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The Soul of Man  
An American Parson in England

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C. Monroe Royce

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**Seal of the Archbishop of Canterbury**

# The Note Book of an American Parson in England

By

G. Monroe Royce

rector of St. Thomas's Church, New Windsor, New York

Author of "The Little Singer," "The Son of Arthur,"

"The Passage of the American," etc.



By Order of the Bishop of London

G. P. Putnam's Sons  
New York and London  
The Knickerbocker Press  
1878



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By

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"The Passing of the American," etc.

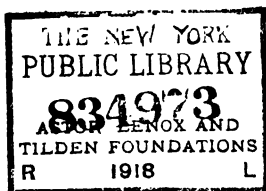


Seal of the Bishop of London

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York





## PREFACE

These notes were in every instance written out immediately after the experiences they relate; and these experiences—covering six years in England—I count as the happiest period of my past ministerial life.

The seals of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London are reproduced on account of their romantic antiquity. They are attached to the license, granting me the right to officiate in the Established Church of England.

I am indebted to the editors of the *Nineteenth Century and After* (London), and the *Independent* (New York), for kind permission to reprint, in substance, if not in exact form, articles which have appeared in these periodicals.

G. MONROE ROYCE

NEPAHWIN, NEW WINDSOR-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK  
*April, 1918*





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**The Note-Book of  
an American Parson in England**



# The Note Book of An American Parson in England

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## INTRODUCTION

A DOG and a fox met by chance, and finding they were cousins, agreed to cultivate each other. This friendship began by the dog inviting the fox to visit him in his comfortable kennel. The fox accepted his kinsman's invitation, but on the way to the kennel he observed that the hair on the dog's neck was thinner than on other parts of his body. "What made that?" enquired the fox. "Oh, that's nothing; it's only the mark of the collar which my master puts on me sometimes." "Indeed! Is that all?" said the fox. "Well it is quite enough to compel me to decline your kind invitation." And away went the fox into the forest with his tail curled proudly over his back.

I have frequently been invited into comfortable ecclesiastical kennels where I might take my ease if I would only wear—as a mere ornament, of course—the collar of somebody or other, but I have preferred the wild life of the forest. I quite agree

that this disposition to wildness is not in itself very commendable and can only be justified by exceptionally good results, which, alas! I am not able to show. Still I feel pretty sure that my ministry has not been wholly fruitless. At any rate I have enjoyed this ecclesiastical freedom, and only hope that I have not "used this liberty for a cloak of maliciousness" towards anyone great or small. For the office of a free lance, while it may be very useful, is at the same time a very responsible and a very hazardous post to fill. I have spent the greater part of my ministry on the Continent, where I have been for longer or shorter periods, in charge of all the churches of the Protestant Episcopal Church save one. I also spent six years in England, and it is of these experiences that I now write. I went to England from Munich, where I had founded the American Church. The first thing necessary in England for an American clergyman to do, is to obtain a special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury to officiate in the Established Church. This is a purely legal requirement. In addition to this general permit, the license of the Bishop of each diocese is required, if an American clergyman wishes to officiate for a period of a month or more, as a curate or *locum tenens*. He may, however, as a rule, officiate for a Sunday or so in any diocese without the official consent of the diocesan.

An unbeneficed, and unattached clergyman in England, who takes irregular duty,—is called a

“guinea pig.” He gets this rather undignified title for the reason that a “guinea” (\$5.25) is the standard honorarium, or fee, for each service at which he officiates.

My duty being irregular, I was not confined to any particular parish, or diocese, but used the Archbishop's license as a kind of roving commission to visit any church within His Grace's province, which includes twenty-seven dioceses and during my six years' residence in England I took duty in almost all of these dioceses and occasionally strayed beyond the province of Canterbury into the territory of His Grace, the Archbishop of York, for which I was once brought very peremptorily to book.

I was sent to churches of all degrees, High and Low, Broad and Evangelical, in town and in country, and I have thus seen and studied the Church of England at work, under exceptional, and I think I may say unique, circumstances. But it is not as a critic of the Church of England that I write, but merely as an observer, and my experiences are given chiefly for the entertainment they may provide the reader,—an entertainment, I think I can promise.

It will doubtless seem to some good people that I have sometimes treated serious subjects in too light a vein. But I am not of opinion that one should always draw a long face when speaking of religious matters. One may, I think, feel the most sincere reverence without assuming an



attitude of solemnity. In fact I feel pretty certain that it is the long face and the solemn voice that is the matter with the Church at this very moment. How many clergymen do you happen to know who maintain their natural voice and face in the chancel and pulpit? Most of the clergy seem to think it is irreverent, if not actually impious, to be natural in their public ministrations and directly they enter the church they pull the long face and assume the holy tone. I do not mean to say that the clergyman should go into the chancel grinning like a cat, or that he should read and preach in a jocular tone or voice. I simply mean that he should be serious but natural, for nothing can be worse, that is, less effective, than a sermon delivered in an artificial voice and manner, however good the material and intention may be. The unnatural voice and manner are positively fatal, as we all know, to any other public speaker, and why should they be thought necessary to the preacher? The late Bishop of Alabama, the Right Rev. Dr. Wilmer, was very impatient of the solemn manner and holy tone, and used all proper means to discourage them among his clergy. "Don't draw a long face, and always speak in a cheerful, honest, manly voice," he used to say to his brethren. But the Bishop had in his diocese one well-meaning, but thoroughly artificial brother, upon whom his words of advice seemed to have no effect, and this man went on his solemn way to the great vexation of his dio-

cesan, who, of course, could not very well make it a personal matter.

When this honest old Bishop came to die, the solemn parson made him a visit, and felt—as such artificial men always do—that he must say something appropriate to the very solemn occasion. He therefore approached the bedside of the dying man, and in his most holy tone said, “Dear Bishop, do you feel that you are passing away?” “How do I know, I never passed away before,” came like a flash as a last parting shot from the man of real natural godliness, to the man of artificial piety; and these, the very last words of Bishop Wilmer, were in perfect character with the whole life of the man, and are a much better testimony to his real Christian life than any amount of solemn twaddle would have been.

I have neither a long face nor a solemn voice, and if I had I should endeavour to disguise both, at least in these sketches.

G. MONROE ROYCE,

*Rector, St. Thomas's P. E. Church  
(Founded 1727),*

*New Windsor-on-Hudson, N. Y.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE SQUARSON

ONE of my first appointments took me far into the country. Starting from London I had one hour and a half by train, which was supplemented by thirty minutes' drive from a small country station. This proved to be the typical country parish,—the kind of church most Americans picture to themselves as well-nigh universal in rural England. The village was small, and the church dominated the landscape for miles around. It was not only the most conspicuous edifice, but was in fact a very fine old pre-Reformation church, with a high embattled tower containing a chime of six bells. There was a superb clearstory. The rectory-house, situated in the midst of very extensive grounds, was large and ancient. The rector was an old swell, belonging to a family with an earl at its head. He was in fact that combination of "Parson" and "Squire" whom Sidney Smith dubbed a "Squarson." He was a Low-Evangelical Churchman—as most of the aristocrats are in England, and ruled the church and the parish after the patri-

archal fashion. The parish was his family in a very real sense. He knew every person within his domain: knew their good points and their bad points, and they were all perfectly aware of it and never attempted to impose upon his ignorance—for that would have been fatal. But they knew their parson as well as he knew them, and if they did not and could not impose upon his ignorance, they could and did impose upon his vanity. This perhaps is too strong a word, but it must stand now that I have uttered it. What I mean to convey by the word vanity will be understood by the following incident. My visit fell on the first Sunday in the New Year, and I thus had an opportunity of witnessing a most interesting and novel gathering of this remote country parish. The parish gathering was convened under the patriarchal summons of the rector, and this was the forty-first annual meeting under the present rector's incumbency. The meeting took place always in the evening of the last day of the Old Year. It chanced to be a Saturday, (1903), which accounts for my good fortune in being present.

The parish school-house was the place of meeting, and a large proportion of the families—so I afterwards learnt—were represented, mostly by mothers. Still there was a very considerable sprinkling of men, especially the older men. Children were there in goodly numbers, but young men and maidens of courtable age were conspicuous by their absence. But, after making

all necessary allowances, it still seemed to be a representative gathering of the parish, a very small one. The rector repeated two or three Collects, we all joined in the Lord's Prayer, and the meeting was open and ready for business; but what the business might prove to be was as yet a mystery to me.

The rector began in the true patriarchal fashion by saying that he was glad to see so many of his people present. He then read a list of those who had died during the year, and made some sympathetic comment as each name was mentioned. I was sitting near him, and looking out of the tail of my eye I saw that he had before him a large book containing a long list of names with notes, bearing various dates within the year which was just expiring. They were alphabetically arranged. "This is the forty-first year of my pastorate"—(I was glad to hear that good old word, pastor),—began the aged clergyman, "and I have to express my regrets once more for my many shortcomings,"—"No, no!" came from the audience. "Yes, I can but feel that I have many weaknesses, still I think I may say I have tried to be a good and faithful shepherd to the little flock which God has given me to tend"—"Ear, 'ear! That 'ave you, sir," sounded out from all parts of the room. "I thank you, my good people for your kind and very forbearing judgment concerning the manner in which I have discharged the great and sacred trust that has been committed to me; and I shall try to be as kindly

and as indulgent as you have been to me in what I shall say about your life and conduct during the past year. But I must speak plainly and honestly to you; otherwise I shall be violating the trust that has been placed within my keeping." This was received with a hearty "'ear, 'ear!" but I thought I could detect a slight smile breaking across the stolid faces before me. It had soon passed, however, and the look of dull reverence, so characteristic of the English villager, returned.

"First of all, and speaking generally," began the rector, "there has been, I am sorry to say, a great deal of sin, both of omission and commission, in this parish during the last year." (Here the people tried to look very sorry and innocent, but only succeeded in looking very sheepish and silly.) "And you know very well that to this evil doing can be traced all the misfortune and poverty and distress that have come into our midst. And I shall now, as is my custom [turning to me] on these occasions, mention by name those of you, my people, who have done evil in the sight of the Lord, and your neighbours."<sup>1</sup> He then adjusted his glasses, and turning to his journal read out—"John Addison!"—"Ere, sir!"—"You have been very irregular at Divine service during the past year, which is very bad indeed, considering you are the father of a family."—"Yes,

<sup>1</sup> I could not take notes and cannot of course remember the names of these offenders, but the nature of the offences stuck pretty fast in my memory.

sir.”—“I know you have had misfortune and trouble, but that is no excuse; it is all the more reason for your regular attendance at the House of God. You are an honest, sober, and industrious man”—“Yes, sir, thank you, sir”—“but you have never been a very religious man”—“No, sir.”—“I think I might have saved your cow, had you come to me in time.”—“Yes, sir,”—“and you need not pay me any interest for the present on the small loan I made you.”—“Thank you werry much, sir.”—“I have nothing to say but good of your wife, Mary, except that she has been several times to chapel,<sup>1</sup> so I hear.”—“Yes, sir, she is a bit weak in the 'ead, as I says to 'er, when them 'ere tonguey-minister chaps comes round.”—“Yes, you are quite right, Addison; dissent is a disease of the head, and of the heart too, sometimes, I fear.”

“Ear, 'ear!” came from the audience. If poor, good weak Mary were present, as I suppose she was, she received her rector's praises and rebukes in silence.

“Mrs. Boyd, I have only one thing to say except in praise of your manner of life during the past year, and that is in regard to your butter. Mrs. Sterling [his wife's name] tells me that it has not been so good this year as usual.”—“No, sir, it's the grass, sir.”—“Perhaps it is, I'll tell Mrs. Sterling.

“John Collins!”—“'Ere, sir!”—“You have been idle a great part of the year, and have had more than your share of parish relief.”—“Yes, sir.”—

<sup>1</sup> Chapel means a dissenting place of worship.

"This is not right, Collins; I warn you that you must not depend upon outdoor relief in the future. I should be sorry to see a man like you going to the workhouse."—"Yes, sir."—"I know nothing serious against your moral character."—"No, sir, I goes to church reg'lar, sir."—"Yes, I am glad to be able to say that you do; and in this respect,—in which you set a good example to your betters,—I have nothing to complain of,"—"I never goes to chapel, sir."—"That's right, Collins, keep out of those conventicles. Where is your wife? I don't see her here."—"No, sir, she 'ad a drop too much for 'er dinner, sir, it bein' Christmas time, an' is a bit queer."—"This is very disgraceful for a woman of her age—nearly always on the parish, too."—"Yes, sir, an' she eat 'most all the puddin' from the rectory, sir; I never 'ad more'n a bite or two, and one do like a bit o' plum puddin' Christmas time."—"Yes, yes, we'll see about it," said the Rector."—"Thank your Rectorship very much, sir."

"Mrs, Dean, where is your husband?"—"E wouldn't come, sir, and is that cross as can't speak decent like to his own wife and children, sir."—"Is he still employed on the Manor farm?"—"Yes, sir, but 'e 'ad some words with Mr. Sewell, sir, about feedin' the cattle o' Sundays, an' 'e says 'e'll leave the parish come lamb shearing 'fore 'e'll work o' Sundays. 'E never can come to church, sir, in the mornings."—"Yes, I know it's hard to be kept away from Divine service in that



way, but he might get up a little earlier, don't you think; for the cattle must be fed, you know."—"Yes, sir, I'll tell 'im what your Reverence says, sir."—"Ask him to come and see me Monday evening."—"Yes, sir."—"Have the children had a good Christmas?"—"Yes, sir, thank you, sir. The rectory was very good to us, sir, and Billie do like the picture book wid the ten Vergers"—"Ten Virgins"—"Yes sir, and Arrebella took two prizes in the Sunday School."—"Good for Arrebella!"—"They are both 'ere with me sir."—"Yes, I see; that is all, Mrs. Dean"—for she was just starting off again, and seemed a little disappointed at not being able to say something more about Willie and Arrebella.

Several day labourers were now questioned about their earnings for the past year, and in almost every case they were behind with their rents. The average wage seemed to be twelve shillings (\$3.00) a week, and eight pounds (\$40) for harvest, making in all about £70 (\$350) a year, or a little less than seventy-five cents a day—for a family big or little. The rent was from three to five pounds (15 to 25 dollars) a year. The rector was the landlord in most of the cases which came before the meeting, and in almost every case abatement of rent was made. I learned afterwards that it was the usual thing for the Rector's tenants to get an abatement, and this, to some extent, accounted for their presence in such large numbers at this meeting. But they came

in for a lecture on their improvidence, etc., which they probably considered a fair equivalent for their arrears. And this method of balancing the annual accounts appeared to be as satisfactory to the landlord as to his tenants.

Several names were called without any responses, and I noticed that the rector passed these names by in silence, or at the most with a simple enquiry as to the cause of their absence. For it was, I perceived, not his habit to talk about people behind their backs—except in the most general way. He regretted that so many of the young people were forced to leave the parish in order to find employment, and he read several letters from men and women, old and young, who had migrated to London, and other large centres of industry. These letters contained favourable reports (the unfortunate seldom write, I find) and many of them were of the distinctly bragging order, the writers knowing no doubt that they would be read at the annual parish meeting. They also revealed something more of the patriarchal, the fatherly care of the rector—I prefer to say pastor, for a real pastor he certainly was—to the people who had been born and had grown up in his parish. He made a point of writing to them all once a year, so it seemed, and he had during the last year, as appeared from these letters, sent each one a half-tone reproduction of a photograph, both of himself and the grand old church. Some of the letters in

answer to this came from America, and the writers spoke very feelingly of the great pleasure it gave them to see the dear old church, and the face of their kind and beloved rector.

This all impressed me very greatly, and I wondered if the new methods, with all their multiplied services, and machinery, and general up-to-dateness could show anything half so telling; half so thoughtful, half so kindly, so brotherly, so Christian, so useful, as these annual letters and photographs from this old-fashioned, evangelical, aristocratic Low-Churchman, in this very remote Midland parish.

The meeting closed with the hymn—"O God, our help in ages past." Two or three shamefaced couples remained after the others had gone—a servant maid from the rectory among others—and in a very confused and awkward manner intimated to the rector that they expected to get married sometime during the new year. Their old pastor subjected them to a short inquisition concerning their habits and prospects; and after a very brief lecture on the married estate, dismissed them with his blessing. Of course the rector had to pay well for the patriarchal liberties he took with his people, and he did in a very real manner help them to bear their burdens. That he was imposed on now and again goes without saying, for his purse was always open to the calls of charity. None of his parishioners was turned away; and like the Father of us all, Who makes

the sun to shine, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, this true servant and steward of God's bounties, gave to the worthy and the unworthy with an almost equal hand, knowing that in this world the tares must grow with the wheat. He might perhaps have been wiser in his methods of charity, but who knows? At any rate he knew what he was doing; he gave with his own hand, at his own door, like the real Christian that he was, and did not delegate his charity to an unsympathetic and harsh organisation to be half-expended on salaries for people whose business it is to spy out the faults in the lives of their less fortunate fellow creatures. We all know without any instructions from these organisations that there is a very thin partition between the beggar and the thief: the beggar, as a rule, has the spirit of a thief without the courage to act; and no one but a fool expects to find either a saint or a philosopher in one who asks alms. But should this prevent the giving of charity when there is real distress? Our Lord said, "I judge no man." The fact that there is a real need should be quite enough and is quite enough for any man who has real Christian charity within his heart. And this does not create but tends to cure the pauper character. I am fully convinced that the great so-called charity organisations in England and America, established for the prevention of "unwise charity," are not only drying up the springs of human sympathy but are producing

in both countries the very class—the unworthy beggar—they pretend to cure. The Union in England and the poorhouse in America are the only real charity organisations—and they are indiscriminate.

But who are responsible for the pauper and criminal classes? The rich. They herd together in cities and pleasure resorts, and they demand comfort, luxury, amusement, and the means for all kinds of self-indulgence, dissipation, and immorality. These things require a vast army of human beings—men and women, boys and girls, and as long as the different members of this army can minister successfully to their rich and vicious patrons they are fed and clothed. But let one of them fail through sickness or accident or any other cause to suit the caprices of their masters and mistresses, and he—and more especially she—is cast off and thrown into the gutter to starve or beg or steal. There is not one of the vast number of men, women, and children employed in any capacity whatsoever in London, in New York, its private houses, hotels, restaurants, shops, theatres, or brothels—who has not been brought there directly, or indirectly to minister to wealth and vice. And they know it as well as you or I know it. And they realise that their hold upon their places of service is very precarious. That sickness, accident, or the caprice of their employer may turn them out to starve at any moment, and self-preservation, the first law of

nature, warns them to make hay while the sun shines. They therefore fleece their employers right and left while they have the chance. They naturally look upon everybody and everything—the Church included—as parts of the general system of self-seeking, luxury, and immorality. It is perfectly idle, therefore, for the self-indulgent pleasure-seeking master or mistress to talk to their people about honesty and purity.

The pretty rosy-cheeked girl from the country is made the toy of the rich man's son for a few months, or it may be years—that is, so long as she keeps her freshness and beauty, and is then turned out of his house, to serve the sensual purposes of a less rich or a less fastidious man. This process of declension goes on till the once rosy cheeked and cherry-lipped maid, blossoming with health and innocence, becomes a hideous thing and is finally kicked into the gutter, and goes to swell the ranks of the "unworthy poor," against whom we are warned by the charity organisations.

## CHAPTER II

### AN ALARMING ADVENTURE. A VILLAGE ROMANCE

**T**HE Sunday following my visit to the "Squarson," I was again sent to the Midlands, and the circumstances were similar in a most astonishing degree. The rector was the grandson of an earl, and the rectory-house was also in the nature of a hall. The church was of the fifteenth century, large and finely proportioned, and there were at least two other churches of equal age and similar structure almost within sight. One of them could be plainly seen from the tower, and the bells could be heard from all of them. The rector, who was an honorary canon, was away from home attending some function in a parish of which his brother was the squire. There was a drive of three miles from the railway station, and of course the house was not warm. I have never been in an English house in the winter that was warm. The wife and the eldest daughter had gone with the rector and there was a son and a daughter to entertain me, which they did in the simplest and best possible manner by letting me alone, except in looking after my necessary com-

forts. I was in fact turned loose in the rector's library, and began at once to make an inventory of the contents. There were, all told, 1523 books. Out of these there were four sets of Commentaries, not one of them bearing date of publication later than 1875. It is needless to say therefore that they were all worse than useless, they were absolutely misleading and injurious. There were more than one hundred books on missionary subjects, equally ancient and equally harmful. There were three or four hundred books of a miscellaneous character, all, however, having a religious or semi-religious nature, and all of them totally devoid of any literary value. There were no books on the higher criticism and nothing whatever to show that the rector had ever heard of such a thing. He took in, as it appeared, two Church papers both strongly evangelical. There was not one historical book, properly so-called, in the collection, nor a book of poetry, and but one book that could by any stretch of the word be called literary, and this was a small volume, well marked as though it had been used for some special purpose—an examination, for instance. The rest of the library—about 600 volumes—were all sermons, and as they looked down from the book-shelves in sober and solemn array, they gave some suggestion of what this poor congregation had suffered. And this represented the mental food, the intellectual outfit of this good Man of God. And yet there are some people who



still go to church, at least in the country where there is no place else to go. But, if the rector was not very modern in his methods of Biblical study, and did not keep abreast of the intellectual life and activity of his day, he looked after the material and moral well-being of his flock with a care and fidelity which was altogether praiseworthy. This I learnt from a very intelligent maiden lady who played the organ and looked after the school. One or more of these intelligent and devoted maiden ladies of mature age are always found in a country parish, be it never so small or remote. They seem to be in fact an indispensable part of the country parish and the country church. Whether they are always a help or a hindrance to the incumbent is a question that has two sides, as most questions have.

The rector had left a note for me, instructing me concerning the hours of service and the manner of service. He did not object to the surplice, but he did to the coloured stoles, the Eastern position, turning towards the "Table," etc. He was "a Protestant and objected to all Romanizing tendencies." So I had my admonition and conducted myself accordingly. There was no cross, and the chancel rail was never passed, except on the first Sunday of each month when there was a celebration of the Holy Communion at eleven o'clock. The vestry, or robing-room, as is usual in these fine old churches, was in the west end where the bell rope hangs. I had never

pulled one of these ropes and requested the ringer to let me have a try. He did so and instantly I found myself being carried upward in a most alarming way. I let go the rope the instant I realised my predicament, and fell a distance of about six feet, alighting on my feet fortunately. But my abrupt contact with the stone floor was a bit jarring. The bell-ringer was struck dumb at my sudden flight upwards robed in cassock and surplice, and did not speak for about five minutes afterwards, when he merely ejaculated: "That 'us a rum go! sir, that 'us. Don't you know no better en that, sir, un you a parson?" I confessed I had not known any better but would in the future. And to use one of my nation's vulgar expressions I have never "monkeyed" with a bell rope since. The young lady (all maiden ladies are young) who played the organ happened to come in with a list of the hymns just as I had completed my ascension and was on the return journey. She dodged me by a foot or so, and with an "Oh!" fled into the body of the church.

I would here explain, for the benefit of my brother clergymen from America seeking experiences in the English Church, that there is a very large and powerful bell generally at the upper end of the rope which he sees innocently dangling in the west end of a country church, and this bell is big enough and strong enough in all probability to jerk him sky high if he holds on to the rope long enough and knock his brains out against the floor of the

bell tower. The bell-ringer, he will observe, pulls down the rope with all his might and main and then lets it go, and the quicker the better, and it slips back through his hand till the bell has righted itself.

#### A VILLAGE ROMANCE

As I have said the rectory-house was large and perfectly appointed. I had spent the Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon in the library alone, but after the evening service and when we had partaken of a high-tea or supper, the drawing-room was thrown open, and we—the two young people and myself—spent the evening in this large, handsome, and freezing room. There is always a display of family portraits in the rectory drawing-room, the Church and the Army being about equally represented. I am always very much interested in such paintings and photographs, as they furnish a kind of composite family portrait. After inspecting several of these pictures I came upon a very fine-looking officer in a colonel's uniform, with medals covering his breast. He was not a kinsman—I saw this at once and asked about him. I learnt first of all that he was a General and a Knight and then I listened to the following romantic story of his life.

He was born in this village. His father was a tailor (and is still a tailor). He served as assistant for a time to the rectory gardener. He was not,

however, a valuable assistant; he was too inquisitive about the Latin names of the plants and flowers, made a list of them in fact and learnt them by heart. The rector gave him a character and he went to the county town—a cathedral town—and acted for a time as valet to an ecclesiastic. But he gave too much attention to the library for a good servant. His next step was to enter the Army. The colonel spotted him at once and asked him to be his servant. This he politely declined, saying that he had other ambitions. Every spare moment he filled with study, took specially to languages till he had mastered several, got into the Staff College and his commission soon followed. He served on the Commanding Officer's staff in two or three wars, and had now reached the rank of General at the early age of 43. He gave himself no airs, was good-looking and modest, and had not the slightest mark of a ranker about him, so the young lady said, appealing to the young gentleman her brother, who confirmed all his sister had related. He married a lady—I use this word in its technical English sense—and of course is received everywhere. As I passed through the village I saw his father's name, "Robertson, Tailor" on a shop door. There is still some hope for a nation in which such things can happen. This tailor's son is now (1917) the Chief of Staff of the English Army.

## CHAPTER III

"YOU WON'T SUIT THIS PARISH, SIR"

IT was late in the afternoon of a cold raw winter's day that I arrived at an obscure little station in one of the northern counties of England. I was met by a little old man with a pony-cart. The pony was old and fat and covered with hair several inches long. The cart was what the English country people call a "car," why I could never make out. The pony had a definite standpoint from which to view life and had stuck to it with such tenacity as to convert old Michel (who must always have been old), his driver, to the same view. "Well, sir, 'e is a rum one 'e 's, sor, this 'ere pony. When 'e wants ter trot 'e trots and when 'e don't want ter trot 'e won't trot and it's no need a trien fur ter make 'im. We knows each other wery well we do and so we gets on wery well together." "Get on," I suggested, "how do you ever get on at this pace?" for the pony was confining himself strictly to a walk. "Well, sir, that's what they all says at the beginnin.' But jest wait till we gets to the turn in the road"—"If we ever do" I interpolated—"and Bob will show you

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what he can do.” “But in the meantime,” I suggested, “we might show Bob what we can do,” and I took the whip from the holder and began whacking the beast. But he stopped dead still and looked round as if in utter astonishment and disgust. “Tain't me, Bob,” shouted Michel. “It's the gentleman what don't know you.” The pony shook his head at this and rattled the bits as if to say—“Who ever heard of such an impudent thing? It's well I have got on my heavy winter coat, otherwise I should make it hot for this very fresh parson.” “It's wonderful it is, sir,” said Michel, “that 'ere pony knows that it weren't I. He knows, sir, as much as you or I 'bout some things. Now 'e's off, sir”—And away we went spinning up hill and adown dale for a mile or more. And then Bob dropped suddenly into a slow walk, which was succeeded in due course by another spurt. This alternate very slow and very brisk pace was kept up at regular intervals until we reached the rectory-house. “You see, sir, that Bob 'as 'is own way of doing 'is work, and me and master never interferes, sir. It's best not, sir. It's a wonder he didn't kick, sir. But you couldn't know Bob's way of doing things could you now, sir?” I confessed I could not. It was pitch dark when we reached the rectory and we saw the flicker of a lantern some distance ahead held high by some one. “That's my missus, sir, wid the lantern. Her and me was wedded in the church 'ere more an forty years come Michaelmas. She

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has done the cooken for Master, sir, fur more an fifty year. No we ain't no children. Nancy never wanted 'em. Yes, sir, I did want a boy. No, sir, Master never married after his cousin Miss Blakey died. That, sir? Well, sir, it was more an' forty year ago, sir." Bob was now doing his slow interval and it seemed an age before we reached the house after having seen the light. Nancy was in the doorway and conducted me without ceremony into the house, where a cup of tea and a large—a very large—piece of buttered bread awaited me. This reminded me of my childhood days, and I ate and drank with a will as much to get warm as anything else, for there was the poorest attempt at a fire I had ever seen, even in England. When I had finished my tea I rang the bell, and asked to be shown to my bedroom. I now had a chance to look Nancy over. She was very tall, five feet ten at least I should say, very thin, and perfectly flat all the way up and down, both behind and before. She was of any age from sixty to seventy. She took one candle and I took another and we thus started on our upward journey, which continued for the next five minutes—as it seemed to me. The house, as it proved, was situated on an abrupt cliff within a cove, a mile or so from the sea, and the water could be heard far down below, lashing itself, and breaking at the base of the rock. There was a strong wind blowing from the sea and it moaned and cried and shrieked, and the house shook as we

## “You Won't Suit This Parish, Sir” 27

went up and up and up a winding stairway, which became very rickety, after we had gone beyond the second storey. At last I heard a door turn on its creaking hinges and I had reached my bedroom, a large, almost empty room with low ceiling and a very big high poster bed in a corner. “Master dines at eight o'clock, sir,” came in sepulchral tones from the tall, thin, flat apparition before me, and then it vanished. I had some difficulty in finding my things in the dim light of one candle, but to my surprise and delight I found a can of hot water in the washing bowl, covered with a cosy. I could now warm my hands at least, and my feet as well, so I found, and I was soon clothed, but hardly in my right mind, and began the descent into the abyss below as it looked in the dim light of the candle which I held over my head. I had not up to this time seen the rector. Nancy was awaiting me below and conducted me into the dining-room, where I was confronted by a short corpulent old gentleman with long grey hair and heavy gold-rimmed spectacles. After extending his fat warm hand, which might have been a piece of bacon for all the animation it expressed, he showed me a chair at one end of the long table and he seated himself at the other end. After a very long blessing Nancy appeared with a hot joint, and there was no difficulty in perceiving that we were to have mutton and very high at that, and my stomach instantly rebelled. “I hope you like mutton, sir. I have been saving this for some



time and it seems very prime," said the rector. "I think I'll not take any hot meat, I'm not very hungry." (I was famishing.) "There's nothing cold, and as I said I have been keeping this especially for you" and the rector put down his knife and peered at me in a very stern manner over the gold rim of his spectacles. "Thank you, sir," I responded in humble submission, and Nancy brought me a very large helping. I hoped the currant jelly might disguise somewhat the high character of the mutton, but it seemed on the contrary to aggravate the state of things. I dallied for a time with the viand, but found that both the rector and Nancy were eyeing me with suspicion and displeasure writ large in their faces. I therefore summoned up all my courage and with a desperate effort bolted a large mouthful. To chew it would have been impossible, as well as unnecessary. Having once broken the ice I went gaily in and utterly refused to listen to any qualms until I had completely cleared my plate. I then looked both the rector and Nancy boldly in the faces as a rebuke for their groundless suspicions. There then followed a telepathic communication between the rector and Nancy, which resulted in another huge piece being offered me. But my courage was now up, or at least I felt that something was coming up and I positively declined any more of the carrion, or anything else for the rest of the meal; which ended at last and I retreated hurriedly from the dining-room, out into the

## “You Won't Suit This Parish, Sir” 29

night, as sick a mortal as ever ate rotten mutton. Relief came at once on the expulsion of the carrion, the wind blew the salt air in my face, and I soon revived.

On my return to the house I found the rector asleep in his study and took the opportunity of inspecting his books. I found no books published within the last forty-five years, and it looked as though the rector had cut off all connection with the outside world some forty years ago. He was now between seventy and eighty. I could find no daily or weekly paper, except a single copy of the *Guardian* containing the notice which had brought me there. There were, however, some curious old volumes on theology, and natural history, more than fifty years old, and a dictionary printed by N. Bailey, 1751. I was deeply immersed in this, the oldest dictionary I had ever seen, when the sleeper awoke. He had slept with his glasses on and might have been watching me for some time for all I knew, and I was somewhat startled when he asked me to stand up at the end of the room and repeat the Exhortation, which occurs in the Prayer Book the first thing after the sentences in the Morning Prayer, beginning “Dearly beloved brethren.” I was never so taken back in all my life and could not for the life of me repeat one word of the Exhortation and hardly my own name. “You don't mean to say, sir, that you can't repeat the Exhortation?” asked the rector in very solemn

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accents. "Well, no. But I have never repeated it aloud in a private room under such strange circumstances." "Strange circumstances, strange circumstances!" ejaculated my aged host. "What do you mean, sir?" I explained that of course he was a stranger to me, and that the whole scene was unfamiliar and that I was somewhat embarrassed. "What is there here, sir, to embarrass you? We are brother clergymen together." Just at this moment the wind seemed to take the old house up in its arms, give it a good shaking, and put it down again. The whole scene in fact appeared almost diabolical, and I became possessed with the horrible feeling that I had made a mistake and got into a mad-house. "Well, sir," said the rector, "have you never heard the wind blow before?"—"Yes sir, but not under the same circumstances."—"Circumstances again, sir." "I mean it is all strange, that is, new to me, you know, sir."—"Perhaps you could read me a chapter from the New Testament if the circumstances will permit?" The irony was no doubt meant to be cutting, but it had the effect of a tonic upon me, and I answered: "I'll give you the Exhortation first, sir," which I did without a slip. "Very good, sir, very good. It's the fashion nowadays, so I hear, for the minister to read or sing the Service in such a mumbling way as not to be understood by the people. You don't believe in that sort of thing I hope?"—"No, sir." I then read the 12th Chapter of Romans, more because it is easy to read than

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for any other reason. “I like your selection. It is practicable and wholesome. That is all, sir. I gathered from your letters that you are not a Romanist, and not afraid to call yourself a Protestant.”—No, sir.”—“Very good, sir, that is all. The Service is at ten o'clock. You will take the Lessons, the second part of the Prayers, and preach. I generally preach about forty-five minutes, but you can preach as long as you please.” He then relapsed into silence which was not broken for at least one hour when Nancy came in, handed the rector a prayer-book, placed three chairs in a row and retired, to return in a few minutes with her husband, Michel, and a boy of about fifteen years. Three more comically grotesque individuals could not have been brought together by accident or design from the four corners of the earth, for the boy, in his way, was as much of a character as Michel, or Nancy. The rector read the prayers in a very clear but formal—not to say artificial—voice and manner, and when prayers were ended he intimated that bedtime had come by informing me that breakfast would be on the table at eight o'clock.

I saw that I was expected to find my way to my bedroom unaided, and for fear that I might have to wander all night through this old house or castle, or whatever it was—for I had no idea of its character or dimensions—I firmly requested to be shown the way. Nancy came in answer to the rector's ring, and conducted me again to my lofty chamber.

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I was curious to know something of the character of a house which seemed to tower so high above the surging sea below, but I could get nothing satisfactory out of Nancy. I inferred, however, that the rectory included the tower of an old castle which had stood on this spot for many hundred years, and that my bedroom was in this tower. This at once suggested ghosts, and I had by this time been worked up into just the frame of mind to fully appreciate any occult experiences that might offer themselves, and with candle in hand, which threw deep shadows before me, I began an inspection of my aerie abode. The room was octagonal, with long narrow windows, some four or five feet from the floor. I managed with some difficulty to open one of these windows, and, standing on a chair, looked out into the night. I could now faintly see from whence came the hollow booming sounds which I had been hearing ever since I entered this strange place, and which had given such a mysterious character to all my surroundings. The sound came from the breaking of the sea-waves against the base of the cliff some hundreds of feet below. But the wind was too strong for me to prolong this experience, and I closed the windows and sought my bed, but not to sleep. The windows rattled, the old tower swayed to and fro, and there came up from the sea below strange sounds and cries that murdered sleep, and I actually covered my head, so great was my superstitious fear of beholding some

unearthly sight. But this was only for a moment, and in shame I threw back the sheet to behold a dreadful apparition at my bedside actually clutching at the bedclothes. I sprang up, the figure retreated, and there came a sound, half human, half infernal: “I didn't wish to wake you, sir, but it's a gittin' cold, and I brought you an extra blanket.” The actual fact finally dawned upon me that this was the voice and figure of Nancy—on a mission of mercy. She hastily departed, but not, I fear, with my blessing, or even my thanks, for her kind thoughtfulness. But the ghosts were now all laid, and I slept.

The morning came, cold and clear, and revealed the outward aspect of the situation. From my window I discovered the little church, standing lonely and hoar, on the opposite cliff of the cove, and I also perceived that my bedroom was high above the roof of the rectory. There were only two windows in this octagonal tower that could be opened, or that were of any use for seeing purposes. My view was therefore confined to the water and a narrow strip of land which bordered the sea front. It was a very fine and extensive view, however, and the tower had evidently been designed for that purpose. The tower might almost have been used for a lighthouse as it stood on a projecting point of the cove, which seemed to be a kind of small harbour, judging from the various craft that lay at anchor within its strong white arms. I was so much interested in the view

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which my lofty tower commanded, as to be late for breakfast. Prayers had been said, and the rector was very much occupied with a huge bowl of porridge. He greeted me very civilly, but coldly, and there was a general air of reproof pervading the breakfast-room. But as I had parted with my dinner on the previous evening soon after its reception I was now hungry enough to ignore everything but my breakfast, which was good and bountiful. I ate to my heart's content and to the great amazement of Nancy, who had evidently gauged my general appetite by the dinner of the previous evening; but she was now called upon to provide me with a breakfast equal in quantity to a good dinner. First I had oatmeal porridge—the best I ever ate; six rashers of bacon and three eggs followed, with tea and bread and marmalade and toast to match.

I was now in my usual amiable, cheerful mood, and proof against the frowns of the world, including the rector, who was not able to hold out very long against my spirit of joyfulness. In response to his enquiries I informed him that I had brought my own "vestments." "Vestments!" exclaimed the rector, "and pray what do you mean by that word?" "Anything you like," I answered, for I was now fully in the spirit of the thing; "everything but a chasuble. I always carry a full outfit, and assortment of everything in order to be able to suit my clients, for some, you know, like one

thing and some another. Now I think the proper colour for today.”—“Stop, sir, stop!” roared the irate cleric in great wrath; “colour, sir, colour! Have you no conscience at all in the matter?”—“Oh, certainly not, it is purely a matter of dress, you know, and has nothing at all to do with religion.”—“Well, sir, I think I may as well tell you, once for all, that you won’t suit this parish.”—“You mean I won’t suit you, sir.”—“It’s the same thing, sir, the same thing.”—“Yes, I suppose it is, sir. Shall you want me to officiate today sir?”—“No, sir, thank you.” This was a great relief and just what I had endeavoured to bring about by my rather flippant manner. For I beheld a vision of a cold dark church and a congregation composed of Nancy, Michel, and the red-headed boy, with perhaps a fisherman or two; and worst of all the rector, glaring at me over his gold-rimmed spectacles, and I felt sure I should not be able to maintain my soberness of mind under such trying circumstances. I was however one of the congregation, and listened for forty-five minutes, and more, to a discourse on the prophet Daniel, which had doubtless been written fifty years ago. There were no fishermen present, and the congregation all told numbered seven, including myself. It was announced that Evening Prayers would be said as usual in the rectory-house at four o’clock. This was then the only Service held in the church on Sunday. There was none of course at any other time. There



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was no attempt made, so far as I could see, to heat or light the church.

I spent the day roaming about on the Downs and the evening looking over the ancient books in the rectory library. The second night in my aerie brought no adventure, and I was the first to appear in the dining-room next morning. On taking my leave I offered some apology for having caused so much trouble, to no purpose. But the aged rector seemed somewhat mollified, and expressed his regret that he had not made himself clearer in his letters. He offered me the usual fee (£2.2. 0), two guineas (\$10.50), which I declined, as I considered the experiences worth ten times that sum. Bob, the pony, took me to the station and behaved in the same eccentric manner as on the outward journey. I endeavoured, in an indirect way, to learn something about the daily life in the rectory, but Michel scented the game, and, stupid as he looked, and in reality was, he parried my questions with the greatest skill, while appearing to be anxious to satisfy my curiosity. In short I got nothing out of him, and had to depend almost wholly upon my own observations for my impressions.

## CHAPTER IV

### MY CLIENTELE

IT may be stretching the English language a little to speak of my clients. What I mean to say is that in the natural course of things the species of the genus Clericus, which I represent, if his services prove at all acceptable, forms certain connections with clergymen and churchwardens who call upon him from time to time as his services may be required, either for Sunday duty or for longer engagements. It was not many months before I had established such relationships between several beneficed clergymen, some of whom were good enough to pass my name on to others in need of temporary help. This I found an altogether more agreeable way of securing employment than applying to agencies, or answering advertisements. I advertised my own wares but once; this advertisement appeared in the *Guardian* and read as follows: "American Clergyman (Presbyter) and author, a good reader and preacher, under license from the Archbishop of Canterbury, is prepared to take temporary duty." This sounded all right as it came from my pen,

but when I beheld it staring me in the face from the columns of the *Guardian* I was horrified at its bold, unblushing conceit, and determined at once to repudiate it, and if necessary to flatly deny that I had ever said such a thing of myself. At any rate I was fully decided not to answer any call that might chance to come to me through the means of this self-laudation. But none came. And yet I had copied almost literally the form that appears continually in the Church papers. There was an interesting psychological experience connected with this event, viz: what appeared perfectly modest and proper and altogether fitting in the self-advertisement of others, seemed improper, immodest, and wholly shameful—if not downright immoral in myself. I have no doubt that this is a kind of morbid self-depreciation, begotten of my nationality.

But I was speaking of my clientele when I was interrupted. Well it was not long before I began to get letters from clergymen and wardens, representing churches where I had taken duty, asking me to visit them again. This was very gratifying as it both saved the agent's commission and paid me a personal compliment. I also received now and again a letter from entire strangers stating that my name had been given them as one who was prepared to take temporary duty, etc. One such note came from a rector in the far north, who stated that he was obliged to be absent from his parish for a month and asked if

I could take his duty—which was very light—for one Sunday, and perhaps longer. The usual fee was offered and travelling expenses going and coming, which amounted to within a few shillings of my stipend—two guineas. The church was in a remote district on the coast, five miles from a little country railway-station. There was no village and no houses so far as I could discover within a mile or so of the church. The rectory-house was in a small and beautiful park of its own. It was originally, I think, the “Hall” or “The Court” or whatever the squire’s residence had been called. It was at any rate a fine large house in the Tudor style, and in a perfect state of preservation and repair. There were modern baths and heating arrangements of the most approved order. I felt warm and comfortable from the moment I entered the door till I took my departure. There was a late dinner served in the “Country” manner, and nothing was wanting that could suggest refinement and culture. The family present consisted entirely of ladies, a wife and two grown-up daughters, all of whom I found charming. The study had been put in order for my convenience, and I had free access to the library, which consisted of several thousand volumes and embraced all the best and most recent books of reference, together with many standard works of history, science, theology, and general Literature. The best and most recent volumes on the higher criticism, English, Dutch, and German, all had

places given them on the rector's book-shelves. By their books shall ye know them, and I did not require to be told that I was in the house not only of a scholar but of a man of exceptional intelligence. But what could he be doing in this out-of-the-way, uninhabited corner of creation? That was the mystery that now loomed large before me, and which I immediately set about to solve. I began by assuming that the rector was a writer, and perhaps an author of distinction, although I had never heard the name in the theological or literary world, and I prided myself that I was pretty well informed in these matters. I turned to the library in the hope of finding a book or some hint that would help me in solving the problem. But my quest was a fruitless one, and I had quite given up the chase when my eyes fell upon *Crockford*, the clerical Encyclopedia Britannica, and I now had no difficulty in running my game to cover. I found, first of all, that my host had distinguished himself at Oxford, and had reached a very conspicuous position in the public-school world of England, before taking up his residence in this lonely parish. But why had he come here? The mystery deepened. He was not an aged man, nor a feeble man, but a very vigorous, active, and rather an aggressive man as I gathered from the family table-talk. A mystery there certainly was, a much deeper mystery than I had first supposed. I arrived on a Friday and had a whole day between me and my

Sunday duty. This I spent in exploring the parish (*sic*) and neighbourhood. The quaint little church was the first object of interest. It was one of the most ancient in England, a veritable Saxon edifice if there be any left standing in Great Britain—which there is not. It was very small, very low, and very dark and damp and cold. But the special—and to me unique—feature of the church was the chancel, which began on a line with the nave and then swung off to the left in a bending or drooping curve. I felt pretty certain that this was the result of design and not accident, but could not then imagine the object, which was of course, as I have since learnt, to represent the drooping position of our Saviour's head as He hung upon the Cross. I have since seen many other examples of this ancient symbolism. As I have stated, the rectory-house seemed to be the only dwelling in the parish, and this proved to be literally so, and the rector's family and household were not only therefore the only communicants of the church, but the only people in the parish. I had heard of rotten boroughs—that is, boroughs that had no actual voters and yet had a representative in Parliament, but I had never before seen or heard of a rotten parish, *i. e.*, a parish with no inhabitants. But this came very nearly being one, and would have been but for the family of the rector. I had also heard of *sinecure* posts in the Church and State and this was certainly the first perfect instance of one I had ever seen.

