England's Peasantry

and other Essays

DR. JESSOPP'S ESSAYS.

"England's Peasantry, and Other Essays." By Augustus Jessopp, D.D. (Fisher Unwin.) 7s. 6d. net.

Dr. Jessopp's way with the peasant was not that of, say, Mr. George Bourne. We see the difference more clearly in these comparatively recent, more colloquial essays, than in the longer, more scholarly historical works. In the latter the separation of time and place necessitated a greater detachment of mind, and yet the note of sympathy with the sorrows of the labourer was more intimate. Here we realise in the writer a faint touch of condescension; we see the pastor of the parish viewing the life of his own time with weaker intuitions than the scholar could bring to his sight of the Elizabethan peasant. It must not be inferred, however, that Dr. Jessopp did not attempt to enter fully into the life of his parish, nor that he was less successful in that effort than the majority of ministers. But while he disclaims the description of laudator temporis acti, it is probably true that he understood the sixteenth more clearly than the nineteenth century. "This is the strong impression that has forced itself upon me during more than thirty years' study of the social history of England in the nineteenth century," he wrote in one of these papers, "this, that the life of our country folk at the beginning of last century was not a much happier life than any superficial retrospect would tend to represent it, but that the actual material condition of the agricultural labourers in the first forty years of that century was by no means so low and squalid and hopeless as some writers have pretended it was." The latter statement is comparatively academic, but the former and more disputable seems to reveal a failure to comprehend the real problem. We would not deny that in many respects the condition of the labourer in 1914 is less happy than that of his forefathers. But the man, himself, is different, and it is not possible to keep back a single class of worker, nor would the simple ignorance of a hundred years ago find happiness in the conditions of the present day. Dr. Jessopp was inclined to lose sight of the individual in his study of the class, an almost inevitable failing in one whose methods were instinctively those of the historian; and it was for this reason that we suggested a comparison between his treatment of the labourer and that of Mr. Bourne. Dr. Jessopp was essentially a broad-minded man and a humanitarian, but the signs of the change came into his life too late for him to appreciate their true significance. The fact need not spoil our enjoyment of this collection of essays, the nine items of which will be familiar to readers of the *Nineteenth Century and After.* Two of the papers are purely historical, the others exhibit some aspect of the revolution in local conditions, seen through the eyes of one who did, at least, endeavour to maintain all his relations with contemporary life. The style of the essays is, as we have suggested, neither so dignified nor so polished as that of his longer works, but we find in them the same expression of kindly, generous personality.

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HENRY WALPOLE, S.J.

Executed at York, 17 April, 1595.

Frontispiece.

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AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.

T. FISHER UNWIN

LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

First published in 1914

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ENGLAND'S PEASANTRY—THEN AND NOW

I

ENGLAND'S PEASANTRY—THEN AND NOW

WHEN the fifteenth century opened—though great social and economic changes had been at work up and down the land during two or three generations—our England was divided into some thousands of geographical areas, which were called *vills* or *townships* (we call them now parishes), varying very greatly in extent; but each of these townships was not only a geographical, but a *civil,* an *ecclesiastical,* a *social,* and we may add a *political,* unit, enjoying a very large measure of self-government, and in many instances enjoying a kind of *constitution* of its own.

The inhabitants of these areas were *human,* and so they had their rivalries, their feuds, their quarrels, their fights, just as, I suppose, ants and beavers have among themselves;

but nevertheless these people in the old townships managed their own affairs with surprisingly little friction, and, above all, they were unanimous in regarding the land comprehended in their several townships as, in some sense, the property not of one or two landlords, but as the property of all the members of the village community. The land comprised within the separate areas of the townships was divided into a countless number of tiny little strips and plots, tumbled about in the most confused manner. The tillage of the land was barbaric in the extreme, and though everybody had some little bit of arable or, it might be, pasture which he called his own, yet he could not even cultivate it as he pleased, so closely were the rights of his neighbour entangled with those of himself and everybody else. Moreover, the actual rights of *ownership* could only be made out with the greatest difficulty by the cunningest of the lawyers. And if it had been possible in those days for every rood of ground to maintain its man —as it certainly was not—it was still less

possible for every man to maintain his rood when it became a question as to the tenure on which he held it.

For ages Littleton's terrible little book on tenures was the great authority for the lawyers to refer to, and a very, very, very stiff book it was. Think of a manual of theology, say only thirty times as long as the Thirty-nine Articles, and dealing with all the possible heresies that a man might fall into who aspired to be an orthodox divine! Think of the hopeless confusion we should most of us be in before we could be quite sure that we were not *Monothelites, Monophysites,* or *Supralapsarians!*

The first impression of a layman on reading Littleton and his commentators is that no man in England in the good old times —oh! those delightful "good old times"! —could have felt any certainty that there was a single acre, from the Land's End to John o' Groat's house, which he could safely call his own! But that was not all. The dwellers in the various vills, or townships, or parishes, could hardly be sure of *themselves.* In

respect of one plot of land such an one might call himself a free man ; but even so he was only a free *tenant,* having some annual money rent to pay to the lord of the manor. In respect of another strip, which he may have inherited from his mother's side of the house, he was bound to render certain *services* to the lord, such as helping to cart the said lord's hay for half a day in July, or provide a dozen of eggs at Lady Day, or a hen—it would often enough be a tough one that was past laying—at Christmas.

On many large estates there are still survivals of these services and dues to be met with, though during the last thirty years they have largely disappeared, owing to what has been called the agricultural distress, which has prevailed so widely. The annual "homage-turkeys" which the tenants on Lord Leicester's estates in Norfolk contributed some few years ago, and which I am inclined to think they still bring at the Christmas audit, constituted in the aggregate a money value by no means contemptible ; and the obligation to convey so many tons

of coal to the capital mansion of many another estate, or to provide the carting of gravel or timber when required by the landlord, is still a custom on many a large property, and such services are, or were till very recently, imposed upon the tenants by clauses actually inserted in the leases. One of my earliest reminiscences goes back to more than seventy years ago, when as a child I went with my father to pay a visit to a tenant of his in Essex. For some reason or other the old farmer protested to his landlord, saying: "Your honour needn't be afraid of me, sir. Me and my father has always kept the *best goose* for your honour and your father, and we aint a-going to do other than fair now!" I remember the scene, and I remember the words, because my father often repeated them to me afterwards. The *best goose* was a customary service beyond the money rent paid for the farm.

On the other hand, as being supposed to bear their share in the common tillage of the open fields, and as a kind of equivalent

for the services rendered to the lord of the manor, the tenants, whether their holdings were great or small, had certain rights of participation in the pasturage of the "common fields," and a limited usage of the "waste lands," which were supposed (though in many instances erroneously supposed) to belong to all the inhabitants of the township. In many cases *customs* had grown up which strict law could not be found to sanction, but for disturbing which, before the parishes were inclosed, strict law was too costly to allow of its being often set in motion. A poor man's cow had the use of the common; sometimes, as now very frequently, he managed to keep a pony or a donkey, earning an honest penny by hawking or doing a little carrier's business where the roads admitted, and sometimes earning a rather less honest penny by cutting the turf or underwood, and selling it for kindling to the townsfolk five or six miles off, where faggots were scarce.

Sometimes another kept a small flock of geese, or managed to keep some cocks and

hens, which had hard work to pick up a livelihood, and their owner had to look very sharp to defend them against the foxes and the weasels, and other "warmint." As for fuel, it may be taken almost as certain that in nothing were the old townships or parishes so entirely self-sufficing as in the one article of fuel. The English peasant, as a rule, literally had his fuel at his door, and paid nothing for it. In such districts as the Fen Country the peat bogs were practically inexhaustible, just as they appear to be in Galway and other parts of Ireland to-day. But everywhere the turf on the common was cut and stored as the people wanted it; the gorse and the heather were stacked for the oven or the hearth, and in some localities the cowdung was gathered by the children in the dry weather, and covered over with bracken or such shelter as they could get, for there was thrift everywhere.

Moreover, there were always a certain number, and, indeed, in many cases a very large number, of trees which grew on the balks or in the wastes, and which that

aforesaid embryonic condition of the law which I have alluded to—to wit *custom*, local *custom*—declared might be lopped and topped, as the phrase was, by all the members of the community. These trees were seldom actually cut down—that was an offence which brought a man before the manor court ; but as time went on they were hacked into all sorts of odd shapes by the favoured many, who began by cutting off the main leader of the tree, and then proceeded year by year to hack off the young branches as they became worth chopping at. These old pollards (or *doddles*, as we used to call them in Cambridgeshire) still survive in considerable numbers in some of our country parishes ; they are the gnarled veterans who as they stand afford their silent testimony to the fact that in the ages before pit coal came into use for domestic purposes they were themselves the reserves from which the poor labourers drew when the scanty fire upon the hearth was low and the pot had to be kept boiling.

High farming and the inclosure of parishes

have swept these curious and picturesque vegetable deformities from the face of the earth by tens of thousands. But they are not all gone, and I should like to see an Act of Parliament passed to protect many of these *ancient monuments* from further destruction, in the same way as other and less beautiful monuments are protected by the Legislature.

Less than five miles from the town of East Dereham, in Norfolk, you may see a very remarkable collection of these pollards growing in an area of not more than two or three acres. The trees must certainly be from six to eight centuries old, and at a guess I should say there must be at least fifty of them.

For centuries the poor people of Elsing went on steadily hacking, *i.e.*, "lopping and topping," these trees until the parish was inclosed ; since then the old veterans have been left to grow their own way, and the grand vigour of these monarchs of the glen has asserted itself in making them as impressive a sight in their splendid old age as a man can well fix his eyes on. They

are worth a trip to go and see—worth a long day's journey for those adventurous and indefatigable people who, when once they are mounted on their bicycles, are prepared at five minutes' notice to go everywhere or anywhere for a sight of the picturesque.

A rage for inclosing the old townships set in first in the latter half of the fifteenth century, and continued almost down to the seventeenth century. I have myself never found time to give much attention to that subject, but I have a suspicion—an ignorant suspicion it may be—that the first inclosures were carried out with a great deal of injustice, not to say cruelty, towards the peasantry, and that the experiment of working the newly inclosed land by associations was done very clumsily. Professor Ashley, in his extremely valuable chapter on the Agrarian Revolution, has thrown out some interesting suggestions, but has not gone so much into detail on the *modus operandi* as might be wished. However, the valuable map which he has constructed—assuming that it is based upon sufficient evidence, and

Professor Ashley is a very learned and very painstaking historian—shows that the extent to which the inclosures were carried during this earlier period was very much greater than has usually been believed till quite recently.[1]

Be that as it may, it is pretty certain that the inclosure of open parishes came to a stop about the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and did not begin again till quite late in the eighteenth century, but then it did begin in earnest.

The man who more than any one else deserves the credit of having brought about the new agrarian revolution, and really almost deserves to be called the pioneer of the new agriculture in England, was Arthur Young. I do not of course mean that there were not intelligent and far-seeing farmers on a large scale who were before him in working intelligently at problems till then untried, making costly experiments on the

[1] "An Introduction to English Economic History and Theory," by W. J. Ashley, Professor of Economic History in Harvard University (Longmans), 1893, part ii, book ii, chap. iv.

improving of stock and the quality of soils, and in many ways giving a stimulus to the taste for high farming, which became through them a fashionable occupation for men of capital at the end of the eighteenth century.[1] But it was through Arthur Young's indefatigable, persistent *agitation,* and his vehement invectives against the wastefulness of the old system, and his continual attacks upon the folly of letting things go on as they were, and against the sentimental advocates who were opposed to the inclosures, that he won the victories he did, and succeeded so well in exposing the ignorance of the majority. The Board of Agriculture was established in 1793 in great measure by his influence, and the General Inclosure Act, which was at last passed in 1801, may be said to have been his work.

Arthur Young was born in 1741. His father was a canon of Canterbury. He lost more than one fortune by his efforts to improve the farming of his time, and his

[1] See "The Pioneers and Progress of English Farming," by Rowland E. Prothero (Longmans), 1888.

works do not deserve the neglect into which they have fallen in our own day.

Arthur Young gave the best years of his life to preaching a crusade against the ruinously wasteful system of the open-field husbandry in the uninclosed parishes. In the country generally a feeling had been steadily growing, even from the beginning of the reign of George III, in favour of inclosures ; but the main difficulty which had to be faced was the immense expense of getting a private Bill through Parliament, and the terrible fees which had to be paid to the army of pettifoggers interested in letting things go on undisturbed. At last the General Inclosure Act was passed, and in the next twenty years at least 3,000,000 acres of land were set free from the trammels which had tied the hands of agricultural reformers, and a vast proportion of these acres were in one way or another thrown upon the market.

The inevitable result followed. Wherever great reforms are brought about, and especially so when these reforms are carried out

rapidly and on a large scale, much suffering is entailed upon those who lived by the abuses of the past ; and not only by the abuses, but by the happy-go-lucky system which reform perforce abolishes.

In the case in point the sufferers were the old men, who could not adapt themselves to the new conditions ; the small proprietors, who had little or no capital, and whose estates were for the most part heavily mortgaged ; and, above all, the adventurous and sanguine ones, who threw themselves into the new farming without sufficient knowledge or intelligence, and recklessly borrowed capital to engage in a business that they were ignorant of and had never learnt.

The result in the shape of the enormously increased productivity of the country was undeniable ; but there were not wanting sagacious men who foresaw that this could not last. The close of the war in 1815 brought with it a severe depression in our trade and manufactures. The almost unparalleled visitation of floods and ruinously bad weather occasioned such a sudden and

almost overwhelming collapse of English agriculture, and, indeed, such distress in all classes, as far surpassed anything that we can now have any conception of. A very fair sketch of the dreadful condition of the country in that year (1816) may be read in Mr. Spencer Walpole's first volume. There were very serious riots, but, with the exception of those in the Isle of Ely and the Eastern Counties (where it is to be remarked that the earliest inclosures on a large scale had been carried out at least two centuries before), the most serious and alarming disturbances were *not* agrarian. They were organized outbreaks among the colliers and ironworkers in Staffordshire and South Wales, the weavers in Notts, and the great centres of manufacturing industries in Lancashire and the Midlands. How the agricultural labourers in the villages fared, and whether they suffered to anything like the extent that the labouring classes in the towns did, during this time of grievous misery and famine, there is much more evidence to produce than has yet been made

public. Probably, too, a very different impression would be conveyed than that which has been arrived at by the study of the mountains of figures and by the miles of statistics in the official returns of a thousand Blue books.

Certainly the *traditions* of our country parishes (and such traditions deserve to be attended to with much more care than they have received)—the traditions, I say, point to the fact that during that terrible year, 1816, and in the years that followed, when among the townsmen and the colliers and the miners, and the manufacturing classes everywhere, there was something very like famine and starvation, there was nothing of the sort among the agricultural labourers. For twenty years I have been on the watch for any stories that could contradict this view. I am bound to say I have never heard *one*. I must have talked to scores and scores of men and women who were grown boys and girls, even men and women, before the Battle of Waterloo. My own father was a somewhat active magistrate

during those times and long before I was born; and I am convinced that there was among the labourers poverty and squalor and distress. But I am equally convinced that there was among the small farmers, hanging on to their lands by their eyelids, scarcely less poverty, anxiety, and difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door than among the labourers themselves. And when I have set myself to ask the question, How, in the face of such a crisis as that of 1816, were the peasantry kept alive at all? I can find only one answer.

You may denounce Gilbert's Act of 1782 as much as you will. It was a monstrous fraud, if you like, whereby the immense majority of the peasantry of this country were reduced to the level of paupers; it was a gross injustice, whereby the wages paid by the farmer were supplemented by iniquitous levies made upon the tradesmen and the professional classes; it raised the aggregate of the poor rate from 2½ millions in 1795 to the enormous sum of 8 millions in 1832, insomuch that with the population

of 14,000,000 every man, woman, and child in the country was paying sixpence a week to meet this single charge alone; and all this exclusive of the direct taxation, which in 1810 amounted to the portentous sum of over £60,000,000. It was bad in principle, it was suicidal in its operation; *but it did keep the agricultural labourers alive; and, what is more, they increased and multiplied, and while the townsmen deteriorated in physique the countrymen did not; amongst them there was no repression of their exuberant vitality.*

But were not their *wages* utterly inadequate to the support of their families? If you mean the wages paid in coin of the realm —yes! But remember that in the first forty years of this century, and before a reaping-machine had been seen in our fields or a mowing-machine had been used in our meadows, every woman that could stub up a thistle or tie up a sheaf, every child that could watch a cow, or scare the birds, or help in the gleaning, was a wage-earner. Nowadays you may calculate to a nicety the

money payment which the father of a family receives in the course of the year, and if you want to know it *really accurately* you may find it, *not* from the very reticent report of the labourer, who will give you the minimum, and less than the minimum, if you ask him, but from the farmer's books, which are far better and more closely kept than the average townsman can bring himself to believe. In the old days the whole population of a country parish turned out into the fields at harvest-time, even to the very sucking child whose mother was hard at work reaping with the sickle ; and, indeed, only so could the harvest have been gathered in at all. In hay-time the baby was laid upon the haycock while the mother plied her rake. In the autumn mother and daughter of ten would follow the husband's steps and drop the seed into the holes which he " dibbled " with the turn of the wrist and that primitive tool of his that only the old men know the use of now.

The gleaning-time was a time when even a small family could pick up corn enough

to last them well over Christmas. The church bell used to be rung morning and night, and none might dare to begin before others, nor stay at the gleaning work after the evening bell was sounded. All through the winter days the flails were going in the barns—there were no half-days then. The thresher did his *task work by the piece,* and was a great deal too good a judge of a good or a bad crop to engage in a threshing job that would not pay for hard work. It was always a matter of bargain between the employers and the employed. Regular contracts were made for carrying out draining work. Bands of six or eight men, who were under the direction of a foreman, undertook to lay down the drains at a certain depth for a certain price the acre, and the labourer tried to scamp the work, while the farmer did his best to take advantage of the toilers. It was all human nature! The perquisites of the peasantry were endless: milk for the herdsman; the horsehair plucked from the manes and tails of the horses for the team-man, a practice which,

by the by, was apt to run into a good deal of rascality now and then ; small beer without stint when overtime had to be made ; straw given gratis in cases where a pig was kept ; allowances for food and drink when a wagon of corn had to be delivered at some town twelve or fifteen miles off, and an extra threepence if the carter got through the turnpike gate on his return journey before a second fee was chargeable to the gatekeeper. As to the shepherd, if he were a really good one, he might in a few years save a fair provision for old age, for it made a vast difference whether the flocks were managed well or ill in the lambing season. At sheep-washing time, too, and still more at the shearing time, there was always extra pay to the really clever hand, for while it lasts there is no labour harder than sheep-washing, and an indifferent clipper may waste pounds of wool in a season.

These are all facts. You may question them if you like, or do the other thing, which is the easier method—say boldly you don't believe them ; but there they are, and

depend upon it no facts are so fallacious as mere figures.

On the other hand, it may be asked, How did the agricultural labourer live in respect to food and clothing in the first thirty years of last century? Well, undoubtedly his garments were of the scantiest, but they were much stouter and more lasting than now. I remember the late Professor Sedgwick telling us once, with his usual drollery and inimitable vivacity, how fierce an opposition there was on the part of the *dons* in Cambridge against undergraduates taking to wear *trousers*—I think it was about the year 1820 or a little later—and having the audacity to present themselves in hall clad in the new and unseemly costume. It was actually proposed that the markers should not mark any man as present who presumed to sit down to dinner in trousers. Alas! the insubordinate young gentlemen with their new fashions could not be repressed. Mrs. Partington's broom and slop-pail never can keep out the Atlantic! Of course, what the gentlefolks introduced, that the lower orders

imitated ; but trousers came in but slowly. The old breeches were, and are, a more convenient garment than the trouser, and to this day the *navvy* on the railroad ties his trousers tightly round his legs below the knee, leaving a wasteful and lolloping fold of unnecessary corduroy to accumulate wet and dirt when he is digging in the slush over his ankles. The farm labourer in the old days had his stout breeches fastened round his waist with a strap. On his shoulders he wore a woollen shirt, which was made of homespun by his thrifty wife, who got the inferior wool at a very reduced price from the farmer. The women spun the yarn, and travelling weavers came and collected this yarn, sometimes giving an equivalent in the shape of coarse woven material, sometimes undertaking to bring back the yarn duly woven. The women made this up into the husband's and the children's clothing ; rarely did any money pass between the parties concerned in these bargainings.

The skins of the dead lambs were the

shepherd's perquisite, and the tails that were lopped at docking time. I gather that long stockings were worn by very few labourers, except such as were rather of an ambitious turn of mind. Why should they be? Does the Highlander think it a disgrace to show his bare legs?

Over all was the grand old smock, reaching to the ankles, and a very picturesque and convenient and comfortable wrap it was. Of course it was laid upon the bed as a coverlet at night-time, and it lent itself to a considerable amount of competitive dandyism on Sundays at church. To provide shoes was the great difficulty, as it still is, among the peasantry. But in the case of the children it was hardly felt to be a difficulty at all, for the children went about without shoes and stockings as a rule; and as for ribbons and artificial flowers, which, of course, are a necessary of life among our rustic mothers and daughters nowadays, they were not so much as heard of sixty or seventy years ago.

As to the food, it consisted mainly of rye bread. A few months ago I tried to get

some of the rye bread which one used to see frequently enough in Switzerland not so long ago, and which the peasantry in some parts of France still eat. I found it impossible to procure it from any chandler in London. Of course it is the fashion to lift up the hands and eyes in horror at the thought of men and women living upon rye bread and barley bread ; but I have heard a prosperous farmer, some seventy years ago, stoutly maintaining that the old rye bread had "a deal more heart in it than that there Frenchified white bread as a man has to swallow without chewing." His notion was that wheat bread stood to rye bread in the same relation that claret stands to port : "You don't get no forrarder with it ! " Here again one cannot but remember that the bony Highlander is not supposed to be a weakling, and yet his oat porridge is his main support. In both cases, to the old English labourer as to the Scotchman, potatoes came in as a useful adjunct wherewith to fill up the cavities ; and if butcher's meat was to the labourer only an occasional treat, yet the

common domestic pig was a very frequent friend in need, and the killing of a sheep at the farm, or the slaughter of a bullock, or the death of a cow or calf by accident, always meant that the labourers on the farm had some odds and ends of fleshy dainties. It might be tripe, or heart, or liver, or trotters, and now and then a shin of beef or the less luscious dainty of sheep's head! Buttermilk in the old days might be had by the children almost for the asking. In twenty years' time people will not know what butter-milk means—do they now? have any of my readers been present at a butter-making class? The new churns and the modern separators are rapidly improving that off the face of the earth, and the people have got to think scorn of it.

Now, do not do me the injustice of thinking that I am by nature or inclination a *laudator temporis acti*. I am not the man to be looking for the golden age in the days gone by. God forbid! But I count it the worst form of scornful ingratitude to indulge in boastings over our advance by making

the worst of the past, and speaking of the generations behind us as if they were conspicuous only for their ignorance, their grossness, their vices, and their brutality.

> "For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
> With—at every mile run faster—'Oh, the wondrous, wondrous age!'
> Little heeding if we work our *souls* as nobly as our iron,
> Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage!"

No! no! There is no need to make out the old days to be worse than they were because our own are the days of advance. But this is the strong impression that has forced itself upon me during more than thirty years' study of the social history of England in the nineteenth century—this, that the life of our country folk at the beginning of last century was not only a much happier life than any superficial retrospect would tend to represent it, but that the actual material condition of the agricultural labourers in the first forty years of that century was by no means so low and squalid and hopeless as some writers have pretended that it was. Further, I

venture to affirm emphatically that the condition of the town population in England, morally, physically, religiously, and intellectually, during the first thirty years of last century appears to have been very, very much worse than that of the rural districts. It could not have been otherwise. The population of London from 1811 to 1821 increased by leaps and bounds beyond all precedent. Liverpool during the same period grew from 100,000 to 131,000 inhabitants. The increase of Manchester was even more rapid. Leeds, Newcastle, Macclesfield, Nottingham, and a host of other towns, gave employment to armies of labourers, for whom *no sort of provision was made, body or soul.* Birmingham as late as 1815 had no town hall, no corporation, and sent no Member to Parliament. According to Telford, the great engineer, who knew the place well, Birmingham was notorious for its ignorance and its barbarism. At Sunderland, at Blackburn, at Norwich, everywhere, in fact, where the increase of the population had quite outgrown the control of the magistrature, there

were continued riots going on. At Nottingham the mob burnt the Castle and all its contents. At Derby they besieged the jail and released the prisoners. At Bristol the rioters had it all their own way, and deliberately burnt down every house in Queen Square, the Custom-house, and the Bishop's palace. So it was elsewhere. Remember that in all these large towns *the clergy were nowhere*. The parochial system, in so far as it was a religious organization, had utterly broken down ; two or three generations of poor creatures, at least, grew up in absolute heathenism. People may tell all sorts of queer stories about sporting parsons and pluralities and absenteeism. But it is no more than the truth that, if it had not been for the country clergy and their families in the villages, and the small band of earnest and devoted men, who were the salt of the earth, labouring in isolation here and there, the very existence of the Christian religion in this country would have been in danger. As to anything deserving the name of national education, it did not exist. The

townsmen were absolutely without it for *at least* the first thirty years of the last century.

The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England was founded in 1809. It was a beginning; but what could it effect, even with the co-operation of the British and Foreign School Society—or, if you will, its honourable rivalry—to deal with the awful and tremendous mass of appalling ignorance which lay as a dense cloud over the ever-increasing masses of the wage-earners in the large towns? Up to this moment no really earnest and laborious study of the great Blue book on the condition of education issued in 1819 has been made. I have always hoped to undertake this, but have never done more than turn over the pages. The impression left upon me has been that in the villages there was incomparably more provision for the education of the working classes than in the towns. In the town of Preston, with its 18,000 inhabitants, there were four schools, including two kept by women. In the county of Bedford—observe,

a purely agricultural county—on the other hand, with a population of little more than 137,000, there were 134 schools all told—*i.e.*, a school for almost every 1,000 of the population. Of these 46 were dames' schools in country villages. Look to it, you younger men and women; act upon my hint, and attack that big Blue book vigorously with your eyes open, and keep yourselves from foregone conclusions and views and theories, which should be only adopted when you have earned the right to take up with such views and theories by diligently and elaborately examining the evidence which may present itself to your hands. In the villages the dames' schools, as they were called, were able to a very great extent to give something like an elementary, or, if you prefer it, a rudimentary education to the children of the labourer.[1] They would be, and they were, utterly unable to afford even rudimentary education to the *masses*.

There is only one more question which I

[1] See note, p. 43.

have to ask, and to which I have only a guess or two to offer as a substitute for the answer ; for my weakness is to leave many questions unsolved in theology, in ethics, in economic and social history, in the belief that when a question is allowed to be an open question in these matters there is some hope of fruitful discussion and stimulating inquiry. When any science approaches the stage of dogma—dogma which is to be received as settled once for all—it has got to the stage where it is ceasing to be a living science at all.

Were the country folk in our English villages at the beginning of last century more, or less, content with their lot than they are to-day? Were they happier, or the reverse? To begin with, this is pretty certain, that they had very little thought of a higher life than that which they were living, but, such as it was, they made the most out of it—the most and the best of it. The agricultural labourers of to-day are certainly better clad, more luxuriously fed, have far more leisure, are better educated,

and are rapidly becoming better housed than their forefathers a century ago. And if these are the main constituents of happiness, then they are happier.

On the other hand, their grandfathers and great-grandfathers were much more gay and light-hearted than the moderns ; they *enjoyed* their lives much more than their descendants do ; they had incomparably more laughter, more amusement, more real delight in the labour of their hands ; there was more love among them and less hate. The agricultural labourer had a bad drunken time between forty and fifty years ago, and he has been growing out of that. A village sot is now a very rare bird, as rare as he was a hundred years ago. Then the *labourer* could not afford a drunken debauch—he had not the wherewithal. His master, the farmer, *did* drink, and sometimes deeply, in the days when he was prospering. And for a few years after the rise of the labourer's wages, some forty-five years ago, the labourer was the publican's friend. But hard drinking has been steadily declining, and the habitual

drunkard is looked upon as a coarse brute to be avoided. As to other vices, things are pretty much as they were—I am afraid rather worse than better.

Perhaps the saddest characteristic of the men of the present, as compared with the men of the past, is that the men of the past were certainly more self-dependent—I do not mean *independent,* in the sense in which that word is used now—more resourceful, more kindly, courteous, and contented with their lot than their descendants are.

As for the outlook, that is not for me to deal with ; a man should never prophesy unless he is sure—that is, unless he knows.

Each age has something to learn from the past. And most of us have something to unlearn before we are qualified to teach.

As to forecasting the future, that is becoming more and more difficult, living at the ever-accelerating pace which we are compelled to keep up in our time.

I think I know something about the

English peasantry of a century or two gone by.

I think I know just a little about the agricultural labourer nowadays. I bear him a genuine love, and feel with him a cordial sympathy; and there is no knowing any men or any class of men whom we do not love and sympathize with.

But as to the agricultural labourer of the future, I am sometimes inclined to doubt seriously whether before another century has ended there will be any such thing as an agricultural labourer to know.

NOTE.

Some years ago a volume of "Notes on the History of the Church and Parish of Rattlesden in the County of Suffolk," by the Rev. J. R. Olorenshaw, assistant curate of the parish, came into my hands. The following notes on the schools in this village of about one thousand inhabitants during the first forty years of the nineteenth century are very suggestive. They illustrate the remarks in the text. It would be well if others would collect similar traditions of the way in which elementary education was carried on in our rural parishes long before any one had begun to dream of "national education."

"Private Schools were carried on in the parish in the earlier part of this [*i.e.*, the nineteenth] century by different persons.

"A lame man, named Martin Wells, had a school in the Rectory, then otherwise unoccupied, about 1816–20, or later, and was succeeded by John Sadler.

"*The art of writing was taught in those days by means of a sand table.*

"John Ready also had a school about the same time, or a little later, in one of the old cottages adjoining the Rectory paddock.

"Two brothers, named Cooper, kept a school somewhere about 1820.

"Mrs. Dickerson, wife of the Baptist minister, had a private school about 1821.

"A public school was held about 1837, or earlier, in a cottage on the Butts. . . . The boys attended school three days in the week and the girls three days.

"The Rev. S. F. Page was curate-in-charge of the parish, and was instrumental in getting the school removed from the Butts to the old workhouse buildings."

[The Return made in 1839 by Mr. Page gave a total of 132 children, with 160 at the Sunday School.]

A COUNTRY PARSON
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

II

A COUNTRY PARSON OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY[1]

It is over twenty years since I contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* an article which attracted some little attention at the time, and was an attempt to draw a faithful picture of the manner of life of a Norfolk country parson in the fourteenth century—of the sort of man he was, of his household and his influence, of the example he showed to others, of the good he did and the solid benefits bestowed by him upon his parish and his people, from the beautiful church which still remains as his noble monument to the *Fair* which he established within his borders, and which for centuries proved a

[1] "*Memorials of a Royal Chaplain*, 1729-1763: The Correspondence of Edmund Pyle, D.D., Chaplain in Ordinary to George II, with Samuel Kerrich, D.D., Vicar of Dersingham, &c. . . . Annotated and edited by Albert Hartshorne. (John Lane, the Bodley Head, London, and New York.) 8vo. MCMV."

real and most valuable boon to that part of the county of Norfolk in which he lived and died.

The unique document on which this account of the Rev. John Gurnay, Rector of Harpley during the first half of the fourteenth century, was based furnishes us with a complete and minute balance-sheet of the good man's expenditure, and some account, too, of his income, during the year 1306, affords us at the same time a curious insight into certain events of local importance, and throws a curious light upon the habits and sentiments of the country folk of Norfolk six centuries ago.

"What a lucky man you are in your finds!" said that illustrious historian, Bishop Stubbs, writing to me shortly after the appearance of this essay; and how proud I was as I read his letter and whispered to myself, "Praise from Sir Hubert!"

It is almost exactly six hundred years since that bailiff's account of the Rev. John Gurnay was drawn up, and times have changed since those days.

They are always changing, and it is well they should. As the great poet of our time puts it—

> Meet is it changes should control our being
> Lest we rust at ease.

The question is, Have we grown upwards as the centuries have moved on, grown up to a higher level of thought and sentiment and manners and ideals?

Does man grow slowly up to Nature? or were the former days better than these?

. . . . .

The picture which Macaulay drew of the manners and life of the country parsons during that dark time when the people of England were painfully and slowly recovering from the effects of the Great Rebellion and the social disorganization that followed, is now generally acknowledged to be full of exaggeration, not to say of caricature; but the mischievous effect which that brilliant piece of writing has had upon the half-informed public is chiefly to be deplored in that whatever measure of truth there may

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be in Macaulay's account of the country clergy in the days of the later Stuarts is commonly believed to be as true of the country parsons in the days of the first Georges, and that among the latter there was little change and no improvement. The assumption has been tacitly taken for granted that during at least the first half of the eighteenth century the incumbents of the country parishes were an ignorant, plebeian, down-trodden class, careless in their ministrations, lacking in any high sense of duty, and exercising little or no moral or spiritual influence upon their parishioners.

I have long had a strong suspicion that this view is unsupported by facts, and could be shown to be altogether erroneous, if only the evidence which is needed could be collected from the holes and corners which are not easily accessible. I was therefore extremely glad to learn that there existed just such a body of evidence as would throw quite a new light upon this subject—evidence which had been carefully preserved, and a portion of which was being prepared for the

press by a diligent and competent editor—exactly the sort of evidence which would show us how the country parsons lived in Norfolk during the reigns of the first two Georges in an area of, say, fifty or sixty square miles, and where people high and low were presumably neither better nor worse than in other equal areas elsewhere.

Obviously it did not tend to lessen the interest of this body of evidence with which we are invited to deal when it turned out that it was in large part and specially concerned with the district in which his late gracious Majesty became the largest landowner, and with the interests of which he has so intimately identified himself that we in the East have presumed to designate that district as "the King's country," without leave asked or granted.

. . . . .

Mr. Hartshorne has been for many years a distinguished Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and has long been known as a diligent "collector," and the fortunate

possessor, among other things, of a huge mass of family letters, numbering several thousands, which have been arranged by their owner in twenty-eight folio volumes—the earliest of these dating as far back as 1633, the latest being comprised in two volumes of correspondence from Francis Douce, the accomplished keeper of the MSS. in the British Museum, and dating from 1804 to 1827.

Personally I cannot help regretting that we have here only the letters of a single correspondent writing to his friend Dr. Kerrich. For we are assured by Mr. Hartshorne that there are in his possession actually seven other volumes of similar gossipy revelations, and covering the whole period of Kerrich's incumbency of the Rectory of Dersingham—a parish contiguous to Sandringham, in Norfolk—from 1729 to 1768—*i.e.*, covering the whole reign of George II and eight memorable years of the reign of George III.

However, this instalment—for we can only regard it as such—makes a very valuable

contribution to the domestic history of this period, helping us to become intimate with good people who were neither politicians nor social magnates, nor fools nor knaves, but simple, homely country parsons and *small* gentry, fairly cultured, and passing their days for the most part virtuously and usefully,

> . . . decent not to fail
> In offices of tenderness, and pay
> Meet adoration to their household gods.

Samuel Kerrich was a Norfolk man, born at Harleston in 1696, educated at St. Paul's School, where he became a diligent and accurate scholar, and entered at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge—then usually called Benet College—in 1714. There he had the character of a very hard reader, being rather more addicted to tea than to any stronger potations. In due course he was elected to a Fellowship in his College, soon rose to be tutor and then a successful "coach," with as many pupils as he chose to take. This continued for ten years. He was evidently a man of winning manners and considerable intellectual gifts, with a

remarkable faculty for making friends. About 1722 he managed to win the affection of a Cambridge beauty with a comfortable fortune entirely at her own disposal. But the loving pair were prudent, and resolved to delay their marriage till the bridegroom should obtain some preferment. He was evidently making a steady income by his pupils, and the Fellowship at Benet College was not to be lightly parted with. The engagement had lasted little more than a year when the young lady died, leaving the whole of her fortune to her *fiancé*. Kerrich kept on his pupils, doubtless saving money, and two years after the death of his first love he became once more engaged to "a famous Cambridge beauty," whom he married in May, 1729. Of course he vacated his fellowship, but he remained still at Cambridge, living in his own house and prospering. He was not without expectations; for he seems already to have received the promise of the living of Dersingham from his friends the Hostes of Sandringham Hall; the incumbent was

a very old man, and the probability was that Kerrich would not have long to wait for the vacancy. He had not been married more than a few months when a messenger came from Andrew Rogers, the Rector of Sandringham, telling him that the Rev. Thomas Gill, the incumbent of Dersingham and West Newton, was *in articulo mortis*, and if he hoped to succeed to the second of these livings, which was in the gift of the Crown, it behoved him to bestir himself and lose no time.

