in value to DEF and GHO even though they were not connected together, and the unkind sentence: "You know nothing at all about it, I suppose," which was passed on his lips. He remembered, too, the silver of dread with which he raised the chasuble on the same gaunt figure at the elevation of the Mass; and how he cast down his eyes, not daring from his seat on the altar, to look up at the terrible apparition with the keen eagle face, and the thin lips that uttered such startling and terrible truths to the silent and awed congregation.

"Very well!" he said, "we'll see more about it. Finally, it sometimes happens that I will be called to the curate to see the priest, when they come into a parish, think they have a right to fit up the curate's house at parochial expense, and in a manner more suitable to some coxcomb of a doctor or lawyer than to a priest. Now, mark me, you shall not spend one penny on that house without previously submitting the items to me. Do you understand?" His curate nodded. "I will be glad to do anything necessary; and let me see them. I shall mark off all that I think may be dispensed with, and shall give you an order for the remainder. Have you seen the house?" "No, I haven't seen it. I suppose that anywhere is there yet."

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in ancient type, and composed by some ancient school-master. Henry Liston remembered it well, because he had never retained it in its ownness. He had been too much afraid to approach him. He was silent now. "Well," continued the grim man, as he stood on the hearthrug, his back to the fire, and his eyes loomed out as challenging some far-off antagonist, and not the humble curate at his feet, "your duties here will be simple, and not embarrassing. You will say Mass at 10 o'clock, every Sunday and holiday at Lackagh, and at Athboy at 12. You will preach at every Mass. The sermons need not be long, and must not be transcendently foolish. No silly eloquence or tawdry rhetoric, but plain, catechetical discourses to the people on their duties. You will take up the two collections, and render me an exact account of them when required. Do you follow me?" The curate murmured something. "Confessions," the grim man went on, holding his right-hand forward, a pinch of snuff between the thumb and index-finger, and the other fingers stretched apart and outward threateningly, "every Saturday at 12 o'clock sharp, alternately at Lackagh and Athboy, and the first Saturday of every month here at Doonvarragh."

"I guess I'll be welcome here," thought the curate. "You will visit every school in your district at least once a week, and catechize the children; and you shall never leave the parish without permission," thought the curate. "The statutes give permission to a curate to be absent 24 hours by merely notifying his parish priest," he said. "Statutes?" shouted Dr. William Gray. "Yes! but remember, young man, that you are to be a parish priest to make his own parochial arrangements, independent of, or ancillary to, the statutes of the diocese; and that is my regulation."

"He took a pinch of snuff, half of which he blew before he touched the lid, and then he concluded: "You will dine with me at 5 o'clock every Sunday without fail." Henry Liston started up. "No amount of Canon Law can interfere with the personal liberty of a man—" "Sit down!" ordered his pastor peremptorily. "Henry sat down. "What rubbish have you been reading? Not your Theology evidently, still less your 'Selva' or 'Challoner.'" "I don't fail to study Theology at proper times and places," said the curate. "I don't think a man is bound to sleep with a folio under his head."

"No," said the pastor, looking at him admiringly, "but," he drawled, as if in mockery of his curate, "at proper times and places. Now, what author are you reading—say in Moral Theology?" "Lehmkuhl!" said his curate, confidently. "Lehmkuhl!" echoed Dr. William Gray. "I never heard of such a writer." "Oh! he is well known," said Henry Liston, "everybody knows the distinguished German Jesuit. He has put your Gury's and Ballerini's on the shelf." "Not much greater than our good pastor experienced," continued his friend. "You never saw such consternation in your life as was depicted on his face. And when he opened the interesting volume, and saw it all dog-eared and marked and underlined, I thought he'd get a fit. And he would, only that he fell in love with the ugly thing in an instant, and wanted to know would I sell it. I said, 'No! I am not a book seller; and besides, I could not live without Sa. He is meat, drink, food, clothing, and lodging to me. Take anything else you like, but don't take Sa.' All the time he was turning and fondling the book, just like a girl with her first doll, thumbing the leaves, running back to the index, studying the date, feeling the consistency of the leather, until at last I was beginning to relent. But I drew myself together, and was firm. Finally, he handed back the book with a sigh, and I thought I would go out in the effort. I took it from him affectionately, as one would take a loaf of bread, and I said, 'Good-bye, I am going to give it to him now.'"

"No?" said Henry Liston, incredulously. "Yes, I am, and I'll tell you the reason presently. But I've never asked you to take anything, as we say in the parts. I can't give you a decent dinner—" Henry Liston protested. "But I'll get you a substitute for one in five minutes. What would you think of a few chops and eggs and a cup of tea?" "Oh, no, no," said the new curate, "you're upset; and I won't be long getting home." "But the good man persisted, and ordered the eatables. And meanwhile Henry Liston was taking stock of the disordered place.