The rector's duties were that of chaplain to himself and his household, and for holding this dignified, if not very useful or onerous post of duty, he received the not inconsiderable sum of £1000 (\$5000) and a beautiful country residence, in spite of the fact that he had really no care of souls outside his own family. And that nothing might be wanting to make the farce as perfect as possible, the Church Services had to be kept up and Prayers said twice on each Sunday. This was the condition of holding the living, but I suspect there were Sundays now and again when the walls of this ancient mite of a church echoed to no sounds of prayer and praise. There was a little beach not far from the church and within the parish bounds where I found some fishermen cleaning their nets, and but for those men—and they were from a neighbouring village—I did not see one human being within the scope of my day's perambulations. This caused me to meditate seriously upon a Church system that rendered such a condition of things possible, and had not the power to provide a remedy. Here was a conspicuously well-educated and intelligent clergyman, relegated to the uttermost parts of the land, with absolutely nothing to do and five thousand a year to do it on, whilst I know clergymen in the very eye of the public, ministering to highly educated people, with little or no tact and less intelligence. And I also know of clergymen with both tact and intelligence working in the great centres of industry and com-

merce having nothing to work with. In fact I think I may truthfully say that as a rule when there is important work to be done in the Church of England, there is no adequate means to do it with. You can verify this statement for yourself. Look over the livings in *Crockford* and you will find, not to put it too strongly, that where there is a good living, *i. e.*, a living with a good clerical income, there is little or no work to be done, and where there is plenty of work there is little or no clerical income. There is something radically wrong, if not actually rotten, in such a condition of things, and it must be set right before the Church of England can hope to do the work it is supposed to do. The Church of England is an Episcopal Church, that is to say, a Church governed by Bishops and they should not only have it in their power to put the best man in the best place, but to proportion the stipend to the actual work accomplished. A general fund should be created for this purpose, and it seems to me that the easiest and best way to create this fund would be to consolidate all the Church endowments of whatever character, and place this fund in the hands of a central committee, to be administered by the Bishops acting as a body for the highest good of the whole Church. If this means disendowment, well and good. Anything is better than the present system even if it should come to the State confiscating Church property. And I am not so sure that State confiscation would not be



the very best thing that could happen to the Church. If the people really desire the ministrations of the Church they will gladly pay for them, and they will pay for them just in proportion to the benefit derived. The Church would thus be placed on the only sound and healthy footing possible, viz., voluntary support. But what right has a poor despised, unbeneficed guinea-pig, and an American one at that, to give advice on such weighty matters to such a learned body of men as the English Clergy?

## CHAPTER V

### THE HALT, THE LAME, AND THE BLIND

THE unquestioned dignity attaching to the position of an incumbent in the English Church resides, for the most part, in his fixity of tenure. The living is his personal property, and he holds it with as good and as sure a title as that by which the Lord of the Manor—be he Commoner or Peer—holds his estates. In country parishes the incumbent is more or less a landed proprietor. This too often results, at the present time, in a very precarious income, but it always provides a permanent social status, so that men are willing to pay very considerable sums for the mere privilege of occupying such a post. I do not, of course, mean to imply that this is always, or commonly, their chief motive, but I do mean to say that perhaps the majority of country livings would go begging were it not for the dignity and social distinction they confer upon the incumbents. The country parson is still in England what his name implies "*the person*" of the parish. This is a good thing in many cases, and might be a good thing in every case, were the parson always dis-

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posed to use his commanding position not in the interests of himself and his family but for the good of the whole community, which I must confess he seldom does.

But I am straying from my point, which is that the principle of the fixity of tenure is a good thing itself, as it gives the cleric that independence of thought and action which is well-nigh essential to his successful ministration. It protects him from the whims, caprices, and unfair hostility of his critics and relieves him of the suspicion of trimming his sails to catch the popular which is always the most favourable breeze. That a man in any dependent position, especially the ministry, is tempted to steer a course best adapted to please his employers is obvious. Moreover a man must have an assured position in England to speak with any degree of authority and force on any subject. The Nonconformist is therefore put at an enormous disadvantage by this want of fixity of tenure which the Church of England incumbent enjoys. The Dissenter stands upon an unstable, a shifting foundation, and I venture to say that his talents would count for more than double their present value, could he speak with the freedom and the force which the assurance of fixity of tenure carries with it.

But fixity of tenure, like most good systems, is subject to abuse. Aged, feeble-minded, and unworthy clergymen hold on to their livings long after they have ceased to be fit to perform their

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duties. There are various causes which contribute to this abuse. In many cases to surrender a living would be to cut off, at one fell swoop, the only means of keeping soul and body together. But livings are not unfrequently held for purely social and family reasons, after the incumbent has ceased to be able to properly perform his clerical functions. To surrender the living is to give up house and home, and to seek a new residence, it may be and usually is, outside the parish. His removal from the parish is in every case desirable from the standpoint of the new incumbent. This comes hard and is naturally resisted till the last moment. But however sad it may seem, it is better that one family should suffer inconvenience, and even dismemberment, than that a whole community should perish. And yet however strongly one may feel and advocate this theory in the abstract, he is almost certain to modify his zeal, if he does not wholly change his views, when brought face to face with concrete examples in the shape of actual families—men, women, and children, as I have seen them more than once in the course of my journeying to and fro through this beautiful mellow England. I once officiated for three Sundays in a cosy little corner of one of the Midland Counties, where the rector had been planted in his early manhood, and where he now stood with the roots of his being fixed firm and deep in the soil of the parish, and the branches of his life and character spreading

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out in every direction, carrying upon their strong and hoary arms the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears of this inglorious hamlet. His ambitions had been simple, and had never strayed beyond his parish boundaries. But within those limits he had lived a full and consistent life, giving himself to his ministrations in public and private without stint; so that he had become in deed and in truth the veritable shepherd of his flock, the faithful curer of souls. He had baptised, and married, and buried two generations of this humble folk, and like Wordsworth's Little Cottage Girl, they are—living or dead—still members of his little flock. I walked with him through "his graveyard" as he called it, and it was as if we were traversing the streets of the village, with the difference that the names and characters of these silent inhabitants of this green churchyard were vastly more familiar to the old pastor than those of his walking and talking parishioners. That they still lived to the thought and feeling of the old shepherd was made evident by the fact that when he spoke of them by name it was always in the present tense, as though they were still members of his flock. As we moved slowly, picking our way among the grey stones, I questioned my venerable guide two or three times concerning certain names that caught my eye. We came upon a long row of stones and I asked about them. "Who are they?" he repeated after me, always changing the past "were" to the

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present "are." "Oh! ah! they work the hill-farm, my wife gets her fowls from them, and good fowls they are too." (His wife had been dead ten years and more.) "I married Janet to a worthless drunkard. I knew what he was and told her so. She had her own way, however, and now she is paying for it. They live a wretched life." (Both Janet and her drunken husband were now lying peacefully together side by side with but one stone marking the two graves.) "Her eldest son is doing well in America, so I hear. Sarah, her sister, went wrong with a farmer's son in a neighbouring parish. But they all come of good old stock, industrious and honest, none better in the parish." I pointed to a newly-made grave. "Oh! ah! A fine maid, quite a beauty, married a steady-going London constable [policeman] who was born here. Always brings her children home to be christened. Has grandchildren but they don't live in the parish. A son was killed in South Africa. That monument? Oh! ah! that's the squire, and my oldest friend. We came here about the same time, he to the hall and I to the rectory-house. A good sort of squire in his way, but his language sometimes is a little too strong, was a bit wild at first but has quieted down." (And well he might, lying as he was under several hundred-weight of granite and marble.) "Doesn't like me to beat him at chess, ha! ha!" I next noticed three or four stones in a row with the rector's name upon them. I asked no questions,

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but the old man took a seat upon an iron bench, and I sat down beside him. We sat for a few moments when the aged pastor got up and began to busy himself in the most cheerful manner with the graves. He went to a little shelter near by and brought a rake, a can of water, and some pot flowers and worked away for twenty minutes or more, wholly oblivious of me. He then suddenly seemed to recall the fact of my presence and came and sat down again. He was now in a talkative mood and told me about his eldest son (who was still living), how he had taken a good degree at Cambridge, become a barrister, married a great lady, and was rich and prosperous. Of the second son, whose gravestone was here he said nothing. Here also was a daughter who, according to the inscription, had died in her seventeenth year. Here were two grandchildren and the family tombstone with his wife's name and a blank place for his own. There were evidences of very frequent visits to this spot, and I afterwards learnt that a day never passed, however inclement, in which the old man did not find his way here, to linger sometimes for hours among his beloved dead, who were still living to him. This rector was old "and a little dotty," as an irreverent youth put it, and deaf and lame, and nearly blind. He took snuff, and presented a very untidy, and truth to say, unseemly appearance. He mumbled his words so that it was difficult to follow him in private conversation, and quite impossible in his

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public utterances, and yet who could have the heart to cut down and uproot this old tree of the primeval forest in order to give place and soil perhaps for some green sprout fresh from the artificial heat of the University hot-house? The old tree cumbered the ground, it is true; its leaves were long since withered, its branches were barren and broken, and its trunk was covered with dead bark and mouldering moss. But below these outward tokens of decay and death the roots of the old tree were still clinging to the soil, with its memories of two generations both of the living and the dead. Who would wish to see such associations, such relationships severed save by the pale hand of death? What could better illustrate the words of the Psalmist, "We all do fade as a leaf"?

I had another experience, similar in some superficial respects, but fundamentally different in all respects. I took duty for two Sundays in a parish where the vicar was afflicted very much as the old rector had been, but not from age or service. He was in fact a young man, not more than thirty-eight years old, and had literally inherited his father's parish in as true a sense as a son inherits his father's estates or his personal property. This means of course that the father arranged that at his decease the living should go to his son. Whether the father had the living within his own gift or not I cannot say. But that the succession was a *fait accompli* before the father's death I have positive evidence.



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The convenience and value of this family arrangement proved very considerable, and the widow and children were provided with a home in the vicarage, so long as the son remained unmarried. The father had been an exceptionally efficient vicar both as preacher and pastor, or parish priest, to use the awkward and meaningless form of expression now almost universal. The people were very fond of him and this had a double effect upon the position of the son as his successor. It secured for him an indulgent sympathy and tolerance which no other clergyman could have enjoyed. But, on the other hand, the father had set a standard of ability and efficiency which was in striking contrast to his successor's powers. But the widow of the late vicar and the mother of the present incumbent had a strong personality, and had wisdom enough to use her strength to the great advantage of her son. She was therefore the connecting link between the old and the new and held out the hope—a mother's hope—that the vicar's youth might finally triumph over his infirmities, and who could have the heart to say her nay? The vicar was suffering from partial paralysis, which had affected his hearing, his sight, his speech, and his whole body, and it required only the eye of an impartial, and perhaps not too sympathetic stranger to see that the case was quite hopeless. The parish could be worked in a way with a curate, but family interests and the good nature of the parishioners aside, here was

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a glaring instance of abuse of fixity of tenure in church livings.

One more example whilst I am on this subject, as illustrating the perplexities that may arise in the case of an incompetent incumbent and the fixity of tenure. And here again the pros and cons almost balance each other. It is the case of a rector who had come into a living after thirty years or more spent as a teacher, in which he had a real vocation, and had worked so hard and so faithfully as to completely use up his physical and intellectual vitality. The living was a good one, the parish was small, and the work correspondingly light, and yet the rector did really nothing more than was required by law to enable him to hold the benefice. He baptised, he married, and he buried. He was forced now and again to present a class for Confirmation. But the candidates were instructed by a deputy and he actually refused the use of his church to the Bishop for the performance of this essential rite of the Church. The rector had been a good man of business and this habit clung to him, so that there was an orderliness about all he did in the church and the rectory-house that made a favourable impression upon the visitor, and led him to expect a well-worked field, and one could not at first give credit to the words of the people and the general tokens throughout the parish to the contrary. The criticism of the most favourably disposed parishioners was harsh and unfeeling, and the village gossip was in many

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instances not only unjust but wilfully vicious, for the rector's private life was wholly free from a taint of any kind. He was not an old man in years but his vitality was actually exhausted. He had succeeded in making this port his haven of rest after a hard and long voyage and had neither the disposition nor the strength to put out to sea again. And there are many such cases in the Church of England where a living is taken as a haven of rest at the ebbing of the tide of life.

There is a very amiable, kindly, and commendable side to this state of things, and yet we all know that it is utterly vicious and really immoral both on the part of the giver and the receiver, and whilst there should be no disposition, as there is no occasion to act harshly or hastily with regard to these abuses they must be dealt with sooner or later in the interest of the health and the life of the whole Church as is plainly evident. They are soul destroying. If the Church of England is a State establishment (which in reality it is not), why should not her servants be pensioned as in other departments of the State? But apart from any action on the part of the Government representing the State cannot the Church of England so consolidate and administer her corporate funds, which she holds be it remembered in fee-simple, as to be able to pension off her superannuated servants?

## CHAPTER VI

### A NOTABLE CASE

THE clergy are often twitted with their prompt willingness to quit a poor parish for a "more promising sphere of labour" as a better living is designated. It is refreshing therefore to come upon a case here and there where a parson turns up a good living for a poor one. The present Bishops of Birmingham and Southwark are notable examples in the Episcopate, of clergymen who gladly surrender what would be considered very desirable Bishoprics for the very hard work and many privations of new and uncongenial "spheres of labour." Bishops Gore and Talbot, however much they may be wanting in orthodoxy, and however much offence they may give by their extreme Ritualistic views, have set examples of self-denial to the Episcopate and to the whole Church, that their critics should seriously ponder before a final condemnation. It was my great pleasure to stumble upon an example of the self-sacrificing parson, in my weekly rounds as a guinea-pig. A vicar had been suddenly called away from his parish by the death of a near

relation, and in his distress called upon the Clerical Agency to provide him a substitute for his Sunday duties, and I was sent. The parish, which once lay in a quiet country district, and had consisted of two ancient and straggling hamlets, had been recently changed into a black, grimy, bustling town of some eight or ten thousand inhabitants, who were wholly given up to the manufacturing of shoes, and nothing could have been more repulsive to any sense of beauty. There was a drizzling rain when I arrived at the station, and the scene was hideous and revolting in the last degree. I actually shuddered as I was being conducted through the streets to the vicarage, fearing lest I might be "put up" in one of the low squatty dungeons called dwellings, for seeing that the town was new I concluded that it was all of one piece. But suddenly my fears were dispelled by a sight that gladdened my eyes, an old ivy-covered church with a Queen Anne dwelling, nestling close to it, which I knew must be the vicarage, and I was saved. For here was an oasis, and the only one, in this wilderness of dirt and smoke and slime that rolled up, surged round, and almost submerged these solitary ancient landmarks of civilised life. I was greeted at the door by an elderly female servant and conducted to the study. This was a cheerful room lined with live-looking books which I at once attacked in an effort to shut out of my mind and soul the nightmare impressions I had experienced while walking

through the town. I soon found an interesting book and felt safe for the night. Not however before giving some careful attention to the fire, for being alone in the house I felt free to do with it as seemed best to myself, and the maid who brought me my tea was startled on entering the room as she evidently thought the house was on fire, for I had kindled a conflagration such as she had probably never beheld before in the whole course of her life. I calmed her fears and told her that I would look after the fire if she would provide the coals. This division of labour seemed to meet her approval, and I felt no further concern about being kept warm whilst I remained in that house at least. The old servant now paid me a visit and enquired if I wished to go out for a walk before supper, if so she would arrange the hour of that meal to suit my convenience. An army with banners could not have driven me out of my snug quarters into such a hideous town that night. I however dissembled my feelings and assuming an undecided state of mind told her I would think about the matter. I however decided at once upon my supper hour and intimated that whether I walked abroad, or remained indoors, I should in any event be ready at the specified time. But I never once so much as peeped outside the door that night, and found no trouble in occupying my time in cultivating the vicar's library till a rather late hour for Saturday night, as there was an early service next morning. The house was all

hushed in sleep when I took my candle in hand and started for my bedroom, and it was now my turn to be startled, for on opening the bedroom door I actually thought for a moment that the house was on fire, as I had never beheld such a blaze in an English house. My lesson in stoking had evidently very much impressed the maid, and she here gave me an example of what she could do on her own account. But if there is anything I dislike more than a cold sitting-room it is a hot bedroom. Yet how could she be expected to enter into my nice discriminations of comfort? If fire was what I wanted fire I should have. This was her simple way of reasoning, and I could not complain. I was now reduced to the dilemma of roasting in my bed, or of opening the window and being poisoned with the putrid air of the town. I preferred to roast.

There was a large number of communicants for the early service, all wearing the indelible marks of their trade upon their hands. I found the old church to be a gem in its way, even more out of keeping with its environments than the vicarage. At the end of this service a young man approached me in a modest manner and offered to read the lessons for me at Morning and Evening Prayer. I am rather particular about this part of the service as I think a great deal depends upon the proper reading of the scripture. The great Hooker said that the reading of the First and Second Lessons is about the best form of Christian

preaching. That is, I would add, if the Lessons are well read. Moreover I could see that this volunteer was not a University man nor blessed with a very agreeable accent. But he was a frank, honest-looking young fellow, and I consented, more to relieve myself of the task than for any other reason, I fear. And never have I been so much surprised in the whole course of my life, for never have I heard the Lessons better read, and that in spite of the illiterate accent. The man had in fact a special gift for Bible reading, and the vicar had evidently found that out.

The Saturday had been cold and dark and rainy, but the Sunday proved fine and warm and bright, revealing all the more plainly the hideous ugliness of the town.

I found a *Crockford* in the vicar's library, but it was three years old, and gave another name than the present vicar's as the incumbent of this parish. I thus learnt that he was a new-comer, and prompted by curiosity I went back to his former "sphere of labour." I found among other things that he was a man of about forty, and I already knew that he was a bachelor. But the very strange, and very interesting thing about him seemed to be that he had left a very small country parish with a very good living to accept his present post, with all work and little or no pay. This was the situation as it appeared in *Crockford*, but I determined if possible to get other and fuller



proof of this strange clerical phenomenon. Without therefore seeming to know anything at all about the matter I broached the subject to the old housekeeper. I pointed to a large photograph of an elderly gentleman which hung over the mantelpiece and enquired if that was the vicar. "Oh no, sir," replied the old woman, with great emphasis, "that, sir, was Canon L——, the father of the vicar. The vicar hain't more 'an two and forty, sir, if 'e's that." I then by degrees learnt several things, namely, that he had been here about two years, that his sister lived with him, that he had been rector of a beautiful country parish, which he had resigned to take this church. "I don't know what ever made him do it, sir, but he gies up one of the most beautifullest homes in all England for this 'ere nasty place. Why, sir, there ain't no gentle people within the whole parish." I now had confirmed by the lips of the housekeeper what *Crockford* had intimated, and had really found a parson who had given up an ideal country parish, where there was little or nothing to do, and much to enjoy, for a very much poorer living, but where there was, in very truth, "a more promising sphere of labour." He had not only given up a good living for a poor one but he had surrendered a beautiful home with congenial surroundings for "this 'ere nasty place." As I have already said I stumbled upon this very interesting case by pure accident and there are, no doubt, very many more such examples of self-

surrender and self-sacrifice among the clergy of the Church of England. That they are not blazoned abroad is what one might naturally expect from the very nature of the case.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VICAR *versus* THE CURATE

MY next experience was not so interesting, or at least not so edifying, and I should not relate it but for the fact that it gives a good bit of colour to the general background of my picture. Moreover it contains many of the features which most good Americans have in their minds when they first visit England, as belonging to the typical English parish. These Americans—always of English ancestry—picture to themselves an old ivy-grown church, with a grey moss-covered tower, owing its existence to some religious order of the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth century. The incumbent must, of course, be an aristocrat, and a brother or cousin to the Lord of the Manor, who is naturally a great nobleman. The incumbent (always a vicar to the American mind) is a high liver, frequently takes a drop too much, and possesses a moral character which is not any better than it should be. Well such an imaginary picture can still be found in real life, now and then, in the English Church, but the cases are very few and far between and will soon have passed away for

ever, under the keen episcopal vigilance which now prevails everywhere. But it was my good fortune, at least from one point of view, to light upon just such a combination of circumstances as the imaginary case depicts. This was a long way from London, and whilst I hope to effectually disguise its identity I shall at the same time give as full an account of the situation as is consistent with propriety. At the end of a wearisome journey of three hours and more I was met at the station by the vicar's coachman and taken to one of those hybrid houses one sees so often in England, which is neither a cottage nor a villa, but a miserable cross between the two, without any of the merits of either. I was greatly relieved, however, to find that my status was that of a paying guest, and I was therefore free to ask for what I wanted, fires included. I found the parish magazine upon the table, and almost the first thing that caught my eye was an appeal from the vicar to his people for funds to provide him a curate. This was "the third time of asking" so it appeared, and the responses were very few and small, not more than £30 having been subscribed in six months towards a sum of £180,—the amount required. This seemed a good round figure for a curate in a country parish, but the vicar went on to explain that it was necessary, in order to secure the services of a University man and a gentleman, the latter qualification, I thought, being emphasised in a somewhat unnecessary manner. The general

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tone of the vicar's appeal was not reassuring as to the character of the man, but a half-tone reproduction of the church on the outside of the *Parish Magazine* was more encouraging, and I saw at once that I had chanced upon one of the fine old country churches, and I looked forward to the morrow with happy anticipations, nor was I disappointed, for the church proved to be in fact a perfect realisation of the American ideal. Its construction was not later than the fourteenth century, and it owed its foundation to the ubiquitous Benedictines, who planted their abbeys by the side of every clear stream, and in every rich valley; and erected their noble churches on the finest spots to be found throughout the whole land. This church was both uncommonly large and fine, with a lofty clearstory that threw a flood of soft light into the alley of the church, producing a Rembrandtesque interior effect of light and shade. There were large cathedral-like vestry rooms in the west end of the church, and the long and finely proportioned choir was separated from the nave by a rood screen the like of which you would be at pains to see in a day's journey. The pulpit was new and fine in itself, but it did not blend with its surroundings, and stood out a crude and bald spot, the one discordant note in an otherwise perfect symphony of warm grey. It is very difficult to introduce anything new into these old churches, with their mellow shades, without fatally disturbing the harmony both of

colour and design, and it is absolutely painful to witness some of the efforts at restoration that have been made. The church edifices in England seem to be almost wholly at the mercy of the incumbent. I know that the Archdeacon is supposed to be the guardian of the fabric of the Church and that no important changes should be made without a faculty having been granted. But in the face of all these numerous suppositions I know a case in the diocese of Bristol where a fine Norman east window was taken out bodily by the late rector and replaced by a nondescript substitute, which gives more light, it is true, but completely destroys the whole architectural unity and beauty of the chancel, in one of the very finest examples of a Norman church to be found in all England. The broken stones of this fine window can still be seen (April, 1910) piled up in the churchyard. I grant that these old churches are not always comfortable or convenient, nor are they so well suited to the present form of service, where good light is one of the chief requirements. But if more light and greater comfort are demanded why not build a new church? I really believe that if this matter was frankly put before the people there would be found a universal willingness to allow these new churches, when necessary, to be built out of the national funds, in order to preserve these old historic monuments. They would then be the property of the whole nation and not of one religious class. Think of

the hundreds of millions of pounds annually spent on the hideous war-ships, and then of the small sum necessary to preserve to all time these superb works of art. A fund of ten million pounds, placed in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, or some other body, would I think be sufficient to secure this object. I should be glad to serve on such a commission, if my nationality would not disqualify me. But why should it when we remember that the artistic education of England has been almost wholly in the hands of Americans for the last ten or twenty years. Whistler gave Ruskin his first real lesson in art, and whilst Abbey (R.A.) is the official painter to the royal family, Sargent (R.A.) is the unofficial portrait painter to the English nation. And there is, or was Broughton (R.A.), and a number of other American painters, who have done so much to give artistic character and value to the annual exhibitions at Burlington House. All these things considered I think that England could not do better than turn her old churches over to the care of America, for I feel sure that Mr. Pierpont Morgan and one or two other multi-millionaires would gladly provide a fund, not for the restoration, but for the preservation in *status quo* of the old country parish churches in England for the benefit of American travellers if for no higher purpose. But this is hardly my thesis at the present moment.

The vicar of the parish was in London when I

made my visit, and had been there for several weeks, the vicarage was closed, and there was an air of mystery surrounding the parish. This I found writ large on everything, but especially upon the faces of the church wardens and the whole congregation. I asked no questions and resolved not to give a willing ear to any gossip. But the best laid plans of mice and men, etc. I ate my Sunday dinner in solitary grandeur, but my hostess joined me afterwards and showed a disposition to talk, which I did not at first encourage. The burden of her talk seemed to be an indirect negative sort of defence of the vicar. She did not say much, but enough to convince me that the trouble was of a complicated nature, involving both the church and the vicar's family. Sides had evidently been taken, for and against the incumbent, and as my hostess clearly belonged to the vicar's party I felt sure I would get nothing very informing from her. And in fact I honestly had no relish just then for the most tempting dish of gossip of any kind as the old church and its picturesque history, bits of which I found, by turning up the back numbers of the *Parish Magazine*, were occupying my mind to the exclusion of all things else. This good woman feared at first that my mind had been poisoned against the vicar by the other party, but being reassured on that point her anxiety disappeared and she ceased from troubling and I was left in peace to enjoy my thoughts concerning the mar-



vellous intelligence, artistic feeling, and wisdom of these snuffy old monks, who combined in themselves the religious and the secular, the ideal, and the practical, to an extent not equalled by any other class, or in any other nation. And I concluded my meditations with the query—why have not these wonderful people and their works been made more of by the historian, for theirs is certainly the most picturesque, if not always the most interesting period in English history, as well as English life and character. There were a great many hints thrown out in the vestry rooms after each service about the unhappy state of things in the parish, and my curiosity was finally piqued into a full blaze of excitement, and I determined to know all that could be known about my dearly beloved brother clergyman. This was all very improper, and positively wrong, but let him who is without sin and would remain without sin, under these trying circumstances, cast the first stone at me,—remembering meanwhile that a part of my mission was to gather as much interesting material as possible in order to produce something readable.

This vicar, as I have already indicated, was a great swell and had a brother with a big title. At the close of the Evening Service one of the sidesmen who was also the leader of the choir volunteered to accompany me to my lodgings, and as I scented revelations in the air, I gladly closed with his offer. Once seated in an easy chair this

church official was not long in coming to the point, and I learnt, first of all, that the vicar could never get on with his curates, and that very disgraceful scenes frequently took place between him and his late curate, both in the church and out of the church. It finally came to the point when they did not speak to each other, except to quarrel, and they actually went so far as to carry their personal hostilities into the pulpit and would preach at each other with very little effort to disguise their intention. These pulpit "bouts" did not add much to the sum total of the religious life and character of the worshippers, and the spirit of carnal contention grew apace, until the congregation was divided into two hostile camps, and everyone was supposed to back his man—the vicar, or the curate. But the curate in the very midst of the fray took a mean advantage of the vicar and married one of the most popular ladies in the parish. This reduced the vicar's backers very considerably, and the contest was suddenly brought to an end by the intervention of the Bishop of the Diocese, who removed the curate from the scene of strife by presenting him with a living.<sup>1</sup> This episcopal action showed on who's side His Lordship stood, and did much to weaken the vicar's cause, and just at this stage the vicar's wife and daughters packed up all their belongings and quitted the parish, giving out that they could

<sup>1</sup> A curate's tenure of office in England, is independent of the incumbent.

no longer live under the same roof with his reverence. He was now in a sad plight indeed and to make matters even worse he constantly absented himself from his parish, leaving his duty to be taken for the most part by poor guinea-pigs, such as I.

This then was the very deplorable situation in which I found this large country parish with its magnificent historic church. I have only given what was already public property, and I really believe that the worst has not only been fully told, but that the case was not actually so bad as these circumstances might imply. So far as I could make out, this was simply an instance of a man with a bad temper, wholly without tact, who had no call to be either a parson or a husband. He had, therefore, entirely missed his vocation, if God ever meant that such men should have vocations.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW I PUT MY FOOT IN IT

I RECEIVED a telegram one Friday morning asking me to take duty on the Sunday following in an Oxfordshire country parish. A reply was prepaid, and I answered regretting a previous engagement. The same thing happened on the next Friday with the same result. Silence then ensued for a space of three weeks, when another telegram of the same nature arrived stating that a letter would follow. This was getting uncommonly interesting and I determined if possible to get released from my engagement (for I was now never without Sunday duty), in order to make the acquaintance of this telegraphic parson. The letter arrived in the course of the day. It stated that the writer had two parishes on his hands and wished to be relieved of one of them. He was willing to turn over the entire income of one living which amounted to £130 (\$650) net with a vicarage and a fine old church. The status would be that of a curate with an independent charge. He had heard of me in some way and inferred that I was an American with a private fortune and

believed that this parish would suit my complaint perfectly. It would at any rate furnish me some good copy so I reasoned, and I decided to visit this Oxfordshire village for that, if for no other purpose. The journey was a long but pleasant one. I had to change trains twice before I reached the nearest station to this parish, and then a drive of three miles brought me to my destination. I learnt during this drive that the incumbent was vicar of this parish and rector of another, and had but recently changed his residence from this to the other living. He was in the village to meet me, and to see that I had everything in my lodgings necessary for my comfort. He was a mild-mannered, kindly-faced man of about five and forty, and held the degree of Doctor of Divinity, not by the way from some dubious American college, but from one of the great English universities. This was indeed a rare distinction for so young a man, not specially engaged in scholastic pursuits, and marked him out in the most emphatic way as a close student of some kind or other, but what it was I never was able to make out. After giving me the necessary information and instructions about the services he drove off to his other parish, and I was left in perfect freedom to occupy my time as I saw fit. My first desire was to see the church, which I found very good but not especially interesting. I also visited the vicarage, which was put at a disadvantage by being empty, and unkept, but I saw that at its best it could

hardly be classed as a very good country parsonage. The village was small and very compact, but I had no time, nor had I the means of ascertaining its composition, except that I knew it was in an agricultural district. This then was the only suggestion I had of the complexion and character of the congregation I was to face on the morrow, and I had therefore no idea of the kind of sermon best suited to the people's wants. The faintest hint from any living creature, man, woman, or child might have saved me from the dreadful, I might almost say awful, fate that awaited me. I cannot to this day explain why I chose the subject I did, for my morning sermon, as I had no manuscript and the whole Bible was before me. It must have been some occult influence that led me on to my doom. For why should I have chosen to preach to a country village upon the sins of gambling, racing, and matrimonial infidelity. From the first I felt the absence of that sympathetic current which is so inspiring to the orator, and I thought I detected an amused expression on the faces of two or three people in the congregation. The day was fine, and on coming out of the church I observed a bunch of high-bred people earnestly conversing together in the churchyard. They glanced at me as I passed but with eyes as cold as steel, and I felt a shiver creeping down my backbone as the nature of the situation began to dawn upon me. I hurried to my lodgings and put my landlady through an anxious inquisition, and

this is what I discovered. First of all that "The Kennels" were in the village and the master of the hounds occupied the hall. Secondly that a well-known racing man was one of the pillars of the church; thirdly that there had recently been an exchange of wives in the parish, or something of that sort which had naturally caused some talk. These people were all aristocrats, and all good church people. In fact the church and the village belonged entirely to them, the people were all in their employ, and the services were conducted for their special benefit. I now realised that I had put my foot in it for a fact, and I knew very well that I had preached my last, as well as my first sermon in that parish. I was driven over to the next parish for a mid-day dinner with the rector, with the understanding, made the previous evening, that I was to return and preach again in this church in the evening. But this never came to pass. I found the rector hardly settled as yet in his new quarters. The rectory was a good, newish house, straight away in the country, with no one in easy reach, and the church was not in sight. There had been trouble to persuade servants to come away to this lonely country parish, and the rector's wife was forced to spend some of her time in the kitchen. The chimneys took advantage of the general confusion and behaved very badly, and we were driven from one room to another by clouds of smoke. Our appetites, however, finally overcame all other feelings, and

we dined in spite of the black clouds that frequently hid us from each other. The rector drove over to the other parish after dinner and I was left to rest in peace till five o'clock, when it was arranged that I was to be driven back for the evening service. But it happened otherwise, as I have already intimated.

#### A VERY CURIOUS STATE OF THINGS

I spent a good part of the afternoon out of doors, looking over the parish, and I found a very curious state of things, so curious in fact that I hardly expect full credit to be given the account I shall make. I promise, however, to understate, rather than overstate the case, and am prepared, as I have said, to give particulars to the Bishop or anyone else who has a right to ask. The living was a good one, netting something more than £300 (\$1500) a year, including a good residence. The former incumbent had been in possession for forty or fifty years and had suffered everything to go to rack and ruin. The church was in a most disgraceful condition, wholly unfit and unsafe for use, and in fact had not been used since the late rector's death. The floor had rotted away and there were great holes in it, exposing the bare ground to view. The roof let in the rain and weather and the plaster from the walls had fallen in in many places and covered the pews. The chancel was in a most scandalous condition,



wholly unfit for any kind of service. The graveyard had until within the last few months, been without a fence or hedge or protection of any sort from the highway, and the gravestones had been knocked down and broken by the sheep and cattle which had free access to this sacred ground. A good iron fence had been recently erected by a tenant farmer in the neighbourhood, in order to protect the graves of his ancestors from spoliation. The church living consisted wholly of glebe land, which the late rector had attempted to farm, with the result that he left farm-houses and all out-houses, as well as the fences, gates, bridges, etc., in a fearful state of dilapidation. These dilapidations were assessed at no less a sum than £900, but the late incumbent did not leave nearly enough property to make them good, so that Queen Anne's Bounty had to be drawn upon for a loan to cover a large portion of these necessary improvements, and the present incumbent is thus forced to suffer in pocket for the sins of his predecessor. But where was the Venerable Archdeacon all these years of the late rector's scandalous conduct? I was told that for the last ten years or so the rector never did more than read morning prayers on the Sunday to a congregation composed solely of the sexton and any pious-minded sheep that might stray in from the graveyard. This Man of God was twice summoned for starving his cattle. That a notorious scandal like this should, or could, go on for years,

not a hundred miles away from such a centre of light and learning as Oxford, is simply amazing. It is true there was no village in the parish and the inhabitants, all told, would not number more than a baker's dozen, and this may help to account for the fact that the thing was permitted to go on for so long. When the present rector took charge he began at once to put matters right, but it was no slight task, and it will require two or three years before he can hope to be in comfortable possession of his living. He has not been able of course to hold any services in the church, and has improvised a place of worship in the shape of a portable iron structure which holds twenty people at a pinch, and where I held forth to a congregation of half that number. There are, I believe, no actual communicants in this parish. The living is in the gift of one of the colleges of Oxford University and is certainly among the best country livings in England.

The rector took the duty in the other parish that I was to have taken, and I did not see him again that night, as I was driven back to my lodgings at the conclusion of the service. We, however, met, saluted, and passed each other on the road in the dark; he homeward bound and I with my face turned towards the scene of my preaching disaster of the morning. I walked over to see the rector next day, but he carefully avoided the subject he had broached in his letter. Neither did he speak of the false step, not to put it more

strongly, that I had made. We parted the best of friends, and on my way to the station I met a lady, belonging to this little aristocratic community who passed me with her pretty nose very high in the air. But it served me right and taught me a valuable lesson, for since that great blunder I make it a point to learn something about the special kind of wickedness to which my various congregations are most addicted, and avoid saying anything on those subjects. This method of preaching may not result in any very great revival of religion, but it avoids giving offence to people of consequence,—a matter which all preachers ambitious for popularity would do well to take into prayerful consideration.

## CHAPTER IX

### I GO INTO RESIDENCE

LENT was now drawing on and I looked about me for a more permanent post of duty, during this important church season. I hoped thus to learn at first hand something of the actual church life of England as well as the methods and principles of church work. Two or three opportunities offered, and I chose a parish not very far from London where there was plenty of work to be had; not that I was anxious for work in itself, but I felt I could not get the experience I desired without the cost of the labour it involved. There were three of us clergymen, the vicar, a senior curate, and myself. I was given the "Mission chapel" as a quasi-independent charge, with duties also at the parish church where there were daily services. I was responsible for three of these services, and for one third of a course of lectures which were given every Friday to the children. Besides this I had a weekly Wednesday evening lecture at the chapel and two sermons each Sunday. I was to preach at least once a fortnight in the

parish church. My pastoral work consisted of visits amongst the people of the chapel district. We, the other curate, myself, and two women met every Monday at the vicarage, made our reports and received our weekly orders from the vicar. I was quartered near the chapel, where cottages most abounded, and my neighbours were all people who wrought with their hands, in some way or other, for their daily bread. I had as lay-helper in my district and under the same roof, an elderly ex-school-mistress, who was a dear, simple, modest, genuine woman, without cant or pretence; she was wise, and above all in thorough sympathy with the people, whom she knew and understood perfectly. They all trusted her friendship to the full, attempted no impositions, and went directly to her when in need of advice or when in any kind of trouble. She was of the greatest value and help to me, and saved me from many mistakes. She warned me not to give indiscriminately, else I would be overrun with beggars. But I found that a visit to a cottage without leaving "summut" behind was not an easy matter. I gave very little, however. There was a very large and thriving Wesleyan church or chapel in my district, and I now made a discovery which I have verified over and over again in every parish I have visited since—namely, that the great, the overwhelming majority of the respectable, or rather self-respecting poor, go to chapel

and not to church.<sup>1</sup> "The Church is a bit too gran' for the likes o' me," said a fine old workman to me one day. "And thin me an' my missus don't want no charity from no one—we don't. We ain't ne'er bin on the rates—we ain't." This gave me a point, and upon investigation I found that almost if not quite all of the poor in my district who were on the parish, or receiving charity doles of any sort, were Church people. The chapel, either cannot or will not, give much in the way of charity, and these poor creatures find it more profitable to be known as "Church people." This makes it very hard for the Church clergy. First it throws upon them the burden of looking after almost all the hopeless cases of illness, sickness, and vice, and they are thus liable to get a totally wrong impression of the poor. Moreover it makes large inroads upon their time and vitality, and renders them less competent both as pastors and preachers. Add to this the work of keeping in order the elaborate parish machinery which is now supposed to be necessary—and where is the time for study, and for that quiet meditation so necessary both to the intellectual and spiritual life of anybody, to say nothing of a clergyman? My point is that the business calls and the time required for the machinery of the modern town parish make it well-nigh impossible for the clergy-

<sup>1</sup> The Church in England means the Establishment, and Chapel means the place of worship of the Nonconformists—Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, etc.

man to give any serious thought and study to anything. It has come to pass that unless the people see the parson always about the parish they think him an idle fellow. So that the old-time studious clergyman is well-nigh extinct, and in his place is the hustler who neither reads nor thinks. There must now be daily services in every well-organised parish, and these services come very near being religious farces, as nobody, so far as I know, attends them except those who are responsible for their maintenance. Let the churches be kept open by all means, but it is very dangerous for the minister of religion to make himself a party to a religious farce. I know it requires courage and self-sacrifice for a clergyman nowadays to stand out against this daily public-service movement. Said a vicar to me the other day: "I can never hope for preferment from the bishop of my diocese unless I keep up daily services." I took daily morning prayers in a very large church in the north for two months, and there never was present during this time one *bona fide* worshipper, *i. e.*, one person not belonging to the staff, and for much the greater part of this time I was absolutely alone in the church. I know an incumbent of a large parish who maintains daily prayers and there is never anybody present at the early services save those who are the paid "workers" in the parish, and I am sure at least that one of these workers would not be present if it were not required. Not one member of the

vicar's family ever by any accident put in an appearance at the early service. Few parishes have clergy enough to maintain these services except in the most perfunctory manner, and nothing is so fatal both to the minister and the Church as keeping up such services for the mere name of the thing. A clergyman in a somewhat elaborate article, printed in the *Guardian* (Feb. 23, 1907), actually bases his plea for daily morning and evening services, in part at least, upon the idea. I quote: "That nothing is more likely to make the working man see that we really have got a job to do than if he sees us taking daily services—especially if no one else is present, and we have to ring the bell ourselves." In this paragraph the writer actually advocates—unconsciously no doubt—the hypocritical practice (Matt. xxvi.) of praying in public to be seen of men, for he frankly gives that at least as one of his motives, and this shows better than I can do the artificial and unreal character of the whole thing. No truly spiritually-minded man can be a party to such a farce; and a minister of religion is greatly mistaken if he supposes such unreality appeals to the man with the real "job." No pretence or make-believe ever favourably impresses such a man, and the priest who says his daily prayers standing in the synagogue that he may be seen of men to be doing his "job," brings ridicule, if nothing worse, upon himself, and belittles all public worship. It is a sound rule in religion, as in everything else, that when there is nothing to



be done don't make a pretence of doing anything. The minister who fears that the people will think he is not doing his "job" never does his job.

An overseer of Rugby School complained to his fellow colleague that the Headmaster (Arnold) "did little or nothing but lie on his back, with his slippers on, and read novels." "Indeed," replied his fellow overseer, "that is no doubt a more or less interesting statement—with which, however, we have nothing whatever to do. The thing, and the only thing, that concerns us is the fact that he is the best schoolmaster in all England."

Not by his outward seeming but by his fruits shall you know that any man—be he clergyman or ploughman, is up to his "job."

But the Prayer Book implies, if it does not command, daily prayers. Yes, and it commands or implies a great many other things that no one "clothed and in his right mind" would think of maintaining. We have all, with one accord, agreed that the Bible is not infallible, and shall we exalt the Prayer Book above the Bible? Times have changed, even since Edward VI., and to attempt to go back to the past, in religious practice, even if it be the immaculate sixth century, is of no avail. We are not monks and nuns, nor are we conventional saints of any kind, nor do we wish to lead the saintly life. Molière said: "People of other days were people of other days, but we are the people of today," and we do not wish to be always in church. Let us be frank with ourselves, at least

in religious matters. Sainthood as an ideal, or even an idea, is gone for ever for better for worse, and it is just as well to recognise the fact. The monkish idea of sainthood never did belong to us, that is to the western world, and there was always an air of unreality about the whole thing. This notion that one cannot worship except in public is, however, anything but a saintly idea. There never was an English or an American—that is, an Anglo-Saxon—saint except in name even in the days best suited for their growth, and when you come to think of it you can count on one hand—and have a finger or two to spare—all the real saints that have ever existed since the second century A.D. At any rate, America and England should either stop making any pretensions to saintship, or stop breaking up monasteries in the Philippines, and smashing Grand Lamas in Tibet, for these are the only kinds of saints left. That the saint is not the kind of religious character we most affect is very obvious. We much prefer, and rightly prefer, a Lincoln and an Emerson, a Clarkson or even an Archbishop Temple to your monk or your Grand Lama, or any other type of the conventional saint. But what has all this got to do with daily public prayers? Well not much I grant you, except to point the moral, that the Anglo-Saxon race does not take naturally or kindly to long prayers, neither in the synagogues nor in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men or known of bishops. “The Turk

puts us to shame," said a deputation from one of the great church societies the other day down in Wiltshire. "He carries his prayer-rug with him everywhere he goes, and does not hesitate, wherever he may be, to drop on his knees at the hour of prayer." I agree that the Turk is a very consistent man and carries his prayer-rug and knife, wherever he goes, and he uses them both with equal sincerity and zeal, still for all that we Anglo-Saxons prefer not to take him as the best type of religious character, especially when we consider his attitude towards the Armenians.