Thomas Gill, who lay a-dying, was the son of a very staunch old Royalist in the time of the Rebellion who had suffered for loyalty in more ways than one. Nathaniel Gill—the father—was born in 1606, and presented to the Rectory of Burgh-by-Aylsham in 1638. He was an M.A. of Cambridge, and was possessed of a landed estate which entitled him to assume the style of Esquire, when that word meant that he was above the degree of yeoman. In 1643 he was denounced as a *delinquent* and his living was sequestered ; but he persisted in serving

his cure with obstinate fidelity, persisted in baptizing children with the sign of the cross and marrying young people with the ring in scornful defiance of Puritans and malignants. It seems that his people trusted and loved him; but this kind of thing could not be expected to be tolerated by the dominant faction, and in 1650 he was driven out of Burgh and took up his residence at Bungay, where he continued to live till the Restoration. He took with him the Parish Register of Burgh, which he retained as his private property. It has been preserved till the present day, and is a very curious volume. The seventeenth-century Norfolk *squarson* has made a number of miscellaneous entries in the book, most of them written in Latin, and many of them giving us scraps of information about his own career, which had a certain romance in it. On Christmas Day, 1660, the ejected Rector once more officiated in Burgh Church. What a pity that we have not even a note on the subject or the manner of that sermon!

It was this gentleman's son, Thomas Gill, who now lay a-dying. I assume that he was born at Bungay during the time of his father's banishment. In 1683 he became Rector of Knapton, and was preferred to Dersingham and West Newton in 1705. He was at this time (1728) between seventy-five and eighty years of age. The poor old gentleman was past work now, for you must please to observe that there was no thought of leaving the services in his churches to take care of themselves. It was regarded as a matter of course that they should be duly provided for, and it seems, moreover, that it was *de rigueur* that a weekly sermon should be preached in the church. So Mr. Gill had as curate a man of some distinction and ability. Somehow he had not succeeded in the clerical profession; but the following letter gives us one little episode in his career:—

"SANDRINGHAM, 16*th of August*, 1728.

"There has lately been a wedding in our neighbourhood, of a very uncommon

and surprising nature ; and because it may possibly affect your affairs in its consequences, I therefore thought it would be the part of a friend to acquaint you with it at large.

" Mr. Gill has a daughter, of about fifty years of age, who has been a widow about twenty years and has for many years past kept a boarding-house at Yarmouth. Her name, Clarges. She has been a merry wife and a merry widow ; she has two daughters women-grown. The younger of these lasses (Penelope by name) has kept Mr. Gill's house ever since he has been a widower, and is a cheerful, sprightly little tit. Mr. Gill has had a curate in his house about half a year ; one Mr. Seward, whose true character I am a stranger to ; but it is possible you may know something of it, he being that Senior Westminster lad that missed of a Fellowship at Trinity. Ever since he has been at Mr. Gill's he has behaved with so much gallantry towards Penelope as to raise very tender emotions in her breast, and their mutual fondness soon

became apparent, not only to their own family, but likewise to the whole neighbourhood, in so much that everybody concluded it would be a match ; especially Mr. Gill seemed to acquiesce in it.

" Penelope's mother, hearing something of the matter, hastened over from Yarmouth, to make her Father Gill a visit at Dersingham, and brings her eldest daughter (Suky) along with her. And perceiving that her daughter *Pene* and Seward were like to make a match (to which she seemed averse) she takes away *Pene* home with her to Yarmouth and leaves *Suky* to keep Mr. Gill's house, and so become a sharer of his favours. It was natural enough for Seward (taking it for granted that his passion was honourable) to pursue his nymph *Pene* to Yarmouth. He did so. But when the widow got him there she was so frank in her declarations to Seward, as to let him know that she (the widow) had conceived such an ardent passion for him that either death or enjoyment must be the result of it. The noble Doctor took pity on the languishing widow, married her

before he returned to Dersingham, and has left poor Pene to weep and call him father.

"Mr. Seward has no preferment but Mr. Gill's curacy (£15 per annum and board) . . . he is well acquainted with the Lord Chancellor's son. He is a man of fine parts and learning and has gained the esteem of the Colonel and Major [Hoste] by his preaching and conversation; and I don't know how far his artful address may be conducive to the attainment of his ends. . . ."

The writer of this letter was the Rev. Andrew Rogers, Rector of Sandringham, he, too, a Cambridge man and M.A. of Benet College; he had but lately been presented to Sandringham, held it apparently for no more than three years, and then was succeeded by this very Francis Seward, who died in 1732 and was buried in Sandringham Church, where a ledger-stone to his memory may still be seen.

To return to our friend Kerrich, he lost no time in securing the two pieces of preferment he sought for, and a fortnight after

old Mr. Gill's death he was instituted to Dersingham and West Newton, having during those fourteen days presented himself before Sir Robert Walpole, who received him courteously, and furnished him with a letter to the Lord Chancellor (King), one of whose sons greeted him cordially as an old acquaintance at Cambridge—peradventure that very son upon whose good offices and intercession poor Seward had built some idle hopes and languidly reckoned without quite knowing why !

Oh ! ye young aspirants for promotion and preferment, ye may do worse than read this volume if ye would learn the trick of climbing the slippery ladder. The game that some men seem to play by instinct—as if to the manner born—has its own rules and methods ; and success is only achieved by continual practice never quite remitted. Would ye win? Then ye must play the game, and play it hard ! The question whether it is worth your while is another question. That I must leave. But all this is digression.

Mr. Kerrich being now in possession of his two pieces of preferment, found himself, nevertheless, houseless and homeless. At neither place was there a parsonage—at any rate, none fit for the residence of a clergyman of some fortune. The first thing he did was to provide himself with a commodious dwelling. Accordingly, he set to work to alter and enlarge an old house of some pretension at Dersingham, and prepare it for the reception of the young wife whom he had lately married. While the building and furnishing was going on he was hovering between Dersingham and Cambridge. The house was just ready when the young wife died. She never saw the home that her widowed husband had provided for her. He was just thirty-five years old. He had "burnt his ships," as far as any prospect at the University was concerned; and now what remained "but to bury himself in the country, poor man! with nothing to do, and nobody to talk to and no society"? Are you quite sure of that, my commiserating reader? Be not rash with those lips of

thine. It so happens that the neighbourhood in which Mr. Kerrich had made up his mind to settle down in this year of grace 1729, and in which he continued to discharge the duties of his sacred calling for the next forty years or so, was a very desirable neighbourhood indeed.

To begin with, in the contiguous parish of Sandringham there lived at the Hall a considerable squire and his son, who kept up a good house and were held in high esteem by all classes in the county. The Hostes were quite above the petty meanness of trafficking in their Church preferment. They had a strong regard for Kerrich, whom they had known intimately at Cambridge, and had learnt to respect and admire. They were patrons of the benefice of *Sandringham*, and the rector of the parish at this time was the very Andrew Rogers, the writer of the letter to Kerrich giving the news of old Mr. Gill's moribund condition. Mr. Rogers was a Cambridge M.A. He had only very recently been appointed to Sandringham, and was himself death-

stricken. His time was short. Mr. Rogers's immediate predecessor had been Robert Cremer, M.A., a son of Sir John Cremer, of Ingoldisthorpe, High Sheriff for the county in 1660. He himself had sold the Ingoldisthorpe estate to the Hostes at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and had taken Holy Orders.

At *Castle Rising* the rector for the past thirty years or so was a scholar and divine of some note in his day, one Elisha Smith, M.A., a great writer of books, and esteemed a learned personage, whose erudite works may be occasionally found on old bookstalls here and there.

At *Anmer and Shernburne* (for he held the two parishes together) the rector was an old gentleman who had been the incumbent for some thirty years, and who lived on till 1748. I presume that he was a graduate, but whether or not, he had married a daughter of John Spelman, of Narburgh, M.P. for Castle Rising in 1660, and one of the Norfolk magnates.

At Harpley—my old friend the Rev. John

Gurney's benefice—there had actually been three doctors in divinity in succession, who held the benefice between 1706 and 1744, one of whom became a prebendary of Bristol, and another ended as Dean of Durham.

I say nothing of Lynn during this period, partly because there is so much to say.

With such an entourage as this, with half a dozen resident clergymen of education and character and more or less culture and learning living within a short walk of his own door, it is hardly conceivable that a man like Kerrich could have wanted for stimulating and sympathetic companionship. He had collected a large library, which he had been studiously using from his boyhood. He was a great reader of Shakespeare. I wonder which folio (for it seems it was a folio) he was the possessor of, and which he had annotated laboriously on many a precious page. He was so faithful a preacher that his heirs or representatives kept more than two hundredweight of his written sermons till the beginning of the nine-

teenth century ; he carried on a large correspondence with his old pupils and Cambridge friends, which it is to be feared has all disappeared—for he wrote too much to think of keeping copies of his letters ; he had a great taste for art, which his son inherited and would have adopted as a profession if he had not been deterred from that by the advice of Hogarth ; he loved music, and among his neighbours we hear of one young lady at least who was a performer upon the organ ; he kept himself abreast of the theological learning of his time, though he seems to have disliked religious controversy, and there was abundance to interest him in the sayings and doings of the great folks to whose houses he was admitted as a well-mannered and well-informed guest. He appears to have been on somewhat intimate terms with Sir Robert Walpole during the last few years of that great man's retirement in his Norfolk palace ; and when Walpole died, Kerrich felt that any hopes that he might have had of cathedral or episcopal preferment were at an end. As Bishop

Gooch puts it, writing in 1745: "The truth is, you lost your benefactor before you lost your friend. The first ended with his loss of power; the last, with the loss of life. He intended you some dignity in the Church, when he could conveniently obtain it for you."

Kerrich was never, it seems, consumed by a hankering after preferment. Obviously he was conscious of more than ordinary powers, but he was rather lacking in *push*. He took his D.D. degree in 1755 in view of what might happen some day. Let it be remembered that the exercises and disputations of a candidate for this, the highest title that the University could bestow, were at this time by no means a mere form. As an undergraduate, Kerrich had started a debating society among some promising young men, and their debates were carried on in Latin, in view of the disputations which were then invariably carried on in the divinity schools. When the time came for Kerrich to maintain his theological dissertation against all comers, there appears to have

been a considerable number of *opponents* to bring forward their formal objections to the postulant's thesis, and Kerrich was put upon his mettle, and "kept in the rostrum for nearly three hours." "It was the longest *Act*," he says, "that has been known a great while. . . . I may send you word that I have lost no reputation by it."

The mania for building splendid houses in Norfolk had begun before Dr. Kerrich took up his residence in the county. The example had been set at the close of the seventeenth century by that gentle-hearted and noble-minded old non-juror, Roger North, who demolished the old house of the Yelvertons and built up from his own designs the Hall at Rougham—a house much too large for the estate, insomuch that his grandson, who could not afford to live in it, pulled it down. The Hall at Raynham had been designed by Jones in 1630, but was greatly altered and enlarged by Charles, the third Viscount Townshend, nearly a century later.

Sir Robert Walpole's palace at Houghton

was begun in 1722 and finished in 1731. Wolterton Hall, built by Sir Robert's younger brother Horatio, Lord Walpole, was begun in 1724 and finished seventeen years later. Holkham, the vast mansion of Lord Leicester, was begun in 1734, and was still unfinished when he died in 1759, and was completed by his widow. At all these palaces much state and profuse hospitality was going on, excepting at Rougham; and Kerrich certainly had the *entrée* of them all. But the Townshends were not to his liking, though he accepted the hospitality at their hands which he could hardly decline. Kerrich's friend, Dr. Pyle, detested both the brothers, George, the first Marquis Townshend, and the brilliant Charles, whose gifts dazzled even those who hated him. "They are looked upon," he says, "as a couple of profligate creatures who will stick at nothing to serve their own purposes of interest or revenge."

Less than three years after this letter of Dr. Pyle's was sent to Dersingham, Pyle had to tell a very ghastly story. It is very extraordinary that the secret which it reveals

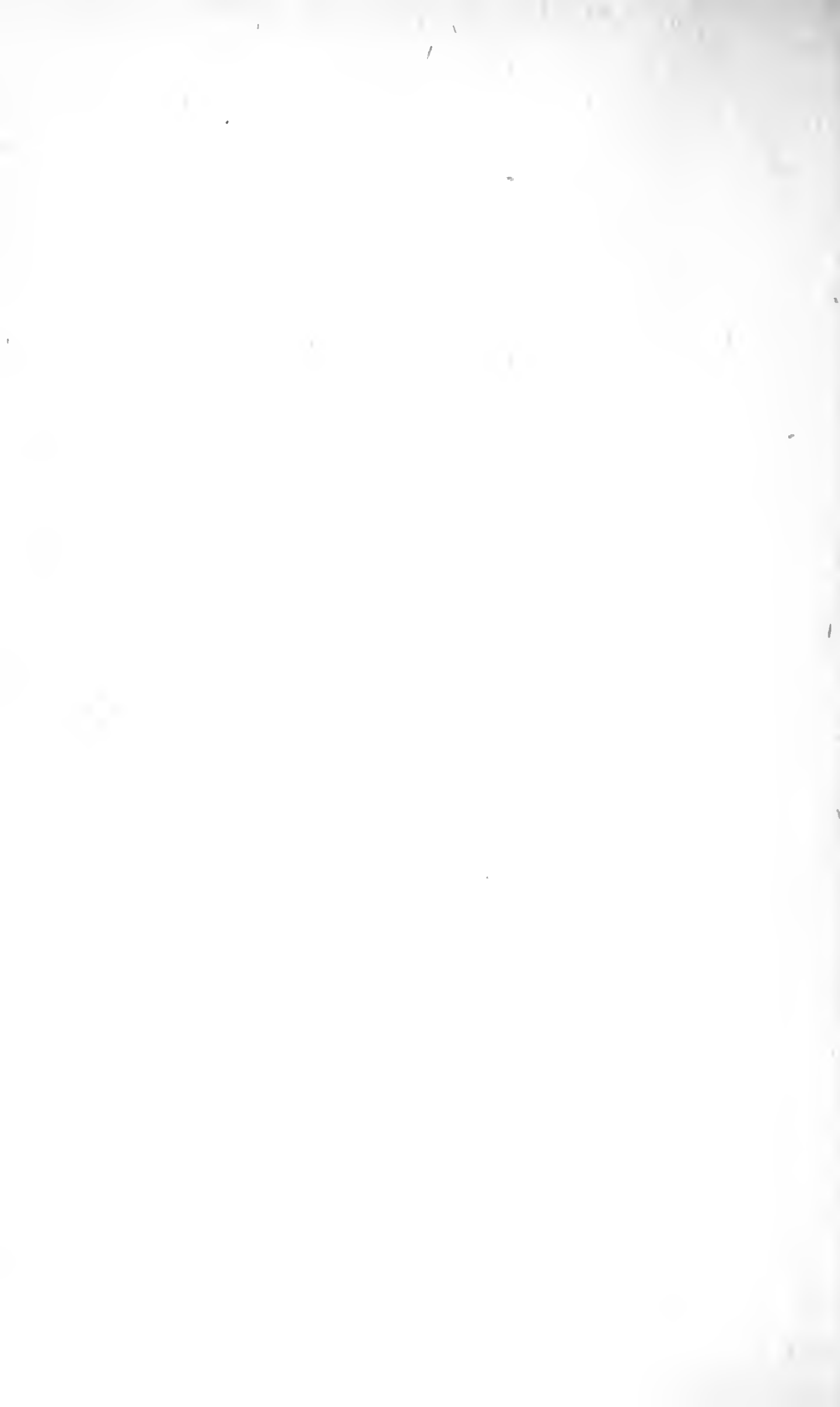
has been kept so close for nearly a century and a half. On the 10th of May, 1759, Pyle writes to his friend that Lord L. had died of wounds received in a duel with G.T. The ground of quarrel was that Lord L., by whom undoubtedly is meant Lord Leicester of Holkham, had spoken, apparently at his own table, severely against Lord Townshend's favourite measure of calling out the militia; whereupon Lord Townshend, a professional soldier, if he was anything, sent a challenge to Lord Leicester, who was a harmless and somewhat accomplished gentleman and Fellow of the Royal Society, and double the age of his ferocious antagonist. Dr. Pyle says that that antagonist "was (by the confession of his friends) drunk when he wrote to Lord L."

I should be sorry to think that our friend Dr. Kerrich ever accepted any more civilities at the hands of such a noble assassin.

There is very little more to say. The Rector of Dersingham lived on his quiet life till "death came placidly and took him" on

the 8th of March, 1768, in his seventy-third year. He had survived a large number of his lifelong friends. Dr. Pyle, who, professionally, was a much more successful man than the other, lived on some nine years longer. He was so pleasant, and innocent, and right-thinking a clergyman—such a delightful gossip, and with such a remarkable faculty for picking up information and conveying it with extraordinary accuracy to his correspondent—that it is to be hoped we may have some more of his amusing letters offered to us from Mr. Hartshorne's great storehouse. Peradventure, we may gain from them other illustrations of the ways and doings and daily life of other country parsons in Norfolk in the earlier Georgian era. I, for one, am not afraid to look for them. Let them come by all means, if only

> To shame the boast so often made
> That we are wiser [or better] than our sires.



THE LAKE-DWELLERS

III

THE LAKE-DWELLERS

I AM informed that in the region of Skeorn's Inga, where a simple folk have little to interest them beyond the limits of their own placid surroundings, a disturbing rumour went the round a little while ago, and that it assumed the form "Actually! The shepherd and his lady are starting on a holiday!" "Actually!" Observe how much is implied in that emphatic exclamation. For of late years we all know that up and down this island it has become axiomatic with the whole population that no man, woman, or child can possibly live out thirteen consecutive months without taking a holiday—that is to say, without absenting himself or herself for a month or so from his own home comforts, and his books, and his flowers, and his garden, and all that he loves best, and rushing about on railroads and steamboats

and rickety vehicles, and sleeping in crowded hotels where the higher you climb the worse you are waited on, or spending week after week in fusty lodgings where the "attendance" is all on your side, and the cooking is vile, and the boots are never clean, and the water never boils. But why dwell upon it all? It has become a national practice with us that we must all have a holiday. Even the submerged tenth have their annual treat at hop-picking, and I verily believe they must enjoy it a great deal more than we of "the great middle class, sir!" who are hanging on to our position by our eyelids, and whose characteristic is that we must all jump over the same stick which the bell-wether has shown his ability to surmount at a nimble fly.

A hundred times during the last few years have I had the question addressed to me, "Why in the world don't you take a holiday?" And as in every case I have told the truth—of course I have never been believed. Who was the diplomatist who gave one golden rule to his juniors, "If

you wánt to outwit the whole *Cour diplomatique,* give a plain statement of facts and they'll all smile sweetly at your jocular habits"? . . . "Can't afford it! How funny he is, to be sure!"

However, it so happened that a month or two ago I scolded my bootmaker by letter for having played some tricks with my last. What had he done that my right foot didn't quite keep pace with my left? Clearly the skilled artificer was to blame. The artist strongly resented the insinuation. Had I forgotten that he had been supplying me with boots for wellnigh forty years? But I *had* forgotten that tenderness of feet was one of the surest signs of incipient old age. I took his rebuke to heart, and on reflection a suspicion grew upon me that just perhaps the thing or the process people call *a change* would help to stop the too rapid advance of eld. The result of a council of war was that we made up our minds to have a holiday.

The suggestions which came to us from our more travelled friends when we hinted that we were resolved on "going some-

where" were absolutely countless. They ranged from a proposal to take a berth on board a sailing-vessel to gain a three-weeks personal experience of life in the *doldrums,* up to a very strong recommendation to disguise ourselves and spend a month at Ostend, where we might indulge in every kind of dissipation absolutely undetectable, and get to know the wild joy of a week's gambling at the Casino. We were to stake no more than a five-franc piece at a time, and never allow ourselves to lose more than twenty-five francs on any one evening. My philosopher and friend who gave me this advice became absolutely intoxicated in his desire to press it upon me. I suggested that the lady shepherd would have *scruples.* The man did not in the least understand what *scruples* were. I suggested that I for my part might not like to be seen at the Casino; it might provoke scandal or, etc. "Bless you!" he replied, "no bishops go there, and if they did, you could tell of them just as easy as they could rebuke you; and what's to hinder your going in a blue coat and

brass buttons? They'd only take you for some rakish old nobleman!" I said nothing of *my* scruples; I let him go on; but Ostend did not allure me. Bishops might not be there indeed. But the vision of an archdeacon's apron acted as a deterrent. Where should we go?

Just at the right moment came a letter from Ulpian—Ulpian the Jurist, the pride of our hearts—of us who know a part of his ways. Ah! It is all very well for you poets and ecstatic ones who ripple into rhyme and indulge in high-falutin', drawing upon your imagination so liberally for your facts; it is all very well for you to talk of woman's love. There is nothing so great and noble and ennobling as the love of a strong, manly nature when he gives his great heart to his friends, and asks and gains theirs in return. There's no sobbing and shrieking in that. No! the emotional is kept under by the predominating guardianship of the lordly intellect in the love of man to man. I verily believe that friendship is greater than the thing we call love!

Ulpian wrote saying: "Come to me! Life is short. Let us revive the old delights, and talk a little of the dear old days. Let us talk of the things that are and of some of the things that may be moving on. Come! Why should life all labour be? Come for rest and refreshment!" And our hearts made answer with throbbings that the old memories set a-going, and we answered: "We come!" So accordingly we settled it all and we started—we two old people. Are we old? How do you reckon old age, my bounding young brother? By the number of years *Anno Domini* that have passed since a man or woman was born? Poor creature, you! I have known scores of men in my time who never were boys, and who always were dull old codgers when they were hardly out of their teens. "My dear!" says the lady shepherd to me oftentimes, "you really mustn't wear that coat except when we are alone together. It makes you look so affected. I mean so young, you know!" Why shouldn't I look young if I feel young, and why am I other than youthful

when I *feel* as if I could jump over a five-barred gate? Depend upon it, Horace, the prince of gentlemen, when he claimed so much for his *sapiens,* meant the man who kept a wise heart till he was at least three-score years and ten, and that man was still and for ever—

> Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum,
> Præcipue sanus, nisi cum pituita molesta est.

Freeman and held in honour; handsome and royally dowered;
Healthy in body and soul, save when he'd a cold in his head.

It was ever so many years—which you may interpret as you please—since we two had been in the Lake district, and now Ulpian had temporary possession of a house in the middle of that enchanting region. As we thought of it, the attractions of Grasmere and its surroundings became every day more and more alluring, and we became impatient to be there. And yet, to my mind, much as I love the beauties of Nature and the charms of a glorious landscape—*mere* natural beauty of sky and cloud, of mountain and glen, of leafage and brook, and lake and tarn; even

the great movements of the glaciers on their silent march, and the awful calm of the everlasting snows always make me feel a want of something human, if with the peaks and the crags, the rolling river, or the roaring torrent I can connect no remembrance of the struggles and the sufferings, the sorrows or the joys of men and women in the past.

Even at Grasmere the other day, as I was halfway up one of the peaks of Silverdale—Silverdale which it seemed so hard to get any intimate knowledge of—one of those peaks acquired for me a startling prominence quite irrespective of its form, when a good dalesman said to me, "That's where Wilson was lost in the snow!" Poor wretch! thought I—the blinding snow, the staggering steps, the growing horror, the heart-beats becoming audible in the horrible stillness, the faintness and the overwhelming drowsiness, the hope, "too much like despair for reason to smother," that he would awake out of sleep if he could rest just for a little, little while—and then. . . . Who was Wilson (if

that was his name)? Husband and father? Old or young? A wise man who could ill be spared, or a fool that few would pity? My informant could tell me nothing. All he knew was that Wilson had been lost in the snow. Did his ghost walk and was he seen stumbling over the rocks? "Never heard tell of it." But before me there stood the man, pale, lank, and tall, clutched by the Frost King. What hollow eyes he had!

But when one got down to the valleys every mile was peopled with ghosts, and such glorious ghosts! Mr. Cadaverous used to say in his sonorous way to me: "Young man! there is room for a new book on geography—the geography of great souls. For take note, my friend, that at all times there has, even from the beginning of time, been a tendency on the part of the great souls to cluster round particular spots and to gather together in geographical areas. Stratford is a spot where only the greatest of the great could have his habitation and hold it as his own. No second man of genius has ever been heard of there. Shakespeare

absorbs the whole horizon, so to speak, there where the Avon glides and yonder spire stands up dominating over miles and miles of broad acres where stupidity and mediocrity have always had it their own way for centuries. But think of the lakes and the lakers!"

I had quite forgotten the remark till the other day; but it flashed back upon me suddenly from one of memory's hiding-places when a sulky coachman pointed with his whip to a mean roadside cottage with the quite uncalled-for remark, "Yon's where little Hartley Coleridge used to live! I remember him!"

"You?"

"Yes, I was no more nor a boy! I remember him!"

"So do I!" I answered. "I saw him standing at that door more than fifty years ago, when I was little more than a lad. What do you remember about him?"

"Nothing, only his big head."

Then the fellow relapsed into silence. We were driving from Ambleside to Grasmere;

and the ghosts began to rise up before me. I had never realized till then how prodigious was the flow of inspiring thoughts and glowing words which during the first thirty years of this century came welling up from the hearts and brains of poets and seers and great teachers dwelling in the little area, never extending over twenty miles as the crow flies, from Keswick to Ambleside, and less than ten miles wide from Buttermere to Helvellyn.

The valleys of this district are incomparably more attractive now than they ever could have been a hundred years ago. I doubt if even Surrey itself could produce a succession of such beautifully situated mansions, and such judicious planting of rare and choice trees, especially conifers, as may be found in "the Lakes." All this building and planting has been the work of little more than sixty years. At the beginning of the century the district must have been singularly wild and rugged; the roads leading nowhere in particular; the people hardly to be called agricultural—for the patches of arable land

were few and far between ; the sheep and stunted cattle hanging about the mountains in a very disorderly manner, with very vague notions of rights of way or metes and bounds ; the population sparse and poor ; a people apart, wandering little, visited seldom by inquisitive trippers from the outer world ; the parsons apparently a simple and unpretending body, with perhaps no grand ideals of duty, but, from all that can be learnt, men who were faithful in their calling, without vices, on the whole respected, and exercising a wholesome influence upon their people. It is very difficult by any effort of imagination to realize the general look of these valleys as they appeared to the passer-by when the present century opened.

To begin with, it is almost certain that at that time not a single cedar or fir, cyprus, thuja or ilex, and hardly a single larch had been planted in the whole district. Grasmere in the winter-time must have been a very desolate region, cut off from any intellectual society—a region very uninviting to the average mortal born in a happier clime.

It is a delusion to suppose that the wonderful cluster of men of genius of the very highest order who settled in *the Lakes* during the period with which we are concerned were drawn there by the natural beauties of the scenery around them. What really drew them all together was the mysterious and irresistible attraction which the unique and magnetic personality of William Wordsworth exercised upon them all. Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in April, 1770. He was sent to school at Hawkshead on the Coniston Lake—a school founded by Archbishop Sandys, the Puritan Archbishop of York, the friend of Jewel and the patron of Hooker, who was tutor to the Archbishop's son, Sir Edwin Sandys, and for whom the Archbishop secured the Mastership of the Temple, the only preferment which the greatest philosophical theologian of the Church of England ever held. I love to think that the boy Wordsworth felt the first inspiration of his noblest ecclesiastical sonnet while he was worshipping in the old *unrestored* church of Hawkshead, and set it down, a

written precious jewel, as a recollection in the after days :—

> Methinks that I could trip o'er heaviest soil,
>   Light as a buoyant bark from wave to wave,
>   Were mine the trusty staff that Jewel gave
> To youthful Hooker, in familiar style,
> The gift exalting and with playful smile.

I do not quote the splendid ending. Ye who know it not—look for it and get it by heart !

Wordsworth went up to St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1787, perchance because St. John's had been the Archbishop's college. He took his degree in 1791—a robust and high-spirited young man with plenty of vigour and fire. He would see the world, and he saw a bit of it—was at Paris in the days of Robespierre, was moved by the howling of the Revolution, came back a Republican aflame with a certain rant for liberty, equality, and fraternity ; but also he came back to write poetry with a novel theory of his own. In 1793 he wrote "The Evening Walk." The Grub Street critics asked in perplexity, "What is this young

man driving at? What does he mean?" Another young man at Cambridge, who had never heard of this other, answered unhesitatingly, "An original poetical genius has risen above the horizon; he will move towards the zenith by-and-by!" That young man's name was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The two young men soon drew together; twin stars that in heart and spirit could not keep apart for very long, they were always revolving round one another. Four years later Coleridge was living at Nether Stowey. It was a far cry thither from the Lake Country in those days, but Wordsworth travelled to Nether Stowey to see Coleridge in the flesh. Charles Lamb happened to be there. Charles Lloyd, too, was there, the young Quaker, rich, of course, but tremulous with the poetic throb that made him scorn the wealth which his father's bank at Bristol promised; one who *would* go and make his home with Coleridge, and live in the light of his "mild and magnificent eye." And little Hartley Coleridge was there too, a baby boy of scarce a year old, whom Wordsworth took upon his

knee. Southey happened to be there too. Think of them staring at Wordsworth for the first time—Coleridge, as he tells us, "feeling himself a little man" in the presence of the king of men. During this memorable visit Coleridge wrote "The Ancient Mariner," Wordsworth contributing the incident of the slaying of the albatross. What a magic circle!

Just about this time it came to pass that there was a marvellous stirring in the hearts and consciences of a certain number of rich Englishmen, which took the form of a longing to rescue young men of genius from becoming stunted and blighted in their nonage—by the eternal want of pence.

It was horrible that these divinely gifted, divinely illumined souls—human creatures that yet were something more, creatures of infinite promise, of infinite potentiality—should be left to go through the little vulgar struggles of the common herd and take their chance among the out-at-elbows penny-a-liners! There was clearly and certainly nothing of the insolence of mere patronage

about this feeling. They who were so strongly moved by it simply desired to make use of their wealth in what seemed to them the best possible way; they never for a moment calculated that in doing so they would bring honour and credit for themselves. Be it as it may, it came to pass, somehow and very strangely, about the year 1793, that a gentleman named Raisley Calvert determined to make an annual allowance to Wordsworth, which he continued till his own death and then left him a legacy of £900; that a year or two later Charles Williams Wynne settled £160 for life upon Southey, and that the brothers Wedgwood secured an annuity upon Coleridge which continued to be paid to him till his death in 1834. But what is very surprising is that this kind of open-handed generosity continued to be shown to the three poets during many years. Southey was the only one of the great trio who ever earned or probably could have ever earned a living wage by his pen. It is difficult to imagine what would have become of Wordsworth or Coleridge

but for the spontaneous and substantial support of their enthusiastic worshippers. The list included such names as Lord Lonsdale, Sir George Beaumont, Charles Lloyd, Poole the tanner of Nether Stowey, De Quincey, who began life as a man of some fortune, and many another among the anonymous or forgotten ones. Remember, too, that it was never a case of "getting up a subscription" as we call it nowadays, when reluctant guineas come in for the fashion of the thing from a score of nondescripts who are bored into giving their "mites" for they care not what. When Coleridge took his house at Keswick, the landlord, worthy Mr. Jackson, merely for the honour and joy of having the poet as a tenant, let him have it for £25 a year, though there were those who would gladly have given him a rent of £50. The beggarly stipend paid successively to Southey and Wordsworth as Poets Laureate, the Government pension from the Civil List conferred upon the two subsequently, came quite at the end of their several careers. They were private and isolated acts of

munificence that tided them over the hard time, such a time as killed Chatterton and which threatened to starve Johnson and Goldsmith.

This kind of thing has almost died out among us ; we are all putting our hands into one another's pockets to get at the small change which our neighbours are told they will never miss ; we pester chance acquaintances for those everlasting subscriptions which are to effect every sort of " charitable object." Bewildered by the countless claims which are made upon us by the importunate, we find ourselves too impoverished to do the duty nearest because we have not the courage to shake off the daughters of the horse-leech that attach themselves to us from all the ends of the earth. Beneficence is done by machinery, and we are perpetually assured that if we hope to relieve the distressed and to cope with the sorrows of the stricken, the struggling, or the bereaved, we must do so on the limited liability principle—taking shares in co-operative associations and never staking too much at a time ; as though

it were an established fact that it is better to do a hundred things badly than to do one thing—only one thing—well.

Commend me rather—a thousand times rather—to the nobler method of the two royal-hearted brethren Walt and Wult—the twain that are but one—who eschew benevolence carried on by machinery, who throw themselves with tenderest, wisest sympathy into every case they take in hand, saying to the wholesale houses :—

"Your business is with the many, ours is with the few ; we rescue a single shuddering family from the menace of beggary here, or pluck a brand out of the fire there ; give the struggling beginner in life's battle the start that, at the right moment, is everything to him ; say to the old man who has seen better days and is miserably slipping down the hill with a pauper's grave at the bottom : 'Take comfort, friend ! you shall go no lower.' And thus in our silent, Christ-like way we try to add to the sum of human happiness, and our joy is full when we see the brimming tears fall down

in sobbing gratitude ; while the widow, the fatherless, and the desponding take heart of grace to look up once more and give glory to God that they have come to know what the magnanimity of hand-made Christian charity means."

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Wordsworth was never happy for long away from his own Lake country. On the 21st of December, 1799, he settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, he and his sister Dorothy. According to her calculation they had not much more than £80 a year between them. The house is wonderfully little changed from what it was. It is nothing better than a labourer's dwelling ; it was neither better nor worse a hundred years ago. Compared with this tiny little tenement, Anne Hathaway's house at Stratford-on-Avon is a mansion. Here the brother and sister lived for nine years. They kept no servant. Dorothy did the household work, cooked the food, and washed her own and her brother's clothes, kept the little place neat and clean, Wordsworth himself digging the garden and

chopping the wood, which was the only fuel known in those days. There Wordsworth wrote the grandest and sweetest of his poems. If we had read of such a story in the literature of Greece or Rome we should have called it fable. If there were anything like it in the books of the Old Testament we should have applied the resources of the higher criticism to "whittle away" the facts and to demonstrate that "Oriental idealism has no regard to the probabilities of our actual life."

Wordsworth had not been many months at Dove Cottage when Coleridge joined him, first as a visitor then as a neighbour at Keswick. It was in 1800 that Coleridge wrote *Christabel*—the most dazzling literary fragment that ever bewitched the world. Far into the nights those three held closest converse soul to soul; Coleridge sometimes walking over Helvellyn and dropping down upon Grasmere famished, but apparently never weary. The opium craze had already begun. Then Southey joined him, and Greta Hall became the common home of the

other two. Southey *read* his *Thalaba* to the others in 1803. Wordsworth, we are told, *recited* his poems, sometimes even before he had dictated them, to that paragon of a woman, Dorothy, when the washing and the baking and the cooking was done with for the day and she could sit alert and eager, her bright eyes gleaming and flashing with a weird fire, ever ready with a suggestion or a criticism, never foolish and never thrown away.

One day in 1805 young Humphry Davy came, and with him Walter Scott and his French wife. Davy had just had the Copley medal awarded to him by the Royal Society ; Scott had just published *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and all the world were reading it, spouting it, and praising the author to the skies. The three men made the ascent of Helvellyn together, and came down for tea and talk in the little parlour—14 feet by 12 and not much over 7 feet high. The visitors were by this time the heroes of London and Edinburgh, the darlings of every aristocratic drawing-room. Were they

gladder than their hosts—though Dorothy had to wash up the tea-things? Why was not Southey of the party that day? Who shall say? And Coleridge? Alas! alas! Step by step he was slipping down the path which leads to moral helplessness. It is hard to be certain where he was at any time during those years when he was *hovering* hither and thither.

Meanwhile, other pilgrims had found their way to the prophet's shrine at Grasmere. As early as 1802 we hear of two young men at Oxford, destined to become illustrious, who had put themselves in reverential communication with Wordsworth by letter and offered their homage. The one was Thomas De Quincey, the other John Wilson, afterwards better known as Christopher North of *Blackwood's Magazine*. Wilson's letter has been preserved and is printed in the complete edition of Wordsworth's poems. There is nothing to show that the young men were even acquaintances at this time. De Quincey was at Worcester College, Wilson a Fellow Commoner of Balliol. Six or seven years

later, however, both had become enthusiastic *Lakers* ; Wilson had built a house at Elleray, and De Quincey, after having made an expedition to Grasmere in 1806, with the purpose of calling on Wordsworth, became so nervous and shy that he did not dare to knock at the door but slunk away without setting eyes upon the god of his idolatry.

