

***FRANK
FRANKFORT
MOORE***

A photograph of a dirt path leading to a wooden bridge in a dense forest. The path is made of dark brown earth and leads towards a simple wooden bridge with two railings. The bridge spans across a small stream or a gap in the forest. The forest is lush with green foliage, including ferns and various trees. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

***PHYLLIS
OF PHILISTIA***

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Phyllis of Philistia

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CHAPTER I.

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AN ASTRONOMER WITHOUT A TELESCOPE.

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"After all," said Mr. Ayrton, "what is marriage?"

"Ah!" sighed Phyllis. She knew that her father had become possessed of a phrase, and that he was anxious to flutter it before her to see how it went. He was a connoisseur in the bric-a-brac of phrases.

"Marriage means all your eggs in one basket," said he.

"Ah!" sighed Phyllis once more. She wondered if her father really thought that she would be comforted in her great grief by a phrase. She did not want to know how marriage might be defined. She knew that all definitions are indefinite. She knew that in the case of marriage everything depends upon the definer and the occasion.

"So you see there is no immediate cause to grieve, my dear," resumed her father.

She did not quite see that this was the logical conclusion of the whole matter; but that was possibly because she was born a woman, and felt that marriage is to a woman what a keel is to a ship.

"I think there is a very good cause to grieve when we find a man like George Holland turning deliberately round from truth to falsehood," said Phyllis sternly.

"And what's worse, running a very good chance of losing his living," remarked the father. "Of course it will have to be

proved that Moses and Abraham and David and the rest of them were not what he says they were; and it strikes me that all the bench of bishops, and a royal commissioner or two thrown in, would have considerable difficulty in doing that nowadays.”

“What! You take his part, papa?” she cried, starting up. “You take his part? You think I was wrong to tell him—what I did tell him?”

“I don’t take his part, my dear,” said Mr. Ayrton. “I think that he’s a bit of a fool to run his head into a hornet’s nest because he has come to the conclusion that Abraham’s code of morality was a trifle shaky, and that Samson was a shameless libertine. Great Heavens! has the man got no notion of the perspective of history?”

“Perspective? History? It’s the Bible, papa!”

Indignation was in Phyllis’ eyes, but there was a reverential tone in her voice. Her father looked at her—listened to her. In the pause he thought:

“Good Heavens! What sort of a man is George Holland, who is ready to relinquish the love and loveliness of that girl, simply because he thinks poorly of the patriarchs?”

“He attacks the Bible, papa,” resumed Phyllis gravely. “What horrible things he said about Ruth!”

“Ah, yes, Ruth—the heroine of the harvest festival,” said her father. “Ah, he might have left us our Ruth. Besides, she was a woman. Heavens above! is there no chivalry remaining among men?”

“Ah, if it was only chivalry! But—the Bible!”

“Quite so—the—yes, to be sure. But don’t you think you may take the Bible too seriously, Phyllis?”

“Oh, papa! too seriously?”

“Why not? That’s George Holland’s mistake, I fear. Why should he work himself to a fury over the peccadillos of the patriarchs? The principle of the statute of limitations should be applied to such cases. If the world, and the colleges of theology, have dealt lightly with Samson and David and Abraham and Jacob and the rest of them for some thousands of years, why should George Holland rake up things against them, and that, too, on very doubtful evidence? But I should be the last person in the world to complain of the course which he has seen fit to adopt, since it has left you with me a little longer, my dearest child. I did not, of course, oppose your engagement, but I have often asked myself what I should do without you? How should I ever work up my facts, or, what is more important, my quotations, in your absence, Phyllis? On some questions, my dear, you are a veritable Blue-book—yes, an *edition de luxe* of a Blue-book.”

“And I meant to be so useful to him as well,” said Phyllis, taking her father’s praises more demurely than she had taken his phrases. “I meant to help him in his work.”

“Ah, what a fool the man is! How could any man in his senses give up a thing of flesh and blood like you, for the sake of proving or trying to prove, that some people who lived five or six thousand years ago—if they ever lived at all—would have rendered themselves liable to imprisonment, without the option of a fine, if they lived in England since the passing of certain laws—recent laws, too, we must remember!”

“Papa!”

