STORIES

FROM

"BLACK AND WHITE"

BY

W. E. NORRIS.
W. CLARKE RUSSELL.
THOMAS HARDY.
MRS. E. LYNN LINTON.
JAMES PAYN.
J. M. BARRIE.
MRS. OLIPHANT.
GRANT ALLEN.

WITH TWENTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

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THE GOLDEN RULE.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

I.

The breakfast-room in the vicarage at Leighton-Furness was one of the most cheerful rooms you can imagine, especially at the hour and the meal to which it was devoted. It got all the morning sun, and on a warm morning in May, when the lilacs with which the lawn was surrounded were in full bloom, and the pretty breakfast-table was adorned — as all tables are nowadays—with the flowers of the season, wallflowers golden and brown, with the dew still on them freshly gathered, making a glow of colour among the white china, and filling the room with fragrance, you could not

have seen a pleasanter place. And the family gathered round the table was in every way suited to the place. First, the vicar, sixty, hale and hearty, with white hair, which was exceedingly becoming to him, and a fine country colour speaking of fresh air and much exercise. Second, his wife, Mrs. Wynyard, ten years younger, very well preserved, who had been a handsome woman in her day; and third, Emily, not, perhaps, to be described in these words, but yet a young woman whose looks were not to be despised, and who would have been an important member of any household in which she had found herself. It was a special providence, Mrs. Wynyard believed, all things considered, that up to this moment her father's house had pleased her more than any other, and that no suitor had carried her away.

For it need scarcely be said that in this pleasant house everything was not pleasant. Had all been well with them the historian

would have had nothing to tell; from whence, no doubt, comes the saying, whether appropriated to countries or to wives, that those are the happiest of whom there is nothing to be said. The post had come in just before the moment at which this episode in their lives opens, and the ladies, as was natural, had thrown themselves upon their letters. The vicar, for his part, had opened his newspaper, which is the natural division—I do not say of labour—in the circumstances. For at sixty a man, and especially a clergyman, gets a little indifferent about his correspondence, which is generally more a trouble than a pleasure; whereas a woman's interest in her letters, even when they are about nothing in particular, never fails.

This morning, however, there was some special interest which made even the vicar's absorption in his newspaper a little fictitious. When Mrs. Wynyard and her daughter took

up the letters, they both in one breath exclaimed "Jack!" throwing aside the other items of their correspondence as if they mattered less than nothing. When he heard that exclamation the vicar looked up from his paper and said, "Well?" sharply, looking from one to another; but receiving no reply after a moment's interval returned, or seemed to return, to his reading. He knew by long experience that Jack's letters generally meant some scrape or other, and he was relieved when he got no answer; but still, I think, his newspaper for the moment was more or less a pretence.

Jack was not a son appropriate to a vicarage: he was not of the kind of those who are their father's favourite and their mother's joy. How it is that this comes to pass, who can tell? With everything to lead him to do well, every tradition and habit of life in his favour, he had not done well. He should have been ready to

step into the vicarage in his father's place, for it was a sort of family living, securing many good things to the fortunate inheritor. But it was soon found that this was out of the question; not in the way which is most respectable and even superior nowadays, entitling a young man to the interest and admiration of everybody — that of religious doubts and scruples—but in a more vulgar way, which secures nobody's interest. He had not managed even to take his degree; he had done nothing that he ought to have done: and, instead of being in orders or at the bar, or a fellow of his college, all which would have been things reasonable and to be expected, he was in a merchant's office in London, sadly against his will, and against all the prepossessions of his family. But what was he, then, to do? Jack had nothing to suggest: what he would have liked would have been to do nothing at all, but, failing that, he did not mind what it was. It

was considered a great piece of luck when his father's old friend, Mr. Bullock, took him into his office at an age when young men are not generally taken into offices, and for a time it was supposed that Jack was going to do very well. But in an evil hour Mr. Bullock sent him on a commercial mission to America, in which Jack was not successful—perhaps because he thought a voyage like that was chiefly a frolic; perhaps for other causes. He had not been successful, but yet, when he returned home (considerably after the time at which he ought to have returned home) he was not dismissed because of his employer's affection for his father. Mr. Bullock, however, took an opportunity of telling the vicar privately that Jack would not do anything in business.