Next year, however, he went again, and when Wordsworth gave up Dove Cottage, which had become too small for his family, De Quincey took a lease of the place, and for the next twenty years and more it was his principal residence. As long as Wilson remained at Elleray the big-boned Scotch professor, with his mighty shoulders and his shaggy head, might be seen any day striding over the crags and fells with a diminutive little elf, keeping up the pace without flagging, and never passing a week without finding their way to Rydal Mount, where Wordsworth settled in 1810, and where he died in 1850. While De Quincey lived at Dove Cottage the habit of resorting to opium, taking it mostly in the form of

laudanum, grew upon him more and more, and it was at Dove Cottage that he wrote those dreadful confessions of which Coleridge so strongly disapproved. From this time Dove Cottage becomes more associated with De Quincey than with Wordsworth. There, it is said, the victim of a terrible indulgence saw most of those visions that he describes; there he wrote those marvellous essays which have secured for him the reputation of being one of the most subtle and brilliant writers of English prose—pouring them forth month by month till the collected works appeared at last in twenty-one volumes. There the little man collected books by the thousand till the house could no longer hold them, and storage for them had to be found and paid for elsewhere. How that brain could have borne all the tremendous tension and excitement, how that little body could have sustained the wear of muscular tissue, and the almost incredible exposure and irregularities in sleep and meals which this extraordinary man submitted to during all the long years, must be a question for the physi-

ologists to deal with! Be it as it may, De Quincey survived all the Lake-dwellers; he died at seventy-four in 1859, twenty-five years after Coleridge, nine years after Wordsworth, and five years after Professor Wilson, who was his contemporary, both having been born in 1785.

When Dr. Arnold settled at Fox How in 1838, only two of the original Lake-dwellers were then living in the district. Southey was still at Greta Hall, but he was failing in body and mind; he died in 1843, and Wordsworth succeeded him as Poet Laureate. "Little Hartley" continued to prowl about the old haunts till 1849; and with him a thousand reminiscences and traditions must have died. His associates seem to have been a very *miscellaneous* set latterly; everybody spoke of him gently, tolerantly, even affectionately, but there is a limit to the continual "making allowances" for oddity and weakness of character. With Wordsworth, Arnold during his vacation residences at Fox How seems to have enjoyed a close intimacy, but the two belonged to

different generations. Wordsworth had lived through many of those opinions which Arnold held with the vehement tenacity of a very masterful nature—lived through them and come out at the other side. Yet the two men had much in common: they were of one mind, however much they might be of two opinions. Wordsworth never bated in sympathy with the prominent spokesman of the new order of things. Arnold recognized in the other a sage to reverence and a man to love. It is significant that of all the critics who have passed their serious judgments upon Wordsworth, none have spoken of the great poet with more appreciative enthusiasm than Matthew Arnold has done. As a youth he must have frequently seen him at Fox How and Rydal; some will be inclined to think that his estimate of Wordsworth's position among English poets is an exaggeration.

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The Lakes ceased to be the haunt and the dwelling-place of the Immortals when Wordsworth passed from us and his spirit

had returned to the God who gave it. His crown of bays lighted upon another royal brow. Tennyson succeeded him as Poet Laureate ; he too for a little while took up his abode at Tent Lodge on Coniston Lake ; but there had come a solution of continuity. How far was the younger poet indebted to the elder? Who shall say? This is certain, that we cannot but be influenced by the generations that have wrought and thought and toiled and sung and fought their moral and spiritual battles before us. The great law of heredity operates mightily through all the universe of God. We speak, we move, yes ! and we even believe, as our fathers did, because we are their sons ; and by a process of unconscious assimilation, not by a mechanical process of mimicry, we absorb the heritage which comes down to us whether we *choose* to take it up or not. The air they breathed becomes charged for us with new elements. We cannot hold aloof from them ; we are members of the mystical body which we call humanity. What our sires achieved, that becomes our possession. They

wrap us round with the mantle of their nobleness ; their very thoughts live in us and become ours. And so we rise by their climbing, and on the level to which they attained we take our stand and find ourselves helped upwards by their outstretched hands, and because they still looked upwards we find ourselves endeavouring to mount higher.

At Coniston Ruskin settled in 1872 : his name has become identified with that lake. We looked in at the very creditable and suggestive Ruskin Exhibition which was open to visitors there. But the gorgeous intellect of that incomparable artist and matchless orator and rhetorician was something almost different in kind from his who in his lowly dwelling at Grasmere was exercised upon other things than splendour of colour and form, and palaces and pageantry, and clouds that shift and move in the firmament—

> As star follows star
> In the blue far above us—so blue and so far.

Somehow we were glad to get back to Grasmere again, and there came upon us

an inexpressible quietness, as we again found ourselves paying our last visit at that little cottage door, standing on the stone floor of that humble parlour where Wordsworth had been moved to write his most magnificent verse. Had he really sat on that chair and lain in that humble bed, and there lived that lofty life, so lofty yet so lowly? We could not bear to pluck a leaf from the garden that he had tilled, nor even a pebble from the path that he had trodden. How could we rob posterity of the stones that peradventure his feet had touched and yet left undisturbed?

But when we looked out from the little window that ought to face the open lake, I could hardly repress a cry of hot anger and indignant disgust.

Not so very long ago there was nothing to block from that little window the lovely view of Grasmere Lake, whose wavelets at times came lapping on the very road in front of Dove Cottage. The beautiful sheet of water spread out before the great poet's eyes always as he raised them from the page

he was writing. *Now* between the house and the lake there is a hideous assemblage of squalid dwellings and abominable red-brick structures which bar the view. That they should be suffered to remain where they are is a standing reproach and disgrace upon England and Englishmen. Oh, we are a great people, a very great people! Being so very great, we are perfectly satisfied with ourselves. We think it only right and proper to smile at the romantic ecstasies of our American kinsmen in matters of this kind. All honour to them, say I! For my part, I would rather *gush* even to the point of ebullition than live and die a snub-nosed Philistine talking slang and bragging of being a practical man! A practical man forsooth! as if the *average* practical man were not about the most useless member of the community; wooden-headed and cold-hearted, alive, he looks out for his trumpery self at the expense of whomsoever he can contrive to overreach; dead, nobody misses him, or wants him back in the land of the living.

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Twenty-two years ago a little company of enlightened visitors at Grasmere, struck by the beauty of the spot where Wordsworth lived so long, and hearing that Dove Cottage was to be sold, determined to make the purchase, and set themselves to raise a subscription for paying the price. They had very little difficulty in doing this. Their charming little handbook tells the story so creditable to them all. Dove Cottage can never be sold again to the speculative builder, it has become a national monument ; but this should be no more than a beginning. The visitor who stands in Wordsworth's little garden or looks out at the little windows should not be mocked as he is now by seeing the staring abominations that Wordsworth's eye never rested on. These should be swept away for ever, and the sooner it is done the better, whatever the cost. It is not for such as I to bring this about. It is a task for you, who have some little leisure, to undertake ; and who can doubt that it would be an easy task to accomplish? Would not the doing of it be its own reward?

THE ELDERS OF ARCADY

IV

THE ELDERS OF ARCADY

EVER since I can remember anything, old people—very old people—their ways and their talk, have exercised a strong fascination over me. Of late years I find that children—if they are good—have begun to master my heart as they never did in my younger time. But this is partly because children are so much better and sweeter than they used to be, and partly because there are so many fewer old people nowadays than when I was in my prime. For when men and women are only ten or twenty years older than you are they are not nearly as interesting as they must needs be when they are twice or thrice or four times your own age.

I used to be a good deal laughed at and teased in my childhood and my boyhood

for this taste for old people, and a wicked young uncle, who never lived to grow old himself, prophesied that I should end by marrying my great-grandmother. "You know, boy," he used to say, "there's nothing against it; for a great-grandmother is not among the prohibited degrees!" That uncle was a bad man, and when I gravely replied that it did not follow because you were very fond of a dear old lady that therefore you should marry her, that bad uncle only laughed the more at me, and made other people laugh too.

Never spend your cheap derision upon a child, my masters! You never can tell how much bitter pain you give by ridiculing a little boy or a little girl.

As I grew older myself I provoked my friends—especially those of them who were in the *spooning* stage—by frequently insisting that, as a rule, a woman of forty was a great deal more beautiful and wiser, and generally a great deal more worth marrying, than any chit of a girl; and I held to that opinion firmly and obstinately until, until—

until, in fact, I gave it up—under compulsion.

The most remarkable instance I ever knew of what I may call *cumulative* longevity was that of a friend of mine in Norwich, who died, I think, at seventy-five, and who used to tell me that his grandfather, when a child, had been held up to look at Charles II at the King's restoration in 1660. My friend was a highly respected and influential solicitor in Norwich, Freestone by name, and at his death in, I think, 1865 or thereabouts, he left an estate in Norfolk to his nephew, now Lord Lindley.

John Freestone, the grandfather, lived as a bachelor till his seventy-second year, and then he married and had a son, John the Second. This gentleman did as his father did; he lived a jovial life till he was seventy-two, and then *he* married and had a son, John the Third, my friend, who, living till seventy-five, died 218 years after his grandfather was born, and some 205 after that grandfather was held up to stare at Charles II. That is, the grandfather

must then have been a boy of eleven or twelve !

It would be hard to beat that record.

And yet, when one comes to think about it, John the Third could never have known much about his father. None of the race, I believe, lived to eighty, and one generation had no reminiscences of the previous generation to hand down to the succeeding one. It has been very different with me. The first man who called on me at Scarning Rectory thirty years ago was an old gentleman of ninety-two, who had lived within three miles of my door all his life, and was born in the parish. There never was a more gifted master of delightful gossip, as distinguished from scandal, than Mr. Barry Girling. No, never ! He distinctly remembered the poet Cowper's burial at Dereham on the 2nd of May, 1800, and had a story to tell of every house in the town of Dereham, and of every family, high or low, within ten miles of his own birthplace. Moreover, he was a born antiquary and collector, and he began to write a minute history of the

Scarning School as far back as 1819, and continued to make additions to it from time to time till his death, in 1881. Scarning School has a history. For wellnigh two hundred years it was a flourishing and famous County Grammar School, at which the sons of the Norfolk gentry received their education, and that a very good education, too, under a succession of masters of some eminence in their day. Mr. Girling fished up a register of the scholars admitted between the years 1733 and 1750, and a very curious register it is. In those seventeen years no fewer than six boys were admitted to the school who afterwards became High Sheriffs of Norfolk ; and on the 11th of April, 1743, Edward Thurlow, afterwards Lord High Chancellor of England, was entered at the school, he being then eleven years of age.

Lord Thurlow's biographers agree in saying that he was a violent and ungovernable boy, and that he had a lifelong hatred of Brett, his Scarning schoolmaster ; for Brett was, by all accounts, a very fierce

and cruel pedagogue. Among Thurlow's schoolfellows, though two years his junior, was Thomas Elwin, of Booton Hall—grandfather of the Rev. Whitwell Elwin, for seven years editor of the *Quarterly Review*, who died not many years ago at the ripe age of eighty-seven. Mr. Elwin told me that his grandfather was present one day when Brett threw a ruler at a small boy named Buck with such force that it knocked him down senseless. There was a great alarm, and Brett called for water and rushed out to fetch some himself. Another boy named North came in first, bringing a cup of water, and Thurlow bawled out to North: "Let him alone! let him alone, you young fool! Let him die, and then old Brett will be hanged. Let him die!" This Charles North was the eldest grandson of Roger North, of Rougham; he was born in 1735 and was alive in 1760; but what became of him I cannot tell, though tradition says that he twice deliberately set fire to Scarning School. But Mr. Elwin's story, which he heard from his grandfather, exactly cor-

roborates the other story of Thurlow's life-long hatred of his first schoolmaster.

A few weeks after I became acquainted with Mr. Girling I was honoured by a call from the Rev. Bartle Edwards, who died nine days short of one hundred in 1889. Elsewhere I have called him Nestor. He held the living of Ashill for seventy-seven years, and he told me once that not a man, woman, or child had been *buried* in the parish during the whole of his incumbency by any one but himself. "I have buried three generations of them," he said. He actually continued to *write fresh sermons* till within a year of his death, and I believe he preached in a black gown to the end. I had the honour of wearing that gown at his funeral; it must have been quite fifty years old, and I shall never cease regretting that I did not steal that gown and run away with it, as I might have done so easily. Nestor was in his whole cast of mind as different a man as could well be imagined from Mr. Barry Girling. I never knew any one who was less of a gossip or who lived less in the past.

He was not only a faithful parish priest first and foremost ; it might almost be said of him that he was a parish priest first and last. I went to see him once, by appointment, to get, if it were possible, some information from him as to the way in which his tithes were collected in the days when they were paid in kind. He had nothing, absolutely nothing, to tell me. "I have been trying to remember something for you," he said, "but *it's so long ago that I can't recollect*." He never thought of anything so far back. His memory began at a point where the reminiscences of men of fifty begin. All before that was a blank ; but of the last fifty years of his life he could talk as simply and as accurately as I could, so much and no more. There seemed to have been only two incidents in his boyhood that he habitually recurred to. The first was when he was about fourteen years old. He had somehow played truant, and he found himself at Epsom on the Derby day. There was a great crowd, and the lad was very nearly ridden over by the Prince

Regent. "I got somehow between the horse's front legs, and I looked up and saw his Royal Highness towering over me." This must have been in 1804, for Mr. Edwards was born in 1789.

The other incident which had made an indelible impression upon him was when he was a pupil under Forby, the author of the valuable *Vocabulary of East Anglia,* at Fincham, of which place Forby became rector in 1801. Here, again, he had nothing to tell me of Forby except that "he was a rare flogger and gave Pillans a cruel flogging the very day he was going to leave him." Who "Pillans" was I did not ask, and I do not know. "Do you remember William Girling, sir, who was at Forby's with you?" "Was he? No, I don't remember that—*it's so long ago*. Of course I knew Mr. Girling very well when he lived at Scarning." That is after Mr. Edwards had become rector of Ashill. Everything before that had passed from his memory.

As I have said, Mr. Edwards died nine days before completing his hundredth year.

But I number among my friends who are still alive an old worthy who is some months over a hundred. I first became acquainted with him about fifteen years ago, when he used to be up to a five-miles walk without fatigue; he was then in possession of all his faculties, except that he was a little deaf, and he more than once assured me that if he survived till 1900 he should be able to boast that he had lived *in three centuries*. Recently, however, they have found that he was baptized on the 12th of February, 1800, and he took to calling that his birthday, though the probability is that he was right at first when he assumed or asserted that he was born in 1799. Mr. Lewis Barton—for that is the old man's name—was a shoemaker at Dereham for sixty or seventy years, and saved a modest competency by his own industry and thrift. In early life he used to travel on his own account for orders, and he had journeymen working for him in the villages round. When the railroad came he saw that this peripatetic looking about for customers would not pay, and he stayed

at home and his old customers came to him instead of his going to them, and he was the gainer. All through life he was a most pronounced and loyal Churchman, and when both eyesight and hearing failed him, he worried himself a good deal because, as he said to me, "I find it hard, sir, that I can't *make my early Communion now*, as I used to do!" The worthy Vicar of Dereham met that difficulty easily, and on his birthday (or it may be only his baptismal day) he administered the Blessed Sacrament to the old gentleman and a small congregation of his friends in the room where then almost all of his time was passed. Old Barton remained wonderfully vigorous in mind to the last; he used to be a great reader, and as long as he could he read the Psalms daily. The loss of his sight, which came on quite suddenly, was a terrible blow to him. It was pitiful to see him wave his hand to the bookshelves behind his chair, saying: "Ah! I shall never read them any more. They're all dumb or asleep to me now, sir. But yet, you see, they're not all dead and for-

gotten. There's old Shakespeare still comes back upon me. I used to read old Shakespeare almost every week seventy or eighty years ago. Don't you think he was a wonder, sir?" One day he began abruptly to recite the famous soliloquy of Hamlet :—

> To be, or not to be: that is the question.

He got as far as

> . . . there's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life.

Then he paused, with a curious fixed set in the blind eyes, turned my way. "Ah, sir, I do pray God to deliver me from that—that temptation of getting tired of this life now. . . ." What more he added I may not and I will not repeat. I am persuaded that if I had known old Barton a year or two before his deafness had become a bar to any continuous conversation, I should have gathered a volume of curious and interesting reminiscences which now have passed away and can never be recovered. Thus it is that we miss our chances, and, once missed, they never return.

I cannot, however, reproach myself for neglecting any opportunities of picking up those fragmentary records of the past which the elders of Arcady have handed down to me from their sometimes well-stored memories. The older I grow the more do I believe in traditions. Old people never invent ; they do not much exaggerate, and the more ignorant they are the more accurately do they tell their old stories. That is my experience of life among the Elders of Arcady.

To the honour of the guardians of this Poor Law Union be it written that they have more than once been censured by the officials in high places for not too rigidly forcing the aged poor among us into "the house." The result is that in this parish there have been for some time past an extraordinary number of aged folk who have been allowed to live on undisturbed in their birthplace for eighty or ninety years, some of them subsisting for ten or fifteen years on the niggardly pittance allowed them as "out-door relief." Of course, when a lonely old

man has no one to look after him and begins to mumble querulously and to get into dirty habits, such a one is best sent to the work-house, where he gets fairly well attended to, but he usually ends by growing silly. He is friendless and has nothing to live for and forgets all that is worth remembering. It is, however, very different with the old people who have never been uprooted from the old belongings. On a single page of our parish register, which covers a period of less than thirteen months—*i.e.*, from the 25th of March, 1877, to the 20th of April, 1878, I find that five persons were buried whose united ages amounted to 425 years. The youngest of them died at eighty-two, the eldest at ninety-two. Now, I have never but twice in my Arcadian experience known of an aged man or woman who "lost their memory," as the phrase is. They can always tell you something about the long past. They can do more than that; they love nothing better than to talk of what their fathers and grandfathers did and said. This is to me the most precious kind of *folk-*

lore. But how few people have ever considered how far back the "living memory" of a man can carry us. Let me illustrate this by an example. Joseph Barker died in April, 1883, in his ninetieth year. He often used to speak of his father and grandfather. They were neither of them apparently estimable characters, and I believe that the grandfather was about fifty when his grandson was born, and he lived to a good old age. That means that Joe Barker's reminiscences, including such stories as he heard from his grandfather, covered a period of at least 140 years; in other words, they went back to, say, 1743. But it seems that the grandfather was as fond of talking about his young scrapes and prowess as the grandson was, and "he'd used to say as he learnt all his devilment from an old chap as my *father* used to talk about, too, sometimes—old Billy Barlow, as broke a chap's nose with his fist, fair fighting, too. They said that chap was a highwayman and was a-looking out for a po-shay as was a-coming on the road. But he didn't stop no po-shays

that night, you may depend on it!" I listened patiently till a pause came, then I interposed. "But who was Billy Barlow?" "Oh, he was dead afore I was much more nor born. My toes, though!—grandfather used to say as he was a owdacious one. Why, when he was a boy he locked Parson Tapps into Scarning Church when he came to be *constitootioned!*" It took me some time to interpret that obscure word, until a happy thought flashed upon me that it meant *instituted*, and I inferred that even in those remote ages beneficed clergy were instituted with the old forms just as they are now. "But, Joe," I asked, "who was Parson Tapps? No man named Tapps was ever rector of Scarning. I know all their names for three hundred years." Hereupon came a long discussion, and old Joe grew more and more positive. At last it came to this: There *was* a certain Richard Tapps, who *was constitootioned* rector of Scarning in 1741, as I afterwards discovered, and he held the living, with the perpetual curacy of St. Saviour's, Norwich, till 1785. After

being *constitootioned* he never put in an appearance here again for the rest of his life. "He was that scared by Billy Barlow he wouldn't come here no more, not even to be buried." And this is how it came to pass: Billy Barlow, apparently, was then a big, hulking, "owdacious" lad. "And when Parson Tapps came over the bridge, and the tother gentlefolks as was with him, the sexton he unlocked the church door and they all went in, and they left the key in the door. And there was old Billy a-looking on, and when they was all inside Billy shut the door and locked it, and pulled out the key and he *hulled* it into the moat, and there it is now, I suppose; and Billy he made hisself scarce, and he never split on hisself, you may assure yourself!"

Now, I have no doubt whatever that this did actually happen in the year 1741, when Richard Tapps was instituted, as appears by the Episcopal Records, and though he died in 1789, during all these forty-eight years his name never once appears in our parish books, though these have been kept with

rather unusual care and precision for the last two hundred years.

"But how about the *bridge* and the *moat?*"

"Well, that's what my old grandfather used to say. When he used to tell that tale he'd always talk about the bridge and the moat, and I don't know what he meant!" No! Joe Barker did not know about those things, for bridge and moat probably had disappeared long before he was born. But I am in the habit of pointing out to my friends where the old rectory stood less than a hundred years ago, and which Mr. Barry Girling distinctly remembered. It was an old moated house, and you may easily trace the moat, which must have been filled up about the middle of the eighteenth century, when an important alteration was made in the high-road, which then apparently was carried between the church and the parsonage, the new road actually passing over the bed of the moat on the north side of the house, which I doubt not in those days was crossed by a bridge communicating with the

churchyard. I have set down all these things because they afford an illustration of an incident in itself trifling and unimportant, and occurring nearly 180 years ago, coming to my knowledge from the lips of a man who had never read a book in his life, and whose father and grandfather "did not know a great A from a bull's foot," as the wise and learned say.

Let me give another illustration of the value of these local traditions.

The parish of Little Fransham possesses a church which is still beautiful in its sore decay. The oak roof, which dates from the fifteenth century, still remains, though the angels with expanded wings which once added to the splendour of the place, the rood screen which some fifty years ago divided the chancel from the nave, the *backs* of the oak seats (themselves still *in situ*), and a great deal else that contributed to make the interior of the sacred building "exceeding magnifical" have been swept away in the memory of man. The angels in the roof went first, over fifty years ago;

they were sawn off because the Vandal who happened to be at that time rector of the parish thought they were dangerous. Then the backs of the seats were sawn off because the aforesaid Vandal declared that they encouraged the people to go to sleep when he was preaching—as though any human being could possibly have kept awake while that Philistine was droning out his platitudes. Then the rood screen went the way of so many rood screens—and that Vandal was happy. He had made a clean sweep of everything that could remind his people of ages which, in his opinion, knew nothing and were best forgotten. Some years ago I went to Fransham to have a talk with Harry Pestell and his wife—two dear old people who had lived all their lives in the parish and were fond of talking about all that concerned the place. Old Harry Pestell must have been some inches higher than six feet in his youth, and even when I saw him he was a grand specimen of an old man. He talked freely, not to say volubly. Of course he had known the Vandal. "Why, he right

down *scrome* when he heard tell that that bit off the angel had dropt off. 'Have'm daywn!' he says. 'Have'm daywn!' Lor', as Mas'r Alpe used to say, 'he needn't a-been afraid as any good angels were agoin' to fetch *him* afore his time; he warn't such good company for the likes o' they!' Anyhow, he had 'em daywn, and then he sawed off the backs o' the seats. He'd used to do what he liked, he did. Them seats had been there, I'm told, hundreds and hundreds o' years before him, and we boys we used to sit in 'em, and many's the time as I's sot in they seats *and watched the images*."

"You mean the angels, I suppose?"

"No, I don't mean the angels! S'pose I dunno a angel from a image?"

"But where were the images? What were they?"

[N.B.—When you are questioning an old man, or, for that matter, when you're cross-examining any man, never ask two questions at once.]

"Well, you're a larned gent, you are, and maybe you can tell me what they was, for

I never heerd no one say what they was. But d'ye think I don't knaw a angel from a image? There was four on 'em, and we boys used to look at 'em all sermon time. Angels!—they warn't no angels!"

"Well, but, my good friend, what is the difference between an angel and an image?"

By which very foolish question you will observe I showed my weakness, and thereby I very nearly lost the extremely valuable piece of information which came out of this interview. Happily, however, old Pestell was quite equal to the occasion.

"What's the difference? Why, a angel's got wings and a image has got his close on. And a angel ain't painted all manner o' colours, and they images they was dressed in red and green, and two on 'em was men and two on 'em was women. D'ye s'pose I dunno what a image is?"

Old Pestell was getting quite angry at my incredulity. So I dropped the subject for a few minutes to give him time to recover his equanimity.

"Where were those images you spoke of just now?"

"Where! Why, *atop o' the screen, o' courst*. There was a kind of balcony in front of 'em and they stood behind it; and we boys we'd used to watch 'em, cause lots on 'em used to say they'd seen 'em move, and I've watched 'em scores o' times to see if *I* could see 'em move, but they never did as I saw for all my watching of 'em!"

"Were they on the top of the screen when the Vandal took it down?"

"Lor', no! That was long afore his time. That was Parson Swatman as sawed them off. I was a grown man by that time, and I heerd tell as one of the boys took his oath as he'd seen one of the images move a goodish way and nodded his head, and he stood to it that hard that Parson Swatman said he'd *seen double;* and then some on 'em laughed a goodish deal, and then Parson Swatman said he'd have no more images and he sawed 'em off."

Now, the inference from all this is plain enough. When the roods were removed by

authority from the chancel screens in the sixteenth century, the spoilers almost invariably tore down, not only the central crucifix but the "images" which were fixed in sockets on the rood beam. There were for the most part four such "images," two of them being always those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John. As an instance I may mention that on the rood beam of Scarning church there are five such sockets distinctly traceable, the socket for the rood or crucifix being considerably larger than those for the *images*. At Fransham I conjecture, with some hesitation, that the rood was not fixed to the beam, but suspended from the roof, and so the "images" were left undisturbed. Anyhow, I can have no doubt that we have here an instance of the aforesaid images having remained *in situ* in a small village church till the second decade of last century, and being actually remembered by a man still living twenty-three years ago. Old Pestell died at Fransham in January, 1891, in his ninety-third year.

It is, however, when we avail ourselves of the opportunities which a long chat in the lowly cottages of the aged poor afford us that we get some of the most instructive reminiscences of the daily life and social habits, and ways of thinking and religious sentiments, of our rustics in days when there were no railroads and no newspapers and no large farms, and when the roads were, for thousands of miles in England, almost incredibly bad. It was only in 1827 that McAdam was appointed General Surveyor of Roads, and received a grant of £10,000 from Parliament as a recognition of his great services in bringing about the improvement of the highways in various parts of England. Even as late as 1830 (and I believe after that) the parish roads within four or five miles of Norwich were so nearly impassable that Mr. Micklethwaite, owner of Taverham Hall—a considerable squire and High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1810—used habitually to drive into Norwich with four horses, as his son informed me some twenty years ago, adding, as if it were within his own recollection :

"He couldn't help himself; the roads were all rucks." The "old Lady Suffield," as she is still called by those who remember her ladyship, even down to the time of her death in 1850 never drove out from Blickling Park with less than four horses. "It was not from any love of display. She had never done anything else all her life, and she would go and stop the carriage at some of the cottages, and talk to the old people." That was the report I received from the lips of one who knows, and to whom all my homage is due "on this side of idolatry."

When Carlyle made so great a point of the incident at Thurtell's trial, where a witness explained what he meant by a *gentleman* by saying that he *kept a gig*, Carlyle must have been ignorant of the fact that in 1824 only the leisured classes kept gigs. Once off the "king's highway" and you were among the "rucks." "Farmers never drove to market in they days," said one of our elders to me. "They rode o' horseback and they'd used to *race* half-way

home—more particularly when they was tight."

It is extremely difficult to realize what the country was like before the open fields and "waste lands" were inclosed. In this part of Norfolk the old byways, as a rule, followed the course of the little runnels or brooks, which served as boundaries of the old manors. Wherever you see a parish road which is quite straight for half a mile, there you may be sure it is a new road laid down when some inclosure was carried out. I think the last inclosure in this parish was made in 1803. One of my old gossips, who died at about eighty, and whom I constantly visited nearly thirty years ago, more than once boasted that his father had turned the first furrow when the common at Daffy Green was enclosed. Why he should have been proud of this achievement I know not, but he was. Of course the road that was carried through the old heath is as straight as a ruler. On the heath there was a tumble-down house, which has only fallen into ruin of late years—it has not been

pulled down—and here poachers, and thieves, and gipsies, and other rogues used to drop in all night long, "lying about anywhere." I infer they used to have as much beer as they could pay for, and that sometimes the *coin* was "an old hare" and sometimes a share of other plunder. "But no one know'd nothing about licensing in those days." The area of heath and scrub and waste land in some parishes amounted to almost as much as was under cultivation. Running along the north bank of a watercourse which separates the parish of Scarning from Wendling lies a tract of land on which the Abbey of Wendling stood for some four centuries. The Wendling canons made the most of it; they skilfully manipulated the stream and utilized it for turning a mill to which all the tenants of their Wendling manor were bound to bring their corn to be ground. Skirting the mill stream there was a long tract of rough, waste land overgrown with gorse and scrub; at the beginning of last century it was reckoned as no man's land, and had become worth-

less for purposes of tillage. But one of the elders of our parish, being a far-sighted and resourceful young fellow, managed to set himself up with a donkey and cart some ninety years ago, and began to cut down the scrub and make merchandise of it. He sold the stuff for kindling fuel and for oven wood, and he succeeded so well and was left so unmolested that he saved quite a pretty little sum of money, which became the nucleus of the considerable fortune that he left behind him thirty years ago. The mill continued to be used till 1878 [?], when a flood wrought much damage to the ancient waterways and to the mill itself, and the landlords (Christ Church) declined to carry out the repairs. "I remember when I was a boy," said one of my informants, "there used to be an old *paved road* of great round stones to the mill from the turnpike. But they took 'em all up and sold 'em for the turnpike road." I infer that this "reform" was carried out when the *macadamizing* of the main roads began, and the boulders were utilized for this purpose while at the same

time employment was found for men out of work by setting them "to break stones on the high-road."

. . . . .

I think I have elsewhere drawn attention to the fact that this parish contains nearly 3,500 acres of very good land. It has never had a great squire's house in it. That is, it has always been an "open parish" with a number of small estates, the owners of which in many cases were non-resident.

Until the beginning of last century no justice of the peace had ever lived in the place, and the outlying hamlets must have been very "shy neighbourhoods," inhabited by a more or less lawless set, who lived in a strangely free and unmolested way. There was a *cage* just outside Scarning, but lying in the parish of Dereham, and the stocks and pillory, or whipping-post, stood outside our churchyard. One of my elders remembered a dissolute old roisterer named Marshall being put in the stocks (he does not remember by what authority), and kept there for three or four hours. "He

was a wonder for roaring and holloring was that there Marshall. They put him in the cage at Dereham one night, and he roared like a bull and called for beer and said he was going to die of cold. So some of his mates they brought him a quart of beer. But they couldn't get it through the bars of the cage ; so they brought him a long old tobacco pipe and he sucked up his beer through that. 'You give all that's left to the constable, mates, and tell him he's welcome to it, with my love,' says he. But there warn't a drop left for the constable nor no one else ! "

It goes without saying that reminiscences like these indicate a certain lowness of *morale* as generally prevalent among the rustics, and yet I am inclined to think that, so far from *our* people being any worse than their neighbours, they bore rather a better character than the average Norfolk labourer three generations ago.

The influence of the school in the parish may have had something to do with this, and the fact that there has been always a

resident clergyman, whose presence must have been for the advantage of his parishioners in more ways than one. It is true that there are no traditions which point to any one of these gentlemen having been a man of conspicuous earnestness, or energy, or pulpit gifts. On the other hand, there are no bad stories or anything to the discredit of any one of them current among the people. They are always spoken of with a certain measure of respect and esteem. One of them, who has long since passed away and left no representatives, is remembered chiefly for a song that he used to sing at the tithe dinner every year, when such gatherings appear to have been characterized by a dangerous amount of boisterous joviality likely to end in unseemly talk and conduct. Mr. Aufrere was appointed rector of the parish at the beginning of last century; he invariably took the chair at the tithe dinner, which seems to have been held in, or near, the "Black Horse." The two rectors (for there are two, one being the lay rector, who was never present at

these festivities) shared the expense of the entertainment, and when the tithepayers had eaten and drunk enough to be quite good for them—that is, when they had come to the end of their liberal *allowance*—some one was deputed to call upon the rector for a song. The song was invariably the same, and was called "The Tithe Pig." It seems to have been a long song, but I have never been able to find out what the story was. When it was ended, with vociferous applause, every man rose to his feet, and the rector, tossing a guinea upon the table, retired from the assembly of roisterers, leaving them to spend the guinea as they pleased under another chairman. "He wasn't half a bad little gentleman wasn't Mr. Aufrere, and he and the lady would do a kindness to any one—that they would. Preach? I don't recollect as any one made much o' the preaching in those days. We mostly did w'rout it."

Did the people attend the church? The impression left upon me by all that I can pick up from tradition is that, at least as

far down as the first forty years of the century, *everybody* attended the parish church on Sunday mornings. Afternoon services appear to have been rare and evening services were unheard of. Working in their little gardens on Sunday afternoons appears to have been the universal practice ; partly because the labourers' hours were much longer then than now, and partly because on Sunday afternoons the men had nothing else to do but dig in their little allotments.

Scarning had a Sunday School many years before those valuable institutions were generally adopted in England. Here it seems to have grown out of what we should now call an infant school, which was started by the rector's wife and Mrs. Girling about 1810.

"My grandmother used to keep a school for the little 'uns as was too young to go to the free school. And grandmother used to teach 'em right well ! She was a wonderful good scholar. Mrs. Aufrere used to pay for them, and Mrs. Girling she used to give 'em straw bonnets with a bit o' ribbon

round 'em and little shawls to keep 'em warm and make 'em all look alike, and very pretty they looked, too, when they came to church—for they all had to go to church, you know!" But even then it is significant that there were at least two opposition dame schools going on at the same time within a mile or so of the first. One of these was started about ninety years ago by a Mrs. Skayce, just outside the bounds of our parish. She, too, "was a wonderful great scholar," and she taught her small pupils, not only their letters but reading and writing and other polite arts. Mrs. Skayce was, I gather, a very rigid and terrible old lady. She charged twopence a week for every child. She was a very strict and uncompromising Dissenter, and she made it a condition that every one of the little mites from three to six years old should accompany her to the Dissenting chapel at Dereham every Sunday morning, walking two and two, hand in hand. Think of that procession of little toddlers marching solemnly along those two miles of dirty road, with

Mrs. Skayce and a neighbour or two like-minded with herself bringing up the rear, and marching home another two miles, when the ceremony ended with "a little prayer"!

"How many of them were there?"

"Mostly about thirty of us. You remember, don't you, John?"

"O' course I do! We stretched a goodish way across Dereham market-place. Some on us used to carry the little ones for a bit when they was tired. But when we got near to Dereham old mother Skayce used to say, 'Git on, children!—git on! Two and two—two and two!' And sometimes the gentlefolks would stop and take notice of us, but old Mother Skayce wouldn't put up with it. She fared as if she was a-defying the gentlefolks with her 'Two and two, children—two and two!'"

The youngest of the interlocutors in this little dialogue is just eighty.

Our ancient hostel, the "Black Horse," which is now as well-conducted a road-side inn as well could be, has had a good character, I think, for more than

sixty years. But in the first twenty years of the century it was famous for the continual pugilistic encounters that were going on then. The old stories are almost incredible. One old woman assured me that she had known—and my impression is she told me *she had seen*—"as many as five couples mauling one another" in a single week.

Occasionally these fights were carried on with the most brutal ferocity, and kicking was very frequently part of the game. I have often suspected that the dreadful cases of *bad legs,* which were so much more common formerly among the old men than they are now, were the results of kicks on the shins given freely in the old days. Some men seem to have had quite a horrible liking for this "sport." "Why, old X., who was dead afore you came, sir, he'd fight any man for a *tater*. But he found his master at last! There was a stranger came in one night; nobody knew who he was; and he sat down and said nothing, and they looked at him and some one said as he

looked like a powerful strong sort of man, though he wasn't so very tall neither—and X. he got near him and pick'd a quarrel with him. And no one knowed how it began ; but before they could get into the yard that travelling-man was too quick for X., and he gripped him in his arms and flung him over the table where they was drinking, and he a'most broke his back. He never was a man no more. And while they was picking him up that stranger made off, and no one knew what became of him and no one asked, as I ever heard. But X. was a cripple for the rest of his life—lost the use of his legs, I mean. But it took all ten years, though, for him to die of his hurt."

There is something not only sad and horrible about this kind of thing, but something even disgusting and revolting in the hideous callousness that followed upon familiarity with all these fierce encounters. Happily, they have all passed away from among us during the last sixty or seventy years, and no wise man can be other than thankful that it is so.

But while the fear of the law has done its work in making our people incomparably more *respectable* and orderly than their sires, they have lost something, too. They have lost all that spontaneity which, while it led now and then to a great deal of mischief and practical joking, yet gave scope to the development of eccentricities of character and to the free play of such rollicking fun and riotous mirth as were the natural outcome of mere high spirits. Many of our elders had a few old songs which they sang over and over again at the rough merrymakings and the harvest suppers. Old Harry Judd had a favourite song entitled "The Blues," which the old folks are never tired of talking of. When he was long past seventy it was a sight to see the roguish twinkle of his sly old eyes when you mentioned his famous song. But for all my trying I never could get him to sing it to me—not a verse of it! He went so far as to chuckle at the mention of his vocal powers. But he had got ashamed of it, too; though, from all I have heard, there was nothing to be

ashamed of in his song. Only the time for singing had passed away, and it is and must be hard to sing with real effect a roaring old ballad in cold blood to an audience of one, and that one the parson.