When it came to my turn to give the Friday evening lecture in the parish church I was handed a little thin book by the senior curate, with the remark that "this is where the vicar and I get the stuff for our talks." This was frank and throws a little side-light upon the methods of instruction in these well-organised, up-to-date parishes, where the clergy have no time for thought and study and where one can hear the cogs of the wheels clinking at every turn of the machinery. Of course the overworked clergy of such parishes are forced to use, and it is perhaps better they should use, little books for "lecture stuff" and larger books for "sermon stuff." "I preach Robertson, whom do you preach?" said a curate to me not long since. I confessed he had chosen a good man, the very best in fact, and that I could not hope to equal him. "Where did you get that sermon?" asked the vicar of a church in which

I had just preached. "I am sorry I can't tell you," was my answer. "You don't mean to say you wrote that sermon yourself?" "Well, yes, I must confess to that sin," I replied. But he remained incredulous, so I think, and yet it was by no means one of my best sermons.

I once took Sunday duty for two months in a suburban church where there was a curate in charge during an interregnum, and where my sermons were freely and adversely criticised, even in my presence by my hostess and others. But after I left this church the curate kindly relieved me of all responsibility in the matter by reporting that I had preached Phillips Brooks. This, now that I think of it, is the only parish I have been in during my sojourn in England where there was anything approaching an unpleasantness; and I confess there was a woman in this case. But I hasten to say there was nothing of a scandalous or even an improper nature. It was simply a want of tact on my part in not paying court to this lady, and I have no actual grievance to complain of now that I have had time to consider the matter.

I return to my Lenten duties, but find I have little, if anything, more to say concerning my experiences in that parish. This seems odd, for I remained there till after Easter, the longest period I had been, up to that time, in any English parish. But when I have nothing to say I find it is best to say nothing. The town itself was ugly

and disagreeable, but the surrounding country was beautiful enough to make up for all that. The ruins of perhaps the oldest abbey in England were not three miles away. Old churches abounded, but they were very small in comparison with the churches in the north. There were country-seats galore, but all wanting in the stately grandeur characteristic of the estates in the Midland and Eastern counties. A fine example of a Prince Bishop's Palace was to be seen not far away, standing in a large and finely-wooded park, on a wide plateau, overlooking a rich valley which was watered by a clear running stream.

I was most happy in my relations with the vicar, the curate, and all with whom I had to do, and after I left, the vicar wrote me a kind letter in appreciation of my services in his parish.

## CHAPTER X

### VILLAGE CRICKET AND OUR SQUIRE

WHITSUNDAY fell on the second week of my residence in this parish and proved to be a very interesting and notable period in my tenency. The village began to fill early on Saturday afternoon, and the roads, and streets, and lanes, were alive with a new population which presented a very gay appearance, with its smart town costumes and spring colours which were in sharp contrast to the sober dress of our village folk. I walked amongst this, to me, strange people, and witnessed their hearty greetings and heard their merry laughter. I was presented to many of these new arrivals—"This is my son, sir, what is in Lon'on." "This is my daughter, sir, what is in service." "This is my brother and my sister, sir, as 'as a job in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, etc." There were three or four schoolmasters and one or two schoolmistresses who had come home from other country parishes for Whitsuntide.

There were also carriages from the hall, passing and re-passing with pretty-faced girls and boys,

CHAPTER

VILLAGE LIFE

**W**HITSUNTIDE is a very interesting tenency. Saturday and I am present. Low for sharp folk people hear many what is it. Sir, what is it. My sister, Sir is Liverpool. Schoolmasters had come home Whitsuntide. There were also and re-passing

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and handsome men and women—all happy and merry and gay. I was the only outsider, the only spectator—so far as I could discover—for everybody else was meeting and greeting friends and kindred. In the midst of it all I came upon the schoolmaster, who was the organist and choir-master as well as the rector's warden. He was surrounded by four or five smartly-dressed young men. He greeted me with that marked deference that a man in his position always shows to the parson, and observed that we should have a good choir for Whitsunday, as these young men would all sing. It then transpired that they were schoolmasters from other parishes, who had been trained by him; they were natives of this parish, and always came home at Whitsuntide for their village cricket; for it is cricket that makes of one blood all sorts and conditions of Englishmen who dwell upon the face of the earth. And Mr. Kipling's rather brutal attack upon this dearly-beloved national sport clearly reveals the fact that he is not an Englishman at least in his sympathies! As I heard a country squire express it—"Nobody but a rank outsider could have said such a silly thing about cricket." And I quite follow the squire, in believing that Mr. Kipling could never have been guilty of such an utterance had he been born and trained in England. And it was perhaps this feeling of being an outsider, a feeling that most Indian and Colonial Britons are too often unfortunately made to experience in England, that pro-



voked the great writer into this impatient, and, ill-tempered poetical outburst.

All schoolmasters in England are cricketers, and their advancement depends as much, and frequently more, upon their ability to play the national game than upon their book-learning. The English country schoolmasters are decidedly inferior in learning and general culture to the American teacher of the same grade. I have been constantly astonished to discover the illiterate and grossly ignorant character of the low-grade country schoolmaster and mistress in England. It is true that they have to do only with children of their own stations in life, for none or practically none but the children of the masses are taught in the national country schools. The gentry, the middle class, the prosperous shopkeeper, and all who can possibly afford it have their own governess or send their children to private schools, for their primary education. Still it does seem hard, at least to a good American, that the children of the poor and the lowly should be hindered and not helped by their teachers in rising to higher things.

The grand old church was full to overflowing on Whitsunday, and the bright town costumes sprinkled about in almost every pew imparted a very gay aspect to the grey old walls with their solemn white monuments and memorials that had looked down for hundreds of years upon generation after generation of this ancient parish. The

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choir was more than doubled in numbers, and infinitely improved in quality. A son of the village blacksmith who was a master in a suburban London school played the organ, and the service and the hymn singing was rendered in a manner that would have done credit to a London church. I am a bit of a musician myself, and I never sang the service in a better voice, or in a more devotional spirit. And I think I may frankly say that there was a mutually good impression made upon the officiating clergyman and the "assisting" congregation, which lasted to the end of my stay in this parish. And having said this I shall dismiss for the nonce the church and the services from my mind, and shall confine myself mainly for the rest of the story to the parish in its civic and social relations.

Our parish had a reputation for cricket and gave its name to a club which, however, was not composed strictly of players residing within its limits. The president of the club was a baronet and the squire of the next parish. But he had once lived within this parish and had had many associations with it from his childhood. The baronet had two sons both of whom played in our club, and although the father was now a man of sixty or thereabouts he still took his part in the game. He had been a sailor and had gained some distinction in his profession, and yet I think he was prouder of his feats at cricket, than anything he had ever achieved in the navy. It was my good fortune to witness one

of these feats which consisted in catching a very swift and altogether difficult "liner," as we say in America. He was loudly applauded for this brilliant play, and his always genial face, the most perfect type of the traditional squire I have ever seen, shone with sixty-fold its usual splendour. He was outwardly very modest and composed about his brilliant catch but I made a point of frequently reminding him of it and in no instance did it give offence, so far as I could perceive.

Our squire—for he was as much ours as anybody's—not only looked his part to perfection but lived it out to perfection in every detail of life. He was a large landed proprietor and lived all the year round upon his estates; seldom going away beyond the day's return; and there was hardly a day when he could not be seen inspecting his fields, and cottages, and looking after the health and welfare of his people, as though they were his own immediate family. He was the most amiable of men, and there was not a man, woman, or child within the two or three parishes who did not regard him as their friend and protector. He knew all their many weaknesses, no one better, and yet his patience was always long-suffering and kind. If there must be a landed aristocracy with its inevitable dependents, I can conceive of no better landlord than this kindly, genial, hot-tempered, strictly conservative baronet. The truth is, as I learnt by personal observation and enquiry, the land belonging to this squire—something like

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13,000 acres—brought him practically nothing, so that he actually kept up his estate, and worked hard day in and day out for the benefit of his tenants, the farmers being the chief beneficiaries. The English farmer I had known nothing about, previous to my residence in this parish, but supposed he was a worthy hard-working and ill-used person. I have completely changed my opinion. He may be more or less worthy, but he is neither hard-worked nor ill-used, so far as I have been able to judge. First of all he is the only person who gets a living out of the land. It of course seems proper and just that he of all men should get a living out of the land. But, with the farmer there is no such thing, or seldom such a thing as the principle of live and let live. He gets his land at a rate so low, as to leave the landlord no profit on the one hand, and he gets his labour at a price so cheap as not to give the labourer a reasonable living on the other hand. The agricultural labourer is thus always kept at the door of the workhouse ready to go in, in case of a day's sickness or loss of a day's work. From all I have been able to learn, after some careful investigation, the farmer has never been disposed even in his most prosperous days to give his labourer a fair living wage; and the labourer does not regard him as his natural enemy for nothing. He has tradition and experience to fortify him in his belief that the farmer is always ready to screw him down to the last farthing. When in trouble

the agricultural labourer never goes, as one would naturally suppose to the farmer, but to the squire and it may be sometimes to the parson. But too often the parson joins with the farmer unwittingly, of course, in oppressing the labourer. And yet they, the farmer and the parson, cannot understand why the labourers in such great numbers are quitting the land for the town. This migration often ends in a much worse state it is true. But the labourer sees in the town the possibility of getting away from the small wage and the petty tyranny of the farmer, and he is willing to risk almost any unknown thing in the hope of finding something better than what he knows his present condition to be. It is utter nonsense to say that the agricultural labourer would quit the land where he was born, and has always lived, to seek employment in the town, were it not for the poor wage and the hard conditions imposed upon him by the farmer. He is not an enterprising person, and would much prefer to accept a very poor wage, with the security of home and the pleasure of his life-long associations than to take a plunge into the unknown and much-dreaded town. But he has no security either of a home or a living wage. Everything rests upon the caprice of the farmer, and a few days of idleness means that the labourer is thrown upon the poor-rate and classed as a pauper, with the loss of his right to vote, as well as all self-respect. There is no agricultural labourer in the world, Russia not excepted, whose condi-

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tions are as bad as the English farm-labourer. Whatever may be said in condemnation of the Russian Government, it at least protects the peasant, *i. e.*, the agricultural labourer, from the landlord and farmer, for it gives him fixity of tenure, which means a permanent home. The strength of a nation rests upon the rural population, and it is obvious that to weaken the peasant is to undermine the foundations of the national life and health. There has been a good deal of talk of late about turning the tenant farmer into the yeoman owner of the land. This of course would mean small holdings, and in that respect it would be a good thing provided the agricultural labourer is given a guarantee of a home, and a living wage. Otherwise his last state will be worse than his first, as the farmer will have him completely within his power, and can turn him out of house and home at his pleasure. I throw out these observations for what they may be worth. They are at least free from the influence of any entangling alliances with party politics. Land is going out of cultivation in England for the reason that the farmer will not pay the landlord a reasonable rent, nor the labourer a living wage, and he can well afford to do both. I know a case in point, where a farm of eight hundred acres is let at the rate of ten shillings per acre. This farmer has the best house in the parish, a very fine old manor-house in fact, fitted up with modern bathrooms, plumbing, etc., he drives the best

horses in the parish; has rubber tyres on his dog-cart, and altogether lives like a prosperous squire; whilst a real squire not two miles distant, who is a large landed proprietor is not able to keep a horse in his stables. There is not a farmer in four adjoining parishes so far as I know, who does not live in comfort and with more or less luxury, whilst eighty per cent. at least of the agricultural labourers are on the poor-rate for longer or shorter periods during the year. In considering the land question two things may be accepted as absolute facts, namely the landlord is only too willing to let his land for cultivation, either in large or small lots if he can get a rental that will return him any reasonable margin of profit; and the agricultural labourer is only too willing to remain on the land provided he can be assured of a habitable home and a living wage. I have already said enough to express my belief that the farmer is the most universally prosperous man in England. There are many cases of course where he comes to grief, but they may be in most instances attributed to one of two causes, either his incapacity and want of industry, or his wish to play the part of a squire, which causes him to live beyond his means.

But I have something more to say about our parish sports. Our village cricket grounds were in the most beautiful field for miles around and this was given free of charge by the landlord, who was the squire of a neighbouring parish, and the Member of Parliament for this district. The

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grounds were provided with a good pavilion and a large land roller (given by our own squire), so that the cricket club owed its existence almost wholly to the generosity of two Conservative squires, neither of whom were resident within this parish, and yet the parish was by tradition and disposition one of the most radical in the county or kingdom, and always gave its vote against their neighbour and benefactor, who was not only a perfect landlord but an ideal man in every relation of life.

I witnessed all the cricket matches played on our own grounds and went with the club to several matches played away from home. I am a strong partisan by nature and the victory or defeat of our club were matters in which I took a very lively interest, and this soon had the effect of identifying me in a most intimate way with the fortunes of the game. There was one special game played annually between a team chosen by the president of our club and one selected by a very rich nobleman of a neighbouring parish. This match always takes place, so I believe, in the very fine and large park of the noble president of the rival club. A luncheon is given in the hall to all the players, and *bona fide* visitors, which latter included myself as I had been specially invited by our kindly baronet. The play occupies the whole day, and when the weather is fine, as it proved to be on this occasion, the scene is such as can only be witnessed in Merry England, and is



beyond dispute the most beautiful rural picture that can be seen within the wide compass of the round world. Men in spotless white, upon a lawn of soft dark green with a background of fields and woods with cattle feeding lazily. In the foreground just out of the line of play, are gathered together the nobility gentry of the neighbourhood seated in rustic chairs. The ladies are habited in smart morning gowns, with hats of all colours, sizes, and shapes, and the picture—or at least this picture—is made perfect in form and sentiment by a very liberal sprinkling of children, who tumble about on the green in their first efforts to imitate the players of the national game. And the whole picture is shaded and tempered and toned down to just the right key by low-lying clouds which keep back the fierce rays of the sun, and permit only a soft grey light to filter through the branches and leaves and shrubs of the park, imparting an atmosphere which envelops all things in a shimmer of silver light and glory. They all seemed unconscious of the surpassing loveliness of the scene, and I wondered if in reality they appreciated its beauty. But one can never tell what these cold-blooded undemonstrative Britishers feel or think about such things. I could not trust myself to make any special comments upon the scene, but in an aside to a young gentleman from our own parish (the son of a distinguished admiral) I ventured something or other about the charm of it all, and was greeted with, “Ah yes, very sylvan

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as the poet says." I felt I was being laughed at and volunteered no more observations on the subject that was possessing me to the exclusion even of the ladies, however ungallant it may sound. But I joined—at least in my outward seeming—in the general spirit of flirtatious nonsense, and tried to appear quite indifferent to the surroundings that were ravishing my heart and soul. I found time, however, to stroll off and inspect the little parish church; a fine herd of red poll cattle; and a gardener's cottage surrounded with flowering shrubs, and covered with creeping vines. I also caught a glimpse or two now and then in my stroll of the park lake enclosed in mossy banks and bordered by trees of all sorts and sizes. This was one of the few times when our club met defeat, but this misfortune was tempered by the fact that one of the best players in the victorious team was from our own village and usually played with our club. He was employed as a schoolmaster on this nobleman's estates and of course was expected to defend the cricket honour of this parish. His good play having counted not a little I have no doubt in securing him this pedagogic post. I was sitting near our noble host, the president of the club, when this schoolmaster made several exceptionally good plays and his lordship enquired who he was. (It is hard to distinguish players at a distance as they are all dressed alike). I had the great happiness of informing him that it was one of his own school-

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masters, who was a native of our village. His lordship smiled at my partisan enthusiasm, but there was a slight laugh at his expense. This was one of the things that tempered our defeat. All Englishmen must be on equal terms on the village cricket field, and the noble lord and master may be bowled out by his valet or his coachman. Both teams on this occasion were made up of all sorts and conditions of men. There were gentlemen, I mean in the English technical sense, school-masters, farmers, trades people, and servants, and during the play of course all ranks and stations were levelled and the players were indiscriminately mixed up together. But when the luncheon hour arrived a very distinct alignment took place, which I must confess gave a very considerable shock to my Republican sensibilities. I was late in entering the dining-hall, and was about to take the nearest vacant seat when my name was called both by my kind friend the baronet and our equally kind host, and I was shown a seat at the small table near the host. I then discovered that all the players without claims to the social rank of "a gentleman" were seated together at one large table, whilst "the gentry" occupied another. Moreover I observed that whilst we of the small and exclusive table were provided with claret and hock-cup or punch as we call it in America—the larger table was furnished with beer only. I should not mention these things if I supposed that for a moment it would give offence to anybody,

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which I am sure it will not, as my only object in doing so is to notice a circumstance that struck me very forcibly, and impressed upon me, more than anything I had ever experienced before, the very hard and fast lines drawn in England, especially in the country, between the aristocracy and—the rest. This does not hold in large towns, and I have since been told that the incident to which I have referred is not characteristic of the whole of rural England, but is somewhat peculiar to a few of the eastern and north-eastern counties.

I have the permission of the late Lord Amherst of Hackney, to state that the incident I have just related took place at "Didlington Hall" Lord Amherst's Norfolk country-seat.

## CHAPTER XI

### A LOCUM TENENCY IN THE COUNTRY

THIS is the place in the natural and actual sequence of events for me to ease my conscience by a public confession viz., that my chief purpose in seeking employment as a clergyman in England was the rare and really unique opportunity it might furnish me for studying the life and character of the British people. And the result has been more gratifying than I could have hoped or ever imagined. I had been a frequent visitor to Great Britain, and had seen something of English life as it manifests itself in the boarding-house, the lodging-house, the hotel, and the club. I had also enjoyed, owing to my family connections, occasional peeps into the aristocratic and middle-class social life. But my character as visitor kept me out of touch with the main springs, and undercurrents of the thoughts and actions, the aims and ambitions, of that complex body-politic expressed by the word nation. A locum tenency in the country therefore offered just the opportunity that I so much desired. Moreover it fell in the most desirable season of the year,

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from May to November. And the parish itself was the kind of thing that all good Americans, with British traditions dream about. It was far removed from the noise and bustle and strife of the town and the manufactory.

There was not a smoke stack nor chimney to be seen within a dozen miles of the massive embattled church tower, which rose high over hill and dale, field and forest, giving the dominating note to the landscape as it stretched itself out before the eye, green and soft and mellow. This was the most perfect realisation of an ideal I had ever experienced; and as I was driven from the station between the sprouting hedgerows and the budding trees with the farms and villages unfolding their quiet life before me, revealing here a herd of cows browsing lazily; and there the labourer following the plough or driving his team afield, I felt the blood of my ancestors pulsing through my veins. It was in the early afternoon when all the able-bodied folk were at their daily tasks, so that the villages were inhabited almost wholly by the very young, and the very old, who sat together before the cottage doors, or walked hand in hand beside the roadway, in loving fellowship. We passed through three or four such villages, and as we journeyed slowly onward, a dog cart would flash past, and a carriage would now and again roll by in stately grandeur, suggesting the hall, the manor-house, and perchance the vicarage, and giving to the scene that subtle atmosphere and

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tone of *melleur* refinement which is the special characteristic of rural England. And then above all, and high over all, was the skylark that singing still doth soar and soaring ever singeth. Add to these thrilling impressions the thought that I, an American, was soon to take my place as one of the actual features of this dreamland of my youth, and you need not be told that my cup of bliss was full.

I was alone to occupy the parsonage, which proved to be a stately mansion of the seventeenth century. The incumbent and his family had vacated the rectory, and quitted the parish a few days before my arrival, and I was met at the door by an old family servant, with that peculiar reserve and respectful dignity of manner which belongs exclusively to the well-trained country servant. I committed myself to this old woman's keeping in a few cheerful words which relaxed her hard features and unloosed her tongue, and I saw at once that I had in her an unfailing source of amusement as well as information, whenever I chose to apply for it, which I found myself doing very often during the next six months.

The amusement began when she gravely announced that she was married, and her name was Mrs. Button. Mr. Button was not in regular service at the rectory—"as you might say, sir, he only gets his meals here,—that is,—when the rector is absent. He ain't fit for nothing else, he's all broke up—and here I be, only one year

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younger, and can work as much as ever." The point of this speech which directly interested me was the fact that Mr. Button was to board with me, and give nothing in return. I asked Mrs. Button if the rector approved of this arrangement and she confessed that she had not consulted him. "But does Mr. Button take his meals at the rectory when the rector is in residence?" "No, he gets his three shillings outdoors." This meant that Mr. Button was on the charity of the town and received three shillings a week "outdoors,"—that is he did not have to go to the "workhouse," which is the name of the English poor-house. She had told Mr. Button to come to the kitchen for his meals as she felt certain that as His Reverence was a bachelor, and a rich American, he would not mind an old body eating what was left. But I asked what then would become of his three shillings a week: "He can put them in the Post Office Savings." But what would the Town Authorities think of that? "They won't be knowing about it, sir." Well I told her,—that although I was not a rich American, I thought her very wise, and approved of this family arrangement,—I had hardly uttered these words, when the old servant, who was standing in the half-open door,—stepped aside and disclosed Mr. Button, who hobbled into the room, and thanked me for my "kindness to an old servant of the rectory." In the course of some further conversation with my old housekeeper, I cautioned her



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to be careful about my handkerchiefs, as I had lost several recently. In reply she said: "I know myself how vexen it is; I had six new handkerchiefs given me when I was married, and have lost two of them"—she had been married forty-five years.

These are trifling incidents, but they are enough to give the reader a bit of the flavour of the Old World atmosphere, which I was to breath for the next six months.

The rectory-house was constructed for the most part of stone, and gave the impression of being dark and cold. But there was a cheerful fire blazing in the open grate and a tea-kettle singing before it, which imparted a homely atmosphere to the house, and suggested peace and comfort. These were the first things that caught my eye, but on turning to the window I beheld one of the most beautiful landscapes to be found even in a country made up of beautiful landscapes. In the foreground was a green lawn bordered with flowers and shrubs and trees. This lawn which was of a dark rich colour stretched straightaway without a break till it overflowed and mingled with the woods, fields, and pasture lands creating a landscape that reached on and on to the horizon. These fields were flanked and studded by magnificent trees, and dotted all over with cows and horses and sheep. And upon this scene I was to feast my eyes and soul, not for a day, not for a week, but for six long months!

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Here could I watch the sun and rain  
That come and go and come again

. . . . .  
Each day with joyous haste begin  
To live a new day through, and then  
Sleep and then live it through again.

There was a delicious loneliness, a delicate feeling of remoteness about it all which came not only from the keen taste of a new sensation, but also from the half-conscious thought that I was suddenly transplanted to an entirely new world where tokens of the old world could never come. It was, in truth, a new birth. I arrived late in the afternoon, and spent the evening indoors, unpacking and arranging my effects. I had also a visit from the church wardens who extended to me a cordial welcome on behalf of themselves and the parish, and gave the necessary information concerning the conduct of the service, the choir, etc. We then fell into a friendly and familiar talk about the parish in general, and I asked them to give me any suggestions that might help me in the discharge of my duties, and save me from blunders. But they preferred not to take this request seriously, and were most reluctant to express an opinion, or give me anything like advice, for fear, as I could see, of seeming to overstep the bounds of propriety, or to encroach in any manner upon my authority and prerogative as the clergyman in charge of the parish. I learnt, however, that there

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was no "proper" squire, but that a gentleman of title and prominence had lately taken up his residence in the parish. He was a good and active churchman, but unfortunately for me he was absent on His Majesty's Service, and would not return during my tenency. I learnt also that there was a lady parishioner, the last representative of a fine old yeoman family, who was a very strong character and held very decided opinions on church matters, and the church wardens delicately hinted that it might be well for my peace of mind and general comfort to get on the right side of this prominent parishioner. This I determined to do at once and at all hazards. I was asked if I were a cricketer, and my visitors seemed greatly disappointed on learning that I was not, for the parish supported a Cricket Club and was noted for its good play, and general sporting character. The rector's warden was the schoolmaster, and the people's warden was a young farmer, and they were both simple-minded men and left a good impression behind them. I did not think to tell them that I was an American, a fact which they did not discover for two or three weeks, somewhat to my surprise. After my visitors had gone I sat far into the night meditating upon the strange providence, or whatever you choose to call it, that had brought me from my far-off American home, and placed me in charge of an English parish. My late bed-going caused me to sleep beyond my usual time for rising, and I

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was awakened by the chiming of the church bells, so that nothing seemed wanting to complete the realisation of my lifelong dream. But I shall spare you any further account of my personal rhapsodies, and I promise not to give a minute diary of my six months' locum tenency.

The village was one of the oldest and most picturesque in the county Norfolk (one of the largest in England) and it possessed the historical distinction of having taken a prominent part in two revolutionary movements. This I learnt in the first few days, from the yeoman lady to whom I regularly went for suggestions, instructions, and advice, in all matters, nor did I ever go in vain. I grant that my motive in consulting this lady was at first largely of a diplomatic character, but I soon perceived that I had discovered one of the most original, intelligent, and altogether interesting characters I had ever known. We not only became great friends, but familiar chums, and but for the fact that this lady was a grandmother, and had a well-established reputation in the parish, and for several parishes round about, there might have been cause for gossip; for I never suffered a day to pass without a visit, short or long, mostly long, to this very near (this lady's home was next to the rectory) and very dear parishioner. The wife and family of the absent knight and most distinguished servant of His Majesty the King, or as I prefer to put it, the State—soon took up their summer residence in

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the parish, and not only welcomed me in the most hearty manner, but extended to me a hospitality during my whole incumbency which equalled, if it did not exceed, anything I have ever experienced, even in my own Virginia home; I was asked to meet all their guests, and never a week passed in which I did not sit at their family board.

I have drawn this slight background, and these general outlines in order that the reader may form some sort of conception of the country parish in which it was my good fortune to be placed; and I shall fill in the picture from time to time with such events, experiences, and impressions as best characterise the daily life of the people. I should add, as a part of the background, that the church was a very ancient and noble structure, of pre-Reformation origin, and contained a very notable and unique marble font, decorated with figures in relief, representing the Creation and the Fall, the Birth and Death of our Lord. This font was an example certainly of the very early Norman if not, as I believe, of late Saxon art. There was also a "Leper window" in this church, and a hegescope or squint as it is popularly called, made through a chancel pillar, commanding a view of the altar, which enabled the people seated in the transept of the church to witness the elevation of the host in the pre-Reformation days. These things were enough in themselves to give an air of age and tradition to the whole community. Age in fact seemed the distinctive feature

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in more ways than one, for there were several men and women in the village who had passed the ninetieth mile-post on the highway of life. At a rummage sale which took place during the second week of my tenency, and was held in the yeoman lady's garden, twenty-six men and women sat down to a free tea whose ages averaged eighty-one years, and this in a parish of but six hundred inhabitants. That, I think, beats the record. Three of these ancient people were beyond ninety-five and yet they were able to "come for their tea" without assistance. The eldest of this company, who was known as the "Rechabite," could be seen any morning between six and seven o'clock with basket and shovel in hand, on the road, gathering "the muck" as he said from the previous day.

My lines, therefore, had not only fallen in pleasant places, but also in healthy places. There is a saying in this village that if one lives beyond seventy they can never die, and the yeoman lady feared that she might be one of the "elect" as she was fast approaching the seventy-year life-line, in the best of health and spirits. This lady said she wouldn't object to a Wandering Jew sort of perpetual existence, as that would certainly provide a great variety of experiences. But she had no ambition to become an animated village mummy. Animated she certainly always would be, and I very much doubt if the best conditioned mummy could long survive the dance my dear yeoman lady would lead it.

An American is not supposed to be a very reverent person, and yet he is somehow confused by the strange way religious and secular matters are mixed up in England. The American holidays are frankly national and secular festival days without the slightest pretext of religious sanction. The church, or rather the numerous churches, may do what they please, and call it by what name they please, and the State takes no note whatever of the matter. Not so in England. The national holidays for the most are not only sanctioned but appointed by the Church, and may therefore be supposed to take on a religious character. This, however, as I have learned, is a harmless fiction, and imposes upon no one but the foreigner and the American (who, by the way, is never regarded as a foreigner in England). Moreover, the holiday (holy-day) and the Church day do not fall together as in all continental countries; and it is this that causes the confusion. The holiday in England comes after the Church festival, and is purely secular, and usually very vulgar, from which the aristocracy, and all people of position together with their imitators wholly abstain. This again differentiates the English from the Continental and American holiday; for the Frenchman, the German, the Italian, and the American don't mind being jostled a little now and then by their vulgar compatriots, especially on their national festival days. The only conditions under which an Englishman will consent to meet his inferiors

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are those of master and servant unless it be on the cricket field or when he is asking for their votes. He then stoops lower, and submits to more than his Continental or his American equal would think of doing.

There are four Bank holidays in England and three of them follow the Church festivals of Easter, Whitsunday, and Christmas. Whitsuntide is perhaps the most valued and enjoyed of all the holidays as it usually falls towards the end of May when the country is in its full dress of leaf and flower. Easter comes too early for the country, and it is getting to be almost the universal fashion for those who can afford it to spend their Easter holidays on the continent, in search of sunshine after the long dark English winter days. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury seems to lead the way in this respect, as he has spent the last three Easters on the Continent. But every Englishman has returned from his wanderings if he means to return at all by Whitsunday, and is to be found at his place in the country, if he has one, and if he has not he will avail himself of any pretence or excuse to visit his friends and relatives who have homes in the country. This country fever attacks the high and the low alike, and there is no resisting it. No Englishman worth his salt will stop in town on Whit-monday if he can help it. This is then, *I* think, the most popular and intensely national of all the English holidays, Christmas not excepted. And there is on



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this day in the country to some extent at least a friendly mingling of the masses and the classes, for it is the frequently annual inauguration in the village of the national game of cricket, which unites, as nothing else does, the English people together in one brotherhood.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE WICKEDEST MAN IN THE PARISH

**I**N answer to my question about a rather notorious village character a woman gossip said, "Him, sir? Oh, he be the wickedest man in the parish, he be. He do swear awful at the church and the parson. But, sir, he be mighty good-hearted and dreadful kind to old bodies and little children. But he be dreadful wicked."

I repeated this to my "yeoman-lady" parishioner. "Yes," said this lady, "he certainly is a very bad man, but the kindest-hearted creature I ever knew." And then this lady told me about some of his kind acts. When one of her sons died this old reprobate brought a bunch of wild flowers to be placed upon the grave, for, said he, "Master Willie allers loved them 'ere flowers from the time he was a little one no higher than my knee." When this lady held a rummage sale the proceeds of which were to be used in restoring the ancient village cross, this old day labourer, with an income of but twelve shillings a week, brought one shilling and gave it to the lady to show his interest in the preservation of the village land-

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marks. I witnessed this act of self-sacrifice, and asked the old man how he could afford it. But all the answer I could get was, "She's a rum 'un, she is. She will have things her way, she will. She be better 'an a dozen parsons, she be, and you be clever, you be, to git on her blind side so soon."

This profane and very wicked old man adopted a sickly orphan boy of the village, gave him all the comforts within his power, and when the child died the old rascal was almost heart-broken. And yet he was known as the wickedest man in the parish and in this verdict all verbally agreed. But for the sake of humanity I am glad to say that I don't think anybody believed it a true verdict in their heart of hearts. And yet even the "yeoman lady" with all her wit, intelligence, and very superior courage could not bring herself to openly confess, in an unqualified manner, that this conventional sinner—who it must be confessed swore like a trooper, and took a drop too much now and again—was one of the very best men in the village. I twitted this lady with her want of moral courage, but when she turned upon me I was forced to acknowledge that I was not bold enough, at least while occupying the post of rector of the parish, to praise this man. But it is never too late to mend and I now repent me of my moral cowardice and promise to reform, when a convenient season offers. It would hardly do, I suppose, for me, a clergyman, to call this man who did swear "awful at the church and the

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parson," a saint, but I can't just now recall a better man in the long list of my friends.

The "yeoman lady" and her family were frequent subjects of village gossip, which I fear I encouraged, for it generally ended by reflecting, however obliquely, praise instead of blame.

But my lady herself was no exception to the rule of the village and enjoyed a morsel of good gossip both in the telling and the hearing, as well as her humble neighbours. One of her best stories and she had a goodly store of them, was about a temperance speech, which our present baronet made when a young naval officer. He was home on a furlough and came with his father, the first baronet, to attend a temperance rally held in this village. His father was in the chair, and after others had spoken, the chairman called upon his son, just off his good ship, to give some account of the evils of drink in the navy. This was somewhat embarrassing to the young officer, as it was well known in the parish, if not to his father, that he enjoyed a drop of something now and then. But accustomed as he was to obeying his superior officers he stood up in his place and said what he could,—albeit in a very lame way,—for the cause of temperance. It was evident, however, that his heart was not in his words, till suddenly his manner underwent a complete change and to the consternation of the chairman he said: "But if anyone should not be able to wholly resist the temptation to take a drop of something now and

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then I can thoroughly recommend a drink called Jamaica rum as one of the best possible tipples after a wetting; you want it hot, you know,"—and the gallant tar was proceeding in a most animated and enthusiastic manner to give instructions as to how this concoction should be prepared when he was peremptorily called to order by his father, the chairman, and the meeting was abruptly adjourned. This story is in perfect character with the Squire as he is known today, for frank, straightforward speech and act.

Another story this lady sometimes told points the risk a parson often takes when he invites a brother clergyman to preach for him, without being fully acquainted with his theological views. The rector of this parish holding very liberal opinions, had preached a series of sermons on the general subject of the "Future Life," in which he expressed the "larger hope" that all mankind would eventually be redeemed from sin and woe and made eternally happy in the presence of their God and Father. He had just concluded his series of discourses, which had made a distinct impression not only in his own parish but throughout the district, when a clergyman and church dignitary from a distant diocese, who happened in fact to be the rector's own brother, came to visit him and offered to give him "a labour of love," *i.e.*, a sermon without any question of honorarium attached. This sermon proved to be, strange to say, on the subject of "Eternal Punishment" in

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which the preacher took a totally different view from the rector, and ended his barbarous harangue by repeating the following lofty lines of poetry:

As the tree falleth so shall it lie,  
As a man liveth so shall he die,  
As a man dieth so shall he be  
In this world and throughout eternity.

She said that it was truly pitiable to witness the agony on the face of the rector as his brother went on, with arch-deaconal authority, contradicting everything the rector had been teaching his people for the dozen years and especially during the last six months. The people of course supposed that this was all intentional. But for the sake of the visiting ecclesiastic's reputation for common decency I am able to state that it was a mere coincidence, and wholly unintentional. But there are still such barbarians going about in the garb of a preacher of righteousness and decent clergymen cannot be too careful. This story reminds me of an experience I once had soon after my ordination and when in temporary charge of the large American Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity in the Avenue de l'Alma, Paris.

I had taken my priest's orders in November in this church. The rector was called away to America in January, and I was left in sole charge of a very large church, with a daily service, and

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had two sermons and one lecture to prepare each week without of course the traditional barrel of sermons to draw from, and if ever a poor parson worked for dear life, it was myself. I was told at the beginning that there would be frequent visiting clergymen, either from America or Great Britain, who would be only too glad to give me a sermon, and I lived on this hope for a month or more. But no one came, and I was getting really desperate and had serious thoughts of throwing up the sponge, when one Saturday at evensong I spied a cleric, or at least someone in clerical dress in the congregation, and my hopes rose. I had given strict orders to the verger, or sexton, not on any account to let any parson he might discover in the congregation, or prowling about the church, escape, and if necessary to knock him down and drag him into the vestry room where I would come to his assistance and relief. Here was our first victim little suspecting the fate in store for him. By his cut and general make-up I concluded he was a Britisher, but escape he should not. I dismissed the choir in a very hurried manner, and throwing off my surplice and with my cassock still on, rushed into the church, through the cloisters, to find my man leisurely inspecting the church. As I entered I caught a glimpse of the sexton hovering about the outer door of the church, ready to pounce upon him should he attempt to elude us. I felt, therefore, that we had our quarry safe within our toils, and at once assumed a more deliberate air as I ap-

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proached the innocent stranger, and said in my pleasant manner, and without the slightest tremor in my voice, "A brother clergyman, I believe?"

"Yes, I am an English parson, and have been admiring your beautiful church." "Won't you come in and see the vestry rooms, for I think you would find them rather interesting." I knew that once in the vestry he was mine. He consented and came with me without in the least suspecting any danger. But when the door was closed upon us I no longer dissembled, and in pleading accents revealed to my stranger brother my sad plight; could he, would he come to my rescue? And without any ado about the matter he said he could and would. It was agreed that he should take the early celebration. But he hesitated about preaching for me, pleading with a most becoming modesty that he was not much of a preacher. We like those qualities best in others which we do not possess to any great extent ourselves, and I was therefore very favourably impressed with this Briton, and remembering something about the "modesty of worth and the emptiness of pretence" I felt sure of a good sermon. This cleric's manner, in fact, reassured me in every way, and I knew he was all right even before he produced his letters of health, which were of very recent date, from his Bishop. He then explained that he was going South for a few months and had left his parish in the charge of his curate. I was glad I had accomplished my pur-



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pose without the aid of the sexton, but for fear he might not understand the situation I conducted my victim beyond the outer church-door and signalled to my ally that it was all right. When I returned to the vestry I looked up my chance acquaintance in *Crockford*<sup>1</sup> and found, but not to my surprise, that he was a very heavy swell, with no end of names, and that his living was in the gift of his father who was a great nobleman. I went back to my lodgings that afternoon with but half the burden I had carried away in the morning, and determined to celebrate my good fortune by taking a night out. I came home late, did not turn out for the early service, and my new-found friend was awaiting me in the vestry room when I arrived for the mid-day service at which I was to preach. It had been agreed at his request that my visitor was to take the afternoon sermon. He again spoke in a disparaging manner of his preaching abilities, but I felt no fears, and was so confident of his abilities as to announce in the morning that the stranger would preach at the four o'clock service. And he did. But how he ever began, or how, or why he ever ended, I am at a loss to this day to explain. He was provided with no manuscript and he spoke for one mortal hour without my being able to understand in the least what he was trying to say. The congregation remained intact for the first half-hour and then began to break away, until at least a

<sup>1</sup> The English Church register.

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third had gone, and those who remained did so, I verily believe, more out of curiosity than anything else, and—as one person put it to me afterwards—to see how it would finally end. Well it finally did end, as all things do in this world, and we, the choir and myself, marched back to the vestry rooms in a mixed mood of sympathy and merriment. The choir-boys I could see were splitting to laugh, and I got rid of them as soon as possible, but not before my kindly and modest brother said:—“I told you, you know, that I was not much of a preacher,” and I believed him now. After that experience I have been a bit shy about asking every stray parson who happens to turn up to give me “a labour of love.”

I was warned by a brother clergyman and a compatriot who was the vicar of a parish in Kent, of the insurmountable difficulty I should find in hitting it off with the narrow parochial ways and conservative prejudices of an English village. But strange to say I was able from the very first to establish sympathetic relations with my surroundings. Sympathy covers a multitude of mistakes which no amount of mere tact, however skilful, could possibly survive. Of course I understood perfectly well that as everything was unfamiliar, and wholly strange to me, so I must necessarily be unfamiliar and wholly strange to everything and everybody, and as the people saw that I was trying to make the most of my environment, they on their part, tried to make the best of me, so that we

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gradually found some common ground upon which we could identify ourselves with each other. I am not a good parish visitor, in the generally accepted meaning of that phrase, and yet I got to know everyone in the parish somehow or other. I did not presume upon my office, and I no more thought of intruding upon the privacy of the cottage than the privacy of the hall. My relations with the people were therefore neither official, nor artificial, but sympathetic and real, so far at least as they went, and I am inclined to think they went very far.

### FOLK-LORE

My yeoman friend was constantly surprised at the friendly and communicative disposition of the villagers towards me, and I think I told her some things about the parish which were new even to her. Yet it is to her after all that I owe the biggest debt of gratitude, for I could have understood but a very small part of the folk-lore, and made but little out of the village reminiscences without the supplementary and explanatory commentary she was always able and willing to furnish, for she was well read both in parish and country lore. "We allers used to have (these people seldom dropped or added an "h") Christmas bell-ringen afore the rector stopped it," said an elderly man to me one day in the course of a quiet chat, and I was not long in asking

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my interpreter what "bell-ringen" meant. She pretended to be astonished at my ignorance. I really did know what bell-ringing meant as applied to the church, and I now learnt that it was, and still is, the custom in many country parishes for the church bell-ringers to go from house to house at Christmas time, and ring, with small hand bells in imitation of the chimes of the church bells. They also ring out simple tunes. These ringers visit the squire, the parson, the principal farmers, and other well-to-do families in the parish and they expect to receive largess at each place to the extent of one shilling for each bell, that is to say a shilling for each ringer. It often happens that these ringers take some lubricating fluid before starting out on their rounds, and this is liable to be repeated as they move from house to house. Well, it unfortunately fell out, that on one occasion they had taken too much before reaching the rectory-house, and were neither able to ring nor in fact to keep their legs under them, and one ringer actually fell into the fire. This so annoyed the rector that he at once put a stop to this merry old-time practice.

## CHAPTER XIII

### “STATTY DAY”

“I COME to this 'ere parish on Statty day more as five and twenty year ago and I has been 'ere ever since,” observed an old farm-labourer to me in the course of a walk through the fields.

“What is ‘Statty day’ I soon asked my yeoman parishioner, and this is what she told me. Statty day or Statute day is a market day and a fair day provided for by law, *i. e.*, by statute. It is, or was, held, throughout this county in all the market towns twice a year, on or about Michaelmas, and again about three weeks after. To this fair came all the menservants and maidservants who were for hire, and all the masters and mistresses in need of servants. The servants offering for hire disposed themselves in rows on either side of the street with their bundles at their feet, the men on one side and the women on the other. They all wore tokens signifying the class of servant to which they belonged. The men offering themselves as farm-labourers wore heads of grain in their buttonholes and the milk maids sported yellow ribbons. A payment of one shilling bound the agreement

and the farmer took the servant home with him. But this was a temporary contract and held good but for three weeks, at the end of which time the maid, and I think also the man, were at liberty to leave if they did not like the place, and offer themselves again at the next fair, which was called "Runaway Statty." This custom had to do almost exclusively with farm servants, and is fast passing into desuetude. I was present at a "Statty day" and a "Runaway Statty" and saw but a very small remnant of this very picturesque old country custom.

"We be all in a 'harrige' as we shall be a-flittin' on Michaelmas day," said a wife and mother in answer to some question I asked her. This speech was very puzzling to me the more so for the reason that Michaelmas day (29th Sept.) had already passed. "Oh, you are such an ignoramus," laughed my dear neighbour when I asked for the interpretation of this mysterious speech. "Don't you know, my innocent, that Michaelmas comes on October the eleventh in this county and not as elsewhere on September the 29th? We have our customs, and are a law unto ourselves you see in this county." "But you have not explained the words 'harrige' and 'a-flittin'." "Harriage," she replied, "simply signifies hurry or bustle, and a-flittin' flitting, that is passing or changing one's place of abode. It may be merely to the next cottage, as it is in the case you mention." I found that in this parish time was reckoned more

from Michaelmas than from any other point in the year, and that the three words “Michaelmas,” “Statty day” and “Flittin’ day” all signified the same thing to the village folk. Michaelmas of course is the principal contract day throughout England, but there are many associations gathered around it, which are not of a purely business nature. Thackeray celebrates this day in the following verse—

*Love at Two Score*

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass,  
 Grizzling hair the brain doth clear;  
 Then you know a boy is an ass,  
 Then you know the worth of a lass,  
 Once you have come to forty year.