“Anyhow, you have done with him, my dear. A man who can’t see that crime is really a question of temperament, and sin invariably a question of geography—well, we’ll say no more about it. At what hour did you say he was coming?”

“Four. I don’t think I shall break down.”

“Break down? Why on earth should you break down? You have a mind to know, and you know your own mind. That’s everything. But of course you’ve had no experience of matters of this sort. He was your first real lover?”

Phyllis’ face became crimson. She retained sufficient presence of mind, however, to make a little fuss with the window-blind before letting it down. Her father stared at her for a moment, and there was rather a long pause before he laughed.

“I said ‘real lover,’ my dear,” he remarked. “The real lover is the one who talks definitely about dates and the house agent’s commission. As a rule the real lover does not make love. True love is born, not made. But you—Heavens above! perhaps I did an injustice to you—to you and to the men. Maybe you’re not such a tyro after all, Phyllis.”

Phyllis gave a very pretty little laugh—such a laugh as would have convinced any man but a father—perhaps, indeed, some fathers—that she was not without experience. Suddenly she became grave. Her father never loved her so dearly as when that little laugh was flying over her face, leaving its living footprints at the corners of her eyes, at the exquisite curve of her mouth. It relieved her from the suspicion of priggishness to which, now and again, her grave moods and appropriate words laid her open. She was not so proper, after all, her father now felt; she was a girl

with the experiences of a girl who has tempted men and seen what came of it.

She spoke:

“It is a very serious thing, giving a man your promise and then——”

“Then finding that your duty to him—to him, mind—forces you to tell him that you cannot carry out that promise,” said her father. “Yes, it is a very serious thing, but not so serious as carrying out that promise would be if you had even the least little feeling that at the end of three months he was not a better man than you suspected he was at the beginning. There’s a bright side to everything, even a honeymoon; but the reason that a honeymoon is so frequently a failure is because the man is bound to be found out by his wife inside the month. It is better that you found out now, than later on, that you could not possibly be happy with a man who spoke slightingly of the patriarchs and their wives. Now I’ll leave you, with confidence that you will be able to explain matters to Mr. Holland.”

“What! you won’t be here?”

Dismay was in the girl’s face as she spoke. She had clearly looked for the moral support of her father’s presence while she would be making her explanation to the man whom she had, a few months before, promised to marry, but whom she had found it necessary to dismiss by letter, owing to her want of sympathy in some of his recent utterances.

“You won’t be here?”

“No; I have unfortunately an engagement just at that hour, Phyllis,” replied Mr. Ayrton. “But do you really think there is any need for me to be here? Personally, I fancy that

my presence would only tend to complicate matters. Your own feeling, your own woman's instinct, will enable you to explain—well, all that needs explanation. I have more confidence in your capacity to explain since you gave that pretty little laugh just now. Experience—ah, the experience of a girl such as you are, suggests an astronomer without a telescope. Still, there were astronomers before there were telescopes; and so I leave you, my beloved child—ah, my own child once again! No cold hand of a lover is now between us.”

It was not until he was some distance down Piccadilly that it occurred to him that he should have pictured the lover with a warm hand; and that omission on his part caused him a greater amount of irritation than anyone who was unaware of his skill in phrase-making could have thought possible to arise from a lapse apparently so trifling.

It was not until he had reached the Acropolis and had referred, in the hearing of the most eminently dull of the many distinguished members of that club, to the possibility of a girl's experiences of man being likened to an astronomer without a telescope, that he felt himself again.

The dull distinguished man had smiled.

CHAPTER II.

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HE KNEW THAT IT WAS A TROUBLESOME PROCESS, BECOMING A GOOD CLERGYMAN, SO HE DETERMINED TO BECOME A GOOD PREACHER INSTEAD.

Phyllis sat alone in one of the drawing rooms, waiting until the hour of four should arrive and bring into her presence the Rev. George Holland, to plead his cause to her—to plead to be returned to her favor. He had written to her to say that he would make such an attempt.

