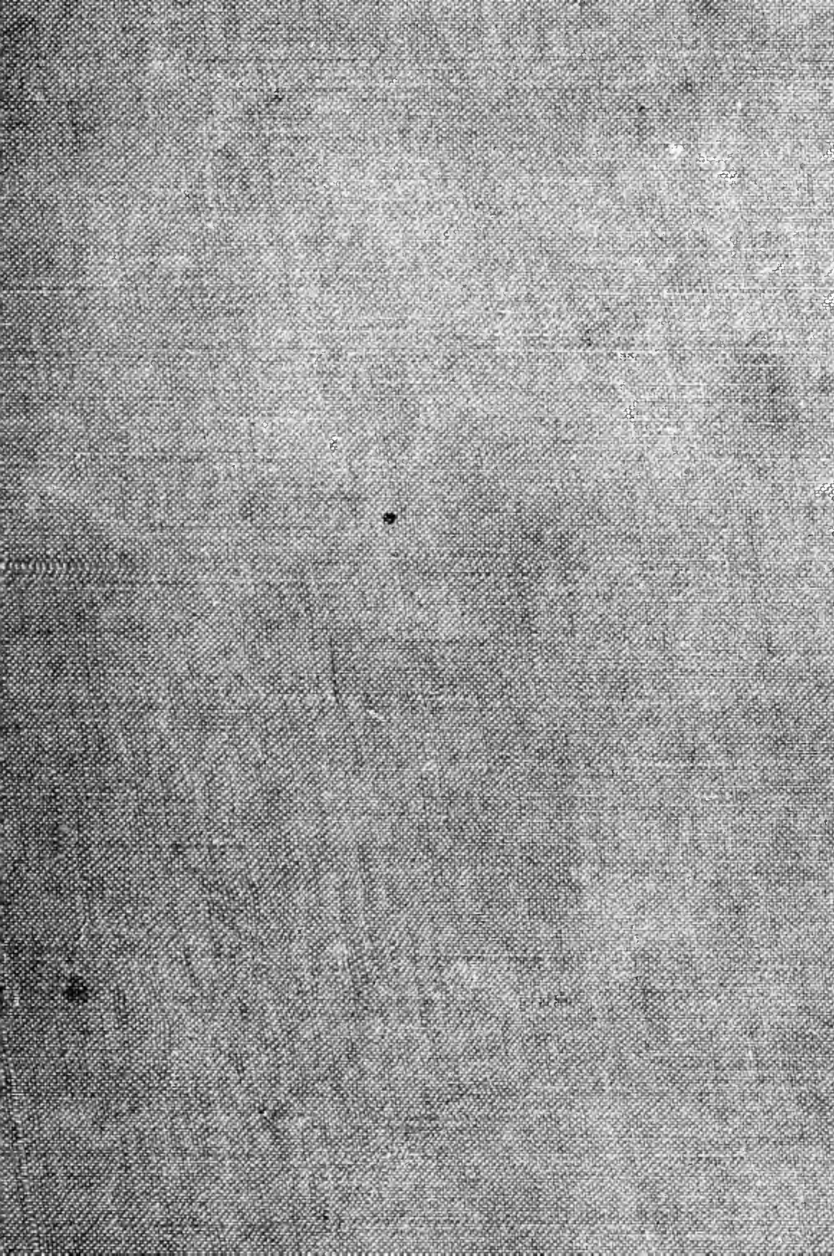

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THE OLD-TIME PARSON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE REVEREND DOCTOR SYNTAX

THE OLD-TIME PARSON

BY

P. H. DITCHFIELD,

M.A., F.S.A.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE, FELLOW OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS book makes no pretension to be a complete and regular history of the clerical office. Many volumes would be needed to record the lives, manners, and customs of the clergy. The writer has tried to paint a portrait of the parson at various stages of his career, to catch a glimpse of the Saxon and mediæval cleric, to see the bishop in his palace, to show what kind of cleric ruled in Elizabethan and later times, to picture him in his pulpit and among his flock, in his sufferings and in his successes, and to discover what other men have written about him. It is a companion portrait to that of *The Parish Clerk*, who won much favour last year in the eyes of many readers; and if the latter had his picture painted, it is only fair that the occupant of the higher tier of the "three-decker" should share his honour. We venture to hope that the admirers of the clerk will consent to raise their eyes to the parson, who always needs the sympathy and friendship of his fellows, and who by his good deeds, his patience under disappointment, his services to Church and State and to "the few sheep in the wilderness" over whom he exercises his pastoral care, is perhaps not unworthy of their affection and regard.

The writer desires to express his most grateful thanks to many correspondents who have kindly sent him anecdotes and biographical sketches of old-time parsons, their

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eccentricities, their curious ways, which often appear unseemly to those who live in a more refined, if not a better, age. I desire especially to thank the Rev. Alan Cheales for placing at my disposal a MS. collection of clerical stories which he has been amassing for many years. The main difficulty which the writer has had to contend with is the mass of material and subjects, and to make a good selection from all that he has collected; and if to the eyes of serious readers there may seem here and there a preponderance of humour, perhaps this may not be deemed an unpardonable fault by the general public. The chapters on the history of the ministry of the Church are serious enough; the stories of the struggles, persecutions, poverty, and distress of the parsons of many ages call for pity and the deepest sympathy; but the pathos is sometimes lightened by humour, and we shall love the old-fashioned parson no less, if occasionally we are forced to smile at his quaintness, or amuse ourselves with his discourses and old-time ways. My most grateful thanks are due to Mr. F. N. A. Garry for his very great kindness in reading through the proofs of this volume.

P. H. D.

BARKHAM RECTORY, BERKSHIRE

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THE OLD-TIME PARSON

CHAPTER I

THE OLD-TIME PARSON

THINK not, Sir Rector, that I would disparage thy profession by dubbing thee "Parson." That title, in spite of the taunts of the insidious and the common speech of the vulgar, is an honourable distinction, more worthy than the Order of the Golden Fleece, the Garter, or any other title in the world. The parson is the *persona* of the parish, the person who manages everything and everybody in the place where he resides, to whom the sick and sorrowful look for comfort and relief, who presides over the vestry and the parish meeting, directs the temporal affairs of his little kingdom as well as the spiritual, and in spite of many efforts to dethrone him, continues to have no little voice in the government of the village and town life of England. In olden times he had the title of *Dominus*, and was addressed as Sir, and you will find him so described in our register books.

Like all great men, he has had his detractors. Either he has ruled too vigorously, or he has not governed at all. He has been sometimes too lazy, and at others too officious. His duty calls him to "reprove, rebuke, exhort," and touchy folk do not like to be exhorted, much less found fault with. They do not care to have a "moral policeman" always watching over them, and would like to

heave brickbats or say naughty words when the parson's presence reproaches them for removing their neighbour's landmark, sanding the sugar, or frequenting the inn too many nights in the week. If he were always popular, I fear he would not be a very good parson. There must be times in his life when, if he would do his duty, he is bound to make a stand for righteousness, and do the right thing, in spite of the opposition of a cantankerous squire or an ignorant flock. Canon Beeching attributes the unpopularity of some parsons to that touch of antinomianism which exists in everybody, parsons and all, Protestants and Catholics, and is ever ready to rebel against an institution which exists to be a curb upon our natural instincts. A Berkshire farmer once expressed this feeling in somewhat forcible and rude manner, when he said, "Us'll never be prosperous till us have fewer o' they black parsons, and more o' they black pegs."

But really the people are very fond of their parson. They know that in him they have a friend to whom they can always go when they are in trouble or perplexity, or when they want "a character." If he is ill, or suffering some grievous sorrow, he knows that he has the affectionate sympathy of every one in the village. His virtues are especially dwelt upon, stories told of his charity, his sympathy, his kindliness of heart, and his sermons pronounced miracles of oratory, directly he dies or removes to another parish. There is a large amount of *post-mortem* kindness in the world. His parishioners always take a keen interest in everything he does or says. His words are reported, magnified, transmogrified, so that he hardly recognises his original utterances when again they reach his ears. His people know far more of his concerns than he knows himself. They know the hour he breakfasts, the time at which he seeks his couch. No king's movements are so closely watched and recorded as are those of the parson.

The parson has no need to magnify his office. Ever since the days of our Saxon forefathers the clergy have been known and read of all men. They have been by far the most conspicuous and influential body of men in every Christian country, and they have left behind them records of their work in buildings and books, in art and constitutional history, vastly more important, more numerous and durable, than those of any other class. It is not so very long ago that they absorbed within their order the professions of what are now the almost exclusive functions of laymen. Besides being priests and bishops, they were lawyers, ministers of the Crown, lord chancellors, doctors, teachers, architects, sculptors, musicians, agriculturists, travellers, and often princes, rulers, barons, warriors, poets, the founders of modern civilisation.

They have had their good times and their bad times, times when the light flickered feebly through the storeyed windows of their churches, times of grievous oppression, wrong, and spoliation, and times when the sun shone down upon them and the spirit stirred the dry bones in the open valley. We shall try to recall to our minds some of these seasons of laxity and irreverence, of brilliant triumphs and spiritual power ; and we hope to make the acquaintance of many excellent clerics, of many curious and eccentric parsons, and to note their quaint manners and customs. We can only try to catch glimpses, here and there, of heroes and saints, of careless and irreverent reverends, some in one age and some in another. The whole history of the English clergy would require many volumes. The story of many, of most, lives has, however, died with them, and no book will ever record the countless instances of self-sacrifice, devotion, and patient continuance in well-doing of which almost every parish throughout England has been a witness. Stories are told of eccentric parsons, of bad and disgraceful parsons. These remain, and illustrate the truth of Shakespeare's immortal lines :

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

The learned author and divine the Rev. S. Baring-Gould describes a tombstone in his own parish church of Lew Trenchard, North Devon, raised to the memory of a former incumbent. He states that the name and the date have been ground away by the heels of the school-children who sit over it, but the part of the inscription that remains records a life of quiet devotion to duty and singular piety. His virtues are not described in the high-flown language of the usual mortuary style which suggested the query of the little maiden, "Mother, where are all the bad people buried?" The simple language of the inscription suggests anything but fulsome flattery, and runs as follows:—

"The Psalmist's man of yeares hee lived a score,
Tended his flocke allone; theire offspring did restore
By Water into life of Grace; at font and grave,
He served God devout: and strived men's soules to save.
He fedd the poore, lov'd all, and did by Pattern showe,
As pastor to his Flocke, ye way they shoulde go."

What could be better? And yet all memory of him has vanished, together with his name. If he had led an evil life and disgraced his cloth, endless stories would have been told of him. Of good parsons men tell no tales; only the memory of evil ones is preserved by anecdote and handed down to posterity.

In the days of our fathers there was a charming little book entitled *The Owlet of Owlstone Edge*, which is now probably quite forgotten. With some difficulty I have procured a copy from a second-hand bookseller It was written by the Rev. F. E. Paget, and my copy is the third edition, published in 1857. In this charming little book the owlet is described as looking down the chimney-stacks of many a homely rectory and vicarage, and records what

he sees therein. His interest was mainly concerned with parsons' wives, but incidentally he tells us much about their husbands. The owlet's father was for the moment rather enraged against the race because, when he was trying to sleep peacefully in the ivy-clad tower of a church, he had hardly had a wink of sleep because some sportsmen, whom he termed butchers, were killing hares and pheasants for the pleasure of killing, and he had just peeped out of his shelter once and caught a glimpse of a parson, gun in hand, whom he knew to be

> ". . . a stranger to the poor,
> Rare at his home, and never at his books."

But the owl's opinion was (and he had abundant opportunities of judging) that, taking them all in all, "the parsons were the best and most devoted priesthood on the face of the earth, the most blameless in their lives, the most kind and generous, the most conscientious, the most thoroughly imbued with the truth of what they teach, not the least learned nor the least painstaking. They have great disadvantages in their imperfect training for their profession, great disadvantages with respect to their social position, and their condition is anomalous in many ways; and, of course, in a body of ten or fifteen thousand there must be some worldly or profligate men, but, in the main, they come as near to what a Christian ministry should be as anything which is to be seen in the world at present, at any rate."

The sagacious bird has a word to say with regard to the popularity of parsons, and remarks that it is in the interest of some, and the policy of others, to run them down. Nothing the *Times* loves better, he declares, than to turn out a parson and worry him to death for the amusement of its readers, and to speak of the whole race

> "As if Hypocrisy and Nonsense
> Had got the Advowson of their conscience."

Perhaps the owl was nodding when he thus accused our greatest newspaper. If sixty years ago the *Times* was hard on the parsons, it is not so to-day, and has been a great defender of the Church and of justice and righteousness, and I cannot endorse the owl's attack; but his remarks upon the action of those who try to injure the clergy by malicious backbiting are worth quoting:

"Take my word for it, if they drive the parsons out of their homes, religion won't be long in following them. Few folk take the trouble to judge for themselves in such a question. They are content to follow the popular cry. And, while the world stands, the devil will take good care that the popular cry shall be against the clergy, and the more they strive to overthrow his kingdom (in other words, the more devoted they are), the greater pains will he take to render them unpopular. Hence it happens that if a parson falls, his fall is published in every direction by ten thousand malicious tongues. Of the good he does no record, except by the merest chance, ever meets the public ear."