Almost every house and cottage in our village had its traditions. One was known as the “Beggarly Bird Cage” and in this alliterative name I felt sure was perpetuated some interesting incident in the village history, and this surmise proved to be true. A man of this parish had made a considerable fortune in the manufacture of some special kind of straw hats and was able to give his son an education as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages of a town life. This son succeeded in winning the hand of a London lady somewhat above him in the social scale, who supposed, so it seemed, that she was marrying, if not exactly into

a county family, at least into a very rich yeoman family. The husband brought his wife home and on entering the village pointed out to his beloved their future residence, with the playful remark that here was his bird and there was his bird cage. But the haughty and disappointed London dame was not at all pleased with her husband's pleasantry and angrily retorted that she was not going to live in any "Beggary Bird Cage." This all happened many generations ago but is still held fresh in the village tradition. The ambitious lady became reconciled to her modest home in due course, and left a large progeny some of whom became Roman Catholics, the first the parish had ever known since the Reformation. Not many years since one of this family, who had died abroad, was brought back and buried in the village churchyard with all the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Church which was a very novel thing to these staunch Protestant country folk, and it is talked of today as that "Papish idolatry service."

There are not many changes from year to year in the routine life of a country parish except that the young people all, or nearly all, emigrate to the town. Some of them return to the village from time to time, especially those who have prospered, and end their last days where they began their first. There were three ex-London policemen living in our parish, and two or three old men and women who had succeeded in getting enough out of the town to keep them off the parish for the rest



of their days and were therefore independent. There was one man about sixty years old, an ex-valet, who went by the name of “Gentleman John.” This name was given him for the reason that he had been left an independent fortune in the shape of ten shillings a week by his deceased master. “Gentleman John” put on no airs in spite of this affluence, and was not only liked, but was in fact a very useful member of the body politic, as my yeoman lady very well knew, for he was always willing to give a helping hand in a pinch when the pinch was not too hard and when there was a trifle to be added to his already princely income.

#### THE MOCK SQUIRE

There was a very different character from “Gentleman John,” a man who usually spent the week-end in this his native parish. He had been very successful in some kind of business and had bought up some houses and farm-land in the parish, and gave himself the airs which he supposed belonged to a squire, and the villagers, quick to see his weakness, and their own advantage, conferred upon him the dignity he coveted. The man was foolish enough to think that his pretensions were taken by these simple folk for true worth, and was actually flattered by being called “squire,” not seeming to realise that “squire” was the village way of laughing at him. There was a mystery about this man which was frequently

hinted at by the villagers, but as I gave them no encouragement it was never revealed, for I was there to learn the village life and character and not the vices or virtues of a common-place, pretentious, vulgar nobody. There was nothing against the man's character so far as anyone knew, but why such a man should come back to his own village to swagger was what I could not make out. There was at least one thing to his credit that would have covered a multitude of sins in America—he was good to his old father, a man of ninety-four years, who could be seen almost any day tottering about the village.

There were one or two sad cases in our village of people who had come down in the world. This was true of the very oldest yeoman name save one to be found on the parish records. This family had once lived in the manor-house, and had owned large tracts of land. But they had now lost everything, and were without a foot of land in the parish or the county, and I saw one of them working as a day-labourer. I fear this story can be repeated in almost every agricultural parish in England.

### "THE JUGGLER"

The village has little diversions in the way of amusements and the advent of an organ-grinder, or a prestidigitateur is always welcome, to say nothing of the gipsy-cart or the circus waggon which,

however, seldom condescends to pitch its tents in any place smaller than the market town. The yeoman lady consented to accompany me to the juggler performance to be held in one of the Inns, but at the last moment she failed me, making a perfectly hollow plea of some sort or other, when I knew all the while that it was a want of courage to face the village custom which forbids gentlefolk mingling with the villagers in their hours of relaxation, when they feel free to make game of anybody who may be present. But as I had no permanent position to compromise I did not hesitate to go. Our juggler was provided with very little of the paraphernalia of the typical showman, and was hardly any better off in his personal attire, and seeing a clergyman in his audience he felt it necessary, poor man, to apologize for this seeming want of respect, which was a clear case of poverty as all could plainly see. Still he must needs make a speech to the effect that had he known that 'is reverence would be present he would have dressed for the occasion. “We be just as good as the parson,” called out the “wickedest man in the parish.” “We’ll wait for you till you put on your fine toggery,” shouted one. “You ain’t got none,” shouted another, and the poor fellow was roasted till he humbly begged the gentlemen to permit the performance to proceed.

He then began, as all such jugglers do, by borrowing a hat and a handkerchief from the audience, which he misused, as is the habit of his kind, in all

kinds of ways. He burnt and cut the handkerchief and took doves and eggs and ribbons from the lining of the hat to the great amusement of his audience. The tricks in fact were the same that have been doing duty in his profession for a hundred years at least, and still he was able, I was glad to see, to mystify and amuse these simple folk. He made a speech at the conclusion of his performance, in which he stated that he would give one more performance on the next evening, when 'e 'oped to be favoured again with all who were now present and their ladies as well. My yeoman friend was anxious to hear all about the show, and if I had come in for any chaff. But I declined firmly to give any account of the affair and told her she still had an opportunity to see it for herself as the juggler was to give another performance on the following night.

The villager is not a humorous person, and is inclined to take things very literally, so I found I had to restrain my natural disposition to humorous description and exaggeration, as I was being made responsible for all kinds of grotesque sayings. But whilst the villager has no sense of humour, he is constantly saying and doing most exquisitely humorous things. There was a man in the parish who had exercised his manly privilege of beating his wife now and then, not that he did not get on reasonably well with his "missus," but rather from a feeling that it enhanced his importance in the community. His wife was, sad to say, afflicted

with fits and it was represented to him by the “yeoman lady” that the fits might be caused by the beatings he gave her. This seemed to the husband to be a proposition worth considering, and he concluded to forego his privilege. The result appeared for a time to justify his abstinence. But the fits came back again and the “yeoman lady” hearing of this unhappy event questioned the husband about his part in the matter. But he protested that he had nothing whatever to blame himself for. “I never touched her once” said the man “and God only is to blame for them ’ere fits this time.” That seemed logical to his mind and he meant not the slightest irreverence.

The village woman is never so happy as when relating the sad circumstances attending the death of someone very dear to her, a brother, or mother, a husband or child as the case may be. She will go into every particular, the people who called and what they said and did, the omens preceding the death and the wonderful prescience of the sick one just before death, and she will mix this up with an account of what she wore, and what they had to eat and drink at the funeral. However deep their grief they want it exploited in the most public manner possible and the minister who recounts the most harrowing events in the life of the departed is the most acceptable. For while, as a rule, they like to have the interment conducted according to the rites of the Established Church they also want the chapel minister to preach a funeral sermon.

Said a poor distressed mother to me, speaking of the death of her little girl, "Oh the minister did preach so beautiful, and made us all cry so very much."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MANORIAL SYSTEM

THE feudal system, transplanted from the Continent by the Norman invaders, found an uncongenial soil, and never really took root in the British Isles. It was opposed to the character and the genius of the Anglo-Saxon people and was soon transformed into the manorial system from which was derived the yeoman farmer, the very backbone of the English nation. The feudal lord was changed to the "Lord of the Manor" one of the most happy titles that was ever invented for it may mean much or little authority, and yet the peculiar dignity it suggests and implies is always the same. The feudal system had to fight for every inch of power it obtained, and could never make the slightest concession without imperilling its authority. The manorial system on the other hand rested in peaceful security, being founded upon the mutual interests of the whole community, and having as its pivot the yeoman farmer.

The lord of the manor was to be sure a very

great personage and held titular sway over very large estates; and yet at least three-fourths of the land was held in fee simple by the yeoman farmer, who lived on the soil he cultivated, and was the best of all subjects because he was the freest. The farmer has now lost his land and the lord of the manor has lost all his authority and most of his dignity. No nation can ever prosper under a system of large estates and tenant farmers. If there is one principle of economics beyond dispute it is that the tiller of the soil must be a freeman in fact as well as name. No nation ever had so fine a farming class as the English yeomen. The yeoman was the glory of England for many centuries. But he has now virtually passed away and with him will go, must go, the English village, for the farmer is an essential element in the village life. England is the only country having a landless peasantry; and one-third of the land belongs to six hundred persons, who comprise one class—the Peers. This is the most serious fact in the economic condition of England at the present moment. In the olden days in Scotland and Ireland land was held by the local community; that is by the tribe or clan, for the common good of all. The chief was, like the lord of the manor in England, the titular head of the clan, but he did not own the soil, and had no right to alienate the land from the people. His duties were even more than his privileges. Such unlawful transfers of tribal lands took place however from time to time, till, as in



England, the people gradually lost all their inherent rights in their native soil. The most conspicuous instance of such unlawful and unrighteous transfer of land is that of the present County of Sutherland, a territory belonging to the Clan Mackay, which was transferred to an ancestor of the present Duke of Sutherland by a drunken chieftain for some insignificant consideration; and the whole tribe was, I believe, actually ejected from their native homesteads. Something like the ancient tribal, communal, or some other form of socialism must intervene soon in England. There were always three distinct classes in the old-time English village, the lord of the manor, the independent farmer, and the agricultural labourer; and the relations of these classes to each other was that of one family, founded upon the strongest and surest of all ties, mutual self-interest and mutual goodwill, and their daily and familiar contact with each other created a real communal fellowship, wholly unknown to the dwellers in towns. The lord of the manor was virtually the chief steward of the community, or parish, and his duties to the commune were not inconsiderable. For one thing he was bound by law to conserve the common land for the good of all. He lived almost entirely on his estates, and was in constant and friendly touch with the farmer, who was the key and mainstay of this economic fabric; and to remove him, as he has been removed, is to pull down the whole structure.

There are still a few estates where the lord of the manor is a very rich man, and makes a pretence of keeping up the old-time régime. But he owns all the land, and the village is composed almost wholly of his obsequious dependents, whose length of tenure of course rests solely with him. He is absent more than half the year and the independent farmer is wholly eliminated, or, if still present, is but an emasculated specimen of his stalwart ancient prototype. The present lord of the manor, who is often a Jew money-lender, or the son of one, may hug the fond delusion to his soul that he is a great peonage because he is the absolute owner and ruler of the land, but he rules without the goodwill or respect of anybody, and his rule means ruin.

Our village had lost the traditional lord of the manor, but fortunately had not acquired one of the new type, and best of all it still retained a good specimen of the old yeoman farmer, and it was around this family that the life of the village flowed and circulated; and it was to this family the people appealed for sympathy and aid in their dull struggle for a poor existence. I detected many signs of the old independent communal feeling which still exists, wherever the yeoman farmer is found. As an illustration of this mutual interest and goodwill I give the following incident. Some few years ago there was an accident to a railway train in which two children of the yeoman family were passengers. This happened some fifteen

miles away, and no particulars could at first be known. The father and mother of the children hurried off in great suspense to the scene of the disaster. It was late in the evening, and they did not return till nearly midnight. Yet the lights were still burning in almost every cottage, and as the happy father and mother drove through the village, with their unhurt children by their side, they were greeted at every door with the anxious enquiry, "Are the young missies safe?" It is almost worth living a whole life-time in a dull village to experience such a universal and genuine token of goodwill from one's neighbours, however poor and lowly. That these humble village folk possess warm hearts I saw many proofs. We had in our village a dozen or more of orphan children from the Barnardo Home. But for some cause, which I was never able to learn, these children were suddenly taken out of our parish and sent elsewhere. This was no trifling pecuniary loss to the poor women who had taken them in, and I assumed that for this fact alone would their absence be regretted. But to my great surprise there were many and genuine exhibitions of grief at the severance of these relations. One woman, had taken into her home a poor deformed child, and notwithstanding the fact that she had very hard work to make her way, she begged with tears to be permitted to keep the child, and that too without any compensation, pleading that she had grown to love the poor little body and feared he might not

be well treated by a stranger who did not understand his petulant little ways.

It was sometime before the villagers could understand that I was an American born, and not an Englishman who had merely spent sometime in the United States, and returned to England empty, as the saying goes. "But why do he come back to England for? It's much easier gotten on in America so I've allers heard say." And they heard this for the most part from letters written by a son, or a brother, a sister or an acquaintance, who always spoke of their own bettered fortune, and these people reasoned from that that the fortunes of everybody must be better in America, and I saw they had a sort of contempt for anyone who had been in America and had not got on. But when they did finally realise that I was a genuine born American, and not even a Canadian, nor a returned empty; and moreover that I was going back to the United States, they had more respect for me and became more friendly, and told me about their friends in America and read me their letters, and asked about many things.

But our little parish had not only connections with America, but with India, South Africa, and almost every other British Colony and dependency. That it was represented as well in the army and navy, a red coat and a blue jacket bore frequent testimony. The graveyard also gave solemn witness to the patriotic sacrifices our village had

always been willing to make for the fatherland.<sup>2</sup> But it seemed to me that this village's martial glory had well-nigh gone, for as I looked round among the youth of the parish I saw few if any who were able, or ever could be able to bear arms in their country's cause. And if the army and navy have lost the village recruit, they have lost their power and might.

I saw something of the allotment system, as it existed in our parish, and thought well of it. The day's work ends in this county at the very early hour of four o'clock, and there is thus ample time left, in the long summer days for the people to cultivate their allotments. This they did, so far as I could see, in a most successful manner, labouring side by side and gossiping cheerfully the meanwhile.

I have not said much about our church or the parish considered in its ecclesiastical aspects and I return to the subjects now more to comment upon some peculiar local features than for any serious purpose. The "living" was an unusually good one, and consisted almost wholly in tithes, there being but forty acres of glebe land. There were two rectors—the clerical and the lay rector. The lay rector receiving the "Greater Tithes" and the clerical rector the "Lesser Tithes." I am

<sup>2</sup> I use the word "fatherland" because there is no one word in the English language strange to say, that expresses this patriotic thought and sentiment. Every other nation so far as I know has the equivalent of this beautiful and comprehensive word.

not learned in the very intricate subject of tithes, but I understand that the terms "greater" and "lesser" in this connection have a purely technical meaning. At all events in this instance the qualifying words had just the reverse meaning of their usual signification for the greater tithes were much less in value than the lesser tithes. The greater tithes throughout England were originally held by monasteries or other religious orders, and when these corporations were dissolved (mostly by King Henry VIII.) the greater, or rectorial tithes, were given by the crown to individuals or colleges and the unappropriated tithes were left to the incumbent of the parish when the parish system came into being. The term "rector" is not therefore necessarily a clerical title in England as it is in America, for a soulless corporation may be a rector. In our parish there were originally two distinct foundations as well as two churches and when the union took place, some two hundred years since, the greater or lay tithes went with the chancel of the church and the remaining, or lesser tithes went with the nave of the church and fell to the incumbent of the parish. And this resulted in a very strange and wholly absurd situation, for it placed the lay rector,—who might be a Dissenter, a Roman Catholic, an Infidel, a Jew, or a Turk—in control of the chancel of the church, including the altar, and he has the power, if he chooses to exercise it, of inhibiting the incumbent from using the chancel for any other purpose

than that of celebrating the Holy Communion. In fact he may close the chancel altogether as the Duke of Norfolk has recently done in one instance at least. The present absentee lay rector, who is said to be a good churchman, does however prohibit the use of the chancel stalls by the choir and for the office of Daily Prayers, so that stalls had to be constructed in the body of the church for these purposes. How such an undignified, not to say wholly ridiculous state of things is tolerated for one moment, I, as an American, without much reverence, but with a pretty strong sense of the fitness of things, cannot comprehend. Americans are accused of a want of reverence because they do not always take the pomp and circumstance of the old world with a sufficient show of seriousness. But it should be remembered that they have not breathed the British air with its traditional atmosphere of class and dignities; and only can behold the outward signs of the inward grace of these things, and these outward signs are not always convincing, nor compelling to reverence. For example an American who would not laugh outright on beholding for the first time, "My Lord Bishop" in his full Episcopal habit or one of His Majesty's superior judges attired in his wig and gown—I say, an American who would not laugh at these absurdly habited dignitaries, is not worthy of his birthright. And it is, perhaps, impossible for him even to get a point of view, from which to properly estimate the true place and importance

these solemn personages occupy in the British mind, and order of things. The American must, therefore, always take them more or less as a joke—which in fact they really are, I mean in their archaic dress. If the Briton would appreciate the attitude of the Yankee towards the bishop's apron and knee-breeches, and the judge's wig, let him make an effort to contemplate in a spirit of true reverence John Chinaman with his pigtail, and he will then, I think, understand to some degree the incapacity of the American to enter into the nice distinctions concerning the respect due to certain British officials. But to return to the question of greater and lesser tithes. Whilst the greater tithes can be sold, to the highest bidder, like any other commodity they carry with them some duties as well as authority, for the holder of these lay tithes must keep the chancel in good repair. But here again the utter absurdity of the situation is brought out very clearly, for whilst the nave and body of the church may bear one scheme of colour and style of decoration the chancel may appear in a totally different architectural aspect. But however incongruous this all may be it has furnished me I hope with an interesting paragraph and gives a good solid bit of local colour to my picture and I feel duly grateful.

#### “PLURALITY”

It has been my general purpose in these sketches to set down nothing which has not come within



the compass of my personal experience, but I cannot resist a good story now and then, especially when it falls within the spirit and scope of my thesis. The yeoman lady had a large number of such stories always on tap and here is one of them.

Not long ago, and not far from our parish, there still existed a very fine example of the evils of plurality, "plurality" signifying—I say this for the benefit of my American readers—two or more churches with livings held by one and the same incumbent. The case in point was known as the "Townley Livings," which consisted of five distinct benefices held by one incumbent, the Rev. Algernon Peyton by name. Two of these livings conferred the title of rector, and three of them the title of vicar upon this plural cleric. He was the rector of Outwell and Welney; and the Vicar of Northwold, Southwold, and Westwold. (These are fictitious names but represent actual parishes.) This plural individual having occasion to spend the day in the market town asked one of his farmers who was also going to market and would precede him by some hours, to order dinner for him at the White Horse Inn. So when the dinner hour arrived this highly clerical gentleman repaired to the White Horse Inn and was shown into a private dining-room where covers for five persons were laid. The clergyman asked the meaning of this, and was informed that his farmer had ordered dinner for five gentlemen, viz., the rectors of Outwell and

Welney and the vicars of Northwold, Southwold, and Westwold. "Very well," said the plural parson, "the other four gentlemen will not be present, but I will gladly settle for them all."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BISHOP AND THE DEAN

#### “HARKING”

I MEAN, of course, the dean of the cathedral and not the rural dean. It will be news, I feel sure, to most of my compatriots, and perhaps to some of my English readers, when I say that the bishop in England has very little, if any authority, over the cathedral churches. This seems a strange contradiction when we remember that the cathedral gets its name from the fact that it contains the cathedra, *i. e.*, the chair or throne of the bishop. The dean and chapter have entire charge and authority over the fabric of the cathedral, but the dean alone holds the power to order the services, the bishop having authority only on such days as are provided by law for his episcopal visitations. This is all very fine for the dean, but is sometimes a little embarrassing, if not humiliating, to the bishop, especially if the episcopal palace is within the precincts of the cathedral grounds, which in fact, however, it seldom is. There is one cathedral in England—Westminster Abbey—which is not only under the exclusive control of the dean and chapter, but is actually extra-diocesan, so that the Bishop

of London in whose territorial jurisdiction it is situated has no authority whatever over the clergy attached to this church. He can neither inhibit them, nor in any way subject them to episcopal discipline. During the incumbency of the famous Dean Stanley, the Bishop of London, after preaching in the Abbey, at the dean's request, of course, began to suggest some things concerning the service in this cathedral church. The dean listened politely to what the bishop had to say, conducting him meanwhile towards the door, and when there he gave his lordship a gentle push which landed him outside, and said: "Now, my Lord, you are in your diocese again where you exercise more or less authority."

Several years ago, in the very beginning of my ministry, I acted as chaplain in Switzerland during a special service to one of the most learned of the English bishops and afterwards visited him in England at his episcopal palace. The cathedral was one of the most perfect specimens of Gothic architecture to be found in England or anywhere else, and is celebrated for its tower and spire, which commands, so I am told, a very fine prospect. Wishing to enjoy this view, which was not then accessible to the public, I asked the bishop if he would kindly give me his card to the dean. This he positively declined to do, saying that it would be of no service to me. I had, however, no doubt that my visiting card, which indicated my position as chaplain to an American church in

Italy, would be sufficient. I also intimated to the very reverend gentleman that I was a guest at the episcopal palace, and requested the privilege of ascending the spire.

"I can't grant it, sir," was all this important church dignitary would deign to reply. A veritable snub—the first and almost the only one I have ever received from an English clergyman, or rather I should say a clergyman of the Church of England. On reporting my reception to the bishop, his lordship merely said: "So you have found out that a man need not be a gentleman in order to be a dean in the English Church."

Yes, that is one of the things I believed I had discovered, but that was not all, for previous to this incident I had the mistaken notion that a bishop had some authority over his cathedral. I also learnt something of the importance of that grand official of an English cathedral—the verger. I felt that the dean's snub was uncalled for, and determined if possible to circumvent him. I, therefore, made up to the verger and asked him to admit me to the tower, on the ground that I was a visitor at the palace. "'is ludship ain't got no hathority in this 'ere cathedral," said this official with the air of pomp and power befitting his sense of absolute proprietorship. It is said that ten years in office makes a verger an absolute autocrat, and he rules henceforth with a rod of iron. I know of a case where an American clergyman had been invited by the dean of a cathedral to take some part

in the Morning Service. The clergyman arrived rather late, but not too late, and was refused admittance to the robing-rooms by the verger, on the grounds that he, the verger, had not been informed of the matter, and did not know the gentleman. "But," said the American, "here is my card, will you take it to the dean?" "No, I will not. I ham not haccustomed to take visiting cards to his deanship just before a service. It 'aint the custom in this 'ere cathedral, sir," said his vergership with great dignity, mingled with scorn for the ignorance of the poor American.

The American reported the matter to the dean after the service, and the only satisfaction he got was the reply: "Yes, he is a great tyrant and we all stand in fear of him." But the extremest case of verger officiousness and verger insolence I ever witnessed or heard of, took place in St. Paul's Cathedral at the closing service of a Lambeth Conference, not many years ago.

There were some hundreds of bishops in the procession, each one preceded by his chaplain or chaplains. The service over, the congregation broke up the better to witness the recessional. The verger stood upon the steps of the choir, clothed in his robes of office, and with mace in hand directed the procession, with great show of authority. An old bishop with white hair and feeble step paused for a moment on the steps before descending, for the evident purpose of seeing or being seen by some friend in the vast congregation.

"Move on, my Lord," commanded the verger in tones which I distinctly heard. But the Bishop either did not hear or did not heed this peremptory order, when he was actually pushed down the steps by this insolent official, whose action called forth a cry of "shame" from those near enough to witness this disgraceful scene. We are beginning rather late in the day to build cathedrals in America, but you will never be able in an American cathedral to catch a dean trying to lord it over a bishop, nor a verger pushing a right reverend prelate down the steps of a cathedral choir. But then America is a democratic country, you know, where grand dignitaries of any sort are rare, still when we do get an aristocratic personage, such as a bishop, we naturally make the most of him, and exalt him above his fellows.

My locum tenency in this parish began in the springtime and lasted till the winter had set in. I therefore came in for the Harvest Thanksgiving and some of the other customs which characterise the autumn season in the country. But "the old order changeth yielding place to new" and this change takes place very rapidly in these days of household suffrage, the ha'penny daily paper and the wider liberty that these unpoetical, but very practical, innovations have brought with them, so that there is not very much left of the old-time traditional local colour which covered, I know, a very great deal of abject poverty and misery, but which nevertheless imparted a soft hazy atmos-

phere, and picturesque tone of romance to the ancient agricultural village. Thanks to the radical agitator, the agricultural labourer has now the good round sum of "eight pounds" added to his honest wage in place of the precarious "largess" of the elder day. Yet I am glad to say that I saw something of the old-time custom of "harking." This is a frolic which the labourers enjoy, or used to enjoy, at the expense of their betters, viz., the squire, the parson, and the farmer. It takes place directly the last sheaf of the harvest is gathered in. This season was an exceptionally good one in every respect, and all the harvesting within the parish had ended before Michaelmas, which you must remember in our village falls on October 11th, and not on September 29th as in the outside world. I had heard from all sources of the very good and very short harvest (which latter means a great deal to the agricultural labourer or harvester, as he now receives the same wage "eight pounds" for the harvest season whether it be long or short), and had mingled my congratulations with the general joy of the village, when on returning to the rectory one evening I heard a very animated discussion going forward in the direction of the kitchen. I overheard bits of this conversation which interested me very much. The following is a specimen bit that was wafted to me on the evening air and came from the lips of my guardian angel, otherwise my housekeeper and general factotum. "No, I says it tain't no longer right



to ask for largess now you all has your eight pounds. 'Tain't right, I says, and I shan't ask his reverence for you and it tain't no use of your insisten." This disjointed bit gave me a good clue to the conversation, and I immediately became intensely interested, for it looked very much as if I were now to get an opportunity of seeing and actually identifying myself with the old habit of "harking" which was rapidly disappearing. I went quietly into the house and rang the bell, which was answered by my factotum in a state of considerable excitement. I told her that I had overheard some of the discussion and asked her to explain more fully the purpose of the deputation. This required some time, but I heard her through with patience, and expressed my very warm thanks for her zeal in my behalf. The *amour propre* of my faithful old servant being thus safeguarded I had no great difficulty in bringing her round to my point of view, and she heartily co-operated with me in dispensing a small "largess" amongst the deputation. I was afterwards lectured by the yeoman lady for being so easily imposed upon and she told me that as a result of my foolishness the harvesters had been to her for the first time in two or three years. "But," said she, "the custom of harking has been killed by the extra harvest wage and a good thing too." I did not, however, regret the imposition nor the fact that I had been the cause of reviving, however slightly, this old habit, and only wish that I could experience a few

more such impositions with which to enliven these pages if for no other reason. We were now in the midst of the Harvest Thanksgivings and I being a stranger was asked to preach in two of the neighbouring churches. Our own Thanksgiving Service was preceded by "a tea" and followed by "a supper" when the visiting clergy and their ladies were entertained. The fine old church was beautifully decorated with flowers and fruit and grain, and was filled to overflowing with a congregation drawn from four or five surrounding parishes.

Almost my last duty before leaving this ancient parish, where I had spent such a happy summer, was to present a class to the Bishop for the rite of Confirmation. This service took place in another parish, whither the candidates were conducted under charge of the "yeoman lady." I had "taken the seal of the day" that is to say I had given and received the daily greetings of these simple folk for a half-year and that I felt a real regret when the hour of final leave-taking came, will, I hope, go without saying. On quitting this parish I betook myself in pensive mood to London town on the look-out for more experiences and adventures, a full and interesting account of which will follow in due order.

## CHAPTER XVI

### “A SLIPPERY FISH”

I CAME back to London from my locum tenency in the country poor in pocket but rich in experiences, and it was this combination of circumstances that urged me to begin these sketches. I had not seen a church paper, nor had I had anything to do with clerical agencies for a period of six months, but I could no longer scorn these good friends of the unbeneficed clergy. I therefore applied to both and found to my great joy an embarrassment of riches, and this, notwithstanding it was in the autumn time, usually an off season for the unattached parson. There were “locums,” “temporaries,” and “Sundays” to be had, ranging from one to six months. “Sundays” was (this grammar is all right) the kind of thing I most desired, as I wished to give my weekdays wholly up to the work of writing out these notes, and Sundays moreover gave greater variety; that is, provided more opportunities for experiences. But, of course, a mere Sunday could at the best furnish but small opportunity for impressions, and I must therefore leave un-

mentioned many of the churches to which I made but a single visit. The ideal thing was to secure a "monthly" with Sunday duty only. If this required a residence in the parish, well and good; if not all the better, for I found that intervals of detachment, however short, helped greatly in clarifying and making vivid my impressions. In other words I saw that two visits, however brief, were much better for my purposes of character study, than double or quadruple the time spent in one parish without a break. Still, with my mornings free for my pen, and my afternoons free for adventures, it was of little consequence to me whether my tent was pitched in the parish or out of the parish.

After reading over the advertisements in the *Guardian*, and carefully considering what the agencies had to offer, I put myself in communication with a rector requiring Sunday duty, for two or three months. The advertisement did not state whether a residence in the parish would be necessary or not. I received a strange sort of indefinite answer to my letter and felt certain that I had hooked a rare fish if not a big one, and would have difficulty in landing him. But this of course only gave zest to the sport, as all keen fishermen will at once appreciate, and I began to play him with all the angling skill I possessed. I knew that the first thing was to give him plenty of line, but to hold it taut. This I managed to do in a correspondence lasting two weeks, and then

he suddenly slipped off my hook and was away. So at least it seemed, for he wrote to me saying he hoped he had secured the help he required. He had then, so it appeared, been nibbling at another unattached. But I, on the other hand, had two or three lines out, and had succeeded in filling each Sunday as it came round, with a double guinea. Moreover I was on the point of concluding an arrangement for two months of “Sundays,” when I had another nibble in the way of a telegram from the artful parson, and this was quickly followed by a quick, strong pull in the shape of a long letter. I now felt sure of my fish, and took my own time for landing him. The letter proposed that I should officiate for the writer on the next Sunday. He would pay my travelling expenses (which were only a few shillings) and “extend to you (me) the hospitalities of the rectory.” But where did the guineas come in? And to change the figure (for a mixed one) I was too old a bird to be caught by such thin chaff. I wrote saying that I had no difficulty in securing duty every Sunday at two guineas a Sunday, and could not therefore comply with his request without some pecuniary sacrifice, which I felt sure he did not intend. He answered saying of course he did not wish me to suffer any loss, by visiting him; but he had supposed that opportunities for Sunday duty were very rare at this season of the year. He then suggested a weekday visit, “each of us to bear an equal share of the expense

of your journey." To this I readily consented, and, I must confess, without much expectation of entering into an engagement with this slippery fish. But this visit also hung fire for a time and to change the figure again I had really given up the hunt altogether when I received a letter appointing the time and giving very precise instructions for my visit. Several weeks had now elapsed since the first communication had passed between us, and as I afterwards learnt, this wily cleric had succeeded during all that time in persuading poor innocent guinea-pigs to come to him for a Sunday each on trial, and also on the terms he had first proposed to me, that is, "travelling expenses and the hospitality of the rectory." This was the worst case of clerical sharp practice I have ever come across, and is almost the only one of any kind I have experienced in England. (I have known worse cases in my own beloved land, I am sorry to say.) I have said almost the only case, and as this implies that there was another case, I think it best to give it at once and have done with this disagreeable subject. I was asked to officiate and preach at one service, which of course meant one guinea, in a London suburban church. The service for which I was engaged was at eleven o'clock; but I was instructed that the train service from London was bad on Sunday mornings, and it would be necessary for me to come on Saturday night, and the hospitality of the curate in charge would be gladly

extended to me. I went as directed and arrived at my destination after dinner or supper, or whatever the evening meal was called. I found that the “curate in charge” had a bad throat, but only required a preacher, as he was quite able to take the other duty. But there was of course an early celebration, and as this was the only one during the day I was expected to attend. “And do you mind putting on your robes,” said the curate in charge. Of course I did not. Nor did I suspect in the slightest degree the nature of the game that was being played upon me. This early service proved to be a full choral celebration, which took place once a month, and as there were more than a hundred communicants present, the value of my services was very apparent. I preached at the midday service and took an early afternoon train for my lodgings, with but a guinea in my pocket. The conduct of the curate in charge struck me as curious, but I did not actually suspect any design on his part to do me out of a guinea. I believed that it was simply a case where the circumstances were rather in his favour, and he naturally reaped the benefits. Still the more I thought of it, the more I was impressed with this happy coincidence, viewed from the standpoint of the curate in charge. But it was just a bit of luck, I reasoned, and let the matter drop. But be it long or short our sins are sure to find us out, and usually in a way we little expect. It was only two weeks after the

coincidence I have mentioned that I had to pass over this very line, and on a Sunday morning too, and to my utter astonishment the train came to a dead stop, where the name of this station was plainly to be seen, at six minutes to ten o'clock. Such were the simple facts, which led to the grave discovery that I had been played upon by the curate in charge. For I found on investigation that three trains, all connecting with the district railway, and all stopping at the station in question, left London every Sunday morning, between the hours of eight and a quarter past ten—any one of which would have served my convenience. That I had been done out of a guinea was now as plain as a pikestaff. This curate in charge is industrious, enterprising, and in every sense of the word a hustler, and I have no doubt that preferment awaits him in the near future.<sup>1</sup> He in fact has already the reputation of doing "a great work among the poor." I think that I ought to say that his name is not pure English, and has somewhat of an oriental sound, which fact may be taken for what it is worth.

But the rector I started to speak about rejoices in a good old English name, without the slightest foreign taint about it. This parson was really unfit by reason of a special physical infirmity to officiate; this much must be said in his favour, but it does not quite justify the ingenious methods he resorted to in securing substitutes to take his

<sup>1</sup> It has already come to pass.



duty. For if the guinea-pig is bereft of his Sunday duty, he is bereft indeed. I was not, as you already know, aware of this rector's peculiar methods when I arranged to visit him, but I had a sort of inkling that he was not the usual thing, and it was for this reason that I was anxious to exploit him. It was, to be frank and honest with you, to spy out the land more than anything else that I went, and this in truth was actually what I said to the incumbent on my arrival. It was said, however, in a jocular mood, but as I could plainly see was not taken in a similar manner, for the rector at once assumed an attitude towards me that did not admit of jest or familiarity. I had asked a few cautious questions of the rector's coachman during our long and dreary drive of six miles and more, but the only particulars I succeeded in learning were that there was a “queer gent” who had always lived with his “reverence.” I was received by the rector in the drawing-room where there was not the slightest pretence of a fire, but I was immediately shifted to the dining-room, where a cup of tea and a big slice of buttered bread awaited me. Of all the cold, barren, cheerless English houses I ever entered on a bleak November day, this was the most perfect specimen I had ever seen. There was a very big fireplace, with a small portable grate in the middle of it containing a handful of coals, completely smothered with the cinders and ashes which were periodically raked out from the bottom, as they fell through and

replaced upon the top. The rector, immediately disappeared after receiving me, and his lady house-keeper (he was a bachelor) stealthily appeared upon the scene. This change in the *dramatis personæ* was so sudden as to give me no time to attack the fire, and on seeing the lady house-keeper I knew that any meddling on my part would be sternly rebuked, for steel traps and spring guns were written all over her face. I have never, in the whole course of my not very brief life, felt so utterly powerless in the presence of any human being, and I have, first and last, confronted some rather nasty characters. Not only did I feel helpless and hopeless, but I was perfectly sure that this lady was reading me like a book, and knew beyond any possible doubt, that I was there under wholly false pretences, and to do precisely what I had jestingly announced to the rector, namely, to spy out the land. So sure was I that I was in the presence and under the power of a thought-reader, that I would have instantly made a full confession, were it not that I seemed to be deprived of all power of the initiative. And the strange thing about it all was the fact that this lady never looked towards me, that is to say when I was looking at her. But I did not need to look at her to be sure that she was looking at me, for whenever the tail of her eye fell upon me, I winced as if I had been struck with a lash. It is impossible for me to exaggerate the hypnotic effect this lady had upon me, for she not only rendered me

speechless, but almost motionless as well. I felt actually paralysed, and wholly unable to as much as change my position. After reducing me thus to a state of passive and harmless resistance, the lady left the room, and I was about recovering my normal free will and action, when she re-entered, and pointing through the window said the rector was taking his evening walk, and should be pleased if I would join him. It required some time for me to realise that I was once more a free agent, but when this blessed assurance did come to me I bounded up and out like a captive loosed from his chains. I found the rector walking up and down as though he were chained to a stake, for he did not seem to vary one inch in the length of his beat. He greeted me with a dignified and solemn air, and after hoping that I had recovered from the fatigue of my journey said: “We have a gentleman living with us who is somewhat eccentric, and one has to be careful what one says to him.” This I made sure was the “queer gent” the coachman had mentioned. As this subject had been introduced by the rector I felt at liberty to ask some questions, but all I could learn was that he was not “quite all there.” I was assured, however, that he was perfectly harmless if one did not cross him, and I became very much interested just then in knowing how not to cross him. I also was a little curious to know the size of this “queer gent.” But before I succeeded in eliciting any information on

that point, there appeared as by magic from among the gravestones (we were walking in the churchyard) a giant figure. He looked first at the rector and then at me as if uncertain which to devour first, and then said in the gentlest voice: "I couldn't make out who you were so I stood behind the corner of the tower some time looking at you." "This is Mr. Guinea-Pig," said the rector, "whom you know I was expecting." "Of course, of course," said the "queer gent." "You're a parson. Well we've had some queer ones here, first and last, haven't we, rector?" I said I hoped he liked the parsons. "Well, yes, in a way, but they do get on one's nerves a bit now and then, don't they?" he asked, appealing to the rector again. But the rector fenced the question very skilfully by saying that it took some time for us to get used to each other's ways. "Of course, of course," replied the strong man. "I didn't mean to say anything against parsons, you know," turning to me. "I am sure you didn't," I ejaculated in a pleasant tone of voice, "for there are parsons and parsons, you know."—"Yes, of course, of course, but do you know Mr. Smith, who was here last Sunday? He was a rum one, he was; why he actually winked at me during the service." But the rector at last succeeded in changing the conversation from parsons to politics, and the "queer gent," after expressing his disapproval of the "whole lot," went his way, and after he had departed the rector observed: "You

would not notice anything queer at first, now would you?” “No,” I confessed, “I should not.” But this fact in itself was not altogether comforting, as I had always heard that these unfortunate people were very cunning, and were frequently able wholly to deceive strangers with regard to their malady. We continued pacing our beat for nearly an hour, and the rector talked about everything save the matter that had brought me there. Finally he remarked that he had taken his usual evening exercise and excused himself and disappeared. Before doing so, however, he showed me a back entrance to the house, and said there were special reasons for keeping the front door always locked. This suggested the “queer gent” and did not leave a cheerful impression upon my mind. I returned to the dining-room—there was no fire anywhere else—and found the lady housekeeper awaiting me. “Have you seen Mr. Z.?” she enquired, “you would not think there was anything queer about him at first sight, would you?” “No, except his unusual size, and apparent strength,” I answered in as brave a voice as I could command. “Well, he is perfectly amiable and harmless if you don’t cross him.” “Cross him,” again! Who on earth wants to cross him? Not I, certainly. This was what I thought, but not exactly what I said. “How can one make sure of not crossing the gentleman?” I anxiously enquired. “Well, for one thing, we never contradict him.” That was dead easy, so I medi-

tated, for I had no disposition to contradict anybody under the present circumstances. In fact I then and there resolved to agree with this stalwart "queer gent" in any and all things he might affirm. I was actually willing to say that I believed in Fiscal Reform as presented both by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain. But this pleasant musing was interrupted by a second thought, for I now remembered that the lady housekeeper had said, "for one thing we never contradict him." It was then only one thing after all, and there might be a number of other things not so easy to avoid, especially as they were unknown to me. "I shall certainly not contradict the gentleman, but have you any other kind suggestions to offer?" I enquired. "Well, there is nothing more that I can think of just now," said the lady housekeeper; and so saying she turned away, to signify that the discussion was ended, and left me to make my own discoveries which might, I reasoned, be attended with more or less danger, and I was on the point of making further enquiries, when the "queer gent" suddenly stalked into the room with the air of one having interrupted a plot against him. "Oh, there you are!" he exclaimed, looking hard at me. Well, there was no denying the fact that here I really was. But what could he mean by that, I wondered. I broke the silence which followed by asking him if he had a favourite seat as most people had in their own house. "Oh, this is not

my house exactly,” he said in the gentlest kind of manner, “and I am not such an old maid as to want a particular chair,” he added with a distinct tone of glee in his voice, and an oblique squint at me out of his eye. I did not know whether to laugh or not to laugh. To laugh I felt sure would be pleasing to the “queer gent” but very unpleasing to the lady housekeeper, and if ever mortal found himself between the devil and the deep sea, it was your peripatetic parson. For now that I was confronted with both, I really found that I stood in greater fear of the lady housekeeper than the “queer gent” or giant, and I therefore tacitly refused to join with him in his levity which I saw was at the expense of the housekeeper. “I don’t know why you should have introduced so ridiculous a subject, I am sure,” said the lady, lashing me unmercifully with the tail of her eye. “I know,” said the “queer gent,” “he sees that you have got the best seat in the best corner. Ha! ha! he! he! And you have been telling him where to sit, I’ll be bound, ha, ha, he, he!” So it thus transpired that in my excessive desire to make myself agreeable to both, I had hit upon a subject of discord between them. I had, however, given great delight to the giant who continued to chuckle to himself in the most happy manner. I knew, therefore, that I had but one enemy to contend with for the present, and that was some satisfaction. But the weight of the lady housekeeper’s evil eye rested heavily upon me. The conversa-

tion now lagged, and we all sat staring into the fire till the maid came to lay the cloth. It seemed to me a little unusual to sit in the dining-room while the cloth was being laid, and I got up and went out. It was pitch dark and I could not trust myself to venture away from the feeble light reflected from the house, so I stood just outside the door in an elbow of the house, shivering and meditating. I had been there but a few minutes when the door was cautiously opened and the huge form of the queer giant towered above me. Shading his eyes with his hand, he peered into the darkness, and it soon became evident that I was the object of his quest, for he smiled, stepped out of the light, and closed the door behind him. He then felt his way to me and whispered, "That was a good one, that was; so she played her corner game on you, too; but you have made her awfully mad. And do you know I often think she's a bit queer. But the rector will not hear of it. Won't you come in and look at my workshop!" I was glad to comply with this request, and to my great relief found that I had ceased to fear the unfortunate gentleman. The workshop was made out of a small parlour, or spare office, and contained ample evidence of his skill in woodcraft in the shape of several useful instruments, as well as numerous toys. The bell soon called us into the dining-room, where the lady housekeeper stood on guard, supported by a frightened-looking servant-maid. Nothing was said, and we all stood in a respectful attitude of



attention for a few moments, when the servant who was near the door suddenly opened it, as if acting upon a secret signal, and the master of the house entered with solemn dignity and took his place at the head of the table. We all bowed slightly, and after he had muttered something, not a syllable of which I understood, we were all told to “please take your seats.” This was my dinner hour, and I had partaken of nothing in the way of a repast since morning, except a Bath bun at a railway Spiers & Ponds. Therefore under ordinary circumstances I should have been ready for a good square meal, which by the way was not in evidence, and strange as it may seem, when asked if I would have a bit of meat in the shape of veal brawn, I actually declined it, notwithstanding there was nothing else in sight, except bread and butter and the smallest speck of cheese, with perhaps a very tiny jar suggesting jam, or something of that sort. “So you don’t take meat in the evening,” said the rector. “Well I approve of that habit. There is nothing I find like having a settled dietary standard.” “That’s all very well,” said the “queer gent”; “but I think a beef-steak, a chop, or something of that sort at night, would be better than the nasty American cheese, don’t you?” he enquired looking at me. Here was another dilemma. But as I had been warned not to cross this gentleman and especially not on any account to contradict him, I felt that I might be excused, if I for the moment disagreed with

my host, which I did in the least offensive manner possible; and then noticing the look in the lady housekeeper's eye I quickly added, "But it is a question everyone must settle for himself."—"Yes, of course, of course," broke in the "queer gent." "That's what I always say to the rector, but he don't seem to see it." It seemed impossible for me "to open my mouth without putting my foot in it," and I determined to make no further ventures in the way of comments or opinions during the remainder of the meal, nor did anyone else enliven the occasion. The lady housekeeper having thrown the lash of her eye round the table two or three times, and feeling convinced that the last mouthful had been swallowed, signified the same to the rector who rose, bent his head and again mumbled something in a solemn tone of voice. He then turned and marched out of the room in the same dignified manner as he had entered. I, of course, expected to be asked to follow him to his study, or wherever he had gone, and I waited in that expectation for an hour, when I summoned up courage enough to ask if the rector was expecting me to join him? "If he is he will let you know," was all the lady housekeeper saw fit to say in reply. He didn't let me know, and I spent the evening in the dining-room with the lady housekeeper and the paying guest as the "queer gent" was called by the other members of this cheerful family. I went out once to inspect my bedroom and as it had been growing colder and

colder, and I was a little anxious about the bedding, I happened by good luck upon the housemaid who was just coming out of my bedroom. I placed a shilling in her hand and begged her to provide me with two extra blankets as the night was turning cold. She seemed most willing to comply with my request but feared she must speak to the mistress about the matter, unless she could get them from another bed. I encouraged her in this enterprise and said I thought it might be better not to trouble the mistress about so small a matter. She started off on this kindly mission, but was met, just round the corner, by the lady housekeeper who stopped her further progress, and advancing towards me said, “You will please to let me know what you require, as I give the orders here.” My blood was up now, and I told her if she did not want to find me frozen stiff in the morning, she must provide me with some extra bed-covering. The maid sniggered at this and was severely rebuked, but all the same I got the blankets. I busied myself for a moment in my room, and on returning to the dining-room I found the lady housekeeper in her accustomed corner seat looking for all the world just as if nothing had happened in the meantime. This gave me a creepy sensation, and as I did not wish again to fall under the spell of her eyes, I announced my intention of going to bed. “Prayers are said at half-past nine,” snapped out the lady in anything but a prayerful tone of voice. I felt severely

rebuked and sank into a chair to await the coming of the rector. But I did not have to wait long, for a prayer-book was soon brought and placed upon the table, and I knew from the hushed manner of everyone that his reverence was expected. We all stood up to receive him, which he graciously acknowledged by a slight inclination of his head. Prayers being over I saw that we were expected to stand again and "make a front" as they say in military circles, till his rectorship had withdrawn. But the place of his withdrawing was still a mystery to me. I imagined it to be his study, and would have given two guineas for a peep at his books and things. But in this I was destined to complete disappointment, for I not only never saw the inside of the study, but did not know its location in the economy of the house. There was one corner room which I supposed might answer this purpose, but it was so fenced about with shrubs, that I could get but a light glimpse of the interior from the gravel walk, which connected the rectory house with the churchyard. The house was a large one with a ground plan consisting of a façade, about eighty feet long, and an elbow rather less than half the length. The hallway ran between the façade and the elbow, cutting off the drawing-room, dining-room, and a small parlour from the kitchen, and what I took to be the study. The rooms upstairs were not disposed upon the same plan, but were divided by a passage which traversed the house at right

angles to the hall below. Before going to bed I explored this passage, and came upon a room which bore signs of having been fastened from the outside. I say “having been” for it was now open, and evidently unused. I was retracing my steps when I came face to face with the paying guest. “Oh, you are looking over the house, are you?” I said something about trying to get a glimpse of the moon. “Well, come with me,” and so saying he took me into the very room I had been inspecting. “I think we can see as well from here as from anywhere.” But there was little to be seen from anywhere, and I turned to go, when he laid his hand gently on my shoulder and said, “Did she say anything about leaving matches about, for she always does, and I can never find any when I want them.” I remembered that I had been cautioned about matches, and was on the point of making some evasive answer when he went on to say that—“This is the room the queer American occupied. Did you know him?” I confessed I did not. “But you are an American, aren’t you?” Yes, I owned I was. “Are you going to stay here long?”—“No, I think not,” I answered. “Have you any nervous trouble?” “Not that I am aware of,” I replied, with my nerves in anything but their normal condition. “Well, mostly nervous cases come here. The last chap was a parson who imagined all kinds of things. He was very decent, however, and he and I got on all right.