She had looked on him with favor for several months—with especial favor for three months, for three months had just passed since she had promised to marry him, believing that to be the wife of a clergyman who, though still young, had two curates to do the rough work for him—clerical charwomen, so to speak—would make her the happiest of womankind. Mr. Holland was rector of St. Chad's, Battenberg Square, and he was thought very highly of even by his own curates, who intoned all the commonplace, everyday prayers in the liturgy for him, leaving him to do all the high-class ones, and to repeat the Commandments. (A rector cannot be expected to do journeyman's work, as it were; and it is understood that a bishop will only be asked to intone three short prayers, those from behind a barrier, too; an archbishop refuses to do more than pronounce the benediction.)

The Rev. George Holland was a good-looking man of perhaps a year or two over thirty. He did not come of a very good family—a fact which probably accounted for his

cleverness at Oxford and in the world. He was a Fellow of his college, though he had not been appointed rector of St. Chad's for this reason. The appointment, as is well known (in the Church, at any rate), is the gift of the Earl of Earls court, and it so happened that, when at college together, George Holland had saved the young man who a year or two afterward became Earl of Earls court from a very great misfortune. The facts of the case were these: Tommy Trebovoir, as he was then, had made up his mind to marry a lady whose piquant style of beauty made the tobacconist's shop where she served the most popular in town. By the exercise of a great deal of diplomacy and the expenditure of a little money, Mr. Holland brought about a match between her and quite another man—a man who was not even on a subsidiary path to a peerage, and whose only connection with the university was due to his hiring out horses to those whom he called the "young gents." Tommy was so indignant with his friend for the part he had played in this transaction he ceased to speak to him, and went the length of openly insulting him. Six years afterward, when he had become Earl of Earls court, and had espoused the daughter of a duke,—a lady who was greatly interested in the advance of temperance,—he had presented George Holland with the living at St. Chad's.

People then said that Lord Earls court was a lesser fool than some of his acts suggested. Others said that the Rev. George Holland had never been a fool, though he had been a Fellow of his college.

They were right. George Holland knew that it was a troublesome process becoming a good clergyman, so he

determined to become a good preacher instead. In the course of a year he had become probably the best-known preacher (legitimate, not Dissenting) in London, and that, too, without annoying the church-wardens of St. Chad's by drawing crowds of undesirable listeners to crush their way into the proprietary sittings, and to join in the singing and responses, and to do other undesirable acts. No, he only drew to the church the friends of the said holders, whose contributions to the offertory were exemplary.

His popularity within a certain circle was great; but, as Lord Earlscourt was heard to say, "He never played to the pit."

He was invited to speak to a resolution at a Mansion House meeting to express indignation at the maintenance of the opium traffic in China.

He was also invited by the Countess of Earlscourt to appear on the platform to meet the deputation of Chinese who represented the city meeting held at Peking in favor of local option in England; for the great national voice of China had pronounced in favor of local option in England.

Shortly afterward he met Phyllis Ayrton, and had asked her to marry him, and she had consented.

And now Phyllis was awaiting his coming to her, in order that he might learn from her own lips what he had already learned from the letter which he had received from her the day before; namely, that she found it necessary for her own peace of mind to break off her engagement with him.

Phyllis Ayrton had felt for some months that it would be a great privilege for any woman to become the wife of a clergyman. Like many other girls who have a good deal of

time for thought,—thought about themselves, their surroundings, and the world in general,—she had certain yearnings after a career. But she had lived all her life in Philistia, and considered it to be very well adapted as a place of abode for a proper-minded young woman; in fact, she could not imagine any proper-minded young woman living under any other form of government than that which found acceptance in Philistia. She had no yearning to startle her neighbors. With a large number of young women, the idea that startling one's neighbors is a career by itself seems to prevail just at present; but Phyllis had no taste in this direction. Writing a book and riding a bicycle were alike outside her calculations of a scheme of life. Hospital nursing was nothing that she would shrink from; at the same time, it did not attract her; she felt that she could dress quite as becomingly as a hospital nurse in another way.

She wondered, if it should come to the knowledge of the heads of the government of Philistia that she had a yearning to become the wife of a clergyman, would they regard her as worthy to be conducted across the frontier, and doomed to perpetual expatriation. When she began to think out this point, she could not but feel that if she were deserving of punishment,—she looked on expulsion from Philistia as the severest punishment that could be dealt out to her, for she was extremely patriotic,—there were a good many other young women, and women who were no longer young, who were equally culpable. She had watched the faces of quite a number of the women who crowded St. Chad's at every service, and she had long ago come to the conclusion that the desire to become the wife of a clergyman was an

aspiration which was universally distributed among the unmarried women of the congregation.