Dancing has almost become a dead art in our Norfolk villages, and I do not hesitate to say that this has been a loss and not a gain among the people. On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, in 1887, some one—I forget who—insisted on our having a dance in the meadow where the feasting was carried on. Only two oldish women and the son of one of them could be prevailed on to show off. But the figures and the turnabouts and the Terpsichorean "fandangles" which they went through were wonderful to see, and as they warmed up to their work the dear old women seemed to throw themselves back into the merry days of their youth and to forget the years that had passed since hornpipes and reels and rough minuets were the fashion.

As matters stand now, among our country

folk everybody is like everybody else, and everything that approaches eccentricity of character is frowned upon as something not quite proper. The tremendous forces of repression which have been steadily at work for the last sixty or seventy years have reduced the pleasures of the country folk to a minimum, and banished from our midst those more or less harmless diversions—from skittles upwards—which gave some outlet for the exuberant vitality of their grandfathers. As one growled out to me in his indignation at not being allowed to make a short cut across the railroad on his way home from his work : "You mayn't do this, and you mayn't do that, and you mayn't do the other now, till you don't know what you may do. Them Ten Commandments was bad enough, but there was only ten on 'em. Who's a-going to say what you may do now? Lawk a mussy ! they won't let you die quiet in your bed soon, w'rout calling in the parish doctor to say whether your time's come ! Why, they'd a shut up old Bright Trollop in the asylum if he'd been

alive now. They'd ha' said he wasn't fit to take care of hisself, that they would!"

I pricked up my ears. "Who was Bright Trollop?"

"Oh, I don't know! You must go to Betsy Upton. She'll tell you all about him."

So to Betsy Upton I repaired, and a highly interesting account she gave me of Bright Trollop, which I hope my readers will forgive me for introducing in this connection.

"Who was Bright Trollop, Betsy?"

"Who? He was my great-grandfather, and you may see his stone in the church-yard. You've heard talk of 'Trollop's Folly'—you must ha' done?"

On my expressing my absolute ignorance of Mr. Bright Trollop and of his sayings or doings, I was favoured with the following story.

Before I tell it, however, I must needs express my belief that Charles Dickens can hardly have been ignorant of some of the talk about Trollop's eccentricities when he described the "Castle" in *Great Expecta-*

tions, which Wemmick had constructed for himself with his own hands at Walworth.

Probably Dickens heard the gossip about our Scarning mansion in one of his East Anglian pilgrimages. Be that as it may. The following is a narrative of facts.

Brightmore Trollop began life as a carver in wood during the first half of the eighteenth century, and attained such fame for his skill that he managed to scrape together quite a little fortune. "There used to be lots o' things as Bright Trollop carved in the gentlefolks' houses at one time. I've heerd my mother talk of 'em often—sich as chairs and great bedsteads. There was one beautiful great carved bedstead as I remember when I was a little girl, but I can't tell what came of it."

Having made his pile, Bright Trollop gave up his carving and settled in Skeorn's Inga about the year 1750, taking a farm of about a hundred acres, with a farmhouse that is all but the most picturesque little dwelling in the parish to this day. He took it into

his head to lay out a garden, not on his own farm but about a quarter of a mile off; and I suspect he must have bought the little patch of ground from one of the smallowners, of whom there were so many in those days. The farming business did not give sufficient employment to his active mind, and he spent all his spare time upon his garden. In process of time he had surrounded his little freehold [?] with a very thick hedge "such as no one couldn't see through," and being a very ingenious personage, he contrived a kind of labyrinth "and gravel walks going all sorts of ways"; and he dug what he'd call a lake—"that wasn't no better nor a pit." . . . "Yes, it were! That were a pond! I've often heerd tell of the pond. That weren't no pit. Why, that weren't no more nor a yard deep, and folks said as he puddled it wi' clay hisself."

The subtle distinction between a pond and a pit must be left. "Bright, he'd used to call it his lake. Why, they was always a-talking of Trollop's Folly when we was young."

In the midst of this earthly Paradise there was a little round house which Mr. Trollop had built with his own hands. It had a door and a window, and was full of "all sorts of curious things as Bright had got together, and that got to be so heavy at last that when he was an old man he *couldn't move it* as he used."

Move it? Was it on wheels? No; this palace of delights was fixed in some miraculous way on a kind of table and it turned upon a swivel.[1] "Nobody never could make out how he did it. He was that crafty as he kind o' puzzled 'em all!" Having exercised his genius for many years upon this splendid palace and park of his, he acquired a very wide renown. People used to come for miles to pay Mr. Trollop a visit. "The gentlefolks they was proud of him, I've heerd say, and they'd do anything for 'old Bright,' as they called him."

[1] As far as I can make out from my informants the little house was moved about in the same way as the sails of a windmill were swung round to catch every change of wind. The mechanism which Trollop invented, however, was in some way concealed from view by the screen which the *overcoat* afforded.

Sometimes the old man when he saw them coming would give his house a turn. Lo! there was no door and no window to be seen, for "there was a kind of a wooden wall, as you may say, that fitted all round that inside chamber—like a great overcoat of boards, as you may say." The would-be visitors, after knocking at the overcoat for a while, would be greeted by the voice of old Bright bidding them go round to the door, which they never found until he was pleased to give his revolving house a turn; then the door came into sight, and old Bright stood looking out of the window laughing at the gentlefolks. Mr. Trollop prided himself greatly upon his gooseberries and his apples. There never were such gooseberries. But when a dish of these giants was brought upon the table it was as likely as not to disappear suddenly—how, no one could imagine. Also there were occasions when the palace smelt very strong indeed of apples, and Bright would assure his callers that there were sacks of them, and any one who could find them should

have of the very best of them to take away. Of course nobody ever did find them till Bright showed them how. That was part of the game. One device the old man was exquisitely pleased to put into practice. A visitor would declare that it was time to go home now. Then there came a creaking sound "of that there swivel." The party rose to go. They opened the door—the only door—and to their horror they found themselves facing the "lake," whose wide expanse and fathomless depth appalled them. They were actually at its very edge. "Oh, Mr. Trollop, we can't get out that way! It is the wrong door. What shall we do?" etc. Whereupon the creaking "of that there swivel" began again; and the gentlefolks departed, having by some other miraculous process been provided with an apple apiece and in high spirits at their escape from the uncanny devices of the wizard and all the perils of The Folly.

"Ah! But that *was* a wonderful place! I've heerd the old people tell all sorts of wonderful stories about Trollop's Folly. And

it was a rare pity as that wasn't kep' up. But you see as the last of they Trollops, he went on bad and he had to go. It was just as old Bright kind o' prophesied, for he'd carved in big letters on The Folly—

> "When I'm dead and come no more
> This place will be as 'twas afore."

. . . . .

Brightmore Trollop died on the 27th of March, and was buried on the 30th of March, 1802. He is described in the register as "an aged farmer." Some of his handiwork, and many of the trees he had planted, appear to have remained for people to stare at and talk about till the railway ran through or near The Folly, and though the place is not, and never will be, "as 'twas afore," yet the new has perhaps improved upon the old.

What a very dull world it will be when there remains no more folly in it! What a dreary life it will be when all picturesqueness has become eliminated; when a horrible

monotony of universal conformity makes it unlawful and impossible for men and women to differ from one another in anything ; when there are no more queer characters. outside the lunatic asylums ; when all the birds sing the same songs and *dress alike* in the winter and in the summer ; when all the men and women speak the same language, and all the dear, quaint varieties of dialect have become eliminated ; when all the dogs wag the same tails, and—saddest consummation of all—when all the elders tell the same stories, and none of those stories have any point or interest in them !

AN INCIDENT IN THE CAREER OF THE REV. LUKE TREMAIN

V

AN INCIDENT IN THE CAREER OF THE REV. LUKE TREMAIN

THEY often talk of him at Rampton even to this day. He has become a mythical personage, though it is only about seventy years since he dropped down from the clouds among us, and there are a score of people who remember him still ; some of them were grown men and women when he came, and some were boys and girls, who have but a faint recollection of him and his ways. They call him sometimes the " 'Vangelist," but more often the " Wrastler " in their dialect. Why they should call him the 'Vangelist is easy enough to understand, though even " thereby hangs a tale," but why they should call him the Wrastler is not to be

guessed until you know a little more about him and his prowess.

In the year 1844 the Rector of Rampton was a pluralist, and held another living, at which he resided half the year; and as that was a pleasant village by the seaside, it is hardly to be wondered at if he only gave the summer and autumn to Rampton and spent the winter and spring in his marine residence. As he grew older the rector spent less and less of his time at Rampton, and his curate, a worthy good soul, but very poor, occupied the rectory-house with his wife and a single servant, and, as the people say, "that was a piggy sort of a place, you may depend on, by the time as he'd had it for six or eight months or more."

Now it came to pass that in the late summer of 1844 the "*fayver*" broke out at Rampton. There was a row of squalid hovels belonging to a small proprietor in the parish—twelve of them in all—about as ghastly places as any man need wish to set his eyes on. They were almost all horribly crowded, the water was poisonous, the sewage

was thrown out into the ditch on the other side of the road, and the habits of the people were indescribably filthy, reckless, and desperate. Everybody drank as much bad beer as he could get ; the "White Hart" over the way was delightfully convenient, and was kept open through more than half the night ; the children were shoeless and ragged, untaught, unkempt, uncared for. There were three or four of the men who were habitual poachers, and one or two of them who were never sober except when they were training for a raid upon the hares and pheasants in the preserves of some neighbouring squire. The saying used to be, "Decent folks don't come from Rampton 'xcept it's arter dark."

When the "*fayver*" broke out among this wild community it did not spare them. Old and young—men, women, and children—were stricken down. "That was a purple-spotted fayver, I tell 'ee," says one. "I'd ought to know, for I had it mysel'. I was a young chap then, and there was seven on us down at once, and we was three in a bed, and father and my sister Jane and her

baby died on it, and I was off my head for a matter of ten days, as I've heerd tell."

You may read the entries in the parish register if you like ; there they are, thirteen funerals in July and August. Gaunt men and tottering women, ragged, hollow-eyed, and wan, staggered out to do the harvest that year, and how they got it in Heaven only knows !

Patient, feeble curate Blackie—himself and wife half fed—did what he could—a timid, silent man, but godly and kind withal. He went among the sick and dying in a helpless, perplexed sort of way, showed he was not afraid of the shadow of death at any rate, read the service over the graves, and won the hearts of some of the poor stricken ones by shedding tears at the bedside. The rectory was not a pistol-shot off the nearest of the hovels.

One day there was no one moving at the little rectory. Then it was found that the poor curate had fallen sick—" the fayver had got him." Next week the poor wife succumbed ; he himself was in fierce delirium ;

there was only a girl of fifteen to wait upon the pair, and nobody knew whether either the one or the other had a friend in the world.

By this time the Rampton fever had become a subject of much talk for many miles around. Her Majesty's mail used to change horses at the "White Hart." The passengers did not like it, and when one of the hostlers was struck down and died in two days the horses were taken two miles farther down the road, and the coach was not allowed to stop at Rampton. But the news of the plague spread all along the road and reached London, and one day a neighbouring clergyman, having occasion to go up to London on some business, put up at Wood's Hotel, then a great place of resort for members of the clerical profession and their families, and he talked much and excitedly of the terrible state of affairs, and, of course, he was very vehement in denouncing it as a burning shame, though how and why it was a shame he didn't explain.

"Why is it a shame?" said a voice

from the other end of the room. The speaker was a dark-haired, close-shaven gentleman in clerical dress, scarcely above the middle height, with a big head, deep chest, broad shoulders, enormously long arms almost amounting to a deformity, and a massive bony hand, which he rested on the back of a chair after he had somewhat slowly walked up to the other clergyman's table and stood confronting him, waiting for an answer.

"Why, it's a shame of the rector, to be sure," said the other, a little disconcerted. "He ought to be there, and be going in and out among them, doing his duty."

"I thought I heard you say, sir, that the rector was half a fool and seventy-three years old. Would his going mend matters much? The shame's not there. Why don't you go yourself? You said you lived only four miles off."

All eyes were turned upon the stranger. He was evidently a very ugly man to tackle, and there was a strange mocking and defiant smile upon his face which seemed to mean

anything except what was pleasant and conciliatory.

"I, sir? You have no right to ask me that question, and certainly not in that insulting tone, sir. I have my own parish and a wife and four little children. I have no business to run the risk—none at all."

"Oh, it's the risk, is it—the risk, eh?"

The words were uttered in a deliberate and inexpressibly contemptuous manner, wholly unjustifiable under the circumstances.

A murmur of displeasure, almost of indignation, went round the room. A white-haired and venerable clergyman rose from his seat and passed straight up to the last speaker.

"You are a young man, sir; I assume, too, you are a clergyman. Have you yourself a cure of souls? I think you cannot know what it is to have wife and children. But you are behaving in a very unbecoming way in hurling taunts like these against a stranger, and him, too, a priest of Christ's Church. For shame, sir! For shame!"

The smile had utterly vanished from the

young man's face ; he held down his head like a penitent child ; his eyes were bent upon the ground ; he uttered not a single word.

The old clergyman went up to him and laid his hand upon his shoulder. "There, there, my young friend, I did not want to wound you, but you know you deserved the rebuke, and I know you'll forgive me. But —but—yes ! I think you'll do more than that, you'll show yourself the man you think another ought to be, and you will yourself go down to Rampton."

With a quivering lip and a pale face the other made his answer—

"I humbly beg your pardon, sir, for the outrage I was guilty of. For you, sir, I humbly thank you for the lesson you have given me. My name is Luke Tremain. I have at this moment no cure of souls. I will go down to Rampton by the night mail. I will go down and—for the love of God."

Next morning, at seven o'clock, as usual, the mail went through Rampton at a spanking pace, but Luke was sound asleep, and

they did not wake him. A couple of miles or so farther on the road the coachman suddenly pulled up, as if he had never thought of the matter till now.

"Why, Bill, isn't there a gentleman booked for Rampton inside?"

"Bless my heart, o' course there is! I never gave it a thought! Would you like to be set down here, sir? There ain't much nor a mile to walk."

Luke, who by this time was wide awake, and quite master of the situation, silently got down and had his heavy portmanteau deposited on the ground.

"Coachman, sir?" "Guard, sir?" cried the two functionaries simultaneously.

"To be sure!" answered Luke. "I wonder I had forgotten. Bad country for the memory, guard! But I shall have to trouble you to call at Rampton Rectory for your half-crown when you come back." The two worthies took it out in some feeble bluster, and the coach rattled on. An hour later the dwellers in the cottages were surprised by the apparition of a gentleman

carrying a big portmanteau on his broad shoulders and walking along straight as a dart. He passed through the rectory gate and startled the weary little servant-girl by walking straight into the hall—for the front door was open—and dropping the portmanteau on the floor with a sigh of relief, took off his hat, mopped his face, and stared at the girl, who looked upon him as an ogre.

"Now, Sally—is that your name?"

"No, sir; please, sir, my name's Helen."

"Where did you get that bad name from? Helen was a very wicked woman, and a heathen, and that's more; and she did a deal of mischief, too. As long as I'm here I'll call you Sally. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir. But, please, sir, you can't stay here. Master and missus are both in bed with the fayver, and master's off his head; and they all say as I'm going to have the fayver, too, and father won't have me home. And please, sir, there's nothing to eat."

"Sally," said Luke solemnly, till the girl's hair almost stood on end, "if you get

the fever you shall be buried in the ditch with a stake run through you. I'll stand no nonsense. Do you hear? Is the kettle boiling?"

Yes, it was always kept boiling. The doctor said she was always to keep it boiling, she didn't know why. That was the hardest work she had to do, keeping up the fire and lifting the kettle. What had she had for supper? Tea. What else? Nothing, 'cause the last loaf had been made into a poultice.

"Ah! I thought so—half starved! Why, you're a walking atomy, Sally. Get the tea—we'll have it together."

In five minutes' time Luke had opened that bulky portmanteau, and had produced a pound of tea, a bottle of brandy, a bag of biscuits from Le Man's shop in the City, a shape of jelly which he had bought at a confectioner's in Fleet Street and carried off in its mould, and finally a huge tin canister of oatmeal. From this last he proceeded to make two big slop-basins full of porridge, Sally looking on with wide eyes.

Then he made her fall to. She had never seen porridge before, but she took to it voraciously. Then came the tea. By good luck one of the farmers had left a jug of new milk at the gate every morning for the last ten days, and Luke, who could not drink tea without milk, consumed cup after cup, and after the girl had been fairly brought to an anchor he finished off the rest of the biscuits, which were enough to have satisfied six harvestmen.

"Now then, Sally, we'll go upstairs. Never do anything on an empty stomach, Sally. Fill up the kettle ; I'll go alone."

"Oh, sir ! please, sir ! you mustn't go upstairs : you'll get the fayver, and you're a kind gentleman. You'll get the fayver !"

"Sally, you attend to me. Kind or not kind, I'll tell you a secret. I've got a devil in me ; and if you don't mind what I say, and do as I tell you, that devil will come out and rend you. If you ever say that word *fayver* in this house again you shall be tossed into the ditch and have a stake driven through you, and lie there till Judg-

ment Day!" He made his way to the dreadful bedroom. Two emaciated human beings were lying there, one of them tossing about in delirium, the other just stupid with helplessness and despair. His first act was to open every door and window on that first floor. Then he dropped down upon his knees beside the poor woman as she lay, and asked for help that he might help others.

And so Luke began his work at Rampton. Before a week was out he had more supplies than he knew what to do with. He hired a "trap" and went driving about the country demanding rather than begging for help. The port-wine, the brandy—even the champagne—came in by the dozen. Three of the cottages had been vacated, the inmates having fled, no one cared whither. Luke treated them as if they were his own—asked no one's leave—had them thoroughly cleaned out, scraped, whitewashed, and the doors taken off from the upper floor. Then he had three sets of fever-stricken patients removed into these houses, and treated the next three cottages in the same way. In

a fortnight the fever was stamped out. There were no fresh cases, and the curate and his wife were moving about again and sitting out in the sunshine. The masterful energy of the man carried all before it. As the patients recovered, Luke always insisted that they should come to church and give thanks for their recovery. Only John Barleycorn grumbled, for the taproom was wellnigh deserted, and the people were somehow showing some little gleams of seriousness and self-respect.

Finally, one morning he abruptly burst out upon poor Mrs. Blackie, who had been whimpering forth her gratitude and protesting that they owed life and health to their benefactor, and so on and so on.

" My good woman, I can't stand this sort of thing. This very day either you go away from this place for three months or I do. It's for you to say. If you'll consult my convenience, you'll go away, both of you, and take Sally with you and stay away till Christmas, and I'll stay here in charge of the parish. Here are five-and-twenty pounds

to help you. The mail will pass at twelve, and you've got two hours. If I find you here when I get back you'll never see my face after this day at sunset."

He flung himself out of the house in seeming wrath, leaving five banknotes upon the breakfast-table behind him. On his return early in the afternoon the house was empty. The next thing was to get a poor woman "to do for him." She was a neat and decent person, had been a cook in a gentleman's family, had married late and had lost her husband, was the mother of two children, and the mistress of a cat.

. . . . .

The harvest had been gathered and the odd labourers were turned off. There were several of the men out of work. Luke looked about him and resolved to remodel the garden. He set four or five men at work, and soon there was a transformation scene indeed. He made new walks, even cut down a tree or two, levelled a new lawn, and cleared out the pond. The strange feature in it all was that nobody interfered

with him. Little by little, now that the fever scare had passed away, the clergy and some few of the gentry round dropped in and called upon him. Once a pompous territorial magnate came to pay his respects. Luke was in the garden ordering his men, and was slow to invite the great J.P. to walk in. Accustomed to treat people *de haut en bas*, the visitor was irritated by Luke's fearless and almost aggressive independence. For no man ever patronized him a second time; once was quite enough to try that experiment. What passed between the two will never be known, but the squire went off like Naaman in a rage. "Confound the fellow! He as much as told me to mind my own business, and he smiled at me as if he'd been a prizefighter stepping into the ring. Who is he? where does he come from?" It was suggested that he was a Cornishman, of a good Cornish family, with a comfortable little independence; that he had been a scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge; might have won a fellowship, but that he had some cranky

notions about the way a man ought to read; preferred Plutarch to Plato, and wasted two whole terms in a vain attempt to translate Cassiodorus and reconstruct the text of that barbarian writer. In course of time he had taken orders; but he could not respect his rector, and one day he smiled at him. The rupture was inevitable; he retired to a small patrimony which was heavily mortgaged, lived like a hermit on less than a pound a week, and at the end of three years had paid off fifteen hundred pounds of incumbrances which had been borrowed for some reason or other at six per cent. Then he had taken another curacy, this time with a really holy and devoted clergyman, whose influence had changed the whole current of his life. One morning his friend was discovered dead in his bed, and Luke found himself "with a loose end" and quite bewildered by his loss. He had come up to town resolved on taking a London curacy, when he found himself that evening at Wood's Hotel, and four months had passed since then and the winter was drawing near.

The spasms of conscientiousness which had twitched and wrung the hearts of the Rampton folk while death was knocking at their doors, and Luke had seemed to them a special "'Vangelist" sent down from heaven to save their bodies and souls, had passed away. The church, to be sure, had become a wholly different place on Sundays; there were a couple of hundred of the farmers and poor people who were now regular attendants, and there was no doubt that a very great change had come upon the parish. But "what's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh," and there was a villainous set among the younger men, whose fathers and grandfathers had been poachers and sometimes sheep-stealers in the old days.

The "White Hart" had begun to fill again. It was nothing like what it had been, but there were always six or eight of the "blacks," who got back to their old quarters by the fireside in the long evenings, and there was noise and quarrelling as of yore, and occasionally something worse.

Luke was vexed, but he knew it must

come to this sooner or later. He went boldly to John Barleycorn and remonstrated with him for keeping the house open all night, and hinted that possibly it might be to his advantage to close at eleven. The man was sulky and insolent. "Close at eleven? What for? Supposing as I did close at eleven. I tell 'ee what—some on 'em 'd come and knock at the rectory door, the' would, and ast what you'd done wi' all that there port-wine as Squire Barclay sent in for 'em when they was down wi' the fayver. I tell 'ee they know as well as you who that there wine belongs to."

Luke was stung as if an adder had struck him. But he bit his lip, said not a word, passed out of the house, came back for one brief moment, stared hard at the landlord, and then, with a grim smile upon his face, said slowly: "John Barleycorn, you're a cunning man; but you cunning fellows are often a trifle too sharp. So it was you put that into their heads, was it?"

The fellow was cowed and shambled back into his parlour and sat down trembling.

When he recovered his speech again he mumbled gruffly to the little knot of boozers : "Blessed if I don't think that blooming parson's got the evil eye. He'd ought to be swum for a witch."

Alas ! John Barleycorn had got the ear of the bad set again, but they did not let him into all their secrets. Luke went on in the old way, taking his lonely walks, mostly in the late afternoons and sometimes in the moonlight nights. In the daytime he was always busying himself about some parish matter—the dame's school (for there was no other) ; the night school for the lads, whom he taught himself ; visiting among the old people, who dearly loved him, and as often as not pulling out a short blackened clay pipe—there were no "briers" in those days—and after handing a big hairy pouch to some old gossip, whose eyes twinkled at the sight of it, filling up himself and smoking voluminously. There was a poor little club-footed boy who lived with his old grandparents, and who could neither read nor write. The hovel in which those three

lived was a long way off the rectory, and the boy could not get as far as the night school. So Luke took it into his head to teach the little cripple with the grandfather looking on. The boy, as time went on, grew up into a rather thoughtful man, who had many stories to tell of his first and only teacher, as thus :—

"Grandfather said as the 'Wangelist was the first parson as he ever heard tell on who was a teetotaller, and the first as ever smoked a short pipe, and the first as ever slopped hisself in a girt thing as they called a shower reg'lar every morning, and the first as preached all out of his own head, and the first as knowed the Bible and Prayer Book by heart, every word."

John Barleycorn sneered at it all.

"What call's he got to wash hisself in that there thing like a Punch and Judy show? And then that there pipe—why ain't it wore up afore now? They say he smokes all day and all night, and yet there's no one never see him smoking in what you may call the open air. I don't hold wi'

they secret ways. That *may* be real 'bacca, but no one knows where that du come from. He's a artful 'un ! "

December was half done. The moon was at its full ; it was a glorious night. Luke started out for a midnight walk. Tempted by the deep quiet, and the splendour of the moon paling all the stars, and the crisp, firm road that the frost had made hard as adamant under his feet, Luke walked on and on, till he found himself some seven miles from home. He looked at his watch, and found it much later than he had thought. He had scarcely turned homeward when, in a turn of the road, he came full upon a little band of five men, one of whom he immediately recognized as a parishioner, with no very good character to boast of, even among the "blacks."

"Why, George, what are you up to at this time of night?"

The moment the words had escaped him he felt he had made a mistake. The fellows all joined in a rough laugh, and one of them answered brutally : "We're a-going

to a prayer-meeting, we are, and we'll take you with us if you loike. Yow've been a-setting snares, I'll bet, Mister. Passons hadn't ought to du sich things. Yow go your gait, and we'll go ourn."

Luke seldom hesitated, but he did hesitate now; and, as they marched on and passed him, he could not see what the right course was, and he continued his homeward walk, very uncomfortable, and angry with himself at his awkwardness and stupidity.

Next morning Rampton was all astir. A party of poachers had been set upon in Squire Gorman's spinney, and three of them had been cleverly captured by a large band of keepers. The other two had made off, and no one knew who these two were, or where they had come from. The three were all Rampton men. Who were the other two? A day or two afterwards Luke came upon George Cannell and another. As they passed him he looked at them both with that terrible smile, but they took no more notice of him than if he had been a clod of mud by the wayside.

Who was that other? He was the bully of the parish, a hulking, powerful man of about five-and-twenty—a very dangerous ruffian when he was in beer, and a "black" who was the terror of the night-school boys when they were on their way home. He was a good deal over six feet high, had maimed more than one opponent in a stand-up fight, and might have been a Hercules but that he was coarse in the fibre, gross in his habits, and wholly undisciplined in mind or body. His name, Dan Leeds.

Luke could have no doubts who the missing two men were, and the less so when he began to hear himself shouted at by men at work in the fields as he was on his walks, with the cry of "Spy!" "Bloomin' spy!" "Informer!" and so on, with many an oath to give the words emphasis. Of course, he was saddened, but he was too obstinate to alter his ways of treating the people. He took no notice, and seemed not to care.

The curate and his wife were to return on New Year's Day. Christmas was very near, and Luke had no plans for the future.

It looked as if he were going to stay on the old footing. As for the rector, he had become quite childish ; no one made any account of him.

One day he was walking at his usual swinging pace along the coach-road on some errand of mercy to a sad one at the other end of the parish, when he met the big bully, Dan Leeds, driving a tiny donkey in a heavily loaded cart, Dan sitting upon the load and furiously beating the poor little animal with a heavy ash stick in mere wantonness of ferocity. Luke's blood was up, for that devil in him that he had spoken of to little Sally was a devil that would not always be *laid*. The young man was always struggling with it, praying against it, getting overcome by it, gnashing his teeth and beating his breast with shame and self-reproach when he had been mastered by it, finding the conflict so very, very hard and the issue, alas ! so often doubtful. As often as his passionate temper broke out, and it seemed to others that the storm had passed and the calm had followed, he would rush into his

own room and fling himself upon the ground, writhing and moaning, sometimes sobbing, revenging himself upon himself in self-accusation, refusing all food, lying there with clenched hands and shut eyes for hours, till Mrs. Clayton would get frightened, and, when all other kindly devices failed, would send one of the little children with broth or tea, or some simple dainty, the little toddler being commanded to stand by the strong man and make him speak, if it were only "Yes" or "No." On one occasion, when he had lain there unmoved for more than twenty-four hours, the little boy, a child of four, went in with a Jews'-harp and began to spring it. Luke opened his eyes sadly. "Mofer says you're Saul, and she says I'm to play my harp to you, Mis' Termain!"

The sight of this hulking Dan Leeds showering blows upon the poor little beast was more than Luke could stand. He burst out in uncontrollable anger.

"What a brute—what an unmitigated brute you are, Dan Leeds, for treating that

poor beast that way! Yes, you're an unmitigated brute. You deserve to have that stick laid across your own thick shoulders!"

Many a Rampton man, even Dan himself, might possibly have borne being called a brute, but to add to that word "brute" an epithet of five syllables—to call him an *unmitigated* brute when he did not know what the long word meant—that was quite intolerable; it was ten times worse than swearing in the vernacular!

"Oh! I'm a titigated brute, am I?" growled Dan. "I'd soon larn you to call folks names out o' the Bible if you weren't a parson. A titigated brute, eh! I've a good mind to do it now, and I *will* lay the stick on you, too, if you don't mind yersel'."

The "devil" was getting the upper hand—the devil had got the upper hand.

"Oh, *I* don't mind if *you* know how to do it," said Luke, and that terrible, indescribable smile passed over his face, and its scorn, contempt, irony, indignation, wrath, defiance smote upon Dan Leeds with the

sting of a blow and drove him mad. He sprang out of the donkey-cart, grasping the ash stick in his hand, and came with a rush upon Luke.

"I'll larn you to keep a civil tongue in your head, you —— parson. You want a lesson, you do."

Reckless ruffian as he was, the fellow was staggered for a moment, for Luke stood there with folded hands as calm as a statue, keeping his eye upon his assailant and only smiling the horrible smile. Dan came upon him with uplifted stick, and in a hesitating way knocked off the parson's hat, as if in challenge. Before he knew where he was Luke's arms were round him like two wire ropes, and the next moment he had been flung into the air like a ball, and was sprawling in the road. The hat had rolled away a few yards into the ditch. Luke coolly went after his hat; but as he stooped to pick it up, Dan Leeds, who had scrambled to his feet, came at him from behind and dealt a tremendous blow at him, a blow which would certainly have fractured his

skull but that the fellow was "silly" with his fall, and Luke's hat was a stiff one with a stout brim.

He never knew how he escaped. He only remembered crying out, "You coward!" a confused sense that he must grapple with a wild beast, that it was life or death; then once more he was closing with his antagonist; then he had thrown him again over his head; then, as he came to himself, there was Dan Leeds a helpless lump, lying as if he were dead! He was very far from dead, only cowed and scared. Wrenching the stick from the hands of the fallen bully, for he still clutched it, Luke stood over him pale and dizzy, the glare in his eyes very bad to see. Then Dan Leeds began to howl like a beaten cur as he was:—

"Oh Lor', ha' mercy on me! Don't 'ee, sir! Don't 'ee! Don't 'ee kill me, sir. How war I to know? Both my arms is broke, sir. Ow! Booh, sir! So's my neck broke, too. What'll mother du w'rout me? He's a-going to kill me! Murder! Murder! Ow! Booh!"

"Up on your knees," said Luke, "you cowardly sneak."

The fellow, blubbering and half beside himself with terror, did as he was bid.

"Now say after me—

"'I'm a brute. Yes, I am! as you said I was, sir!

"'I'm a cur-cur-coward, as you said I was, sir.

"'I'm a liar. Yes, I am; I knaw't. My arm ain't broke!

"'The dickey's a better beast than me. Yes, sir!

"'I promise faithful, I'll go and tell mother—booh!—as the parson brought me on my marrow-bones. Booh! w'rout hitt'n of me!

"'I'll come to church o' Sunday afternoon and be preached at, and I'll tell 'em all as I hit 'en wi' a stick, and he tossed me over his head. Yes, I will. . . . Amen!'

"Now you may go!" said Luke. He broke that tough ash stick across his knee—broke it, and broke it again. "There! That donkey of yours don't want any more

of your beating. I fancy you'll find your collar-bone broken. It is a way collar-bones have of breaking, with that throw. I've heard 'em sometimes!"

. . . . .

All this happened on Friday afternoon. In a few hours the story was all over the parish, and had spread far and wide. As usual, rumour and gossip had taken all sorts of wild liberties with the facts. There had been a stand-up fight in the yard of the "White Hart," and the Bishop was coming on Sunday afternoon to unfrock the "'Wangelist" with extraordinary ceremony. There was a warrant out against Dan Leeds, and he was going to get off by doing penance in a white sheet. Dan's mother was going to have it out with the parson. She was a dangerous virago, who would stick at nothing. She had been going about trying to borrow a gun, and when no one would lend it her—for they were as much afraid of her fury as they were of her son—she had been screaming out that she'd stick the parson in

the pulpit before Dan should demean himself. She'd stop it if she swung for it. He shouldn't have a sheet of hers—no! nor a blanket neither, not for all the Amens that ever were sworn.

Luke walked about all Saturday as if nothing had happened, even passed Widow Leeds' hovel, but didn't call. She yelled at him through the half-open door, but he passed on and took no notice, swinging his long arms, as his wont was, and never looking round.

Sunday came. The little urchins got as near as they dared and peeped in at the rectory gate. The bells rang out. At morning service Luke expounded the gospel as usual—cool as a cucumber, fluent, gentle, unembarrassed. Nothing ailed the man. Then came the memorable afternoon; crowds came tramping in from all points of the compass—some walking, some in carts, some on their nags. The "White Hart" had a harvest. People hung about the churchyard, lingered in the porch, watched for the parson, and some wondered when the bishop

would turn up. There was a curious hush of expectation. At last!

In the tiny vestry Dan Leeds was waiting in his smockfrock—they wore such things in those days—the left sleeve hanging down empty, for the fracture of the collar-bone was a bad one, and the doctor had bandaged his left arm to his side with voluminous wrappings. When Luke marched into church the other followed at his heels like a dog. The people noticed that the parson was wellnigh six inches shorter than his giant henchman. Dan, obeying a sign, took his seat on the pulpit steps. At last the sermon came; the text was a brave and startling one: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Old Hulver says: "I was a youngster then; but I ain't likely to forget that there sermon anyway. 'Look 'ee here,' says he, 'there's on'y One as ever did that; and if you and I was to try it on, the blacks 'd pretty soon have it all their own way. We ain't no call,' says he, 'to let the blacks

hammer at us. What ha' we got to do?' says he. 'Why, go as near it as we can! No man ain't no right,' says he, 'to let another murder him if he can help it. That ain't the gospel,' says he. And then he went on and told 'em what the gospel was. Lor'! that was a sermon! They'd use talk of it for years and years, they did."

There are floating scraps and grotesque reminiscences of the sermon still to be picked up in the neighbourhood, some of them almost profane, and almost all of them representing very strange perversions. But it was evidently a "word spoken in season," and a very impressive appeal to the moral instincts of the ignorant peasantry, which went home to the convictions of some few, and was listened to by all. At last the preacher stopped. "Daniel Leeds, stand up in the face of God and of this congregation and make what reparation you can for your sin and wrong."

The hulking bully rose up to his full height upon the pulpit step, with a hang-dog scowl upon his face, and made answer

to question after question, which Luke had written down upon a paper beforehand. Dan was not spared ; he said he had been a brute to the donkey—a coward, a liar ; that he would have killed the parson if he could. The answers were made in a dull, formal manner, every now and then ending up with an Amen ! to which mysterious word a special solemnity attached in the minds of all. The confession finished with some questions which produced an immense sensation.

" Did I strike you, Daniel Leeds, a single blow with stick, or fist, or hand ? "

" No, sir ! you hadn't no need ; you gripped me ! "

" Is all this plain truth ? "

" Yes ; that's the truth—far as I know ! "

" Are you sorry for your sin ? "

A pause ; then a sullen nod of the head.

" Do you acquit me of any wrong done ? "

Another pause, and another reluctant hesitating nod and grunt.

" Do you ask God's forgiveness ? . . . Speak up, man ! " cried Luke, with a voice

of indignant command, his eyes flashing as he turned them on the wretched culprit.

Dan started, woke up with a stare of terror, and blurted out: "I ain't no objection; I ain't, indeed. Yes, sir! Amen!"

. . . . .

The congregation broke up. There were little groups of them in the churchyard, at the gate, in the road. Dan Leeds clung to Luke's side—followed him like his shadow.

"Well, Dan, anything more you want to say?"

"I count they's a-going to hollar at me, sir. I dunno what's come to me; I ain't got no heart to face 'em. Then there's another thing, sir. I'm afeard as I shall find mother dead when I get home. She had a fit like afore church-time."

Luke was horror-struck, and hurrying with all speed to the woman's cottage, with Dan close to his heels, found she had slipped down from her chair, and was lying huddled before the smouldering fire, unconscious, speechless, evidently paralysed.

