the management of your estate. So far as the income of it is concerned we have managed well for you. But we have not known or taken care of the men who made the money out of your land. We could not do that, for we knew nothing of such matters. Only we saw to it that they should not be overburdened with rent, or deprived for your sake of a fair reward for their toil. You must do much more than we have done if you wish to do your duty. I cannot advise you about this further than to repeat to you the words of God: 'Do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly.'"

This was the sum of the Quaker's advice. He did not press decision or immediate action on Stephen. He neither suggested a return to Oxford nor a visit to Dhulough. Men of John Tennant's society learn patience and self-restraint by sitting quiet in their churches, neither reciting liturgies nor declaiming doctrines. Stephen remained, untroubled, a guest in the new villa, until he made up his own mind about his future.

"I think, Cousin John," he said at last, "that I shall not return to college."

He waited, but John Tennant expressed neither approval nor disapproval.

"If you will continue to act for me," Stephen went on, "and if you can supply me with sufficient money, I should like to go abroad for a while, for a year or two, and travel."

"It is well," said John Tennant. "I shall arrange about your affairs and act for you as before until your return."

CHAPTER IV

DINNER was over. The cloth, after the custom still prevalent in 1875, was removed, and the mahogany table shone pleasantly in the

light of the candles, reflecting tall decanters, many wine-glasses and dishes of apples and filbert nuts. Three men sat round it. John Manders, the host, was at the head of the table. Beside him a bottle of port reclined in a basket. A screw fitted to a lever already pierced the cork, awaiting the pressure of his hand. Before him was a bottle of whisky, a lemon, sugar, and a large china bowl with a silver ladle in it. On the hob beside the fire a kettle sang. John Manders was a young man, not more than thirty-five years of age, tall, well built, and handsome in a florid style. He had the manners of a gentleman, and clear bright eyes with a look in them that convinced most men that John Manders was afraid of nothing on earth, and probably very little inclined to give way to the will of any one who might claim the right to command him from heaven. The other two men were older. One, Lord Daintree, was perhaps sixty years of age, but because he was spare, upright, and exceedingly well dressed, looked youthful still. He owned a large property which he had visited once since his boyhood. Hunting and shooting attracted him very little, and Connacht had no other pleasures to offer. He had spent his life in the diplomatic service, preferring the society of courts to that of country squires. But of courts, and even the reputation acquired by frequenting them, there comes satiety at last, and Lord Daintree, meditating the publication of a book of reminiscences, sought quiet. Where could peace be secured more certainly than in western Connacht? Therefore the fine old house was opened again, servants imported from England, and Lord Daintree found himself the guest of his agent, Mr. Manders. The third man, was a portly, grey-whiskered clergyman. He wore the great white tie which distinguished the Irish parson in the days before he discovered that he believed in the Holy Catholic Church, and took

to wearing a collar like a dog's to emphasise his catholicity. The Very Reverend Dean Ponsonby had dined to his satisfaction. He cracked filbert nuts and sipped his glass of port in a leisurely fashion. He spoke as men do who are accustomed to be listened to with respect.

"I said, my Lord, and I said it with emphasis, let us expunge all traces of popery from the Prayer Book. I voted dead against the Athanasian Creed. I voted in favour of a revision, a root and branch revision, of the Baptismal Service. I proposed a canon which I think would have prevented the wearing of cassocks by our clergy. But it wasn't passed."

"Ah!" said Lord Daintree; "now I should have supposed that the cassock, a species of coat as I understand, might have been left to the option of the wearer. It is surely——"

"It is," said the clergyman, "the mark of the beast, the thin end of the wedge, the beginning of the end."

John Manders, who had listened with patience to a long description of the debates which resulted in the revised Prayer Book of the disestablished Church of Ireland, began to feel bored. He drew the cork of the bottle beside him, and the pleasant gurgle of wine flowing into a decanter silenced the clergyman for a moment. When he began to speak again his subject was finance. Words quite strange to Lord Daintree and phrases which bore little meaning to his mind came easily from the Dean's lips. "Commuted and compounded," "Assessment," "Diocesan Scheme," "Commuted and cut." From the severity of the clergyman's tone it was apparent that to commute and cut was a villainous series of actions. An individual stated to have been contemplating such iniquity had been cast from the society of decent men.

"What about Hegarty?" asked Mr. Manders. "Have you got him into your scheme yet?"

"Hegarty," said the parson solemnly, "is little better than a fool."