The owl's sagacity is beyond dispute, and his words of wisdom are so excellent that I make no apology for making so long a quotation. His observant offspring, the owlet who indites this book, was in the habit of noting the conversations which he heard when perched upon convenient chimney-stacks and watching closely the doings of parsons and their wives. We should like to imitate the example of the owlet, and, greatly daring, would even venture to glance down the chimneys of episcopal palaces and of comfortable deaneries and canons' houses, watch my lord bishop when he is at his ease—if in these busy days bishops can ever be so discovered—and catch the humorous phrase or the veiled jest when he is trying to "suffer fools gladly," an indispensable requisite for the holder of the episcopal office. We will venture to find examples of that ready wit which seems somehow to lurk

beneath a dean's hat and to accompany the apron. The old rectory has had many occupants since the days when it was first reared. Perhaps we might be able to hear some tales of old-fashioned clerics, the hunting parsons, the eccentric parsons who once dwelt beneath that same tile-covered roof. All these portraits of more or less distinguished folk will be included in our gallery, and perhaps we shall find many worthy men amongst them.

There is an old-fashioned book, called the *Velvet Cushion*, which was written by the Rev. J. W. Cunningham, Vicar of Harrow. Many catalogues of second-hand books have I searched in order to discover this volume, but in vain. My friend Mr. Baring-Gould has kindly lent me his copy, which is the seventh edition, published in 1815. The *Velvet Cushion* tells the story of its adventures from the time when it "first saw the light in the shop of an upholsterer in Fleet Street in the days of bloody Queen Mary," to its final resting-place in a small parish church on the shores of one of the most picturesque lakes in Westmoreland. It had undergone many vicissitudes; it had been swept by the tunic of a Pope's nuncio, had descended to the pulpit of one of the first Puritans, had been expelled by some of the Cromwellites as an impious adjunct to the simplicity of primitive worship, had risen again with the rising fortunes of the Monarchy, and after many chances and changes had climbed the mountains of Westmoreland, to spend the years of its grand climacteric in the quiet and unambitious pulpit of the village church. It had heard the best preachers of three centuries and had an intimate acquaintance with a variety of parsons of all shades and types. And this is the story that the *Velvet Cushion* tells to an old vicar of the lives and characters of the previous occupants of his pulpit:

"But, sir, you will be anxious, I am sure, to hear the history of some of your predecessors in the living. And it is my intention to gratify you. I think it right, however,

to observe, that of a large proportion of them no very interesting records remain. Mankind are much alike. And a country village is not likely to call out their peculiarities. Some few were profligates, whose memory I do not wish to perpetuate. Many of them were persons of decent, cold, correct manners, varying slightly, perhaps, in the measure of their zeal, their doctrinal exactness, their benevolence, their industry, their talents—but, in general, of that neutral class which rarely affords materials for history or subjects of instruction. They were men of that species who are too apt to spring up in the bosom of old and prosperous establishments, whose highest praise is that they do no harm."

The *Velvet Cushion* is none too flattering. He describes fairly faithfully the kind of parsons who flourished, shall we say?—perhaps existed is the better word—at the end of the eighteenth century, though we shall hope to find better and brighter examples of ministerial efficiency. At any rate, the witness of the *Velvet Cushion* supports our contention that the parsons even of the sleepiest and dullest period of Church life were not, as a rule, a disreputable, drinking, careless set of men, a disgrace to their cloth, despised and scorned. It is of them that stories are told, and nothing pleases the vulgar more than a story which casts a slur on the parson and evokes merriment. Hundreds of anecdotes are in circulation about their sayings and doings, their characters and lives, and a spice of scandal is not without its interest and adds flavour to the jest. The stories of the good parsons, of their self-sacrificing lives and labours, are not worth telling; hence their virtues are soon forgotten.

Parsons have, I expect, written more books than any other class, even more than lady novelists and the romance writers of the present day who pour out books by the hundred. Parsons have written endless volumes on, of course, theology, history, biography, and antiquities.

Archæology seems to be a very favourite subject with them, and endless "dry-as-dust" treatises have issued from their pens, ponderous tomes which sleep reposefully in the library and are not often disturbed save when spring-cleaning time comes round. But the parsons seldom tell us much about themselves. It was the fashion among the Puritan ministers in former days to write their own lives or leave materials behind them for that purpose. Hence in the seventeenth century there were heaps of *Printed Lives*, *Funeral Sermons*, *Precious Sayings*, recalling the virtues of these eminent divines, or divines who thought themselves eminent. Of such lives the author of the *Sufferings of the Clergy* wrote with some scorn. Those who undertook to hand down the memories of these worthies always picked out the best eulogies of Scripture wherewithal to adorn them, and seldom failed to amplify their character in such a manner as to cover many pages. "Add to this they hardly ever speak of the most common and ordinary actions of their lives, but with a parallel of some Scripture example and in Scripture language; and are prepared with a set of terms and phrases of that kind which are ready on all occasions. Insomuch that I have often thought the furniture of those people was not unlike that of an undertaker's equipage, which serves indifferently for all funerals; or that like a salesman's shop they are ready sorted beforehand, for persons of all sizes and statures; if the Sute was too long, it being easily dock'd; or, if a little too short, that would make no great odds; if too close on the ribbs, it is soon let out; or if too wide in the shoulder, it is as soon taken in; tho' after all, it often sets so awkwardly, it is plain it hath been on the back of more than one person before; and that he who hath it, was never measured for it."

Such biographies will help us little in our efforts to study the habits, manners, and lives of the old-time parsons; they themselves, by their writings, afford us

little assistance, and we have to depend for the most part on what other writers have said about them, and on their portraits mirrored in the literature of the ages in which they lived. Although they have been more or less a class apart, they have never been entirely exempt from the customs and fashions of their environment. They have been more or less remarkable for their learning, which usually ranked higher than that of the laity amongst whom they dwelt. They were somewhat given to disputation, inclined to independence, and were always judged even in the worst of times by a higher standard than that meted out to the laity.

In these pages we shall try to depict the parson as he appeared at various periods of his existence. We see the far-off figure of the Saxon parson converting our pagan forefathers, establishing the faith in this island, rearing his little wooden church in the scattered villages, and laying the foundation of the parochial system. We follow his footsteps through the mediæval period, through the stormy period of the Reformation, and read what various writers have said about him when he had cast aside Papal authority and the English Church had recovered her independence. We see him patiently—sometimes rather impatiently—suffering for the truth's sake, struggling against wrong, spoliation, and tyrannical persecution, and again basking in prosperity which injured him more than vehement opposition. We see him somewhat old and decrepit and then renewing his youth and starting along his journey with new hopes and higher ideals. We see him in his pulpit and in his garden, in his hours of ease among his books, or busy amongst his flock, and perhaps catch some words of holy counsel from his lips, at least learn patience.

The clergy of the present day talk much of progress, of church work advancing by leaps and bounds, of crowded churches, many services, endless societies for the promotion of this or that worthy object; and for much of

this activity we ought to be thankful. The old-time parson, however, could have set us modern folk an example in some things. A modern vicar of a town parish spends much of his time in presiding at meetings. Does he find time for visiting? What would he say of the parson of Maristowe, at the beginning of the last century, who had a bedridden parishioner? For twenty years the poor man lay there, and in all those years Parson Teasdale did not miss coming to see him, and read and pray with him every day, Sunday and week-day alike. With all our advance and progress, our talk of parochial visiting, do the clergy ever visit like that now? Or take the witness of that old book the *Velvet Cushion*. In it you may read an account of true, regular, systematic visiting which seems to have been in vogue during that much-abused eighteenth century. The old vicar is speaking to his wife.

"'I am not sure,' said the vicar, 'that it is not a presumptuous reliance upon the goodness of God, an abuse of the doctrine of Divine mercy, that has kept me at home to-day, when I should have gone to visit old Dame Wilkins. An' so now, my dear, let us go to Mary Wilkins directly.' Her bonnet was soon on, and they hobbled down the village almost as fast as if their house had been on fire. Mary Wilkins was a poor, good woman, to whom the vicar's visit three times a week had become almost one of the necessities of life. It was now two hours beyond the time he usually came, and, had she been awake, she would really have been pained by the delay. But happily she had fallen into a profound sleep, and when he put his foot on the threshold, and in his old-fashioned way said 'Peace be with you,' she was just waking. This comforted our good man, and, as he well knew where all comfort comes from, he thanked God in his heart even for this."

In our study of bygone times we shall meet with some very strange and remarkable parsons—some who had little zeal or much else to commend them; but these were the

exceptions, and not the rule. The parsons in the eighteenth century usually led good and useful lives. They had many drawbacks, as we shall see presently; but they tended their flocks with loving care, and quietly did their duty. There were few local newspapers in those days to tell the parson's virtues, to print his sermons or his speeches at the opening of bazaars or flower-shows. He knew nothing of the lust of advertising himself, his parish, and his family—a failing from which his modern brother is not wholly exempt. The modern parson always wants a function with an account in the local newspapers, which usually tells of the zeal of the clergyman, though the reporters often make sad mistakes in describing the services. The soul of the late Bishop Stubbs was often distressed by being asked to perform all kinds of ceremonial "openings" of divers bazaars, &c., &c. He once rebelled and declared, "I really have no time to consecrate hassocks; they'll be sending for a curate next to 'open' an umbrella." Of the mistakes of reporters in describing ecclesiastical functions we have many instances. One gentleman of the press actually suspended a thurifer from the beam of a church, and was not indicted for manslaughter. It may be stated, for the benefit of the unlearned, that a thurifer is the official who carries the thurible or censer, where incense is deemed to be an essential accessory to public worship, and to suspend a thurifer, was a hanging matter. Another reporter, in describing some Easter decorations, laid great stress upon the arum lilies which adorned the altar. Unfortunately he recorded the flowers as "harem" lilies, and stated that they were "emblems of purity." The old-time parson rejoiced in few functions and no reporters.

In my book on that worthy man *The Parish Clerk*, I tried to describe the old-fashioned services which flourished in the days of our fathers; the hideous "three-decker" which reared its monstrous form in most of our churches

blocking out the sight of the sanctuary; the immense pews which, like cattle-pens, filled the nave; the squire's pew with its armchairs and special fire-place; the west gallery wherein the choir sat and made strange noises and sang curious tunes to the accompaniment of the clerk's pitch-pipe. We shall visit again some of the curious old churches, and hear again the dulcet strains of the barrel-organ—most fearsome of instruments—or the no less startling sounds of the village orchestra, composed of fiddles, flutes, clarionets, and bassoons, or "baboons," as an old clerk insisted on calling them. The days of the old-time parson saw irreverence triumphant, much external carelessness and slovenliness, and heard much curious preaching, dull and dry and terribly long; but while thankful for the many improvements which Time and changed opinions have wrought, we shall retain an affectionate regard for the old-time parson, who, in the matter of ritual and reverence, shared in the weaknesses and failings of his age, and nevertheless was often in heart and life a worthy and much-loved clergyman.

CHAPTER II

THE SAXON PARSON

IT would be a pleasant task to journey back to the beginning of things and to picture to ourselves the first preachers of Christianity converting the pagan Saxons and teaching them the holy lessons of the Cross. We might go further back still and catch some glimpses of Romano-British Christianity, of the good British bishops, Eborius of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelfius of Lincoln, or, perhaps, Caerleon-on-Usk, journeying to attend the Council of Arles; of the priest of Silchester officiating in that little Christian church which the labours of the Society of Antiquaries have revealed; and of the holy martyr St. Alban and others (Bede numbers them at nearly one thousand) who laid down their lives for their faith.

We should like to dwell upon the labours of our English saints, Paulinus, Wilfrid, Birinus, Aidan, Cedd, Cuthbert, and a score of others who laid the foundation of English Christianity and won the pagan people from barbarism and idolatry. But that story, so full of heroic sacrifices and of romantic detail, would take too long to tell in these pages and would require a separate volume for its complete narration. Our chief concern is with matters of less remote antiquity, but it is advisable in tracing the parson's history to try to understand how he came to be established in his parish, how he did his Master's work,

how parishes were formed, churches built, and the foundations laid of that parochial system which has continued from early times to the present day.

Before the advent of the parson as a parochial clergyman the Church established various centres of light and religion, with colonies of priests or monks, who went through the villages teaching and preaching; and so well did they perform their duty, so receptive were the minds of the English folk and so eager to accept the holy lessons of the Cross, that in a single century England became a Christian country, a fountain of light, a land of learned men, of devotion and unwearied missions, and of strong, rich, and pious kings. Eagerly did the people welcome these itinerant preachers. Bede tells us that "the whole care of these teachers was to serve God, not the world; to feed the soul and not the body. For this reason the religious habit was at that time in great veneration, so that wheresoever any clergyman or monk happened to come he was joyfully received by all persons as God's servant, and if they chanced to meet him upon the way they ran to him and, bowing, were glad to be signed with his hand or blessed with his mouth. Great attention was also paid to his exhortations, and on Sundays they flocked eagerly to the church or the monasteries—not to feed their bodies, but to hear the word of God; and if any priest happened to come into a village the inhabitants flocked together to hear from him the word of life, for the priests and clergymen went into the village on no other account than to preach, baptize, visit the sick, and, in few words, to take care of souls; and they were so free from worldly avarice that none of them received lands and possessions for building monasteries unless they were compelled to do so by the temporal authorities, which custom was for some time after observed in all the churches of the Northumbrians. But enough has now been said on this subject."

These itinerant priests were congregated at the bishop's

house, which was the centre of the spiritual activity of the diocese. Clerks, priests, monks, and nuns were assembled there, nigh to the court of the king. The diocese was coterminous with the kingdom. The kingdom of East Anglia had its bishop, with his seat at Dunwich; Northumbria its bishop, who abode at York; Mercia was a see, with Lichfield for its centre; the Bishop of Wessex resided at the little Oxfordshire village of Dorchester or at Winchester; Essex was the diocese of London, Kent of Canterbury, with a suffragan at Rochester. These sees embraced large tracts of country. The monks and priests travelled from the diocesan centre to all the outlying settlements. There were few churches, so the wandering clerics set up crosses in the villages, and beneath their shade preached, baptized, and said Mass. The pagan Saxons worshipped stone pillars; so in order to wean them from their superstition, the Christian missionaries erected these stone crosses and carved upon them the figures of the Saviour and His Apostles, displaying before the eyes of their hearers the story of the Cross written in stone. The North of England has many examples of these crosses, some of which were fashioned by St. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York in the eighth century. When he travelled about his diocese a large number of monks and workmen attended him, and amongst these were the cutters in stone, who made the crosses and erected them on the spots which Wilfrid consecrated to the worship of God. St. Paulinus, one of the companions of St. Augustine, more than a century earlier than St. Wilfrid, erected the cross at Whalley, Lancashire. There are wonderful crosses at Gosforth, Ilkley, Hexham, Thornhill, Leeds, Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Eyam, all covered with strange and curious sculpture, to describe which would carry us too far afield. Beneath these crosses, and countless others, the early missionary delivered his message to the assembled villagers.