When the doctor arrived Luke made the best of his way home. It was dark now. As he passed the "White Hart," John Barleycorn was holding forth in a great state of excitement and in a loud voice—

"Didn't I say so all along? Why, the first thing he said to that girl Kinder was that he'd got a devil. He's one of they chaps as sell their selves, he is. Rampton's been all wrong sin' he came. Why, I tell ye he's got the evil eye. He took and grinned at me once, fit to craze a man, he did. There ain't a man in the parish—no! nor two of 'em—as could lift Dan Leeds off his legs and drop him same as this one did. I tell ye he's *overlooked* him, and now he's gone and witched his mother as well. Parson? He ain't no more a parson than I am. The folks is all silly running arter him. Why, he's just got rid of the parson and kep' him away these four months. He'd ought to be swum!"

Luke was very much exhausted by the work and excitement of the long day. When he got home to the rectory the fire had been

out for hours. Half-suspecting what was the matter, he made the best of it—found the tinder-box, struck a light, managed to boil his kettle at last, comforted himself as best he could with tea and porridge, took his pipe, began to read, dropped asleep over his book, and fell into a deep slumber, from which he was only roused by Mrs. Clayton coming in before the daylight to "tidy up" and get his breakfast things. She looked at him furtively, and as if she were afraid of something, she knew not what. Luke, always kindly interested in other people, asked about the children. Her face fell. He excused her for leaving him without a fire. He had come in so very late. "But it *was* cold welcome, Mrs. Clayton, and I'm very cold now, for I fell asleep, and I've not been in bed." Then it all came out. The poor woman was bitterly penitent. She had been afraid to come when the people were all about. They were saying this and saying that—the parish was divided. Up at the "White Hart" they were all declaring that Dan Leeds had been overlooked, so was

his mother, so was Mrs. Blackie, so was the rector, so was everybody. She, Mrs. Clayton, was going to be overlooked next. John Barleycorn made no manner of doubt but that her little Mary Ann would be turned into a witch and "sold off like."

The poor woman burst into floods of penitent tears. "Never you mind, sir. They shan't make me turn against you, not if it's ever so. They'll all come round when they come to their senses. Only don't you give in now—Lord bless you for evermore!"

. . . . .

I only set myself in this paper to relate an "incident." I did not promise, I did not intend, I could not venture to give the whole story of Mr. Tremain's career. I'm not sure that that kind of thing is in my line. But there are some legends and traditions of places and people that I have been thrown amongst which I like collecting and setting down, and this is one of them. This story would die with me if I did not put it on record. Whether it is much worth

preserving is a question which others must answer. We *collectors* are proverbially undiscriminating ; in our museums and repertories there are, as often as not, odds and ends that the world at large holds very cheap.

. . . . .

What was the end of it all?

Luke had a very bad time of it at Rampton. Mr. Blackie came back and his wife with him, and Sally, too. They did not know what to make of it ; they were a good, kindly, weak-minded, woolly-headed pair. Luke stayed on. A few weeks later the rector died. Then there was a change. From all that I can learn, John Barleycorn won the day, and the last state of that parish was worse than the first. Dan Leeds went wrong again, like the sow that was washed—went, indeed, from bad to worse, and was killed in a poaching affray ; his mother had a mysterious remittance of two pounds a quarter, which was paid regularly to her till she died—a poor tottering, palsied creature—a year or two after her first seizure.

Luke Tremain died of cholera somewhere in the Shires, so they tell me, probably on just such another mission of mercy as brought him to Rampton. A distant cousin, it is said, inherited his little patrimony. His last wish was that he should be buried where he died, and that his only epitaph should be, after giving his name and the date of his death: "He won the Anstey Hat at eighteen years of age."

The clergyman of the parish, however, refused to allow such a tombstone to be set up in the churchyard, and as the cousin was by no means keen upon the point it never was set up, and if any substitute for the eccentric though veracious record was erected I cannot say.

If my readers are so deplorably ignorant as not to know what the Anstey Hat means, I am sorry for them, but I don't think it is my business to instruct them—at any rate, not now.

ST. WILLIAM OF NORWICH

VI

ST. WILLIAM OF NORWICH

We are told by the historian Socrates that during the reign of Theodosius the younger a strange event occurred at a trumpery little town with an odd name, somewhere between Aleppo and Antioch, which was destined to produce a very profound impression upon the imagination of mankind in the ages that followed. It is said to have happened at Inmestar about the year 430 A.D. The town has disappeared now, but fourteen centuries ago it was a town with streets of houses, and in those streets there dwelt a large number of Jews, who made themselves obnoxious to the other inhabitants by their boisterous, insulting, and bloodthirsty behaviour. It appears that the Jews at Inmestar used to keep the feast of Purim after a fashion of their own, much

in the same way that the Protestant folk in the city of Exeter kept the 5th of November forty or fifty years ago. There the rabble carried about in procession an effigy of that arch conspirator Guy Fawkes, and ended by burning him, with many noisy demonstrations of loyalty, in a monstrous bonfire, finishing up with much expenditure of gunpowder and explosions of squibs and crackers.

The Jews in the old days did the same with the effigy of Haman. They hanged him upon a gallows with uproarious shoutings of derision and hate and scorn, and they spared not their curses, loud and deep, upon all who should follow in the steps of Haman and conspire to work the Hebrews harm. The Christians did not like the ceremony, and when the gallows, intentionally or unintentionally, assumed the form of a *cross*, their blood was stirred, and angry passions were roused. Both sides waxed more and more wroth. The Jews said they had a right to their guy ; the Christians said they should have nothing of the sort. How much

truth or falsehood there may be in what followed it is idle now to conjecture, but, at any rate, Socrates believed that the Hebrews became at last so furious and mad that they actually set up a veritable cross in the streets, fastened a Christian boy upon it, and ended by beating the child to death. Be the facts what they may, it seems that the wretched creatures suffered without mercy, and paid very dearly for their fanaticism, or whatever else we may think fit to call it.

The story was often repeated, we may be sure, and, as I have said, it became a "stock story" in the after-time. The wonder is, that, as such stories are wont to do, it did not at once and immediately become the foundation of a body of *mythus* for ingenious people to embellish and vary in a hundred different ways. Instead of that happening, it seems that the story was well-nigh forgotten for more than seven hundred years. Then, however, somebody fished it up from the obscurity in which it had been lurking for long; and, once revived, it

became not only a favourite romance in the Middle Ages, but to this day there are many credulous people who firmly believe that this diabolical crime of the Israelites has been committed again and again in various parts of the world and in various places, and that if the Jews could have it all their own way there would be annual repetitions of the tragedy of Inmestar in Hounslow, Warsaw, Vienna, or Berlin.

. . . . .

The history of the Jews in Europe and England is a bad and sad history enough. It has, however, never been written at all adequately, and there is no English book upon the subject which can be described as even a respectable compilation. We have good reason for believing that there were many representatives of the oppressed race in Britain before the Norman Conquest, and that they continued among us in somewhat large numbers till they were banished by Edward I in 1290, after which time we hear little or nothing about them in these islands for four hundred years. During

the two centuries, however, which elapsed between the coming of the Normans and their expulsion by Edward I, a great deal may be learned about this strange people and about the barbarous treatment they received. I am not, however, going to dwell upon the subject here, for I think the time has hardly come for that. But a word of explanation is required in anticipation of the question why our ancestors treated the Hebrews so cruelly as they did, and why they hated them so fiercely.

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The want of money in England during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries made itself very severely felt among all classes. The scarcity of coin was a chronic difficulty and evil, and it was met by the "moneyers" after their fashion. They issued counterfeit coin to so large an extent that Henry I had to lay his hands upon the unlicensed coiners, and, much to the joy of his people, inflicted very heavy penalties upon the culprits. It was all in vain. Certain long-headed speculators came

to the fore ; they accumulated large hoards of treasure, and the money market was in their hands. These speculators, or financiers, or capitalists—call them what you please—were all Jews. There was a reason for this. It was a law of the Church that no Christian might lend money at interest ; to do so was mortal sin. In proportion as this law was observed or enforced, in that proportion was the lending of money thrown into the hands of such as had no consciences or no scruples. The Hebrews had no qualms of conscience ; they did not believe in the immorality of charging rent for coin any more than the Christian did of charging rent for houses and lands. The result was inevitable. With the Conquest had come in a rage for building churches, monasteries, castles, houses ; and all these could not be paid for without large expenditure of hard cash. Where was it to come from? There was only one answer : the Jews were the only financiers—if you wanted money, you had to go to them. But the Jews were not likely to let you have

money without a consideration, and the Christians soon found that the *rent* charged for accommodation of this kind was extortionate and ruinous. Owners of lands and houses were reduced to beggary, while the Jews were always growing richer and richer. In every prosperous town the Jews were established; in some they had their "Jewery," or Jews' quarter, where they lived apart from the Christian inhabitants; they had their synagogues and their burial-grounds. At Lincoln, at Bury St. Edmunds, in London, Norwich, Canterbury, Leicester, York, and elsewhere, wealthy Jews appear to have been the first builders of stone houses, when, as a rule, the Christians lived in timber dwellings thatched with straw or reed. It is easy to see that the Jews would be envied, hated, loathed the more they prospered and the richer they grew. The wretches had learnt the secret of making the dissolute, the prodigal, and the reckless pay the price of their selfish vices. Of course, the spendthrifts stood upon their Christianity, and loudly and fiercely proclaimed that it was

not to be borne that the children of the faithful should be given over as a prey to the accursed Israelites. Whether the harrowing description which the Monk of Peterborough gives us of the condition of the country during the miserable reign of Stephen be a faithful picture; whether it can be true only of that limited area over which the good man's purview extended; or whether, indeed, the rhetorical language employed does not betray very evident exaggeration, let others decide. One thing is certain—that in the midst of the anarchy that is said to have prevailed far and wide there was everywhere a rage for building castles, and churches, and monasteries, and that this building could never have been carried on without large outlays of money, while, at the same time, the owners and the tillers of the soil were extensively impoverished. Equally certain is it that the money, as a rule, was found by the Jews, that they let it out at usurious rates of interest, and obtained mortgages upon the estates of the nobles and the religious houses.

The monasteries, to go no further, were very heavily in debt—how heavily may be seen from the glimpse we get of the condition of the great Abbey of St. Edmund in the pages of Jocelin de Brakelond.

Herbert Losinga, the first Bishop of Norwich, died in the year 1119. He was a man of very large resources, and he spent them lavishly. During the last twenty years of his episcopate he surrendered himself to the prevailing mania for building, and the cathedral at Norwich is only one of many vast architectural works which he projected and carried out. The most costly of these, perhaps, was the foundation of the Benedictine Priory at Norwich, the endowing it with estates which were sufficient for the maintenance of a society of sixty monks, and the erection of the large mass of buildings of which now only insignificant fragments remain. When he died the see of Norwich remained for two years without a Bishop, and the loss to the monastery, left now to its own resources, must have been enormous. When at last Bishop Eborard entered upon

his episcopacy, in 1121, he must have found himself with a great deal upon his hands, and there is reason for believing that between him and the monks no very cordial understanding existed. It was almost inevitable that the monastery should have got into debt, and as sure as it did so it must have been in debt to the Norwich Jews.

People who borrow money at 60 per cent. per annum are not likely to love the lenders, neither are their own prospects likely to improve as time goes on. But every needy citizen and every one who was, or had been, temporarily embarrassed was smarting under the exactions of the only moneyed class in the community. The Jews were not only bankers and financiers to the landowners and the trading class, but they were the only *pawnbrokers* in the city, to whom the artisans pledged their tools, their clothes, or their chattels when they found themselves in difficulties. The Hebrews were regarded as merciless bloodsuckers, and believed to be bad enough for anything. It was actually to the interest of everybody to accept every

horrible story and to represent the Jews as being the worst and basest of mankind. At Norwich, as elsewhere, there was a Jews' quarter, and almost certainly a synagogue as well as a cemetery outside the walls.[1] In the Jewry the Hebrews lived a life apart from the citizens, kept up their religious rites and customs, and were the objects of no little curiosity and suspicion, and of a certain measure of superstitious terror. It is probable that during the reign of Stephen the hatred of the race had increased greatly and had grown to the point of ferocious rancour and abhorrence. It only required that some definite charge should be brought against them to make it certain that the anti-Semitic feeling of the populace would burst forth into acts of furious violence and persecution.

In the East Anglian diocese two synods were held annually, the one in the spring, the other in the autumn, to which all the bene-

[1] It is difficult to believe, though Benedict of Peterborough and Roger de Hoveden assert it as a fact, that there was only one Jewish cemetery in England before 1177, and that before that date the Jews carried their dead for burial to London.

ficed clergy were summoned. Attendance was a burdensome duty, and the more so as the inevitable fees were demanded from the members, and these had to be paid. In the year 1144, shortly after Easter (which fell upon the 25th of March), the synod assembled as usual in the cathedral, and Bishop Eborard took his seat upon that remarkable throne which still exists, though somewhat mutilated, and supported by the magnates of the diocese and by other people of consideration who had come to take part in the proceedings, he opened the meeting with the usual forms. Of course the Prior of Norwich and his monks were in attendance; for the theory was that the Bishop was Abbot of the monastery, and the Prior and convent were at all times expected to ratify any important act of the Bishop which affected the temporalities of the see. In the silence that followed the delivery of the usual sermon, up rose a certain married priest named Godwin Sturt and asked leave to bring before the Bishop and the synod a very dreadful and distressing complaint

which it was impossible to keep back. Permission being granted, the Rev. Godwin delivered a set speech which must have startled the assembly indeed. He declared that during Passion-week an innocent little boy had been barbarously murdered after being horribly tortured ; that his body had been carried to Thorpe Wood, in the neighbourhood of Norwich, and there left unburied ; that the boy was the cousin of his own children and a nephew of his own ; that the outrage had not been committed by Christians, but—as he professed himself prepared to prove—by "the Jews, the enemies of the Christian name" ; and he ended by demanding that right should be done in the matter, that a searching inquiry should be made into the facts, and that opportunity should be afforded him of making good his serious charge against the Jewish community, which was undoubtedly implicated.

The Bishop, who apparently had received information beforehand, briefly gave his response that, while the guilty ought never to be shielded, it was not seemly to con-

demn the unheard, and therefore he decreed that the Jews should be summoned to attend before the synod next day, be required to make answer to so serious an indictment, and, if convicted, be given over to condign punishment. Thereupon the Bishop's official sent out his summons to the Jews requiring them to attend on the morrow and purge themselves before the synod.

The Jews were greatly alarmed, and promptly put themselves under the protection of the sheriff of the county, who was the King's representative, and whose residence was the castle at Norwich. His name was John. Our historian assures us that the sheriff was handsomely *bribed* by the Jews—in fact, so handsomely bribed that he actually took the Jews' part and positively decided to support them against even the monks and the Bishop. He declared that the Jews were not under the Bishop's jurisdiction at all, but under his own as the representative of the King; that the synod was at best nothing more than a *Court Christian*, before which they could not be called to appear,

and he advised that the Jews should not plead at the Bishop's Court, but repair at once to the castle, where for the time they might take refuge. Acting upon this advice, the Jews took no notice of the Bishop's summons, and the synod dispersed. But the Bishop was not disposed to let the matter drop, and he vehemently insisted that the case should be tried in his own court, and again summoned the Jews to answer to the charge brought against them, ending with the threat that if they continued to show themselves contumacious they should be simply "exterminated."

Note that we have here an early and a remarkable instance of a conflict between the ecclesiastical and the civil courts, about which historians have written so much, and will write more.

The sheriff, thinking perhaps that prudence was the better part of valour, and perhaps thinking that it was well to bend before the storm, gave way under protest, and he produced the Jews; but when the priest Godwin again repeated his accusa-

tion, and insisted that the accused should clear themselves "by the judgment of God"—that is, by the ordeal—the Jews, having good reason to suspect foul play, demanded an adjournment; and when this was peremptorily refused they appealed to the King, and retired from the court under the protection of the sheriff, and waited in the hope that the popular madness would quiet down.

So far from abating, however, the excitement among the Norwich folk went on increasing, and it is only too evident that the monks of the Priory and their adherents went all lengths to inflame the mob. It happened that, among other notables, the Prior of the Cluniac Monastery of St. Pancras at Lewes, Aimar by name, had taken a prominent part in the synod. It is probable that he was in Norfolk at this time on some business connected with the Priory of Castletere, which was then a *cell* of Lewes. Having an eye to business, and foreseeing that this story of the "martyrdom" of a child by the Hebrews was likely to make a noise and bring pilgrims to the

shrine of the murdered saint, Prior Aimar made a bid for the body, and offered to take it away for honourable burial in his own monastery. The offer was refused ; and then Prior Aimar answered that if only he could have got his wish he would have done such honour to the little saint's remains, and would so have glorified his *cult*, that he would have become a very precious possession to the monks of St. Pancras for all time to come. Bishop Eborard seems to have been struck by the remark and to have thought to himself, "Why should not we at Norwich take the hint and act upon it?" Accordingly it was resolved that the body should be brought into the cathedral at once, preparatory to its being buried in the monastic cemetery. No great enthusiasm seems to have been aroused, and, as far as we are told, the body was buried without any pomp or magnificence.

Up to this point the attempt to make capital out of the story appears to have been a failure. The Jews came out of the affair with flying colours ; the sheriff suc-

ceeded in protecting them from persecution, and King Stephen issued an edict in their favour. It is to be presumed that they soon went about their business as heretofore, though the feeling against them was not allowed to slumber, and the inventors of the story were not the men to cease repeating it and make the most of their case to the populace. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that there was a strong party of scoffers who ridiculed the whole business. These men—possibly hating the monks as much as they hated the Israelites—denounced the former as knaves and madmen, and took up the cause of the latter with some zeal and vigour.

But was it to be thought of that the Priory of Norwich, having discovered a real martyr, and being in possession of his bones, should allow that martyr to be cheated of his honour or themselves of the glory and profit of such a priceless treasure? If a martyr, surely miracles would be wrought at his tomb. They had not long to wait for them. It seems that the body was buried

about Michaelmas, and a rose was planted upon the grave. Lo! a few days later the tree was in full bloom. Other rose-trees lost their blossoms—this went on flowering. A great wind arose which wrought huge havoc—the martyr's roses did not fall. Nay, one vowed that on Christmas Day there was a blood-red rose upon the tree! Strange and wonderful! Look to it, ye Sadducees! Soon there came to Norwich a young man from Welney (?), in the Isle of Ely, Lewin by name; he had been brought to death's door by rheumatism down there in the fens. The poor lad was favoured with a vision: an angel led him through the dark and grisly abodes of souls that were expiating their sins in subterranean torments; thence he was graciously permitted to soar upward in the spirit to the celestial mansions where, beside the throne, there stood the Virgin Mother, and next her on a golden footstool (*scabello aureo*) an angelic boy was seated in glory. Of course it was the martyred William, and in his intercessions lay the hope of cure for the

afflicted, deliverance from bodily and spiritual enemies, and greater things than these. The dreamer sought the burial-place and was the first who was healed. A little later a young maiden at Mulbarton, four or five miles from Norwich, saw another vision. She, too, was carried in the spirit to the other world, and gazed upon the hideous torments of the damned, and heard the angelic songs of the happy ones above. Then another girl, rich and beautiful, whose soul was fired with the desire to live the higher life, got deliverance from the haunting presence of a fiend malign, one of those foul demons *quos faunos dicunt et incubos*, till her pure soul was troubled to its depths. To her appeared as a helper Herbert Losinga, the Bishop and founder of Norwich Priory, and bade her seek the Martyr William's tomb; and she sought it and found salvation.

This last vision and revelation was an important one. Hitherto only the vulgar had shown much disposition to believe the story. But now there was a real lady who had joined the faithful. Evidently there had

been more than doubt, there had been jibes and floutings and scorn to bear ; for who cared what Botilda Girard, the wife of the convent cook, might allege, or what humble *côtiers* here and there said?—they who would say anything. But here was a real young lady, and a devout and ecstatic one —there was no getting over that! "Accordingly," says the writer of the book I am quoting from, "this last miracle revived the memory of the Blessed Martyr William, which had been gradually getting weaker and weaker of late, *and in fact had almost died out among the masses*." Now, however, things began to look a great deal more promising.

Meanwhile, about a year or so after the synod of 1144, Bishop Eborard grew weary of his Norwich life, resigned his bishopric, joined the Cistercian Order, and founded the Abbey of Fontenay in Côte d'Or, where he died. The Norwich monks, availing themselves of the weakness of the King, boldly elected their prior, William de Turbe, to the vacant see of Norwich, and, in spite

of the opposition which the Sheriff John (de Caineto ?) offered in the King's name, carried their point and succeeded in getting their nominee consecrated at London in 1146. This was bad news for the Jews; for the new Bishop had shown himself their relentless enemy all along, and they knew too well that he would not spare them if any opportunity offered. Just at this time a new misfortune came upon them. John the Sheriff had fallen ill very soon after his first taking the Jews' part, and from that time his health began to give way, obviously and manifestly a judgment upon his setting himself against the cause of God. He was present at the new Bishop's consecration, but his malady—whatever it was—increased upon him so rapidly that on his way back to Norwich he was stopped at Mileham, a castle which belonged to the Cheney family, and there he died. A lesson and a warning that, for the doubters and the scoffers! Let them meditate thereupon lest the Divine vengeance fall on them too as it fell on Sheriff John!

Bishop William's opportunity was not long in coming. There was a certain Sir Simon de Nowers, a knight of much consideration in Norfolk at this time, who had been living beyond his means and had got heavily into debt to many creditors. Among those creditors was a wealthy Jew whose name does not appear, but who is described as a man of immense riches. He pressed for payment of the debt, and Sir Simon was worried by his importunity. One day a band of rascals, headed by an esquire of the knight, laid wait for the Jew and murdered him. The ruffians were caught and brought before the King, who happened to pay a visit to Norwich about the same time. The Jews appeared as plaintiffs—the Bishop as defendant—for Sir Simon held his fee of and owed fealty to the Bishop. Each of the parties made out a very good case, but there can be very little, if any, doubt that the knight's people had committed a deliberate murder. But the Bishop or his advocate in reply declared that his knight should not purge himself of the charge

against him till the Jews had purged themselves of the guilt of murdering the Christian boy, from which they had not cleared themselves, and of which the priest Godwin was again prepared to accuse them as he had done six years before. He still persisted in challenging them to the ordeal which they had previously declined to submit to.

For the rest, the Bishop asserted that the Jews had endeavoured to tamper with him to the extent of offering to withdraw their charge against the knight if the Bishop would let drop the charge against themselves, but that he, the Bishop, had indignantly repudiated the notion of compromise, and now demanded that the King should do justice in the first case before proceeding to investigate the second. King Stephen was wise enough to see through the pleas that were urged ; he refused to deliver up the Jews to the Bishop and his monks and, through them, to the Norwich mob, and he adjourned the case till such time as he should hold a council at London, and there both parties might appear.

Even so, the obstinate persistency of the Bishop was not to be gainsaid. I take it that the Council referred to was that which assembled in 1153 (*Gervase*, i. 157), when the agreement was confirmed between Stephen and Henry II which settled the succession to the Crown and brought peace at last to the kingdom. Here, again, the Bishop attempted to bring forward his charges against the Jews, and once again, and finally, he failed to get a hearing. The story was evidently disbelieved, and the Norwich Jews from this time appear to have been protected from any serious annoyance. During the next hundred years they were swarming all over Norfolk and Suffolk, and flourishing exceedingly. Bishop Turbe[1] was a man before his time; he would have "exterminated" the unhappy Hebrews, if he could have had his way, in the first half of the twelfth century. They were not actually "exterminated" in England till the last decade of the thirteenth.

[1] I find it more convenient to speak of him by his surname rather than to call him Bishop William.

But if kings and sheriffs were so ill-advised as to tolerate the presence of the accursed ones and to protect them from violence, bishops and clergy and the whole army of monks would not show themselves half-hearted or supine. Least of all would they who had the martyr's body in their keeping let the faithful forget what an infinitely priceless and wondrous thing they had in their midst. The faithful did *not* forget it: they gloried in the fact that Norwich had a saint and a martyr of her own. Unluckily, there was one unbeliever even in the precincts of the very Priory, and he a man of force and influence too —none other than the Prior Elias, who had succeeded to the office when Prior William Turbe had been elected to the bishopric. For six years the blessed martyr's body had lain in its grave in the monks' cemetery, and the Bishop and the more ardent of the monks had long felt that it should be allowed to remain there no longer. It should be moved, they thought, to a worthier resting-place. Prior Elias was "a still, strong

man in a blatant land," and he held his peace and said nothing. Perhaps he sneered, perhaps he smiled, perhaps he snubbed the brethren. Be it as it may, he gave them no encouragement ; even Bishop Turbe could not move him. One day, early in Lent, the writer of this strange history was lying on his bed asleep, after Matins, in the dormitory, when there stood before him, in a vision, Herbert the Great, founder of the monastery, and bade him deliver a message to the Bishop and the Prior. It was his command that the martyr's body should be exhumed from the cemetery and be deposited in the chapter-house, and that a splendid tomb should be prepared for its reception. Brother Thomas—for that was his name—kept the vision to himself ; he was by no means sure of what the Prior might say. The form of the founder appeared once more, and warned him that he must needs deliver his testimony. A third time he appeared, and this time smote the shuddering wretch with his pastoral staff. Then Thomas went to the Bishop, who was overjoyed ; and

then, too, he told his vision to the Prior, and the end was that the little martyr was taken out of his lowly grave and laid in a sarcophagus prepared for him in the chapter-house. But Prior Elias obeyed grudgingly. He resented, as it seems, the pressure that had been put upon him ; he was actually rude to Brother Thomas. Was he a doubter? Was he a scoffer? Who should say? But as the autumn drew on he fell sick, and his sickness increased ; the hand of God had smitten him. He was in his prime, and yet on the 1st of November he died. How could it be but that there should be great searchings of heart? "He was a grave and serious man," said his monks, "a devout and learned man, too ; but he died before his time. We may have had our suspicions, but, on the whole, we did not find it very, very hard to believe that he may have been saved after all!"

But when he was dead what an awakening there was! People outside were very much impressed by this re-interment in the

chapter-house. There were strange tales going about; wonderful things had happened when they put him in the tomb—very wonderful things; the Bishop had preached a powerful sermon in the cathedral, and the thunder of his eloquence had scared the listeners. How if it were all true, after all?

A perfect epidemic of visions and miracles burst forth among the people. More than a score of boys were miraculously healed of their various maladies. Twenty-two grown men, twenty-eight women and maidens were cured—the blind, the dumb, the paralysed, the dropsical, the gouty, the deformed. Nay, the very brutes felt the benefit of the little saint's intercessions—a rich man's horse, the oxen of the monastery, a poor woman's swine, and a distinguished young gentleman's favourite hawk. People came flocking into Norwich from all the country round. The great folks were as wild as the mean folks. There can be no doubt about it, for we have their names given us, and they are names that are, to local antiquaries, no

mere obscure names, but of people of position and importance. At last! Yes, at last! What a joy to the faithful few who had never doubted!

The monastery was in a state of siege; such multitudes came crowding in to gaze upon the sepulchre of the blessed William in the chapter-house that the discipline of the monastery was in peril. Ecstatic ladies actually forced themselves into the cloisters and *would* see the place where the martyr lay. It was becoming very serious: it could no longer be borne. Clearly the chapter-house was not the proper place for him to lie, even though the great founder of the house had issued his mandate in the vision. Bishop Herbert's own body was buried under the high altar: let the blessed William's be laid in front of the founder's tomb! There they laid him accordingly, and there they built his shrine.

But the crowds that came to make their offerings and their supplications there were just as great and just as importunate and just as troublesome as before; he had to

be moved once more, and now for the last time. Prior Richard had succeeded Prior Elias, and he took the matter in hand. A serious consultation was held, and finally it was decided unanimously that the saint's last resting-place should be in a certain *cancellus,* formerly dedicated to the Holy Martyrs, situated to the north of the high altar ; and thither they carried him with much thronging of people, and an imposing function, and immense veneration ; and there, says Brother Thomas, "he lies to this day in the aforesaid *cancellus,* and there frequent miracles still are wrought, and will continue to be wrought in the days to come."

If local antiquaries and other cunning men and learned ones ply me with questions as to where and what this *cancellus* was, and where we are to look for it now, I beg leave to assure them that—as at present advised—I am resolved to take a leaf out of the book of Prior Elias and to hold my peace. Any unwise man, even the unwisest of men, can ask hard questions ; it takes a wise man to answer them when they are

hard. I may have my views upon a question, and yet I may not be prepared to state them—as at present advised.

The removal of the saint's remains to the aforesaid *cancellus* took effect, apparently, about 1151—that is, shortly after the death of Prior Elias. It was followed by a new outbreak of miraculous interpositions, all which the faithful Thomas thought it his duty to record. But, to the sorrow of the monks, the startling phenomena ceased after a year or two, and there were no wonders wrought, though there was little or no decrease in the number of the pilgrims who came to visit the shrine. "I began to think," says Thomas, "I should have no more to write, and that I was going to know the sweets of repose from weariness at last."

[Brother Thomas, you must understand, was a rhetorical person, and revelled in what Socrates called "the long-winded method," and when you read him—as I trust you will read him all in good time—you will have to take him as you find him, and I think

before you get to the end of him you will have learnt a lesson or two in the "divine art of skipping." This, however, is by the way.]

Brother Thomas was mistaken. When the year 1155 opened there came a new display of miracles. The fame of the Norwich saint had travelled to the distant parts of England. It had reached even the *Provincia Hastingensis;* it had come to the ears of a certain Reimbert, *dapifer* of Battle Abbey. The poor gentleman had been paralysed. He came to St. William's shrine and was whole!

The signs and wonders began again; and next year another palsied man came all the way from York, having travelled the distance on crutches. He, too, was cured of his infirmity. A little after a certain scoffer, who had derided the saint and laughed at his votaries, was made an example of. Walter was the blasphemer's name. In a vision St. William appeared before him, carried him away to the spot where the body had at first been found, and cudgelled him dreadfully, so that when he woke he

was exceeding sore. Very different was the treatment received by damsel Lathewis, daughter of Edwin, the parish priest of Taverham, three miles from Norwich. She was a cousin of the saint, for their respective grandmothers had been sisters. She, it seems, was suffering from a curvature of the spine. A moment at the martyr's sepulchre was enough to straighten her body. Could a saint do less for his own kith and kin? Then came a boy who had never had the use of his legs. His father brought him all the way from Lincoln *in a gig!*

[There's a question for you, ye archæological magnates! Correct me or confirm me. How else am I to translate "a patre in vehiculo rotatili advehitur, quod *civeriam* appellant"?]

Needless to say, that boy got up and walked.

So it went on from day to day. Thomas tells us it would weary his readers if he enumerated all the instances of miraculous cures which were wrought, and we may well believe it. But when Bishop Turbe pro-

ceeded to build a special chapel to the honour of St. William in the Wood, as he had now got to be called, and dedicated it with all due observances on the 27th of April, 1168, wonders and miracles again multiplied. A monk from the ancient Abbey of Pershore, in Worcestershire, came for help, and went not empty away ; a woman who had dealt in sorcery long ago came and screamed out her confessions in the ears of all ; a holy virgin, much afflicted, came from distant parts, and was relieved. In 1172—it was two years after Archbishop Thomas was murdered, and two years before he was canonized—a man of note from Ospringe, in Kent, came, who had actually been led on his way by the holy Archbishop himself, and by St. Edmund too, and what he did not find at Becket's tomb, that he found at the chapel of St. William in the Wood. He came there racked with agonizing pains ; he went away leaping for the joy of his complete recovery.

"I saw that man myself," says Brother Thomas, "and he was sound and vigorous,

and himself told me what had been wrought in him. I saw him when I myself went on pilgrimage to Canterbury, and I and others are certain that he spake true!"

. . . . .

I can carry my readers no farther in this story, for here my story-teller brings his narrative to an abrupt end.

Who was this story-teller?

. . . . .

John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, the coarsest and most scurrilous English scholar who ever took pen in hand—John Bale, whom Fuller calls "Bilious Bale"—was a Carmelite friar at Norwich; in his youth and all his life he was a very hard student. In 1546 he published a vile book called *The Actes of the English Votaryes*, in which he gave some extracts from a work which he calls the *Legend of S. William written by Thomas Monmouth*, a monk, of Norwich. Compilers of catalogues of English writers since Bale's time have always taken their information

about "Thomas of Monmouth" from Bale, and always, I think, without acknowledgment. Bale certainly had seen the *Legend* from which he quotes, I doubt not had seen it either in the library of the Carmelites, or in that of the great priory at Norwich before the dissolution. What became of the volume after the pillage of the religious houses nobody can tell. What we do know is, that it disappeared for at least three hundred and fifty years, and though men have searched for it high and low, and made every sort of inquiry regarding it, it was given up as a thing hopelessly lost till some two years ago.

Before I pass to the finding of the original manuscript, however, it will be advisable to dwell upon the effect which the work produced, and on the circulation which the story met with. The author calls himself Thomas Monemutensis, or Monemetensis, and dedicates it, as we should say nowadays, to Bishop William Turbe. He tells us that he was a monk of the Norwich Priory, and an eye-witness of much that he narrates.

He seems to have begun to write his book about 1160, and to have gone on adding to it from time to time till the death of the Bishop his patron. The Bishop died in 1180, and the last incident that Thomas mentions is said to have occurred two years before that date. At first sight it seems a little puzzling to explain how a Monmouth man should have found his way to the farthest east in the first half of the twelfth century, and why he should have chosen the distant Norwich monastery as a place to hide himself in. There are, however, some reasons which might be adduced for accounting for this apparent difficulty, on which it is not necessary to dwell here. But does Monemutensis, or its other form Monemetensis, necessarily mean that Thomas was a Monmouth man? To begin with, *n* and *u* are letters easily confounded in manuscript, as everybody knows, and Monemutensis may be only Monementensis with the *e* omitted from carelessness, as Monemetensis may be the same word with the stroke and the second *e*, which stood for *n*, omitted. John

Capgrave, the chronicler, who was a Norfolk man, and an Augustinian friar at Lynn at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when Latinizing his own name, called himself Johannes de *Monumento Pileato*—that is, John *of the grave with the cap on it.* It is a suggestive absurdity, and we can but smile at it. But how if our Thomas, with characteristic affectation, played a trick of the same kind with *his* name, and turned a patronymic which was Hill, or Graves, or Mount, into this Latin folly? How if he were Thomas of Hillborough, or Hillgay, or Hillington, but that these places were not "classical" enough for his refined taste? The suggestion must be taken for what it is worth. Be it as it may, his name was Thomas. There is reason to suspect that the book was not written with a view to publication and circulation so much as to serve as a sacred record of the miracles that were wrought by the influence of the boy saint at his shrine, and as a chronicle which might be added to from time to time when some fresh marvel called for notice.

The fame of the murdered martyr and of his wonder-working power spread far and wide with astonishing rapidity. The story of the boy crucified by the Jews at Norwich was the first of a cycle of almost identical stories which were repeated from that time forward all over Europe, every country and almost every large town laying claim to the honour of possessing the remains of a boy saint slain, and in many cases crucified, by the Jews. The story of St. William of Norwich is the earliest of them all, and I have little doubt that before very long it will be capable of something like demonstration that it was the source and origin of them all.

It is instructive to trace the way in which the story travelled from place to place. It must be remembered that the cult of a new saint with attractive features of its own appealing strongly to the imagination of mothers and children would be sure to bring, and did bring, a vast concourse of devotees to Norwich, and that the offerings made at the shrine would be very considerable

in amount. If the monks of the great Abbey of St. Edmunds, with its martyred king lying there and its splendid shrine inviting pilgrims, began to feel uneasy at the counter-attraction which the Norwich Priory offered to the stricken and the sad, it was not to be wondered at. If while at Bury the insolent Jews had brought the Abbey to the very verge of insolvency and were going in and out among the monastic buildings as though they belonged to them—and such was the case during all those years when the St. William craze at Norwich was at its height—what would be easier than to fan the flame of anti-Semitic hatred even by repeating and circulating the Norwich story? But would it not be far better to find a boy saint of their own? Exactly when things were at their very worst at Bury, just at the time that Abbot Hugh died, and while the election of Abbot Samson was, as it were, hanging in the balance, Bury, too, found a boy saint for herself—St. Robert the Martyr—and he, too, wrought signs and wonders; and his battered and

mangled corpse was buried with all due pomp in the Abbey church, and no less a person than Jocelin de Brakelond wrote a book about him, which, it may be supposed (without being uncharitable), served as a counter-attraction to the more famous book of Brother Thomas of Norwich. This was in 1180, the year when Bishop Turbe died. That very year, too, the city of Paris found that a boy had been crucified by the Jews, and the same frenzy displayed itself, and the same tales were told, and the miracles of St. Richard of Pontoise—for that was his name—were proclaimed in the ears of all. The outcome of this last business was the banishment of the Jews by Philip Augustus from his kingdom, with the usual accompaniments of pillage and massacre. Forty years later the monks of the Abbey of Weisenberg, in Saxony, had found another boy saint, St. Henry, whom the Jews had martyred.