This is the part where the patients are kept. Where is your room?"—"I am afraid you are keeping Mr. Guinea-Pig up too long," came in a female voice from the head of the stairway. "I am very sorry," said the paying guest, and we bade each other good-night. I had now some more food for reflection. One thing was quite evident viz.; that I was in a retreat for nervous people, and there might be, for all I knew, one or more of these unhappy fellow-creatures under the roof at this very moment; and the thought was not calculated to strengthen my own nerves, considering all the circumstances of the case. I had by this time dismissed all fear of the "queer gent" or paying guest, for I saw that it was feebleness of mind, rather than weakening of nerves that affected him. It was the unseen and wholly unknown danger that now terrified me. There were rooms on either side of my bedchamber, and I knew they might contain a patient each, and I began to imagine that I heard all kinds of sounds. I locked and bolted my door, and after placing all the portable furniture against it, tried to sleep, and am glad to say that I succeeded much better than I had any reason to hope. In fact, I had a fairly good night. You see I was very tired, and a tired healthy man is very apt to sleep whenever and wherever he gets a chance.

The breakfast passed off without any incident worthy of mention, and I was on the point of starting off for a stroll when the lady housekeeper

informed me that the rector was going to walk to the next village, and would be glad of my company. I felt greatly flattered, and expressed my pleasure in the most fitting terms I could command. I was certain the walk had been planned that we might have an uninterrupted talk about the business which had brought me here. But never one word did the rector utter on this subject, from the first to the last of our long tramp. I made one or two efforts to lead the conversation in that direction, but with no success whatever. It had been agreed between us that I should spend two nights at the rectory, but I felt that it was hardly fair for me to prolong my visit, knowing as I did that there was not the faintest chance that we should come to any agreement. I therefore suggested that perhaps I had better return to town in the afternoon. But he informed me that his coachman would “not be available till tomorrow morning,” so I was to spend another night in this retreat for nervous people of gentle birth. Well, the prospect was not very cheerful but I determined to make the best of it. We had a midday dinner which proved both good and bountiful. It was served in the old-time English fashion beginning with sherry and ending with port wine. There was general conversation and his rectorship actually smiled once or twice in the course of the repast, but the lady housekeeper never, and I felt her lashing me unmercifully with the tail of her eye during the whole time. The paying guest said little and

looked as though he had been crossed, and he abruptly left the room so soon as "thanks" had been returned. The rector withdrew again in the same magisterial manner as he had on former occasions and I was left alone with the lady house-keeper. I had been out-doors all the morning and should have been glad of an hour or two of rest. A drizzling rain had also set in. But anything was better than to face this lady alone, and I was on the point of starting out, when, to my utter amazement, the lady smiled and asked if I would not be seated for a little while, as it was beginning to rain. She confessed also that she desired some private conversation with me. This was all said in a most insinuating manner, and as there was no way out of it that I could think of, I submitted as gracefully as possible. But in doing so I cast a furtive glance at the fire, which had not been replenished since the morning, and was growing faint and low. The lady instantly responded to my look with a vigorous poke, and a small shovel of coals. This was really exciting, and I was wondering what might happen next, when the lady seated herself in her cosy corner, and looking me in the face for the first time, said—"Well, how do you like us?" This very nearly upset me, and I pulled myself together with some difficulty. Had the lady taken a sudden and violent fancy to me, or was she laughing at me? I chose to assume that she was at least serious in her question, and dismissed for the



nonce the rector and the “queer gent,” who were evidently meant to be included in the plural form of the pronoun. “I hope I may say without offence, that I am not insensible to such pleasant associations and happy circumstances as I am at this moment enjoying,” I said. “Oh, I did not mean it in that way, you know very well. But there is no offence. What I meant to ask was, how do you like the—the church, the parish—and the household?” This gave me my chance, and I answered that I was delighted with all the members of the household that I had had the pleasure of meeting, but were there any I had not seen? “No, we are quite alone this winter, except Mr. Blank who has always lived with us. What do you think of him?”—“He seems an amiable and harmless person,” I said.—“Yes, when he is not crossed. But he has taken to you, and I am sure you and he would get on right well together.” I felt sure we could. “Mr. Blank spoke of another American as having lived here, what did he mean?” I asked. “There was with us for a few months an American lawyer, who had overworked and this had brought on nervous prostration. He imagined that he was pursued by enemies, and was suspicious of everyone. But he was easily controlled.” “Then you take in patients who are afflicted with hallucinations?” “Well, not exactly that, but this air is very good for nervous troubles, and as our house is much larger than we require we are able to take in two

or three paying guests.—Do you think you would like to come for the winter?"—"Do you mean as paying guest, or as curate?"—"Oh, as curate, of course," she replied, in some confusion. "Well, of course, I should like to come immensely, but my coming will depend, I am sorry to say, upon circumstances. I write, and should require a private sitting-room, with fire."—"Oh, should you?" exclaimed the lady housekeeper. "This room is always heated, and you would be quite at liberty to use the large dinner-table for writing."—"But I should disturb you and Mr. Blank."—"Not at all, we seldom have occasion to write, but the table is large enough for us all."—"Is that the arrangement you have always made with the curate?" I asked.

"Yes, they have all shared this room with us."

"But is there not a study?"—"Yes, but the rector occupies that of course."—"Does he write?"—"I don't know what he does," was her answer, and I saw that I must not go any further in that direction. "Should I have access to the Library?" I ventured to enquire. "No, I think not," was the laconic response. The conversation now became general and I learnt a good many things more or less interesting about the house, the church, and the parish but little or nothing about the rector and his manner of life. The rain cleared about half-past three, and I tramped over to another village, where there was an interesting old church to be seen. After supper I made bold to ask if I might

have a word with the rector, but was told he would see me in the morning. I now made it plain to the lady housekeeper that a private sitting-room with fire would be a necessary condition of my taking up my residence here. Her countenance fell at this announcement and she never smiled again. The second evening passed as did the first in silence and gloom unbroken even by a cheerful word from the paying guest who had evidently been crossed in the morning and had not yet recovered his wonted amiability. I found him at his workroom door as I went up to bed, and he informed me that he had been sent away in the afternoon so that “she”—pointing with his thumb over his shoulder towards the dining-room—“might have you all to herself.”

I had a few rounds with the rector on his churchyard beat the next morning before my departure, and he regretted that he was not able to provide the accommodation I required. I joined in this regret, and bade him a long farewell.

## CHAPTER XVII

### GREAT EXPECTATIONS. HIS LORDSHIP'S CARRIAGE

ON arriving at my Club one morning I found the following message awaiting me:

Can you take duty next Sunday in Blank parish church thirty miles from London and six from station? Lord Blank will send his carriage to meet you. Two services, eleven and six. Take 7.30 A.M. train Sunday. Return same day. Fee two guineas and expenses.

I answered in the affirmative and found myself the next Sunday morning shivering in a dense fog at Baker Street station, half an hour before the train time. I had almost as soon be too late as too early for a train and was lamenting my ill-luck when a porter rushed at me, and asked in that very abrupt manner so characteristic of his order, "Where are you going?" I told him in a manner meant to imply that I knew my own business, and did not thank him for his meddling, when without further ceremony he bundled me into the train that was just starting, saying "There is no other train on Sunday till eleven o'clock." He had

saved my clerical life, so to speak, and I was grateful. Someone had blundered about the train time and I had by the merest accident caught the only train available. But in the hurry of embarking I lost my return ticket, and on arriving at my destination I was called upon first to explain why I was travelling without a ticket, and secondly to pay my fare over again both ways. This I felt to be a distinct grievance, but submitted to the hardship, after protesting and backing up my protest with my card, the proper thing to do on all occasions in England, I find. Having made these mere railway officials feel very small by this revelation of myself to them, I enquired in rather a lofty manner if Lord Blank's carriage was in waiting. "Well, not exactly that," said the station-master, who had come out of his office and was giving me his personal attention, "but there is a man here from his lordship enquiring for a parson, and you may be the one";—and with this he led the way out of the station and pointed the aforesaid man out to me. I looked in vain for a carriage and pair. There was in fact nothing but a solitary vehicle to be seen, and I felt sure there must be some mistake. "Well tain't my mistake at any rate," said the station-master in the most respectful manner possible, and yet I felt that he and his assistants who stood round were all laughing at me, for I had asked for his lordship's carriage in a tone which was meant to be impressive. I don't think there ever could

have been an instance of great expectations so utterly, so cruelly blasted, for of all the stupid, unkempt-looking rustics I had ever seen in any country this man was the most perfect example. He was seated in a dirty market cart, to which was attached a shaggy, knock-kneed pony. There was only one satisfactory thing about the picture and that was its artistic harmony, all things being in perfect character with each other. "Are you sure that's my man?" I enquired again, thinking the carriage might be late. "No, sir, I don't see that I has occasion to be sure about the matter at all. All I know is that this man comes from Lord Blank's and he says he has come to fetch a parson, but I don't see as I have got anything to do with it, sir. But I think you'll find it's all right, sir."

The situation was getting unbearable, for a crowd was collecting, and remarks were being made. "Oh that's 'is Ludship's carriage hall right," said a man near me, "shall I put your bag in, sir?" During all this time the rustic sat in his cart, without seeming to take the slightest notice of anything. He was, however, some fifty feet away, and may not have heard the conversation that had been going on about him. With bag in hand I now walked over to him and asked if he had come from Blank village to fetch a clergyman. "Yis sir," said the man, touching his hat, or rather cap, "Be you 'im sir?" There was then no mistaking the fact that this was the vehicle sent for me, and after handing up my bag I climbed

over the dirty wheel and deposited myself at the rustic's side. The crowd of spectators was as silent as death during this performance, but just as we were starting off some one said, "Why the gentleman doesn't seem to know a lord's carriage when he sees it." There was no laughter till we had turned out of the station yard, and then a loud explosion of mirth smote my ears, and never in all my life did I feel so keen a sense of humiliation. I ask you to keep in mind all the circumstances and I feel sure you will sympathize with me in my hot indignation. The message giving the instructions expressly stated that Lord Blank's carriage would be at the station to meet me, and I had naturally been looking forward for several days to a peaceful morning drive of six miles through a beautiful country, behind a spanking pair of perfectly groomed horses, with a stately coachman and a smart footman on the box. I had also permitted my fancy to dwell upon the family arms surmounted by a coronet emblazoned upon the carriage door, and embossed upon the harness. This was the ideal picture that had floated through my mind, and I was now confronted with the reality in the shape of the rustic and a market cart and was being conveyed to my appointment as though it were market day and I a load of cabbages or potatoes drawn by a broken-down pony and driven by a dirty farm-labourer, who reeked with the manure of the stable and the barnyard. After getting

away from the station and its crowd of impudent loafers I was on the point of refusing to go any further and asked my sweet smelling companion how far it was to the up station, and what were the trains. But he knew absolutely nothing, and after further consideration I determined to pursue the incident to the end in the hope of finding and punishing the person who was responsible for this inexcusable indignity which I had to suffer. And then my curiosity was excited, and I felt an anxious desire to meet a nobleman who could permit himself to be represented by such an extraordinary equipage. It was the utter failure of all my bright expectations which at first possessed me, and I am sorry to say enraged me. Had I been expecting nothing I could have accepted the situation with good natured amusement. Still under any circumstances my journey of six miles in this vehicle could not have been a pleasant one. I finally concluded, however, to make the best of the conditions, and realising that the poor rustic was in no way to blame I began to cultivate him, and actually forgot his smell in listening to his village and farm gossip. I learnt, among other things, that the pony and cart were his own property, purchased with the money that had been left him in the last will and testament of the late rector; that the man was proud of his turnout, and especially of being in the service of a lord, was very evident. He was not in the regular employ of his lordship, however, and only did



occasional jobs, such as the present one, when his lordship did not wish to have his own horses taken out. It was his lordship's coachman that employed him.<sup>2</sup> This conversation gave me the text for my sermon, and I made up my mind that I should give this particular nobleman a shot or two that would make him wince. But the sermon was a failure, so far at least as the local colour was concerned, for his lordship looked me steadily in the face during my most pointed and personal observations, and when I expected the "stricken deer to weep" I saw that the hart ungalled played. He asked me to dinner, as a further proof that he was unconscious of any special iniquity. But this may have been only a pretence to hide his desire for revenge for he took me for a tramp after dinner and came very nearly walking me to death. He never once referred to anything offensive in my sermon, but on the contrary he complimented me upon my happy effort and remarked upon the pointed and personal character of the discourse, and said that preaching nowadays as a rule was too general and diffuse to be effective. So I had spent my powder and ball for nothing as I had wholly missed my mark. My sense of failure was so complete that I changed my tactics entirely and my evening sermon—which

<sup>2</sup> Coachmen frequently employ others to do their work, rather than take their horses out, when this can be kept from their master. This coachman knew perfectly well that a clergyman could not very well complain of this to his host.

however his lordship did not hear—might have been upon the Apocryphal Three Hebrew Children for any local reference or timely quality it contained. I had my supper with his lordship and was carted back to the station in the same undignified manner I had been fetched in the morning, and the strange thing about it all was that I made no protest and felt little or no resentment, so completely had I been soothed and charmed by the fine manners of a lord. In proof that this charm was in some degree mutual, though I say it who should not, I may add that I have made this nobleman a private visit since, and we are, I might almost say, friends. I am therefore sure he will not be offended in the least, but very much amused and I hope instructed, when he reads—as I mean he shall—this account of my first visit to his parish church.

The loss of my ticket was not a serious matter but I reported it to the railway authorities, giving full particulars, and after waiting three weeks and having given up all thought on the subject I received the amount in full. This is not the only instance in which I have tested the disposition to fair dealing on the part of English railway companies. In November, 1888, I booked from Charing Cross to Paris by the South Eastern for the night boat. There had been a land slip on the line a day or two before and our train was so much delayed that it did not reach Dover till after the boat had gone and the passengers for

Paris were forced to spend the night in Dover. I stopped at a good hotel and went on to Paris by the day boat. I wrote from Paris to the railway company enclosing a statement of my hotel and other expenses caused by missing connection, and asked to be recouped. In answer to this request I received a letter declining any payment on the ground that I had taken the ticket at my own risk. But I pointed out that the ticket had been sold to me but a few moments before the departure of the train, and that no mention had been made of a possible delay. In a few days after this I had a visit from Captain — the company's representative in Paris, who paid me in full the sum I claimed. I have another and a more recent, and a more remarkable example of English railway fair dealing, which like all just dealing pays in the long run. In July, 1904, I journeyed from Eastbourne on a Saturday afternoon, arriving at London Bridge Station at 4.30. I was on my way to Downham, Norfolk, and my train was advertised to leave the Great Eastern Station, Liverpool Street, at five o'clock. A block on London Bridge caused me some delay, and I had but ten minutes left when I arrived at my station. I gave my luggage—four pieces in all—to a porter, told him my train, and he said he would have it labelled and would report to me at the train. I got my ticket without delay and was in front of my train five minutes before the starting time. But no porter was to be seen. It was the

last train for my station and I had an engagement, on the morrow, and I could not therefore afford to miss it. The train was held a minute or so for me, and I gave my card to the inspector and told him the particulars. But just as we were pulling out the porter appeared at the carriage door and said "Your luggage is all right sir." I threw him some coin out of the window and felt happy. But on arriving at Downham my luggage could not be found in the train, nor did I see anything more of it for nearly five weeks. This was most embarrassing as I was left without any summer clothing save my travelling suit. I was also bereft of toilet articles and a great many other small articles that add so much to one's comfort and happiness. My Sunday sermon was also gone. The station-master at Downham was very kind and enterprising, and did all he could for me but without any degree of success. I finally made out a list of the lost articles with the approximate values set opposite, and sent it in to the London office. There was, among other papers, the manuscript of an article I had just written and two sermons not entirely new. The article I put down at six guineas, and the sermons as of uncertain value. I waited as long as I could, and was then forced to make some purchases, and had given everything up for lost when I got a wire from the Superintendent's office stating that "Your luggage has been found and is being sent to you today." Where it had been all this time

I have never learned. But the Great Eastern Company was "glad to give me six pounds as some compensation for the inconvenience I had been caused." That was handsomely done and deserves the free advertisement I have given it. I am a good American and love my country as well as any of my compatriots, and believe it is a little better than any other nation, but I am perfectly certain that in none of the three cases I have mentioned had they occurred in my native land would I have received one red cent from the coffers of any American railway company.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ENGLISH PARSON'S COMPLAINT

“**A** LITTLE knowledge is a dangerous thing,” but it may be also a very good and convenient thing when mixed with a little wisdom. It has taken me many years, exactly how many I shall not say, to learn something, however little, about this vile body we here inhabit, and I now know that drugs in any form are its worst enemy, spirits not excepted. I say this boldly in the face, and without fear, of all sorts and conditions of temperance advocates. And if I did not realise that you, reader, belong to a very literal race of beings I should beg you in all sincerity to heed the evil admonition of Macbeth and throw physic to the dogs. But as I am a great lover of dogs I fear to give my unqualified endorsement to the advice of that ancient and canny Scot. Now this is meant to lead up to the statement that the reverend clergy of England seem to be universally afflicted with a complaint called lumbago; but why they should dose themselves with all kinds of poisonous drugs on that account is beyond my comprehension. In my peregrinations up and

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down this land in quest of experiences I have happened upon dozens or more of clerics who were rendered *hors de combat* by this very inconvenient and painful form of rheumatism, and in every case where my services were accepted I have taken the parson out of bed and re-established his going.

My first case was a young vicar who had recently come in for a good living and a pretty wife. He was stricken on the Thursday, and had hoped against hope, till late on Saturday that he might be able to officiate on the Sunday, and he had swallowed all kinds of physic, to brace him up for the occasion. But, strange to say, the more poison he took the worse he got, and in his dire extremity he called in the guinea-pig to help him out of his difficulty. I arrived late at night and did not see the patient till Sunday morning, when I was called to his bedside to receive his instructions concerning the services, announcements, etc. "It's only a case of lumbago" he answered, with an air of assumed cheerfulness, in answer to my enquiry about the nature of his complaint. "Are you subject to this malady?" I further enquired. "Well yes, I believe I am. But this is, I think, the worst attack I have ever had. It's a great bother."—"Yes, it's the complaint that seems to bother all the English clergy," I remarked. "Do you think so?"—"I can only judge from my experience and I don't think I ever knew an English cleric who was not more or less bothered

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with this complaint. What are you doing for it?"—"Oh, I have tried all kinds of remedies," and he pointed to a row of bottles, big and little, on the table. "Well I'll cure you if you will promise me never to take any more drugs for this disorder."—"What do you mean? I don't quite understand."—"You will understand when you are cured," I said, taking off my coat, and rolling up my shirt-sleeves. "I am much obliged to you," said the poor helpless man in a voice that betokened some alarm, "but I don't think I will trouble you."—"Just as you please of course, but I can cure you all right if you are not afraid of my hurting you."—"But how will you do it?"—"By rubbing you of course." The sufferer was somewhat encouraged by my confident tone, but I saw that he felt some reluctance in committing his person unreservedly into my strange hands; but making an effort just then to turn himself in his bed in order to get a better look at me, he gave his back a twitch, and a groan escaped him. This aroused afresh the loving sympathy of his young wife who had entered and was standing by his bedside. "Harry dear, why not let him try?"—"Oh, very well, just as you think dear," and it was agreed that I should try my hand upon him after the Morning Service, and this I did in the most literal manner. I intimated to the wife that I should not require her services and no sooner had she left the room than I locked the door to make sure of not being interrupted. I then threw off my coat



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again, and removing the bed-clothes I asked my patient to turn over and lay flat on his stomach. I then denuded the affected part, and went for it with both hands in a manner that meant business. I rubbed and I pinched, I pounded and I pulled the skin on the back and loins till the vicar begged for mercy. "What is it Harry dear?" came in loving accents through the keyhole. "Oh, you can't come in. I have him now at my mercy and shall show no pity till I have performed the cure," I answered back in a gleeful voice to the helpless wife. "But you are taking the skin off, you know," came in a smothered voice from the pillow. "Oh, how cruel," responded the gentle voice from the other side of the door. "Please don't hurt him."—"It cannot be helped," was all I said in reply, and continued to apply the remedy till my hands, and fingers, and arms refused to obey my will which was still active. "There now," I said, turning the patient over and covering him up. "I'll give you a rest. How do you feel now?" I enquired. "Well really I don't feel any more pain at all."—"Can I come in now please?" came a pleading voice again through the keyhole. "If you will promise to be good and not disturb the patient," I answered. "Yes, I promise," and the door flew open and admitted the anxious wife. "You may now get up and have a little waltz round the room with this lady," I said, "while I go and wash some of your skin off my hands. But before doing this, and to make sure of the cure I shall pro-

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nounce the magical word that I always use to seal the cure." And turning to the bed I pronounced "Abracadabra" in solemn tones, and then walked out of the bedroom and left the happy husband and wife together. "Why it was really like magic, Harry says. However did you do it?" enquired the wife an hour or so later. "I did it with my two hands and confirmed it with the cryptic word you heard me pronounce."—"But that was just a bit of fun of course: what was the word again?"—"Abracadabra."—"What language is it?"—"It is perhaps arabic in origin, but has been used as a cryptic word by all Eastern peoples for many centuries."—"But, it does sound so silly and superstitious doesn't it?" Yes, I admitted it did to ignorant ears but that the late Mr. Myers and the Society for Psychical Research of which Mr. Balfour, the Prime Minister, was for sometime President have taught us that what one is wont to call superstition is simply due to our ignorance. That Planchette, table-turning, clairvoyance, ghosts, and the like are as real to the subliminal or sub-conscious self as houses and trees, men and women are to the merely sensual or ghostly material self. That in fact we are only acquainted with a very small part of our selves, a one-tenth part, or something like that, the other nine-tenth being submerged. So that to speak of anything whatever as superstitious nowadays is simply to expose one's ignorance of the larger self. "That is I suppose all very

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learned," said the vicar's pretty wife, "but I do not understand one little bit of what you have said." I suggested that she should talk to the vicar about it when she had time, and he would explain it to her. She asked me if she would be able to give her husband the proper treatment, but I said I was afraid that her little hands were not strong and rough enough for the task, and I suggested the gardener for the rubbing and herself for the other part. "What other part?" she enquired. "The cryptic part," I replied. "Well you'll have to write it down and teach me how to pronounce it," she said reluctantly. The handsome young cleric was able to come down to breakfast next morning and declared himself "all right except for a feeling of soreness where the skin had been rubbed off." When we were alone he asked me why I had been stuffing his wife with such rubbish and said she was not quite the fool that I took her to be. "On the contrary it was because I saw that she was no fool that I paid her the compliment of talking to her on the subliminal self."—"Subliminal stuff and nonsense" exclaimed the vicar in some heat. "You don't mean to say that you do not believe in the subliminal or sub-conscious self?" I asked.—"I don't know what you are talking about and I don't believe you do yourself."—"Well you write to Mr. Balfour and ask him about the matter. For you know he has written two books, one on the inherent necessity of doubt, and the other on the foundations of belief, and

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I understand that he is soon to publish two companion volumes, one entitled *The Everlasting Truths of Free Trade* and the other *The Inherent Commercial Necessity of a High Tariff*. All these books may seem contradictory and mutually self-exclusive to the ordinary limited consciousness, but in the greater subliminal self-unconsciousness they will be found, so he says, to supplement and coalesce with each other." The vicar laughed and said I could not draw him into any discussion as he felt too grateful to dispute with me on any subject. The wife came in just then and repeated "Abracadabra" in the most distinct and beautiful voice. "That will answer perfectly," I told her, "and I leave my patient with you and the gardener in the perfect assurance that he is in safe hands." The carriage was now at the door and I was driven away, leaving the happy husband and wife standing in the doorway and leaning against each other for support.

My next patient was a fellow guinea-pig, who, like myself, was taking a locum tenency in a parish not far from my own. He had called upon me in my absence, and I was on social pleasure bent, otherwise returning his visit, when I found him sitting in his lodgings as stiff as a poker, unable either to stand or to lie down. We had never met before, and he was greatly mortified at not being able to receive me standing. He was an elderly man, with a beautiful long white beard, and had served his church and his country

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for many years as chaplain to the forces in India and elsewhere. All this I knew before my visit, but I had not heard of his illness and asked for particulars. I then threw off my coat and commanded the venerable patient to lie down flat on his stomach upon a sofa. He did not at first quite realise what I meant and there seemed to be some hesitation in obeying my injunction. But this I soon discovered was more from inability than unwillingness. But with my help he was finally able to dispose himself in the necessary position and I quickly removed the clothes from the lumbar region and set to work with all my might and main to relax and straighten out the muscles in that part of the guinea-pig's body. It was more painful than in the case of the young vicar, but the guinea-pig was an older, if not a better soldier, and had learnt to endure pain with more composure than the young recruit. The ex-chaplain only permitted one or two grunts to escape him during my treatment. There was instant relief and on resuming his clothes and his chair he greeted me with a grateful smile and said, "Well we have made each other's acquaintance under rather strange circumstances." I admitted that the circumstances were somewhat unusual and hoped he would pardon my abruptness and added that of course I should not have treated a beneficed clergyman with the same want of ceremony; but knowing that we were fellow "guinea-pigs" I felt that I could with impunity

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be guilty of a greater degree of familiarity. I knew that sleep would soon be wooing him and mounting my bicycle I rode back to my temporary home through beautiful green lanes feeling very much pleased with myself. I visited my patient again in a day or two and found him "quite all right."

My fame as a healer of lumbago now spread abroad throughout the region round about, and on making new acquaintances I was generally greeted with, "Oh you are the American clergyman who cures lumbago by rubbing, are you not?"—"Yes," I usually answered, "but I confine my treatment to the male gender and to clergymen," for I began to discover that doctors were looking askance at me, and I did not wish to excite their jealous ill-will.

### A VERY DISTINGUISHED PATIENT

I shall now go back a few years in order of time to a very notable patient, no less a person in fact than a Right Reverend Lord Bishop. It was in the year 1891 and I was spending the summer in Lucerne, Switzerland, as American chaplain, having been sent there by my bishop for the special work of collecting funds for a new church, which was to be built in conjunction with the "old Catholics." This I succeeded in doing and I represented the American Church, in the absence of my bishop, at the laying of the corner-stone of

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this handsome but badly-placed church. It was a day or two after the ceremony of laying this stone that a distinguished English bishop and his chaplain arrived at my hotel. I picked up an acquaintance with the chaplain who presented me to his lordship. This bishop had never taken part, nor had he ever witnessed a service conducted according to the American Prayer-book, and he announced his intention of attending our church on the following Sunday. He declined, however, my invitation to take some part in the Service, but his lordship was very friendly disposed towards me and asked me to join him in walks and drives and to sit with himself and chaplain at the same table in the dining-room. He was considerably interested in our Prayer-book and accepted a copy from me as a gift. On the Monday morning the chaplain appeared at breakfast alone, and on my asking after the bishop I learnt that his lordship had a severe attack of the English parson's complaint, *i. e.*, "lumbago." I hesitated for a moment about offering my medical services to such a distinguished patient. But my human sympathy finally overcame my natural shyness, and I boldly informed the chaplain that I could give the afflicted bishop instant, if not permanent relief. He looked incredulous and bluntly told me that he did not believe I could do anything of the sort as it was a chronic case of long standing. I warned him of the fate of the unbeliever and said "It is written that

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he that believeth not shall be damned." He thought the quotation highly irreverent but consented after much argument to convey my message to the suffering bishop, and I was asked into his lordship's presence. I found him in great pain, and between groans he informed me that lumbago was an old enemy of his, "and of all the English clergy," I added. With the assistance of the chaplain I turned the episcopal body over on its bel— or "stomach" if you prefer the word, and went to work with a will, and did not relax my efforts till I was thoroughly exhausted. But we had hardly time to turn his lordship right side up before he fell into a peaceful slumber and we stole noiselessly out of the chamber. His lordship came down to dinner that evening clothed in his full episcopal habit, with gratitude writ large on his handsome episcopal countenance. "Most remarkable," "marvellous," "almost magical," "you must have great electrical powers," were some of the expressions the right reverend prelate used in reference to my humble services. I modestly said that I laid no claim to any special gift. "All that is required is good strong arms and fingers and your chaplain my lord I am sure can do the trick as well as I can, so that you need suffer no more from this painful clerical complaint." The chaplain did not look so much pleased as the bishop over this oracular utterance of mine, and when we were next alone he rather went for me for letting him in for such



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unclerical work. "And then you know it will be rather awkward if I am not able to give any relief."—"Under such circumstances perhaps his lordship will give you a living and give me your place as chaplain," I replied. But he resented the light vein in which I was inclined to consider the matter and said, "It's all very well for you to laugh but a chaplain is not exactly a Bishop's servant as you seem to think, and he sees quite enough of the episcopal person without being called upon to rub him down as a groom rubs down a horse." He said all this in the most serious manner possible, and I almost split with laughter, which made him so angry that he left me with scant ceremony. I found out in the course of another conversation that the chaplain was a man of birth, which his lordship was not, and this added to the complications of the situation, as the chaplain felt himself, socially, quite above the bishop. When I learnt this important fact I was mean enough to tell the bishop that I had talked the matter over with his chaplain, and whilst he had doubts of his efficiency I felt sure there was no question of his willingness to administer the treatment to the best of his ability. The bishop was greatly pleased at this happy assurance and on leaving he gave me his Apostolic Benediction. He also sent me his photograph with his autograph thereon. This photograph is now looking kindly down upon me from the mantle-piece as I write.

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I hope I am not filling too many of my pages with lumbago, yet for fear I may do so I shall give but one more instance out of the many I have known of the ravages of this fell complaint among the clergy of the English church.

I had been doing duty without a break for more than two years, that is ever since my arrival in England, and I now determined to take a day off, and had made up my mind to hear Canon Hensley Henson or some other interesting heretic preach on the Sunday. But I happened by the merest chance to go into my Club about four o'clock on Saturday afternoon and found a wire awaiting me stating that a vicar had been suddenly taken ill, was unable to officiate and could I come? "It would be so kind." I felt sure a woman had written the telegram and suspected a young wife, and lumbago. There are not many cases in a clergyman's life when he is sure he can do any good, but this was one of them and I did not feel justified in running away from it. So I gave up my heretical preacher with a sigh, and answered, "Yes, please expect me by train you suggest." The railway journey was very short, but it was supplemented by a rather long drive right away into the country. The driver knew nothing about the nature of the clerical complaint. "All I know is that the vicar was took sudden," was his answer to my question. I now felt positive, and would have waged dollars to dough-nuts that it was my old friend, and the parson's enemy "lumbago."

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I was met at the door by a pretty young lady who proved to be the wife and—well it was lumbago, and on hearing this announcement I exclaimed, "Oh, my prophetic soul."—"Why what on earth made you think that it was lumbago," said the wife, in some surprise, looking prettier every moment. "Well, I am getting to be a pretty old and experienced guinea-pig, and can almost always tell by reading a telegram whether it was written by a man or a woman. Now I knew from the internal evidence of this telegram that it was written by a young and pretty—I mean a young and devoted wife, and I also felt pretty certain that it was another case of that old enemy of the clergy, lumbago."—"Why what could I have said in the telegram to put all these things into your head?"—"It wasn't so much what you said but rather the way you said it."—"I suppose you mean it was silly."—"No, not at all."—"Well at any rate it pleases you to be very mysterious and I don't mind what I said in my wire seeing that I succeeded in persuading you to come."—"Yes, that is just the word, for I had concluded to take a day off, and it was the persuasive tone of the telegram that brought me, and my confidence in the telegram has been fully justified."—"I don't know at all what you mean," said my blushing hostess, trying to look offended in which laudable endeavour she did not succeed, "but at any rate I trust we shall be able to make you comfortable." An excellent repast was awaiting

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me, of which I partook freely, chatting cheerfully meanwhile with my hostess who was my *vis-à-vis*. The wife visited the sick-room from time to time during the evening, and brought me a note from the vicar giving instructions concerning the morrow's duty. Just as we were saying good-night I imparted to the anxious wife the intelligence that I could and would, if desired, cure her husband before leaving for London. "But why not now, for the poor dear does suffer so?"—"Well I have my reasons which are perfectly valid as you will agree when I make them known to you, which I shall do before I take my departure." She begged, but I firmly declined and went to my rest without having seen as much as the face of my prospective patient. There was an early service, and it was blowing a gale and raining torrents when my hot water was brought in the morning. The vicarage was quite in the country, and to my utter consternation I found the church was a mile and a half away. But fortunately it was undergoing repairs, and the Services were being held in the village, midway between the vicarage and the church. But even then three-quarters of a mile is a good long step at winter time, and in a drenching rain. To make matters worse the chapel was not open when I arrived, and I had to shelter myself as best I could in a wooden shed, till the sexton came. I was driven to the eleven o'clock service and to a three o'clock extra duty in a remote part of the parish. When the

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time for Evensong arrived the weather had cleared and I ended my hard day's work in a cheerful frame of mind. I wish to say in passing that this parson's work was much more than doubled by the fact that the vicarage was in one end of the parish, the church in another, and the village in the middle. He had a great many wealthy parishioners who kept horses and drove once a Sunday to church, and little did they seem to care how the villagers got to church or how much extra labour it cost the vicar. I say this for the reason that the church building was an inferior structure in every way, and they had just spent money for repairing it which would have been almost enough to have erected a new church in the village. The only meal I ever fully enjoy on Sunday is supper and for the reason that it comes after the day's work is done. We had an unusually good supper, and when it was ended I announced my readiness to administer to the bodily ailments of my brother clergyman, and my services were gladly accepted. My treatment was similar in all respects to the cases I have already so fully reported, and the relief was as speedy. The patient in fact insisted upon getting up and dressing himself at once. But the spirit of sleep, which had been baffled for so many long hours, finally overcame every other desire and my reverend patient was off to the land of Nod before his impatient wife, who had been waiting just outside the door, could get as much as a

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word with him. The young wife and I spent another evening together, in the course of which I discovered that she had not only a very pretty musical talent, but was endowed with unusual musical comprehension and appreciation. I had been feasting on Wagner in Germany for five years previous to my coming to England, and we found ourselves discussing musical matters till a rather late hour. But before we separated for the night my hostess asked me why I had deferred my treatment of her husband till to-night. "Well," I said, "I fear you would think me very selfish, if not cruel, and I think it better on the whole not to give my reasons for the plain truth might offend you."—"No, no, you promised you know, and I insist."—"Well then, if I must I must. The truth is I found my first evening so very pleasant that I had a strong wish to repeat it."—"But what has that to do with your delay in giving my husband relief?"—"Well, I was afraid he might be able to be up and about, and husbands are sometimes very much in the way you know."—"Oh, you are an awful fraud, and I don't wish to hear anything more about the matter," said my young and blushing hostess. But still we parted in a friendly manner and I have an invitation to visit this happy husband and wife when the trees are in leaf and the flowers are in bloom.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ENGLISH ORAL TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

**I**N every parish I have visited, when time would permit, I have made a point of looking up the local oral traditions. There are very few written traditions, and these are, as a rule, cooked up more or less, and are therefore devoid of real interest and value. The difficult thing, of course, is to get the tradition at first hand; that is, in the regular channel of oral communication without any intermediary. For you cannot trust the parson or the doctor or any other educated man who may live in the village to tell you the exact truth about any tradition. And the strange thing is that these educated people may live in the midst of the most interesting traditions for a lifetime without knowing anything about them. The farmer is the most likely person to put you on the right scent, but even he is not wholly trustworthy. It is to the plain, ignorant, stupid agricultural labourer, and to the equally ignorant village tinker and mechanic that you must go for the

<sup>1</sup> By permission of the editor of *The Nineteenth Century and After*.

direct and authentic line of tradition. And this is a most delicate business, for it is the nature of these shy folk to give you what you want, and it is astonishing what plausible stories they can improvise. In fact, they will be able usually to accommodate you with any kind of tradition you require; that is, if you, by your questions, give them any kind of a lead. You must therefore use indirection, must dissemble your real purpose and approach your subject in a way that will arouse no suspicion in the rustic mind that you are on the hunt for traditions. Above all, you must avoid, as far as possible, asking questions; for, however skilfully disguised, they are almost certain to give you away. The parson has more and better chances for discovering the true local traditions than anyone else, for the reason that he can, if he be gifted with tact, cover his visits with a multitude of plausible pretences. The important thing is to get your man—it is always a man, women are too garrulous to repeat what they have heard without giving their own emendations and glosses—to talk, for this is the surest way to establish friendly relations with him. Any subject almost will serve your purpose, especially anything relating to the parish, the village, or the graveyard. For the most interesting and valuable bits of tradition are hidden away, in the most unexpected holes and corners of the rustic mind, and drop out suddenly like pure nuggets of gold from some dull, hard, unpromising lump of quartz. There is a small



round hole in a pane of glass in one of the windows of the room where I am at this moment writing. I felt certain the hole had been made by a bullet, but I had inhabited the apartment for nearly two months without asking any questions about it. This is in the town of Cricklade, Wiltshire, near the Gloucestershire border. It is situated on the banks of the Thames near "Thames Head," "and is of great antiquity," to quote from *Kelly's Directory*. In fact, the greatness of its antiquity no man knoweth, for it reaches back to "Brutus, who with his warlike Trojans took possession of the Island of Albion, and planted a Colony of Greek Philosophers on this spot and called it 'Grekelade.'" However true or false this may be, there is no doubt about the ancient character of the town, and that it is the site of the first University ever established in England. Moreover, it is claimed that to this foundation Oxford University owes its origin. Of course, the Benedictines had a settlement here. The town now consists for the most part of one long, wide, irregular street, in which a market is held once a month, when cattle, sheep, and pigs are to be seen rounded up in front of every door from one end of the town to the other. And occasionally an adventurous cow, steer, or pig bursts into the very bosom of a family circle. The house in which I am now lodged is at the north end of the town, where the street suddenly widens into a sort of public square. This square is occupied on cer-

tain festival days with merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, cocoa-nut alleys, and the like national sports, from which the town receives a small revenue. I asked my landlady the other day if these sports were not a source of some annoyance. She waxed very hot in answering my question, and said they were not only a great nuisance, but a great danger, and, pointing to the small round hole in the window-pane, said that was done last Michaelmas by a bullet from a shooting-gallery just in front of the house. "But I should think you could stop that sort of thing?" I said. "No," she replied, "these people have the right to the use of the open space by the payment of a small licence, and no one can prevent them, and we must take the risk and prosecute them individually for any damage they may do. That is what the police inspector says. But you can't get anything out of such vagabonds. Still, I think I know a way to prevent them coming here any more. I and my husband were both born in this town, and anyone born in Cricklade has the right to sell any proper merchandise in the streets of any town in England and Wales without licence, and we and Captain K—— (their next-door neighbour) are going to cover the square with tables during these festivals on the pretence of selling things. Of course, we shall have to offer something for sale." "How did the natives of Cricklade come by this special privilege?" I inquired. "It was given by royal grant to the natives of this town,

because Cricklade gave refuge to a queen in distress." I was not and have not been able to learn either the name of the queen or the nature of her distress; but this gave me a scent which I have followed pretty closely, and while I have learned nothing more concerning the incident itself—for the clergy, the doctor, the squire and all the other members of the gentry were wholly ignorant of the tradition, had in fact never heard of it before, yet—and this is the interesting feature—I have made sufficient investigation to learn that this merely oral tradition, hundreds of years old and without any documentary evidence to support it, will, if evoked, hold good today, at least in Cricklade, and my landlady's citizenship will stand her in good stead. This oral tradition is therefore at least of some real value to her, whether true or false. That it is true I have not the slightest doubt, and I offer the following explanation for what it is worth. There is a farmhouse in this town, which I can look upon from my back window, that has always, time out of mind, supported the lordly name of "Abington Court." When or why this grand name was given to a mere farmhouse, and, as at present seen, a very ordinary one at that, no one here seems to know, or to be curious about. The present family have occupied it for more than sixty years as tenant farmers. The house and a large portion of the farm are beautifully situated on the south side of the winding Thames. Now, there is not only

tradition but documentary proof that here in Cricklade was at one time a royal hunting-box, and that Charles the Second was the last sovereign to occupy it. "Abington Court" figures in the Court records of those times, and the site of this farmhouse would have certainly been the most desirable spot in this neighbourhood, and for miles around, for a royal seat. This fact of itself, together with the name "Abington Court," which has always been associated with the place, is worth something in an argument which endeavours to establish the ancient site of the royal residence. But "Abington Court" boasts of a royal bedstead, which I have seen, and in which I implicitly believe. It is a large four-posted solid oak bedstead, with a heavy oak covering, or "canopy," if this word can be properly made to apply to material so substantial. The headboard is high, reaching in fact to the top, and is very elaborately and artistically carved, as is also the canopy and the posts. The footboard is lost. This bedstead has always belonged to this farmhouse—"Abington Court," as it is called. I made an offer to purchase it, but was told by the farmer that it was a part of the estate and could not be alienated. "Was there any writing to that effect?" I asked. "No, but it was quite well understood," was the answer. This is all mere tradition, but when taken together with all the other circumstances—with the beautiful situation on the Thames, the princely name, and the his-

torical fact of the royal hunting-box—it furnishes almost the last necessary link in a pretty strong chain of evidence that goes to show that “Abington Court” was once a royal abode. If, then, this chain hangs together, without much tinkering, as I believe it does, we have established our major premise, namely, that “Abington Court” was once a royal seat. That much we shall now at any rate assume as proved, and from this it is not a very wide nor wild leap to the conclusion that once upon a time a queen gave birth to a child in the town of Cricklade. And this I take to be the meaning of the tradition that this town gave refuge to a queen in distress, and that this interesting event caused the king to decree that all the native citizens of this place should be for ever at liberty to sell, without licence, any and all articles of merchandise throughout England and Wales. Moreover, I have come upon some small traces of a tradition that the royal bedstead was left behind when the Court took its final departure, as a most appropriate gift to the citizens of the town in which a royal accouchement had taken place. I may be guilty of a little innocent cooking of facts in the explanation I have given of this interesting local tradition, but I am wholly unconscious of any disposition to do so, and I fearlessly stake my reputation as an antiquarian (which I am not) upon the issue. At any rate, here we have a local oral tradition that has outrun all written records, and has nothing but the word

of mouth of the most ignorant members of the community to support it, and yet when this tradition is evoked it retains, even today, the character and force of statutory law. The fact that not one of the "gentry" of Cricklade, so far as I know, had ever heard of this tradition is very remarkable, but is in perfect character with the unconscious methods by which these country traditions are perpetuated from generation to generation. But I have now to relate a still more remarkable example of the secret manner, conscious or unconscious, in which these traditions are held and passed on by the peasants. I told my story of the royal grant in favour of the citizens of Cricklade, to Mr. Charles Beadon, of "Upcott," in the adjoining parish of Latton, and he quickly gave me a Roland for my Oliver. I give Mr. Beadon's story substantially as he told it to me. A few years ago a labourer was working in Mr. Beadon's garden under his immediate supervision, and *à propos* of nothing that he can remember this man remarked that a certain stream near by, called the "Lertoll Stream," was good for the eyes, and that people used to carry this water away to bathe their eyes with. This was all the rustic knew, and therefore was all he would say. A more intelligent and romantic individual would have garnished this simple story with a border of some kind. But poor Hodge had not the wit to do that, and without adding or subtracting he passed on the tradition just as his forebears had done all

these centuries. Mr. Beadon is a native of the village, and his uncle, the late Canon Beadon, was for fifty-three years the vicar of this parish, and yet this was the first time that any member of the family had ever heard of such a ridiculous superstition, and he naturally gave it little or no thought. A year or so after this trifling incident, the present vicar of the parish came in to see Mr. Beadon, and asked him if he had ever heard anything about a spring behind the "Oak Barn," called the "Lertoll Well," from which the stream of that name is supposed to flow, and if there was any tradition in the parish that this water was good for the eyes? The vicar said he asked these questions because he had just received a letter from the Bishop of Bristol enquiring if he had ever come upon such a tradition in the parish. Mr. Beadon then made known for the first time the story of the agricultural labourer, and this peasant was the humble instrument of enabling the bishop—who is a well-known antiquarian scholar, to trace the story of the "oak tree"—under which St. Augustine held his famous conference with the native British clergy—to this "Oak Barn." Here the historical "oak tree" once stood, and from under its branches a spring of water issued, with which the saint healed the blind. The historical incident known to the bishop and scholar gave the fact of the conference, the oak tree, and the reported healing; the oral tradition furnished by the rustic identified the place, and confirmed,

in a most unintentional and ingenuous manner, the whole story of the famous conference. So that the Oak Barn in the parish of Down Ampney, not more than two miles from where I write, has now been with reasonable probability identified with St. Augustine's "oak tree," through the casual word of a peasant dropped between the intervals of digging in Mr. Beadon's garden. But to me the most interesting part of this remarkable story is the amazing fact that Mr. Beadon's family have lived not one mile distant from the "Oak Barn" for at least sixty years, and still he had never heard of this tradition concerning the healing qualities of the "Lertoll Stream," and yet it has been passing from mouth to mouth among the humble and ignorant folk of this parish for thirteen centuries. The Venerable Bede mentions in his account of St. Augustine's conference with the native British clergy the circumstance that after the conference the saint healed a man's eyes by prayer—and tradition adds—by bathing them with water from a spring near by. I cannot at the moment verify this very free quotation from Bede, but I think it is substantially correct, and I leave it thus.