She knew so much, but she was not clever enough to know that it was her observance of this fact that confirmed her in her belief that it would be a blessed privilege for such a woman as she to become the wife of such a clergyman as George Holland. She was not wise enough to be able to perceive that a woman marries a man not so much because she thinks highly of marriage—although she does think highly of it; not so much because she thinks highly of the man—though she may think highly of him, but simply because she sees that other women want to marry him.

In three months she considered herself blessed among women. She was the one chosen out of all the flock. She did not look around her in church in pride of conquest; but she looked demurely down to her sacred books, feeling that all the other women were gazing at her in envy; and she felt that there was no pride in the thought that the humility of her attitude—downcast eyes, with long lashes shading half her cheeks, meekly folded hands—was the right one to adopt under the circumstances.

And then she saw several of the young women who had been wearing sober shades of dresses for some years,—though in their hearts (and she knew it) they were passionately attached to colors,—appearing like poppies once more, and looking very much the better for the change, too; and she felt that it was truly sad for young women to—well, to show their hands, so to speak. They might have waited for some weeks before returning to the colors of the secular.

She did not know that they felt that they had wasted too much time in sober shades already. The days are precious in a world in which no really trustworthy hair dye may be bought for money.

And then there came to her a month of coldly inquisitive doubt. (This was when people had ceased to congratulate her and to talk, the nice ones, of the great cleverness of George Holland; the nasty ones, of the great pity that so delightful a man did not come of a better family.)

Why should she begin to ask herself if she really loved George Holland; if the feeling she had for him should be called by the name of love, or by some other name that did not mean just the same thing? Of course she had thought a good deal—though her father did not know it—of love. She had seen upon other people the effect of the possession of this gift of love, how it had caused them to forget pain and poverty, and shame, and infamy, and God, and death, and hell. Ah! that was love—that was love! and she had hoped that one day such a gift of love would be given to her; for it was surely the thing that was best worth having in the world! Once or twice she had fancied that it was at the point of being given to her. There had been certain thrilling passages between herself and two men,—an interval of a year between each,—and there had also been a kiss in an alcove designed by her dearest friend, Ella Linton, for the undoing of mankind, a place of softened lights and shadowy palms. It was her recollection of these incidents that had caused her to fumble with the blind cord when her father had been suggesting to her the disadvantages of inexperience in matters of the heart. But the incidents had

led to nothing, except, perhaps, a week or two of remorse. But she could not help feeling, when that month of curious doubt was upon her, that the little thrill which she had felt when one man had put his arm around her for an instant, when another man—he was very young—had put his lips upon her mouth—it was a straightforward kiss—suggested a nearer approach to love than she had yet been conscious of in the presence of George Holland. (He had never done more than kiss her hand. Is it on record that any man did more when dressed with the severity of the cleric?)

This was a terrible impression for a young woman to retain before her engagement to a man has passed into its third month. Then she began to wonder if all her previous ideas—all her previous aspirations—were mistaken. She began to wonder if this was the reality of love—this conviction that there was nothing in the whole world that she would welcome with more enthusiasm than an announcement on the part of her father that he was going on a voyage to Australia, and that he meant to take her with him.

And then——

Well, then she threw herself upon her bed and wept for an hour one evening, and for two hours (at intervals) another evening; and then looked up the old published speeches made by a certain cabinet minister in his irresponsible days, on a question which he had recently introduced. Her father was bitterly opposed to the most recent views of the minister, and was particularly anxious to confront him with his own phrases of thirty years back. She

spent four hours copying out the words which were now meant by Mr. Ayrton to confound the utterer.

CHAPTER III.

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THE BISHOP KNEW SOMETHING OF MAN, AND HE KNEW SOMETHING OF THE CHURCH; HE EVEN KNEW SOMETHING OF THE BIBLE.

Her father when he came in commended her diligence. He read over those damning extracts, punctuating them with chuckles; he would make an example of that minister who had found it convenient to adopt a course diametrically opposed to the principle involved in his early speeches. He chuckled, reading the extracts while he paced the room, drawing upon his stock of telling phrases, which were calculated to turn the derision of the whole House of Commons upon his opponent.