THE SAXON CROSS AT EYHAM

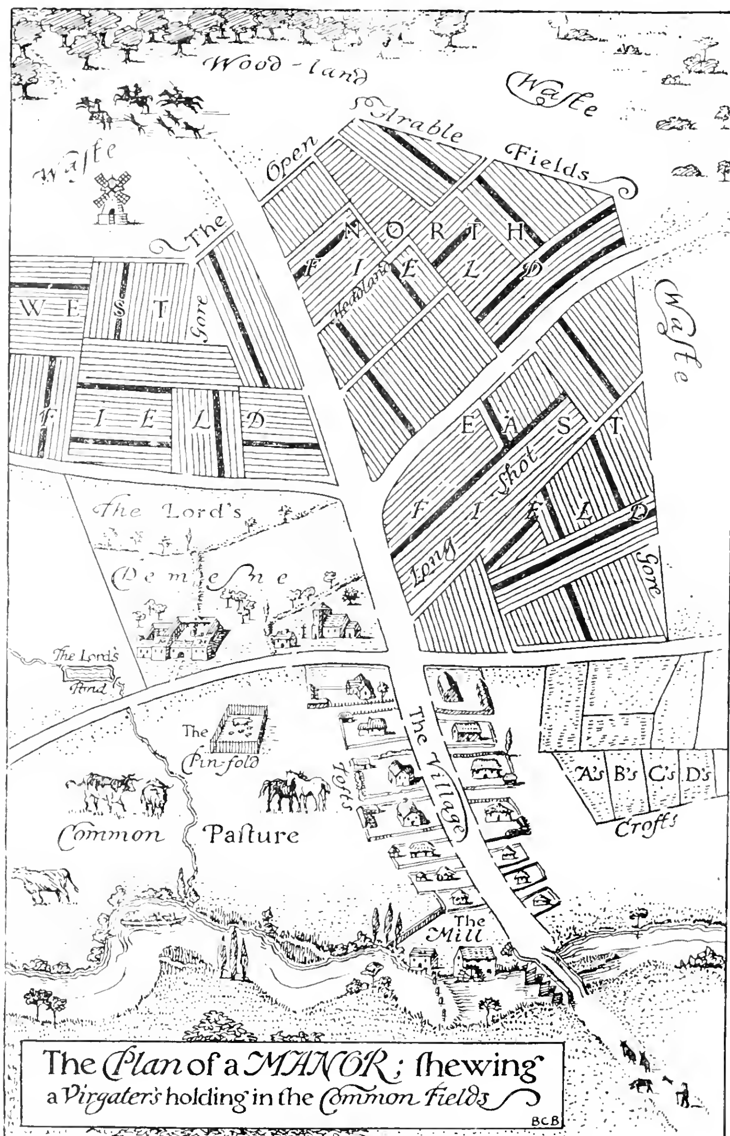
Then with the advent of Archbishop Theodore came the days of diocesan organisation and the parochial system. In his days there were no archdeacons or deans; the parson is an older official than his ecclesiastical superiors. Theodore determined to divide these immense dioceses, a task not altogether easy, as parsons and prelates are often very touchy folk, and care not to have their spheres of influence diminished or encroached upon by other clerics—a failing which we notice in most ages, and of which they are not even now altogether cured. However, Theodore set to work vigorously, and partially accomplished his design, which was completed after his death. Dioceses were formed, each having its own bishop. He divided the great East Anglican see, forming two dioceses with centres at Elmham and Dunwich. The great Northumbrian diocese he divided into four, wisely forming his new sees according to the bounds of the old kingdoms which made up the Northumbrian realm. Thus the ancient kingdom of Deira became the see of York; Bernicia the see of Lindisfarn or Hexham; a bishop's seat was set up at Withern, and Sidnacuter became the diocese of Lincoln. Out of Mercia were carved the four sees of Lindsey, Worcester, Hereford, and Leicester. A *parochia*, or parish, was originally the diocese, the district ecclesiastically ruled over by a bishop. Then the energetic Theodore is said to have grafted on the English Church the system which he had observed in other lands, encouraging the earls and great landowners to build churches on their estates for the benefit of their tenants and serfs, and to support a clergyman to minister to them. Elmham states that he used to arouse the devotion of the faithful to found churches, and to mark out parishes, so that those who had built churches on their own farms might enjoy the patronage of them. This the learned Bishop Stubbs describes as mere tradition or invention, and maintains that the parochial system simply founded itself. The parish is

merely the ancient village or township ecclesiastically considered, and the township was the natural sphere of duty of the single priest, as the kingdom or shire was of the bishop. Sometimes a parish embraced many townships, as one township was often too poor to support a separate church and priest. When the villeins and socmen, or lord of a manor, were rich enough and zealous enough to build a church and maintain a priest, a new parish would be formed out of the old one; and this process has gone on from that day to this, new ecclesiastical districts being at present not infrequently carved out of ancient parishes.

Kings, nobles, and bishops soon began to build churches in the scattered hamlets, and resident clergymen were settled in the parishes and commenced that service of ministering to the souls of their people which has continued from that day to this. The parson began his long career of usefulness and devotion, which, in spite of vast changes in both Church and State, in spite of war and tumult, of periods of general laxity and lawlessness, has survived to the present time.

But all this was not the work of a day. The story of the Saxon settlement of England tells of the gradual reclaiming of old forest land and waste, of industrious families leaving the first settlement of their race, advancing into the unreclaimed woodlands, cutting down the timber, and starting new centres of agricultural enterprise. Thus new villages arose and new churches were required and built, and the villagers, not content with the occasional visit of the parson of the mother-church, required a parson of their own. Thus daughter churches sprang into being, which later on became independent of their mothers and were recognised as separate parishes.

As an example we may take the formation of the parish of Hurst, Berkshire. It formed part of the old parish of Sonning, where some Saxon bishops lived and were called



THE PLAN OF A MANOR

SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH, MANOR HOUSE AND VILLAGE

Bishops of Sonning, though it was not the episcopal centre of the diocese. The people who lived in Hurst pleaded to the Abbot of Abingdon that they were far removed from their parish church of Sonning, that in winter the roads and paths were overflowed and dangerous by reason of floods, and therefore that they sorely needed a church and pastor of their own. A wooden church was, therefore, built by the abbot and consecrated by good Bishop Osmund of Salisbury, and the abbot supplied the church with a priest. Then the parson of Sonning complained bitterly that his rights were interfered with by the erection of this new church, and that he was deprived of his fees and tithe. In consequence of this complaint the church was closed and the Hurst folk deprived of their parson. However, the Bishop of Salisbury a little later happened to be staying at the Abbey of Abingdon, and talked the matter over with the abbot, and the whole affair was settled. The church was reopened, the abbot provided a parson for the new parish, who received all the fees, and the abbot paid the bishop half a mark a year ; the parson of Sonning was to receive all that had anciently been due to him. In several cases the yearly present of a few cheeses and hens by the parson of the new parish to the rector of the old parish was considered ample compensation for the loss of fees and tithe which the formation of an ecclesiastical district entailed.

We can picture to ourselves the country parson of Saxon times settled in his parish and ministering to his flock, and the records of ancient Councils of the Church afford some idea of his duties and of the manner in which he discharged them. He had a house and some glebe land assigned to him. He was usually a man of good family, probably a younger son of the lord of the manor or owner of the estate, who held the advowson of the church ; though some Saxon parsons were not of gentle blood, and were raised from the rank of serfdom to serve in the

ministry of the church. Thus St. Aidan bought young serfs and caused them to be trained, together with the sons of thanes and kings, in his monastic school. But this accident of birth was not allowed to cause dissensions or difference in the treatment of the clergy. Archbishop Dunstan, when framing the "Canons of Edgar" for the guidance of the Church, expressly ordered that the nobly-born priest should not presume to look down upon the peasant-born priest, but should remember that all men are equal in the eyes of God, and of one birth, and should not be conceited or proud of his learning, or throw scorn on his half-learned brother, but rather teach and correct him.

The priest was trained in one of the great schools of the Saxon period, where he received no small amount of learning. Canterbury had a famous school, where a crowd of pupils assembled, and streams of sound learning, sacred and secular, flowed daily for the watering of their minds. Archbishop Theodore in his old age used to lecture on the rules of ecclesiastical arithmetic, for the calculation of the Church seasons, astronomy, music, and even medicine, side by side with the volumes of sacred letters. Many Saxon scholars knew Greek and Latin as well as their mother-tongue. The curriculum of the school of York included grammar, rhetoric, metre, astronomy, and physics. The Saxon parson was, therefore, well equipped with learning before he was presented to his cure of souls. St. Aldhelm of Malmesbury was the most beloved of all teachers; tenderly did he watch over their progress, and when they had completed their studies he pursued them with letters, gently admonishing to abstain from youthful follies, such as drinking-bouts and feastings, to prefer the study of Scripture to immoral specimens of heathen poetry, to keep clear of sensuality, to be simple in dress and habits, and in all secular studies to keep in view sacred knowledge as the end to which all other lore should minister.[1] Saxon

[1] Bright's *Early English Church*, p. 400.

pupils under a less wise teacher sometimes proved refractory. At the same monastic school at Malmesbury the pupils resented the advent of a learned Scot, John by name, who was sent by King Alfred to make Malmesbury a great centre of light and learning. John was a mightily clever person, and the author of a book on the Division of Nature. Perhaps, like other Scots, he was lacking in a sense of humour, or was too strict a disciplinarian. At any rate he was unpopular, and his pupils attacked him with their steel pencils and stabbed him to death.

When the parson was settled in his parish he was bound by certain rules and laws and canons passed at various Councils, and if he conformed to them, as doubtless he did, he was a most efficient and worthy parish priest. He used to say his daily hours in church and pray for his people, preach every Sunday, and explain the mysteries of the Faith, the Creed, and Lord's Prayer, and the duty of Christians, and the necessity for the abandonment of all pagan customs, to baptize, reprove, rebuke, exhort, and attend to the morals of his people. He paid attention to Church music, and perhaps studied under John the Chanter, who was sent by Pope Vitalian to teach the orthodox way of chanting. Sad to relate, the Germans or Gauls, partly from levity of mind, partly from natural roughness of voice, could not retain the sweetness of Gregorian melody; hence John the Chanter was dispatched to correct these unfortunate defects. "Natural roughness of voice" is, perhaps, a little reflection on the gutteral Teutonic language of our German neighbours, and the "levity of mind" an allusion to Gallic lightheartedness, which has not yet quite evaporated.

No work was allowed on Sundays. Holy days, fast-days, rogation-tide, and ember days were ordered to be observed, and the most minute instructions are given with regard to the conduct of the parson, his dress and behaviour. The parson is especially warned against the sin of drunkenness,

to which the Saxon race seems to have been prone. He is ordered not to be a hunter, or hawker, or dicer, but to occupy himself with his books, as becomes his order.[1] Reading and prayer were the duties of a priest, and the observance of the seven canonical hours—Prime at 4 a.m., Matins at 6 a.m., Terce at 9, Sext at noon, Nones at 3 p.m., Vespers and Nocturns—were strictly enjoined. Rules, too, were laid down with regard to his dress, his tonsure, and the vestments which he was ordered to wear in church. When celebrating he must wear a corporal and an alb; his mass-book must be before him lest he should make any mistake. Fasting communion was enjoined, except in cases of severe illness. The holy vessels of the altar were to be of molten metal, not of wood, and great care was to be exercised with regard to all the furniture of the altar. Lights burned during the celebration of the Eucharist, incense was used, and all the holy things, salt, bread, holy water, were all carefully prepared.

Such was the Saxon parson, the forerunner of many generations of the parochial clergy, a worthy man, forsooth, and a pious priest of Holy Church, if he always acted up to the laws and regulations laid down for his guidance. And, in the main, he was a faithful priest, this Saxon parson. There were times of laxity, it is true, but men like Dunstan, Swithin, and others reformed what was base and renewed what was lacking in zeal and earnestness, and religion never sank so low as it did in this same period in France. There strange things were happening, while here the Saxon parsons were leading orderly and well-disciplined lives, and doing their duty well and worthily. Across the Channel you might have met with two bishops carrying arms, men of rapine and blood, or seen another prelate assaulting his archdeacon in church on a Christmas morning on a suspicion of fraud. Another holy bishop, the follower of Him who was meek and lowly of heart,

[1] *Parish Priests and their People*, by E. L. Cutts, p. 71.

proudly exclaims, "Because I have taken orders, am I therefore to forego my revenge?" and another is drinking himself into epilepsy, and ordering a priest to be shut up in a tomb in order to force him to give up some title-deeds. Some foul clerics are plotting against the reputation and life of their bishop, and others are selected by an infamous queen as the best tools for killing a young king with poisoned daggers. You could not find such parsons in Saxon England. There you would see the result of their labours in the pious lives of their countrymen, in the singular fidelity and singleness of heart of the laymen of Saxon England. The English parsons had a passion for winning souls, not only in their own country, but in lands beyond the seas; and Frisia, Germany, and other parts of the Continent owe much of their Christianity to the zealous labours of our English missionaries. The parsons of England have advanced much since those primitive and far-distant ages; but, as Dean Church warns us, "in our eagerness for improvement it concerns us to be on our guard against the temptation of thinking that we can have the fruit or the flower, and yet destroy the root; that we may retain the high view of human nature which has grown with the growth of Christian nations, and discount that revelation of Divine love and human destiny of which that view forms a part or a consequence; that we may retain the moral energy and yet make light of the faith that produced it. It concerns us that we do not despise our birthright, and cast away our heritage of gifts and of powers, which we may lose, but not recover."