I spent six months as the *locum tenens* of a remote Norfolk country parish. My next-door neighbour, a widow lady, had married into one of the few yeoman families who still live on their own land. This was a very ancient family. My neighbour and I became very good



friends, and held almost daily converse with each other.

"How is it," I asked her one day, "that the villagers never by any chance pronounce your name as you do?"

"It is sheer stupidity mixed with stubbornness," she replied.

"But have they always pronounced your name wrongly, for they seem to spell it correctly?"

"Yes; they have always persisted in spelling it one way and pronouncing it another. But the Norfolk villager is noted for his rude and ignorant independence, as it is called."

But I did not feel so sure that this would account for a habit of speech among the peasantry which was both universal and immemorial, so far as I could learn, and I thought it a matter worth investigating. I asked several villagers why they did not pronounce this lady's name as she did, and as it was spelt. But they could give no answer, the only reply being that their fathers and mothers had always pronounced the name as they did. So I did not get very far in my investigation, till one day, in passing through a village some eight miles distant, I found that it bore the name of my yeoman family. This at once arrested my progress and, dismounting, and giving my horse a rest, I spent several hours walking about talking with the villagers. I found that they all pronounced the name just as our own village folk did, and that in spite of the spelling to the contrary. I

became very much interested, and I asked to see the church records. But this was rather difficult, as the incumbent was absent. However, I finally induced the clerk to show me the books. The records of this parish went back to the fifteenth century, and I discovered that the name I was in search of was spelt first one way and then the other, till I came to the seventeenth century—my examination went backward from the nineteenth—when it was uniformly spelt as the village folk now pronounced it. This was indeed a most important discovery, and proved in a striking manner that the peasant folk had perpetuated by word of mouth the correct original name of this ancient family, whilst the family itself had lost it. This I regard as a very remarkable instance of the purity and persistence of oral tradition in the very face of the incorrect written word, proving, as I have always held, that tradition is more trustworthy than history so called.

On my return home I greeted my neighbour by her correct traditional name, and remarked that the villagers were not so stupid, but were perhaps even more stubborn than she had suspected. She was greatly interested in the results of my antiquarian research, but pretended not to be convinced, and always smiled when I greeted her—as I did ever after—by the correct ancient family name.

Not many months ago, during a somewhat heated discussion in the smoke-room of a West

End club, the following old saw was given as a perfect example of false logic: "Tenterden steeple was the cause of the Goodwin Sands." But I contended that on the contrary this was an example both of good logic and the persistency and value of oral tradition. My intervention in the discussion was laughed at by a room full of university men, many of whom were well-known authors; and I stood there for some ten minutes quite alone contending against this brilliant company of Britons.

"But he laughs best who laughs last," and I stuck to my thesis, intimating, as politely as I could, that it was pure ignorance which caused their merriment. I then gave the following account of this classic example of false logic: When the encroachment of the shoals called the Goodwin Sands began to be dangerous to navigation, there was some sort of a commission appointed to investigate the matter, and if possible to ascertain the cause. Many expert witnesses had been heard when a common sailor took the stand and said he had always understood that Tenterden steeple was the cause of the Goodwin Sands. Of course, he was laughed at for his pains by the wise and learned commission, and his testimony has served to amuse the knowing ones for many generations. But a little knowledge of the local tradition of Tenterden confirms the testimony of the poor ignorant sailor and turns the laugh at last upon the commission. A sum of

money had been left by an enterprising citizen of the parish of Tenterden to keep the Goodwin Sands from encroaching upon the Channel. This money was honestly applied for some time, how long is not known, and the shoals were kept clear. But the time came when these funds were diverted from their rightful purpose, and were misapplied for the erection of a steeple on the parish church. The sands were thus left to accumulate, and hence the very truthful, as well as logical, saying of the people that Tenterden steeple was the cause of the Goodwin Sands. Here we have a perfect bit of logic, containing a very interesting and valuable historical incident, wrapped up in a traditional nutshell—which had been handed on from generation to generation by word of mouth.

“But where is Tenterden steeple? It is nowhere near the Goodwin Sands,” exclaimed several of my literary auditors at once; and I then had to supplement my lecture on the persistency and value of English oral tradition with a short discourse on English geography, explaining that there was a time—strange as it might seem to these highly literary gentlemen—when Tenterden steeple was nearer the coast than it is today.

The Mayor of Canterbury writing to the *Times* only the other day, in answer to a letter of Sir W. B. Richmond concerning the alarming condition of the cathedral tower, states that “The Mayor and commonalty, as a body corporate, are no more responsible for the present condition of

the cathedral tower than are the Goodwin Sands for that of Tenterden church steeple." The Mayor in his quotation of this old maxim has got it wrong end first, but his meaning is clear enough, and he has unwittingly evoked an example which is fatal to his arguments, for if the municipality of Canterbury is no less as well as no more responsible for the decay of the cathedral tower than Tenterden steeple was for the accumulation of the Goodwin Sands, then it is wholly responsible.

The ecclesiastical parish of Chipperfield—where I acted as *locum tenens* for nearly a year—lies for the most part within the manor of King's Langley. This was once a royal manor, and some remains of the royal manor house are still to be seen on the top of Langley Hill. There is also a royal tomb in Langley church, and there is a tradition, which is acted upon to this day, that the lord or lady of the manor has the special privilege of raising the Royal Standard on all national festive days. All these things have, as it were, clothed King's Langley parish with an atmosphere of royalty. Now, among the traditions, there is one to the effect that during the royal residence at this manor house there was a decree passed that the widows of the village of Chipperfield in the manor of King's Langley should not be allowed the usual dowry from their husband's estates, be they large or small. That some of the villagers believe this law to be still in force is shown by the following incident. The late lord of the manor, a few years

ago, was condoling with a widow who had just lost her husband, when the old crone greatly surprised him by saying, "Yes, sir, it is hard, but the worst is, I can't keep any of his things if his children (who were also her own) wants to take them." "But why not?" asked the lord of the manor. "Why, sir, don't you know there is a law that no woman in Chipperfield can claim anything that belonged to her husband?"

"I know there is an idle tradition to that effect, but it has never been a law so far as I know. But what makes you think there is such a law?" "Well, sir," (I give the substance of her words), "I have always heard that once there was a king with a hunchback, who came to see our beautiful Chipperfield Common. The women of the village all turned out to see His Majesty, and when they saw his hunchback they all laughed at him. This made the king very angry, and he then and there decreed that no Chipperfield woman should ever inherit a dowry from her husband."

The lord of the manor had lived at least for sixty years in Chipperfield, and, whilst he was familiar with this tradition, he has never before heard anything about the special circumstances connected with the origin of this royal decree. And yet this very picturesque bit of history—for history it appears to be—had been passing for five centuries, by word of mouth, from one generation to another, and from one villager to another. Could anything better illustrate the uninten-

tional secrecy and persistency of English oral tradition?

The story of a visit to Chipperfield by a hunch-back king is strangely corroborated by the fact that Richard the Third was at least once in residence (between the years 1483-85) at King's Langley manor.

A curious and amusing instance of the way family reputations are sometimes perpetuated by oral traditions came under my notice in an ancient Lincolnshire country parish. I was talking one day with my cook about the various families in the parish, when in the course of our gossip the name of a very old county family became the subject of comment. Speaking of the lady who was the present head of this family, my cook said: "She be mighty good to the people, she be; but she do like her own way, she do, and she be dreadful hard on the young people. But they do say that her own young ladies (they were all married) be a bit wild."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"No harm, I am sure, sir, only they do say as how one of the young ladies fell into the dyke stream at the end of the first field as you goes to the cricket ground, and that she was taken out with her long beautiful hair all down and wet by a young gentleman what was a-readin' with the rector, sir."

"I don't understand."

"Well, sir, it was like this, sir. You know the

rectory field" (I was living in the rectory-house) "and the manor field both go down together to the dyke side by side like. Well, sir, the rector he had a young gentleman a-readin' with him for the University, and him and my lady used to meet each other o' nights at the Dyke Bridge. And the way they was found out was because my lady fell into the dyke one dark night, and the young gentleman had to pull her out and take her home all wet and drabbled like, with her long hair a-hanging down, and they do say it reached nearly to the ground. And that's how it all comes out at last that they were a-makin' love with each other, sir."

"When did this happen?" I enquired.

"Oh, I don't know that, sir."

"Did you know this young lady?"

"Oh no, sir."

On further investigation, and on making enquiry of the lady of the manor herself, I found that this clandestine and very romantic meeting between the man and the maid had been the talk of the parish for more than a hundred years, and had given a reputation for wildness to the daughters of this family during all these years. Which is another proof of the persistency and truthfulness of English oral traditions, and, as I remarked to the lady of the manor, the continuity of character, to which latter, however, she demurred.

It is in these quiet and remote places and by the most simple and unpremeditated methods, that



the oral traditions of England are handed on from generation to generation. Written records kill them, as does also too much knowledge. But knowledge, at least in the sense of reading and writing can no longer be kept away from the peasants, so that now is the time to take stock of these most interesting and valuable traditions which are hidden away in the remote corners of the rustic mind all over England; and I fear that in another generation they will have been lost for ever.

I feel sure that almost every country parish in England contains some interesting and valuable local oral tradition, if one but knew how to get on the scent of it, however trivial it may seem. The smart up-to-date destructive critic often talks more nonsense than the ignorant local story-tellers in the old Anglo-Saxon villages, where they still keep the "veast" by old reckoning, a fortnight behind the date of national festivals as given in the modern almanack.

I spent the last week before Christmas, 1904, in an ancient little Berkshire village, with a gentleman who is very much interested in the study of the old-time rural life and character, and especially in the quaint customs of the village merry-makings associated with certain feasts of the year, such as Michaelmas, Lammas, and Christmas. During the Christmas season my friend had been visited by a troop of the most ancient order of "Mummers" and I went down upon his invitation in the hope that these players might repeat their

performance. My friend did not know at what time to expect them, and to make any enquiry or to appear at all interested in the matter would have spoiled the naïve and unconscious character of the players. I went down on the Tuesday and on the very next night our faith was rewarded. We had just partaken of a slight and early dinner (7 o'clock) when a serving maid entered, and with intense interest and excitement speaking in her eyes said, "Please sir, the 'Mummers' are here and would you see them, sir?" Her master appeared to take little interest in the matter and turning to me said in the most indifferent manner—"Would you like to see them?" I said I should. The maid was then instructed to tell all the other servants to come into the hall and witness the play. She hurried off and in a short time we could hear them gathering from within and without the house. We then opened the dining-room door and stood expectant. The "Mummers" entered with lanterns—they were seven in all, but two of them took no parts and acted only as supers, and two out of the five took dual parts. They retired to a corner when a door opened into the passage leading into the servants' room, and, after some whisperings and readjusting of their costumes the play began. It was difficult, if not quite impossible for me to identify the *dramatis personæ* by their habiliments, but the first speaker I took to be Father Christmas. I could follow him in but little he uttered but I believe his speech

corresponded more or less to the printed tradition and ended with:

So walk in Rom, again I say  
And pray good people clear the way  
So walk in Rom.

Father Christmas having made his speech retired behind the door and "Rom" whatever he was expected to represent, came forward from behind his fellow-players who had been shielding him from view. Rom delivered a harangue, very little of which I could understand, and his costume suggested nothing to me. It consisted of one long loose garment made of some very cheap and flimsy material, worn over his ordinary clothes like a cassock. After finishing his none too brief oration he too retired behind the door, and St. George came gallantly forward and in very brave language challenged all knights seen and unseen, known and unknown, to a personal combat. This gauge of war was boldly taken up by a foreign gentleman (Captain Bluster I suppose) who forced the fighting with such fury that St. George was unhorsed, so to speak. A British doctor and his attendant now appeared upon the scene of war to display their nimble wit, as well as their medical skill. The wounded knight was soon able to again face his foe. The combat was renewed with even greater fury, and this time the foreign knight bit the dust. And there he lay without help from the British doctor and was finally obliged

to receive medical aid from one of his fellow foreigners, who was of course pronounced a quack by the British medical man. But he too, quack or no quack, was provided with a magic potion, and Captain Bluster was also restored to his legs, but declined to fight again so redoubtable a foe as St. George, and here the tragedy was declared ended. A boy dressed as a woman and answering to the historical name of Maid Marian now stood forth and recited verses composed for the most part by local poets. He held a small tin box in his hand, the use of which did not clearly appear till the recitation had ended, and then with a shamed face, she, or he, passed about among the audience, and we all, servants included, contributed to the "Mummers."

This was the beginning of Christmas holidays, and I saw the end in a northern Anglo-Saxon village where "Plough Monday" has survived, or has recently been revived. "Plough Monday" is the first Monday after Twelfth Night and ends the Christmas holidays, when the labourers are supposed to return to their work whatever it may be. A plough is drawn through the parish and money is solicited to be spent in a public-house frolic. This consists of a "banquet" with a queen called "Bessy" seated at the head of the table. When I looked in upon the merry-makers through the window there seemed to be a contest going on, as to who should kiss "Queen Bessy" the oftenest, and as they were all, including their

queen, the worse for liquor, I did not venture in. In the olden time these revellers were exempt from all law for the time being and could kiss any woman they found in the streets, and carry off with impunity any loose property they might find, so that all windows and doors were well barred on "Plough Monday."

## CHAPTER XX

### A CHAPTER OF CURIOSITIES

**A**S I have already said a single visit to a parish furnished little opportunity for observations except of the most superficial character, and unless there was some special circumstance which arrested my attention I have left such visits unreported. But I find in looking over my notes at the end of my sketches that I have a little budget of curiosities and strange adventures, which I have not been able to fit in anywhere, and I now give them all together without any studied plan or order of time.

On entering a pulpit in a fine parish church not more than thirty miles from London, I was confronted with the words "Be Brief." This admonition was printed in large bold letters and placed in a black frame which was nailed to the pulpit just beside the sermon desk, so that the preacher could not but see it the first thing on entering the pulpit. And I must confess that it was somewhat disconcerting to have these, not altogether polite words, staring me in the face from the beginning to the end of my sermon. I

tried to look away from this black frame with its two short emphatic words, and to forget them in the warmth of my discourse; but my eyes kept returning to them in spite of all that I could do, and it was not long before I felt them on my nerves as well as before my eyes. But I was determined not to be bullied by such impertinence, and taking out my watch I resolved to preach five minutes longer than my usual time. But I found it very hard sledding, as they say in Pennsylvania, for the last half of my discourse, and was suddenly seized with the horrible idea that something was the matter with my watch and that I had really been preaching for an hour or more, and this brought my sermon to an abrupt end. I was more in command of myself in the evening, but not at my best, nor quite in my usual form, and I fear that congregation has a very imperfect notion of my real ability as a preacher. If they will only take away that black frame with its rude words, and give me another chance, I will show them a very different thing in the way of a sermon, and in about half the time of my previous efforts.

I officiated in a little country church one Sunday, which strange to say did not possess a name of its own, but was simply called after the village. It was an ancient and interesting church, within the grounds of the Manor House Park, and I felt sure there must be some explanation of this anomaly, in the traditions of the village if one could only get at it. On returning to London I wrote to a

gentleman of the parish, and asked him if he could not unearth some local tradition about this matter and suggested that he take Hodge into his confidence for that purpose. He very kindly did so and after several weeks of investigation he came upon an oral tradition to the effect that two brothers had built the church, but could not agree about its name—one wishing to call it “St. Peter” and the other “St. Paul,” and as these two names represented two very distinct lines of theology, as I suppose, they would not give into each other, and the result was that it did not get named at all. But how it was ever consecrated still remains a mystery.

I once conducted the Morning Service in one of the very old and very interesting London churches. It was a small edifice, literally filled with memorial tablets and monuments from top to bottom and from end to end. There was in the west end a desk containing three chained books, the Bible being in the centre, with Fox’s Book of Martyrs on one side, and the Book of Homilies on the other. The incumbent, whose title was that of perpetual curate, was more than eighty years old, and had been as the verger said, for more than fifty years the “incumbrance” of the parish.

After reading Prayers in a country church one Sunday morning I could not find the pulpit till the clerk came to my aid and pointed it out in the west end of the church. The pulpit was at least



eight feet high, and I could see nothing but the tops of the heads of the congregation. This church was peculiar in some other respects. The seats all faced each other and the centre aisle of the church was filled with elaborately carved oak stalls that had evidently been taken out of some large church. These seats were all reserved for the exclusive use of the farmers and their families. The north side of the church was completely taken up with a large enclosed box-pew. This was panelled in oak that extended at least six feet above the floor, and over the door were the Arms of the Squire emblazoned in colours of gold, red, and blue. The pew was carpeted and furnished with easy chairs, rugs, etc. On the south side of the church, and at the west end were a few seats, not more than twenty in all, for the villagers, and anyone else who might stray in. So that it was plainly to be seen that this church was intended for the use of the squire and his farmers to the exclusion almost of everybody else. At any rate there were few provisions and no encouragements for the labourers and other members of the parish to attend worship in this house of God.

I had difficulty in another remote country church in finding the pulpit, and again the clerk came to my relief, and conducted me round one of the pillars in the body of the church and I found an opening which led through the pillar into the pulpit. I noticed that there was a string of metallic crowns, some bright and some dull in

colour, suspended from a rod that passed in front of the chancel at the top. I supposed at first that this was the remains of some temporary decoration, but on enquiring of the clerk—a genuine old-timer—I was told that, “They be the crowns of virginity” and it was further explained that when an unmarried woman, or to be more precise a virgin, died, a crown was placed in the church to her credit. This seemed to me to be a discouragement to matrimony and a premium on celibacy, and I asked the old clerk if it had such an effect upon the female portion of the congregation? “Oh Lud no, sir. They hall gets married as can, sam has they do in hall parishes, sir. But its summut to thim has can’t.” He told me the names of each of the virgins was stamped upon the crown and I agreed with him that it was doubtless some consolation to those who could not, or to put it in a more polite form, did not wed.

There is a church on the Western sea-coast in which the pillars are enclosed in wood to the height of six or eight feet. In this wooden framework pegs are fixed where the sailors hang their hats, or rather caps, on entering the church. This produces a strange effect as seen from the chancel.

In a church in Cambridgeshire I found box-pews, one for each farmer’s family, extending from the chancel all the way round the church next to the wall. These boxes joined close together and gave the appearance of a pen with the villagers inside, guarded, as it were, by their masters, and thus

compelled to listen to the sermon. What I took to be the squire's pew was in the chancel where the choir stalls are usually placed. This pew was not occupied the Sunday I officiated, and on trying the door I found it locked. I afterwards learnt that there had been no squire for several years and that the pew had been kept locked all that time. Not far from this parish was a small ancient church which at one time must have stood very near the manor-house for there were the remains of a moat and a wall and a few traces of a house in the shape of broken stones and brick. This church was full to overflowing of family memorial tablets and tombs. It was in fact a very perfect example of a family mausoleum, which the great majority of these English village churches are, and were meant to be. There were two large monuments, so completely filling the chancel that there was hardly room for anything else. One of these monuments was to the memory of a famous Lord Chief Justice, and the other to the memory of a wife of a still more famous Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chief Justice was lying in state in his robes of office, with a wife kneeling on either side of him. This was a little puzzling as his lordship could not have left two wives behind to mourn him; that is, I mean, in the regular conventional way. Still this was not long after the time of King Henry VIII. when the marriage bond was not regarded with the same sacredness, for example, as it is in America at the present

moment. But even this does not fully elucidate the matter for why should a discarded wife be made to mourn her unfaithful husband? It is a little puzzling in whichever way we may choose to regard it, and places his Lord Chief Justiceship in the awkward position of having broken a law which he, of all persons, is supposed to maintain. But when it is added that this was the Lord Chief who condemned Mary Queen of Scots to death, we are ready to believe—that is a portion of us—any evil thing of him. In this church is another very elaborate and highly expensive monument erected by a widow to a member of this same family. The widow states that “I have here entombed my heart.” But she proved to be a fickle lady, and married again, and found herself in need of her heart once more. The inscription on the monument to her former husband was therefore somewhat embarrassing. Hence she had the letters of her heart’s entombment filled up with a hard kind of frost or cement. But the most of this has now fallen away and laid bare the entombed heart. It is to be hoped, however, that it served its purpose during the lifetime of the second husband.

I was driving through a little village last fall, or autumn if you prefer that word, with a brother clergyman, and in passing the parish church he remarked that this parish kept to an old custom of calling the roll of the dead at midnight on the last day of the year, and that everybody, dissenters

as well as church people, attended this solemn ceremony.

I heard of a church the other day where the new vicar on entering upon his duties placed two crosses and six candles upon the altar. This was a "Low" parish and when the people remonstrated with him he offered to compromise with one cross and two candles. This seemed to show a spirit of concession and was accepted by the parishioners. This was a most ingenuous way of gaining his ritualistic ends, and a man who has wit enough to resort to such a clever device is sure to succeed in keeping the peace and interesting his people.

This reminds me that the use of candles on the communion-table (I don't object to the word "altar" but prefer to stick to the Prayer-book nomenclature as far as possible in these sketches), which was originally meant for purely utilitarian purposes, so I suppose, has now acquired an exclusive ceremonial significance. During the past winter I took Sunday duty in a beautiful Surrey church, and at the eight o'clock service I found that there was not sufficient light. I made this discovery just before the hour of service as I had learnt by one or two awkward experiences that it was always safer to inspect the church before undertaking a service. The vicarage was within a very few steps of the church and I asked the sexton to fetch two candles. He did so and I lighted them, and placed them upon the table.

But the vicar's wife hurried into the vestry in some excitement to say that it would never do to use candles. But I protested that I could not see to read the Office without more light, and that the communicants must understand that I used them for a very practical and for no mere ceremonial purpose. But no it could not be done however great the necessity, as it would be sure to cause talk in the parish. And so I was forced to stumble my way in the dark through the service, as best I could. Now there is just as much ritual in objecting to candles under such circumstances as in insisting upon them under other circumstances. In truth we might well say in this, as in many other cases, that have caused so much bitter strife in the English Church "a plague upon both your houses" for you have between you reduced a naturally beautiful ritual to an almost wholly artificial one. I have just referred to my custom of always inspecting a church before undertaking to conduct a service. I learnt to use this caution early in my ministry. During the early days of my deaconate I was sent by the Bishop of New York to take a Sunday mid-day service in a country church, which had been built and was supported by a rich railway magnate, who owned the land for miles around. I took a Sunday morning train from Jersey City which was timed to reach my station a few minutes before the hour appointed for the service. But the train was delayed and I reached the place some twenty

minutes after the hour. But the congregation knowing that the parson was expected by the delayed train lingered good-naturedly about in the woods and on the hillside till I arrived. I was naturally a little flustered and robing myself in some haste I stepped from the little vestry-room through a small door into the chancel of the church, and found myself in Egyptian darkness. There were but two small windows in the apse of the chancel and they were completely enveloped in the deep shadows of the primeval forest that surrounded the little stone edifice. I could just make out the reading-desk upon which I found a prayer-book. It was printed in good large type, and I was proceeding after a fashion in mumbling the prayers when I came to a break in the order. I turned forward and backward in some confusion till at last I discovered that a page was missing and there was nothing to do but to borrow a prayer-book from some member of the congregation. But I was now standing on both ends at once, and in the excitement resulting from such a mixed attitude I could not, or at any rate did not, find the order of Morning Prayer and took refuge in the Litany, which was most appropriate for my own personal wants, for it was composed at a time of great distress for persons in sore trouble. The Litany being ended I looked round in a vague sort of way not knowing exactly what should come next. After a moment of dreadful suspense a gentleman came out of the congregation to the

chancel steps and handed me a slip of paper which contained the numbers of the hymns. I now spied a small organ, or more properly a harmonium, surrounded by a half dozen or so of young ladies dressed to kill. I announced the first on the list, but the music did not begin and looking in the direction of the harmonium I observed that the young lady seated at the instrument was shaking her pretty head at me in the most vigorous way. I stepped down from the chancel and this young lady told me in a loud whisper, heard by everybody, that the girls could not sing the first hymn and that we must have "There is a green hill far away" instead. This change in the musical programme occupied some little time, and I thought I could hear a snigger now and then from the congregation. But at last the service took another start, and away we went singing with all our might. The singing gave me time to collect my thoughts and to glance over my sermon, and I consoled myself with the thought that I should make up for the lame service by the eloquence of my discourse. But this was not to be, for I found the pulpit stuck against a dead stone wall with no window near, or other means of providing light. I could not therefore read my sermon, and frankly announced this fact to the congregation, which was now in an expectant, cheerful mood, ready for any adventure as I could see from their merry faces. I was thus forced to preach without my manuscript, bits of which I remembered here and



there, and filled up the lacunæ the best way I could. Please remember that I was only a two-months-old deacon, and you will be able to understand or imagine the sickly kind of rubbish I talked for the space of twenty minutes. Taken all in all this was certainly one of the worst messes a poor parson ever got himself into. I should explain that this was only a summer church, there being no services except on Christmas day from November to May, and this was the first service of the summer season. There was of course no resident minister, and no one whose special duty it was to see that everything was in order. I have greatly profited by that early experience and have made it a practice to subject all churches, chancels, and service-books to a close scrutiny before undertaking a service in a strange place, and this precaution has saved me from one or two similar adventures.

In relating this rather unhappy experience in my own beloved land I am reminded of the difference in the personnel of the church officials and workers in the two countries. In America the church workers are always chosen from among the most prominent men, financially and socially in the parish, or what in America corresponds to a parish. This, I believe, is seldom or never so at the present time in England. Even the squire, who usually reads the lessons in the small country parish is seldom nowadays a warden. These offices, together with the sidesmen, who correspond to the American vestrymen—there being in

America, however, no real vestry—are nearly always farmers or small tradesmen, who are only prominent among their own class. Again the church music is as a rule wholly in the hands of the villagers in an English country parish, whilst in America it is the fashionable people who look after this part of the church service in the country. I speak especially of the Episcopal Church, which is becoming more and more the fashionable church of America, as the Established Church is in England. Once more, whilst the clergy of the Episcopal Church in America are growing in social influence and prominence, the clergy of the establishment in England are declining in social influence and prominence at a very rapid rate, so it seems to me. It is now no longer assumed, as it once was, that a cleric is a gentleman, and he must personally make good such a character before he can expect to be received as one. His position is in fact just now a very uncomfortable one for he is virtually suspended between the aristocracy and the upper middle-class, both of which are very civil to him, but neither of which receive him as its own. Of course he dines at the "Hall," the "Court," the "Park" or whatever the great house of the parish may be called, but he is seldom asked by the mistress of the hall to meet her fashionable visitors, while in America the rector of a country church is almost sure to be one of any fashionable company in his parish.

There are still a few sons of peers and now and

then a peer himself to be found in the English clergy list, but they are not nearly so frequent as fifty or even twenty years ago. The clerical supply in England is in truth becoming a very serious question, so serious in fact as to be really alarming. It is becoming difficult for parishes to get proper incumbents and the supply of curates is greatly below the demand. But I am straying.

After taking a Morning Service in one of the Southwestern counties where we had a congregation of six, I spoke to the sexton and asked him if there was anything especially interesting about the church or the parish? Any traditions and that sort of thing. The old man held his chin in his hand for a moment and answered: "No, sir, I don't know as there be anything special like as you says except the ghost-bottle." That sounded very special and I asked if I might see it. He said I might but he would have to go to his house for the key. It proved to be a small, crooked, ancient-looking bit of glass something like a "tear-bottle." It seemed empty, but the mouth was sealed and stamped with what appeared to be a crest of some sort, but which I was not able to make out. I had never heard of a ghost-bottle before and asked the sexton its meaning, but all the information he could give was that it contained an evil spirit. I have not since looked the matter up very carefully, but enough to learn that in pre-Reformation times the priest sometimes exorcised an evil spirit from a house or a person and confined it in a bottle

which was immediately sealed and the evil spirit was thus imprisoned. Sometimes this bottle was cast into the sea, or buried deep in the ground and only in rare cases was it kept where it could be seen, and this was of course taking great risks, for the slightest crack in the glass would enable the evil spirit to escape and be free once more to plague whom it would. During the building of a new church near London, the congregation worshipped in one of those portable iron structures which are so common nowadays, and are used for all kinds of purposes. This structure was the personal property of one of the parishioners who lent it to the church-wardens rent free. But it happened unfortunately that this gentleman had a rather violent disagreement with the incumbent, and without giving any warning he, one night, folded his tent, or rather his tabernacle, and like the Arabs, silently stole away, and the congregation was left homeless. It has always been my experience that men holding power or authority in a congregation are very easily offended. In one of the most beautiful spots in beautiful Surrey, not far from Guildford, there is a most ancient church with a double altar, one immediately over the other. This looks very much as if the lord of the manor carried his exclusiveness to the extent of having a special mass for himself and family, apart, or rather on top of the heads of the common people. Such grand people, I fear, may find the company in Heaven a little too mixed to suit their

fastidious taste. I have found my bicycle a very great convenience in slipping about among the country villages and churches and it has enabled me to visit many places that I never should have seen without it. I had made a point of visiting a fine, large, old church near the seashore, and after spending more than three hours inspecting it I started on my return journey over a different route. I found this an unfrequented way and had some difficulty in tracing it. But the whole afternoon of a long summer's day was before me so that I had plenty of time for loitering. My path led over a succession of barren little hills and a down quiet little dales, through very thinly settled districts. On reaching the top of one of these small round hills I saw a queer mite of a grey-stone church in the quiet little dale just in front of me. There was no village and only half a dozen or so houses within sight of the church. I floated down to the church on my bicycle and tried the door but could not open it. I then looked out for the parsonage, which was the second house from the church and made several efforts to get the attention of those within. There was no bell, and having tried the knocker in vain, I took the liberty to walk into the garden, and not until I had gone entirely round the house and into the kitchen door did I find anyone in the shape of man, woman, or child. Here I was confronted by a middle-aged shrew with a sharp face and a sharper voice. "What are you doin' 'ere?" she demanded, with

both surprise and alarm. "I want to see the church."—"Well this ain't the church and gentle-folk don't come to the servants' entrance."—"I have tried all the other ways of entrance and only came here as a last resort. I should be very much obliged if you would kindly let me have the key to the church."—"I ain't got it and it ain't in the house. The rector has it. He always keeps it."—"Where is the rector?"—"He's somewhere in the parish and that's all I can tell you." She then turned and shut and locked the door in my face. I was determined now to find the rector, and as there were only five other houses in the parish, so far as I could see, I did not imagine that I should have much difficulty in doing so. I had left my bicycle at the church door and thought it prudent to take it with me on my rounds from house to house. On going to fetch it I thought I would try the church door once more, and the rattle of the lock caused a stir within and I soon heard steps approaching. But instead of the door opening, "Who's there and what do you want?" came to me through the door in a displeased tone of voice. I answered that I was a traveller and merely wanted to see the church. "What do you want to see the church for?"—"Well it may be for devotional purposes for all you know. Anyhow open the door please." I now heard the key turn in the lock and the door was cautiously opened when a little wizened head peeped out. "What brought you this way," it enquired, eyeing me

very closely at the same time. I answered that it was the spirit of adventure. "You're a foreigner." These words were hurled at me as though they contained a charge of the most heinous crime. "No, I am not, I am an American," I hurled back at him, with pride and defiance ringing through every syllable. "I am a clergyman of the American Episcopal Church," I added, "and take special interest in visiting churches and clergymen." "Well there's nothing to see here," he replied in a somewhat more civil tongue, but still in the same displeased manner. "There is always something interesting in every church," I made answer, "and I'll trouble you to open the door so that I can come in."—"There is, I tell you, nothing whatever to see."—"I shall judge of that matter for myself," and pushing the door open with some force and it must be admitted with some anger, I entered the church, when to my utter surprise I came upon a carpenter's work-bench provided with a full complement of tools. There were shavings and other litter giving evidence that work was actually being done. This was in the west end of the church where the bell rope hangs, and where there is usually a vestry-room. The font was covered with loose boards and resting on these was a beehive in course of construction. I soon perceived that the church was not undergoing repairs but was actually being used as a workshop. There were some dirty curtains hanging near the bell rope which were evidently meant to cover the work-

bench during the hours of service. But the worst was to come, for within the chancel rail and to the right of the communion-table I found hanging a dirty surplice and an old black stole; and this was the place, I have no doubt, where the minister robed and unrobed. I came back to the door where the sexton, as I took him to be, still stood in glum displeasure. "I suppose you hide the work-bench behind those curtains when there is a service," I said. "Yes," was the laconic reply. I was by this time slightly disgusted and offered the man a small fee, just as I was passing out, and to my surprise he put his hands indignantly behind him in token of his refusal. I thought it might be the small amount that had offended him. Still I did not mean to increase it, and on turning away I remarked that he was the first sexton who had ever refused my money. "I am the rector," said the man. My first impulse was to stop and give him a plain lecture on the first precepts of decency and reverence. But on second thought I felt it would be better to say nothing, and asking his pardon for my blunder I mounted my silent little pony and rode away. I stopped at the first farmhouse, which was about a mile distant from the church, and learnt that there was no sexton, and that one man acted in the dual capacity of rector and clerk. There was really no congregation, the only people in the parish were labourers, except one farmer, who drove every Sunday to a dissenting chapel six miles away.



The first time I ever officiated in London I met with a very strange experience. It was a West End church whose territory is divided about equally between the very poor and the very rich.

As I approached the church from the district railway station I had literally to fight my way in the street through throngs of men, women, and children. This seemed to promise a large congregation, and what was my surprise on entering the church to be warned by the curate not to expect many people. I, however, took this warning with a grain of salt, and thought little or nothing of it. I had some time on my hands before the appointed hour of service, which I occupied in inspecting the church edifice. It was of the usual Gothic structure with a seating capacity of about six hundred, and was well appointed in every respect so far as I could see. I observed among other things some fine old paintings in folding frames. On re-entering the vestry-room I was again warned not to expect much of a congregation, and this second admonition given again by the curate in a most lugubrious voice and manner had a very mystifying and chilling effect upon me and, as I am uncommonly susceptible to the spirit of a place, I began to feel that something unusual, if not uncanny, was about to happen. And something, at least unusual, did happen. There was a choir of men and boys in scarlet cassocks, and they entered the church singing a processional. I did not look about me, but was impressed with the empty feeling of

the church. I took my place near the altar rail where I commanded a view of the choir only. Matins having been said by the curate (the vicar not being present), I ascended the pulpit, and was confronted by a "vast contiguity of space," the whole body of the church being empty, except for two persons, a man and a woman. In the side aisles were a few boys and girls with their teachers—three women in all.

I was for the moment completely paralysed, and unable to utter a word. I realised that it would be quite impossible for me to preach the sermon I had prepared, and my notes were therefore useless. I could have read in some way or another a written sermon of any description, but to stand there and preach extempore, with nothing between me and emptiness, seemed an impossibility. How I managed to occupy the fifteen minutes—which was to me a foretaste of eternity—I cannot now understand.

The celebration of the Holy Communion followed, and the whole congregation, *i.e.*, the man and woman communicated. The man was the vicar's warden, and the woman was his wife—so I afterwards learned. The vicar, I was told, had been unable to do duty for several months. I asked no questions but took it for granted that there were some special reasons for the total absence of a congregation. This was not in "the city," be it remembered, but in the West End, and within ten minutes' walk of Hyde Park.

On coming out of the church the streets presented the same very animated appearance, that I had observed on my arrival, which deepened the mystery. This was the first time I had ever officiated in a London church, and I leave each one of my readers free to imagine what my thoughts were for the next week concerning the Established Church of England. Here was an average church building with a good choir, and all the necessary means of worship. The ritual was in no sense extreme in either direction. The weather was better than is common at that time of the year, and yet there was actually no congregation at all. What could it mean? I knew of course that this must be an exceptional case, but such a case! It got on my nerves, and I was almost on the point of declining any further duty. But fortunately I persevered, and my very next experience was a totally different one. I shall, however, finish with this London church before passing on to more cheerful subjects.

I was sent to this church again, after an interval of two months, and experienced precisely the same thing. It was then that I learned who the man and woman were that constituted my second, as well as my first, congregation. There is something rather fine in the unqualified, the absolute, and I hope altogether unique character of such a failure. But why keep up the farce, for it must be a very expensive one? Why not turn this church over to the Church Army—the Salvation

Army, or any other organisation conforming, or non-conforming, that can bring some of the multitude who swarm up to the very church doors, inside the church. There are several Hyde Park mansions within this parish district, and it seems a very strange thing, that no one person, man or woman, out of all these houses, seems to take the slightest interest in their parish church. What, I again ask, can it all mean?

Fortunately for my opinion and my thoughts about the English Church, as well as my own peace of mind, my next Sunday duty entirely effaced my first gloomy impressions.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SOME ANGLO-AMERICAN CLERICAL STORIES

**I**F the Lambeth Conferences have served no other purpose than that of bringing together the Protestant Bishops of the English speaking world, they have done enough to justify their creation. Previous to these Conferences the Episcopate of England and America knew very little of each other as a body, and their general attitude towards each other was, if not openly hostile, at least inwardly suspicious. For proof of this fact one need go no further than "The Colonial Clergy Act" (of which I speak elsewhere). This Act, which is still in operation, puts the Episcopal Church in America, together with all English Colonies, under the ban of illiteracy, and so long as it remains, there cannot be that perfect inter-communion which should exist between brethren of the same church, and which does exist between the Members of the Roman Catholic clergy and all other Christian Churches so far as I know. This attitude of "I am better than thou," is thought by some critically disposed persons to be a National British characteristic and previous to

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these Lambeth Conferences the English Bishop acting it may be in this spirit regarded his American brother with supercilious superiority; and the American Bishop in return believed his British brother to be puffed up with spiritual pride, and sadly lacking in common sense. These Conferences have destroyed the superciliousness of the one, and corrected the rash judgment of the other. In a word the Bishops of both nations have come to know and appreciate each other at their true value, and they now understand that each has something of worth to give the other, and that they are thus mutually benefitted by these decennial meetings.