"His wife's a pretty woman," said Mr. Manders, "and very good fun. I like Mrs. Hegarty, and I've no objection to her husband being a fool."

The Dean pondered the remark. Then, not to be diverted from his estimate of Mr. Hegarty's character by any suggestion of his wife's personal charm, he went on—

"Hegarty's living is a beggarly thing, not worth more than a couple of hundred a year. I told him he'd have no chance of promotion unless he commuted and compounded and came in with the rest of us. There's no use his standing out by himself. But the man can't be got to understand or take the smallest interest in finance. What do you think he said to me when I tried to explain the advantage for our scheme? Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' Now what do you think of a man who could make such an answer as that when I was talking business?"

"A fool," said Lord Daintree; "obviously a fool. As great a fool as St. Paul."

The Dean frowned. St. Paul was part of the Bible, and the Bible was an inspired book. And yet it was obvious that in a disestablished church thought must be taken—— John Manders saved him from the horns of a dilemma.

Mrs. Hegarty manages all right about the raiment," said he. "Last summer she came out in the green silk gown, like Solomon in all his glory for splendour. I told her how pretty she looked, and after mincing and mouthing, she confessed where she got it. Now, Mr. Dean, no tales out of school. There was an old chest in the rectory full of silk hangings for the church, green and red and white silk, yards and yards of them. I fancy Antony Butler, the man that married the Quaker and died just after the famine,

must have brought them back from abroad. He was half a Papist they say, and liked such things. Anyway they were never used since he died till the gay Carrie Hegarty thought of cutting them up into gowns for her pretty back. She began with a green one. She'll look mighty fine, as I told her, when she gets to the white. Hegarty's such a dreamer I don't suppose he'd know what she wore or where she got it, unless she took to cutting up his surplices into shifts."

Lord Daintree smiled. "I trust," he said, "that she won't be reduced to such extremities."

The Dean puffed his cheeks out, preparing to protest.

"Now, Mr. Dean, remember," said Mr. Manders, "no tales to the bishop. Honour bright. This is between gentlemen over their wine. It goes no further. I can't have poor Carrie Hegarty worried. Besides, you know, silk hangings are d—d ritualistic things. You wouldn't like to see a woman's petticoat taken off her and hung up behind the altar? Come now, would you? And that's what the bishop would have to do if he did anything. Fill your glass now. You're not drinking. I'll have no heel taps here, and it's time to be mixing the punch."

The Dean allowed himself to be pacified. Church property in the days immediately following disestablishment was not always regarded as sacred by its custodians. Odd things happened, even to outlying pieces of land, and it was really impossible to look strictly after such things as disused altar hangings.

"Hegarty told me," said the Dean, after he had received his tumbler of punch, "that young Butler is coming to live here. Is that true? You're agent for the property and ought to know.

"It's true enough," said Manders; "he arrived yesterday. I haven't seen him yet, but I hope to God he'll have some sense now he's of age and

taking the management of his own affairs. It's awkward for me having a property under-rented alongside of yours, Lord Daintree, and Snell's bit of land. I've told the trustees, Stephen Butler's trustees, you know, fifty times that the rents could be raised thirty per cent all round. The beggars could pay it if they had to. Your fellows pay all right, Lord Daintree, and so do Snell's, who really are a bit racked. But those Belfast Quakers were as obstinate as mules. Not a penny more they'd allow to be put on the tenants. The result is that the man across the fence, your man, Lord Daintree, is for ever grumbling, because he sees the other fellow getting his land for less than its proper value. And as for Snell's people, who have more to pay than they can well manage—— It's the devil managing the three properties as they stand."

"Some day," said Lord Daintree, "there will be trouble over this Irish land. We're putting on the screw too tight, Manders."

"You're not," said the agent. "Your property is set at about its proper value. But of course you needn't take the money unless you like."

"Oh, I'll take it," said Lord Daintree. "As a landlord I take what I can get. I want every penny of it, and more if I could get it. Don't think I intend to reduce my rents. But speaking as a man with some little experience of the world outside Ireland, I say there'll be trouble, serious trouble, one of these days. I hope the present condition of things will last out my time. Anyway, I shan't mind. If there's any shooting done, I shall get out of range, and shall take good care to keep out of range. You'll have to stand fire, Manders. It's hideously unjust. They pay and shoot. You gather and get shot. I spend and enjoy myself. Very unjust; but that's the way of the world. Only mark my words. There'll be trouble."