CHAPTER III

THE MEDIÆVAL PARSON

WHAT kind of men were the parsons of pre-Reformation times, during that long period known as mediæval? A relation of the writer once saw a ghost. She entered a village church late one autumn afternoon, when the sun was declining and the evening shadows falling, and in "the dim, mysterious aisle" she distinctly saw a cowled figure kneeling above the spot where his body lay. A stone marks his tomb, but there he knelt. She drew closer to observe him, and gradually his form faded away. We will try to approach this bygone vicar of a past age and see what manner of man he was. He was often the younger son of some territorial magnate who had livings in his gift, and was glad to bestow a benefice upon him. The clergy were drawn from all ranks. These country knights and squires had kinsmen in their livings, and sons or nephews in the neighbouring monasteries. Great nobles often regarded bishoprics as special provisions for their clerical sons, and the Church was frequently the stepping-stone to high preferment in the State. But it was a very democratic institution, and welcomed into its ministry the sons of tradesmen, yeomen, villeins, and even serfs, who often rose to great distinction. The great and powerful Cardinal Wolsey was the son of a butcher, as our honest Berkshire merchant, Jack of Newbury, once told his grace—"If my lord cardinal's father

had been no hastier in killing calves than he is in dispatching poor men's suits, I doubt he had never worn a mitre." William of Wykeham, the great Bishop of Winchester, Archbishop Chichele, the son of a yeoman educated by Wykeham and Waynflete, were all men who had raised themselves from a poor and humble position by the services which they had rendered in subordinate offices, and poor and humble origin was no bar to great preferment. If you take the list of the Archbishops of Canterbury you will find that several were of lowly birth. Thomas à Becket was the son of a London portreeve; Richard and Baldwin of poor parents; Edmund Rich was the son of a merchant at Abingdon; Walter Reynolds of a baker at Windsor; and there were several others of a like humble origin. Richard Wych, Bishop of Chichester, worked on his poor father's farm at Droitwich; Thomas of Beckington, of Bath and Wells, was the son of a weaver, and many others might be mentioned who proved that the highest preferment in the Church was open to poor men, who by their holiness and ability were worthy of their exalted rank.

But distinguished clerics were not all of lowly origin. Many were the noble names which appear in the list of our mediæval ecclesiastics, and members of the royal family scorned not the priesthood. Everard, Bishop of Norwich, belonged to the noble family of Montgomery, Henry of Winchester was a grandson of the Conqueror, and Roger of Worcester was the son of Earl Robert of Gloucester. Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham, and St. William, Archbishop of York, were nephews of King Stephen. A son of Henry II. was Archbishop of York. Henry III. obtained the archbishopric of Canterbury for his wife's uncle and Winchester for his half-brother. Amongst other great names of distinguished and high-born clerics were those of Fulk Basset, the Cantilupes, Beaumont, Berkeley, Grandison, Charlton, Despenser,

Courtenay, Stafford, Beaufort, Neville, Beauchamp, and Bouchier. The great families thought it no humiliation to contribute sons and brothers to the clerical profession, and it was the ambition of every yeoman and tradesman to have a son "in the Church." Napoleon used to say that every soldier in his army might be carrying a marshal's baton in his knapsack; so every farmer's son who became ordained might live to become a great and powerful bishop.

This union of all ranks in the Church's army was a great source of strength. Some writers assert that the clergy of the Middle Ages were unpopular; but such could scarcely have been the case when almost every family had a parson son. A study of mediæval wills shows that almost every one who had money to bequeath to the members of his family had some clerical kinsman who failed not to benefit. So the interest in the Church, the close connection of every family with the Church, was almost universal. The admission of the sons of poor persons into holy orders was not always regarded very favourably, as the author of *The Vision of Piers Plowman* plainly testifies:

> "Bondmen and bastards, And beggars' children
> These belong to labour. And lord's children should serve
> Both God and good men, As their degree asketh.
> Some to sing masses, Others to sit and write,
> Reade and receive, what Reason ought to spend.
> And since bondmen's bairns Have been made bishops,
> And bastard bairns Have been archdeacons,
> And cobblers and their sons For silver have been knights,
> And monks and monials,[1] That mendicants should feed,[2]
> Have made their kin knights, And knights' fees purchased,
> Pope and Patrons Poor gentle blood refuse,
> And take Simond's son, Sanctuary to keep.
> Life holiness and love Have been long hence
> And will till it be weared out, Or otherwise ychanged."

[1] Nuns. [2] That should feed mendicants.

Again, Langland inveighs against cobbler's sons and beggars' brats getting book-learning and becoming bishops, sitting with the peers of the land, while knights kneel to them, and the father of such a prelate remaining a poor cobbler, "Ysoild with grees, his teeth with toyling of leather battered as a saw."

This same idea, that ploughmen's sons should go to the plough and craftmen's sons to their father's calling, was in existence at the time of the Reformation, and was combated by Archbishop Cranmer at the re-founding of the King's School at Canterbury, who contended that poor men's sons should have the benefit of education, since God gives His great gifts of grace, of learning, and other perfections in all sciences unto all kinds and states of people indifferently.

This prejudice against low-born clerics still exists. A parson should be a gentleman is the opinion not only of squires and rich folk, but also of artizans and labourers. A charitable rector of a northern parish used to teach his young factory hands Latin and Greek, and some of them succeeded so well under his instruction that they were ultimately ordained, and doubtless became useful and excellent clergymen. When I ventured to commend this good work to a canon of a northern cathedral he replied, "Don't you think that the members of at least one profession should be confined to gentlemen?" So my friend of the nineteenth century and Robert Langland of the fourteenth were evidently of one mind.

Our parson of the Middle Ages began his career at a school, of which there was no lack. Each monastery had its school; grammar schools were numerous, and in many villages and towns chantry priests or good parish clerks taught the children of the place and made good scholars of them. After a while these students went to one of the Universities, which were crowded with scholars of all ranks. Rich men's sons resided there in

luxury, and poor students begged their way thither. The origin of the Long Vacation, lasting nearly four months, arose from the practice of the sons of farmers and tillers of the land returning to their homesteads to gather in the harvest, and then tramping their way back to the seats of learning to resume their studies.

The young candidate for the ministry had to pass through various stages before he was ordained priest. He first held the office of *ostuarius*, or door-keeper; then he became a *lector*, or reader, and then followed successively the other minor offices of exorcist, acolyte, sub-deacon, and deacon. The priesthood was usually reached when he had attained the age of twenty-five years. The number of the clergy was very large. The clerical career offered many attractions. Their social position was of great importance. They constituted the first estate in the realm. As a body they were rich, as is proved by the fact that one-third of the whole taxation of the nation was borne by the parsons. They had great immunities and great power. Being more learned than laymen, they were often chosen by the kings for secular appointments under the Government. They became chancellors of kings and held other important offices. No wonder that ambitious youths, aspiring to positions of rank and wealth, embraced the clerical profession as a means for advancing their prospects, and did not always consider the special qualifications necessary or the sacredness of the calling. Hence the number of priests was very considerable, as the lists of ordination in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries plainly testify. In most dioceses about a hundred were ordained every Ember season. In 1370 Bishop Courtenay ordained at Tiverton, in the Exeter diocese, 374 candidates, viz., 163 first tonsure, 120 acolytes, 30 sub-deacons, 31 deacons, and 30 priests. In other dioceses it was much the same. At Cirencester, June 1, 1314, 463 persons were ordained; at Tewkesbury, June 6, 1338, as many as 613

were received into holy orders; but these numbers were exceptional, and about one hundred was the usual amount. How did such vast numbers obtain employment? There were only about eight thousand benefices in England. Many of these clergy were employed as chaplains, chantry, or stipendiary priests. They received a small pension from some squire or noble, taught children in schools, and by saying masses for the dead eked out a subsistence.

But all were not so badly provided for. There were rectories and vicarages to be filled. A rector is the ruler of a parish, who receives the great tithes of the benefice—that is, the tithes on corn—could sue and be sued for the property held by him in the name of the Church, and was responsible for various charges, the repair of the chancel, the support of the poor, and the exercise of hospitality. There were few inns in the Middle Ages; hence pilgrims, travellers, and strangers sought shelter in the *hospitium* of a monastery, or in the country rectories, where they could find stalls for their horses and food and lodging for themselves. A vicar is legally one who acts in place of the rector. He receives the small tithes of the benefice, all the tithes except those on corn, together with fees and offerings. Thus it is now; and thus it was then. The multiplication of vicarages was a great misfortune to the Church. By gift, or purchase, the monasteries got hold of the rectories and enriched themselves, causing the parish to be served by one of their monks, or by a chaplain, or clerk. This system has produced untold misfortune to the Church of England, and has been the cause of the poverty of the parochial clergy which has continued from that time to this. We shall have occasion again to allude to the action of these grasping abbots, to the seizure of the tithe by laymen at the Reformation, to the granting of tithe for "services" rendered to the Crown, and to all the evil consequences of this disgraceful business.

Some of this evil was recognised in early days. Monks

did not make the best parish priests. The secular habit fitted not well on the shoulders of the religious. Chaplains, appointed by the abbots with a small salary and removable according to their will, were not much better. An attempt was made to remedy the evil by Anselm at the Synod of Westminster to prevent monasteries from acquiring benefices, and supplying them with impoverished priests. The sanction of the bishops was to be obtained for all such transactions. Little good was, however, effected until later in the century strict orders came from Rome, and armed by Papal power the bishops took the matter in hand; and although they could not get the impropriated rectories out of the clutches of the monks, they founded perpetual vicarages. This was a vast improvement. No monk or clerk from the monastery might serve the parish, but a competent parish priest licensed by the bishop was appointed to the living, and was under episcopal authority, and endowed with a sufficient stipend. This action by no means remedied all the evils of the monastic possession of benefices, but it mitigated some of the hardships of the secular clergy, and improved parochial work.

When a rector or vicar required additional assistance he engaged a curate. A curate is one who is entrusted with the cure of souls, and in the English Book of Common Prayer it is used as a generic term, including all parochial clergy—*e.g.*, in the Prayer for the Church Militant where we pray for "all Bishops and Curates." He is known in canon law as *vice curati*, and is usually termed at the present day "assistant curate." Young clergymen of the present day seem to dislike being called "curates," and instead of using the old honoured name rectors introduce you to them as "my colleagues." Is not the old name the better? Sometimes he was known as chaplain, or *capellanus*, one who served a chapel in connection with the mother-church of the parish. A very large class of

mediæval clergy were the chantry priests. A chantry was a chapel or aisle or separate building erected by the founder and endowed by him, wherein prayers were to be offered for himself, his family and friends and all faithful souls. The chantry priest received his stipend for performing this duty of saying the Office for the Dead. Twice a week he would say *dirge* and *commendations*, and once a week the *requiem* Mass, and the whole service for the dead on the year-day of the founder, when the office was very elaborately performed. In addition to these duties he was ordered to distribute certain alms to the poor, and gifts to the Church officers, the clerk and singing-men, to provide lights for the altar, service books, vessels, and vestments; the expense of all this being provided by the endowments of the chantry. He was also required to serve as assistant curate of the parish, to take his part in the ordinary services of the Church, and to visit the poor. Many chantries, however, were founded simply for the purpose of providing additional places of worship for large or scattered congregations, and some were grammar schools wherein the chantry priest acted as schoolmaster. He had, therefore, many duties to perform, this chantry priest, and was a most capable, industrous, and useful helper in the work of the parish. There were in England about two thousand chantries, founded chiefly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Needless to say their wealth attracted the covetous eyes of the greedy courtiers of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., and they were all despoiled at the Reformation, on the ground that they were devoted to "superstitious" purposes. It was a convenient excuse! The plate and vestments and the endowments were too rich a booty to be spared. Much of the wealth was the property of the poor, left to them by pious benefactors; much of the clerical work required from the chantry priests was of the same nature as that which curates discharge to-day; but that did not prevent the rapacious

robbers of Church property from seizing everything and casting the chantry priests adrift, to swell the ranks of the unemployed and to increase the amount of clerical poverty which later on became such a disgrace to the rich spoliators of the Church.

Such were the various kinds of clergy who carried on the Church's work in the mediæval period. They were on the whole well looked after by their ecclesiastical superiors, the bishops and archdeacons, and, in spite of some weaknesses, some sad displays of ignorance and carelessness, performed their duties well. There were several abuses, to which we shall presently allude, but an examination of the results of Archdeacons' Visitations shows that in many places there was not much amiss. Every one knows Chaucer's description of the "poor parson of a town," a charming portrait of a mediæval cleric, which proves that there were plenty of saintly men in the Church then, whose lives did not accord with the popular notion that the clergy of those times were an ignorant, careless, worldly-minded race, totally unfit for the duties of their holy calling. Here is the poet's account of the good man who was the rector of a village, a scattered parish "with houses far asunder," and not the parson of what we understand by "a town" [1] :—

"A good man there was of religion
That was a poor parson of a town;
But rich he was of holy thought and werk:[2]
He was also a learned man, a clerk,
That Christë's Gospel truly wouldë preach
His parishen devoutly would he teach.
Benign he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversity full patient:
And such he was y-proved often sithes.[3]
Full loth were him to cursë for his tithes,

[1] A town is really a *ton*, or fortified village.
[2] Work. [3] Oftentimes.