Thus, being very well satisfied with himself, he was satisfied with her, and kissed her, with a sigh.

“What a treasure you are to me, dearest one!” he said. There was a pause before he added, in a contemplative tone:

“I suppose a clergyman has no need ever to hunt up the past deliverances of another clergyman in order to confound him out of his own mouth. Ah, no; I should fancy not.”

Regret was in his voice. He seemed to suggest to her that he believed her powers would be wasted as the wife of a man who, of course, being a clergyman, could have no enemies.

“Dearest papa!” she cried, throwing herself into his arms, and sobbing on his shirt front, “dearest papa, I will not leave

you. I don't want to be anyone's wife. I want to be your daughter—only to be your daughter.”

He comforted her with kisses and soothing smoothings of the hair. No, no, he said; he would not be selfish. He would remember that a father was the trustee of his child's happiness.

“But I know I can only be happy with you, my father!” she cried; but it was of no avail. He, being a father and not a mother, was unable to perceive what was in the girl's heart. He considered it quite natural that she should be a trifle hysterical in anticipating her new life—that strange untraveled country! Ah, is there anything more pathetic, he thought, than a girl's anticipations of wifedom? But he would do his duty, and he fancied that he was doing his duty when he put aside her earnest, almost passionate protestations, and told her how happy she would be with the man who was lucky enough to have won the pure treasure of her love.

What could she do? The terrible doubts of that month of doubting broadened into certainties. She knew that she did not love George Holland; but she had not the courage to face Philistia as the girl who did not know her own mind. Philistia was very solid on such points as the sacredness of an engagement between a man and a woman. It was a contract practically as abiding as marriage, in the eyes of Philistia; and, indeed, Phyllis herself had held this belief, and had never hesitated to express it. So nothing was left to her but to marry George Holland. After all, he was a brilliant and distinguished man, and had not a score of other girls wanted to marry him? Oh, she would marry him and give up

her life to the splendid duties which devolve upon the wife of a clergyman.

But just as she had made up her mind to face her fate, Mr. Holland's fate induced him to publish the book at which he had been working for some time. It came out just when the girl was becoming resigned to her future by his side, and it attracted even more attention than the author had hoped it would achieve.

The book was titled "Revised Versions," and it was strikingly modern in design and in tone. It purported to deal with several personages and numerous episodes of the Old Testament, not from the standpoint of the comparative philologist; not from the standpoint of the comparative mythologist, but from the standpoint of the modern man of common sense and average power of discrimination; and the result was that the breath of a good many people, especially clergymen, was taken from them, and that the Rev. George Holland became the best-known clergyman in England.

He dealt with the patriarchs in succession, and they fared very badly at his hands. He showed that Abraham had not one good act recorded to his credit, and contrasted his duplicity with the magnanimity of the ruler of Egypt whom he visited. He dwelt upon the Hagar episode, showing that the adulterer was also a murderer by intention, and so forth; while no words could be too strong to apply to Sara, his wife. Isaac did not call for elaborate notice. He could not be accused of any actual crime, but if he was a man of strong personality, he was singularly unfortunate in having failed to impart to his wife any of that integrity which he may have

practiced through life. Her methods of dealing with him after they had lived together for a good many years were criminal, considering the largeness of the issue at stake as the result of his blessing. As for Jacob, not a single praiseworthy act of his long life was available to his biographer. His career was that of the most sordid of hucksters. Of eleven of his sons nothing good is told, but Joseph was undoubtedly an able and exemplary man; the only thing to his discredit being his utter callousness regarding the fate of his father, after he had attained to a high position in Egypt.

The chapter on the patriarchs was followed by one that dealt with the incidents of the Exodus. The writer said that he feared that even the most indulgent critic must allow that the whole scheme of Moses was a shocking one; but he was probably the greatest man that ever lived on the face of the earth, if he was the leader and organizer of a band of depredators who for bloodthirst and rapacity had no parallel in history. How could it be expected that a kingdom founded upon the massacre of men and cemented by the blood of women and children should survive? It had survived only as example to the world of the impossibility of a permanent success being founded upon the atrocious methods pursued by the worst of the robber states of the East. While civilization had been spreading on all sides of them, the people of Israel had remained the worst of barbarians, murdering the men who had from time to time arisen to try and rescue them from the abysses of criminality into which they had fallen,—abysses of criminality and superstition,—

until they had filled their cup of crime by the murder of the One whom the world worships to-day.

