

**THORNWELL  
ABBAS; IN TWO  
VOLUMES; VOL. I**

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Thornwell Abbas; In Two Volumes; Vol. I by Grant LLoyd

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**GRANT LLOYD**

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# THORNWELL ABBAS

BY  
GRANT LLOYD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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# THORNWELL ABBAS.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ Fish, fish, are you doing your duty ? ”

*Arabian Nights.*

THORNWELL ABBAS is one of the most delightful of English gentlemen's seats. It is not exactly a show place, though people often drive over from Blowcaster to see the grounds, and perhaps sketch some of the antiquities. The ruins of the abbey itself have almost disappeared, but a good many bits of gothic tracery and quaint corbel heads are to be found built up into the cot-

tages of the neighbouring village of Thornwell; and odd leaves of parchment, relics of the ancient conventual library, may now and then be found in the binding of old receipt books in the farm-houses. Thornwell Abbas is said to have been so called from a holy thorn (an offshoot, it is generally supposed, of the one at Glastonbury) and a wonder-working well, which were to be found within a couple of miles of the abbey ruins. The original cell had been on that very spot, but in later times the community had found it more convenient to settle close to where the present village stands, and in fact on the site of Sir John Pike's family residence.

Ever since the Reformation the Pikes have had Thornwell Abbas. Henry VIII. gave it to their ancestor in acknowledgement of a dish of the fish of that name which Sir John served up to the king on a meagre day. The Pikes have always had three fish proper in their coats of arms, and are, we

believe, a collateral branch of the Lucys of Stratford-on-Avon.

Sir John Pike, the head of the family, and cousin of the last owner of Thornwell, had all the characteristics of his race. Do not suppose that these were cunning selfishness or avarice. If any of the family had ever had these qualities, they had long ago died out. At the time we make their acquaintance the Pikes were known as a good-natured, heavy clan who had intermarried so often that their relationships had got quite past the comprehension of any but the oldest and most practised dowagers. These intermarriages had, besides, served to perpetuate two or three peculiarities which had risen to the dignity of heirlooms. The most singular was that of being taken ill whenever there was a rose in the room. This infirmity (of which there are other instances on record) was to them quite what the pea was to the fairy-tale princess.



For the rest, the Pikes had always done what was expected of them, been high sheriffs, justices of the peace, and chairmen of committees and charitable boards, stood for the county, kept up the old Blowcaster hounds, had had their portraits painted in yeomanry uniform for the Agricultural Hall and Assembly Rooms, taken their daughters to be presented at Court, subscribed to the restoration of the Cathedral cloisters, and generally acted up to the popular notion of the duties to be fulfilled by an English country gentleman.

There was one person, however, it must be confessed, who did not look on them with entire approbation, and that was the vicar of Thornwell, the Rev. George Hooker. If he could have re-christened himself, he would doubtless have adopted the name of Richard. He was poor—the living having been originally stripped of its great tithes by the monks—and was somewhat soured

by various disappointments. He had written a book which did not sell; had had a long series of pupils—"cubs," as they richly deserved to be called—who worried him at the time, and did him little credit afterwards.

He was shy, near-sighted, and sensitive, and did not get on with his farmers. He did not care for gardening, nor—in the depths of his heart—for fishing. When he was younger he used to think he would like a preachership—say at one of the Inns of Court, and sometimes imagined himself holding forth to an appreciative metropolitan audience on the refinements of theology; but now he had left off building castles, and had not even mud butts to supply their place. His sister, Miss Frances, kept house for him. Of her we may, we hope, know more as the story proceeds, and will now, therefore, only say that she was everybody's favourite.

At this moment we may see her making

breakfast for her brother, who is telling her of the christening dinner last night at the Hall, where a "son and heir" had lately made his appearance. Several children had been born to Sir John, but only one—a little girl, now about a year old, who was at present staying away with relations until her mother's recovery—had hitherto survived.

"Well, dear George, and how did you like your party?"

"About as much as usual."

"Whom did you sit next to?"

"Between Lady Grizel and Mrs. Sowerby. Lady Pike is not so well, and indeed has not been down-stairs at all, so Lady Grizel took her place. She looks very anxious about her daughter."

"I am very sorry to hear that. Did she tell you whether her appetite was any better?"

"I am afraid I never asked—at least

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