But rather would he given, out of doubt,
Unto his poorë parishens about,
Of his off'ring, and eke of his substánce.
He could in little thing have suffisance.[1]
Wide was his parish and his houses far asunder,
But he ne left nought, for no rain nor thunder,
In sickness and in mischief to visit
The farthest in his parish, much and lit,[2]
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he gaf,[3]
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.
Out of the gospel he the wordës caught,
And this figúre be added yet thereto,
That if gold rustë, what should iron do?
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder is a lewëd[4] man to rust:
And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,
To see a filthy shepherd and clean sheep:
Well ought a priest ensample for to give
By his own cleanness, how his sheep should live.
He settë not his benefice to hire,
And left his sheep encumber'd in the mire,
And ran unto London, unto Saint Poul's,
To seekë him a chantery for souls,
Or with a brotherhood to be withhold:[5]
But dwelt at home, and keptë well his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarry.
He was a shepherd, and no mercenary.
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful men not dispiteous,[6]
Nor of his speechë dangerous nor dign,[7]
And in his teaching discreet and benign.
To drawen folk to heaven, with fairness,
By good example was his business:
But if it were any person obstinate,
What so he were of high or low estate,
Him would he snibben[8] sharply for the nonës.[9]
A better priest I trow that nowhere none is.

[1] He was satisfied with very little.
[2] Great and small. [3] Gave. [4] Unlearned.
[5] Detained. [6] Severe. [7] Disdainful.
[8] Reprove. [9] Nonce, occasion.

> He waited after no pomp nor reverence,
> Nor marked him a spiced[1] conscience,
> But Christë's lore, and his apostles' twelve,
> He taught, and first he follow'd it himselve."

A worthy priest truly. There have been many such in ancient times as well as in modern days. But there were exceptions, as the episcopal visitations, which were of a very searching character, plainly disclose. In a thirteenth-century visitation at Sonning, Berkshire, the vicar, Vitalis, presented one Simon, a chaplain of the same village. The dean examined him in the Gospel for the first Sunday in Advent, when it was found that he did not understand what he read. He was then tested in the opening of the Canon of the Mass, "*Te igitur clementissime Pater rogamus*," &c. He had no idea in what case *Te* was, nor by what it was governed. Requested by the dean to look more closely at the words, the chaplain gravely suggested that *Te* was governed by *Pater*, because the Father governed all things! He could not state the case or decline the word *clementissime*, or explain the meaning of *clemens*. Of hymns and antiphons he knew nothing. All priests were expected to know the Mass and the Psalter by heart, but Master Simon was ignorant of such matters. At the same visitation it was discovered that several others were in a like case,[2] and were dismissed for their incompetency. They were exceptional, and furnish no ground for the conclusion sometimes stated that all the parsons of the period were ignorant men. The fact was that the vicar of Sonning was a careless worldly person who procured the cheapest assistant priests that he could find, and was quite content with irregularly ordained chaplains, who had probably only attained to the first tonsure and had

[1] Scrupulous or artificial.

[2] *Vetus Registrum Sarisberiense*, i. 275–314.

taken the priesthood upon themselves.[1] Such scandals were few.

The visitations were very useful for the detection of any such irregularities and cases of ignorance and scandal. It was the practice of the archdeacons, as it is now, to hold these visitations once a year, and to require the rectors and vicars to answer long lists of questions with regard to the affairs of the parish, the conduct of the parishioners, the custody of the goods of the Church, &c. The replies to these questions afford most wonderfully minute descriptions of the Church life of the period. Moreover, there was an important class of parochial officials who were encouraged to act as careful watchmen over the conduct of their parson, and to report to the archdeacon any defects in his conduct and ministrations. Every one knows the existence of sidesmen at the present time; but not one person in ten is acquainted with the origin of the name or the history of the office. Popularly they are supposed to be an inferior sort of churchwarden officials who collect the alms of the faithful in the side aisles while the churchwardens proudly present the alms-bags in the central nave. Really the sidesman has quite a different and more exalted origin. His name is a corruption of Synod's man, and these officials were known as *testes synodales*, whose duty it was to attend the archdeacon's synod, or visitation, and report to him concerning the behaviour of their parson and how he performed his duties.

He corresponded to the "aggrieved parishioner" of modern legislation, and was not a very emaculate person. Any bit of parochial gossip or scandal was eagerly retailed to the ears of the archdeacon. The sidesman had to give a true account of everything that went on in the parish, and was examined upon oath. His criticism of his rector's sermons is amusing reading. Thus in the Exeter

[1] *Victoria County History of Berkshire*, ii. 7; "Ecclesiastical History," by the Rev. J. C. Cox, LL.D.

diocese the sidesmen say that their parson preaches in his own way and expounds the gospel "as well as he can." Another one, the vicar of Colebrook, does not give them much instruction in "the articles of his faith, the Ten Commandments and the deadly sins." He does not say his Matins with note on the more solemn days, and only celebrates on the week-days every other day. His moral conduct was not what it should be All his houses, except the hall and chamber, are falling to pieces, and his gate is so far from his hall that one calling without is not heard in the hall, which is dangerous for the sick parishioners. Sometimes the rector is reported for being absent from his parish. But on the whole the returns from the parishes seem to have been fairly satisfactory, and the sidesmen, aggrieved or otherwise, had little to report against their parson. But there was a sad story of Colyton in 1330, where the sidesmen say that their vicar has been struck with leprosy and continues to come to communion with his parishioners at the risk of contaminating the whole flock, which was a scandal.

Parsons have always been somewhat "clubable" men, and we find that in remote times they had their guild and meetings. Their fraternity was called the Guild of the Kalenders, so named because they usually held their meetings on the first day, or kalends, of the month. The history of the Fraternity of the Kalendars of Bristol has been written, and abounds with interest. As early as 1464 the members had a library, which was destroyed two years later "through the carelessness of a drunken point-maker." These guilds were at first confined to the clergy, but afterwards laymen were admitted, and in 1422 their wives gained admission to the dinners which followed the meetings. But a condition was attached: the wife of the lay brother whose turn it was to entertain his brethren had to provide the meal and to wait at table.

What were the ordinary duties of the parson of the

period? In Saxon and Norman times it was not the usual practice to have the daily Mass, and Archbishop Peckham's "Constitution," A.D. 1281, ordered every priest to celebrate at least once a week, but in towns and in large country villages it became customary to have a daily celebration, as well as Matins and Evensong. In country villages there is little evidence to show that daily services were the rule, or that Mass was celebrated more often than on Sundays and Festivals. Nobles and kings used certainly to attend the Holy Eucharist in their private chapels before breakfast, but it is doubtful whether farmers, labourers, artizans, and tradesmen frequented church more often than on Sundays and holy days. Matins and Prime usually preceded the Mass, and the service began at 6 or 7 a.m. and Evensong at 2 or 3 p.m. Those who could not attend the morning Mass heard the Sanctus bell peal forth at the elevation of the Host, and wherever the sound penetrated over the waters of a harbour, as at Bosham, when the sailors or fisherfolk were engaged with their boats, or over the fields when the labourers were gathering in the harvest, every knee was bent and prayer offered to Almighty God. Moreover, the churches were always open for prayer, and the people availed themselves of this privilege far more often than they are accustomed in England at the present day.

On Sundays the parson began his duties at an early hour, at 6 or 7 o'clock, saying Matins, and at 9 a.m. celebrated High Mass, and to these services the bulk of the people came. Then they had dinner and returned in the afternoon to Evensong. Thus does "Piers Plowman" lay down the rule:

> "And upon Sundays to cease, God's service to hear,
> Both Matins and Masse, and after meat in churches
> To hear Evensong, Every man ought.
> Thus it belongeth to lord, to learned, and to lewd
> Each holy day to hear wholly the service,
> Vigils and fastings days further to know."

Sometimes the people had far to go and could not return to Evensong; or the ale at the inn was too attractive. Hence the attendance at the afternoon service was not so numerous as in the morning.

We shall refer later on to the subject of sermons and the preaching of the mediæval parson. It is generally supposed that before the Reformation he somewhat neglected his duties in this respect, but that does not seem to have been entirely the case. If he followed the injunctions of his bishop and the directions given in such books as Myrc's *Instructions to Parish Priests*, he would be continually teaching his people in the verities of the Faith, though set sermons were not so frequent then as they are now. Catechisings were frequent.

In saying the service and repeating the Psalms the parson was warned not to say the verses too quickly, but to pause in the midst of the verse, and not to begin another verse before the other reader shall have finished his verse—an admonition which might be useful in the present day, when one is amazed at the rapidity with which two parsons will read through the Psalms at a daily Matins.

Special seasons brought special duties to the mediæval priest, but it would take too long to tell all that was required of him on the great festivals and fast-days of the Church. Processions, too, he had to arrange at Rogationtide, and on Corpus Christi day when, with banners flying and cross uplifted and swinging censers, he and his parishioners marched along bearing the Blessed Host, while the people who lined the streets fell on their knees as the procession passed.

His chief duty was, of course, to administer the sacraments, not only the Holy Communion and Baptism, but Penance, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, to prepare candidates for Confirmation and present them to the bishop, and to visit the sick.

The special seasons for baptism were Easter and Whit Sunday, when the fonts were hallowed, and all children born within eight days of those feasts were then brought to be christened. Norman fonts have a large bowl, evidently showing that baptism by immersion was the rule. But in later times both that form of baptism and also by affusion or sprinkling were both practised. Children were often baptized on the day of their birth, and if they were in danger of death one of the parents, or the midwife, was instructed to christen the infant. The position of the font near the entrance of the church was typical of the sacrament of Baptism being the entrance to the spiritual life. Fonts were regarded with great reverence, and had a cover, which was kept locked. The sanctity attached to the consecrated instrument of a holy sacrament has caused the careful preservation of fonts, unchanged by centuries of rebuilding and alteration. On Norman examples we find curious sculptures, conventional forms of strange creatures, serpents and salamanders, favourite legends of saints, as well as Scripture subjects, the baptism of the Saviour, the descent of the Holy Dove, the Crucifixion, the mystic Vesica Piscis, or the entwined and fretted arms of the floriated cross. To the Norman nothing came amiss: men, animals, fishes, birds, plants, agricultural operations, hunting, hawking; the saint, the bishop, the priest, the warrior, the heraldic and conventional forms of creatures living and dead were worked up with surprising ingenuity and ever varying forms of delineation. Later fonts contain little beyond architectural ornaments which correspond with the details of the ecclesiastical architecture of the period.

Parish priests were ordered to instruct the godparents to bring their children to be "bishoped," or confirmed, not later than when they had attained the fifth year of their age, and at confirmation new sponsors were appointed to look after the children. The bishop used to fix some

central church for the celebration of the rite, and crowds of children were conveyed there from the neighbouring district. It will be observed that children were confirmed at a much earlier age than they are now. They were also anointed with the chrism, and the parents brought a linen band, which was bound round the heads of the children and kept there for eight days. Myrc, in his *Instructions to Parish Priests*, gives the following directions:

> "When the child confirmed been,
> Bonds about his neck be lafte,
> That from him should not be rafte,
> Till at church the eighth day
> The priest himself takes them away.
> Then shall he with his own hands
> Burn that ilk same bonds,
> And wash the child over the font
> There he was anointed in the front."

Hearing confession was an important part of the parson's duty, especially in Lent and at Christmas, Easter, and Whit Sunday. The chancel screen was the usual place for confessions. There are in some old screens four or five mysterious holes, the object of which is not apparent. When I first saw an example of these holes I ventured to hazard the suggestion that they were formerly used for hearing confession. My theory was not wholly accepted, but I have since obtained confirmatory evidence from Dr. Gasquet's *Mediæval Parish Life*, where he states that the usual place for hearing the confessions was at the opening of the chancel, and tells of the "shryving stool," which was a special seat or bench placed there for the purpose.

It would take too long to describe the many other duties of the mediæval parson, his visiting the sick and administering Extreme Unction, his performance of the ceremony of marriage, and other functions. In many ways his life differed little from that of the parson of a parish in the

present day. His successor serves in the same Church and has much the same duties to perform. There have been some changes in doctrine and usage, many changes in the people, in their customs, their habits and modes of thought; but the parson of to-day has many points of resemblance to his mediæval predecessor; and if they could meet and compare their experiences they would probably find that they had much in common, much the same disappointments and successes, cares and anxieties, joys and woes, and in their happy hours spent amongst their people each one could whisper to his heart *Lætus sorte mea.*

CHAPTER IV

THE BISHOP

IT is rash, perhaps, and presumptuous to include in the category of parsons those who hold the highest office in the Church, but before they assumed the mitre they were ordinary or extraordinary parsons, and it may be permitted to follow their footsteps from the parsonage to the palace. Godwin, in his work, *De Presulibus Anglicanis*, has told us much about the history and lives of the English episcopacy, and ordinary folk may stand in amazement before the vast learning, dignity, and state, the piety, devotion, and saintliness of most of the bishops of our Church. They, like their inferiors, have had their good times and their bad. They have sometimes been warriors and statesmen rather than Fathers of the Church. Some of them have been fonder of their books than of their sheep, their state and dignity than of their office as overseers of the flock of Christ. Others have been ambitious and worldly and thought little of their ecclesiastical duties and much more of their secular concerns. Some have been more inclined to sternness and severity than to the gentleness of their Master, to repress heresy and wrong-doing with the sword of persecution than with the sword of the Spirit. They have been human, very human, not celestial beings. But take them all in all you will not find a nobler, saintlier, more devoted body of men than the bishops of the Church of England.

