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[Authors](#)

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[Man and Wife](#)

[Wilkie Collins](#)

This Book:

[Contents](#)

[Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter](#)

## Chapter 10 - Bishopriggs

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THE knock at the door was repeated--a louder knock than before.

"Are you deaf?" shouted Arnold.

The door opened, little by little, an inch at a time. Mr. Bishopriggs appeared mysteriously, with the cloth for dinner over his arm, and with his second in command behind him, bearing "the furnishing of the table" (as it was called at Craig Fernie) on a tray.

"What the deuce were you waiting for?" asked Arnold. "I told you to come in."

"And \_I\_ tauld \_you\_," answered Mr. Bishopriggs, "that I wadna come in without knocking first. Eh, man!" he went on, dismissing his second in command, and laying the cloth with his own venerable hands, "d'ye think I've lived in this hottle in blinded eegnorance of hoo young married couples pass the time when they're left to themselves? Twa knocks at the door--and an unco trouble in opening it, after that--is joost the least ye can do for them! Whar' do ye think, noo, I'll set the places for you and your leddy there?"

Anne walked away to the window, in undisguised disgust. Arnold found Mr. Bishopriggs to be quite irresistible. He answered, humoring the joke,

"One at the top and one at the bottom of the table, I suppose?"

"One at tap and one at bottom?" repeated Mr. Bishopriggs, in high disdain. "De'il a bit of it! Baith yer chairs as close together as chairs can be. Hech! hech!--haven't I caught 'em, after goodness knows hoo many preleeminary knocks at the door, dining on their husbands' knees, and steemulating a man's appetite by feeding him at the fork's end like a child? Eh!" sighed the sage of Craig Fernie, "it's a short life wi' that nuptial business, and a merry one! A mouth for yer billin' and cooin'; and a' the rest o' yer days for wondering ye were ever such a fule, and wishing it was a' to be done ower again.--Ye'll be for a bottle o' sherry wine, nae doot? and a drap toddy afterwards, to do yer digestin' on?"

Arnold nodded--and then, in obedience to a signal from Anne, joined her at the window. Mr. Bishopriggs looked after them attentively--observed that they were talking in whispers--and approved of that proceeding, as representing another of the established customs of young married couples at inns, in the presence of third persons appointed to wait on them.

"Ay! ay!" he said, looking over his shoulder at Arnold, "gae to your deerie! gae to your deerie! and leave a' the solid business o' life to Me. Ye've Screepture warrant for it. A man maun leave fether and mother (I'm yer fether), and cleave to his wife. My certie! 'cleave' is a strong word--there's nae sort o' doot about it, when it comes to 'cleaving'!"

"He wagged his head thoughtfully, and walked to the side-table in a corner, to cut the bread.

As he took up the knife, his one wary eye detected a morsel of crumpled paper, lying lost between the table and the wall. It was the letter from Geoffrey, which Anne had flung from her, in the first indignation of reading it--and which neither she nor Arnold had thought of since.

"What's that I see yonder?" muttered Mr. Bishopriggs, under his breath. "Mair litter in the room, after I've doosted and tidied it wi' my ain hands!"

He picked up the crumpled paper, and partly opened it. "Eh! what's here? Writing on it in ink? and writing on it in pencil? Who may this belong to?" He looked round cautiously toward Arnold and Anne. They were both still talking in whispers, and both standing with their backs to him, looking out of the window. "Here it is, clean forgotten and dune with!" thought Mr. Bishopriggs. "Noo what would a fule do, if he fund this? A fule wad light his pipe wi' it, and then wonder whether he wadna ha' dune better to read it first. And what wad a wise man do, in a seemilar position?" He practically answered that question by putting the letter into his pocket. It might be worth keeping, or it might not; five minutes' private examination of it would decide the alternative, at the first convenient opportunity. "Am gaun' to breeng the dinner in!" he called out to Arnold. "And, mind ye, there's nae knocking at the door possible, when I've got the tray in baith my hands, and mairs the pity, the gout in baith my feet." With that friendly warning, Mr. Bishopriggs went his way to the regions of the kitchen.

Arnold continued his conversation with Anne in terms which showed that the question of his leaving the inn had been the question once more discussed between them while they were standing at the window.