"I guess," he said, when his friend came back, "I'll have a large order on the pastor for repairs." "You will," said his friend, "and remember, the larger the better. The best way to deal with this man is to dazzle him, to mesmerize him by audacity. He has two pet objects of detestation, a stupid man, and a timid man. Now, whilst we are waiting, let me see! Have you a bit of paper about you—an envelope or something?" "Here's the Bishop's letter, which I presented this morning." "The very thing," said his friend. "You see the Bishop is considerate. He always leaves a blank page for such things. Take thy pen, or pencil, and write down quickly, thou son of Mammon!" "Where shall we begin?" said Henry Liston. "Here, of course. Write a dining-room to be newly papered in maroon window-shutters, doors, and all woodwork to be painted in faint pink, panels in rose-color. Have you that down?" "I have," said Henry Liston, with a smile. "Very good. Now Drawing-room—by the way, you may expect a little characteristic sarcasm there. 'Drawing-room,' he'll say, 'no! boudoir! that's a better word.' But you mustn't mind. Go on! Drawing-room—white, with chrysanthemum leaves in gray. All the woodwork to be painted white; panels in pale blue or green. All right?" "All right!" said Henry Liston.

"By Jove, that's the best joke I have heard for many a long day. Look here, Henry, I'll send that on the wings of the wind far and away across the diocese. It won't extinguish him, though. You can't extinguish him!" His voice dropped from a tone of exaltation to one of sadness and despair. "When I came here," he continued, taking down book after book from the shelves, but talking over his shoulders at Henry Liston, "I managed for a time, too, to shut him up. I found he knew all about Lugo and Suarez and Petavius and every one else, and every opinion they ever expressed. He had the greatest contempt for the Salamancaesque, and I flung them at him on every occasion, although I never saw a volume of these interesting novelties in my time. He used to get awfully mad; but these little bits were only moonlight unto sunlight, when I quoted Sa. The first time I mentioned Sa, I thought he'd go for me. He glared at me for some time without a word for fully five minutes; and then he said with his rasping, contemptuous voice: 'Sa! Sa! Who's Sa? And what do you know of Sa? Why, I said, 'every one knows Sa—Emmanuel Sa, the greatest theologian that ever lived!' The greatest theologian that ever lived?' he shouted. 'Greater than Suarez, greater than Vasquez, greater than Lugo?' 'Certainly, I replied, 'greater than all, except Aquinas.' 'Oh, then you've heard of St. Thomas?' he said sarcastically. 'A little,' I replied, waving my hand in the air, as if it were of no consequence. 'But I'd recommend you to read Sa. Sa and the Salamancaesque would make a man of you.' He was too stupefied to say more, except one word: 'You read Sa of course, *nocturna versus manu, versus discipulo*?' 'Yes!' I said calmly and solemnly. 'Sa is on my dressing-table in the morning; Sa is my pillow at night.'"

"You had tremendous courage," said Henry Liston admiringly. "Did he say any more?" "He said no more," said the tolling curate, stopping in his work, and turning round, "but a few days afterwards he came up here on some pretext or another, and after a little while, he came over here and sought me out, and examined my books, talking about indifferent matters all the time. I knew what he was looking for, but I wanted to see the play out. After he had probed and examined every shelf, he was about to take away, and had reached the door. Then, as if suddenly remembering something, he wheeled round, and said: 'By the way, that Spanish theologian you spoke of, would you let me see his book?' I said, 'I can't issue a Habeas Corpus unto eternity to evoke the immortal spirit of Sa; but I keep his works in my bedroom as I told you. Just one minute, and I will deliver the immortal part of him into your hands.' 'But you haven't Sa?' said Henry Liston. "Oh, yes, I have," said his comrade, producing a thick ancient volume, red-edged, and bound in boards, or stamped leather that had the consistency of boards, "here you are!" "By Jove!" said Henry Liston, "this is a surprise! I never saw such consternation in your life as was depicted on his face. And when he opened the interesting volume, and saw it all dog-eared and marked and underlined, I thought he'd get a fit. And he would, only that he fell in love with the ugly thing in an instant, and wanted to know would I sell it. I said, 'No! I am not a book seller; and besides, I could not live without Sa. He is meat, drink, food, clothing, and lodging to me. Take anything else you like, but don't take Sa.' All the time he was turning and fondling the book, just like a girl with her first doll, thumbing the leaves, running back to the index, studying the date, feeling the consistency of the leather, until at last I was beginning to relent. But I drew myself together, and was firm. Finally, he handed back the book with a sigh, and I thought I would go out in the effort. I took it from him affectionately, as one would take a loaf of bread, and I said, 'Good-bye, I am going to give it to him now.'"