"He may make his own living as a poor clerk," the merchant said, "which is a dreary thing to look forward to. I gave him a chance, but he hasn't taken it. I felt it my duty to tell

you, Wynyard: if you can find anything else for him where he may do better, don't hesitate to take him away."

The vicar knew very well this meant that his commercial friend would be glad to get rid of Jack, but he did not take the hint.

"It is always something that he should be making his living," he said, and Mr. Bullock was too great a friend of the Wynyards to send their boy away.

But Jack got on worse than ever after that unsuccessful attempt. As for making his living, his mother knew how many little things there were to be made up. It was a knowledge which the ladies of the family kept as far as they could from his father. But when he got into any bad scrape this was not possible, so that all the members of the family were a little afraid, as well as eager, to see what was in Jack's letters when they came. They did not come very often, and two in one day was a

thing which probably had never happened before: the scrape must be graver than usual to warrant such an effort on his part, they all thought. Each of the recipients gave a little gasp on opening her special communication, but neither said anything, which at first was an ease to the vicar's mind. But the letters were long (another wonder), and after a while he became impatient. When Emily had reached the fourth page of hers, which her father saw, in some miraculous way, through the *Times*, he put down his paper altogether and again said, "Well?" in a still sharper tone.

"Oh, papa! the most wonderful news," Emily said.

"Well?" cried Mrs. Wynyard, not to be behind, "I can't tell you if it is well or not, but it is something, at least, that I never thought I should live to see."

"It may be the making of him, mother," cried Emily.

"OH, PAPA! THE MOST WONDERFUL NEWS," EMILY SAID.

"Or his ruin," Mrs. Wynyard said.

"What is it," cried the vicar, bringing down his fist on the table, "in the name of ——?"

It was only to be expected from a vicar that he should never use any bad words: and neither did he make a free use of those that are too good for common use, and which sound profane, even when authorized, as some people think, by his cloth. But he had a habit of going very near the edge, as if he were about to say them, which had often an impressive effect.

"Papa—I don't know how to tell you—Jack has got engaged."

"Oh, stop, Charles, stop! wait till you hear. Don't say anything rash. To a lady whom he met in America (I knew there was some reason for his staying so long in America)—a lady—who is rolling in money, Charles!"

The vicar had his mouth opened to make a remark when he was stopped by his wife; indeed, he had more than half made it before

he could stop himself. "The confounded foo—!" Being arrested, he brought himself up with a run and a gasp.

"Wait till you hear it rightly!" cried his wife. "He met her in some out-of-the-way place; don't you remember he did say something about an out-of-the-way place, Emily? and fell in love with her. But poor boy, he was too honourable to speak. How could he, knowing he had nothing? It is that that has made him so unsettled. Didn't I always say there was something, Emily,—something we didn't know?"

"As for that," said the vicar, getting his breath, "there are probably hundreds of things we don't know."

"Oh, Charles, don't be so harsh; when now there is every appearance—— Her father has come over with her, and has called at the office. They've taken a house in the country, and they've asked Jack to stay with them."

"But more, more, far more!" cried Emily, crimson with excitement, "he has proposed—and has been accepted, papa."

"Are you sure you are not dreaming all this?" the vicar said. "Look again; there must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake at all; read it yourself," said Mrs. Wynyard, thrusting the letter into his hands. "Of course it is for you as much as me. He says a pretty creature, with those wonderful complexions American girls are said to have, and with Heaven only knows how much money; oh, I don't wonder your father is flurried; I cannot get my breath myself."

"It may be the making of him, mother!"

"If it isn't the other thing," Mrs. Wynyard said.

"How could it be the other thing? when we have always said between ourselves that a wife, a nice wife, who had sense——, if it were ever

possible that he could be able to marry, would be the saving of Jack!"

"Ah, yes," said Mrs. Wynyard, "if he could have had an income to marry on—an income of his own; but if the money is all on the woman's side, and a father to look after her, to tie it up. Oh, it isn't that I am for money, though I see the great, great advantage. But would she take all the trouble with him if it was like that?"

"She would love to take the trouble," said Emily. "Could she be happy if he were not happy—and right?" she added in an undertone.