"You see we can't help it," he said. "The waiter has gone to bring the dinner in. What will they think in the house, if I go away already, and leave 'my wife' to dine alone?"

It was so plainly necessary to keep up appearances for the present, that there was nothing more to be said. Arnold was committing a serious imprudence--and yet, on this occasion, Arnold was right. Anne's annoyance at feeling that conclusion forced on her produced the first betrayal of impatience which she had shown yet. She left Arnold at the window, and flung herself on the sofa. "A curse seems to follow me!" she thought, bitterly. "This will end ill--and I shall be answerable for it!"

In the mean time Mr. Bishopriggs had found the dinner in the kitchen, ready, and waiting for him. Instead of at once taking the tray on which it was placed into the sitting-room, he conveyed it privately into his own pantry, and shut the door.

"Lie ye there, my freend, till the spare moment comes--and I'll look at ye again," he said, putting the letter away carefully in the dresser-drawer. "Noo about the dinner o' they twa turtle-doves in the parlor?" he continued, directing his attention to the dinner tray. "I maun joost see that the cook's;s dune her duty--the creatures are no' capable o' decidin' that knotty point for their ain selves." He took off one of the covers, and picked bits, here and there, out of the dish with the fork. "Eh! eh! the collops are no' that bad!" He took off another cover, and shook his head in solemn doubt. "Here's the green meat. I doot green meat's windy diet for a man at my time o' life!" He put the cover on again, and tried the next dish. "The fesh? What the de'il does the woman fry the trout for? Boil it next time, ye betch, wi' a pinch o' saut and a spunefu' o' vinegar." He drew the cork from a bottle of sherry, and decanted the wine. "The sherry wine?" he said, in tones of deep feeling, holding the decanter up to the light. "Hoo do I know but what it may be corkit? I maun taste and try. It's on my conscience, as an honest man, to taste and try." He forthwith relieved his conscience--copiously. There was a vacant space, of no inconsiderable dimensions, left in the decanter. Mr. Bishopriggs gravely filled it up from the water-bottle. "Eh! it's joost addin' ten years to

the age o' the wine. The turtle-doves will be nane the waur--and I mysel' am a glass o' sherry the better. Praise Providence for a' its maircies!" Having relieved himself of that devout aspiration, he took up the tray again, and decided on letting the turtle-doves have their dinner.

The conversation in the parlor (dropped for the moment) had been renewed, in the absence of Mr. Bishopriggs. Too restless to remain long in one place, Anne had risen again from the sofa, and had rejoined Arnold at the window.

"Where do your friends at Lady Lundie's believe you to be now?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am believed," replied Arnold, "to be meeting my tenants, and taking possession of my estate."

"How are you to get to your estate to-night?"

"By railway, I suppose. By-the-by, what excuse am I to make for going away after dinner? We are sure to have the landlady in here before long. What will she say to my going off by myself to the train, and leaving 'my wife' behind me?"

"Mr. Brinkworth! that joke--if it \_is\_ a joke--is worn out!"

"I beg your pardon," said Arnold.

"You may leave your excuse to me," pursued Anne. "Do you go by the up train, or the down?"

"By the up train."

The door opened suddenly; and Mr. Bishopriggs appeared with the dinner. Anne nervously separated herself from Arnold. The one available eye of Mr. Bishopriggs followed her reproachfully, as he put the dishes on the table.

"I warned ye baith, it was a clean impossibility to knock at the door this time. Don't blame me, young madam--don't blame \_me!\_"

"Where will you sit?" asked Arnold, by way of diverting Anne's attention from the familiarities of Father Bishopriggs.

"Any where!" she answered, impatiently; snatchin'g up a chair, and placing it at the bottom of the table.

Mr. Bishopriggs politely, but firmly, put the chair back again in its place.

"Lord's sake! what are ye doin'? It's clean contrary to a' the laws and customs o' the honey-mune, to sit as far away from your husband as that!"

He waved his persuasive napkin to one of the two chairs placed close together at the table.

Arnold interfered once more, and prevented another outbreak of impatience from Anne.

"What does it matter?" he said. "Let the man have his way."

"Get it over as soon as you can," she returned. "I can't, and won't, bear it much longer."

