

**THE PENALTY PAID.  
A STORY, PP. 6-215**

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The Penalty Paid. A Story, pp. 6-215 by Alicia Mary Hance

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A STORY

BY  
ALICIA MARY HANCE

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London:  
REMINGTON & CO.,  
HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN  
1884

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the other nestled the moss-grown Vicarage by the side of the ancient Gothic church. Life moved so quietly on, that what in busier places would have been merely ordinary occurrences, in Odstone were extraordinary events.

The death of the old vicar and the appointment of his successor was one of these. But the Reverend Paul Stafford soon became very popular, in spite of the great alterations he made both in the parish and the old fashioned services. His genuine piety, his self-denial, and his unwearied labours in behalf of his flock, justified their regard, even if the improved choir, beautiful flowers, and decorations accounted for the fuller attendance at church, and novelty added enthusiasm for parish work. Some of the older folk may

have shaken their heads at the changed aspect of affairs,—the low open pews, the reredos with its crucifix, the processions, and other innovations,—but they could not close their eyes to the increased care of the sorrowful and poor, the earnest seeking of the sinful, and the general improvement of the parish. And so Paul Stafford was allowed to work in peace after his own lights.

Soon after the vicar had settled to his new duties the Squire of Odstone, who had been travelling abroad with his family for some years, returned to the old Hall, and it became a topic of much interest to the female portion of the community, who Renault Tremleston, the heir, would marry. It was generally supposed, and not altogether without reason, that pretty



fair-haired Amy Spenlow, niece to the Squire, was the destined bride. The Squire did all he could to encourage the idea. It had been necessity and not choice that had made him desert the home of his forefathers so long, (for he hated living anywhere but at Odstone) and there were heavy claims against the old estate which Amy's share in old Sir John Spenlow's fortune could satisfy. Lady Spenlow, who had gone an almost penniless bride from the Hall to the wealthy city knight, was anxious to keep the family acres together by such means. Amy wished it, for she loved her tall, dark, handsome cousin with all the force of her gentle nature. But did Renault, named after the French grandmother whose extravagance first began the Tremleston

embarrassments, wish it? All had thought and hoped so. Arrangements for the marriage were actually being mooted, when Renault seemed suddenly to take a dislike to the whole affair. He had never formally proposed to his cousin, and now without word or warning he announced one day that he had no present intention of getting married.

The Squire and his wife were thunder-struck at this unexpected blow, but by the advice of the vicar they resolved to let him alone for awhile.

Renault's was a peculiar and melancholy disposition, which displayed itself in a gloomy reserve that all the affection his parents and sisters felt for him, and the deference they paid to his wishes could not dispel. So both his father

and mother were pleased when he formed a sudden but warm friendship with the vicar, who gratefully responded to the advances of a young and well-educated man—a rare being in Odstone.

Renault entered with considerable zest into the church services. His well trained baritone voice was of the utmost use in a choir composed chiefly of men and boys imperfectly acquainted with music, and liable to the not uncommon trick of unexpectedly breaking down unless supported by some thorough vocalist. One Sunday morning this actually happened. Renault frowned in annoyance when the tune was taken up by a clear soprano voice rallying the weak and faltering boys. Glancing round the church he saw standing near the