The vicar glanced over the letter while this conversation was going on. He did not read it line by line, but jumped at the meaning, having had it already explained to him. And for a moment his heart rose lightly in his breast. To have Jack provided for, suddenly made independent, no longer a trouble and

anxiety to everybody belonging to him, but with a home, an income, a keeper (so to speak) of his own! The vicar's heart gave a leap of relief and delight. No more responsibility. It would be his wife's business to look after him, and nobody could do that as well as a wife. And then the money. Even without the money, if there had been any chance that Jack could ever have enough to live upon, they had all been agreed that a wife might be the making of him. That meant, I fear, that she (poor soul! the problematical wife) would take the anxiety off the shoulders of his parents, that she would put herself between Jack and harm, and perhaps cure him, and bring him right—a thing which it is known women have undertaken to do, and have done *tant bien que mal*, and made life possible, before now. This was an aspiration they had all breathed, never expecting, however, that it would come to pass —and to see it suddenly realized, and with

money added, that would make it all the more sure! A beautiful vision rose before the vicar's mind—of a time when there would be no anxiety about Jack, no remittances to send him, no dreadful news of dismissal to be looked for, or any other anxiety of that kind; no call upon every available penny to make up for some misadventure: but peace and happiness, and some one to watch over him wherever he went. The money, indeed, was a great thing, but the guardian, the companion, the some one to watch over him, that was the thing of all.

But then the vicar put down the letter, and those heartstrings, which had so relaxed and been sensible of the happiest loosening and ease, tightened all at once again. He put his elbows on the table, and his face in his hands. The ladies were silent, thinking that he was thanking God. But, when he looked up after that pause, his face was not the face

of a man glorified by thanksgiving. The old lines were all drawn again round his anxious eyes.

"Jane," he said, "and you, Emily, listen to me. We talk every day, don't we, about doing to our neighbours as we would that our neighbours should do to us?"

"Surely," said Mrs. Wynyard, a little dismayed, though she scarcely knew why: for to have her assent required to such a proposition, at such a moment, was the strangest thing in the world.

The vicar's ruddy countenance had grown quite pale.

"If a man should come asking to marry Emily, and his people concealed—necessary facts from us—hoping she would be the saving of him——"

Then there passed a dreadful moment of silence in that glowing room, so bright with sunshine. The three looked in each other's

faces—they were as if they had been struck dumb.

"Oh, Charles, Charles!" said Mrs. Wynyard, and began to cry; "Oh, *papa!*"

It was a name she still sometimes called him, in kindness, for the children's sakes.

"Father," said Emily, faltering, "in such cases people judge for themselves. They hate any one who interferes——"

"As you would that men should do unto you, do you also unto them," the vicar replied.

"If it was my case," she cried, colouring high, "I should not believe a word!"

"Oh, papa," repeated his wife, "papa! you will not say anything! Your own son, and perhaps the only hope."

"Father, if he was responsible for a woman's happiness—he has never had any responsibility: and if he loses her—as he says——"

"And he always had the kindest heart!" cried Mrs. Wynyard, among her tears.

"Get me the time-table," said the vicar; "at least they must judge for themselves. I am going to town by the next train."

II.

THE vicar was asked into a handsome room in a hotel somewhere in Mayfair. He had got the address from Jack, who gave it with suspicion and reluctance, not knowing what his father could mean, or what he wanted dashing up to town like this.

"Do you mean to tell me you're engaged to Miss Boldero?" the vicar said.

"Why, yes; of course we are engaged. Should I have written to the mater about it, do you think, if it hadn't been true? But you never believe a word I say," Jack answered, with a certain defiance.

"I believe this, Jack, since you say it to

my face. Does this girl know anything about you?"

"This girl! You might be more civil to my betrothed. Of course she knows everything she has any call to know about me——"

"And she has a father?"

"She has a father," said Jack, beginning to feel there was trouble in the air.

"It is right that he and I should talk the matter over," said the vicar.

"If it's about money," said Jack, more and more alarmed, "they know I've got no money; there is no use entering upon that."

"There is use in entering upon—a great many things," the vicar said.

"Father, what do you mean? You are not going to—you don't mean to—spoil my chance!" cried the young man, "the only chance I ever may have in my life!"

The vicar said nothing. He gave his boy a look that silenced Jack. When had his

father spoiled a chance, or taken a hope away from him? But there was nothing more to be said to him now.