They took their places at the table, with Father Bishopriggs behind them, in the mixed character of major domo and guardian angel.

"Here's the trout!" he cried, taking the cover off with a flourish. "Half an hour since, he was loupin' in the water. There he lies noo, fried in the dish. An emblem o' human life for ye! When ye can spare any leisure time from yer twa selves, meditate on that."

Arnold took up the spoon, to give Anne one of the trout. Mr. Bishopriggs clapped the cover on the dish again, with a countenance expressive of devout horror.

"Is there naebody gaun' to say grace?" he asked.

"Come! come!" said Arnold. "The fish is getting cold."

Mr. Bishopriggs piously closed his available eye, and held the cover firmly on the dish. "For what ye're gaun' to receive, may ye baith be truly thankful!" He opened his available eye, and whipped the cover off again. "My conscience is easy noo. Fall to! Fall to!"

"Send him away!" said Anne. "His familiarity is beyond all endurance."

"You needn't wait," said Arnold.

"Eh! but I'm here to wait," objected Mr. Bishopriggs. "What's the use o' my gaun' away, when ye'll want me anon to change the plates for ye?" He considered for a moment (privately consulting his experience) and arrived at a satisfactory conclusion as to Arnold's motive for wanting to get rid of him. "Tak' her on yer knee," he whispered in Arnold's ear, "as soon as ye like! Feed him at the fork's end," he added to Anne, "whenever ye please! I'll think of something else, and look out at the prospect." He winked--and went to the window.

"Come! come!" said Arnold to Anne. "There's a comic side to all this. Try and see it as I do."

Mr. Bishopriggs returned from the window, and announced the appearance of a new element of embarrassment in the situation at the inn.

"My certie!" he said, "it's weel ye cam' when ye did. It's ill getting to this hottle in a storm."

Anne started. and looked round at him. "A storm coming!" she exclaimed.

"Eh! ye're well hoosed here--ye needn't mind it. There's the cloud down the valley," he added, pointing out of the window, "coming up one way, when the wind's blowing the other. The storm's brewing, my leddy, when ye see that!"

There was another knock at the door. As Arnold had predicted, the landlady made her appearance on the scene.

"I ha' just lookit in, Sir," said Mrs. Inchbare, addressing herself exclusively to Arnold, "to see ye've got what ye want."

"Oh! you are the landlady? Very nice, ma'am--very nice."

Mistress Inchbare had her own private motive for entering the room, and came to it without further preface.

"Ye'll excuse me, Sir," she proceeded. "I wasna in the way when ye cam' here, or I suld ha' made bauld to ask ye the question which I maun e'en ask noo. Am I to understand that ye hire these rooms for yersel', and this leddy here--yer wife?"

Anne raised her head to speak. Arnold pressed her hand warningly, under the table, and silenced her.

"Certainly," he said. "I take the rooms for myself, and this lady here--my wife!"

Anne made a second attempt to speak.

"This gentleman--" she began.

Arnold stopped her for the second time.

"This gentleman?" repeated Mrs. Inchbare, with a broad stare of surprise. "I'm only a puir woman, my leddy--d'ye mean yer husband here?"

Arnold's warning hand touched Anne's, for the third time. Mistress Inchbare's eyes remained fixed on her in merciless inquiry. To have given utterance to the contradiction which trembled on her lips would have been to involve Arnold (after all that he had sacrificed for her) in the scandal which would inevitably follow--a scandal which would be talked of in the neighborhood, and which might find its way to Blanche's ears. White and cold, her eyes never moving from the table, she accepted the landlady's implied correction, and faintly repeated the words: "My husband."

Mistress Inchbare drew a breath of virtuous relief, and waited for what Anne had to say next. Arnold came considerably to the rescue, and got her out of the room.

"Never mind," he said to Anne; "I know what it is, and I'll see about it. She's always like this, ma'am, when a storm's coming," he went on, turning to the landlady. "No, thank you--I know how to manage her. Well send to you, if we want your assistance."

"At yer ain pleasure, Sir," answered Mistress Inchbare. She turned, and apologized to Anne (under protest), with a stiff courtesy. "No offense, my leddy! Ye'll remember that ye cam' here alane, and that the hottle has its ain gude name to keep up." Having once more vindicated "the hottle," she made the long-desired move to the door, and left the room.