In 1244 somebody found the body of a boy lying unburied in St. Benet's churchyard, in the city of London, with marks upon

its arms and legs, which the mob screamed out were Hebrew letters. Not that any Christian in those days would demean himself by learning Hebrew. The old story was revived ; he had been crucified by the Jews. The usual consequences followed. The craze went on. Northampton had its boy saint, for the slaying of whom Jews were hanged and torn to pieces horribly ; and in 1255 Lincoln could boast of its little St. Hugh, the most famous of them all, whom Chaucer has immortalized by naming him in close connection with the Prioress' Tale.

Gloucester, too, is said to have had its little martyr. How many more of them there would have sprung up it is impossible to conjecture if Edward I had not hunted the Jews out of England in 1290, after which, on one side of the Channel, there could be no more boys to crucify, because there were no more Jews to rob and torture and slay.

But on the Continent the boy saints went on steadily increasing in number. Adrian

Kembter, a Professor of Canon Law at Innsbruck, who had taken upon himself to write the *Acts* of St. Andrew, the boy saint of Rinn, makes out a list of no fewer than fifty-one of these tales, the latest of which is of the date 1650; the earliest is the story of St. William of Norwich. The ghastly superstition is very far from extinct even now; how long it will go on he would be a rash man who would venture to forecast.

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The discovery of the long-lost work of Brother Thomas is a matter of some importance, not only for the new light it throws upon the genesis of a widely spread mediæval superstition: it is more than a literary curiosity, it is really a contribution to historic literature. Of the reign of Stephen we know less than of any nineteen years since the Norman Conquest. No period is so barren in contemporary records of any kind. Of the life of the people from the death of Henry I to the

accession of Henry II historians hitherto have been able to tell us next to nothing—they have been compelled to express themselves with a vague caution, which even Mr. Round's sagacious industry has done but little to improve. Brother Thomas has cast a new light upon the prevailing darkness. The impression that his work leaves upon us is that there was no anarchy at any rate in East Anglia. The sheriff was quite able to repress any popular outbreak, and to protect the Jews from violence. If a rowdy squire committed an outrage, the crime was at any rate the subject of a formal inquiry. We hear nothing of hectoring knights and turbulent barons. Men move about from place to place without fear of molestation. Trade goes on without hindrance. Commerce, too, appears to be flourishing; for we hear more than once of sailors and their ships delivered by St. William's prayers from the perils of the deep. The names of county magnates are the same names which appear, in the persons of their ancestors and descendants, in the annals of

the earlier and the after time. The diocesan synods are held regularly, and the clergy attend them in large number. From anything that appears to the contrary, the East Anglian folk were living quietly and happily, the bond of kindred, indeed, singularly close, and the mutual affection of parents and children conspicuously strong. As to the five or six incidental allusions to what was going on in the outside world, this is not the place to dwell upon them. I doubt not they will be utilized by and by.

With regard to the credibility of the story, or rather of the large number of stories, which Brother Thomas sets down, I have no hesitation in saying that of deliberate imposture from end to end of the book there is only a single trace. It was a very credulous age, when religious people were always on the look-out for some miraculous interposition, when dreams and visions were expected, and their significance believed in without hesitation. The imaginative faculty not only had full play, it was stimulated and cultivated to the utmost. Men

and women had at least as much faith in the unseen as in the tangible ; the mind's eye, they were fully convinced, was an organ on whose perceptions they could rely quite as confidently as on that bodily eye which was of very little use to the inner man. It was an age when anything like a critical weighing of evidence was almost unknown ; to submit implicitly to authority in matters of faith was a prime duty, to question what the accredited teachers had once promulgated was almost a mortal sin. It is very difficult for us to throw ourselves back into an age so unlike our own. Undoubtedly, the wide reception of the story was very largely due to the way in which Bishop Turbe took it up and identified himself with it. The Bishop was a man of immense tenacity of purpose—a stern, obstinate, immovable man, who, when once he had made up his mind to support any person or opinion, would never yield to persuasion or argument. That he believed the story of the boy saint from the first is abundantly clear. I think it is St. Augustine

who somewhere says that faith depends upon the will as much as upon the reason, and Bishop Turbe was one of those who could always find good reason to believe what he had once resolved to believe. Surely such men are not rare.

I have said that there is one trace of something like conscious imposture. The priest Godwin Sturt does not come out of this business without some suspicion attaching to him. Years after the saint's *cult* had become extensively prevalent, Godwin was found to be possessed of an instrument called a *teasel* ("*quod vulgo teseillum dicitur*") with which they had tortured the child, and it turned out that he had been making merchandise of this for a long time past and performing cures with it on his own account. This looks bad enough; but, even so, the man was not suspected, though his avarice was blamed and punished after a fashion. In any case, whether he were a rogue or not, his story was received as beyond all suspicion. If he were a deceiver, he deceived a guileless generation only too ready to

accept the improbable, or even the impossible.

. . . . .

There remains to add one word more on the discovery of the manuscript.

More than sixty years ago, when I was preparing to take Holy Orders, I entered into negotiations with the rector of Brent Eleigh, a village in Suffolk, about the curacy of his parish. They came to nothing, but I went down to see the place, especially attracted to it by hearing that there was a curious library which had been bequeathed to the parish at the beginning of the eighteenth century, though I was told nobody ever consulted the books. It so happened that the key could not be found, and I never saw the books and MSS. I thought no more about the matter till I saw a notice in the newspapers some six or seven years ago stating that two MSS. from Brent Eleigh had been purchased by the authorities of the Bodleian and that one of them had turned out to have been the property of St. Margaret

of Scotland, and was actually mentioned in her Life by Bishop Turgot. (She died in 1095.)

In the summer of 1891 Mr. Montague James, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, paid a visit to the Brent Eleigh Library, in the faint hope that there might still be found there something worth the quest. He was amply rewarded. There, in a folio volume covered by the original wooden boards, he was delighted to find the long-lost Life of the Norwich saint, bound up with four other works of about the same date and of the same character. For money and fair words he at once secured the prize, and it now remains in safer custody than it has ever been before, under the charge of the accomplished librarian of the University of Cambridge.

The writing is of the twelfth century—that is, it is contemporary with Brother Thomas, and there is every reason to believe that it is a holograph by that worthy Norwich monk himself. No more competent editor of such a work could be found among

us than Mr. James, and scholars may look forward to its appearance in print at no distant date.

The first book—there are seven books in all—has already been translated into English, and the original text offers very little difficulty, and calls for little critical, though it will require some illustrative, comment.

Mr. James is so exactly the right person to whom the good fortune of such a find as this should have come in the fitness of things, that I, for one, can as little presume to envy him as I can to wonder that his eye should have detected at a glance the value of his discovery.

ST. MARTIN OF TOURS

VII

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It is more than sixty years ago since I was much impressed by hearing Professor Sedgwick say in his emphatic manner: "Geology knows no beginning—knows no beginning!" I was very young then, and the words came upon me as a new revelation for which I was not prepared. Mr. Cadaverous was my guide and mentor in those days, and I went to him in my perplexity.

"Is it true? What does he mean?"

"Quite true, my friend. Reach what point we may in the past, there is always something behind it."

"Then is it true of History?"

"Yes—of History! History, too, knows no beginning! Yet be it remembered that History knows many beginnings. Abraham's start from Ur of the Chaldees was one of

them. Mohammed's Hegira from Mecca was another, and a third was Cæsar's first campaign in Gaul."

How often have I thought of those words! How long it was before I at all understood how Cæsar's campaigns in Gaul could be regarded as one of the great beginnings of History; how it was the first great opening out of the West to the light that should come from the East; how the sudden start of Cæsar from Rome in the spring of 58 B.C. was another of those momentous Hegiras which usher in a new era for the nations of the world. Seven years after that the western frontier of the great republic had advanced from the shores of the Mediterranean to the seaboard of the Atlantic, and stretched from the mouth of the Rhine to the Bay of Biscay. The people of Gaul had become subject and tributary to Rome, and what the future might be which the wonderful conquest had opened out for the victors and vanquished — who could forecast or imagine?

Among the last of those many peoples in

the great basin of the Loire whom Cæsar names in his *Commentaries* were the Turones. Their territory appears to have extended along both banks of the Loire from Blois to Saumur. Even then it must have been a fruitful land through whose southern borders flowed the Cher, the Indre, and the Vienne. Then, as now, it must have been "sunny Touraine." But the people were not as warlike as the dwellers in the more rugged districts of Gaul ; and when Cæsar made his dispositions for keeping the lately vanquished peoples in due subjection, he counted it enough to leave two legions in Touraine to overawe the whole district of the Lower Loire from the Cher to the sea. Whether the Turones had any important *oppidum* in their borders up to this time does not appear, but the military occupation of Touraine by a regular army implied the existence of a garrison town with regular defences ; and early in the first century of our era we find such a stronghold occupying a commanding position at the point where the Loire is joined by the Cher. The city soon rejoiced

in an imperial designation, and was called Augustodunum. For long it has been known among men by its modern and more familiar name of Tours.

We learn but little about this earlier Roman fortress or depôt. The people of Touraine broke out in revolt in the days of Tiberius ; were promptly reduced to submission, seem to have behaved themselves becomingly for a few generations, lived in that kind of happiness which results in a people having no history, and were rewarded with the honour of *freedom*, for the meaning of which term any one who wishes to know is hereby referred to the work of M. Fustel de Coulanges.[1] For religion, there is reason to believe that these people clung stubbornly to some half-mystic, half-idolatrous forms of faith and worship which we vaguely call Druidism. But as the generations passed on, and Roman culture and Roman ideas took ever a deeper root, Druidism tended to die out, and what was left in its place which appealed to the

[1] *La Gaule Romaine*, p. 210 *et seq.*

people's hopes and fears and aspirations behind the veil—none can tell us.

The Saviour's Gospel soon got a firm foothold in the valley of the *Rhone*. The Narbonénsis might be almost called a Christian land before the third century was well over. On the Rhine and the Seine there were important centres of the new faith. But, however much the hagiologists may babble of apostles and semi-apostles going forth here, and there, and everywhere when—for the Church of Christ—time was young, there is less than no proof that in the wide region that lies between the Seine and the Garonne, and comprehends the whole basin of the Loire—no proof, but strong presumption the other way, that Christianity had got any firm foothold even at the beginning of the fourth century.

Nevertheless, when we have brushed away as much as we please of legend and fable and of tradition invented in the times when pious frauds were not rare and not discouraged, there remains a certain residuum of fact which may be accepted as the basis

of sober history, and which finds us standing upon solid ground. It seems clearly established that in the middle of the third century a great missionary movement was started from Rome in the days of Pope Sixtus II, having as its object the evangelization of Celtic Gaul. Missionary work in those days was begun and carried on after a fashion which we in our times are only beginning to adopt. Those early missionaries were sent out in bands under a bishop appointed as the leader and commander, and one of these bands, it appears, was sent to Touraine, with a certain Gatian as its responsible director and head. He fixed his headquarters in the neighbourhood of Tours. He found himself among a heathen people—people who had lost their old Druid hierarchy with its elaborate organization, and whose religion was a confused and chaotic polytheism in which no one quite believed, which no one could hope to explain or defend, and which exercised over no one any moral influence or control.

The Roman fortress occupying the extreme

eastern limit of the modern town presented a frontage of about 450 yards along the left bank of the Loire; its western limit extended to the point where the piers of the suspension bridge now stand, and it comprehended within its area the soldiers' quarters, the Prætorium, the baths, and an immense semicircular theatre with a diameter of nearly 500 feet, and calculated to hold 17,000 spectators. To the westward the city itself extended along the river bank. The enormous walls which surrounded this important military station, and of which fragments still remain to attest their cyclopean proportions, were not yet built up. The terror of the Roman name was sufficient in the third century to overawe the most audacious subjects of the Empire, and the barbarians on the frontiers had not yet burst the barriers that kept them within the borders assigned them. Tours was a *free city*. The taxes and tribute were not burdensome; trade flourished after a sort. There was peace and contentment in the land. The missionary bishop preached and

taught and gathered converts. There is not much to show that the opposition he met with was fierce or violent, nor much to indicate that his success was great. The converts were, it seems, the poor and lowly, but the "common people heard him gladly." At times he had to hide himself among the caverns in the rocks over there, on the other side of the river. At times he came forth again, showing an example of a life of self-sacrifice, and an example of holiness, meekness, and love. The only strip of land which those Christians owned among them seems to have been a cemetery outside the limits of the city to the west, and this cemetery appears to have been held on the same tenure as similar burial-places were held by the early Christians at Rome. There they laid their first bishop in the "poor men's graveyard." Not yet, does it seem, could they call it a *churchyard*, for a church they could hardly venture yet to raise and worship in as their own. For fifty years we hear this man of faith and prayer stayed at his post, and when he died there was none

to carry on his work. There was nothing to tempt the half-hearted to follow in his steps. The little Christian society, however, kept together and held its own.

This state of things went on for seven-and-thirty years; meanwhile Christianity had been steadily making way. Constantine, the Great Emperor, had taken up with the new creed, and the world was following in his steps. There was no talk of persecuting now, nor any need to beg for mere toleration. The men who had jeered at the meek and lowly Gatian had passed away, and a new generation had sprung up who had learnt to revere his name. By this time peradventure they had got to call him a saint, and to wish there were another like him.

There was a certain wealthy citizen of Tours whose name was Litor, a devout and earnest man, large-hearted and open-handed. He saw that the Christian folk were many, and that the time had come for providing them with a worthy place of assembly. So he built them a church

wherein to worship, and he acquired a great house in which a nobleman of Tours had dwelt, and he converted it into a *Basilica*, by which seems to be meant a sort of cloistral establishment, where the clergy might live in society, strengthening each other's hands. Then the Christians said, "Let Litor be our bishop," and somehow a bishop he became. We hear but little of him. They date his consecration in the year 337; he died in 371. Far away in the East there were wars and rumours of war—of vast masses of people moving Westward—of terrors and horror that were at hand; but there in the West, all over the wide basin of the Loire, there was peace and quiet. The revolting peasants had come to a frightful end wellnigh a hundred years ago. Tours was the most important city from the Loire to the Seine, and by this time in Gaul a bishop was a personage whose power and influence were great, and making themselves felt more and more from day to day.

While Litor was ruling his diocese with

quiet zeal and discretion, a far more illustrious ruler than he was playing a great part some seventy miles to the south of Tours. Poitiers was a city that lay on the high-road from Tours to Bordeaux. We know very little of its early history; but we do know that in the middle of the fourth century there was a large number of Christians settled there; perhaps it is not saying too much to assert that paganism had almost passed away in this region. At any rate, the heathen folk were in a minority. At Poitiers, as at Tours, there was a man of birth and education, a man of wealth and position, who had been born in the town, and lived there with his wife and daughter, and his name was Hilary. One day he declared himself a Christian; he had been for long a devout student of the Scriptures, but had hesitated to take his side. He would do so no more. He was baptized with his wife and daughter, and then the eyes of all the faithful were turned upon him. There is nothing to show that there had been any bishop at Poitiers till now. The people's

voice rose up to heaven. "We need a guide and teacher among us, speaking with authority, and acting as our leader and governor. Let Hilary the good be our bishop—him and none else!" Those were days when it seems the people did not wait for any *congé d'élire*.

It was twelve years or so before this that the Church at Tours had elected Litor; twenty-four years later St. Ambrose was chosen Bishop of Milan by acclamation; now, in the year 350 A.D., Hilary was summoned by the voice of the Christian people to be Bishop of Poitiers. Never was a popular election more justified by the event. Hilary became the champion of the orthodox in the West; but he was more than a mere polemic: the holiness of his daily life exercised an immense personal attraction. To young men he was a hero to worship. Among them was a young soldier born at Stein-am-Anger,[1] a town about 100 miles

[1] He was born in 336, consecrated on the 4th of July, 370, and died on the 11th of November, 401, æt. 65. (Arndt and Krusch, *Greg.* ii. 590, n.)

south of Vienna (Pannonia), who had served in the wars under Julian the Apostate, perhaps against the Alemanni in 359, and probably had been on the young prince's staff when he kept his Court at Paris. There he may have had time for study and reflection. There, too, he may have heard of the great Bishop Hilary in the West, pounding away at the Arians, and giving them no rest —for they called him *Malleus Arianorum*— but all the while living the life of a saint, to whom this world was but a painful sojourning-place : the other world was his home. Martin—that was his name—threw up his commission, he could find no *peace;* he, too, must become a real living, praying, fasting, toiling Christian. His heart was hot within him ; he must needs go to some one who could give him counsel and help, and tell him how truth was to be found, and how heaven could be ours. He was one of those ardent and passionate natures from whom the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, who lay siege to its gates and batter its walls with strong sighs and tears,

and who can give themselves no rest till they have taken that kingdom by force. To Poitiers he came, and there the saintly Bishop Hilary received him with open arms. There was no limit to the ascendancy which the elder man exercised over the younger. Martin was a man of birth and fortune, and he laid his worldly wealth at the feet of his teacher. There was much strife and variance among Christians in those days. The heathen had ceased to persecute people for professing Christianity, but the Arians and the Orthodox had begun to persecute one another. The craze for asceticism, too, in its various forms had set in. Martin founded a monastery at Poitiers, doubtless a very different sort of establishment from that which developed into the vast institutions of a later time, for all this was going on more than one hundred years before St. Benedict of Nursia was born or thought of. Such as they were, however, these early devotees had begun to be troublesome in the eastern parts of the Empire, and their numbers had multiplied so seriously here,

there, and everywhere that the Emperor Valens, A.D. 365, issued an edict ordering that monks should not be excused serving in the army, and whoso refused should be flogged for his contumacy. But the rage was not to be stopped this way; it went on growing from much to more. Indeed, the monastic life was at this period passing through a new stage in its development. The dangerous mischiefs inseparable from a life of asceticism passed in lonely seclusion had become widely recognized. The Anchorites were beginning to associate themselves in communities under some sort of discipline, and Martin built, it seems, a house in which they who had a craze for turning their backs upon the world might live together in society; that is, he invited the *Anchorites* to become *Cœnobites*. To separate oneself from all that was evil might or might not be for the good of the soul. To live in the society of seekers after God must be better.

Meanwhile Martin himself was practising severe austerities, with the usual results.

Visions came to him, voices spake to him, the foul fiend appeared before him, the flesh troubled him, angels comforted him. Hilary, his teacher and guide, had gone through it all. But Hilary had thrown himself into theological disputation—the literature of the time—and this had saved him from excessive introspection, saved him from being a mere morbid mystic, hardly able to separate his dreams from his waking actions ; for the brain will not bear to be left without its natural repose, and revenges itself for uninterrupted demands upon its powers by making unconscious cerebration do the work of sleep. Martin was no man of letters, he had no resource in books and study. What he saw, or thought he saw, what he heard or felt, or thought he heard or felt, he accepted as fact, without questioning. Beginning with a faith that asked only for certainties, he had gone on to accept ever more and more as absolute verity, dogmas one day, inferences hardly deserving the name the next ; then injunctions that were laid upon him as binding, this to do, that to

refrain from, and the other to maintain without doubt or wavering ; till the faith of the neophyte had ceased to be a force controlling the excesses of the critical faculty, and had become mere unquestioning credulity stubbornly receptive of all that might be offered. Let reason, or conscience, or prudence, or doubt suggest what they might, these were all devil-born.

Martin was exactly the man of his time —neither behind the age nor too much in advance. These people of Gaul, in the basin of the Loire, wanted only something to believe—only to believe, to believe ! Here was one whose faith, at any rate, was firm as the everlasting hills. He had found the truth, and if he verily and indeed arrived at that, what could he not be expected to do? He spoke of the Lord the Christ as a friend who held personal converse with himself ; the Christ, he told them, was always by his side. He heard His voice in the roar of the tempest, in the rush of the hurricane. In the blaze of the noon-day, when the cicala forgot to chirrup, that voice came with

articulate words. He wondered others did not hear them! In the blackness of the midnight whispers spake to him such mysteries as might not be uttered by the lips of mortal men. "Faith!" said the multitude, "faith! If we could but believe as he does, then were our salvation sure. Faith, they say, can remove mountains; what is to hinder this man from working miracles, raising the dead or opening the eyes of the blind; or, if the barbarians come, as come they will some day, what is to hinder him from turning to flight the armies of the aliens? There is one virtue," they cried, "and that is faith. Only to believe—only to believe! One power that can overcome all things, that is faith. All things are possible to him that believeth, and this holy one believes as none others do!"

Of course, the next step was that up and down this Gallia Lugdunensis, among this newly awakened people, excitable, unreasoning, superstitious, ignorant, counting nothing impossible, the contagion of St. Martin's

unquestioning faith, supported and buttressed as it was by his fame for holiness and absolute unworldliness, communicated itself like a prairie fire among the multitude, high and low. They accepted with a passionate enthusiasm the dogmas which he imposed upon them, they adopted his attitude of passive acquiescence in his creed; they thought they had gained like faith with him when they had only followed him in his boundless credulity; but for his life of holiness, his unworldliness, his ecstatic devotion and his attitude of aspiration, his thirst for nearness to God, even the living God—all that they let him keep to himself. They would believe; they would *do*, they could *do*, no more.

Good, worthy, generous, and blameless Litor died. The people cried out for Martin of Poitiers to come and be their bishop. They would take no denial, and on the 4th of July, 370, he was consecrated Bishop of Tours. It was a Sunday, the day of days, the day which the saint of wonder-working faith had always loved; for was it

not the Lord's day, which the Lord had exalted as His own?

Take as notes of time, that when Martin was elected bishop, St. Hilary had been dead two years; that St. Jerome had just brought his tour in Gaul to an end, and during that tour had been much moved by "religious impressions," had made acquaintance with Hilary's book on the Psalms, and copied the whole of it with his own hands; that St. Ambrose was still a layman and prefect of Liguria, with his official residence at Milan; that St. Augustine, a precocious and rollicking lad, was leading a somewhat dissipated life at Carthage, and just beginning to surrender himself to the allurements of the Manichean creed. We need not look farther Eastward, though there were great men there, too, who were fast rising into notice—Basil, the two Gregories, and Chrysostom. Athanasius, the greatest of them all, was ending his days at Alexandria, revered and undisturbed in his peaceful old age.

St. Martin took up his abode at Tours.

Litor's Basilica, it must be remembered, was not the episcopal or cathedral church. Already it had become a monastery, though perhaps hardly yet with a perfected organization. Probably the monks were presided over by a prior, but the bishop's authority was paramount ; there was no thought of disputing his supremacy in those early days. The cathedral was situated at the other end of the city, within the precincts of the Roman citadel, and hard by was the episcopal residence, from which the bishop worked the great diocese.[1] His clergy lived round him in their clergy houses. They were still to some extent missionary preachers, told off to minister in this station and in that ; in the town itself there were arduous duties to discharge, and many calls upon their time. There was the education of the young to

[1] The parallel which London affords is extremely interesting. There too, we had, on the left bank of the Thames, the cathedral Church of St. Paul with its canons, among whom the Bishop had his residence, and higher up the river was the Confessor's Abbey at Westminster, with its monks *and their shrine*—the distance between the two foundations being almost exactly the same as between the Basilica and the Cathedral at Tours.

supervise, and it must needs be a Christian education; there was the care of the poor and needy, of the widow and orphan in the daily ministrations, and soon there came the provision for the sick and incurable, for it is claimed that at Tours the very earliest hospitals were founded and endowed. These cathedral clergy had to conform to such discipline as the bishop thought fit to impose; and as their number in the natural course of things went on increasing, that discipline would tend to pass through changes; for not only did circumstances alter, but each succeeding bishop would be pretty sure to have views of his own of what was wanted. Whether these clerics were yet called *canons* (*i.e.* men of *Rule*) I will not venture to pronounce decidedly, but that they were a chapter or college whose members were united by the bond of subjection to the bishop in a *de facto* corporation I cannot doubt.

As for the monks in the Basilica, they were meek enough and subservient enough in St. Martin's days, but the time came

when they waxed fat and kicked, and declared that no bishop should be lord over them. An abbot of so renowned a monastery was as good as a bishop any day, even though he were Bishop of Tours. But that was a long time after this.

Martin did not like the secular business that it was hard to avoid. He shrank from the pressure and the noise of the crowd. He would fain keep up the old life of mortification and silent prayer ; how could he, when there were interruptions at every hour of the day and night, and ceaseless questionings in things great and small, which imperatively demanded his prompt decision? He set up a sort of hermitage, a cell to retire to when he needed to be alone, in the precincts of the great Basilica. Even that sufficed not ; he would not rest till he had founded a real monastery on the other side of the Loire. After passing through centuries of romantic vicissitudes, it still flourishes as a quiet and beautiful nunnery, known by the name of *Marmoutier*, which is only a transformation of the older

title, *Majus Monasterium*, or the Greater Monastery, founded more than 1,500 years ago.[1] Thither the bishop would retire at intervals when the stir and stress of the Canons' College was unbearable, and there he collected all such seekers after God as he could find, men old and young, afraid of the world or sick of it, and yearning to lead the higher life, and spend their days and nights in exercises of devotion, and looking into the state of their souls. Poor souls! What grievous and sore trouble they gave their owners!

Meanwhile there was a mighty movement going on. Mothers brought their children for baptism; they could not tell you why, save that it *must* be good to make them somehow children of God. Conscience-stricken men flocked to the Mass with bowed heads, trembled when the Host was raised, trembled at the presence of the Very God. In the great cathedral church

[1] There is a very interesting map of Marmoutier (there called Mont-majour) of the date 1684, in de Lille's *Monasticon Gallicanum*, 1871, *planche* v.

multitudes with one voice pealed forth some hymn which Hilary of Poitiers had composed only, as it were, the other day, whose words were familiar to them all; or they followed the bishop, with a ringing echo, when the creed that those Arian heretics hated came to be said or sung, and each man cried aloud with a certain ferocity of assertion, "I believe! I believe! I believe!" It was all mystery and a holy wonder. It was the age of faith—faith that asked no questions, knew no perplexity, nor any halting on a borderland between assertion and denial. One day a man was in the outer darkness, where the wolves were packing and howling, the next he had sprung at a bound into the shepherd's fold.

Ay, but this bishop and his staff were not slothful shepherds that cared not for the flock. The children were sent to them to be taught, and taught they were. The beggars came for food. The poor in the hard times asked for help—for seed corn, for a loan, for a garment. The widow and orphan came that they might have some

one to speak for them, might have protection from their oppressors, counsel in their distress, deliverance from the scribes who devoured widows' houses and restored not the pledge to such as had no friends.

And when disease and physical suffering had brought them very low the people found their holy bishop a friend indeed! The science of medicine may have been, as we say, in its infancy, but, such as it was, Martin appears to have been skilful in applying it. To set a broken limb, to bind up a painful wound, to apply such remedies as might relieve common ailments, to detect the causes of mischief that were below the surface, and to suggest some rational treatment—all these appear to have been a kind of intuition with him. His fame spread far and wide. Soon it began to be said that he *was*, as they expected he would be, a worker of miracles indeed. One could tell how his son lay dying, nay, he was dead, and the bishop had laid his hands upon him, and he rose up and walked; another had been halt or maimed, and the

saint had bound up his wounds, touched him, and he was whole. The frenzied were calm and gentle in his presence, and their ravings ceased. His voice of tender sympathy soothed sharp pain. Each new story of his marvellous and inexplicable power was the parent of others, stimulating unconsciously the exaggerations which arose so easily, and were in many instances the mere innocent expressions of exuberant gratitude for real benefits received. Sometimes, too, with the greedy credulity of irrational superstition there was mingled a strain of motives that helped to emphasize the wildest assertions of witnesses whose testimony was appealed to. Some, who were proud of their native city, were proud that such things should be going on in their midst ; the world had no such bishop as theirs. Pilgrims were already coming from afar to gaze upon him, to listen, to see him with their own eyes, to bring their needs to him and cast themselves at his feet, and all left something behind them : it could not but be well for Tours. "Great is Diana of the

Ephesians!" was doubtless shrieked by many who believed what they said with all their hearts; by some who could not bear the thought that the temple of the great goddess should be despised and her magnificence destroyed; by some in no small fear that their craft was in danger of being set at naught, and that the demand for the silver shrines of the temple should come to an end, to their own great loss and damage.

Our beliefs and our professions of assent to this or that creed, aye, and our misgivings and loud protests of denial too, are not always free from lurking considerations of loss or gain such as sway many fairly honest men, in the main neither hypocrites nor cowards. How much more convenient, when a multitude is under the dominion of an irresistible delusion, to let them have their way, rather than hold aloof, and lift up one's voice, and be the single sane man among the myriads crazed!

Almost the only contemporary Life of St. Martin is that by his enthusiastic disciple,

Sulpicius Severus. The influence of this curious tract upon mediæval hagiology it would be very hard to exaggerate; its importance as the model on which the later Lives of saints were drawn up has, I think, never been adequately recognized. It is incomparably more sober, humanly affectionate, and free from nauseous extravagances than the stupid and impudent pictures of copyists. One critic calls it a "pious novel." He never could have read the bookling. Sulpicius may have been weakly credulous, but he believed what he tells us as simply as he believed the Gospel. From his point of view, what he set down was mere matter of fact. The prodigious accumulation of *mythus* which grew up in the next two hundred years, and which Gregory of Tours collected together with the insatiable voracity of a mind saturated in the grossest superstition, proves how deep was the impression left by St. Martin upon the people of his own days, and it proves, too, that Sulpicius, while gratefully accepted as a true and faithful witness as far as he

went, was not regarded to have done full justice to his master and friend. There was so much more to tell.

Moreover, if in deed and in truth the holy Bishop of Tours had, in his lifetime, restored to life a wretched slave who had hanged himself; had kissed into health and cleanliness a hideous leper at Paris; and cured of (temporary?) blindness a friend who afterwards became Bishop of Treves; and had done many another wonderful work that there was no explaining—what more natural, what more logical, than that the people should expect that this kind of thing would go on? "It is sure to go on!" men cried. "It must go on! It shall go on!" And go on it did from generation to generation. Captives in their inaccessible prisons called to the dead and ever-living saint, and burst their fetters and were free. Drowning men at their last gasp thought of him, prayed to him, struck out with one more desperate effort, and found themselves on the river bank. Sailors in the trough of the sea, their vessel ready to

founder, shrieked out his name, and the winds were hushed into a calm! Woe to those that mocked, and woe to those on whom his displeasure fell; and blessed were they who put their faith in him, be they where they might, on land or sea. But Tours had been his home when living, now his resting-place when dead; for even workers of miracles die.

In 401 St. Martin felt that his time was short. Quarrels had broken out among his clergy at Candes, a town at the point where the Loire receives the waters of the Vienne. The saint went down to make peace. He quelled the dissensions, but he fell ill and never rallied. A countless multitude assembled to take part in his obsequies, and with sobs and tears and irrepressible grief they laid him in his grave.

His successor was one of those many whom he had turned away from a frivolous life in his youth, Brice by name, of whom the saint had foretold that he would have a troublous career, and the prophecy came true. For years St. Martin's tomb, though visited

by multitudes, was but a poor little sepulchre, roofed over only with thatch. At last St. Brice (they were all saints, as the Pope is styled "his Holiness") resolved to erect a worthier resting-place for the sarcophagus in which the man of God was sleeping. Accordingly, he inclosed it in a small chapel, some forty feet long by twenty wide, terminating towards the east in a semicircular apse, with a vaulted roof ceiled with panels of exquisite workmanship. From the roof was suspended a lamp that was never allowed to burn out. Behind the sarcophagus was the high altar, where the "daily sacrifice" was offered with becoming solemnity. The crowds of pilgrims increased—the usual consequences followed. Needless to say that the miracles went on. Soon the concourse of worshippers required more and more space, and in the next generation another bishop, St. Perpetuus, set himself to build a worthier and more splendid temple.

The sarcophagus was opened; the bones of the saint were collected and placed in a magnificent shrine of silver gilt (*electrum*),

and over this Perpetuus set up an altar of marble, fragments of which *in situ* were discovered in 1860, after being concealed from all eyes for many centuries. Round this central shrine the Church of St. Perpetuus rose up, a marvel of magnificence; and though its proportions were inconsiderable as compared with the immense cathedrals of a later age, its massive walls, its wide portals, its lofty windows, and its hundred columns, with all the barbaric glitter and sheen that bewildered the worshippers with a sense of vastness and beauty and glory, made even this early church of Tours by far the most impressive sacred building in Gaul, and as such it continued to be the admiration and the despair of the Western architects for at least six hundred years.

In the century that had elapsed since St. Martin had been so prominent and dominant a figure at Tours his name had become more and more a name to conjure by; his personality had impressed itself ever deeper and deeper upon the imagination of the

Christians of the West ; his fame as a worker of miracles had spread abroad from one end of Europe to the other—but greater honour was preparing for him and for Tours.

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During the fourth century no part of the Roman Empire had suffered so little from war as Gaul, south of the Seine. The people enjoyed a kind of independence : they were in a great measure left to themselves. The fifth century was almost half over before Tours had any experience of the horrors of a siege. Then the Visigoths got possession of the town ; but the bishops of Tours set their faces against these Arian heretics, and played into the hands of the terrible Franks. Clovis was by this time the mightiest conqueror in Europe, but his ambition was not satisfied—say, rather, that he could not safely stop in his career. To leave the Visigoths masters of Aquitaine, and to let them retain the Garonne, was impossible ; but the Loire must be made sure of as a first step to the next advance.

Clovis saw that with Touraine as the home of orthodoxy, and St. Martin as the wonder-working champion of the Nicene Creed, the Arians must needs be at a disadvantage; they had no *oracle*, the others had. Prudence, policy, and the unceasing pleading of his queen Clotilda, all urged him in the same direction: those Arian Visigoths were to be swept from the face of the earth; their foes should be his friends.

Four years later Clovis moved his head-quarters between Paris and Soissons. It was the year in which his brother-in-law, Theodoric the Great, paid his memorable visit to Rome. In 507 he set out to drive the Visigoths across the Pyrenees. His march led him along the old Roman road that passed through Tours, and already a great awe was upon him as he approached the city of the saint, who was to him a mysterious object of wonder akin to fear, a being whether human or Divine he could not tell.

He sent messengers before him to consult the oracle, as men had done to Delphi a

thousand years before. They carried rich offerings in their hands to the shrine and the Basilica of St. Perpetuus, now in all its fresh and dazzling grandeur. As the envoys entered the church the choir were chanting the 17th Psalm, and while their steps were just passing the great doorway the words of triumph burst forth in loud acclaim: "Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle; Thou shalt throw down mine enemies under me!" The omen came to the fierce warrior with a shock of joy; he crossed the Vienne on the way to Poitiers, and at Vouillé he met the Visigoths and routed them with hideous slaughter; Alaric, the Visigoth king, was among the slain; Aquitaine was won.

Four years later Clovis went again to Tours. The Emperor Anastasius had sent ambassadors to the Frankish conqueror; they brought him a purple robe, a mantle, and a golden crown enriched with precious stones, and in their master's name they greeted him as consul. Clovis rode through the streets of Tours, scattering handfuls of

gold as he went along, the people troubling the air with their plaudits, and welcoming him as "Consul!" and "Augustus!" He passed into the great Basilica, and there he gave a public audience. Then he prostrated himself before St. Martin's tomb, and rendered thanks for the victories he had won through the intercession of the Holy One, whose votary he professed himself to be. Next year he died at Paris (27th of November, 511); he was but forty-five years of age; his career, take it all in all, has no parallel in history.

Clotilda, the widowed queen, returned to Tours, and took up her residence within the precincts of the great Basilica, under the shadow of St. Perpetuus' church. She gave herself up to a life of austerity, so far as one in her exalted position was likely to do; she chose at her own will three bishops of Tours,[1] at least, and at Tours she died in 545. She seems to have been lavish in her offerings, to the end a kind of queen that could hold her own. Through the mists

[1] See G. Kurth's *Clovis*, pp. 278–9.

that hang about that period of horrible wickedness and cruelty, when the Merovingians showed themselves less like men than like wild beasts, rioting in lust and blood, every now and then there flit across the stage at Tours some of the actors in that revolting drama—men and women, with hobgoblin names, that one finds it hard to believe were human beings of note and power in their day. Did Clotilda make that place of retreat into a kind of palace, or something like it, that Ultrogotho, another queen and widow of Clotilda's son, Childebert, made a pilgrimage to Tours, bringing with her gold and jewels and precious garments? She humbled herself with strong crying and tears, and as she wept and prayed at the awful shrine, lo! two blind men were restored to sight. Next came the hapless Radegunda—she, too, a queen, but not a widow, for she had renounced her ruffian husband, Clothaire. She came to find peace of mind, and found it; for she was a blameless and a gentle woman, truly devout and sound of heart, who deserved, if any do,

to be numbered among the saints of God on earth. Clothaire himself appeared at Tours the year before he died (561). He came to play the penitent, and to beg with loud groanings at the shrine, bringing rich offerings in his hand, that he might be saved from the wrath to come.