They meet of course as peers, on a perfectly equal footing, and give and take with that perfect frankness and freedom which are fundamental traits of our common race. But whilst these two rare features are common to them both, they are held in different degrees by the two nations, the British Anglo-Saxon having more frankness and the American Anglo-Saxon more freedom. This slight difference of temperament, or whatever you choose to call it, is brought out in my first story, which has to do with the last Lambeth Conference, and the late Archbishop of Canterbury, who was nothing if not frank, and who was greatly respected by all, and greatly beloved by the few who knew him intimately on all his sides.

Dr. Temple being Archbishop was the ex-officio chairman of the Conference. These Conferences are not authoritative bodies, and can only be called

legislative in so far as their discussions and recommendations are afterwards taken up and acted upon in the regular law-making bodies and conventions of the two Churches. The method of procedure in these Conferences is of course based upon the code of Parliamentary rules; but, as in the British House of Peers and the United States Senate there is no fixed limit in regard to the number of times a member may speak upon the same subject, this being left to the judgment and sense of propriety of the speaker. The Presiding officer at the Lambeth Conference is addressed simply as Mr. Chairman and not as "His Grace." There had been some question of Canon Law under discussion, and an American Bishop who is a recognised authority on that subject, had spoken a great many times and had risen to speak again, when a British Bishop interrupted him, and addressing the Archbishop said, "Mr. Chairman, there are other Bishops who would like to speak on this subject and the Lord Bishop of — has already spoken a great many times." "I know he has," said the Archbishop, "and I am sure he is ashamed of himself by this time." One morning just as the Conference had been opened for business another American Bishop, a youngish and handsome man, who had an idea that he possessed both a good voice and a good figure arose and said, "Mr. Chairman, I should like to explain why I voted as I did yesterday on a certain question if it is in order?" "It is perfectly in order, sir," said the

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Archbishop, "but I am sure nobody wants to hear you." These *two* positively authentic stories illustrate perfectly what I meant by saying that the Briton uses more frankness and the American more freedom in their intercourse with each other. No American Bishop would think for one moment of reproving and snubbing a brother Bishop, as the late Archbishop reproved and snubbed these two American Bishops; nor would any British Bishop ever be found trespassing upon the time of his brother Bishops as the two Americans were. There is perhaps a little too much frankness in the one country, and a little too much freedom in the other. I grant you, however, that in these examples of frankness and freedom the British hold the best score except in the trifling matter of politeness.

During the same Conference a certain English Bishop endeavoured one day to speak to some question but was ruled out of order, and rather unceremoniously shut up by the Archbishop. But the next day, before the Conference began its work His Grace addressed the House and acknowledged that he had been wholly in the wrong, and that the Bishop of — had been wholly in the right, on the previous day and he desired to ask the pardon of the Conference. He then went on to say that the Conference reminded him of his Rugby days, (when he was Head Master) for sometimes he was on top and sometimes the boys were on top. Such an incident shows the late Archbishop at his



very best, and when he was at his best no man was ever better. Of his kindly heart, beneath his rough exterior, I personally know something.

My next narrative is also rather hard on my beloved countrymen, but it happens to come in the regular order of things, and I can't spoil a good story for the sake of patriotism.

In 1885, I came to England for the almost express purpose, strange as it may seem, of hearing the oratory of the May Meetings. The majority of these Meetings took place in Exeter Hall, as all the world knows. How or why I ever came to attempt such a feat of endurance I cannot now recall. On arriving in London, I gathered together all the programmes I could lay my hands on, took them to my hotel, and arranged and digested them in an order of time which would enable me to attend the greatest possible number. I found I could manage at least two meetings each day and generally three, and one of these was always in Exeter Hall. On the Sunday I made a point of hearing the most popular preachers that happened to be on tap. This I felt was doing the spouting racket thoroughly well and I determined that if I did not come out at the end of June with a full and complete notion of what a true orator ought to be, then I should give up the idea of becoming a minister, and especially a preacher. But I was confident and felt sure that these multitudinous oratorical object lessons ought to make me, what I had a great ambition to become, namely, an eloquent preacher. This was a

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unique sort of preparation I grant you, but it seemed as practical as it was original. I made a point of taking elaborate notes, which I was afterwards able to utilise for the public press, but the editors were so stupid as to cut out all the eloquence and return only a most prosaic summary of events. The *New York Independent*, however, took a series of articles on London Preachers, and the then *Christian Union*, the present *New York Outlook*, published a series of articles from my pen on "London Life and Character." And these were about all I ever got out of this school of oratory, except that my faith in the whole matter of eloquence was terribly shaken, if not completely upset, at least for the time being, by the realisation of the overwhelming number of humbugs among the list of the eloquent speakers and preachers.

One of my first and most interesting experiences in Exeter Hall was at a meeting of the "Lay Helpers Society" of the diocese of London. This meeting was in the nature of a reception to the new Bishop of London, the Right Reverend Frederick Temple, who had just been translated from the See of Exeter, and this "Lay Helpers Society" evidently meant to impress him with its importance. The large platform was full of gentlemen in evening dress. I cannot recall after so many years how many of these laymen spoke, but I can remember very distinctly the general tone and trend of the speeches, which were in perfect harmony with each other, and to the general effect

that the "Lay Helpers Society" was responsible for about all the really good work that was getting itself done in London, and that the parsons were upon the whole rather a sorry lot. The grim black bishop sat through these speeches without a word, and hardly a movement, till it was the proper and appointed time for him to respond. There are what are called the Layman's Bishop and the Parson's Bishop, and when a new Diocesan appears, there is usually a little struggle between these two as to which shall possess him. The "Lay Helpers" had clearly opened this combat and seemingly to their great advantage but almost the first thing the new bishop said indicated pretty clearly that they had not captured their man, nor had they succeeded in convincing him that they had, after all, accomplished such a tremendous work. On the contrary the new bishop considered that according to their own showing very little, indeed, had been done. He did not, however, speak in a complaining spirit, but he meant to have it frankly understood, at the very outset of his episcopate in London that he was not to be humbugged by figures and speeches, or Oxford students, in the East End, etc. The bishop spoke in true appreciation of the good work the society had done, but it was only a very small beginning of what he hoped would be finally accomplished. But it was in his closing words that the bishop scratched the minds of his thoughtful hearers. He said that Englishmen as a rule were not disposed to interfere in other

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peoples' business, and this would generally prevent the best laymen from offering their services to the clergy, so that the church had often to put up with inferior lay help. This spiritual modesty was very commendable, but it made the work of the clergy very difficult. Yet upon the whole it was much better that the fitness of a layman for any special work should be more evident to his pastor than to himself. This was a palpable knock-out for the "Lay Helpers" and the parsons were left very much on top.

I heard about three hundred speeches during these May Meetings and as I now gaze back into that great wilderness of talk through which I groped my weary way, I see but few illuminated spots, and these were for the most part the speeches of the then Bishop of London, who afterwards became the Archbishop of Canterbury, and they make the surrounding darkness appear all the more terrible. But I really did not mean to say all this as an introduction to my next story, and the only connection it has with my tale is the fact that it owes its existence to Exeter Hall. At one of these "May Meetings" the chairman announced that he was glad to inform the audience that in addition to their list of distinguished speakers, they had present upon the platform an American gentleman who was the editor of a well-known New York weekly semi-religious paper, and that after much insisting he had persuaded their visitor to address them. He then introduced the Rev. Dr. S—— of

New York. This gentleman came forward with becoming modesty, and began by saying that he had always heard that John Bull believed in fair play, but it was hardly fair to capture a poor American who was travelling about in your beautiful country in the pursuit of health and pleasure, and compel him to address such a vast and intelligent audience on the spur of the moment. He then delivered a very eloquent address, one of the best of its kind I had heard, and I was very proud of him and flattered myself that we Americans could give John Bull a few points on extemporaneous speaking. The chairman felicitated himself and the audience on his success in forcing such an eloquent speech from the lips of their reluctant American brother, and added that the English had much to learn from their brother Americans in the way of extemporaneous speech making. And in this I perfectly agreed with the chairman.

Some months later, in October of the same year to be exact, I found myself in the City of Glasgow, and attended some great religious meeting in the Town Hall, or some other public building. The meeting had not advanced very far before I saw my eloquent compatriot of Exeter Hall fame upon the platform, and in due course of time he was introduced by the presiding officer and somewhat after the manner of the Exeter Hall chairman. He arose in the same modest way and began his address with the following preface, which may sound slightly familiar to you. He had always

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heard that Scotchmen were noted for their fair dealing, but was it quite fair to capture a poor American who was travelling through their beautiful country in pursuit of health and pleasure and force him to speak at a moment's notice. He then delivered the very same purely extemporaneous address that I had heard in Exeter Hall, and I must confess that I was not so proud of him as I had been on the first occasion. Again the chairman felicitated himself and his audience upon his marvellous success in forcing so eloquent a speech from unwilling lips, but I could not say "Amen."

But my story is not ended. I had made the chance acquaintance of a young Scotch Presbyterian clergyman, whose father—the well-known Dr. Sommerville—resided in Glasgow, and I was invited, after the meeting adjourned, to dine with this distinguished gentleman. It proved to be a big dinner and my eloquent countryman was one of the company. Our host was a large and handsome man, with flowing white locks. He stood at the head of the table, and pointed each guest to his seat (we were all men) with a brief word of introduction. When he came to the American Editor he said "This gentleman is the Rev. Dr. S—— Editor of the —— whose very eloquent address we had all heard with so much pleasure and profit." Finally he came to my humble self, and after an aside to his son said, "This is also an American gentleman, a friend of my son's." I was placed just opposite my countryman, whose

paper I knew and disliked, and got ready my ball and powder for a bull's eye shot. "We are compatriots," remarked my distinguished *vis-à-vis* in a patronizing air. "So it seems," I responded. "I of course know your journal, and this is not the first time I have had the pleasure of hearing you make an extemporaneous speech. I was in Exeter Hall last June, when you were persuaded to say something." "Oh, were you?" and my countryman had neither a look nor a word for me for the rest of the dinner. I did not of course expose him at the dinner, but I told Dr. Sommerville's son who is still living I am glad to say, about the two extempore speeches I had heard made, and we enjoyed ourselves at his expense for a few minutes.

That sort of thing I consider the worst kind of dishonesty and yet I have known other cases almost as bad.

One more Anglo-American story, and I shall for the rest confine myself to the pure British article. When the late Dean Stanley visited America, he of course used the American Prayer-book in his public ministrations, and after a service in New York he turned to the late Bishop Williams of Connecticut and said. "You Americans have watered the Prayer-book."—"Yes, it needed washing," was the laconic answer of the witty Bishop.

Soon after the present ex-Bishop of Ripon had taken orders, and when he was in fact in the "guinea-pig" state, he answered an advertisement from a Yorkshire vicar who required a curate.

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A correspondence followed and the young un-beneficed cleric made a visit to the Yorkshire parish. But he did not, so it would appear, meet all the requirements of the very aristocratic rector. At any rate he did not take up the curacy. But the times are perpetually changing and we with the times, says an old Latin proverb, and this young clergyman passed in very quick succession from the state of a guinea-pig to that of vicar, canon, and bishop, and was still a young man when he made his second visit to this Yorkshire parish. But he came now as the bishop of the diocese, and on being received at the rectory-house by the same incumbent he merely remarked—"I think we have met before, sir." I have this story from a son of the Yorkshire rector.

My next story seems somewhat incredible, but whilst I am not able to vouch for it from personal knowledge, it comes to me only once removed from the mouth of a bishop. In one of the most out-lying dioceses in England the bishop took it upon himself to inspect the church schools, a thing that had never been done before in this diocese. This innovation was not very acceptable to many of the clergy and was violently resented by at least one of the incumbents who did all he could to prevent the bishop inspecting his schools. But his lordship persisted and finally appointed a time for his visitation. The parish was a very remote one, some eight miles away from the railway, and the incumbent very reluctantly consented to meet the



bishop. But he did not bring with him any vehicle and informed his Diocesan that he would have to walk eight miles through a very rough country. But this did not deter the Right Reverend Prelate, and they started out upon their tramp, the incumbent remarking that he should not be able to extend the hospitality of the vicarage to the bishop, and that therefore it would be necessary for him to walk back alone. Even this did not shake his lordship's purpose, nor stop the episcopal progress and the two clergymen marched on in silence until about half the distance was overcome, when the vicar suddenly turned upon his Reverend Father in God, and in a most menacing attitude, with arms bared and fists doubled, said, "Look here My Lord, there has been enough of this nonsense, and I tell you plainly that I am not going to have you meddling in my parish with things that do not concern you, and much as I regret it I shall be obliged to force you if necessary to retrace your steps."—"I shall do nothing of the sort," said the bishop, throwing off his coat, and displaying as good a pair of arms as the vicar's, "and the question of force had better be settled here at once." But the incumbent did not choose to force the fighting. The bishop inspected the schools, enjoyed the hospitality of the vicarage and parted from his vicar on the best of terms.

After relating this strange experience of a bishop I feel emboldened to give a brief account of an incident in which I myself figured as a member of

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the church militant. The fogs were uncommonly bad in London and I went to Brighton to escape them. I had ordered my lodgings by letter, and did not know whether there was a man on the premises to look after my luggage. I therefore made an arrangement with my cabman to take it in for me, whilst I minded his horse. But on arriving at my lodgings a man presented himself and began to remove my light luggage. I asked him if he belonged to the house and he said he did not. I then told him that I had arranged with the cabman to take in my luggage, which the cabman was in the meantime proceeding to do. But the other man insisted. I told him I was sorry I could not employ him and gave him three-pence as some compensation for his disappointment. He took the money and immediately began to beat and kick the horse to make him run away. I stopped the horse when to my utter surprise and alarm the man attacked me and succeeded in planting two blows in my face before I could in any way defend myself, and I should have fallen but for the fact that I caught on to the railing. He then turned and started to walk away in the most deliberate manner. I followed him and told him that I should give him in charge. Then he turned again and came at me, but I was ready for him this time, and used more caution than he did, and my first blow knocked him flat on his back. He got up and I repeated the remedy. This seemed to satisfy him and he got to his feet with some difficulty and

started off again. I followed, and after a chase of almost twenty minutes I gave him in charge. He was a young man, of good appearance, and well dressed. He had not followed my cab from the station but had merely come up from the West End Road, which was not more than three hundred feet from my lodgings. He belonged to a gang, so I was afterwards told, who followed cabs with luggage, and forced their services upon the travellers, especially women, demanding in some cases the most exorbitant charges, and terrorizing them till they paid. But as my account is naturally an ex parte statement I shall give the following editorial report which appeared in *The Brighton Herald*:

A good deal has been heard in Brighton of late of that much-placarded person "The Fighting Parson." This week a "Fighting Parson" in real life has shown himself at Brighton in the Rev. Monroe Royce. In thus describing Mr. Royce it needs to be made quite clear that one does so without conveying the slightest reproach in the title. Indeed Mr. Royce's fighting did credit alike to his pluck and his muscularity. One can only regret that his arrival in Brighton was signalled by so grievous an outrage as that from which he was called upon to defend himself, by one of those ruffianly "cab-runners" who have made the very name a term of reproach. Mr. Royce was attacked in a fashion that can only be described as scandalous. But the rascal, "Underhay" by name, had made a serious mistake. So taken aback was Mr. Royce and so much was he engaged with the horse that Underhay

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had nearly caused to bolt by kicking it, that the ruffian planted several blows in Mr. Royce's face before the latter could defend himself. When he did he knocked the fellow down and gave him a good pummelling. When he let him get up Underhay made off, but Mr. Royce followed him for the purpose of giving him into custody. Underhay further threatened to assault Mr. Royce, but was deterred by the promise of another good thrashing. An appropriate sequel was the consignment of Underhay to Lewes Gaol for three weeks' hard labour. If more of our visitors had the grit and the "science" of Mr. Royce outrages of the cab-running fraternity would be likely to become extinct.

I have always made it a point to keep myself in good physical training, and I have more than once experienced the practical wisdom of the proverb, "When in peace prepare for war."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE RETREAT AND THE ARCHDEACON

THIS sketch, although last in the order of my scheme, really comes first in point of time. I came to London from America as nominal chaplain to one of the bishops in the Lambeth Conference. I performed no duties, however, and at the close of the Conference and with my bishop's consent I took temporary duty in one of the northern dioceses. I shall not describe this parish, except to say that it was not one I should have chosen, had there been any power of choice. I was in point of fact dreadfully disappointed, and a feeling of homesickness took possession of me as I drove from the station through the town, for instead of a country parish which I had somehow looked forward to, with its hedges, and lanes, and fields, I was confronted at every turn with great tall chimneys, sending out thick columns of black smoke, into an equally murky sky. We passed between solid rows of dirty-looking houses till we reached the vicarage, which had nothing to distinguish it from its neighbours, but was a small house wedged into the middle of a row of small houses.

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This you must remember was my first experience as a clergyman in England, and the American ideal of the English Church, which I brought with me was ruthlessly shattered. The only cheerful thing I saw was the vicar, who greeted me very warmly, and put me at my ease at once.

The church was a large and stately edifice, and had been erected within the last quarter of a century for the special benefit of the people employed in the large iron works. The patron was a very great nobleman no less than a duke, who had a country seat not far distant. There was a magnificent choir of boys and men with a musical doctor at the organ. My engagement was for a month or more, and as I realised this fact my spirits sank within me. But the spirit of adventure, which I have always possessed I fear in too large a measure, came to my relief. I knew there must be country round about to explore; and this hopeful thought gave me courage to face the disagreeable situation. Lodgings were found for me in one of the best rows of cottages, and I was in fact—to my great surprise—made entirely comfortable. It took me, however, some time to convince my landlady that I preferred not to sit and shiver over a few half-burning coals in a grate small enough at the best, which was half-filled up with bricks, fitted in behind, and on either side. I asked this good woman to take these all out and fill the grate with coals. But she remonstrated and insisted that the bricks at the back and sides gave out a

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great deal of heat. I preferred coals to bricks as fuel, however, and gave positive orders on going to bed to have the bricks removed before the fire was lighted in the morning. But what was my surprise and indignation the next morning to find that my landlady was still burning bricks instead of coals. But she was prepared for me, and greeted me with, "You see what a bright fire you have this morning, sir."—"Yes, I see a little blaze—slightly larger than a candle flame between a wall of bricks," and so saying I seized the tongs and pulled out the bricks, and asked her to have the kindness to take them out of my room, and never under any circumstances to put anything in the grate except coals and just enough wood to kindle it. I declined further to discuss this subject, and told her that I should expect a roaring fire, as big as the grate could possibly hold, to greet me every morning. And it did during my stay. I sometimes had visitors—as there were a number of young gentlemen studying engineering in this place, and they invariably upon entering my sitting room, exclaimed, "What a jolly fire!" and they always took up their position in front of the grate with their hinder parts as near the fire as possible. When an Englishman does that in your own house, you may feel yourself highly flattered for it's an infallible token that he considers you all right, and is quite willing to associate with you on equal terms.

The vicar of this parish was a good deal of a

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brick. He had distinguished himself in the university, not by his close application to books but to athletics, and his library was almost as full of trophies of victories, from the river, the football, and cricket fields, as of books. He did not possess a large collection of books, but they were all of recent date and of actual value. He was not a student exactly, but he was a discriminating reader—knew an authoritative work when he saw it; and did not waste his time on theological trash. He was a very moderate high churchman, and confessed to me that he had set out to be a ritualist, but it seemed too artificial, too unreal, and he had to give it up. Yet he felt obliged to keep up the farce of a daily service, when there was never any genuine congregation. There was as a rule no one at all, but the officiating clergyman. He was a good preacher, always had something fresh to say, and the Sunday congregations were good. I remained in this dismal parish for more than two months and preached meantime in several of the neighbouring churches. The country round about had not the mellow beauty of the south of England, but there were the ruins of a fine old abbey not far distant, which imparted a sentiment of romance to the district. This was in the province of the Archbishop of York, and I was officiating under a license from the bishop of the diocese, which I supposed of course was quite orderly and regular. But it proved to be otherwise, and after having officiated for a month or so I received a very



alarming letter from His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Thomson informing me that I was violating the law of England, and was subject to grave penalties. What these grave penalties were His Grace did not specify, and I was left in the dread of uncertainty. But I did not act hastily, and after my first alarm had passed away it occurred to me that my position after all was not so very dreadful, for the offence seemed to lie in the fact of my nationality. I had, so it appeared, committed the heinous crime of being an American, instead of an English clergyman. I had supposed, of course, up to that time that as the Episcopal Church in the United States of America had been founded by the Established Church of England, and was in full and perfect communion with that church, I would be recognised and received as an authorised clergyman in England. Moreover I remembered that when an English clergyman came to America, a letter from his bishop was accepted by the American bishops as quite sufficient, and that there were hundreds of English clergymen, with English orders, holding good positions in the American Church. All this reassured me, and I took it for granted that some mistake had been made by a secretary or chaplain or such official. But no, I was given plainly to understand that the rule by which English clergymen were received in America did not work in England. That of course English clergymen would be received into the American Church without any question but simply upon their letters of

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orders and a certificate of health from their bishop. But that American Orders were not recognised in England. This very much interested and angered me and I wrote to His Grace declining to discuss the matter, and simply referred him to the Bishop of the Diocese under whose license I was officiating, knowing perfectly well that the archbishop would have to deal with the bishop and not with me. I informed my diocesan of the action of the archbishop, and he wrote me a kind friendly letter saying that he had never had his license questioned before, but that His Grace was within his rights. He therefore requested me to comply with the archbishop's demands. I consented to do so, and received a document entitled *The Colonial and Continental Clergy Act*, containing a long list of questions, most of them such as might be put to a lad in a primary school. This I felt to be grossly insulting, and replied that America was no longer an English Colony; that I was a clergyman of the American Episcopal Church in good standing, as the letter from my bishop showed, and that I declined to accept such a humiliating position. But the bishop of the diocese had put himself, so it seemed, in an awkward position, by giving me a license before the archbishop had passed on the case, and for his sake I waived all personal and national feelings and submitted to the inquisition, which was a perfect farce, but which resulted in the transference of a guinea from my pocket to the pocket of the archbishop's secretary. I have

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since been told by a number of clergymen that it was the fee—and the fee only that caused all this commotion. I related this and a similar experience with the Archbishop of Canterbury to one of the editors of the *Church Times* a few months ago, and he requested me to write a letter to his paper on the subject. I did so—some correspondence resulted and the discussion was concluded by a long leader in the *Church Times*.

It was in this northern parish that I had my first experience with an archdeacon, as the American Episcopal Church up to that date had managed somehow to get on without this ecclesiastical dignitary. I do not mean to say that I had never seen an archdeacon. I had seen several archdeacons at a distance, and it seemed to me that this ecclesiastic was always hoping that he might be mistaken for a bishop. I have been in England, first and last, a good many years, and have only recently learnt the difference—I mean in dress—between a bishop and his archdeacon, so that on first sight of this northern archdeacon, I satisfied his hopes and promptly mistook him for a bishop, and “my-lorded” him to the skies. He was not offended at my mistake, so far as I could see, and explained to me in a kindly sort of way that there was some difference between himself and a bishop, but as I inferred it was very trifling. The archdeacon, he said was the *Oculus Episcopi*—the eye of the bishop.—He then expressed the wish that I might preach in his church (he was the vicar of one of

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the churches in the town) before I left the neighbourhood, which I did.

But I have mentioned the archdeacon more to adorn a tale than to point a moral. This particular archdeacon had good legs, as all archdeacons should have, and was upon the whole rather pleased with himself, in truth he was just a bit inclined to be what shall I say? I don't like the word "pompous" and yet I can think of no other word at the moment, that so clearly expresses what I would say.

He announced to me privately that he was going to hold a retreat the week following, and said he should be glad if I could attend. I did not then quite understand what was meant by a retreat, but as it was to be held in one of the beautiful lake districts near by I was very glad to accept the invitation. We were to send in our names to the hotel in good time to secure good accommodation. This sounded very enticing and I looked forward to the retreat with bright anticipations. I was among the first at the hotel, and greeted the other arrivals—those whom I knew, I mean—with great cheerfulness. I was in fact in a gushing mood, and inclined to expatiate upon the beauties of the scenery. But my enthusiasm was abruptly checked, and my ardour cooled by the solemn air of the clerical crows as they alighted one by one, or two by two at the door of this cosy wayside inn. "It's only their English manner," I said, to reassure myself. "They don't mean to be unfriendly;

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and I persevered to the end, in my fresh-American way, for I was too innocent in those days to be conscious of my want of good form. A notice was posted in the inn to the effect that members of the retreating party would have dinner served them after the other guests had dined. But where were the clerics? They had all disappeared like magic. And I found myself quite alone with two hours on my hands, which I occupied rambling about the village. This was very picturesquely scattered along the banks of the lake and a small clear river. I occasionally caught sight of a lone parson on the hillside, in the lanes, or in the fields, but I was never able to get within speaking distance of him. At last the jolly face of my vicar appeared in the distance and I hastened to greet him. But could I be mistaken? No, it was the vicar, sure enough, but minus the jolly face. I was now determined to know the cause of this funeral gloom that seemed to envelop everybody. What had happened, I wondered? I hurried towards my vicar and called out "Hallo, old man, whatever is the matter?" He smiled, and in a low amused voice asked me what I meant. I told him and he said, "You irreverent, irreligious, American idiot. This is a 'Retreat.'" "Well, what if it is, isn't a fellow expected to talk in a retreat, and must he look as though he had lost his last friend and kinsman?"

"Yes, that is exactly what he is expected to do, my very volatile friend. So now you know what

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is expected of you, and do try and keep quiet.”—  
“Good gracious!” I exclaimed, “are we not to speak to each other at the table either?”—“No, we’re not, and mind you don’t begin any of your American yarns or the archdeacon will sit on you in a way you won’t like.” With this warning, accompanied by a sly twinkle, he left, and prayer-book in hand went his solitary way. I was now prepared for the worst, and took my seat at the dinner table in a most becoming manner, and I hope in a proper frame of mind. The archdeacon was standing at the head of the table as we entered, looking more like a bishop than ever, and returned the bow of each man in the solemn silence it was given. After a silent grace, each man for himself, we took our seats, and the dinner was served in silence. Each clergyman was provided with a devotional book, which he kept before him during the meal and ate and read alternately. I was the only one present without a book, and that gave me an opportunity of observing in what manner my clerical brethren performed their dual function. I was placed near the archdeacon, and could not but notice a considerable struggle which was going on between his appetite and his spirit of devotion. The dinner by the way was a good one, and it was an hour or so after the regular meal time—half-past eight to be exact. Everything in this world comes to an end sooner or later, and so did this repast, and after silent grace, we all separated for the night, and it was expected, so I afterwards

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learnt, that we were to spend the evening in our bedrooms.

But not having been instructed in this particular, I wandered about the village and the lake till a late hour, and on my return to the Inn I found that the lights in the clerical bedrooms were all out. I took my candle and found my chamber without difficulty. I was tired and sleepy, and was soon off to the land of Nod, from whence I was suddenly brought back by a thumping sound on my bedroom wall, accompanied by groans, and "oh mys!" of a most distressing character. I hurried into the room from whence this noise proceeded, and found the archdeacon,—without his gaiters, or any other article of the episcopal habit—writhing and twisting in great agony. "Have—you—some—Jamaica ginger, or paregoric?" the poor man gasped. "Hush, silence," I whispered. "I'll see what I can do for you. I have some cholera mixture, I always carry, which I think will give you instant relief." "Oh, how kind," groaned the ecclesiastic, "please fetch it at once." I did so and gave the archdeaconal body a good rubbing as well, and it was not many minutes before the *Oculus Episcopi* was closed in peaceful slumber, as it was merely a rather bad case of indigestion. Owing to this break in my night's rest, I was very late in ringing for my hot water next morning, and when it came I found a note with it from the archdeacon, thanking me for my kindness and suggesting that it would be better perhaps not to mention

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the incident of the night. And I never shall. The archdeacon gave a meditation at three o'clock, after which we all dispersed to our several homes. This, my first and only experience, convinced me that I had no special vocation for retreats, meditations, etc. The archdeacon was always extremely civil but there was no obvious disposition on his part to cultivate me, after the occurrence above mentioned; and I regret to state that he has not, up to the time of my writing, donned the full episcopal habit.

As I have already said this gloomy parish was in a manufacturing town and there was one remarkable feature about the parishioners. They were all or nearly all, under forty years of age, and mostly married, and the streets swarmed with children. There were churchings and baptisms three times a week, and I have had as many as twenty-six infants to baptise at one service. These young mothers never by any chance present the child to the officiating clergyman right end first, and how serious accidents are avoided is a wonder. I have more than once just escaped an accident and it seemed by pure good luck. Once a little mite of an infant not much bigger than my hand wrapped up in a very big and long garment, was so awkwardly presented that I utterly failed to get hold of anything but the voluminous clothing, and the infant dropped several feet, and nothing but the quick elevation of my hands in which I held the frock saved the infant from striking the stone steps of the font.



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There was a very interesting clericus which met monthly, and I had the privilege of attending two of its meetings. The discussions were extremely interesting, and ranged over a wide field of controversy, from the Athanasian Creed to the authorship of the fourth Gospel. Questions of churchmanship, I observed, were studiously avoided. My stay in this, my very first English parish, was suddenly cut short by a telegram from my bishop calling me to Paris, where I was ordained to the priesthood, and took charge of the very large American Church for a period of one year.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FOX-HUNTING IN SALOP

I WONDER how many of my American readers know that Salop means Shropshire? I must confess that I did not until a few months ago, and yet I had been priding myself on my knowledge of things English. But my present humiliation is somewhat mitigated by the circumstance that I am acquainted with at least two born and bred English people, belonging to the intelligent middle-class, who were as ignorant as myself of the meaning of this strange word "Salop." Nor have I yet been able to learn, though I have lived in this county for more than two months and have asked many questions, how this word came to stand for Shropshire, for the two names seem to have nothing to do with each other, at least from an etymological point of view. Nor can I find any tradition relating to this matter. But English people, unlike Americans, have no curiosity about such things, and take their words, as they take their positions, just as they find them, without troubling themselves about the whys or the wherefores. And now I have also

to confess that I know as little—almost—about fox-hunting as I did about Salop. But being in the very midst of it, with the music of the horn and the hounds ringing in my ears, I have, I hope, caught something of the spirit of the thing, which I shall try to convey in some measure to the reader. I should explain, however, that this is not quite my first experience in a fox-hunting community. I spent eight months in Wiltshire, only last year, within sight of the kennels of the "Vale of the White Horse Hounds." The master and owner of this pack, Mr. Butt-Miller, was my neighbour and very kind friend and yet I never enjoyed a run with these hounds, notwithstanding the fact that he kept a stud of twenty to twenty-five hunters. I hinted several times in the most delicate, and yet the most distinct manner possible that I was reckoned a good horseman in my native land. But he never rose to the fly, and as there were no hacks to be had I was unable to gratify a very keen desire for at least one gallop in old England across country. My resentment, if resentment it may be called, against Mr. Butt-Miller's want of consideration for me has been very much moderated, if not wholly removed, on learning that the master of the hunt is never supposed to furnish mounts for anyone—not even an American.

I took up my abode in Wiltshire in the month of March, just as the season was on the point of closing, and therefore saw little of the pink coats

and less of the actual sport. But I remained till late in October and came in for some cub-hunting, and this again as a mere observer and without any actual participation in the sport. As cub-hunting is, I believe, wholly unknown in America, a word or two on this rather tame,—and as one might say,—premature sport may serve as a prelude to the more humane (if there be any degrees of humanity in this rather one-sided game) and dignified aspects of fox-hunting. Every pack of hounds throughout England—and there are hundreds of them—has a certain well-defined district over which it is free to run and beyond which it is not supposed to go, except under stress of very great temptation, such for example as the end of a long and exciting run, when the brush is within sight, but beyond the boundary limit. Under these most trying circumstances, it is, I suppose, permissible for the field to follow the fox to the death. This is in keeping with the etiquette of shooting, which permits a gun to retrieve the game that has been brought down from one's own preserves, but dies beyond the boundaries.

But in each of these territories, which is called the hunt, there are covers prepared and carefully preserved, where Sir Reynard and Lady Vixen may build their home and rear their family safe from the rude alarms of the horn of the hunter and the cry of the hound. This safe retreat of the fox family lasts longer in some counties than in others, but always long enough for the birth

and maturing of the young, which I suppose means a period of about four months and during which time the life and comfort of all the fox tribe are not only inviolate, but an object of the most anxious care and solicitude from all right-minded English people. The fox, true to his reputation, is cunning enough to realise this universal concern about his safety and prosperity. His boldness, in fact, during the close season frequently approaches the impudent, and it is not a wholly unknown thing for him to visit the poultry-yard in the garish light of day, knowing—none better than he—that no respectable Englishman would think of harming him.

On a parsonage lawn in Wiltshire last summer I was sitting by the side of the vicar, when he suddenly called my attention to Lady Vixen calmly sporting with her frolicsome family not more than a hundred yards distant from my host's poultry run. This parson was very fond of raising all kinds of fowls, but was subject to constant loss by the marauding visits of these animals, which are in England sacred to the Goddess of Sport. "Is it not rather aggravating," I asked the vicar, "to know that these sacred cubs are growing fat and frolicsome on your fowls?" "Oh, rather," said the parson with the peculiar earnestness these words imply in the mouth of an Englishman. "Then why do you stand such nonsense?" I asked in reply. But my reverend host only looked at me in a kind of surprised silence, as

much as to say, "You are not an Englishman or you never could have suggested such an absurd thing!"

A sufferer is not wholly without redress, however, and may receive compensation for losses if he chooses to apply to the master of the hounds, as each hunt has an exchequer made up from subscriptions of the members to the support of what is called the Covert Fund—and this money is used for the purpose of making good the losses of fowls destroyed, and fences damaged in the interest of the sport. But the sporting feeling is so deeply ingrained in most Englishmen, rich and poor, especially the country people, that many of them prefer to suffer in silence rather than to mention their loss and run the risk of having their claim critically scanned if not disputed. Hence it comes to this in the end, that the farmer—and everybody else—is expected to suffer spoliation gladly, for the good of the general cause of the finest sport in the world. The hound, therefore, is the only person in England who has the right to molest this sacred animal, the fox, and even he may only do so under the rules of the game; that is, at the appointed times and in the appointed manner prescribed by the laws of the sport. "Self-hunting" is strictly forbidden, and none but the most inexperienced puppies are ever permitted, even a night out among the covers. When are dogs not dogs? When they are hounds. For the foxhound, you know,—if you are not a

complete ignoramus—is never under any circumstances a “dog” and it is for this reason that I have called him a person; and few two-legged persons have anything like the dignity of look and bearing that this noble creature possesses. I recall very vividly the look of utter contempt a master of the hunt once gave me when I spoke of hounds as dogs. His contempt was so complete that he did not stoop even to correct my ignorance; and I afterwards learnt that he remonstrated with a gentleman who had offered me a mount, saying, “Why do you lend that Yankee a horse? He can’t ride. He calls hounds, dogs!” I was very anxious to convince that scornful English sportsman that I could ride, but I have never up to the present time been afforded an opportunity.

Foxhounds are not only not dogs, but they have no such things as tails. They possess, it is true, caudal appendages somewhat resembling tails, but they are in reality—or at least in sporting nomenclature—nothing of the kind. They are “sterns” and only “sterns.” And their appearance certainly justifies the name or the epithet, as they stand up as straight and as stiff as so many spears. I took a very modest part in a hunting function only last September when this fact was impressed upon me in a not altogether agreeable manner. The master of the “Vale of the White Horse Hounds” sent me notice that there would be a meet not far from my house, at the rather early, but very healthy hour, of half-past five

o'clock. This notice did not carry the offer of a mount with it, and I was forced to walk or to resort to my bicycle. I chose the latter means of locomotion and was the first person to arrive at the appointed place, Down Ampney Park, the property of the Earl of St. Germans. I had not waited long before I heard the pack approaching, and as this was the first meet of the season for cub-hunting, and the hounds had not been out for several months, they seemed a little restless. It required all the vigilance of the master and the whips to keep them in hand. I stood a solitary figure in the open park. The morning twilight still lingered, and gave me a more or less dubious appearance—when the hounds came up and swarmed all round me, with their great eager eyes fastened upon me and looking me through and through as if they did not quite know what to make of me. Their tails—I mean their sterns—were erect and stiff like the bayonets of a charging squadron. I saw nothing in fact but their heads and sterns and was suddenly possessed with the fear that they might mistake me for a cub and begin the hunt there and then. They were some forty in number, or twenty couple to speak the language of the hunt, and as they surrounded me and sniffed at me, I looked anxiously at the master for a kindly word of recognition which I hoped might relieve the tension. But this word seemed a long—a very long—time in coming. It, however, did come at last, and instantly



changed the situation, for the pack no sooner heard their master's voice, than they turned their gaze from me to him as much as to say, "Oh, you know him! It's all right then, but we couldn't quite make him out with his bicycle and all that." I was of course thoroughly ashamed of my momentary alarm. But the reader must remember that I was not brought up in a foxhound kennel, and could not be supposed to know their likes and dislikes. I am aware that hunting people will laugh at my fears, but that foxhounds are as liable to make mistakes as other superior persons appears from the following incident. A keen hunter and all-round sportsman told me only the other day, that his little daughter, mounted upon a pony, was once almost attacked by a pack of stag hounds, who appeared to mistake the combination of child and pony for a stag. All dogs—in which general term I suppose I may for the moment include hounds—go by scent more than sight, and seldom fully identify an object even if it be their master, without using their sense of smell.

Salop or Shropshire is not one of the famous hunting counties such as Leicestershire and Buckinghamshire. But it is certainly one of the most interesting from a historic point of view, as well as for the fact of its extreme beauty of landscape, which is diversified by hills and dales; intersected by rivers and streams; and threaded by silvery brooks; and whilst a "field"

cannot be kept so long or so steadily in sight as in Leicestershire and other flat counties, yet the diversity of surface has its advantages, at least from a spectator's point of view, for hounds and hunters appear and disappear over and under the hills in a most picturesque manner, and thus present a much more lively scene to the mere onlooker than is possible in a flat country, where the riding is of course much straighter, the runs much longer, and hence the sport much better.

The appointments of all the packs in England and Scotland are announced at least once a week in *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, and all the local papers. Printed cards are also sent out to the members of the hunt giving all necessary information. The time of the hunt varies in different counties, but eleven o'clock appears to be the most popular hour. In the olden time—yet not very olden either—the meet was usually preceded by a sit-down breakfast, for both men and women. This custom has now entirely disappeared, but there is still a snack, and a nip, to be had standing, in the dining-room of the host and hostess of the meet. The servants of the hunt are provided with bread, beer, and cheese in the open. The hunt is not always entertained, even in this slight manner, and the most usual thing is for the sportsmen to meet the hounds in the open, ready for work. This—which may be called the actual meet—takes place near some covert, which is drawn at once, and if a find is made the field is

soon in motion. It is hardly necessary to remark that finds do not always come off according to expectation, nor are the quickest finds always the best, for they too often result in chopping the fox, which is fatal to real sport. I may explain to the uninitiated that a "chopped fox" is one that is killed as soon as found and the sport of course consists in the chasing more than the killing. But the killing is after all necessary to the sport, for the brush is the object of the quest, and a run, be it never so fine and exciting, is not complete without the capture and death of the quarry. But if the brush (foxes like hounds have no tails) be the object of the hunter, the blood of the poor beast is even more the object of the hounds, and to deprive hounds of this, their legitimate reward, would be fatal to the discipline and efficiency of any pack. The proper and natural termination of a run then is a kill; and after the brush is secured, the hounds are left free to rend the body and drink the blood of the animal who has furnished the fun.

But is there not a very strong flavour of the most refined cruelty about this aristocratic pastime? Perhaps so, but let us not enquire too curiously into that matter just now, for we have other and more agreeable things to occupy us. Besides if we become too squeamish about the matter of killing things we shall all become vegetarians and grow into squashes or something of that kind. Then again, who shall say whether

it is more cruel to kill things for mere sport, or simply to eat? In war, for example, the best sportsmen do not eat what they slaughter. It is, you see, therefore a question bristling all over with fine points of casuistry, and we had better leave it alone, that is if we would preserve our peace of mind, and our appetites for succulent viands.

I lived within the domain of the Albrighton hunt not far from the kennels and caught frequent glimpses of pink coats "whene'er I take my walks abroad." There was a house meet the other day at "Beckbury Hall," the country residence of Colonel and Mrs. Tillotson. I was living in the rectory-house very near the hall, and owing no doubt to this circumstance of propinquity, I was included among the guests. The hounds in charge of the whips arrived punctually at eleven o'clock, and it was a fine sight to see them move into the green field adjoining the lawn, where refreshments, such as I have already mentioned, were provided in the open for the servants of the hunt, who numbered six in all, and looked as well mounted and as smart in their pink coats almost as their masters. The hunt was in the meantime assembling in the front of the hall, and on my return from the park I was confronted with a very animated and a very pretty scene. The dining-room, where was provided a great variety of "nips" and "snacks," was well filled with red and grey and black and all kinds of coats, both male and female, and a merry chatter

sounded throughout the house. In front of the hall was a mixed assemblage of dogcarts, carriages, motor cars, and mounts held by grooms. Many of the sportsmen come to the meet in vehicles, their hunters being brought by their grooms. And then of course, many people, especially ladies, come to the meet who do not follow the hounds.

After half an hour or so of handshaking and gossip, for which the light refreshments served as an excuse, the hounds moved off, and the master mounted and led his field to a hollow about a mile and a half distant, where the hounds soon found, and away we sped over hill and adown dale following hard the cry of "Tally-ho" and "Hal-loa!" I say we, for I was actually following the hounds, for the first time in my life. But sad to say I was not well mounted, and had to suffer the humiliation of seeing the field draw out and gallop past me, and worst of all a hedge was immediately to be encountered, and here I was obliged to halt, till the last horse had gone over, when I ignominiously crawled through the hole the field had made—if such an action as crawling can be attributed to anything in the shape of a horse. I hasten to say that my horse was a pony. But—such is the irony of fate—when I had accomplished the feat of crawling through the hedge I found to my great surprise that I was at the head, instead of the tail of the hunt. There had been a call back which I did not hear, or hear-

ing did not understand, and I beheld the master leading the pack to the winding of his horn not a hundred yards away. The field had halted a quarter of a mile or so in the rear, and bore an expectant look. My pony seemed to realise the advantage which the fortunes of the chase had brought to him and was disposed to cut in and lead the field. But I had heard a great deal about the crime, or at least the bad manners of over-riding, and had the modesty to restrain my ambitious mount. I was able, however, to keep the field in sight for an hour or more, when hounds at last got away in a straight course and I took my humble road home.