It was a handsome room for a room in a hotel, being the best; and in the corner near the great window which commanded a glimpse of Piccadilly, there was seated a young lady alone—a tall girl, with fair hair frizzed upon her forehead, an unexceptionable toilette, and a clear-cut imperious face. There is something a little faulty, something peculiar, in the American mouth. Heaven knows all our mouths are faulty in all nations—it is the peccant feature everywhere. In France they say it of the English, whose long teeth are a frequent subject of mockery: but the American mouth has a character specially its own. It is a little harsh, the merest trifle in the world under-hanging—nay, too slight for any such decided expression; let us say with the under lip the least in the world protruding beyond its fellow—

"Her lips were thin,
Except the one was next the chin."

But, on the other hand, that is too complimentary, for the underlip was as thin as the other, only put forward a hair's breadth. It is the result, I suppose, in the young feminine subject of having things too much her own way. She was looking at the vicar's card, which he had sent up, when he entered the room, and she said, with a little start, but without rising—

"Mr. Wynyard, Leighton-Furness Vicarage. Goodness! You are Jack's papa!"

"Yes, I am Jack's papa," said the vicar, half astonished, half confused—half, nay, not half, for three halves cannot be—but the very least bit amused. He took the hand she held out to him and held it for a moment. She looked a creature who might do this thing—imperious, not hesitating or counting the cost, whatever she might take into her head.

"And you also have a papa," said the vicar.

"Yes; I suppose Jack has told you all about us—how we met him, and how we did this bold thing and came after him here?"

"He did not say you had come after him. I should have been very angry if he had."

"Why? it is quite true. I liked him—I don't feel the least ashamed—better than any man I have seen; and I thought, perhaps, it was the money kept him back. You are so ridiculously poor in this country. Why are you so poor? So we came after him, papa and I——"

"Was papa aware of—of what I may call the object of the journey?" said the vicar, not knowing whether to laugh out, which, perhaps, she would not have liked, or what to do.

"Oh," said this young lady, "I never hide anything from papa."

"He is not in, I fear," said the vicar.

"Yes, he is in; do you want him? Tell me

first before I let you see him what are you going to tell him about Jack?"

"My dear young lady, the two fathers must certainly be permitted to talk such a matter over."

"No," said the girl, "unless you tell me first what you are going to tell him about Jack."

"I am going to speak to him very seriously," said the vicar. "It is a very serious thing to confide the happiness of a girl like you to a young man you scarcely know."

"Oh!" she said, "that's taking it the wrong way about—confiding his happiness to me, you mean. Oh, I am not at all afraid; I'll make him happy. You need not make yourself miserable about that."

The vicar pressed his hat—a hat which had a rosette, as somebody has said, a sort of daisy in it, for he was a rural dean, whatever that may be—between his hands. The girl's eyes were fixed upon that little symbol of ecclesi-

astical rank. She interrupted him before he could say any more.

"What is that for?—that thing in your hat? You are perfectly delightful for a papa-in-law. You make me more and more satisfied that I came."

"My dear," said the vicar, feeling that his virtue was stealing away from him under these blandishments, "I must see your father."

"Why?" she said. "I am sure I will do better. It is I that am to marry Jack, and not father. I'll hear what you have got to say."

"I called on Mr. Boldero," he said, more and more anxiously; "permit me to ring and ask if he is in the hotel."

"Oh, he is in the next room," she said, "but he would not come in, of course, when he heard I was talking to somebody. Father!" she said, raising her voice.

A door opened, and a tall man put in his head. "Do you want me, Childie?" he said.

"I don't want you; but here is a gentleman who wants you. It is Mr. Wynyard, papa; Jack's father."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, sir," said Mr. Boldero.

Both father and daughter spoke with an accent which was extremely piquant to the vicar. He had scarcely ever encountered any of their country-folk before, and he was extremely curious about them, and would, had his mind been less deeply engaged, have been greatly amused and delighted with their unaccustomed ways. Mr. Boldero was clad very solemnly in black, and doubtless had other peculiarities besides his accent; but the vicar was not at sufficient ease to remark them.

"I heard only this morning," he said, "of the engagement—if it is an engagement—between your daughter and my son Jack: and I came up to town instantly to see you."

"If it is an engagement!" said Miss Boldero with indignation.

"Well, sir, and have you any objection?" said the other father.

"Will you grant me an interview, Mr. Boldero?"

"With pleasure; isn't this an interview? Fire away," said Miss Boldero's papa.

