

All night the astronomer's mind was on the stretch with curiosity as to what the Bishop could wish to say to him. A dozen conjectures entered his brain, to be abandoned in turn as unlikely. That which finally seemed the most plausible was that the Bishop, having become interested in his pursuits, and entertaining friendly recollections of his father, was going to ask if he could do anything to help him on in the profession he had chosen. Should this be the case, thought the suddenly sanguine youth, it would seem like an encouragement to that spirit of firmness which had led him to reject his late uncle's offer because it involved the renunciation of Lady Constantine.

At last he fell asleep; and when he awoke it was so late that the hour was ready to solve what conjecture could not. After a hurried breakfast he paced across the fields, entering the churchyard by the south gate precisely at the appointed minute.

The inclosure was well adapted for a private interview, being bounded by bushes of laurel and alder nearly on all sides. He looked round; the Bishop was not there, nor any living creature save himself. Swithin sat down upon a tombstone to await Bishop Helmsdale's arrival.

While he sat he fancied he could hear voices in conversation not far off, and further attention convinced him that they came from Lady

Constantine's lawn, which was divided from the churchyard by a high wall and shrubbery only. As the Bishop still delayed his coming, though the time was nearly eleven, and as the lady whose sweet voice mingled with those heard from the lawn was his personal property, Swithin became exceedingly curious to learn what was going on within that screened promenade. A way of doing so occurred to him. The key was in the church door; he opened it, entered, and ascended to the ringers' loft in the west tower. At the back of this was a window commanding a full view of Viviette's garden front.

The flowers were all in gayest bloom, and the creepers on the walls of the house were bursting into tufts of young green. A broad gravel-walk ran from end to end of the facade, terminating in a large conservatory. In the walk were three people pacing up and down. Lady Constantine's was the central figure, her brother being on one side of her, and on the other a stately form in a corded shovel-hat of glossy beaver and black breeches. This was the Bishop. Viviette carried over her shoulder a sunshade lined with red, which she twirled idly. They were laughing and chatting gaily, and when the group approached the churchyard many of their remarks entered the silence of the church tower through the ventilator of the window.

The conversation was general, yet interesting enough to Swithin. At length Louis stepped upon the grass and picked up something that had lain there, which turned out to be a bowl: throwing it forward he took a second, and bowled it towards the first, or jack. The Bishop, who seemed

to be in a sprightly mood, followed suit, and bowled one in a curve towards the jack, turning and speaking to Lady Constantine as he concluded the feat. As she had not left the gravelled terrace he raised his voice, so that the words reached Swithin distinctly.

'Do you follow us?' he asked gaily.

'I am not skilful,' she said. 'I always bowl narrow.'

The Bishop meditatively paused.

'This moment reminds one of the scene in Richard the Second,' he said.

'I mean the Duke of York's garden, where the queen and her two ladies play, and the queen says--

"What sport shall we devise here in this garden,
To drive away the heavy thought of care?"

To which her lady answers, "Madam, we'll play at bowls."

'That's an unfortunate quotation for you,' said Lady Constantine; 'for if I don't forget, the queen declines, saying, "Twill make me think the world is full of rubs, and that my fortune runs against the bias."'

'Then I cite mal a propos. But it is an interesting old game, and might have been played at that very date on this very green.'

The Bishop lazily bowled another, and while he was doing it Viviette's glance rose by accident to the church tower window, where she recognized Swithin's face. Her surprise was only momentary; and waiting till both her companions' backs were turned she smiled and blew him a kiss. In another minute she had another opportunity, and blew him another; afterwards blowing him one a third time.

Her blowings were put a stop to by the Bishop and Louis throwing down the bowls and rejoining her in the path, the house clock at the moment striking half-past eleven.

'This is a fine way of keeping an engagement,' said Swithin to himself.

'I have waited an hour while you indulge in those trifles!'

He fumed, turned, and behold somebody was at his elbow: Tabitha Lark.

Swithin started, and said, 'How did you come here, Tabitha?'

'In the course of my calling, Mr. St. Cleeve,' said the smiling girl. 'I come to practise on the organ. When I entered I saw you up here through the tower arch, and I crept up to see what you were looking at. The Bishop is a striking man, is he not?'

'Yes, rather,' said Swithin.

'I think he is much devoted to Lady Constantine, and I am glad of it.

Aren't you?'

'O yes--very,' said Swithin, wondering if Tabitha had seen the tender little salutes between Lady Constantine and himself.

'I don't think she cares much for him,' added Tabitha judicially. 'Or, even if she does, she could be got away from him in no time by a younger man.'

'Pooh, that's nothing,' said Swithin impatiently.

Tabitha then remarked that her blower had not come to time, and that she must go to look for him; upon which she descended the stairs, and left Swithin again alone.

A few minutes later the Bishop suddenly looked at his watch, Lady Constantine having withdrawn towards the house. Apparently apologizing to Louis the Bishop came down the terrace, and through the door into the churchyard. Swithin hastened downstairs and joined him in the path under the sunny wall of the aisle.

Their glances met, and it was with some consternation that Swithin beheld the change that a few short minutes had wrought in that episcopal countenance. On the lawn with Lady Constantine the rays of an almost perpetual smile had brightened his dark aspect like flowers in a shady place: now the smile was gone as completely as yesterday; the lines of

his face were firm; his dark eyes and whiskers were overspread with gravity; and, as he gazed upon Swithin from the repose of his stable figure it was like an evangelized King of Spades come to have it out with the Knave of Hearts.