Incidentally, of course, the character of Samson was dealt with. Delilah was shown to be one of the most heroic of womankind, making greater sacrifices through her splendid patriotism than Joan of Arc. But Samson——

Ruth was also dealt with incidentally. She was the woman who expresses her willingness to give up her God at the bidding of another woman, and who had entered into a plot with that same woman to entrap a man whom they looked to support them.

Then there was David. It was not the Bath-sheba episode, but the Abishag, that the author treated at length—one of the most revolting transactions in history, especially as there is some reason to believe that the unfortunate girl was, when it was perpetrated, already attached to one of the sons of the loathsome, senile sensualist.

Perhaps, on the whole, it was not surprising that after the publication of this book the Rev. George Holland became the best-known clergyman in England, or that the breath of bishops should be taken from them. So soon as some of them recovered from the first brunt of the shock, they met together and held up their hands, saying that they awaited the taking of immediate action by the prelate within whose see St. Chad's was situated. But that particular prelate was a man who had never been known to err on the side of rapidity of action. Nearly a week had passed before he made any move in the matter, and then the move he made was in the direction of the Engadine. He crossed the Channel with the book under his arm. He determined to

read it at his leisure. Being a clergyman, he could not, of course, be expected to have examined, from any standpoint but that of the clergyman, the characters of the persons dealt with in the book, and he was naturally shocked at the freedom shown by the rector of St. Chad's in criticising men whose names have been held in the highest esteem for some thousands of years. He at once perceived that the rector of St. Chad's had been very narrow-minded in his views regarding the conduct of the men whom he had attacked. It occurred to him, as it had to Mr. Ayrton, that the writer had drawn his picture without any regard for perspective. That was very foolish on the part of a man who was a Fellow of his college, the bishop thought; and besides, there was no need for the book—its tendency was not to help the weaker brethren. But to assume that the book would, as some newspaper articles said it would, furnish the most powerful argument that had yet been brought forward in favor of the Disestablishment of Church, was, he thought, to assume a great deal too much. The Church that had survived Wesley, Whitefield, Colenso, Darwin, and Renan would not succumb to George Holland. The bishop recollected how the Church had bitterly opposed all the teaching of the men of wisdom whose names came back to him; and how it had ended by making their teaching its own. Would anyone venture to assert that the progress of Christianity was dependent upon what people thought of the acceptance by David of the therapeutic course prescribed for him? Was the morality which the Church preached likely to be jeopardized because Ruth was a tricky young woman?

The bishop knew something of man, and he knew something of the Church, he even knew something of the Bible; and when he came to the chapter in “Revised Versions” that dealt with the episode of Ruth and Boaz, he flung the book into a corner of his bedroom, exclaiming, “Puppy!”

And then there came before his eyes a vision of a field of yellow corn, ripe for the harvest. The golden sunlight gleamed upon the golden grain through which the half-naked brown-skinned men walked with their sickles. The half-naked brown-skinned women followed the binders, gleaning the ears, and among the women was the one who had said, “Entreat me not to leave thee.” He had read that old pastoral when he was a child at the knee of his mother. It was surely the loveliest pastoral of the East, and its charm would be in no wise impaired because a man who failed to appreciate the beauty of its simplicity, had almost called Ruth by the worst name that can be applied to a woman.

The bishop did not mind what George Holland called Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Samson, but Ruth—to say that Ruth——

The bishop said “Puppy!” once again. (He had trained himself only to think the adjectives which laymen find appropriate to use in such a case as was under his consideration.)

But he made up his mind to take no action whatever against the Rev. George Holland on account of the book. If the Rev. George Holland fancied that he was to be persecuted into popularity, the Rev. George Holland was

greatly mistaken, and the bishop had a shrewd idea that the rector of St. Chad's was greatly mistaken.