Think not that I am about to write their history. That would be a large volume which recorded their great deeds for Church and State, their noble, self-sacrificing lives. I may not tell of the wisdom and saintliness of Dunstan, Swithin, Lanfranc, Anselm, and scores of other great men who conferred honour on the Church and countless benefits on the State, who repressed disorder, ruled wisely, governed kings and kept them from doing evil, who were not afraid to withstand the tyranny of an oppressor, or to defend the rights of the people and of the Church. Englishmen have short memories, but will not forget that they mainly owe the Great Charter, the Charter of English freedom, to an Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, and that the first clause of that charter states "*quod Anglicana ecclesia libera sit.*" He it was and his brother bishops who protected the rights of the free-holders and fenced them round with carefully drawn provisions; and to the Church the nation owes that precious record of its liberties forced from a reluctant king who was made to agree that "no free man shall be taken, or imprisoned, or disseized, or outlawed, or exiled, or anywise destroyed; nor will we go upon him, nor send upon him, but by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land. To none will we sell, to none will we deny or delay, right or justice." As Anselm withstood William Rufus, as Theobald rescued England from the lawlessness of Stephen, so Langton saved his country from the tyranny of John, and all Englishmen should feel gratified to the good prelate and respect his memory.

We cannot conceive a modern bishop leading his men-at-arms to fight for his king and country, unless it be a brave northern member of the episcopal bench who recently brought his people to London in bold array to protest against the destruction of his schools. He would have made a good "fighting bishop." But in ancient

days it was not unusual for a prelate to be a leader ot hosts. As early as Edgar's time the tenants of the see of Worcester were ordered to fulfil their military duties under the bishop as their archiductor, and in the Domesday Survey we find the men of Taunton joining with the armed hosts of the Bishop of Winchester. The first time we hear of bishops fighting was in 835 A.D., when two Wessex prelates fell in the battle of Charmouth, and Bishop Ealhstan, of Sherborne, acted as Egbert's general in Kent, and was one of the successful leaders of the English army that defeated the Danes on the Parret in 845 A.D. Roger, Bishop of Salisbury (1107–1139), was a type of militant prelate, or great feudal Churchman, who ruled by force and led his men to battle. His castles at Devizes, Sherborne, and Malmsbury excited the jealousy of the neighbouring nobles. He was unscrupulous, fierce, and avaricious; and William of Malmesbury states that if there was anything contiguous to his property which might be advantageous to him, he would directly extort it either by entreaty or purchase, or, if these failed, by force. He fell a victim to the tyranny of Stephen, who seized his castles and those of his nephew, the Bishop of Lincoln, and imprisoned them both. Some say he died broken-hearted, others that he was starved to death through a promise to Stephen that his castle of Devizes should be surrendered to him before he eat or drank; but another episcopal nephew, the Bishop of Ely, kept it three days before surrendering it, and caused his uncle's death.

There is a curious brass in Salisbury Cathedral that tells of another fighting prelate, Robert Wyville (1330–1375). It shows a castle with a figure of the bishop on the first floor in the act of prayer, and his champion issuing from the gate, while hares and rabbits disport themselves on the grass outside. This refers to his suit against William de Montacute for the restoration of the

THE BRASS OF BISHOP ROBERT WYVILLE IN SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

castle and chase of Sherborne, to whom he sent his champion, clothed in white, to try the wager of battle for the assertion of the rights of his see. His adversary declined the combat, and the bishop gained for his bishopric 2,500 marks and the castles of Sherborne and Sarum, and also permission from the king to fortify his manors of Sherborne, Sarum, Woodford, Chardstock, Potterne, Canning, Sonning, and his mansion in Fleet Street "in the suburbs of London," where Salisbury Court now is. Walsingham gives no very flattering picture of his lordship. He was not merely destitute of learning, but so deformed and ugly, "it is hard to say whether he was more dunce or dwarf, more unlearned or unhandsome," that had the Pope seen him he would never have consented to his election.

Another fighting prelate was John de Grey, of Norwich (1200–1214), who remained faithful to King John, and invaded France with a small army to attack Philip, King of France, but soon was forced to retreat. Bishop Anthony Beak, of Durham, who died in 1310, loved military parade and pomp, and had always knights and soldiers with him. He led the van of the army of Edward I. against the Scots and fought very gallantly. When in Rome a company of ruffians entered his house, and he valiantly opposed them and drove them out. Many stories are told of his eccentricities and strangely mixed character, in which good and evil were curiously blended.

Another Bishop of Norwich, Henry le Despenser (1370–1406), was a very militant bishop. He not only turned his arms against the rebellious citizens of Norwich, but he led an army into Flanders to fight for Pope Urban VI. against the supporters of his rival, Clement VII., in response to a Bull issued by the former and published in England ordering all men to take up arms against Clement. The army was formidable in numbers, but the bishop was not a good

general. The walls of Ypres offered a stubborn resistance to all attacks, and the strength of the English force was considerably reduced by this ineffectual siege. Bishop Henry had better have stayed in his own diocese.

Some bishops took active parts in the Crusades, such as Peter de la Roche, of Winchester (1204–1238), who led a body of Crusaders in 1226 and fought bravely in the Holy Land. One of the last of the fighters was Peter Mews, Bishop of Bath and Wells and Winchester. As a layman he fought in the Civil War, and fled with Charles II. to Flanders, but after his consecration to the episcopacy he showed his warlike propensities, and fought at the battle of Sedgemoor against the followers of the Duke of Monmouth, where he was wounded.

There have been many fighting parsons, too; notably Samuel Speed, whose grandfather was the learned chronicler of London. He made England too hot for him by conspiring against Oliver Cromwell, and fled to America. This was before he took orders. In the West Indies he became a noted pirate and took part in many a bold fight and drinking carouse, capturing vessels, killing and plundering. He returned to England at the Restoration, became a reformed character, was ordained, and presented to the vicarage of Godalming. However, his old fighting spirit broke out when he served as chaplain to the Earl of Ossory during the Dutch war, and his valour is recorded in the verse :—

> "His chaplain he plied his wonted work,
> He pray'd like a Christian and fought like a Turk,
> Crying, 'Now for the King and the Duke of York,
> With a thump! a thump! a thump!'"

Perhaps we have seen enough of fighting parsons. Of statesmen-prelates there are too many to be named here. The offices of Lord Chancellor, Treasurer of England, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, Master of the Rolls,

Regents of the kingdom during the minorities of kings, were usually held by bishops in the mediæval and Tudor periods; and whenever an ambassador was wanted, or some negotiations to be arranged with foreign kings and potentates, the monarchs of England usually sent one of the bishops to perform these duties. They had a great amount of political power. They, with the mitred abbots, held a majority in the House of Lords, and on their great estates exercised powers of jurisdiction equal to that of the great nobles. The prelates of ancient days were very powerful people.

Another great debt we owe to the old bishops is the legacy of the magnificent buildings—the grand cathedrals, colleges, and schools—which they built, or caused to be erected. We know that several of them were great architects and were responsible for the actual buildings; how far others were indebted to the skill of master masons and monastic architects it is impossible to say. Names perish and often the only monuments of skilful architects are the shrines they reared. But many bishops have left behind records of noble work, and were themselves the architects. Such were Bishops Hugh of Lincoln and Walkelin of Winchester, who was granted by the king as much wood in the forest of Hempage as he could cut in four days and nights. He gathered a small army of woodmen, and carried off within the given time the whole forest, much to King William's anger. Henry of Blois built the Hospital of St. Cross. Bishop Edington began the reconstruction of Winchester Cathedral, carried on by the master-builder of all time, the famous William of Wykeham, whose appointment to Winchester incurred the wrath of Wickliff. The reformer observes, "They wullen not present a clerk able of God's word and holy ensample, but a kitchen clerk, or a penny clerk, or one wise in building castles and other worldly doings." This was not the way to write of the blameless, large-minded, munificent Wykeham, the founder

of New College, Oxford, and Winchester School, who revolutionised the system of education existing in his age, devoted his great wealth to the advancement of learning, and left to future generations the magnificent buildings which, perhaps, he alone could have constructed. England may well be proud of Wykeham.

His successors in the see of Winchester carried on the fine traditions left by Bishop William. Henry de Beaufort was the rebuilder of St. Cross, and William of Waynflete founded Magdalen College, Oxford, and may possibly have influenced Henry VI. in his scheme for building Eton and King's College, Cambridge. It would be easy to extend our list of episcopal architects. Almost every cathedral of the Old Foundation owes something to some of the bishops of the see, and they could have well used Wren's proud motto, and pointed to their buildings as a witness of their skill and reverence for the houses of God which they strove to make fair and beautiful, and worthy of the worship offered therein to the Great Architect of the universe.

And when the Reformation changes swept over the Church of England and freed her from foreign bonds, the bishops showed themselves strong men, able controversialists, zealous, and industrious, and many sealed the sincerity of their faith by dying for it. They lived in dangerous and troubled times, and it is difficult for us in these days to realise their circumstances and the unsettled conditions of affairs in which they were called to play a distinguished part. It is unfair to judge them harshly. We have only to look at the *Bishop's Book*, the popular name of the *Institution of a Christian Man*, drawn up by Cranmer, Lee Stokesley, Tunstall, Gardiner, Latimer, Shaxton, Fox, Barlow, Hilsey, Rugge, and Goodrich, described by its authors as a plain and sincere doctrine concerning the whole sum of all those things which appertain unto the profession of a Christian man," in order to

learn something of the wisdom of the prelates in 1537 and of their earnest desire to promote unity and to instruct the people in Church doctrine. Unfortunately the influence of foreign reformers was at one time too keenly felt, who strove to fashion the Church of England after the model of Geneva. Some of the new prelates, Cranmer, Ridley, Ponet of Rochester and Winchester, Holbeach and Taylor of Lincoln, Miles Coverdale of Exeter, and Harley of Hereford, sympathised with these foreign folk, and threatened much harm to the Church. Hooper was a deep-dyed Puritan, and refused the bishopric of Gloucester because he would not consent to don "Aaronic habits" for his consecration. We may smile or scoff, as we feel inclined, but we must remember the swing of the pendulum. When it rises to a high point on one side it will naturally swing to a high point in the opposite direction. We must look a little further on before we come to any permanent settlement. Terrible were the sufferings of bishops and other brave English Churchmen and Churchwomen during the shameful proceedings of Mary's reign, and we turn away with a sense of sickening horror from those scenes of savage and relentless burnings and revolting cruelties. Many of the bishops of the Roman party were humane men, and liked not persecution and the burning of heretics. In some dioceses where such scenes occurred it was not done with the consent of the bishop. Oxford, Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, under the good bishops Robert King, James Brook, Robert Parfew, and Richard Pates, enjoyed much quiet. Indeed, Brook is described as a "great persecutor of Protestants," but he contented himself with preaching at Oxford two fiery orations against Cranmer, chiefly remarkable for their length, and did not vex his own diocese. Exeter fared well under good James Turberville, and only one martyrdom occurred in that diocese. Gilbert Bourn, of Bath and Wells, who owed his life to a Protestant, having been

saved from a dagger thrown at him in a tumult at Paul's Cross, was tender to the lives of other Protestants. John Holyman, of Bristol, would not soil his soul with persecution, though a low person named Dalby, his chancellor, was guilty of the death of three men. These chancellors were terrible people, and were responsible for many martyrdoms. The blame of the burnings in Berkshire ought to be laid chiefly on Chancellor Geoffrey, that "Doeg worse than Saul himself," as Fuller calls him, rather than on John Capon, the Bishop of Salisbury, though he was not altogether guiltless. So it was in the dioceses of Ely, Peterborough, and Norwich. The chancellors were the guilty persecutors, not the bishops. In East Anglia Downing, the chancellor, "played the devil himself: enough to make wood dear in those parts, so many did he consume to ashes."[1] Christopherson of Chichester was well learned in persecutions, as he had translated the history of Eusebius into Latin, and put in practice some of the cruelties which he had learned from the study of the doings of Roman emperors. Cardinal Pole did little, but his suffragan, Thornton, and his archdeacon, Harpsfield, fully made up for his mildness, and Morris of Rochester proved himself a stern tyrant. The northern dioceses enjoyed peace and quiet, Tunstall of Durham and others being unwilling to fan the flames. But the chief and notorious sinners were Bonner and Gardiner. Bonner, Bishop of London, was a demon of cruelty; in him, says Fuller, met "lion, tiger, wolf, bear, yea, a whole forest of wild beasts." No sex, quality, or age escaped him; and Gardiner egged him on, though he needed no spurring in order to do evil. Gardiner's malice was "like what is commonly called white powder, which surely discharged the bullet yet made no report, being secret in all his acts of cruelty. This made him often chide Bonner, calling him 'ass,' though not so much for killing poor people as

[1] *Church History of Britain*, by Fuller, ii. 394.

for not doing it more cunningly." He was cruel and revengeful, and "the hammer of heretics," as he has been called, will always be execrated. When Bonner's time came and he was compelled to resign his bishopric and go to gaol, his misfortunes did not quench his spirits. He was being conducted to the Marshalsea Prison; a man meeting him cried—

"Good morrow, bishop quondam."

"Farewell, knave semper," was the bishop's ready reply.

But enough of these terrible times. We will pass on to better days. The period of the Elizabethan settlement presents many difficulties, and modern historians have endeavoured to throw much light upon it. We have the fancy pictures of Froude, painted in glowing colours by a facile brush, but sadly lacking in truth and accuracy. Archbishop Creighton and Dr. Gee have brought to bear upon it the wealth of their historical knowledge, and Dom Birt has recently viewed it with great impartiality from the Roman standpoint. It is quite beyond the limits of this book to discuss all the burning questions that arose, the strife of parties, and the gradual settlement that took place in that difficult time. The bishops were strong men; they had powerful minds, but in the latter part of the sixteenth century there was a dearth of beautiful characters. As Bishop Creighton states, "A time of revolt and upheaval is a time of one-sided energy, and of moral uncertainty, of hardship, of unsound argument, of imperfect self-control, of vacillation, of self-seeking. It is difficult in such times to find heroes—to discover a man whom we can unreservedly admire."