"Of course," said the Dean, "there'll be

trouble. Once the rights of property are interfered with there will be no damming the stream of socialism, anarchy, and spoliation. The Church's property went first. The landlord's will go next. The man who laid sacrilegious hands upon the one won't hesitate about the other."

"They couldn't do it," said Manders. "No Government would or could attempt such a thing. It was all well enough robbing a lot of parsons. Parsons can't fight. But the landlords would be a different matter. No man will ever see a British Government interfere with freedom of contract between the owner and the occupier."

"You probably won't see it," said Lord Daintree, "because, as I said before, you'll be shot. It will be the shooting of a few men like you that will bring the matter up. Then——"

"Once property in any form is interfered with," repeated the Dean, "there is no knowing what the end will be."

He went on to deliver a discourse on the theme of the rights of property, and the iniquity of Mr. Gladstone, who first taught the English people to deny their sacredness.

"I think," said Lord Daintree, yawning, "that I must go down and call upon young Stephen Butler."

"Impress upon him," said the clergyman, "that it is his duty as a landlord to stand by the Church in the present crisis, that he ought to subscribe, and subscribe liberally, to the funds."

"And if you get the chance," said Mr. Manders, "tell him that he ought to let me screw his rents up a bit. It's awkward, very awkward, for me, managing the three estates as they stand."

"What sort of income has he?" asked Lord Daintree.

"Oh, between two and three thousand clear," said the agent. It's not a big estate, but there are no charges on it and hardly a mortgage. It has been nursed ever since his father died,

The widow lived on deuced little, and every penny that wasn't spent on the boy's education went on clearing off the charges. I fancy he got some sort of legacy lately. Anyhow, he has his income clear now."

"Lucky man," said Lord Daintree. "If I were in his position I'd cut down my rents. But how can I with all the infernal mortgage interest to be paid and a son like mine? A young fellow in the Guards is pretty expensive. I can't sacrifice a penny."

"To-morrow," said the Dean with some solemnity, "is Sunday. I always make it a point to get to bed early on Saturday nights. I like to be fresh for my day's work. Manders, will you be so good as to order my car? I told my man to go round to your yard."

"The Dean," said Lord Daintree, when the clergyman had left, "is a little inclined to be prosy, but he seems to be a gentleman. Is he a fair specimen of his kind?"

"There are worse men than old Ponsonby," said Manders. "He runs straight. I never knew him do a crooked turn to a man or woman. And the people like him."

"Oh, the people! I thought there were next to no Protestant people in these parts."

"No more there are. Hegarty, for instance, the man we were speaking of, hasn't above a dozen in his parish, and I never saw more than twenty or thirty in old Ponsonby's church—his cathedral, I beg its pardon—any time I was there, and I generally am there of a Sunday morning. When I said the people liked him, I meant the Roman Catholics—your tenants, Lord Daintree, and Snell's. He's uncommonly liberal to them. He's pretty well off, you know, apart from his parish, and it's a good one; I suppose because the church has the name of being a cathedral. It's not once nor twice that I've known him put his hand in his pocket and pay up the rent

for some poor devil that I should have had to evict otherwise. I don't set up to be over and above pious myself, but I'll give my subscription to the church so long as there are men like Ponsonby in it. I wish there were more like him. But I'm afraid, in the future, what with reduced stipends and loss of social position, we shan't get that stamp of man. We'll have more like Hegarty. He's a fool as Ponsonby said, and worse. He's a Methodist in his heart. It's no good asking him to dinner. I asked him once, and he proposed to have what he called family prayers afterwards. Prayers are all right, of course, at the proper time, but I don't call it decent to pray after dinner. Besides, he's queer in other ways. He spends hours with an old madman who lives on an island away off opposite Dhulough, a fellow that once was a sort of schoolmaster, and then was mixed up with the Fenians and got five years in gaol. After he came out he wandered about the country for a while and finally squatted on the island. I suppose I ought to have turned him off, but I never did. What the deuce Hegarty finds to talk to him about I can't imagine. I dropped him a hint one day that a Fenian wasn't very respectable company. But I didn't like to worry him. After all, his wife's a very pretty woman. I hear she's the daughter of some half-pay officer. She's not precisely a lady; knocked about too much in barracks in the days of her youth to be a lady now. I can't think why she married Hegarty."

"Perhaps," said Lord Daintree, "she is like me, tired of the gaiety of the great world; seeking peace."

Mr. Manders winked. "Mrs. Hegarty," he said, "is not yet on the retired list."