(It may be mentioned that he came to this determination when he had read the book through, and found it was so cleverly written that it included no heretical phrase in all its pages.)

But so soon as Phyllis Ayrton had read the first review of the book that fell into her hands, she felt inexpressibly shocked. Great Heavens! Was it possible that she was actually at that moment engaged to marry the man who had written such a book—a book that held up Delilah to admiration, and that abased Ruth? (It was singular how everyone settled upon Ruth in this connection.)

She did not pause to analyze her feelings—to try and find out if she was really so fond of Ruth as to make Ruth's insult her own; but without a moment's delay, without a word of consultation with her father, she sat down at her desk and wrote a letter to George Holland, asking him to release her from her promise to marry him; and adding that if he should decline to do so it would make no difference to her; she would consider the engagement between them at an end all the same.

She felt, when that letter was posted, as if a great weight were lifted from her mind—from her heart. Then a copy of "Revised Versions" arrived for her from the author, and with the ink still wet upon the pen with which she had written that letter to him, she caught up the book and covered it with kisses.

Had he seen that action her lover would have been thoroughly satisfied. A young woman must be very deeply in

love with a man when she kisses the cover of a book which he has just published. That is what George Holland would have thought, having but a superficial acquaintance with the motives that sway young women.

Later in the day he had replied to her letter, and had appointed four o'clock on the following afternoon as the hour when he trusted she would find it convenient to see him, in order to give him an opportunity of making an explanation which he trusted would enable her to see that "Revised Versions," so far from being the dreadful book she seemed to imagine it to be, was in reality written with a high purpose.

She had not shrunk from an interview with him. She had sent him a line to let him know that she would be at home at four o'clock; and now she sat in her drawing room and observed, without emotion, that in five minutes that hour would strike.

The clock struck, and before the last tone had died away, the footman announced the Rev. George Holland.

CHAPTER IV.

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SHE HAD NO RIGHT TO ACCUSE HIM OF READING THE BIBLE DAILY.

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Phyllis shook hands with her visitor. He sought to retain her hand, as he had been in the habit of doing, as he stood beside her with something of a proprietary air. He relinquished her hand with a little look of surprise—a sort of pained surprise. She was inexorable. She would not even allow him to maintain his proprietary air.

“Do sit down, Mr. Holland,” she said.

“What! ‘Mr. Holland’ already? Oh, Phyllis!”

He had a good voice, full of expression—something beyond mere musical expression. People (they were mostly women) said that his voice had soul in it, whatever they meant by that.

She made no reply. What reply could she make? She only waited for him to sit down.

“Your letter came as a great shock to me, Phyllis,” said he, when he had seated himself, not too close to her. He did not wish her to fancy that he was desirous of having a subtle influence of propinquity as an ally. “A great shock to me.”

“A shock?” said she. “A shock, after you had written that book?”

“I fancied you would understand it, Phyllis—you, at least. Of course I expected to be misrepresented by the world—

the critics—the clerics—what you will—but you—You had not read it when you wrote that letter to me—that terrible letter. You could not have read it.”

“I had only read one notice of it—that was enough.”

“And you could write that letter to me solely as the evidence of one wretched print? Oh, Phyllis!”

Pain was in his voice. It may have been in his face as well, but she did not see it; his face was averted from her.

“Yes,” she said quietly; “I wrote that letter, Mr. Holland. You see, the paper gave large extracts from the book. I did not come to my conclusion from what the newspaper article said, but from what you had said in your book—from the quoted passages.”

“They did not do me justice. I did not look for justice at their hands. But you, Phyllis——”

“I have read your book now, Mr. Holland——”

“Ah, let me plead with you, Phyllis—not ‘Mr. Holland,’ I entreat of you.”

“And my first thought on reading it was that I had not written to you so strongly as I should have done.”

“My dear Phyllis, do not say that, I beg of you. You cannot know how you pain me.”

“To be misunderstood by you—*you*.”

She got upon her feet so quickly that it might almost be said she sprang up.

“*You* must have misunderstood *me* greatly, Mr. Holland, if you fancied that you could write such a book as you wrote and not get such a letter from me. The Bible—Ruth—and you a clergyman—reading it daily in the church——Oh! I cannot tell you all that I thought—all that I still think.”