I have heard it said that foxes are not so quickly found nowadays as, say, a quarter of a century ago, although they are really as plentiful in most counties as ever they were. This—which amounts to an actual check upon the sport—is accounted for by the almost total disappearance of “The old earth-stoppers” who flourished all over the hunting districts not many years since. Earth-stopping was a regular profession and received not only the recognition, but the active encouragement and generous support of the hunting world. The earth-stopper knew both the fox and the hound as few people did, and his business was to visit the coverts and stop the holes or “earths,” as they are technically called, when the foxes were not at home. He of course knew their habits, and seldom made the mistake of stopping the earths

before the fox had started out on his nightly expeditions. But to make assurance doubly sure he often watched the foxes out of some of the most important earths before closing them. In the old days each hunt had at least one professional earth-stopper, who did his work in the still hours of the night, using a pony in order to give him rapid transit from one covert to another. Having accomplished his secret mission, he would snatch a short sleep, at some farm-house or in the stables of a big country-house, and was always on hand at the beginning of the hunt, to witness the result of his labours and to open the earths again at the proper time. He was known and welcomed by all the farming community, and went in and out among the game-keepers without any fear of having his actions misunderstood. But it finally came to pass that these nocturnal visitations were supposed to disturb the game (pheasants, partridges, etc.) and thus to interfere with the interests of another, and a kindred sport, whose ambition is big bags, rather than long runs. And thus the old earth-stopper has been almost driven out of his profession and his work is now done, for the most part, by the game-keeper who has other, and to him, superior work to do. So that earth-stopping is no longer done *con amore*, and as a natural consequence, is not well done. But, when we stop to think, it seems rather hard lines for the fox to be watched out of his home, to have his own door closed in his face, to be forced into

the open, where his enemies await him in overwhelming numbers, and be obliged thus to enter a very unequal contest, that is, to take part in a game where the dice are all loaded against him. It is a sad reflection, but men are sometimes equally handicapped in their race for life.

My last meet<sup>1</sup> was at the village of Burnhill Green, belonging to Patshull estate, the Staffordshire seat of the Earl of Dartmouth. The hounds had moved off before I arrived and drew two coverts before they found, and then to little purpose and they hung about Patshull for an hour or more, so that I was again able by a little manœuvring to keep in touch with them for a considerable time, and when I at last turned my pony homewards, I had the rare good luck of seeing the fox cross the road about ten minutes ahead of the pack, and he proved strong enough to stand up for nearly an hour after that, before he was killed. The name Dartmouth has American associations of a most interesting character, as an ancestor of the present Earl gave his name to the first American college, whose primary object was the education of the North American Indians. The present Earl went to America a few years ago to lay the cornerstone of the new hall at Dartmouth College, and his

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written I have enjoyed a real hunt on the back of a real hunter, and have thus at last realised my ambition to follow hounds across country in old England. My mount knew his work and the country equally well and carried me safely over two or three hedges and ditches with the greatest of ease.



lordship was greatly pleased with his reception, not only at Hanover and by the college authorities, but throughout America, and his sense of kinship to the American people has become a real and lasting emotion.

But this feeling is founded upon something more than the mere sentiments of affinity, and the romance of tradition, for Lord Dartmouth is also bound to the American people by the ties of consanguinity. The Dartmouth escutcheon contains the Stars and Stripes, and we know that this, our national emblem, was derived from George Washington's coat of arms. Moreover there are several heirlooms of the Washington family at Patshull House, among them being a most interesting portrait of Sir Henry Washington painted in 1593.

The present Earl, notwithstanding his high rank in the aristocratic peerage of Great Britain, is very proud of his kinship to the father of the American Republic. Lord Dartmouth is also a great admirer of ex-President Roosevelt, and, I think I may add, of many more citizens of the United States. In fact it is quite astonishing to learn the very many points of sympathetic touch between his lordship and America. I was particularly pleased to hear him speak with enthusiasm of American college songs and to express his regret that he was not able to give the young American collegians a taste of "old Eton's young Minstrelsy." And his lordship added the explana-

tion that in England it is at the public schools, such as Eton, Harrow, and Rugby, and not at the universities—as in America—that this college minstrelsy flourishes. College songs may seem a minor matter, but it is these very minor touches that reveal the common origin and common sentiment of the life and character of both countries. Lord Dartmouth's family has been very prominently connected with Staffordshire for many generations. The family seat, however, is on the border of Staffordshire, and the estate runs over into Shropshire. The present Lord Dartmouth entered politics when a very young man, and served in the important post of Conservative whip, until he succeeded—on the death of his father—to the earldom. He is a Privy Councillor, having this distinction conferred upon him at an unusually early age. Lord Dartmouth is a prominent churchman and the late Lord Bishop of Lichfield was his uncle.

It is interesting to add that Mr. Choate, when American Ambassador in England, was a guest at Patshull (July, 1899), and was present at the Puppy Show of the Albrighton Hunt on the occasion of the presentation of his portrait to the then Master, Captain Foster. Mr. Choate made a speech, and his health was proposed by Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, M.P.

The Dartmouth family is a good illustration of the fine old French motto *Noblesse Oblige* and has ever maintained its escutcheon untarnished.

The Albrighton pack is the property of Captain Foster, brother of W. H. Foster, Esquire, of Apley Park, one of the most beautiful seats in Salop, comprising an estate of about 5,000 acres. The Fosters have been the chief supporters of the Albrighton Hunt for many years, and the present head of the family is famous as one of the best riders to Hounds in all England. The district included within the Albrighton Hunt is very rich in country-houses, great and small, and I have never experienced such universal hospitality anywhere else.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ANGLICAN CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

I LIVED six years in England as an American clergyman, acting under special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury. I was also licensed by the Bishop of London, and received the written permission of more than a dozen other bishops to officiate as a *locum tenens* in their respective dioceses. Besides this I have taken occasional duty in many other dioceses where episcopal sanction was not required, so that my observations cover almost the whole of England. And I have experienced nothing but the kindest consideration from both the clergy and the laity of the Church of England. This paper, therefore, is inspired by no spirit of hostility, but by a true, if mistaken, feeling of love and loyalty to the Mother Church of the Anglican communion.

My point of view must necessarily be American. Yet I believe I am also able to appreciate, to some degree, at least, the English position, otherwise this discussion would be bootless.

<sup>1</sup> By permission of *The Independent*.

In order to assure the reader that my study of the English Church and my observations of English life and character have been both careful and sympathetic, I venture to refer to papers on "English Oral Tradition" and "Henry VIII. and the Religious Houses," published in *The Nineteenth Century Review*.

My duty for the most part was that of *locum tenens* in country parishes. I resided, as a rule, in the parsonage (vicarage or rectory-house, as the case might be), hence I was able to take my observations from the very centre and heart of the parish. My tenencies were for periods of one, three, six, and twelve months.

Perhaps it is well for me to say that I did not go direct from America to England, but by way of Germany, where I acted for several years as chaplain to the American Church in Munich. I had also held the post of chaplain in France and Italy. In all of these countries I was in the way of meeting British clergymen and of learning something about the administration of the Church of England. Besides I had often visited England as boy and man, so that I did not find myself in a wholly strange situation. Still the atmosphere of the Church of England was very different from that of the Continental chaplaincies, and I was impressed from the first by the stability and dignity of the position of an English Church incumbent and the tone of authority which his security of tenure imparted to his office, and—viewed from the

purely personal standpoint of the parson—I considered the British cleric a most fortunate man.

The next thing that arrested my attention was the austere aloofness of the English bishop and the air of legality which enveloped him. It took me some time to realise that a lawyer—and his fee—always stood between me and my father in God, and that in very fact I was dealing almost exclusively with a lawyer. I at first supposed that the bishop's secretary was a clergyman—as he invariably is in America—and I made the mistake, more than once, of addressing him as the reverend. Such a thing as seeing a bishop face to face, or of getting one friendly word of greeting from him by tongue or pen, I soon learnt was not to be thought of, and the utter coldness of the thing nearly froze me to death during my first winter. But I was in England for study, experience, and adventure, and determined to stick it out to the bitter end—if bitter it should prove. On second thoughts I find it is not literally correct to say that I did not during my first winter meet a bishop face to face. As the *locum tenens* of a parish I was asked by the rural dean to take part in the re-opening ceremony of an old and disused church. The bishop of the diocese was present, and I ventured to introduce myself to him as an American clergyman, acting under his permission. He turned upon me with a look of astonishment. "American? With American orders? I know nothing of an American priest officiating in my diocese." And this was

the only greeting I received from his lordship; and it set me to wondering whether a man could become a bishop in England without having the manners of a gentleman. I confided this unhappy experience to a brother clergyman, who was both a scholar and a gentleman. "Yes," said he, "such things do happen in the Church of England, and you must understand that your case is not an exceptional one; let that console you." And it has. I knew, of course, that there could be nothing personal in the cold comfort I got from the English episcopate, as I was unknown to nearly all of the bishops, and I learnt, as time went on, that the unbeneficed clergyman, and especially the non-parochial clergyman, is a wholly minus quantity in the eye of the diocesan—for the Church of England is made up of parishes, and a minister without a parish connection of some sort—except he be some high official—does not come within the purview—to use a legal phrase—of the diocesan's functions. But, strange to say, in spite of all this, the Church of England is governed—not by bishops, as I had supposed—but by act of Parliament; and the bishops, realising this fact, surround themselves with lawyers, who define the scope of their episcopal authority, and the bishops naturally confine their activities, for the most part, within these legal limitations. That they possess human sympathy beyond the bounds of their episcopal dignity I have no doubt, but they are so hedged about with lordships and palaces that the

man and the Christian minister are often lost in the grand official. It is a dangerous thing to take a successful schoolmaster out of his schoolroom, or a learned professor out of his chair, put him in a palace and dub him "My Lord." In nine cases out of ten it turns his head and spoils his character. The social pretensions of bishops not too well-born were brought to my attention at Lucerne, Switzerland, early in my ministry, by the chaplain of an English lord bishop. "You know," said the chaplain, who himself had some well-grounded family pretensions, "that his lordship is not quite a gentleman by birth, and hence he makes the most of the dignity of his high office."

On the other hand, I have generally found that when a bishop is a man of good birth he is also a man of good manners and simple habits—always amiable and usually friendly disposed to the stranger within his gates. I may, perhaps, without meaning to be invidious, give two examples of what I am trying to suggest. One of these examples I take from the Midlands, the other from the south of England. A clergyman of the very highest scholarship and of hardly less high birth was offered the bishopric of a diocese with a country palace attached. He accepted the diocese, but declined the palace, and took up his residence in a very modest dwelling, where I had the honor of visiting him. His diocese was divided not long after he became bishop, and he voluntarily removed from the old See city—the site



of one of the great cathedrals of England—to make his home in a huge, dirty, smoky, manufacturing town. An almost exactly parallel thing happened, about the same time, not a thousand miles from London, where another bishop, of similar birth and scholarship, left a palace and a cathedral to live in the midst of squalor and poverty. How much easier it is, apart from every other consideration, to have relations with a bishop who is not fenced about and shielded from the vulgar view by the high walls of a sequestered palace. This is not mere theorising, and I point to the two bishops just mentioned as object lessons of the good results of what I am suggesting, for there are certainly not two bishops in the entire Anglican Communion who exert more, or, in my opinion, as much, influence for good among all sorts and conditions of men as these two veritable fathers in God.

De Quincy somewhere tells how episcopal pride descends even to servants, all of which shows that if the bishop resigned his palace and his worldly title it would probably promote family modesty if no other virtue. But this family pride points to much graver matters, for it can hardly exist where the bishop is a godly man, intent on doing the work of a Christian minister. The point which I am endeavouring to make is that these things—the palace and the lordly title—are corrupting influences which a bishop can seldom withstand, and his family never; and that

often, very often, they—the palace and the lordship—are fatal to what might have been under more favourable conditions a good, earnest, effective, chief shepherd. Moreover, palaces and lordships—together with knee-breeches, aprons, etc.—belong to a period in English history when bishops were often temporal princes and always temporal powers, and are therefore archaic and should long since have become obsolete. Does any sane person suppose that John Wesley or General Booth could have accomplished his vast work if he had lived in a palace, remote from the heartbeat of the mass of the people? Nowhere, perhaps, is the temperature of England registered with so much accuracy as in the city of London. But when, in recent days, was a lord bishop, or an archbishop even, given the freedom of the city as General Booth was given not long since? Is it possible that the Church of England is wholly blind to such signs of the times?

Now I believe there is no finer class of men in the world than the English clergy. I go further, and say that the English are the best educated and best mannered clerics to be found in any nation; and as the bishops can only be chosen from this splendid body of men, it seems strange that their elevation to the highest office in the Church should so often prove a fatal mistake. Well, my explanation of this sad circumstance is that the lordship and the palace into which the bishop is suddenly thrust paralyse him and render him a mere legal

official, with a strong tendency to social pretensions and worldly mindedness.

An episcopate, I believe, is essential to the stability and continuity of a Christian Church. Church history teaches us this, I think, if nothing else; and this fact is coming more and more to the front, as dogma recedes more and more into the background. There can be no such thing as cohesion or union of any sort on mere dogma, for it is the primal nature of dogma to divide by exclusion and condemnation. The *Quicumque Vult* is perhaps the typical dogmatic formula, and it begins by exclusion and condemnation. The episcopate, as such is free from all prejudice, and is at liberty to assume such an attitude toward all questions of doctrine and discipline as the times and the circumstances may suggest. As these simple truths are more and more apprehended there will be a wider and a freer acceptance of the episcopate, as the only universal point of Christian contact, as well as the only means of tracing the historic continuity of the Christian Church. But his lordship, or his grace, in a palace can never become this centre of Christian convergence. That, I think, is self-evident. The bishop is the connecting, the uniting vertebra in the body of the Church, and he cannot be separated from it without causing universal paralysis of the whole body. He has survived all reformations and all revolutions. It were as well to found a state without a head as a Church without a bishop.

Where the bishop is there is stability, cohesion, union, order; where he is not there is a want of stability, cohesion, order; and sooner or later anarchy creeps in and chaos is the final state.

The Church of England possesses a valid historic episcopate, but it can no longer grow and flourish in the hot-house atmosphere of a palace, surrounded by lordships and other civil dignitaries. It must be taken out and away from all this, and planted in the midst of the work-a-day life of the common people before it can hope to draw democratic England to its banner.

With the passing of the bishop from the palace and the House of Lords, the social exclusiveness of the country clergy would soon prove untenable, and one reform would follow fast upon the steps of the other.

I wonder if the British people fully understand what I mean by the social exclusiveness of the clergy? I doubt if they do, for they have become so accustomed to it as to be hardly able to see it—or at least to appreciate its full meaning. The first locum tenency I held was for six months in the diocese of Norfolk. I had not been in residence at the fine old rectory-house many weeks before most of the gentry in the neighbourhood had called upon me, but the resident dissenting minister took no notice of my arrival. I thought this strange and asked the principal lady of the parish to explain it. She was literally amazed at my question, and answered, with some heat, that he would

not dare to do such a presumptuous thing. "Why presumptuous?" I inquired. "Has there been any trouble between him and the rector?"—"Not that I know of," this lady made answer, "but, of course, they have nothing to do with each other." On pressing my enquiry I found that it was not on account of their Church differences, but solely on social grounds, that these two Christian ministers living in the same little parish, were as far apart as the poles. And I ascertained further that no one not included in the very small body of "gentry" would presume to visit the rector or his family on social grounds. And that is the state of things that exists all over the countryside throughout England, with hardly an exception, so far as I know, and I have been at some pains to make a very extensive enquiry about this matter. Such a condition of things is simply appalling to an American, and it must be more or less so to many thoughtful English people, who love their Church and would like to see it the happy home of all the people, and the minister the hearty friend and pastor of all, without regard to birth or condition.

Water will find its level, and a clergyman and his family will naturally form their intimacies with the most congenial people in matters of birth, education, and tastes. But for the parsonage to adopt the social standards of the hall is to destroy the office of pastor, degrade the calling of minister, and make impotent the church's ministrations; for neither those who are excluded nor those who

are included have any respect for such utter worldly mindedness. If the people of the parish cannot meet on a common basis in the home of the church minister, they will not willingly meet on any basis in the church itself. And the truth is they do not.

In the light of this clerical social exclusiveness is it surprising that all the Nonconformists have combined and act as a solid body against the Established Church and the social order and exclusiveness it represents? Virtually no one in the country parish worships in the church except the gentry and their dependents, who fear to offend by going to the chapel. During my six years in the English Church I did not find a dozen common labourers who were *bona fide* worshippers in the Church of England. In one parish where I was *locum tenens* for three months I found the vicarage in an unsanitary condition and took lodgings in the house of a dissenter. After a month or so I observed one of the daughters in church for two Sundays in succession, and laid the flattering unction to my soul that I did it, and I said to the mother that I was glad to see Katie in church. "Yes, sir," said she, "Katie is now in service at the hall," and this she knew was a perfectly sufficient explanation.

The worst cases of all—and I have seen several—is where a poor clergyman marries a woman with money and social ambitions. There is perhaps not a hundred—I should say not half a hundred—

country livings in England today that can be taken by men without private means, and this fact is changing the character of the country clergy very rapidly. When the Archbishop of Canterbury visited the United States a few years ago he was greatly pleased, and not a little surprised, to receive a very cordial greeting from the non-Episcopal ministers, who would be classed as dissenters in England, and who, of course, never approach his grace in any way whatsoever. This expression of goodwill for the archbishop on the part of the American non-Episcopal ministers is explained by the fact that there is no social exclusiveness nor other superior pretensions by the Episcopal clergy in America. Abolish these things in England, and put the archbishop in a more modest and accessible place of residence, and I prophesy that in a very few decades he will be accepted as the head of that great body of earnest Christian men and women now known as Non-conformists. And it is perfectly plain that unless some such thing does happen the Church of England will be left high and dry, to whiten on the narrow beach of class distinction, while the warm red blood of the nation will flow away from her into the wider and deeper channels of a common humanity.

It has been shown, time after time, that something in the neighbourhood of \$500,000 is annually thrown away on empty city churches, while one-quarter of that sum cannot be raised for the mil-

lions of people swarming all round these stranded Church barks. I held a curacy just outside of the city limits, in a parish of more than eight thousand souls, which did not contain one person of independent means or position, so far as I knew, and where 90 per cent. of the people were in abject and indecent poverty, and yet the Church of England appropriates, all told, less than \$3,000 for the support of a staff of three clergymen, while within a walk of fifteen minutes there is a city church, which has practically no resident parishioners, that gives an income of \$6,000 to one cleric. This church has besides an endowment for a lectureship, which yields, I think, \$1,000 a year. I cite this case because it happens to lie within my own personal experience, but I have heard of much worse contrasts. The Bishop of London is, I hear, moving in this matter.

There is, I believe, no national Church whose history has embraced so much of the "glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"—and I think I may add of the righteousness that was Jerusalem—as the Church of England; and there is nothing which attracts and holds the reverent attention of the American and the colonial visitor to England so much as the beautiful cathedrals which cover the soft green bosom of their motherland; and as loyal children of a common race and a common religion they protest against the narrow and exclusive spirit in which this great national and racial Church inheritance is being administered.



They know, of course, that rank and social distinctions in the mother country are marked by very hard and fast lines, which it would be ignorant and futile presumption on their part to attempt to alter or modify. But the Church—their Mother Church of England—they hold should be free from all such alliances and should breathe an atmosphere of fraternity, equality, and Christian fellowship for all—untainted by rank or title or any other class distinction.

## CHAPTER XXV

### HENRY THE EIGHTH AND THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES OF LONDON<sup>1</sup>

I SUPPOSE it is hardly expected that one should maintain a wholly non-partisan attitude in discussing a subject around which so much hot controversy has raged as that of the dissolution of the religious houses by Henry the Eighth; and whilst I have made an honest effort to be fair to all, I frankly confess that, putting mere sentiment aside, my sympathies, as well as my better judgment, are strongly drawn in support of the King. For I am convinced that his conduct, and his motives, with reference to this matter, have both been grossly misrepresented. Any stick is good enough to beat Henry the Eighth with, but no cudgel is so handy or so popular as the dissolution of the religious houses. I know very well that this confession of my faith in the English Blue Beard, slight though it be, will offend at once a large number of well-meaning persons, who love the picturesque in religion (as who does not?) but who are not always

<sup>1</sup> By permission of the editor of *The Nineteenth Century and After*.

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careful to discriminate between the mere outward seeming and the true inward meaning of things.

There never has been a time in the whole history of the world, so far as I know, when religion was less picturesque than at the present moment; and we all yearn, more or less, for a glimpse, however slight, of the abbot and the abbess, the prior and the prioress, the friar, the monk, and the nun; and we read with an indignation, amounting almost to horror, how that a cruel, sensual tyrant of a king abolished, at one fell swoop, thirty-five religious houses within the single district of London, to say nothing of the rest of England. But if we pause for a moment, to let our indignation cool a little, we shall remember that this king was both a masterful man and a great statesman; and it will probably occur to us that he would hardly have been guilty of such a seeming high-handed piece of spoliation and sacrilege without good and sufficient reasons for so doing—reasons not only satisfactory to himself, but reasons that would be likely to satisfy the public as well. For, however much of a monster Henry the Eighth may have been in many ways he was certainly too much of a statesman to disregard and to outrage the public sentiment and the religious feelings of his subjects, and especially of the citizens of London. No king, however secure in his autocratic power, would have dared, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to touch with his little finger such a house, for example, as the Grey

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Friars (the Franciscans) or their sister-house of St. Clare, "The Nuns' Minorities."

Up to the beginning of the fifteenth century, or thereabouts, the people of London believed in these religious houses, and no king could have been strong enough to dissolve them, or even molest them.

Let us get these general facts and principles concerning religion, and especially concerning the life and character of the English people, kings, and governments, firmly fixed in our minds at the outset, or we shall never be able to understand and appreciate the situation as it existed when Henry the Eighth dissolved the religious houses of London, and of England.

Sentiment has played, and must always play, by far the largest part in any religious matter, and I have no disposition to turn it out of court during this investigation. To do so would be to shut the mouth of the most important, and the most creditable witness that could be summoned. In fact, I am quite willing to rest the case solely on sentiment. But it must be true sentiment, and not a false and mawkish substitute, which our historical pageants are doing so much to foster just now; where the monk and the nun, and all the other picturesque properties of mediæval Christianity are made to appear at their best—and rightly so—in these religious pictures of the past, whilst Wycliffe and Cranmer, and all the other reformers, are seen wholly out of perspective,

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and hence at their worst. This perhaps cannot be avoided, and may not be—and probably in no case is—the design of the promoters of these spectacles; but it is none the less the effect, and is an illustration of the danger to truth which always attends any attempt at symbolical teaching. There can be little doubt that the Roman Catholic Church is very much the gainer by all this historical pageantry so called. It could not very well be otherwise; nor do I utter one carping word of envy or detraction against this ancient Church for the advantage it derives from these reproductions of the picturesque past, especially at a time when there is such a dearth of the romantic, the poetical, and the truly sentimental in religion as in everything else. Taken at their best, in their proper time and place, the monkish communities presented a type of piety which greatly impressed the public, and were even at their worst always better than the rest of the world about them. But, apart from their special character, as examples of a superior type of godly living, the religious houses of London were of much practical usefulness to society in many non-ecclesiastical ways. They were the custodians of learning as well as of piety. This fact needs no special emphasis here, as it is known of all men; but it is, perhaps, not so well known that they provided hospitals—such as they were—for the poor; and schools—such as they were—for the education of the aristocracy and the gentry. They were like-

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wise the banks, and the safe depositories of the rich—the King himself frequently entrusting to their care and safe-keeping not only his money and his jewels, but much more sacred things, such as the records of his right and title to the throne. And best of all, the poor and the hungry were never turned away from their doors empty. This sort of thing—this quick charity, this practical human sympathy and aid, were the best titles of the religious houses of London to the respect and support of the public. And it should not be forgotten that this humanitarian work of the monk and the friar was often a rebuke to the non-humanitarian methods of the Catholic Church—and her priests were often the most hostile critics of these houses. Mediæval London was nothing if not religious; it was, in truth, one great religious community. Nothing was begun and nothing ended without the offices of the priest, and the sound of the church-going bell was not only heard by Dick Whittington at Highgate, but by every other London citizen—north, south, east, and west.

Again, it should not be forgotten that the religious houses of London were for many generations the only corporate bodies that could act for the common interests of the people of London. This privilege was of course prized very highly by these houses, and, like all privileges, was abused; it was finally sought to establish it as a perpetual monopoly; and—aided by the Crown—the houses endeavoured to prevent the City of London organ-

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ising itself into a civil community—that is, into a corporate life with a mayor, aldermen, and the other officers and functions of civic life.

They—the religious communities—also opposed the formation of guilds and fraternities of all kinds, as such confederacies took power out of religious hands and put it into secular hands. Never was there, even among the Jews, a more perfect theocratic form of government than was seen in London during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; it seemed to answer very well during a certain period in the history of London when religious rites and ceremonies were regarded as the only things that mattered, and it was perhaps a necessary stage in the city's self-realisation. But this could not go on for ever; and had it been unduly prolonged it would have been fatal to the civic life and commercial development of London. The twenty-four hours of day and night were divided into three equal parts—eight hours for prayer, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for work and play. Now, it is perfectly clear that such a law of life and conduct would never have made London what it is today, the metropolis of the world. That kind of thing is better suited for the climate and inhabitants of Benares, or Thibet, than London or England. But besides this very serious inroad which this theocratic government made upon the working time of London, these religious houses hindered the development and expansion of the city in another way. They owned, or at least were

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in possession of, one-quarter of the land in the narrowly restricted area to which Nature had confined the limits of the city; and this land was, of course, taken out of the market of barter or sale, and was therefore useless for any business purposes whatever. We must keep in mind that there were thirty-five religious houses, with their extensive possessions—each one a complete self-governing community. It had its church, its hospital,<sup>1</sup> its brewery, its bakehouse, its corn mill, and its vegetable fields. And besides these thirty-five communities there were 126 churches and one cathedral—all within the narrow limits of what is now known as the business part of London. The finest spots of England, outside of London, were not only pre-empted, but were in the exclusive possession of the monk and the friar. So sore a grievance did this state of things become, even as early as the reign of Henry the Fourth, that Parliament prayed the Crown to confiscate, in the interests of the nation, the land that had been appropriated and sequestered by religious bodies. This meant virtual disendowment, and it would have been carried into effect if the people of England, and not their king, had had their wish.

This national prayer for relief from the monk and the friar was repeated in the reign of Henry

<sup>1</sup> These were very poor things at best, and were often actual evils, for there were not infrequently tumbled in one bed five or six patients with as many different complaints.



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the Fifth, and so earnest was this prayer as to cause that royal Church zealot and bigot to dissolve the alien religious houses. Mr. James Gairdner in his *Lollardy and the Reformation* skims lightly over these rather significant Parliamentary incidents. Can this be for the reason that they do not help on the main purpose of his thesis, which seems to be to discredit not only the "Lollards," but all other Church reformers?

These two Parliamentary petitions to the sovereign show us, I think, how the wind began to blow as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century—fanned, no doubt, by Wycliffe and his disciples—and prepare us somewhat for the gale that finally set in, and continued to blow till all the religious houses of London and England fell before the blast.

I have not the time, and this is hardly the place, to attempt an estimate of the influence of Wycliffe and the Lollards in this popular movement for the dissolution of the religious houses; but that Lollardy was a most potent protest against priestly and monkish sway is an historical fact which even Mr. Gairdner, with all his ability and hostile spirit, will have some difficulty in shaking.

But let us see how the religious houses of London began, grew, prospered, and decayed. They were at the first a popular movement in the widest and best sense, and depended wholly upon public favour for their support. Everything

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was given them; their land, their dwellings, their churches, and in many cases their daily food in the most literal sense. Public opinion was, in fact, as the very air they breathed, and so long as they commended themselves to the public their life and activity were assured, and no one, be he bishop or king, dared to molest them. And they inspired confidence not so much by their preaching and praying as by their practical charity and humanity—that is, by the actual service they rendered, not to the rich and the mighty, but to the sick and the poor and the unfortunate. In the beginning of the thirteenth century some Grey Friars, the followers of St. Francis, came to London and quietly began their work. They made themselves huts of wattle and daub just outside the city walls, near New Gate, and began their ministrations among the poor. No disease was so loathsome, no quarter so unsanitary, no person so low or depraved as to deter these friars in their brotherly ministrations. The people of London looked on and were convinced, and gave them all the help they asked for—as people always will do to such people—and they grew and prospered, requiring no other protection than the good opinion of the public—a protection stronger than all the king's horses and all the king's men. Their sister-society of St. Clare—"The Nuns' Minories"—settled outside of Aldgate and did a like work for the sick and the poor and the fallen of their own sex; and they too, grew in favour with God and man.

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There were five friar houses that have left their names in the streets and districts of London: The Grey Friars, or the Franciscans; the Black Friars, or the Dominicans; the White Friars, or the Carmelites; the Austin Friars, and the Crutched Friars, or the Friars of the Holy Cross.

The "friar" must be sharply differentiated from the monk. The friar was generally drawn from the ranks of the people; and he was always and everywhere a man without property. The monk was generally, at any rate in London, drawn from the ranks of the gentry and the aristocracy. He usually paid a good round fee to be taken into an abbey or a priory, and he lived for the most part in ease and comfort—often in luxury, as luxury was reckoned in those days. Many of the abbeys and priories were little less than high-class social clubs for younger sons. They were often as exclusive as the West End social clubs are today. Those who were in could keep others out; and this they often did, from social consideration, and in order to keep down the numbers, so that there might be a better division of the accommodations and the general comforts of the house. The abbot ranked with an earl, and in some instances—as Westminster Abbey—was hardly of less consideration than a prince. A prior was only of less importance than an abbot. An abbess might be of royal blood, and was, as a rule, a lady of high social rank, and the nuns usually came

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from the same social class. Queens sometimes retired to London nunneries for a season of rest and seclusion from the strain of Court life. This fact in itself is quite sufficient to indicate the spaciousness and comfort which the apartments in a London nunnery—such, for example, as St. Helen's, Bishopsgate—possessed. The abbey and the priory were the first of the religious houses of London to lose the confidence and the support of the general public; but by that time they had accumulated sufficient property to live in independence of public favour and in contempt of public opinion. When an abbot moved abroad for an airing, or any other purpose, he was attended by a large and brilliant company of dependents—often numbering more than a hundred—and by every other token of pride and rank and power; and the prior was second only to the abbot. The monks of London frequently vied with the nobles in horses and hawks and hounds, and in every other accompaniment of a sportsman and a man of the world. They dressed in the latest and gayest fashion, with nothing to mark their special calling. They kept their mistresses, and lived the fashionable and worldly life to the full.

Wycliffe's and the Lollards' testimony with reference to these matters is abundantly supported in the most unwitting and unconscious manner by all kinds of documents, and especially by that devoted and truthful antiquary of London town—John Stow. Such a thing as real piety was hardly

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thought of at all in connection with the abbeys and the priories of London in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

The friars were a wholly different and a far superior class, and they retained their character for piety and charity long after the monk had lost the regard and the confidence of the people. Mankind in the past appears to have been about the same from generation to generation, and has generally been able to see more or less clearly any notable service rendered to humanity, and we have only to take note of how mankind, acting under sane and normal conditions, has expressed its likes and dislikes, in order to know the real worth of the Church or any other society at any given time and place. I say "under sane and normal conditions," for there are special circumstances of stress and excitement—such as the religious mania or the mob spirit—when society seems to be possessed and insanity reigns. But true public opinion, when it can be got at, is the best, almost the only sure test of the value of any man or association of men for a given purpose. And this public opinion is sometimes expressed as clearly and as effectually by a negative as by a positive attitude. Let me repeat, then, that the religious houses of London depended wholly for their life and support on public opinion, and so long as that opinion was favourable to them they grew and prospered. They were not, be it observed, identical with the **Church**, but were only societies within the Church

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fold. So that no one was under a strictly Church obligation to contribute to their support. It was all a purely voluntary matter. A very large proportion of the friars—always the majority—were mere laymen. The founder of the most famous and the best of all the houses, the Franciscans, was himself a layman. It was not, therefore, wholly nor distinctly by a hope of future reward nor the fear of future punishment that the people were induced to give of their substance to these houses; but it was from a sincere regard for their noble, unselfish, human charity that the public volunteered such generous aid. This should be kept well in mind. It was to the Church, with her priests and sacraments, that the people looked for salvation, and not to the religious houses; and this faith in the offices of the Church was independent of the personal character of the officiating priest. It was his office, and not his person, that was sacred and efficacious. Not so the office of the monk or the friar. It was of little or no religious significance as such, and his whole power and authority lay in his personal devotion and sanctity. This, and this alone it was that so often gave to friar priests their popularity as father confessors.

Of course, the friar and the monk did their work in the name and by the sanction of the Catholic Church, and the Church got the glory of it all; but it did not shield the friar as it did the secular, or parish priest, from the censure of the public. He

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rose and fell in power and esteem in proportion as he convinced the public of his sincerity and his usefulness. If this distinction between the Catholic Church and the religious houses be fully grasped we shall be able, I think, without any great difficulty, to judge of the character of any religious house at any given period of its history. This judgment will for the most part be founded upon public opinion, and the best way to get at public opinion is through the individual charity of the persons who constitute the public. A man must be perfectly convinced of the merit of a cause before he can be induced to give his money to it. He may be, and often is, deceived for a time; but no device, however skilful, can deceive a whole community for very long. If the religious houses of London had been nothing more than skilful pretences of piety and charity and humanity, they could not have gone on for two hundred years and more; and if these houses had been still discharging their high functions of human service for the well-being of society, the Lollards, and King Henry the Eighth, and all the other forces of Protestantism would have beaten against their walls in vain. These two propositions are clearly self-evident and need no elaboration.

Why is it that we have not got the hermit and the anchorite with us today? For the very same reason that we have not got the monk and the friar—they are not wanted. And they were not wanted at the time of the Reformation, and for a

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very considerable period before the Reformation, as I shall now proceed to make plain; and I think that a slight review of the hermit and anchorite may help me in doing this, as it will enable the reader to see not only the growth and the decay, but the death and the burial of these very romantic mediæval religious orders. They are frequently confused with each other, but they were perfectly distinct in motive and character; as much so, and even more so, than the monk and the friar.

The anchorite and anchoress—for this order was open to women—was a Church institution, and could not be separated from the Church as a fabric. It was not, however, an integral part of the parish or communal life, but merely an adjunct to it, and [the parish priest, the abbot, the prior, or the head of the religious house was responsible both for its creation and its support. That is to say, the anchorite looked to the responsible head of the parish or the religious house for food enough at least to keep life going; and of course this food had to be brought to the recluse. But as a rule the bequests made in wills for the benefit of the anchorhold were enough and more than enough for this purpose; the fact being that the parish churches and religious houses made a considerable profit out of their anchor-holds, both by the odour of sanctity which they imparted and by the actual funds they drew. The anchorite was a perfect recluse, and never for one moment quitted his cell on any ac-



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count or under any pretence whatsoever. The cell might be in some part underground, but it always provided a point of observation from which the recluse could behold the elevation of the Host, and thus assist at and partake in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It was, therefore, generally attached to the side of the church, as near the sanctuary as possible, and a window was let into the wall at an elevation corresponding to the cell. One is often shown these windows in old country churches, and is told that they were constructed as peepholes, or "squints," for the benefit of the village lepers, who were not permitted within the church; as though the leper was a well-understood and permanent element in the village church life. Of course the "leper squint" is an absurd fiction. These low side windows were for the benefit of the anchorite, and their history coincides perfectly with the history of the anchor-hold, so that we see no church erected after the fourteenth century with the so-called "leper squint." The anchorite, as I have said, was an absolute recluse, and never stirred from his cell; but that did not prevent people coming to him—and more especially to her—for counsel and advice on all manner of subjects. They were the village oracles, and were consulted by all sorts and conditions of people on the most trivial as well as on the most sacred things, but perhaps more often by the lovesick maid and swain than by the graver members of society.

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The hermit—there of course could be no such thing as a hermitess—was a perfectly independent character, attached to no place or church, and played his game, so to speak, entirely off his own bat. He was not necessarily a recluse—I am speaking more of the London hermit—but often lived in the very eye of the public, choosing his pitch where the tide of humanity ebbed and flowed most freely, for he depended wholly upon the casual charity of the public; and when business became slack at Newgate, or Ludgate, for example, he struck camp and moved to London Bridge, or Tower Hill. He, too, was counted a wise and holy man, and many a sober alderman on his way to his warehouse stopped to consult the London hermit on matters of the gravest concern.

The hermit and the anchorite were signs of their times, and served, no doubt, some purpose. At any rate they struck a note of romance in the life and character of the London of their day, and we look back upon their decay and disappearance with feelings of tender pity. But we cannot reproduce them, and would not if we could. They died a natural death, and are interred with the many other forms and customs which grew out of the circumstances and conditions of the times. The dissolution of the anchorite and the hermit was brought about by no act of violence, but by the gradual and natural processes of decay and death, for as soon as they lost the favour of the public

they *ipso facto* ceased to be, and no Act of Parliament or royal decree was necessary for their extinction.

This is really just what would have happened in the case of the religious houses had it not been for the property that they had accumulated—contrary to their vows, be it remembered—and which enabled them to linger on after they had ceased to perform their proper functions, or receive the public favour. We know with the most positive assurance that they did cease to receive the public support long before their dissolution. How do we know this? Through the wills of the citizens of London. These wills tell a very interesting tale, and they have now been edited in such a careful manner as to make them accessible to anyone who cares to be informed about this matter, and I refer my readers to them.<sup>2</sup> What do we learn from these wills? That in the beginning the religious houses of London were in constant receipt of bequests by the wills of the citizens of London. The dearly beloved Grey Friars came in for the greater share, but none of them were forgotten. In Besant's *Mediæval London* a tabulated statement is given showing the gradual decrease of these bequests, until they finally cease altogether. I extract from this table and from the author's comments the following significant fact. The Grey Friars—formerly the most popular of all—

<sup>2</sup> Sharp's *Calendar of Wills, The Publications of the Camden Society*, and Dr. Furnivall's *Fifty Earliest English Wills*.

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obtained only one bequest between 1396 and 1436; after that year none at all. The Black Friars got no legacies at all from 1413 to 1503, when one fell to them. The White Friars got none between 1395 and 1503, when they received one. The Austin Friars got none after 1395; and the Crutched Friars none from 1460 to 1518. These "bequests" are more than straws showing the way the wind blew; they are positive, though unconscious, evidence that the religious houses of London had lost public favour long before the Reformation, and were merely existing upon sufferance and the accumulations of past favours. But for such "houses" to have continued at all after they had ceased to hold the good opinion of the public was nothing less than a public nuisance, and a public danger of no small character. For we know perfectly well that when a large number of single men are thrown together in a community of any sort, religious or otherwise, without strict discipline and exacting duties, their own demoralisation is sure and rapid; and the wonder is that they were tolerated so long. The anchorite and the hermit had to go at once, as soon as they lost their popularity; for they had had no chance of accumulating any reserve fund, and they were without houses of their own in which to shelter themselves from the face of the storm of public disfavour. But the religious houses were not thus exposed to the changing winds of fortune; for they not only possessed good and comfortable dwellings, but they had

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gathered together during their long years of public goodwill a large reserve capital which saved them from immediate extinction, and enabled them to prolong their existence indefinitely. They thus cumbered the narrow ground of London in no mere figurative sense. This more or less scandalous state of things continued for many years after these houses had fallen from their high estate into utter disregard and disfavour. It was solely their accumulated property that kept the religious houses afloat so long after the anchorite and the hermit had gone the way of the world.

The public, however, had a positive as well as a negative grievance against these lingering communities. They were sanctuaries, and offered places of refuge for all sorts and conditions of men. This may have been at certain times, and under certain conditions, especially political, a wise and humane provision, but it had shared in the general degeneration of these houses, and had become a serious obstacle to the proper execution of the law, and thus hindered the business of the city in a most important matter. And it was perfectly well understood that these religious houses derived a very substantial revenue, from their office of sanctuary, by compounding with these unwilling guests, whether criminals or otherwise. This money was not, of course, paid down on the nail, but was disguised under the plausible name of "board" and fees. The Knights Templars are another illustra-

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tion of what I am endeavouring to make appear. No one doubts that this order had its origin in the best of Christian motives; and no intelligent person doubts that their dissolution became a public necessity. Still it did not justify the cruel, treacherous, and bloody manner in which the King of France and the Pope of Rome put a sudden end to this order. But we hear little or nothing in criticism of that high-handed piece of tyranny from such historians as Mr. Gairdner. The causes leading up to the dissolution of the religious houses of London and of England are simple historical facts, and it is the height of folly to import into this discussion—as Mr. Gairdner has done—any religious or party rancour. We have still another example immediately before us in our own day and generation of how the religious houses of a nation may bring about their own dissolution. When the unification of Italy was accomplished in 1870, it was found that the religious houses of the country were in a state of decay and vice, as they were in England at the time of the Reformation, and the Italian State, acting through the Crown, dissolved these houses, and confiscated the property, which had been drawn from the people; and this drastic act caused no hint of any protest from the people. On the contrary, the royal decree abolishing these houses of old Italy was hailed with the liveliest expressions of popular satisfaction by the citizens of the New Italy.

Would Mr. Gairdner have the boldness to say

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that the Italian Parliament passed this act of dissolution "to please" King Victor Emmanuel the First? For that is what he says his own nation's Parliament did "to please Henry the Eighth." This I affirm to be a gross libel upon the English nation and race. Again, Mr. Gairdner says that "Henry the Eighth acted from passion and self-will." Would he say this of the act of Victor Emmanuel in a precisely similar case? One has only to travel through Italy with one's eyes open to see the truth for oneself; and no historian would dare to make such a charge against Italy's great patriot King for he could be, and would be, instantly brought to book. This can be done in safety against a remote English king of bad repute; but when an English Parliament, together with the whole English nation and race, is made to suffer by this libel it is high time to protest. What do we find in Italy after this act of dissolution? In the public streets and squares of every town of importance is to be seen a statue either to King Victor Emmanuel or to Garibaldi—generally to both. One will also find in every town these names given to streets and quarters. On the other hand one never finds statues erected to, or a street named after, a monk or a Pope, or any other ecclesiastic. These facts prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the dissolution of the religious houses of Italy by Victor Emmanuel expressed the popular will and true sentiment of the nation. It is a sign of the times, a sign that the friar and the monk have

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played their part in Italy, as they had in England, and must make way for a new and a different state of things. "The old order changeth, yielding place to the new."

Everyone knows perfectly well that the continuation of the religious houses of London after the Reformation would have been not only an intolerable nuisance but an utter physical impossibility—that is, if London was to become what it quickly did become, the market and banking house of the world. We may sigh and lament over the picturesque and romantic past, as we do over our youth and beauty, but it cannot be brought back. And I go further, and say that people are wanting in a true sense of the picturesque and the romantic who endeavour to carry the habits, the manners, and the customs of the remote past into the present. As the religious houses declined, hospitals, schools, colleges, and libraries took their places. The Reformation set the mind free, and the immediate result was seen in such men as Bacon, Shakespeare, Jonson, and the golden age of English letters. This classical period of England, when almost every man of rank was a man of letters, was hardly the age to pass Acts of Parliament merely to please a king. Ah! Mr. Gairdner, we are not all such fools as you think, and you may speak as contemptuously as you like of the burning of vulgar Lollards; and may shout as loud as you please of the "Martyrs for Rome," but you ought not to be surprised if, in the midst of your performance, the



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wig of the advocate is discovered under the hood of the historian.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was a reply to this article in the July (1909) number of *The Nineteenth Century and After*, by James Gairdner, C. B., under the title of "Henry the Eighth and the Monastery. A Reply to the Rev. G. Monroe Royce."

But in this reply the very distinguished author—who had been made a Commander of the Bath as a reward for his book, which I criticise—admits that my main attack was successful. He says: "Let me admit there is something in Mr. Royce's statement. . . . For indeed I confess that my treatment of monasticism is exceedingly defective. . . . There are defects and errors in the treatment of this subject which I much regret."

And yet his book *Lollardy and the Reformation in England* had been loudly acclaimed by the critics and scholars of England as a great and original work, which had changed the whole point of view of the Reformation to the serious damage of Protestantism.

It is rather noteworthy that "An American Parson" without any pretensions to scholarship should have been the first to point out how "defective" and full of "errors"—to use the author's own words—this epoch-making book proved to be.









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