Nevertheless there were not a few who strove manfully for the cause of right and truth. Bishop Jewell, of Salisbury, the learned author of the *Apologia Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*—the first of a long series of masterpieces which rendered the Church of England unassailable from the Roman side—was one of the worthiest of bishops. "A jewel," says Fuller,

"sometimes taken for a single precious stone, is properly a collection of many, orderly set to their best advantage. So several eminencies met in this worthy man . . . so devout in the pew where he prayed, diligent in the pulpit where he preached, grave on the bench where he assisted, mild in the consistory where he judged, pleasant at the table where he fed, patient in the bed where he died, that well it were if, in relation to him, *secundum usum Sarum* were made precedential to all posterity. . . . It were hard to say whether his soul or his ejaculations arrived first in heaven, seeing he prayed dying, and died praying." He lies buried in his cathedral near the tomb of Bishop Wyville, who defended the Church's lands with his sword, whereas Jewell defended her doctrines with his pen.

Opinions differ as to the merits of Archbishop Parker. He coveted not his high office, and would have preferred to remain in the quiet deanery of Lincoln, where he loved scholarly research and the delights of the study of antiquities. But when he could not escape from the cares of the leadership of the Church, he threw himself heartily into the work. "He was a Parker indeed, careful to keep the fences, and shut the gates of discipline against all such night-stealers as would invade the same. No wonder, then, if the tongues and pens of many were whetted against him, whose complaints are beheld, by discreet men, like the exclamations of truanty scholars against their master's severity, correcting them for their faults."[1] Grindal, his successor, was infected with Puritan tendencies and influenced by the notions of foreign reformers. He fell foul of the dictatorial queen and was suspended from his functions for six months. The poet Spenser refers to Grindal's disgrace in one of the sweetest stanzas in the English language, wherein he transposes the syllables of Grindal and converts the name into Algrind. These are the lines :—

[1] Fuller's *Church History*, vol. ii. p. 511.

> "One day he sate upon a hill,
> As now thou wouldest me:
> But I am taught by Algrind's ill
> To love the low degree."[1]

Space forbids me to tell of the other bishops of the period —Whitgift, Pilkington, Bullingham, Cheyney's *Luthero addictissimus*, Horne "of a spiteful and fruitful wit," and other episcopal personages. They were attacked, as all good men are liable to be; but these bishops were especially annoyed by certain scurrilous pamphleteers who issued the Mar-Prelate tracts. The vulgarity and indecency of these publications may be gathered from their titles: "*Theses Martinianæ*, *i.e.*, certain demonstrative conclusions set down and collected by Martin Mar-Prelate the Great, serving as a manifest and sufficient confutation of all that ever the college of cater-caps, with their whole band of clergy-priests, have or can bring for the defence of their ambitious and anti-Christian prelacy." Published by Martin Junior, 1589, and dedicated to John Kankerbury. We presume that Kankerbury was a magnificent pun on Canterbury. Another tract is headed, "Protestation of Martin Mar-Prelate; wherein, notwithstanding the surprising of the printer, he maketh it known to the world that he feareth neither proud priest, anti-christian pope, tyrannous prelate, nor godless cater-cap," &c., 1589. Others are entitled, "Dialogue, wherein is plainly laid open the tyrannical dealings of the lords-bishops against God's children"; "Ha' ye any work for Cooper?" referring to Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Winchester; "Epitome of the first book of Dr. John Bridges against the Puritans. . . . Printed over-sea in Europe, within two furlongs of a bouncing priest," &c.; "Ha' ye any more work for the Cooper?" The only way to answer the authors of these libels was to cover them with ridicule, and

[1] Spenser's *Shepheard's Calender*.

several pamphlets were issued written in the same vein, such as "Pappe with an hatchet, *alias* a fig for my godson"; "An Almond for a Parrot, or An Alms for Martin Mar-Prelate"; "A Counter-cuff given to Martin Junior." Martin Mar-Prelate received as good or as bad as he gave, and the ridiculous controversy died down, and, like the Jackdaw of Rheims, "no one seemed one penny the worse."

The early Stuart period lacked no learned divines and scholarly bishops, as the authorised translation of the Bible plainly shows to all future generations of Churchmen. The names of John Overall, Bishop of Ely, afterwards of Norwich, the guide, philosopher, and friend of John Cosin, Bilson of Winchester, Buckeridge of Rochester, Andrewes of Winchester, the Keble of his age, Thomas Morton of Chester, Lichfield, and Durham, who would be called now a Low Churchman, and Archbishop Laud, tell of the powerful minds and noble men who guided the Church through this period. Robert Southey boldly asserts that then the Church of England was better provided with able and faithful ministers than it had ever been before. And when we add the names of such men as Joseph Hall, Matthew Wren, William Juxon, Robert Sanderson, Brian Duppa, we can well understand how brightly the light shone upon the Church, just before the darkness of the Commonwealth period set in, and temporally obscured its rays. Yet the Church, in spite of all the efforts of Parliament and Puritan, took a great deal to kill it. It did not even show signs of suspended animation. The bishops were deprived, but they still managed to say their service, and ordain clergymen, and many young men were being trained for the clerical office, so that when the time came and the days of mourning passed, there might not be lacking "fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of Christ's Church." Moreover, the silenced bishops and clergy used the time of their mourning well. They studied deeply theological ques-

tions, drunk deep of biblical and patristic wisdom, and when the time of their deliverance came, they were ready with spiritual armour complete to fight the battles of the Lord and uphold the cause of truth.

The Caroline divines were the glory of the Church of England. Archbishop Juxon, his successor, Gilbert Sheldon, John Cosin of Durham, Robert Sanderson of Lincoln, and two bishops of Chester, Brian Walton and John Pearson, the learned author of the *Exposition of the Creed*, were all distinguished and able bishops who maintained the honour of the Church and guided her through the dangers of reactionary times. When the foolish King James began to tamper with the Church and ordered the bishops to read his precious *Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*, in order to enable him to Romanise the Church of England, he was resolutely met by the gallant Seven Bishops who were not afraid to go to prison and thwart an angry king, rather than to betray their Church. Drs. Sancroft, Archbishop, Lloyd of St. Asaph, Turner of Ely, Lake of Chichester, Ken of Bath and Wells, Trelawney of Bristol, and White of Peterborough, were those who defied the angry king and were conveyed to the Tower. The scene that occurred is one of the most famous in English history. The whole bank of the Thames was covered with crowds who besought the blessing of these fathers of the Church, and prayed for their protection. Soldiers who were guarding the prisoners flung themselves on their knees and craved benediction. Some persons ran into the river to get near to the barge. Others crowded in boats, forming a great procession which conducted the prisoners to the gloomy Tower. The bell of the Church of St. Peter was tolling as they entered the fortress, and they entered the building and attended the service. In the Lesson for the day occurred the words, "In all things approving ourselves as ministers of God—in much patience, in affliction,

in stripes and imprisonment," which comforted them and were told in the city streets. Never was there such a triumph. And then, when their trial came in Westminster Hall and the verdict "not guilty" rang out—

"Lord Halifax sprang up and waved his hat—at that signal benches and galleries raised a shout—in a moment ten thousand persons who crowded the great hall replied with a still louder shout which made the old oaken roof crack, and in another moment the innumerable crowd without set up a third huzzah, which was heard at Temple Bar. The boats which covered the Thames gave an answering cheer. A peal of gunpowder was heard on the water, and another, and so in a few moments the glad tidings went past the Savoy and the Friars to London Bridge and the forests of masts below. As the news spread, streets and squares, market-places and coffee-houses broke forth in acclamations. Meanwhile, from the outskirts of the multitude horsemen were spurring off to bear along the great roads intelligence of the victory of our Church and nation."

The bishops were the champions of the national liberties, and the nation knew this. When the bishops marched out of the hall free men the populace crowded round them; mothers held their children up above the sea of faces, that they might in future years look back with pride upon a day of triumph, and be able to say that they had seen those men who had redeemed the national liberties.

> "The fathers urged the people to be still
> With outstretched hands and earnest speech in vain!
> Yea, many, haply wont to entertain
> Small reverence for the mitre's offices,
> And to religion's self no friendly will,
> A prelate's blessing ask on bended knee."

Never had the Church of England and the bishops been so popular, or so dear to the heart of the nation.

This chapter is growing fast in length, and I must tell briefly of those who followed in the wake of the Seven Bishops. The Church lost the services of many devoted men on account of their unwillingness to take the oaths of allegiance to William III. when they deemed James II. their lawful king. These non-jurors included nine bishops and many learned and pious divines whom we should like to visit in their retirement and hear their views. Inferior folk were called to fill their places. Gossiping, busy, bustling, meddlesome Gilbert Burnet of Salisbury was one of them, and he tells us complacently that the fifteen new bishops were "generally looked on as the learnedest, the wisest, and best men in the Church," himself being among the number, but we have not space in which to record their virtues.

The bishops were giants in the days of controversy that set in during the Georgian era. They reasoned, they argued, they defended the cause of true religion, but they did not look after their flocks. They erected grand fortresses to guard their heritage, but they forgot to govern it. They heaped any amount of maps and plans of their spiritual estate, but they forgot to till the ground. Great names there were among them—Bishop Butler, the author of the immortal *Analogy*, Tenison, Wake, whose efforts for the Reunion of Christendom will not be forgotten, the saintly Bishop of Manxland, Thomas Wilson, Martin Benson of Gloucester, and many others whom it would be tedious to name. The type of the Georgian prelate is distinguished by good scholarship, sound Churchmanship, and excellent character, but lacking in zeal and enthusiasm. I need not mention the names of Secker, Warburton, and Hurd, all good men and true, great scholars and learned divines.

In the days of Wesley and the rise of the Evangelicals the bishops liked not Methodism and the new ideas, and few of that school were raised to a see.

Sometimes these eighteenth-century bishops fell foul of the Methodists. Lady Huntingdon, with her autocratic ways, was rather a thorn in their sides. Dr. Benson of Gloucester once came to argue her ladyship out of her new-fangled notions, but she turned upon him with vigour, lectured him, argued with him, and the poor man had to retire discomfited, with feathers ruffled and dignity hurt. She feared not to attack the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cornwallis, and his wife, who rather shocked good people by entertaining extravagantly at Lambeth, and by having routs and card-parties on Saturday nights prolonged into the small hours of the Lord's Day. One day she called and lectured the Archbishop on his enormities. He resented it, and Mrs. Cornwallis was scornful at the lady's impertinence. But the great Countess Selina was not to be so lightly treated. She begged an audience of King George III., and induced him to write a remarkable letter to the Primate, which is probably unparalleled. It was as follows:

"My good Lord Prelate,—I would not delay giving you a notification of the great concern with which my breast was affected at receiving authentic information that routs have made their way into your Palace. At the same time I must signify to you my sentiments on the subject, which hold these levities and vain dissipations as utterly inexpedient, if not unlawful, to pass in a residence for many centuries devoted to divine studies, religious retirement, and the extensive exercise of charity and benevolence; I add, in a place where so many of your predecessors have led their lives in such sanctity as has thrown lustre on the pure religion they professed to adorn. From the dissatisfaction with which you perceive I behold these improprieties—not to speak in harsher terms—and on still most pious principles, I trust you will suppress them immediately; so that I may not have occasion to show

any further marks of my displeasure, or to interpose in a different manner. May God take your Grace into His Almighty protection.

"I remain, my Lord Primate,
"Your gracious friend,
"G. R."

We should like to have seen the consternation of the Archbishop and the angry looks of his wife at the breakfast-table at Lambeth on the morning of the receipt of this letter; the triumph of the Countess must have been complete.

Bishop Porteus of London, who was an Evangelical, was a poor specimen of his order. When asked to preach a charity sermon, he said that he only gave one a year, and for that year it was bespoken. Not a single church was built in London during his episcopacy, which lasted from 1787 to 1808, whereas in the time of his successor, Bishop Blomfield, two hundred were erected. In the early days of the last century the bishops were very aristocratic. In 1815 one archbishop was the son of a peer and the other a grandson. Of the bishops, one was a peer, and sons and grandsons of peers or tutors in the families of noblemen were elevated to the Bench on account of their aristocratic connections. Nepotism was rampant, and these exalted bishops took good care of their families and connections, much to the detriment of the Church and the impoverishment of less fortunate parsons.

Bishop Watson of Llandaff was a type of early nineteenth-century prelate. What would the world think in these days of such a bishop? His opinions were of the vaguest and his Churchmanship questionable. He never resided in his diocese during all his episcopacy of thirty-four years, lasting from 1782 to 1826, because he said there was no suitable house for him. He is not ashamed to tell us that he had retired in a great measure from

public life, and spent his time partly in writing, but principally in building farmhouses, blasting rocks, enclosing wastes, and in making bad land good. He held sixteen livings, and enjoyed an income of £2,000 a year for doing nothing except writing books, which he did extremely well. He lived in rural retirement at Calgrarth Park, Westmoreland, which does not seem exactly convenient for working his diocese of Llandaff.

They were a lax lot, these early nineteenth-century bishops, and did more harm to the Church than all her enemies. Bishop Sparke of Chester had an amazing diocese, including all the populous districts of Lancashire, and he was a wonderful man. Modern bishops could not possibly vie with him. He actually confirmed eight thousand persons in one day at Manchester—a truly remarkable feat. It would be interesting to have heard his address to the candidates, if ever he gave one. They were wretched pluralists, too. Bishop Blomfield of Chester held the rich rectory of Bishopsgate, in London, a parish with ten thousand souls, who could scarcely be well cared for by their episcopal rector living at Chester.