"There may be heaven, there must be hell," mutters the fierce man in the poet's lay. If he was right, that foul and blood-stained king might have grovelled long enough on the pavement by St. Martin's burial-place before by such gesticulations he could have atoned for the murder of his eldest son, whom, a little while ago, he had burnt alive!

If you have a taste for horrors you may have your appetite for such food supplied even to satiety by turning over the pages of Gregory of Tours' history of those Merovingian monsters and their enormous crimes during the sixth century. But Tours, at one time or another, saw them each and all. The grandsons of Clovis were almost worse than their sires. The story of that genera-

tion is one long record of slaughter and treachery. Clothaire's dominions were at his death divided into four kingdoms, precisely as his father Clovis's had been, and the old conflicts between the brothers began again ; only the atrocities of this generation were tenfold worse than their fathers had known. These were the days of Fredegonde and Brunehild. The story of those terrible women makes one sick to read. Let us pass them over here.

From the coming of Clotilda to Tours the bishopric appears to have become a piece of patronage which the royal family bestowed at their will. We hear no more of the people's voice making itself heard. The bishops followed one another in rapid succession. Clotilda seems to have virtually appointed five or six of them. Then Clothaire promoted his chancellor, or private secretary, and then a diplomatist who had done him good service—alas ! the man took to drink in his old age—then the high-born and magnificent Euphronius, who was bishop when Clothaire came howling and blubber-

ing to St. Martin's shrine ; he died in 572, eleven years after Clothaire had closed his long career of crime.

Seventeen days after the death of Euphronius, Gregory, "the father of French history," as our neighbours across the Channel love to call him, was chosen Bishop of Tours. The Lower Loire had fallen into the hands of Siegbert, the eldest of the sons of Clovis, by the death of his brother Charibert in 567. Gregory was virtually appointed to his bishopric by Siegbert and his audacious wife Brunehild. Between Siegbert and his youngest brother, Chilperic, King of Soissons, there had risen up implacable hate, and Chilperic's wife, Fredegonde, was more than a match for Brunehild in cunning and reckless ferocity. The war between the two brothers and their children went on for forty years. It may be said to have come to an end when Brunehild was tied to a horse's tail, and dashed to pieces as the scared brute was lashed into a gallop (A.D. 612).

Gregory was of diminutive stature but

well-born ; he counted at least three bishops among his forefathers ; he was now in his thirty-fourth year. All his life he had lived among ecclesiastics ; he had been nursed in the atmosphere of religious observances which were very closely indeed allied to superstition. St. Martin had long been his hero ; for years he had been collecting stories of miracles and wonders and nursing his faith to keep it warm ; he accepted everything, he questioned nothing. Under his eye the cathedral and the great Basilica, which had suffered much damage by fire and pillage, were more than restored : they were made more glorious than before. Tours had already become a holy city, and in that narrow area, exclusive of the precincts of the cathedral, there were by this time at least eighteen churches, not to speak of any others that were built on the right bank of the Loire. We are dealing, observe, only with the sixth century. In a later age they count more than sixty churches and chapels upon this holy ground. The architecture, as far as the fabrics were con-

cerned, was barbaric, but Gregory's friend and contemporary, Fortunatus, tells us how the interiors were enriched with paintings and sculpture, with mosaics and bas-reliefs, and all ablaze with gilding and colour. The prodigious wealth of the churches and the clergy was becoming embarrassing. To the monks it was a serious danger in many ways ; laxity, indolence, and all the usual concomitants of luxurious living were the rocks ahead. But in the meantime Tours attracted able and cultured men within its walls, as well as the slothful and the time-servers. Already the school of music at Tours had a wide reputation. Artists could always hope to find employment ; education went on of a certain kind. The Merovingian kings were far from being illiterate. Chilperic, Fredegonde's husband, wrote prose and verse, and even believed himself to be something of a theologian. It must have been at Tours that Fortunatus first got into favour with St. Radegunda before she took flight to Poitiers. There was much coming and going, and much dis-

cussion, sometimes of a heated character. Britain's St. Augustine—on his way to England to breathe, if it might be, a new life into the wellnigh extinct Christianity that was languishing among us, and to introduce new discipline into the drooping Church of our island—sojourned for a while at Tours, and saw the holy city as Gregory had left it just three years before, a sight to make even the Roman monk pause and wonder with much searching of heart. And just about the same time another saint, Columban, the Irish missionary, found himself also at Tours, when Brunehild had put him on shipboard at Nevers a banished man, and ordered him to leave her realm and take himself back whence he came. What a sight for the eyes of those two fervent and earnest ones as they gazed upon the forest of towers and fanes glittering in the sunshine! Of course they bent their steps to the renowned Basilica, but as their eyes rested upon the long series of frescoes on which St. Martin's miracles were displayed, covering all the walls, did it occur to either of them, or

peradventure to both, "Everywhere Martin and his wonders, but where is Christ?"

Not a little significant is it that among all this crowd of churches there was not one dedicated to the Saviour's name; they were erected to the honour of outlandish saints, whose memory has passed away, and of whom the boundless industry even of the Bollandists has little to tell that is better than fable. Tours, from first to last, was the home of credulity. Under the sway of those Frankish rulers preachers of righteousness, purity, and love could have gained no hearing. It was as if the priests of the sanctuary had come to acquiesce in an ethical standard which to us is simply horrible to think of, and had laid the flattering unction to their souls that at any rate their converts were believers. Where both practice and profession could not be looked for together, better to have one than neither; if the multitude continued to be the slaves of their old vices and appetites and passions, following in this the example set them by their irresponsible princes, still something

was gained by making them believe as they were taught, like callow fledgelings opening their mouths for whatever might be dropped into them.

Simple little Bishop Gregory—all nerves and heart and busy little brain, with his feeble constitution and his romantic temperament, brave and outspoken, and never daunted by bluster or threats—lived the higher life according to his light, but he moved along a line with a very narrow gauge. His own times, and all succeeding times, could better spare a better man. What would we not give for such a history of our own land in those centuries over which now an impenetrable darkness hangs, and will hang for ever !

Gregory's eight books on the virtues—that is, the miracles—of St. Martin gave a new and powerful impetus to the cult of the saint ; they did more—they served to stimulate immensely the unhealthy appetite for that mischievous form of fiction which, the more it was indulged, the more emasculated did the untrained intellectual powers of the

multitude become. The shrine was the object of their adoration ; it was like the sacred stone of Mecca, the outward and visible sign that miracles had not, never could cease, a palladium which legions of angels watched round to defend. When, in October, 732, Charles Martel assembled his mighty army in the great plains hard by Tours, it may be that he chose this battlefield to give his hosts the benefit of such assurance of victory as might be supplied by the consciousness that the saint was near them and on their side. When the Saracens were smitten hip and thigh, routed and cowed, and Europe was saved from the infidels, who could doubt whence deliverance had come? Whence but from the awful one whose bones were resting in the great Basilica, where prayers were offered up without ceasing night and day? If blasphemers in their godless cynicism ventured to suggest that in very truth the wealth of the plundered churches and monasteries had helped to gather the soldiers of fortune to the Hammerer's standard, and so had mightily

influenced the fortunes of war, the monks despoiled of their good things, and the clergy who had been grievously plundered, as they undoubtedly were, would be sure to raise a howl of fierce denial: "Nay, nay! Not his wealth which ye robbed him of, but his own right hand and his stretched-out arm. He smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever; and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

New and abler rulers rose up to oust the dregs of the House of Clovis, but still St. Martin held his own. Pepin, Charlemagne's father, lay a-dying, and he knew it. There was one chance for him of recovery from the grievous sickness that was upon him, one chance of being granted a few more years of life. He sent great gifts worthy of a king to the shrine, and begged the saint to give ear to his moan and set him up again. The prayer was answered. He rallied a little, just long enough to allow of his reaching Paris, and there he breathed his last (A.D. 768). Karl himself—emphatically Karl the Great—is said to have made

more than one pilgrimage to Tours. The city had become more and more splendid; but the waters of the Loire, Karl said, must be kept within bounds, and new quays were constructed by his orders.

In June, 800, says the Chronicle, he was at Tours again; Hildegard, his fourth wife, was sick unto death. Karl paid his devotions at the shrine; but Hildegard's hour had come. Karl buried her in St. Martin's church, and in her memory raised up that tower—or the core of that tower—which is one of the few relics of the glorious Basilica, and it still bears his name. The monastic and episcopal schools at Tours long before this time had quite superseded the old Roman municipal schools. The school of the Basilica had now become a sort of Frankish Eton, where the sons of the rich and noble congregated in large numbers, learning as little as they chose, but paying high fees for the little that they learnt. Karl brought about a new order of things, and reforms were carried out or attempted—on paper. But not even a Roman Emperor

can change the spirit of his age. Tours never rose to that position, as a seminary of sound learning, which was reached at Paris or Aachen. When Alcuin of York—worn out at last by all the work and noise and unrest at the Emperor's Court—retired to enjoy a short period of repose as Abbot of St. Martin, to which preferment he had been appointed some years before, he found the cathedral canons and the monks of this and that religious house in the town mere dunces as compared with those he had left behind. But of the lovely climate of this favoured land, of its air, its fruits, its sunshine, he speaks in a kind of rapture.

It is now as it was then. I for one could not but think of Alcuin when they brought us the pears and figs and peaches, fragrant and luscious, in such prodigal abundance, only a month or two ago, in our delightful caravansary. More than a thousand years had passed away. What had not changed since then? Laws, morals, politics, literature—yes, and, thank God! religion too, for the faith and Christian sentiment of the

twentieth century are other than those of the ninth. But Nature in her smiling beneficence is almost as she was, though one had one's misgivings as to whether or not the march of luxury had not surpassed the old level after all, and whether the habits and requirements of our modern life were or were not less potent for good or evil than the barbaric grandeur and stifling self-indulgence of those so-called Dark Ages.

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What a long story there is still to tell about this city and its shrine! We are but at the beginning of its romantic annals. A man may saunter through those streets and find at every step a spirit of the past accosting him; every stone in the road, every ripple on the river, brings him a message from the ages behind us. What a happiness it is to some of us to have an ear to hear the voices of the dead speaking, and calling up the wondrous memories! Alas! that, with all our immense advantages, with knowledge so accessible, and our means of acquiring it so incomparably more facile than in

our fathers' days, Gibbon's sarcasm should be truer now than ever: "Our modern travellers, taking nothing with them on their travels, bring nothing home."

When I sat down to write with a light heart, I thought I could easily get it all over from the beginning of time down to the last and, in some respects, the most wonderful resuscitation of the cult of St. Martin by the rebuilding of his Basilica in our own days. But who is sufficient for these things, and who would read the long, long tale if I had the wit to tell it? And yet there are some very queer stories of events that happened and personages that did such amazing things at Tours. I wonder how many of my readers ever heard that it was at Tours that William the Conqueror took a huge fancy for the lady who became his queen; that she would not have anything to say to him; that she was so very, very, very rude, and said such horrid things to him, that he kicked her and beat her within an inch of her life. Only then did she submit to this terrible wooer, and even

went the length of vowing that she would have this man, who could trounce his wife so soundly, and him only. Whether St. Martin helped this suitor who would take no denial—helped him by telling him the right way to win the bride—I know not. But that, too, happened at Tours. Well, if it did *not*, how does it happen that only the Tours Chronicle relates the odd legend? There is so little unusual and such an entire absence of the miraculous in the incident that it can hardly be a dream or an invention. Did the grim Conqueror, too, make a pilgrimage to Tours, and did the oracle say, "Win her by fair means or by foul"?

DEFENCE OR REFORM?

VIII

DEFENCE OR REFORM?

"I think," quoth my father, "that the noble science of defence has its weak sides, as well as others."

TRISTRAM SHANDY.

THERE is a passage in one of Lord Beaconsfield's earlier novels in which two disputants are introduced wrangling about their several political opinions. One says bluntly: "I am not a mere Tory—I am a *Conservative*." The other replies: "A Conservative? *What are you going to conserve?*" Somehow that pregnant question made a very great impression upon me when I read it first; so great, indeed, that it has never ceased to exercise a certain influence upon my life and opinions. I find myself continually asking: "What are you going to conserve?" and when my friends urge upon me the necessity of standing up in *defence* of the Church in England as by law established, I can never help

answering: "To begin with—what are you going to defend?"

As matters now stand, and as men now set themselves to discuss them, I believe there is no word in the English language which is a more ambiguous term than that word *Church*. There is no question, or very little question, among professing Christians that in its highest sense the word "Church" means a society, or family, or organization which our Lord founded and over which He watches—*a kingdom* as He Himself calls it.

That kingdom exists in idea, and men have always hoped to realize that ideal; they have never succeeded in their endeavours to attain to it—it is hardly conceivable that they ever should.

But when we talk of the *Church of England as by law established,* we mean something very different from that which we indicate when we talk about the spiritual kingdom—the Church of Christ—for the latter must be commensurate with *Christianity*. The former denotes something

very much more mundane. With the spiritual kingdom, the Divine ideal, I am not now concerned ; in the actually existing organization which we call the "Church of England as by law established" all Englishmen are profoundly interested, for all come within the sphere of its influence, and all are more or less, consciously or unconsciously, affected by the working of its mighty machinery.

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1. No organized society can exist or continue operative unless its conditions of union are based upon the recognition of certain beliefs which all its members assent to. Every society, religious, political, professional, or commercial, starts with setting forth something like a statement of principles, to the acceptance of which all its members are pledged. This is saying neither more nor less than that every organized society must needs have its *creed*. The creed of every society formulates the beliefs of that society, and in giving in their adhesion to the society the members accept

the principles laid down and the beliefs so formulated as their own.

A man joins a political club, a trade union, or a medical association on the understanding that he assents to the terms laid down in the articles of association, and accepts the fundamental statements which explain the necessity for founding such association. To talk of a Church without a creed is about as wise or as foolish as to talk of a trade union which should have no regard to any trade, or to talk of a political club which professed no distinctive political opinions. Every society must needs have its creed.[1]

It goes without saying that Christian men are all pledged and all prepared to defend, with all earnestness and zeal and by legitimate means, the creed of their Church. But the invitation to join the Church Defence

[1] As I wrote these words my eye lit upon the following creed of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (*Times*, 26th of November, 1895): "Organization gives to men a special character, and is a source of strength. It keeps them compact and concentrates their efforts towards one end; whilst without it they are both weak and ineffectual, exercising no influence or control over their own future condition."

Society means something very different from and much more—or must I say much less?—than that.

2. Every society must necessarily have a definite sphere of action and a defined object which it aims at attaining.

A railway company exists for the working of a convenient method of transit between one point and another, and its *modus operandi* is strictly defined. Sometimes its motive power will be steam and sometimes electricity. It is quite conceivable that the original object may be extended, the sphere of activity greatly enlarged, and that the methods of attaining the ends desired may require to be greatly altered, perhaps greatly improved "to meet the times," as the phrase is. Is it pressing a metaphor too far to say that every society must, over and above its *creed*, have its *regulative formularies*, which formularies require to be strictly observed and rigidly enforced if the machinery of such society is to work smoothly, and a deadlock, sooner or later, be avoided?

Is it conceivable that in any going concern, any society which should continue to justify its existence for, say, only a few generations, extending its operations and enlarging the sphere of its activity—is it conceivable, I ask, that such a society should allow itself to be tied and bound by regulations, by-laws, and customs which were imperative and serviceable a century ago, but which now only testify to the antiquity of that society, and by no means prove that they are the best possible for carrying out the purposes which they were originally intended to subserve?

Imagine a steam navigation company, established, say, sixty years ago, whose articles of association prescribed that all the vessels built should be furnished with paddle-wheels, and that a majority of the directors should be possessed with the belief that they were precluded from propelling their steamer by a screw. Would such a company enlist the confidence of the commercial world, or its directors be reckoned to be among the wisest of mankind?

Now, the Church of England is a society which exists for evangelizing this nation. Its creed is clear and plain, and sets forth the principles and beliefs which justify its existence. But over and above this expression of fundamental principles the Church, like every other society, must set forth the methods whereby it intends to carry out its professed objects. These are those regulative formularies which require to be observed, and include rubrics, canons, "articles" (which are conditions of thought binding on some of its members), and regulations of a more or less precise character which are framed for the advantage, and sometimes for the actual protection, of other members of the great society.

It is pretty near the truth that the by-laws, ordinances, rules of conduct, restrictions, regulations of the Church of England are to be found in the Book of Common Prayer. I hope I shall not be made an offender for a word. I do not say that all the laws or all the by-laws of the Church of England are contained in the Book of

Common Prayer, any more than I say that this is all that the Book of Common Prayer contains. Either assertion would be absurd.

Knowing well that I am now treading on dangerous ground, and that any man who ventures to hint that the Book of Common Prayer (whether regarded as a glorious manual of devotion or as containing in its rubrics and authoritative ordinances a collection of regulative formularies binding upon us all) needs something more than mere *defending* incurs the risk of being denounced as a heathen man and a heretic, and perhaps as something worse: yet, nevertheless, I do venture humbly to ask in all earnestness, Is everything in the Book of Common Prayer worth defending? Is everything defensible?

I forbear from entering upon the history of the compilation of the book, though it is a history which is full of suggestion and instruction. I take it as I find it.

To begin with, when, some thirty years ago, the powers that be were authorized to carry out a revision of the passages of

Scripture read as the lessons during public worship, and when, in the place of the old lessons which had been read for more than three centuries in our Church, an improved selection of lessons was made, and the reading of those lessons became obligatory upon us all, I, for my part, can regard this enactment as nothing less than an alteration of an old by-law of the Church of England. The old enactment was tacitly assumed to be indefensible or not worth defending ; its removal, and its replacement by something better, was urged as a measure of reform.

There were not wanting many who objected to any change ; these latter were for defence, and defence only. The defenders had to submit to the reformers in this. Have we at all lost by the change that was brought about ?

But is everything that is *now* contained in this book—considered as the treasure-house of our formularies—to be defended at all cost against all those who would hesitate to pronounce it an infallible guide ?

Is the Calendar of the Church of England,

as printed in our Prayer Books, a document which must be retained in its entirety, as if to meddle with it were profanation? Is it defensible as a literary compilation? Is it worth defending as a kind of ecclesiastical by-law, directing us all what days in the year we are bound to observe as commemorations or festivals, and all more or less edifying as associated with the career of God's chosen servants, whose lives or deaths ought not to be forgotten?

For myself I hold that we of the Church of England have by no means too many anniversaries. But as for our present Calendar, is its retention, except as an antiquarian curiosity, worth *defending*? On the other hand, should we not gain greatly by having a revision of this Calendar? As to the lines on which such revision might be carried out, that is quite another question.

In the meantime, how many of our clergy or laity, who are anything less than experts in a branch of learning which is caviare to the general, can tell us why on the 22nd of January our attention should

be drawn to " Vincent, Spanish Deacon and Martyr "? why on the 25th of October we should have " Crispin, Martyr " intruded upon our notice? or what we are meant to understand by the strange reminder of the 16th of December, " O Sapienta "? Who is celebrated under the name of " Machutus, Bishop," on the 15th of November, is at least doubtful; but there can be no doubt at all that the Bishop of Orleans, who, for a good deal more than three centuries has appeared in our Calendar on the 7th of September as Enurchus, never answered to that name while still in the flesh. It is *a mere printer's blunder* for Eurtius or Evertius—a blunder which has never been set right in our Prayer Books down to the present hour. Is its retention *defensible?*

But to come to a much more serious question. It is a matter of only too general notoriety that the interpretation of half a score of rubrics has exercised the law-courts again and again during the last fifty years. Even now he would be a rash man who

would undertake to say that we have heard the last of those unhappy disputes. I need not particularize. Do they who call upon as all to take part in the *defence* of the Church and everything that concerns it—do they mean that we should all unite in preserving intact and unaltered every rubric that now is supposed to bind us all, and yet about the meaning of which we may have the widest divergences of opinion? Would it not be wiser, braver, more loyal, if we could but set ourselves to correct misapprehensions which under the present condition of affairs can hardly fail to continue, and by continuing be fruitful sources of disagreements? Surely it would be better for us all to acknowledge frankly that among our regulative formularies there are some that are capable of improvement in their wording; better to face the fact that a policy of stubborn *defence* of those formularies is a policy at once undignified and unreasonable, and, moreover, a policy that we cannot hope to persist in to the bitter end unless that end is to come, not in the shape of concord but violent division.

3. But every organized society, if it is to do any work at all, must carry on its operations by the instrumentality of duly appointed agents and officers. Obviously, too, among these there must be subordination of the lower to the higher; supervision and control by responsible heads of departments; facility for removing an incompetent servant here, or promoting an able official to more arduous duties there. The larger and the more important the sphere of operation in which any organized society is engaged, the greater the need that every duly appointed worker should be kept to his duties—that his liberty of action should be restricted within certain limits while performing the duties of his office—that discipline should be enforced rigidly and promptly exercised.

Is it conceivable that any railroad in the world could be carried on efficiently by an army of porters, engineers, stationmasters, guards, and signalmen, every one, or any one, of whom was irremovable from his place, and who might continue to hold his

appointment subject only to the condition of putting in an appearance on stated occasions at this point or at that, and going through the form of discharging the functions of the office to which he was appointed once and for ever?

Yet, absurd and extravagant as such a dream as this appears to us all, we have only to look at what is going on in that society known as *the Church of England as by law established* to find such a dream realized.

Every parish clerk *statutably admitted* to his office is an official holding his office during his own pleasure, and irremovable. The fees he is entitled to receive are recoverable, I believe, at law; he may be blind or deaf, and may appoint his deputy, and the income he derives may be, and is in some cases, in excess of that which accrues to the incumbent of the Church of which he is supposed to be the servant. That is bad enough; but there are worse abuses than that. It is bad enough that any prominent functionary in our churches

should be notoriously intemperate, physically incapable of discharging the duties of his calling, or habitually an object of derision, and something worse, to the congregation whose mouthpiece he is supposed to be when Divine worship is being carried on. This is bad enough, I say, in the case of the parish clerks. But it is infinitely more serious and mischievous when the fact forces itself upon us that every beneficed clergyman in the land possesses a freehold in his benefice, and that from that freehold he cannot be removed except he has so grossly misconducted himself that he has brought himself under the notice of a criminal court. Of course I know that recent legislation has gone some way to correct this, for here there has been a timid endeavour to reform what the common sense of the community condemned as intolerable. But I know this, too, that in cases even of habitual intemperance it is found by experience that it is extremely difficult to obtain such evidence as may bring about a conviction; though the general belief of the

parishioners point in one direction, and no moral doubt exist among them that the charge which may so easily break down is, nevertheless, certainly well founded.

Is it too much to remember in this connection that Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion?

But is it to be borne for ever that a man who from the first moment that he was presented to a benefice proved himself unmistakably ill-adapted for the cure on which he has entered should be irremovable from his living so long as he commits no serious moral offence against the laws of the land? Congregations may be as unreasonable, as fickle, as wrong-headed, as little to be trusted, as it suits some clerical gentlemen to represent them. But are the congregations of our churches or the inhabitants of our country parishes to be left for ever with no redress against the cruel injustice of being given over to the life-long ministrations of a quarrelsome, indolent, careless, or personally objectionable clergyman, without tact or sympathy or know-

ledge; a man of low tone and offensive manners; a man whose presence in the reading-desk or the pulpit—to go no farther —might become a misery to those whose sense of the fitness of things is outraged by irreverence and coarseness, and who from childhood upwards have habitually been assuming, with a cruel irony, that their parish church was "their own"?

4. But over and above the officials carrying on the ordinary routine of every organized society, it is essential that there should be an executive—directors, managers, heads of departments, and the like—who must in all cases have *some* voice in the choice of their subordinates, and some liberty of intervening in cases where bad appointments may be made or attempted in the staff coming under their supervision. There is in most large concerns some sort of qualifying examination to pass before a lad is admitted to a clerkship. In all cases there is something like a time of probation. In no case could it be conceived that an absolute power of nomination

should reside with any individual, high or low.

Imagine, if you can, an insurance company—that will do as well as anything else —so peculiarly constituted that three out of seven of the clerks or local agents of the company were in private patronage, that any man could go into the market and buy the right of presenting his son or his nephew or his friend to one of these clerkships, the only provision being that the presentee shall have passed the "junior local" examination when he was fifteen, and was able to produce a certificate of his success when called upon. What should we think of, what should we look for from such a company, and how should we expect the accounts of the company to be kept, or how many years' life should we be inclined to give it?

And yet, astonishing as it may seem to those who are unaware of the fact, this amazing system prevailed in almost every branch of the public service of this country for ages. In the profession of the law, admission to practice in certain privileged courts was regularly purchased for money;

reversions to certain posts were bought and sold two or three deep. The "six clerks" of the Court of Chancery, who gave the Lord Keeper Guilford so much trouble in the seventeenth century, had all bought their *benefices*—for it really amounted to that—and all took care to sell the reversion to such benefices before they vacated them by death or resignation. The pleaders in the Palace Court, of which comfortable institution old lawyers used to delight to talk, all bought and sold their exclusive privilege of appearing on behalf of suitors compelled to make their moan there whether they would or not. A good half of the commissioned officers in the Army paid money down for their commissions, and more money down for each successive promotion, and when a major or a lieutenant-colonel of a regiment thought it was prudent to retire there was a general levy among his juniors to buy him out, each and all being actually pecuniarily interested in getting rid of him. The system was universal. Gradually it disappeared. But it is less than seventy years

since the "six clerks" were handsomely pensioned off, and it was during the last century that the close borough of the Palace Court was abolished; to some of us it seems only the other day since the system of purchase in the Army came to an end; and it is hardly more than fifteen years since the last of the registrars of a certain "peculiar" court joined the majority, the reversion to the appointment having been bestowed upon him some eighty years before, when that courteous and very estimable gentleman was in his cradle.

Patronage by purchase has been altogether abolished in this country, never to be tolerated again. Yet in the Church of England as by law established it flourishes in full vigour, all recent legislation notwithstanding.

I speak as I know. I could point to half a dozen instances of barter and sale in advowsons and next presentations, within twenty miles of my own door, which have been managed with complete success during the last five or six years. The thing is

notorious, and will go on merrily till we forbear from tinkering legislation which proceeds upon a basis of defending—*i.e.*, making the best we can of things morally indefensible—instead of resolutely setting ourselves to face the problems of constitutional reform. An unscrupulous man with little or no moral sense finds no difficulty in driving a coach and four through any such Act of Parliament as we have hitherto been content to draft ; he can easily satisfy the thing which he calls his conscience when it stands between him and the piece of preferment which is within his grasp. He makes declarations without demur, and defends himself by slanderously protesting that any man would do the same who had the same chance. Your attempt to keep out the unconscionable man fails—you keep out the really honourable and scrupulously upright man, and him alone. Abolish the parson's freehold ; let it be understood that no clergyman shall be a tenant for life in any benefice, great or small, and then, and not till then, will you put an end to the

buying and selling of "desirable livings." The seller will not be able to guarantee security of tenure, the buyer will hesitate to put his money into a very unsafe investment.

Meanwhile, again, I ask, Is the buying and selling of advowsons *defensible,* is it worth defending, or is not the whole system crying out to us all—crying out to the heavens above and the earth beneath for something more than defence, for nothing less than drastic reform?

5. Once more, no organized society can hope for long to continue its operations effectively without a *constitution.* Every joint-stock bank must have its board of directors ; every club must have its committee ; every railway company must have its periodical meeting of shareholders, when the directors are required to give an account of their stewardship, and the several heads of departments present their reports.

Will some wise and learned man, some earnest and thoughtful man, some true and loyal man—true and loyal, I mean, to the

sacred society of which we claim to be members—will such a man take pity upon us, the befogged and ignorant ones, who yet yearn to get some intelligible information on the point? Will such an one deliver us from our vagueness and the unhappiness which is inseparable from the suspicion that we do not know where we are, standing upon we know not what, and groping in a darkness that makes us afraid? Will such an one answer the question—What is the constitution of the Church of England as by law established?

For myself I can get as far as this, that the sovereign of these realms is the head of the Church as of the State, and as such is "over all persons and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as temporal, supreme." That the sovereign should be acknowledged as ultimate referee in all causes and controversies debated within his dominions, and the supreme arbiter between conflicting parties and persons, seems to me to follow logically from a nation's acceptance of a monarchy as its form of government. To

admit of an appeal from the sovereign's decision in any causes whatever, ecclesiastical or temporal, is *ipso facto* to take the crown from his brows and to go far to annihilate the royal supremacy altogether. But there are a thousand organized societies among us which are hardly conscious that the sovereign is supreme over them all; societies which go on very usefully, very profitably, very actively, managing their own concerns, and never appearing as suitors before his Majesty's representatives—the judges who are his deputies and spokesmen for the time being. It is only when such societies cease to carry on their operations harmoniously, and when, in consequence of grave disagreement, they, in one form or another, apply to the sovereign to settle their differences, it is only then that they are brought to recognize the fact that the sovereign is supreme head over them.

Meanwhile, all these societies manage their own affairs without let or hindrance, and, for the most part, without much friction or serious quarrels. In such societies there are

governors or directors whose functions are clearly defined ; managers whose responsibility is exactly limited ; laws and ordinances which are altered and improved upon from time to time ; by-laws which regulate procedure and prescribe duties. Every member of the executive, from the highest to the lowest, knows what is expected of him. The governing body is a representative body —not a mere order—and, for the most part, elected by the voice of the members of the whole society. Lastly, there are occasions when every member of such society is called upon to attend a general meeting, where discussion is invited, where speech is free; and where all important proposals affecting the welfare of the society are accepted or rejected by the votes of those attending, sometimes by holding a ballot of every member on the roll.

Has the Church of England by law established anything remotely resembling such a constitution as this?

I shall, perhaps, be told, "The Church has its Convocation at any rate." That is

exactly what the Church of England has *not*. The *two provinces* of Canterbury and York have each their Convocation, interesting and very curious survivals of an almost buried past; but the Church of England as a whole has *no* general assembly where its representatives have liberty of discussion on questions affecting its very life and regimen; no assembly with anything remotely resembling legislative powers; and so far as either of the two Lower Houses of Convocation can be regarded as a representative assembly of the Church at all, it is an assembly exactly in the same condition in which the House of Commons was before the Reform Bill.

The Convocation of Canterbury consists of forty-four deans and proctors of cathedral chapters, fifty-three archdeacons, and forty-six representatives of the inferior clergy—forty-six representatives of all the beneficed working clergy south of the Humber; as for the unbeneficed, they are not represented at all. Can we wonder if certain audacious young clergymen, not too prone to respect their ecclesiastical superiors, and a little too

outspoken when their wrath is hot, do not hesitate to say that the Lower House of Convocation of the province of Canterbury is a House in which rotten boroughs have it all their own way? I am far from wishing to adopt such language; for over-statement is only a form of mis-statement, but I cannot wonder that we hear it repeated around us.

But where are the representatives of the laity in these Convocations of the two provinces? There is, indeed, a House of Laymen, which assembles in solemn conclave, passes resolutions, and carries on debates with earnestness and dignity; and it must be added that the sobriety and wisdom of the suggestions embodied in the resolutions of the House of Laymen are at least as worthy of respectful consideration as any of those which have emanated from the Convocations of the clergy. But the practical effect of the deliberations in the one assembly or in the other is hardly more than would ensue if a debate should take place at the Oxford or Cambridge Union,

and a majority of fluent undergraduates should resolve that it was desirable that the Church of England should submit to the supremacy of the Church of Rome.

Defend those interesting survivals, those anomalous curiosities, the Convocations of the provinces of Canterbury and York? Defend them in a hopeless despair of being able to get anything better? Has it come to this, that we are unanimous on one point at any rate—to wit, that there is no statesmanship left among us all?

6. Every organized society with a definite sphere of activity must needs possess some property which constitutes its capital. Sometimes this property is in buildings and lands, sometimes in mortgages, bonds, and debentures; sometimes large portions of this property are allocated for specific purposes. In all cases, however, this property belongs unquestionably to the society; and though a million or two here or there may stand in the names of trustees who represent the society, there can be no question about the ownership. It is all corporate property, and

if the manager of a branch bank, for instance, in a small country town, were to tell us that the building in which his business was carried on, and the residence provided for him *durante bene placito*, were his own, and that he was tenant for life of the freehold, we should not feel so much inclined to smile at his amiable delusion as to ask ourselves whether such a monomaniac was a fit person to be entrusted with the management of that bank. Here, however, I am anticipating.

But imagine one of the great insurance companies receiving a notice from the "State" to the effect that on and after a certain date it would be required to surrender to a body of commissioners twenty-five per cent. of its funded property, these commissioners to have in future the administrative control over an allocation of a couple of millions or so. Imagine, further, that a third—or a fifth, if you like that better—of these commissioners entrusted with the management of these millions might, for anything that appeared to the contrary, be

actual shareholders or directors of associations embarked in the same line of business, bidding for the same class of customers, and each of them with a keen eye to the interests of the rival or hostile undertaking, and no friendly feeling at all for the company whose property he was called upon to watch over. Should we not all be a little alarmed, and be asking one another anxiously, " What are we coming to? What next? "

When, however, we come to look into the position of the Church of England with reference to the property which we are told belongs to her, we find ourselves not so much staring at a " mighty maze without a plan," as on the edge of the dread realm of chaos and ancient night. In perplexity and bewilderment of mind I am sometimes inclined to doubt whether the Church as by law established is an organized society at all. There is indeed a corporation—may I call it one?—to the custody of which very large funds were handed over in the first half of last century, and which ever since then has administered the revenues derivable

therefrom ; and I suppose this corporation may be regarded as administering a certain allocation of Church property made when the Ecclesiastical Commission came into being. But what the Church as an organized society had to say in the matter, whether the Convocations of the two provinces were consulted—whether they ought to have been consulted, whether they exhibited any interest in the matter, whether they issued protests or passed resolutions, which one would have thought would have been the least they could do—all these and a great many more questions which may suggest themselves in this connection I must leave to others to answer. It is all ancient history now. This, however, is pretty clear—that when the Ecclesiastical Commission was *established* for facilitating and carrying out *a most important measure of disendowment*, all the bishops were put upon it as *ex-officio* members, and associated with them were four judges and a large number of august personages, every one of whom in that remote past was almost necessarily a member of the Church of Eng-

land by law established ; but as matters now stand these lay members of the Ecclesiastical Commission may be members of half a dozen elaborately organized religious bodies actively hostile to the Church : they may be conscientious separatists, contemptuous agnostics, Christians unattached, or accomplished gentlemen of the Hebrew persuasion. Let no one reply, "This is only an imaginary grievance." As far as I am concerned I am not prepared to say it is a grievance at all. But it would be rather startling to hear some fine morning that the Midland Railway Company had been relieved of the embarrassment of working a certain group of branch lines, or of working the mineral traffic on others, by the handing over the management of this part of its system to a body of directors, only a proportion of whom need be shareholders in the great going concern.

Meanwhile the result of this allocation of ecclesiastical endowments is that, as a body, the bishops are at this moment mere stipendiaries receiving their quarterly payments

from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and owning no property in virtue of their several offices except the houses in which they reside, and which in some cases they would gladly exchange for more modern and commodious mansions. The episcopal and capitular estates were in all cases handed over to the management of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, perhaps to the advantage of the Church, but the gross annual income dealt with by this body amounts to very close upon one-fourth of the whole income derived from our ancient endowments.

But how about the other three-fourths? These have been left in other ownership. There are—if I may trust the *Official Yearbook of the Church of England*—more than 14,000 separate estates strictly settled upon 14,000 tenants for life, who from the time they enter upon their tenancy are left far more free to deal with their several estates than most landed proprietors. They may plant, they may build, they may plough up the pasture, they may cut down the timber, they may throw the land out of cultivation,

they may let the houses fall into ruin, they may turn the glebe into a racecourse, the parsonage into a grand-stand, the coach-house into a billiard-room, the stable into a parlour and kitchen, and the hay-loft into a couple of bedrooms, and answer truthfully unpleasant questions by replying that they reside upon the premises. They *may* do all these things—because they *can*. You exclaim in wrath that all this is exaggeration. So far from it, actual instances of all these strange doings might be adduced without difficulty if it were at all desirable. What! have my readers never heard of that beneficed clergyman who won the Derby some twenty years ago; or of that other peerless sportsman who had no sooner been presented to a "comfortable living" in—well, *not* in East Anglia or the Midlands—than he availed himself of his opportunities to start a pack of hounds at the rectory? Every one of these abuses of prerogative has been perpetuated within the last century; any one of them might be done now by a beneficed clergyman without a

conscience, and with a sufficient amount of audacity and contempt for the good opinion of his neighbours. The day of reckoning only comes when the life tenancy expires, and the day may come without any one to pay the reckoning if the Reverend A. B. has no effects to distrain upon. You can't get dilapidations out of an insolvent.

Is this a state of things which is *defensible?* Is it not a mockery to talk of defending a system which it is quite impossible to believe will continue long without compelling us to set about reforming it?