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To return for a moment to Louis Glanville. He had been somewhat struck with the abruptness of the Bishop's departure, and more particularly by the circumstance that he had gone away by the private door into the churchyard instead of by the regular exit on the other side. True, great men were known to suffer from absence of mind, and Bishop Helmsdale, having a dim sense that he had entered by that door yesterday, might have unconsciously turned thitherward now. Louis, upon the whole, thought little of the matter, and being now left quite alone on the lawn, he seated himself in an arbour and began smoking.

The arbour was situated against the churchyard wall. The atmosphere was as still as the air of a hot-house; only fourteen inches of brickwork divided Louis from the scene of the Bishop's interview with St. Cleeve, and as voices on the lawn had been audible to Swithin in the churchyard, voices in the churchyard could be heard without difficulty from that close corner of the lawn. No sooner had Louis lit a cigar than the dialogue began.

'Ah, you are here, St. Cleeve,' said the Bishop, hardly replying to

Swithin's good morning. 'I fear I am a little late. Well, my request to you to meet me may have seemed somewhat unusual, seeing that we were strangers till a few hours ago.'

'I don't mind that, if your lordship wishes to see me.'

'I thought it best to see you regarding your confirmation yesterday; and my reason for taking a more active step with you than I should otherwise have done is that I have some interest in you through having known your father when we were undergraduates. His rooms were on the same staircase

with mine at All Angels, and we were friendly till time and affairs separated us even more completely than usually happens. However, about your presenting yourself for confirmation.' (The Bishop's voice grew stern.) 'If I had known yesterday morning what I knew twelve hours later, I wouldn't have confirmed you at all.'

'Indeed, my lord!'

'Yes, I say it, and I mean it. I visited your observatory last night.'

'You did, my lord.'

'In inspecting it I noticed something which I may truly describe as extraordinary. I have had young men present themselves to me who turned out to be notoriously unfit, either from giddiness, from being profane or

intemperate, or from some bad quality or other. But I never remember a case which equalled the cool culpability of this. While infringing the first principles of social decorum you might at least have respected the ordinance sufficiently to have stayed away from it altogether. Now I have sent for you here to see if a last entreaty and a direct appeal to your sense of manly uprightness will have any effect in inducing you to change your course of life.'

The voice of Swithin in his next remark showed how tremendously this attack of the Bishop had told upon his feelings. Louis, of course, did not know the reason why the words should have affected him precisely as they did; to any one in the secret the double embarrassment arising from misapprehended ethics and inability to set matters right, because his word of secrecy to another was inviolable, would have accounted for the young man's emotion sufficiently well.

'I am very sorry your lordship should have seen anything objectionable,' said Swithin. 'May I ask what it was?'

'You know what it was. Something in your chamber, which forced me to the above conclusions. I disguised my feelings of sorrow at the time for obvious reasons, but I never in my whole life was so shocked!'

'At what, my lord?'

'At what I saw.'

'Pardon me, Bishop Helmsdale, but you said just now that we are strangers; so what you saw in my cabin concerns me only.'

'There I contradict you. Twenty-four hours ago that remark would have been plausible enough; but by presenting yourself for confirmation at my hands you have invited my investigation into your principles.'

Swithin sighed. 'I admit it,' he said.

'And what do I find them?'

'You say reprehensible. But you might at least let me hear the proof!'

'I can do more, sir. I can let you see it!'

There was a pause. Louis Glanville was so highly interested that he stood upon the seat of the arbour, and looked through the leafage over the wall. The Bishop had produced an article from his pocket.

'What is it?' said Swithin, laboriously scrutinizing the thing.

'Why, don't you see?' said the Bishop, holding it out between his finger and thumb in Swithin's face. 'A bracelet,--a coral bracelet. I found the wanton object on the bed in your cabin! And of the sex of the owner there can be no doubt. More than that, she was concealed behind the

curtains, for I saw them move.' In the decision of his opinion the Bishop threw the coral bracelet down on a tombstone.

'Nobody was in my room, my lord, who had not a perfect right to be there,' said the younger man.

'Well, well, that's a matter of assertion. Now don't get into a passion, and say to me in your haste what you'll repent of saying afterwards.'

'I am not in a passion, I assure your lordship. I am too sad for passion.'

'Very well; that's a hopeful sign. Now I would ask you, as one man of another, do you think that to come to me, the Bishop of this large and important diocese, as you came yesterday, and pretend to be something that you are not, is quite upright conduct, leave alone religious? Think it over. We may never meet again. But bear in mind what your Bishop and spiritual head says to you, and see if you cannot mend before it is too late.'

Swithin was meek as Moses, but he tried to appear sturdy. 'My lord, I am in a difficult position,' he said mournfully; 'how difficult, nobody but myself can tell. I cannot explain; there are insuperable reasons against it. But will you take my word of assurance that I am not so bad as I seem? Some day I will prove it. Till then I only ask you to suspend your judgment on me.'

The Bishop shook his head incredulously and went towards the vicarage, as if he had lost his hearing. Swithin followed him with his eyes, and Louis followed the direction of Swithin's. Before the Bishop had reached the vicarage entrance Lady Constantine crossed in front of him. She had a basket on her arm, and was, in fact, going to visit some of the poorer cottages. Who could believe the Bishop now to be the same man that he had been a moment before? The darkness left his face as if he had come out of a cave; his look was all sweetness, and shine, and gaiety, as he again greeted Viviette.