The vicar did not know what to say. He sat still for a moment with the spirit gone out of him. Then he murmured almost with a supplicating tone, "I meant a private interview, Mr. Boldero."

"Oh," said the American, "I have no secrets from my Childie here. She's full of sense, and always gives me her advice. Besides, if it is anything about Jack, it is she that has the best right to hear."

The poor vicar stared blankly in the face of this man, who, being a man and his own contemporary, ought surely to have understood

him. He had thought that no man could have been more surprised than he had been this morning by the news of Jack's engagement. But he was more surprised now.

"My dear sir," he said, "it is impossible that I can say what I have to say in the presence of Miss Boldero——"

"Oh, never mind me," said the young lady. "He has come to tell you something against Jack, papa. I ought to be here——"

"It will be more fair," said Mr. Boldero.

"It is just simply indispensable," said his daughter.

The vicar felt the obstinacy of despair come into his being. He said—

"This is a very serious matter; I must talk to you alone. For Heaven's sake grant me ten minutes when your child's happiness is at stake. It is not all such easy work, such plain sailing as you seem to think."

"Father," said Miss Boldero, "if he tells you

Jack has another wife living or anything of that sort, promise me you'll not believe him."

She raised herself slowly from her seat.

"No, I'll not believe him without proof."

"I shan't, with volumes of proof. But I'll go away, though I consider it very uncivil and just like an Englishman to treat a woman in this contemptuous way. You said ten minutes, Mr. Wynyard. I'll come back in ten minutes to hear what all this fuss is about."

The young lady retired accordingly. She had a fine, graceful figure, and moved languidly, swinging a little to one side and another as some tall people do; and she went no further than to the next room, where it would not have been difficult to hear all that passed. But one could not see that young person and suspect her of listening at a door.

"Well," said Mr. Boldero, "out with it now. Is there another wife living? I'll have to see all the papers before I'll believe that of Jack."

"Another wife!" cried the vicar. "God bless my soul, what can you be thinking of? Jack is not a villain!"

"Then there is not another wife? Well, that's a relief. What was a man to think? You're so dreadfully in earnest. If it ain't that, it's all right."

"But it is not all right," said the vicar. "Mr. Boldero, do you know my son has not a penny?—that is, there will be a mere trifle when we are both dead, his mother and I; but she's young yet, thank God. Stop a moment! And he is only a clerk in my friend Bullock's office, earning little, and, it breaks my heart to say, deserving little."

"An idle young dog; more fond of pleasure than of work. One can see as much as that, having, as you may say, the pleasure of his acquaintance, with half an eye."

"And there is more behind," said the vicar, very pale. "Don't make me blame my own

boy more than I can help. God knows what it costs me to speak, but I can't let—the happiness of another young creature—be thrown away."

"Meaning Childie," said Mr. Boldero. "She's pretty well able to look after that herself. Hullo! you're not feeling faint, are you? Stop a moment; I've got something handy here."

"Never mind," said the vicar, waving him away. "Never mind; I'm all right. Mr. Boldero, do you understand what I say? Can I say anything stronger to make you understand? I dare not let you trust your daughter's happiness to Jack without telling you——"

"Here, old man, take this, and sit down and keep quiet till you come to yourself."

And to tell the truth a mist was coming over the vicar's eyes. He laid his head back, and the room seemed to be gyrating round him. His heart was beating loud in his ears, and the

tall figure standing before him with a glass in its hand seemed some kind of solemn demon tempting him to an unknown fate. He swallowed what was given to him, however, and slowly came to himself — the walls sinking into the perpendicular, and the tall American in his black coat becoming recognizable once more.

"You want to know, now, I suppose," said the other father, "how the young folks are to live? I'm pretty comfortably off, and she's all I have in the world."

"Are you sure you understand me? Do you know what I mean?" said the vicar in despair.

"I know what you say fast enough; but what you mean is beyond me: unless it be to put a spoke in your son's wheel: which is more than I can understand, I'll allow."

The vicar did not say a word. They would think it at home, too, that he had tried to put a

spoke in his son's wheel; and Jack would think it with more reason. But he felt that he had not another word to say.

"Have you got anything more to tell me in this hole-and-corner way?" the other father asked.

The vicar shook his head. "What does it matter what I have to say, when you won't believe me?" he said.

"Then I reckon I may as well have her back. Here, Childie," said Mr. Boldero.