"No?" said Henry Liston, incredulously. "Yes, I am, and I'll tell you the reason presently. But I've never asked you to take anything, as we say in the parts. I can't give you a decent dinner—" Henry Liston protested. "But I'll get you a substitute for one in five minutes. What would you think of a few chops and eggs and a cup of tea?" "Oh, no, no," said the new curate, "you're upset; and I won't be long getting home." "But the good man persisted, and ordered the eatables. And meanwhile Henry Liston was taking stock of the disordered place.

"I guess," he said, when his friend came back, "I'll have a large order on the pastor for repairs." "You will," said his friend, "and remember, the larger the better. The best way to deal with this man is to dazzle him, to mesmerize him by audacity. He has two pet objects of detestation, a stupid man, and a timid man. Now, whilst we are waiting, let me see! Have you a bit of paper about you—an envelope or something?" "Here's the Bishop's letter, which I presented this morning." "The very thing," said his friend. "You see the Bishop is considerate. He always leaves a blank page for such things. Take thy pen, or pencil, and write down quickly, thou son of Mammon!" "Where shall we begin?" said Henry Liston. "Here, of course. Write a dining-room to be newly papered in maroon window-shutters, doors, and all woodwork to be painted in faint pink, panels in rose-color. Have you that down?" "I have," said Henry Liston, with a smile. "Very good. Now Drawing-room—by the way, you may expect a little characteristic sarcasm there. 'Drawing-room,' he'll say, 'no! boudoir! that's a better word.' But you mustn't mind. Go on! Drawing-room—white, with chrysanthemum leaves in gray. All the woodwork to be painted white; panels in pale blue or green. All right?" "All right!" said Henry Liston.

"Two front bedrooms," continued his friend. "First to be papered in same color; woodwork to be painted in lavender. He'll like that! Second room to be papered in sage-green, all woodwork to be painted white; panels, sage-green. All down?" "All down!" said Henry Liston. "Now, write: Back bedrooms, halls and staircase to be left to the option of pastor?" "Look here!" said Henry Liston, despairingly. "This would never do. He'd murder me!" "Never fear!" said his friend. "That last hint will fetch him completely. Left to option of pastor! By Jove! he won't be stare? But, mark me, young man, 'tis your first and greatest victory. Come along now, and eat something. Oh, by the way, I was near forgetting. Write down: But I am going to have a stable to be tiled in small pattern, and chambered, with channels, drains, etc. That's all, I think. But we may remember something else as we go along!" "When they parted, Henry said to the curate: "You said you were going to give Sa to the pastor, and that you'd tell me the reason."

"Yes, I will," said his friend, laying his hand on Henry's arm, and speaking slowly and solemnly: "I've been chafing a good deal. We must, you know, to keep off the blues sometimes. But I am going to make a present of Sa to the pastor, because he is a great and good man—one of the greatest men I have seen yet. Others, who find fault with him, are like coughs, sneezes, and blisters, and you mustn't let them. He is not only a great thinker, but a great man—" "I'm better pleased than if I got a five-pound note to hear you say that," broke in Henry. "But you know that is the opinion of a layman, and of the pastor?" "The pastor was right," said his friend. "Now, for example, you have often heard how hard he is about money?" "Yes! I certainly had that reputation," said Henry. "And he has got that name," said the other, "from the very persons who received the greatest benefactions from him. For example, he is strict at the stations, but he is the most generous he ever heard of, and he is avaricious. They don't know that he gives that station-offering to every poor grocer and cottier in the bedroom or parlor before he calls the list. He has an awful name about marriages. Yes, he insists on being paid. But his own share goes back again into his pockets, if they are poor. And, mind you, he knows that he is doing the right thing, and he is not only a great thinker, but a great man—" "It is the law!" you find a man whom you are forced to respect and even love. That's why I am leaving him with regret and giving him this wretched thing."

"By Jove!" you find a man whom you are forced to respect and even love. That's why I am leaving him with regret and giving him this wretched thing." "By Jove!" said Henry Liston, "I do you know that although I grew up in fear and trembling before him, somehow I felt I had a warm corner in my heart for him; and, as I said to myself, I think he has some interest in me." "Well, all's for the best, I suppose," said his friend. "And this old place is not so bad as it seems. This is the worst of it, that the diocese and people here are a little rough and ready, and there are the prettiest little coves in the world. The people, too, are good. A instant, and wanted to know would I sell it. I said, 'No! I am not a book seller; and besides, I could not live without Sa. He is meat, drink, food, clothing, and lodging to me. Take anything else you like, but don't take Sa.' All the time he was turning and fondling the book, just like a girl with her first doll, thumbing the leaves, running back to the index, studying the date, feeling the consistency of the leather, until at last I was beginning to relent. But I drew myself together, and was firm. Finally, he handed back the book with a sigh, and I thought I would go out in the effort. I took it from him affectionately, as one would take a loaf of bread, and I said, 'Good-bye, I am going to give it to him now.'"

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