ZOE

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Zoe by Evelyn Whitaker

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CHAPTER I.

"HATH this child been already baptized, or no?"

"No, she aint; leastwise we don't know as how she've been or no, so we thought as we'd best have her done."

The clergyman who was taking Mr. Clifford's duty at Downside for that Sunday thought that this might be the usual undecided way of answering among the natives, and proceeded with the service. There were two

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other babies also brought that afternoon, one of which was crying lustily, so that it was not easy to hear
what the sponsors answered; and,
moreover, the officiating clergyman
was a young man, and the prospect
of holding that screaming, red-faced,
little object made him too nervous
and anxious to get done with it to
stop and make further inquiries.

The woman who returned this undecided answer was an elderly woman, with a kind, sunburnt, honest face, very much heated just now, and embarrassed too; for the baby in her arms prevented her getting at her pocket handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from her brow and pulling

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her bonnet on to its proper position on her head. The man beside her was also greatly embarrassed, and kept shuffling his large hob-nailed shoes together, and turning his hat round and round in his fingers. I think that really that hat was the chief cause of his discomfort, for he was so accustomed to have it on his head that he could not feel quite himself without it; and, indeed, his wife could hardly recognize him, as she had been accustomed to see him wearing it indoors and out during the twenty years of their married life, - pushed back for meals or smoking, but always on his head, except in bed; and even there, report says,