"I'm faint!" Anne whispered. "Give me some water."

There was no water on the table. Arnold ordered it of Mr. Bishopriggs--who had remained passive in the back-ground (a model of discreet attention) as long as the mistress was in the room.

"Mr. Brinkworth!" said Anne, when they were alone, "you are acting with inexcusable rashness. That woman's question was an impertinence. Why did you answer it? Why did you force me--?"

She stopped, unable to finish the sentence. Arnold insisted on her drinking a glass of wine--and then defended himself with the patient consideration for her which he had shown from the first.

"Why didn't I have the inn door shut in your face"--he asked, good humoredly--"with a storm coming on, and without a place in which you can take refuge? No, no, Miss Silvester! I don't presume to blame you for any scruples you may feel--but scruples are sadly out of place with such a woman as that landlady. I am responsible for your safety to Geoffrey; and Geoffrey expects to find you here. Let's change the subject. The water is a long time coming. Try another glass of wine. No? Well--here is Blanche's health" (he took some of the wine himself), "in the weakest sherry I ever drank in my life." As he set down his glass, Mr. Bishopriggs came in with the water. Arnold hailed him satirically. "Well? have you got the water? or have you used it all for the sherry?"

Mr. Bishopriggs stopped in the middle of the room, thunder-struck at the aspersion cast on the wine.

"Is that the way ye talk of the auldest bottle o' sherry wine in Scotland?" he asked, gravely. "What's the world coming to? The new generation's a foot beyond my fathoming. The maircies o' Providence, as shown to man in the choicest veentages o' Spain, are clean thrown away on 'em."

"Have you brought the water?"

"I ha' brought the water--and mair than the water. I ha' brought ye news from ootside. There's a company o' gentlemen on horseback, joost cantering by to what they call the shootin' cottage, a mile from this."

"Well--and what have we got to do with it?"

"Bide a wee! There's ane o' them has drawn bridle at the hottle, and he's speerin' after the leddy that cam' here alane. The leddy's your leddy, as sure as saxpence. I doot," said Mr. Bishopriggs, walking away to the window, "\_that's\_ what ye've got to do with it."

Arnold looked at Anne.

"Do you expect any body?"

"Is it Geoffrey?"

"Impossible. Geoffrey is on his way to London."

"There he is, any way," resumed Mr. Bishopriggs, at the window. "He's loupin' down from his horse. He's turning this way. Lord save us!" he exclaimed, with a start of

consternation, "what do I see? That incarnate deevil, Sir Paित्रick himself!"

Arnold sprang to his feet.

"Do you mean Sir Patrick Lundie?"

Anne ran to the window.

"It \_is\_ Sir Patrick!" she said. "Hide yourself before he comes in!"

"Hide myself?"

"What will he think if he sees you with \_me?\_"

He was Blanche's guardian, and he believed Arnold to be at that moment visiting his new property. What he would think was not difficult to foresee. Arnold turned for help to Mr. Bishopriggs.

"Where can I go?"

Mr. Bishopriggs pointed to the bedroom door.

"Whar' can ye go? There's the nuptial chamber!"

"Impossible!"

Mr. Bishopriggs expressed the utmost extremity of human amazement by a long whistle, on one note.

"Whew! Is that the way ye talk o' the nuptial chamber already?"

"Find me some other place--I'll make it worth your while."

"Eh! there's my paintry! I trow that's some other place; and the door's at the end o' the passage."

Arnold hurried out. Mr. Bishopriggs--evidently under the impression that the case before him was a case of elopement, with Sir Patrick mixed up in it in the capacity of guardian--addressed himself, in friendly confidence, to Anne.

"My certie, mistress! it's ill wark deceivin' Sir Paित्रick, if that's what ye've dune. Ye must know, I was ance a bit clerk body in his chambers at Embro--"

The voice of Mistress Inchbare, calling for the head-waiter, rose shrill and imperative from the regions of the bar. Mr. Bishopriggs disappeared. Anne remained, standing helpless by the window. It was plain by this time that the place of her retreat had been discovered at Windygates. The one doubt to decide, now, was whether it would be wise or not to receive Sir Patrick, for the purpose of discovering whether he came as friend or enemy to the inn.