We all talk of these 14,000 entailed estates as the *property* of the Church of England by law established. If you mean by that that these 14,000 entailed estates are held by the several tenants for life for the moral and spiritual benefits which the holders of those estates may confer upon the Church at large, the statement is true; and if you add that no men in the world are devoting themselves more conscientiously and more zealously, each according to his light, to perform the duties of their high

calling, and making greater sacrifices to elevate the moral tone, to awaken lofty conceptions of duty, to lift up the vicious and the godless to a higher level of sentiment and aspiration, and in things great and small to shed abroad an influence for good upon the people among whom their lot is cast, I humbly give God thanks that this is so, and in grateful recognition of the fact I pray that so it may long continue. But as I bow my head the Psalmist's words come back into my menory with something more than the literal meaning, "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

But outside the lands and houses which constitute the great maintenance fund allocated for the support of the resident officials or clergy of the Church of England by law established, there is an enormous amount of property in the shape of ecclesiastical buildings which are supposed to belong to "the Church," but which, as matters now stand, really appear to belong to nobody.

I am quite prepared to be denounced and ridiculed as a thick-headed or thin-headed

ignoramus ; but if I can only " draw the fire " of the wise and learned upon me I am quite prepared to run away from a position which may appear to be untenable. Meanwhile, I shall not have written in vain if a million or two of my fellow-countrymen get to know where they stand when they and I ask humbly, To whom do the cathedrals and parish churches of England belong?

There was a time—at any rate I for one am possessed by the conviction that it was so—when the cathedrals actually did belong to the chapters severally representing them. When the *estates* of these chapters passed into the hands of the commissioners, did the ownership of the cathedrals pass with the estates into the same hands? If that is so, how does it come to pass that some of those chapters are provided with a *sustentation fund* to keep up the buildings, and some are left with no funds at all for keeping the fabrics in repair? Ely Cathedral is one of the most magnificent ecclesiastical buildings in the world. If I am rightly informed,

it has no sustentation fund. Given another fifty years, and in the ordinary course of things unless *some* funds are forthcoming to carry out the simple repairs and sustentation of such a glorious pile, Ely Cathedral must inevitably exhibit inside and out such a deplorable appearance as no one could contemplate without grief and shame. Given only twenty years of such continuance in the fall of rents and in the value of land in Cambridgeshire as has been steadily going on during the last ten years, and no resident canon of Ely will be able to keep a house over his head ; even the very dean of the cathedral will find it hard to support a couple of housemaids and a pony gig.

Doubtless the Philistines may rejoice at the prospect and amiably exclaim, " Serve 'em right ! Quite good enough for them ! " For the Philistines as a class have a happy way of contemplating the abolition of things in general with a jocund equanimity.

But the point is not whether we could afford to strip all the deans in England to their very gaiters, but whether it would not

be an incalculable loss to the community at large to let Ely Cathedral and twenty more cathedrals up and down the land fall into ruins. As things are now, as far as I can see it is nobody's business to keep Ely Cathedral in repair, because the responsibility of maintaining it lies upon nobody, and it belongs to nobody.

On the other hand, there does appear to be one single cathedral church at the present moment which, just because it and its belongings were never handed over to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, therefore it has been found possible by some legal jugglery to hand it over to almost the absolute ownership of a single personage.

All my life I have been an ardent admirer of Lord Grimthorpe. As for his lordship's splendid munificence and the lavish bounty which has made his name a name of honour to all men of large hearts and generous impulses, what need to say more about it? But if I understand the position of affairs at St. Albans, that prodigious church is now in the possession of Lord Grimthorpe to do

with it pretty much what he pleases, and not only that (which is bad enough), but to keep anybody and everybody else from meddling with him and his reconstructions or restorations, or whatever we are to call them. What will happen when "the mourners go about the streets," and St. Albans finds itself, it may be complete, but with no one to take the responsibility of paying the plumber's bill year by year ; and not the ghost of a chapter to worry and call to the bar of public opinion? Hardly would the most unreasonable of the sons of Ahitub call upon the honorary canons—those *honorarii onerati sine honorario*—to take upon themselves the responsibility of the fabric of St. Albans. For myself I do not write as an alarmist ; I hope and believe that the day is far off when England and Englishmen will allow their cathedals to crumble into decay ; but though there may be no fear of that among us yet, what security have we now against a millionaire, with a ship's carpenter or a railway engineer, calling themselves architects, and prodding him from

behind, getting possession of Salisbury or Chichester on a kind of ten years' repairing lease, and playing such tricks as should result in turning either the one or the other into a replica of the National Gallery, without the pictures, but with three such cupolas and three such pimples on the top of them?

"Fie upon you!" writes a fervid and impetuous young friend who tells me that he regards "the mission of Lord Grimthorpe at St. Albans as a special interposition of Providence at such a time as this"! Well, that is rather strong language, and a little incorrect in the grammar, too. Nevertheless, I have only to reply that men of such gifts as are united in Lord Grimthorpe are very, very rare, and that we have no right to look for a continued succession of such men. On the contrary, we have much more reason to fear an influx of vulgar imitators, whose lust of notoriety shall be the motive force of their lives. As for "special interpositions," they, too, are not to be expected whenever we think we want them. The old

canon was a sound one, *Non multiplicanda sunt miracula*.

But the case of our parish churches is much worse than that of our cathedrals. In idea the "parish" is a geographical area inhabited by a community having certain proprietary rights in the land contained within the boundaries of that area, and other proprietary rights in the church which *belonged* to the community. The consideration of the parson's life-interest in the chancel must be deferred to some future time. Rights imply obligations, and the obligation to maintain the fabric of the church in decent repair, to keep up the *furniture* and to provide all things necessary for carrying on the worship, was enforced with considerable rigour in times when ecclesiastical law and ecclesiastical discipline were operative among us. When church rates were *abolished*, as the phrase is, the parishioners were relieved from all obligation of keeping up the church, and with the obligation the rights of ownership in the church, one would have thought, lapsed alto-

gether. Not a bit of it! Every nondescript inhabitant in the old area, we are assured, has a right to a seat in "his" parish church; every rogue who can shout claims to be a member of the *vestry;* any ferocious agitator with a grudge against the parson may be elected churchwarden, and every aggrieved parishioner whose greatest grievance is that he should be compelled to enter the church at all before he can qualify himself to discharge the functions of a common informer or false witness, appears to have a *locus standi* in the law-courts on the ground that he has rights in his parish church—rights of worrying and persecuting other people who are not of his way of thinking, whatever that may be.

Let me make one more demand upon the imagination of my readers before I close. Imagine half a dozen members of a social or political club taking it into their heads to withdraw from such club or society, and yet loudly asserting their right to make use of that club as if it were their own: sitting down in the reading-room as though nothing

had happened ; ordering the servants about with all the airs of committee men ; taking the best chairs by the fireside, and flattening their noses against the club windows when the Lord Mayor's Show was passing outside. I think it would not be long before somebody would politely inquire, "Are you a member of this club, sir?" "No! My uncle and I were both members once ; but we had conscientious objections to paying any subscriptions, and for other good reasons we withdrew!" Would not the physical withdrawal of that ex-member of that club be somewhat peremptorily insisted on? How much more so if this eccentric but aggrieved and possibly well-meaning creature, instead of going away as he was told, should proceed to jump upon the table and attempt to make a speech upon the defective arrangements in the kitchen department! If you choose to secede from any society there is nothing to prevent your doing so ; but, having done so, don't persist in whining about your grievances, and don't try to take the management of it into your own hands.

What does it matter to you if the cooking is bad? You can always get a snack at a chop-house round the corner.

. . . . .

And yet, with all these glaring scandals and preposterous anomalies staring us in the face, these cruel wrongs and unnecessary burdens from which honest and conscientious Churchmen are suffering—and which show a tendency to increase upon us, we are solemnly called upon to enter into a great league for the defence of the Church of England as by law established! Is it not a maxim among military tacticians that there never was a fortress in the world that could hold out against a besieging army if only the attack were kept up long enough? A society that calls out for defenders, and defenders only, is doomed to fall to pieces. A society that cannot bear reorganization when old things are passing and new things are in the air, is a society that cannot be defended; it is actually *in articulo mortis*. Its dissolution may be deferred for a little while, but you cannot keep it alive indefi-

nitely by wrapping it up in flannel and shutting off all draughts. But how if this society that you want to keep out of harm's way is not moribund at all? How if it is only being suffocated for want of fresh air, and faint from want of exercise? How if the patient is only suffering from shameful shackles which only convicted felons ought to be tied and bound with? How if your moribund patient exhibits the signs of approaching syncope as the result of your throttling and gagging process, and of your fiercely objecting to the use of all restoratives? What then? You say you want to defend the Church—that is, you want to protect her. Do you forget the maxim of the economists that "every protected interest languishes"?

Reforms have been carried out with good results in every branch of our administrative system. We began with the House of Commons; we went on to reorganize our municipal institutions. We got rid of the system of purchase in the Army; the odious survivals in the legal profession have almost

passed out of remembrance ; the life tenure of the old endowed schools has come to an end, and a score of minor "revolutions" have followed in the wake of these changes, and others are coming. Is it conceivable that the Church of England by law established should be left stranded high and dry upon a mud bank, because timid folks would have us think of her only as a grand old hulk, with a glorious record, indeed, of splendid victories and heart-stirring memories, but never to be trusted again to set her sails to the breeze? "Nail her flag to the mast," say these apologists ; "keep her out of harm's way, defend her from the force of yonder broad stream of ceaseless progress running ever on and on with such a pitiless force. Let her have a peaceful end under our dutiful protection." Thank you ! There are some, and I hope they may be counted by the million, who would blush to think of such an ignoble end. These cry out for freedom, not a death of bondage. Nail her flag to the mast if you will, say they, but on it let there be written, not "Defence," but "Reform."

OUR WORN-OUT PARSONS

IX

OUR WORN-OUT PARSONS

WHEN a man has the audacity to propose any important reform in the management of property which has for ages been left in the hands of administrators who have dealt with it as their own, he must be prepared to be denounced as a dangerous fellow with a bee in his bonnet. His scheme is proclaimed by some to be a veiled plot for introducing wholesale robbery ; by others he is denounced as an idle dreamer ; by the majority, who have never thought at all about the matter, his proposals are confidently declared to be impracticable. I have lived long enough to see too many "impracticable" measures become legislative enactments to the enormous advantage of the community, to be frightened by a sounding word, even though it be an adjective of five syllables ; and I have read

enough history to convince me that any scheme which has the merit of striking at the root of great evils, and has in it the germ of such reform as insures healthy growth for a great social or religious organism, is quite safe to work its way to acceptance sooner or later. Also, I have observed that the authors of such schemes very rarely receive what men usually understand by reward. Why should they? They are not labouring for *that*. The man who would fain be the bringer-in of new things has to suffer for his temerity. The Philistines protest that he is stealing their weapons, and invading a territory where they have planted their flag. The Have-nots shriek at him as a traitor in league with the Haves, and as only anxious to keep off the hands of *the People* from their own. Timid spokesmen of the orderly and well-to-do classes, whose temptation is to mistake indolent inaction for a policy of defence, earnestly advise prudent reticence, and warn him with mournful insistence, *Quieta non movere*.

That chilling maxim—the wet-blanket of enthusiasm—has its good or its bad side, according to the point of view of him who uses it. If there be real quiet—the quietness and assurance of living energy, the quietness that results from stable equilibrium—no wise man will wish to disturb it. But if there be *no* security and *no* stability, then to let things be is to let them fall without an effort to avert catastrophe.

Every sincere and loyal Churchman—be he layman or cleric—must needs be *ad hoc* a Conservative. But there are three kinds of Conservatives. The Retrospective Conservative, who is for ever whimpering for the days that are gone, and is for ever trying to put back the clock. He knows so little of history that he believes he can restore the past by dressing up the present in antique costume, and returning to plate armour and bows and arrows. Let him have history. He and I are one in this, that I, too, love the past, and have lived in it perhaps a little more than most men, but my eyes are not in the back of my head

as his are. For me and those who are of my way of thinking "our path is onward —onward into light."

Secondly, there is the Retardative Conservative, whose mission is to keep down the pace of progress, to put the drag on, even when we are travelling uphill, to prophesy ruin as the certain consequence of any meddling with things as they are. With him, too, I sympathize often enough to make myself uncomfortable. Meddling and muddling somehow do seem to be near akin, and the late Mr. Lowell was quite right when he wrote :—

> Change just for change is like them big hotels
> Where they shift plates and let you live on smells.

But this earth of ours will go on spinning about its axis and wheel in its orbit round the central sun though you hang on with all your weight to the pendulum that swings in Greenwich Observatory. You can no more stop the great clock that keeps on marking centuries with the minute finger than you can put it back.

Lastly, there are the Progressive Conservatives. These are they who cling with a grateful love to all in the past that is still instinct with life and force and energy, and still full of promise of abundant fruitfulness. They are more, much more, than merely Liberal Conservatives, for there is a certain ring of condescension in the sound of those very ambiguous words ; they are *Radical* Conservatives, in that they look to the root of things, and if it comes to root-pruning of a living institution, they will not shrink even from that at the last resort.

I shrink not from avowing myself one of these Radical Conservatives. In my love for the Church of my baptism I yield to none, nor in my loyalty to her as an institution whose history ought to be the pride of every Englishman ; but in our Church polity I see there are some things that call for change—change for the better, that the future may not be less glorious than the past. Change for the better, that is true reform, but it *must* go to the root of evils that call

for remedy, or it is a spurious reform—mere political quackery or something worse.

. . . . .

We talk of this Church of England of ours as the *Established* Church. It seems to some of us that that is exactly what it is not. As a Divine society, the Church is a body with which I am for the present not concerned. But in the lower sense, as a society holding property, and recognized as such in the body politic, it seems to me that the Church exists on sufferance only, tolerated *ad interim*, and if allowed to hold its own as an institution, yet with very hard measure dealt out to it ; an institution or society restricted in its action, crippled in its natural growth, fettered in its liberty. Call this Church the *non*-Established Church, and you call it by a name which may truly describe it.

This anomalous *polyp* is a very big something, which in one form or another makes itself seen and heard wherever we move. It is so bulky that it is felt to be a

power whose formidable mass compels politicians of all shades of opinion to reckon with it. It is so huge a mass that they know not how to deal with it.

There are those who would destroy it by pillaging it—who would despoil it of its resources, and so deprive it of its means of material activity. These men are for *dis*establishment—that is, they demand that the Church, as an institution recognized by the State, shall cease to exist ; that its property shall be confiscated ; and that the clergy, if any remain, and the churches, if any be left standing, shall be supported, as the hospitals are, by holding round collecting-boxes in the streets.

There are others, again, who plead that it is no more than fair and just that the Church should be put upon a footing of equality with every other great corporation. They demand that the Church shall be allowed to "live of her own," to frame for herself a reasonable constitution, to govern herself according to some intelligible principles, to exercise her functions,

whatever they are, without fear of external dictation, and to manage her property without menace of periodical plundering. They who claim this are they who, in very truth, are asking that the Church shall be *established*.

Lastly, there are those who call upon us to let well alone. These are they who are content with the Church being *not* established. They are content with the position of the Church as an institution which is just tolerated ; they tell us that she may last as long as she is harmless. Too much activity, any semblance of an aggressive movement upon the vices or the supineness of the "classes," or any sign that she is acquiring a preponderating influence over the "masses," would be the signal for withdrawing even the measure of toleration at present vouchsafed to her, not to speak of the haughty protection and support of the politicians.

That things should be allowed to go on as they are, and that the Church should be left for another generation without being

subject to some organic changes, or, failing these, should continue even to be tolerated as a political institution, seems to some of us an assumption entirely untenable. *Quieta non movere* will not do. There are only two ways of escape from the present position of the Church: we must either boldly embark upon some statesmanlike experiments in the direction of reform, or we must make up our minds to submit to extinction.

Because I believe that this latter alternative would be found to be the heaviest calamity that could befall this country, and because I believe that keeping up the existing old-world regime on its present footing is impossible, I have already ventured to mark out the lines on which I humbly conceived some constitutional reform in the Church should be carried out.[1] I believe they are such reforms as are imperatively called for, without, of course, being so presumptuous as to hope that any proposal for conservative reconstruction would ever be accepted in its entirety.

[1] See "Defence or Reform," *ante*, p. 317.

Reform of our political institutions in every department has been accepted by the nation during the last half-century. It was felt to be inevitable, and our national life has become incalculably more vigorous by the great changes that have been effected. Reform of our ecclesiastical polity must follow.

Assuming that some important changes in the tenure of Church property in England and in its administration are inevitable, common prudence suggests that we should all endeavour to take an intelligent view of the outlook, and prepare ourselves for what is coming. No question is pressing itself more upon the attention of Churchmen at the present moment than this, how provision may be made for aged and disabled clergy, and something like a maintenance fund may be raised for their widows and families. The initial difficulty suggests a painful reflection. Every other profession is going up, the clerical profession alone is going down. It may be, as it is, saddening to confess the fact—to deny it is impossible.

A great economist of the last century is reported to have said that "the clergy of the Church of England bring more into their benefices than they take out of them." I believe there never has been a time when, in the ranks of the beneficed clergy of this country, there was not a considerable number of men who had "private means," from which their professional incomes were supplemented. In the times before the Reformation we are perpetually coming upon such instances. In the century that followed we find the pages of Walker in his *Sufferings of the Clergy* full of bitter complaints, not only that the dispossessed clergy under the Commonwealth were ejected from their livings, but that their "temporal estates" were sequestered also. When Goldsmith wrote his *Vicar of Wakefield*, he made a great deal of the interest of his beautiful story turn upon the good man's loss of his private fortune ; and down to our own time it may be said to have been the rule that the country clergy have had resources outside their clerical incomes. Unhappily, the

number of clergymen who are in any sense men of fortune is diminishing year by year, and their place is being supplied more and more by men who look to live by their benefices, and by them alone. Meanwhile, we have begun to provide for the maintenance of such clergymen as are no longer able to discharge their duties, and who are anxious to resign their livings—not to speak of the compulsory retirement of others, which is advocated as a needful measure of reform by not a few of our magnates. According to our recent legislation, it has been laid down that whatever pension is to be awarded to the superannuated or retiring clergyman is to come out of the income of the benefice which his successor is presented to. In the same proportion that the retired officer is thus provided for, in that proportion is the new man's income diminished, and the parish suffers by the withdrawal of the funds supplied for the maintenance of the superannuated, who, as a rule, removes from the scene of his earlier labours. The method adopted is not unlike that which prevailed

under the purchase system in the Army. An officer paid for his *step*, and sacrificed the income derivable from the sum paid down, receiving in return an increase of pay and a higher rank in his regiment. If he were fortunate, he recouped himself sooner or later ; if the reverse, he might lose his all.

But in the case of the retiring rector, his pension becomes a first charge upon the living he vacates ; or, in other words, the benefice becomes less in value as long as the pensioner lives. During all his term of service this pensioner may have contributed nothing to any pension fund—he has not been called upon to make any provision for old age ; as far as his benefice is concerned, he has lived from hand to mouth, the pension he enjoys has cost him no sacrifice of income during the term of his incumbency ; it is paid by his successor, and by him alone.

Surely this is hardly fair to the working man, who takes over all the duties and responsibilities of his new charge. As a financial arrangement it is open to very grave

objections; on higher grounds it is even less defensible. Whether a better scheme might not have been proposed and a better arrangement been formulated, it is hardly worth while just now to discuss, and the less so because no attempt to deal with the problem before us should stop at considering the claims which any one class of the clergy may put forward. It is a problem in the solution of which all the clergy, beneficed or unbeneficed, are interested. When this matter is discussed people seem to forget that the numbers of the unbeneficed are steadily increasing upon the others, and that curates, too, grow old, and, as time goes on, become less fit for the discharge of their exhausting labours.

Why should we begin to make provision for old age only when old age has begun? Why should they who are in their full vigour be excused from sacrificing any of the comforts and luxuries of life in preparation for a time when they will need them more than now?

If the clergy of the Church of England

were indeed an organized body, subject to real, and not merely nominal, discipline; if they were really doing their duty in some sort of subordination to their commanding officers; and if the same sort of solidarity existed between the clergy of every diocese and their bishop as does exist between the officers of every regiment in the King's Army and their colonel—it would be a matter of no difficulty to insist upon a certain quota of every man's pay being *stopped*, and invested as an assurance fund, accumulating at compound interest, and payable only on the retirement or the death of the contributor. Nor would there be any difficulty in so taxing the clergy for the benefit of themselves and their families if the clergy were, as some pretend they are, a department of the public service. It is because they are neither the one nor the other that any proposal for introducing compulsory life assurance among the clergy of all grades is denounced by some as impracticable, and by others as a scheme flagrantly Erastian in its character. As long as the clergy con-

tinue to hold their livings on their present tenure—*i.e.*, as long as a man's benefice is his freehold for life, with, practically, no trustee responsible for impeachment of waste, and no tenant in tail who can interpose to prevent mismanagement—so long will *any* scheme be impracticable which contemplates the taxation of an incumbent, even for his own benefit, or which interferes with his liberty of spending the income of his benefice exactly according to his own pleasure, and without any regard for the interests of those who may come after him in his cure, or of those whom he may have brought into the world.

It was stated in the Convocation of Canterbury the other day that the numbers of the unbeneficed clergy at this moment stand to the beneficed clergy in the proportion of more than two to one, and, therefore, that not more than one clergyman in three can ever hope to receive any but a subordinate charge. Meanwhile, it was added, these latter are marrying in the most reckless fashion, and bringing large families

into the world, who, as a rule, are "dragged up," no one knows how. In other words, a class of pauper clergy is rapidly increasing upon us, and the hat is being held round every week for the support of those who find themselves left absolutely unprovided for. They cannot dig; to beg they are not ashamed. It is a scandal and a reproach to somebody. The question is—to whom does the reproach belong?

The enforcement of clerical celibacy is not to be thought of. Can nothing else be enforced? Granted that they who preach the gospel have a right to live of the gospel; yet it surely is too much to claim that they who preach the gospel have any right to expect that their widows and families should be supported and advanced in life out of the alms of the laity indefinitely. It is a discipline of finance that we want, and we want it grievously. As for those who are already ordained, and have been so for years, they must, I suppose, be left to take their chance. As for those who are admitted into the clerical body in the future, they

ought to be protected from themselves, in the interest of the community at large. Let us begin at the beginning.

It is not too much to assume that the average stipend which the deacon expects when he enters upon his first cure is £100 a year. As a rule, he is then twenty-three years of age. The sum is not large, but somehow the young men live upon it ; they very rarely get into debt, which proves that they can and do live upon it. Let this stipend be charged at starting with an abatement of 10 per cent., for which the paymaster, not the payee, is liable. Let this abatement be placed to the credit of the payee, as a premium upon a policy of insurance standing in his name—a policy not transferable, and not negotiable in any way. That is, let it be impossible for the assured to mortgage his policy, or borrow money upon it, or deal with it in any way as property which he can dispose of except by will, and even so let his power of appointment over it be limited by reasonable restrictions. Let the premium be at once invested by some Board,

or Commission, or other duly authorized body, incorporated *ad hoc*, and let the interest as it accrues be added to the premium in the ordinary course. Let this be done year by year, the annual premium in all cases increasing by compound interest, and the capital growing continually in which the clergyman or his representatives have a reversionary interest. Assume that our young curate never gets more than his original £100 a year, and is therefore never called upon to pay more than his annual £10 —a very unusual case ; and assume, further, that the premiums accruing are invested at only 2½ per cent. Even so, the aggregate standing to the credit of this account after forty years will be something over £690, the clergyman being then only sixty-three years of age. Or let the process go on for another ten years at only the original rate of payment, and instead of £690 there will be a very little short of £1,000 to the credit of the account, though the aggregate of annual payments has amounted to no more than £500, and the clergyman is no more

than seventy-three. At this age many a man has still some vigour, and is far from unfit for the discharge of his clerical duties.

But this example puts the case at its worst, and applies to those who get no more than £100 a year all their lives. Moreover, it assumes that the premiums are invested annually at no more than the normal rate of interest of Consols. It assumes, further, that the premiums are always invested at par. But it is very seldom that a man's clerical income remains at £100 a year during his life. If he chooses to take one of those "small livings" which yield him a mere nominal income, the presumption is that he has some private means from which he supplements his professional stipend. In such cases—and they will be very few—the annual abatement of 10 per cent. upon his net clerical income will be less than £10, the amount to his credit will go on increasing more slowly than before, and the aggregate at the end of thirty or forty years will be proportionately less than in the previous instance. But in this case

the presumption is that there will be less need for making provision for a family than before, and less chance of the wife and children being left destitute.

But take a more frequent case. Our curate who starts with £100 a year at twenty-three finds himself with £150 a year at twenty-six, gets a living of £300 a year at thirty, is promoted to one of £500 at forty, and at fifty is advanced to the discharge of archidiaconal functions, with an increase of income corresponding to the lofty title to which he has succeeded. Then, at every step up the ladder of preferment the 10 per cent. abatement increases at the same rate as before; every successive increment goes on at compound interest to swell the aggregate that stands in his name; till, in the case of that favoured few who are born to succeed in their profession, and who do succeed in carrying off the prizes, their credit balance in the end will count, not by hundreds, but by thousands—the increase of the fund going on automatically, the annual premium rising as the man's income rises,

and at the same rate at which this latter grows.

But other cases will present themselves for special consideration. Many men are admitted to Holy Orders without any stipend. Assistant masters in our endowed schools are very frequently ordained in some dioceses—and I wish with all my heart this were the practice in all dioceses, and that many more were so admitted to the ministry of the Church; such men do excellent work as kindly helpers to their clerical brethren, and are among the most valuable of those clerical volunteers who, to the parochial clergy, are their best friends—their friends in need. Such men, it may be said, have no *clerical* income that can be dealt with as stipends can, but they continue to be members of the clerical profession; they are eligible at any moment for preferment, and, for the most part, they look to obtain such preferment sooner or later; they are not at all anxious to renounce their Orders.

These men, being (as they undoubtedly are) by far the most cultured and learned of

the clerical body, and having acquired, by their long training, habits of business and the faculty of making the most of their time, make very good working clergy when they take to pastoral work ; while, on the other hand, during those years that they pass in what I may call the reserve they are usually making a far larger income than they ever make afterwards when they join the ranks of the town or country parsons.

It is almost certain that such men would willingly contribute their annual payments to their own assurance accounts : no pressure would be required in their case. But if there were any reluctance, and if some should object, and if in their case compulsion were objected to, might it not well be insisted that any clergyman whose name did not appear upon the register of the assured should be considered as having retired from the profession, and should therefore be considered as no longer eligible for preferment by reason of his having so retired?

And this brings us to another aspect of the scheme proposed. The annual payment,

which I have hitherto treated as an insurance premium only, would really be something more : it would be an annual levy upon the members of the clerical *profession.* It would be a *fee* which all the members of the *profession* would be called upon to pay. Just as every graduate of Cambridge or Oxford who has not withdrawn his name from his college books, or every solicitor whose name remains upon the rolls, is called upon to pay his annual fees for the privilege of belonging to a learned corporation or a profession of which he is a member, so should every clergyman be compelled to pay his annual fee ; though in his case such fee would be, not only a payment in the nature of a tax upon him as a member of the clerical profession, but it would be also the principal of a fund which would be accumulating for his own benefit, and standing to his credit against the time of his death or voluntary retirement.

That word "retirement" introduces another question : What is to prevent any clergyman retiring from the profession at any moment and claiming his savings?

1. In the first place, it will have been seen that the annual abatement, or fee, or subscription—call it what you will—is not to be regarded or treated as an insurance premium and nothing more. It is also the annual fee which a man pays as an equivalent for his continuing to be a member of the clerical *profession*. Of course, he may retire from his profession if he chooses; but would it be equitable that, on his retirement, he should claim, not only all the principal sum which he has been called upon to contribute, but the compound interest as well?

Without venturing at this stage to go into details, it seems to me that in some cases it would be wise and equitable, in others it would not. Every case would have to be dealt with on its merits. At the worst, there would be the case of the clerical scamp whose career as a clergyman is practically closed, who could never again hope to make any professional income. At the other end of the scale there would be the hopelessly disabled man, who could no longer continue to pay his fees, and whose

future in this world was a blank. In the one case there should be reserved the right to withhold at least the accumulated interest ; in the other, it might easily be provided—sometimes that the annual fee should be remitted, sometimes that the whole of the fund standing to his credit should be handed over to him without conditions, sometimes that a portion of the accumulated interest should be reserved for his family in the event of his death. Where a clergyman deserted his profession—either because he was practically compelled to resign, or because he was tired of it, or because he was in debt, or from any other unworthy motive—it might be provided that a certain discretion should be left in the hands of the body in whom the management of the fund was vested ; and where, in their judgment, the retiring cleric could not make out a good case for himself, the accumulated interest at least might be withheld, such interest being paid over to a general fund, which might go to swell the resources of the corporation, and thus

become a bonus fund for the benefit of the assured.

2. Very different from the cases of clergy retiring from the profession on insufficient grounds, from caprice, or because of some moral pressure brought to bear upon them, would be the cases of those who were really past work and past hope of professional usefulness.

(i.) In the case of the disabled clergyman still retaining a benefice, I incline to think that, as a rule, he should not have control over the sum standing to his credit during his lifetime. On the other hand, he might be relieved from all compulsory subscriptions at the age, say, of sixty-five. If he chose to go on adding to his accumulations, he could, of course, do so.

(ii.) In the case of the clergyman retiring with a pension paid out of his former benefice (always supposing that this vicious practice should be allowed to continue), it would certainly be advisable that any sum for which he was liable for dilapidations might be paid out of the accumulations

standing to his credit ; but, inasmuch as he would be still receiving some income from his profession, it would be advisable that the balance should be paid over only to his representatives at his death.

(iii.) In the case of the *unbeneficed* there might be, and there would be sure to be, instances where a poor man would find himself without employment for months at a time, and even for longer periods. Would it not be hard to compel him to pay even the minimum annual fee when he was earning nothing? Observe that here, again, it would be no harder than it is for a lawyer to pay his annual subscription while earning nothing by *his* profession. But there always is, and there always would be, so much sympathy among the laity for the unbeneficed clergy that there would be very rarely any difficulty in providing for the minimum annual professional charge. There would be sure to spring up societies and associations for arranging this ; and, moreover, it would be found pretty certain that, as time went on, the financial position of the assurance

fund itself would be such as to allow of the annual increment being placed to the credit of many needy clergy, whose cases might be considered and dealt with from time to time.

What would be the effect of a clergyman's retiring and claiming a return of his money? He would cease to be a member of the clerical profession, and be incapable of accepting preferment or officiating as a licensed curate.

But might he not again return to work if he returned to a better mind? Clearly a *locus pœnitentiæ* should be allowed in all cases which admitted of being satisfactorily explained. On the other hand, it would be impossible to allow of a man's withdrawing from his profession (and so withdrawing from all restraints of discipline and responsibility) for as long as he pleased, and yet to give him the option of coming back to it at any moment, and being presented to a benefice without passing through some period of probation, or being subject to a searching inquiry as to how he had been

spending his time and as to his present fitness to resume professional duties.

It may be said that the minimum annual payment to be required of the clergy under this scheme is too large.

In the first place, it may be answered that such payments are not to be levied from the receivers of stipends in the case of the unbeneficed, but from their paymasters, whoever they may be. The curate would not be called upon to pay back anything that he had received. It would be his rector or vicar who would be chargeable.

In the case of the beneficed clergy, again, the annual payment would be a *first charge* upon the income of his living; and in accepting preferment the incumbent would take this annual charge into account in making his calculations, just as he now takes into account the amount of land-tax for which he is liable, or the interest upon any mortgage effected through the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty.

Thus far but little has been said on that part of the problem before us which is con-

cerned with the pensioning of the aged clergy. We have assumed that they will leave families behind them, and for them our scheme aims at making some provision. But suppose the reverend gentleman has never married—what then? Then, on his retirement after loyally serving his time in the ranks, and finding himself, say, with a thousand or two pounds standing to his credit, two courses would be open to him: he might either withdraw his capital, and so withdraw from the profession; or he might compound for a life annuity, surrendering all claim upon the principal and interest due to him. If he declined to accept either of these alternatives, a middle course would be at his option whether married or not, whether a celibate or the father of a family: he might leave his capital where it was; but instead of adding to it he might, on superannuation, be entitled to receive interest upon it during his life. This would be his pension. At his death his family would receive whatever sum stood to his credit at the moment of his retirement.

In putting forth a proposal like this, which aims at dealing with a great and acknowledged evil, an evil which is rapidly growing to the proportions of a scandal, I repeat that I am not so presumptuous as to expect that it will be received without objections more or less reasonable, wrathful, or contemptuous. This generation is very strong in criticism ; we all have to run the gauntlet of that—we get quite as much of that as is good for us. What we really do want, however, is not such criticism as goes no farther than pointing out faults, but such as may help forward the cause of reform wherever reform is urgently needed. This scheme may be as crude as you please. The present writer may be a mere country parson, as ignorant and silly as—of course—they all are ; but he does not speak without having long and honestly thought over the measure he advocates. He has at length felt himself compelled to say his say in all earnestness, and with the deep conviction that in this matter the time for taking action has come.

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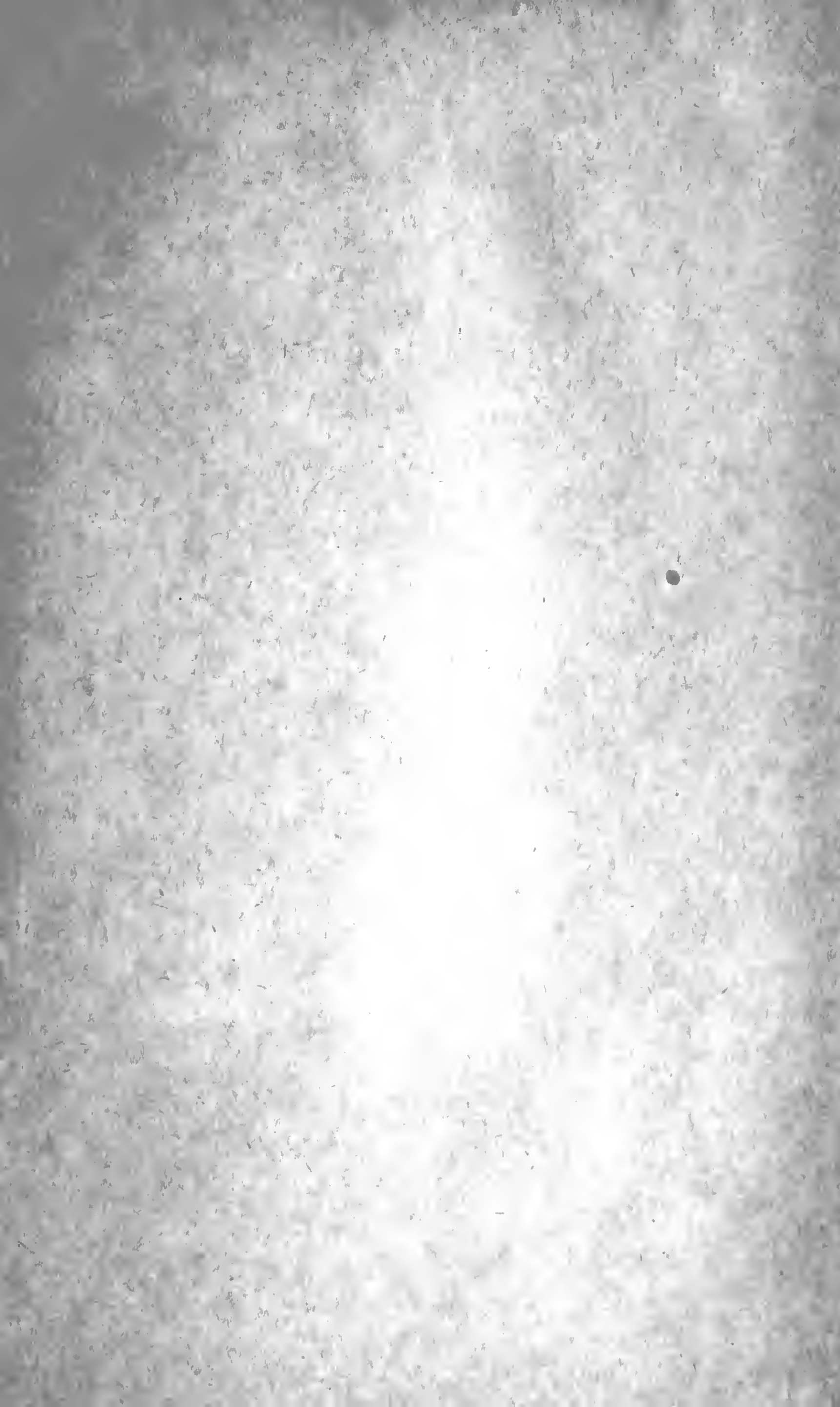

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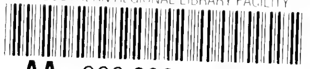
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