And the door opened widely, and the young lady sailed in. "Well, papa," she said.

"Well, Childie. This old gentleman wants us to understand that his son is a bad lot, earns no money to speak of, and deserves less; is just good for nothing as far as I can make him out, not fit to be trusted with your happiness, he says."

"Father," said Miss Boldero, "who is talking of trusting Jack with my happiness? Is it the

woman that asks the man to make her happy, or the man that asks the woman?"

"As a matter of fact it's the man; but I don't know that it always holds good. I must allow there is a doubt on that."

"There is no doubt in my mind," said the young lady. "Jack's happiness is going to be trusted to me, and I'll take care of it. If Mr. Wynyard has any objection to me he has got a right to say it."

"I ain't quite so clear of that," said Mr. Boldero. "Jack's of age; he's a man, and he has a right to choose for himself. The old gentleman has no call to have any voice in it."

Now, the vicar had gone on for a long time hearing himself called the "old gentleman," and had borne it; though at sixty, when a man is well and strong, it is an appellation which he feels to be half ludicrous and half injurious. But at last the moment had come when he could bear no more.

"The old gentleman," he said, "as you call me, has no desire to have a veto on his son's choice. You are a very pretty young lady, and charming, I am sure. But I don't know what are your other qualities, Miss Boldero. You must excuse me if I go now, for I have said everything I have to say."

"Go!" cried the girl, "without even having your luncheon!—you, who are going to be my papa-in-law?"

"Or a drink," said her father. "Yes, I had to give him a drink, or he would have fainted on my hands. Sir—if I must not call you an old gentleman—I'm a great one for knowing motives. What was your meaning in coming here to-day?"

"His meaning, of course, was to make acquaintance with me, papa, and see what sort of girl I was."

"Childie, let alone with your talk for one short moment, and let him speak."

The vicar stood up, and would have gone away if he could; but the tall, black figure opposite barred the way, and demanded an answer. And, indeed, the answer was hard to give; for a man somehow finds it very hard to say that he has done anything, whatever it may be, simply from the highest motive of all. The vicar felt this deeply, though he was an old gentleman, and though to be religious was, as you may say, his profession. He was often not at all abashed to avow a mean motive; but when you think of it, it requires a great deal of courage to claim to be carrying out the charge of the Gospel. When he spoke his voice faltered, and his ruddy old face was like a rose. "Sir," he replied, adopting, without knowing it, the style of his questioner, "I have been preaching all my life what my Master said, 'Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.'"

There was a little pause in the room, and

though the rattle of the carriages in the streets, and the sound of the men with the flowers calling, "All a-blowing and a-growing," came in very distinctly, yet the effect was as if you could have heard a pin fall. The boldest held his breath for a time—that is to say, even Miss Boldero, though she was not quite clear what it was all about, did not say a word. At last—

"That gentleman's Jack's father, Childie," said Mr. Boldero slowly. "I'm not in the running with the likes of him. If you don't train that fellow up to do his father credit, I'll never believe in you again."

"I will, papa," said the girl, as if she were making a vow.

* * * * *

Jack Wynyard strolled in in the afternoon, very carefully dressed, with a flower in his coat, but with much trouble in his mind. Why did his father come up to town so suddenly? What was it he was so anxious to say? The

young man's conscience told him pretty clearly what it was, and he went to the hotel to fulfil

"JACK."

his engagement with his betrothed, expecting little but to be met by her father, and sent

about his business, as the result of what his own father had said.

But no such reception awaited him. He found Miss Boldero in her prettiest toilette waiting for him. "And oh, Jack," said that young lady, "there has been the sweetest old gentleman here with a button in his hat, saying all sorts of things about you. He said you were not fit to be trusted with my happiness, and I said no; but I was to be trusted with yours. And we are going down to the vicarage to stay; do you hear, to stay, and make acquaintance with everything. And papa has fallen fathoms deep in love with him. And you are to behave, sir, like a saint or an angel, or I will lose all my credit with everybody from this day."

The vicar went home, I need not say, with a load lifted from his heart. He had delivered his soul, and yet he had not injured Jack. But that was because the people whom he had

warned, in the discharge of his bounden duty, were such people as never were.

"They know everything at least," he said to his wife and Emily, who met him with much anxiety at the gate, both of them looking ten years older. "I have not concealed anything from them. But how it will all end God knows."