They were also disgracefully careless in their examination of candidates for Holy Orders. Bishop Pelham used to send his butler with a message to the candidates requesting them to write an essay. The bishop's chaplain usually conducted the examination, which was the briefest possible. Bishop North, who died in 1820, had for his chaplain his son-in-law. This young man was fond of cricket, and when playing in a match interviewed the candidates in a tent on the cricket field. The chaplain of Bishop Douglas must have been a busy person; he had no time to spare, and utilised every moment. The time devoted to the examining of candidates for the ministry was the few minutes he spent in the act of shaving, and the construing of two words of the Greek Testament was considered quite a sufficient test of their qualifications.

Owing to political affairs and the excitement caused by the Reform Bill, a strong anti-clerical feeling was aroused in 1831, and the bishops were viewed in an unfavourable light by the mass of people. The palace of the Bishop of Bristol was sacked and burnt, and at Gunpowder Plot celebrations the effigies of bishops took the place of guys, and at Exeter and Winchester were burnt close to the palace gates.

But a better day dawned. The Oxford Movement revived the spiritual life of the Church, and brought with it greater reverence and higher ideals. Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford, by his example, his energy, his devotion to the work of his diocese, raised the standard of episcopal duty and effected a change which is never likely to be effaced. His high ideals have been recognised as the standard at which every prelate should strive to attain. A bishop is no longer one who is content to sit in his study, ride about in a state-coach drawn by four horses, and care little about the diocese which he is supposed to rule. The *Times*, when commenting on the appointment of some of these aristocratic bishops, remarked, "their names are written not only in the Book of Life, but also in the Peerage." The modern prelate is the most active, hard-working man in the whole district, oppressed by the care of all the churches, required ever to be ready with a speech, a sermon, a lecture, to give his opinion on all kinds of difficult questions, to rush about by train, motor-car, or carriage. "I am so tired," said one devoted bishop to the writer as he sank back in his carriage after a fatiguing function. That must be the sigh of many a weary bishop. But the Church and the nation recognise the debt they owe to their hard-working prelates, and none are really so popular as they.

CHAPTER V

BISHOPS' WIT

AN intimate acquaintance with numerous prelates reveals the fact that wit often lurks beneath a bishop's mitre, and that the merry twinkle often seen in an episcopal eye, and a hearty laugh, are not considered a bar to the appointment to a see. Indeed, if I ever aspired to the office of a bishop, judging from the brilliant humour displayed by many occupants of the Bench, I imagine that it would be necessary as a qualification to acquire a certain store of good stories and "merry jests," and to cultivate wit—a ready weapon for silencing foolish and troublesome tongues. This is all very wrong, say certain pious folk of a gloomy and morose disposition. Bishops should never joke, they contend. Having no sense of humour themselves, these mighty good people cannot understand it, and think that episcopal jests—in fact, all kinds of jests—should be abolished with theatres, music-halls, and other naughty forms of amusement.

Happily, such is not the universal opinion of mankind, and I will not apologise to this gloomy fraternity for venturing to record the witty sayings of my ecclesiastical superiors. Indeed, it is a happy thing that bishops can sometimes jest. The days of the scholar-bishop, who shut himself up in his study and edited Greek plays, are long past. No one works harder than a modern bishop. Cares

innumerable are his; and if he can sometimes relieve his mind by a humorous view of his own perplexities, his trials, his weariness in "suffering fools gladly," he will be no worse a bishop or a man. Indeed, appreciation of humour is only a sign of sympathy with his fellows in their joys and sorrows, and sympathy is a true requisite of a successful episcopate.

The witty sayings of bishops are like the *bon mots* of a judge. They are soon repeated; and if I venture to record some "chestnuts," some stories that are familiar to some readers, they will perhaps forgive me, and try to remember that all people are not so well acquainted with episcopal utterances as themselves.

I met with an early instance of episcopal humour in a dull chronicle of the early history of the Netherlands. A king who by no means lived an immaculate life complained to the bishop of the low and degraded lives of the fisher-folk who inhabited the island of Walcheren, on the banks of the Schelde. The bishop replied by a question:

"Tell me, O king, which is the more important part of a fish, the head or the tail?"

"The head, I suppose," said the king.

"Well, sir, you are the head of this people; it is important that you should reform your own life, and then you will be able to speak about the sins of the poor people of Walcheren."

We will not, however, ransack the pages of antiquity, as we shall discover plenty of good-humour nearer to our own times.

Bishops can be very caustic at times, and Atterbury of Rochester showed a ready wit in replying to Lord Coningsby in the House of Lords on the occasion of the debate on the Occasional Conformity and Schism Bill. The bishop strongly opposed the Bill, and in his speech stated, 'I prophesied last year this Bill would be at-

tempted in the present session, and I am sorry to find that I have proved a true prophet."

The noble lord in a fiery speech retorted:

"One of the right reverends has set himself forth as a prophet; but for my part, I do not know what prophet to liken him to, unless to that famous prophet Balaam, who was reproved by his own ass."

This gave the bishop a great opportunity, of which he availed himself with much skill and wit. He replied:

"Since the noble lord has discovered in our manners such a similitude, I am well content to be compared to the prophet Balaam; but, my lords, I am at a loss how to make out the other part of the parallel. I am sure that I have been reproved by nobody but his lordship." Thus Lord Coningsby earned for himself the pleasant title of "Atterbury's Ass," or "Atterbury's Pad," by which he was ever afterwards known.

Akin to this story is that of Dr. Thomas Sprat, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, who in his early clerical days was chaplain to the profligate Duke of Buckingham. The Duke was as rude and offensive in his manners as he was profligate in his conduct, and on the first occasion when his chaplain dined with him, seeing a roast goose placed opposite to Dr. Sprat, observed, "How is it that geese always seem to be placed near the clergy?"

The chaplain was quite equal to the occasion, and replied:

"I cannot tell the reason, but I shall never see a goose again but I shall think of your grace."

Bishops have not shown themselves above seeking preferment. The Rev. Dr. Mountain, who lived in the days of George II., was a self-made man, and by his industry, and also by his ready wit, had raised himself from a lowly lot to a palace, becoming Bishop of Durham. The metropolitan see of York fell vacant, and the king knew not whom to appoint. He consulted Dr. Mountain, who

replied, "Hadst thou faith as a grain of mustard-seed, thou wouldst say to this mountain" (indicating himself), "Be removed hence and be cast into the *sea*." It was not the raging sea, but the see of York, which the Mountain sought, and the King was so pleased at his jest, that the facetious parson was promised the archbishopric.

Bishop Wilberforce was guilty of making a somewhat similar request to a powerful Minister. The archiepiscopal see of York was again vacant, and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce desired it for himself. He was conversing with Lord Derby, the Prime Minister, who informed him that he was about to translate Homer into English verse. "Better translate Samuel," replied the witty Wilberforce; but, unlike Dr. Mountain, he did not obtain his request.

Another story is told of a Bishop of Exeter who longed for the valuable bishopric of Durham, and when he heard that the bishop of the latter see was not very well, he sent many tender and solicitous inquiries. This was long before the days of telegrams, and messengers were frequently dispatched to the palace of the bishop of Durham by his lordship of Exeter. It is a long way from Exeter to Durham, and possibly both bishops were staying in their London houses. The Durham prelate began to suspect the motives of his brother bishop, and summoning the messenger said to him: "Pray tell your master that I am better, much better, but that the Bishop of Worcester has a sore throat arising from a bad cold, if that will do as well." Evidently his lordship of Durham lacked not a somewhat dry and caustic humour.

Even the despicable Bonner in the days of Henry VIII. was not devoid of a certain amount of humour, which he displayed on one occasion during an interview with his tyrannical king. Henry wanted to send him as an ambassador to the French Court. The French king Francis was, like Henry, somewhat a tyrant, and poor Bishop Bonner was instructed by Henry to speak to him in a very

haughty tone and to convey to him some rather severe threats.

"Please, your Majesty, if I should hold such haughty language, King Francis would probably order my head to be chopped off," said the bishop.

"I would chop off the heads of ten thousand Frenchmen for it," replied King Henry.

"Truly, your Majesty, but perhaps not one of those heads would fit my shoulders," objected the bishop, who, however keen he was to burn heretics, had no special liking for losing his own head. He condemned no less than two hundred victims to the flames, and Fox represents him whipping with his own hand one of the martyrs. On the accession of Queen Elizabeth he was deprived and sent to prison, where he died. The following epigram was by some unknown hand fastened to his monument:

> "If Heaven be pleased when sinners cease to sin,
> If Hell be pleased when sinners enter in,
> If Earth be pleased when it hath lost a knave,
> Then all are pleased! for Bonner's in his grave."

Bishop Corbet of Oxford (1629) and Norwich (1632) was a very facetious prelate, as his poems show. I have discovered a copy of them at the British Museum, but could not discover any worth quoting. Several are certainly not edifying.

Before he became bishop he held the deanery of Christ Church, Oxford, where he excited the ridicule of the undergraduates by the foppishness of his attire. Hence the following epigram:—

> "A reverend dean
> With a starch'd band clean,
> Did preach before the king;
> A ring was espied
> To his band to be tied—
> Oh, that was a pretty thing!

It was that, no doubt,
Which first put him out,
That he knew not what was next;
For to all who were there
It did plainly appear
He handled it more than his text."

It may be gathered from a perusal of his poems that he was not a very grave and reverend personage, though kind-hearted. One day he was at Abingdon, and saw from the window of a tavern, where he was refreshing himself, a poor ballad-singer trying to sell his wares. The bishop called to him, and heard his complaint that his trade was very bad. So the prelate doffed the clerical gown he was wearing, assumed the leathern jacket and hat of the ballad-singer, and went out into the street, where he sang so well and chaffed so freely, that a crowd soon gathered, the stock of ballads was soon sold, and the ballad-monger retired home with a full pouch. Some of his exploits were not so praiseworthy; but nothing interfered with his good-humour, not even a coach accident, when he and the fat Dr. Stubbins were thrown out into a ditch. In describing the accident the bishop said that the doctor was up to his elbows in mud, and that he himself was up to his elbows in Stubbins.

Not all bishops have shown the politeness, wit, and wisdom of good Bishop Hough, of Worcester. He had a remarkably good temper, which Prime Ministers and those in authority should deem a necessary qualification for the episcopal office. Certainly the holders of it are sorely in need of sweet tempers, as they are often sorely tried. Dr. Gough showed them a good example. At his palace a large company was assembled at dinner, when a stranger guest entered. He was a young man whose family knew the bishop well. He was warmly welcomed, but unfortunately the butler, in placing a chair for him knocked over a curious and valuable weather-glass, which

was broken. The guest was much concerned, feeling himself the cause of the accident; but the bishop, like a true gentleman, hastened to place him at his ease, saying, "Be under no concern, sir, as I am much beholden to you for it; we have had a very dry season, and now I hope we shall have some rain, as I never saw the glass so low in my life." The merit of the good bishop's kindliness and courtesy is enhanced (so the biographer states) by the fact that "he was over eighty years, a time of life when the infirmities of old age make most men peevish and hasty."

Many stories are told of the wit and wisdom of Bishop Wilberforce. His deep spirituality, his devotion to the Church, his earnest rules of life, are abundantly shown in the Lives that have been written of him, and are still remembered by those who knew him. But his ready wit served him usefully on many occasions. In his early episcopal days—it seems now quite impossible—some of his clergy objected to wear surplices, and clung to their black gowns, deeming the former "rags of Popery." An important service was about to be held, and the clergy were directed to walk in procession attired in their surplices. Two of them resolutely refused, and the rector of the church was in despair, and told his trouble to the bishop. "Do not be alarmed," said Bishop Wilberforce, "they will wear surplices like the rest." And going to one, he said, "Mr. ——, will you kindly read the First Lesson?" to the other, "Will you read the Second Lesson?" and the trouble ended. The two clerics rushed to find surplices, and followed meekly in the procession.

Another instance of his tact was shown when he was about to consecrate a cemetery in a rough neighbourhood. He declined police protection, and a crowd of rowdy men looked mischievous. The bishop quietly greeted them, telling them that he had declined the protection of the police, as he knew that the townspeople would act as his

bodyguard. "I see that I am not mistaken, and with every confidence I now commend myself to your guidance and respect."

When he was most sad he appeared to the world most light-hearted. He wrote to one of his friends: "Often when I seem the gayest I am indeed the most utterly sad." Once when driving with the Lord Mayor, being exceedingly depressed on account of the death of one son and his fears for the other boys, he says that he "was unwatchful and seemed too gay." It is well to remember this inward melancholy when we laugh at his witty sallies.

One day he was at Banbury, and dined at a farmers' ordinary on a market-day. He was not hungry, and declared himself "off his feed." A burly farmer bellowed out:

"Try Thorley's food, my lord."

"That is good for horses, and, I see, for asses, but might not suit Oxon," was the ready retort.

It is said that there was a curates' toast in the diocese which ran: "May our Oxon be strong to labour."

Close to Banbury is the beautiful seat of Lord Saye and Sele—Broughton Castle—in which there is a very interesting mediæval chapel. It has a gallery, and some bedchambers look down upon it, so that it is possible for the occupants to hear the service without leaving their rooms. The bishop was shown the chapel, and remarked upon this peculiar arrangement, saying:

"I understand now the meaning of the passage which has always baffled me—'Let the saints rejoice in their beds.'"

When he was shown a luxurious squire's pew, with a special fireplace, armchairs, and "every convenience," and the clerk said that if the bishop could suggest any improvement or the addition of any furniture, he was sure the squire would supply it, Wilberforce quietly whispered to the clergyman by his side:

"A card-table!

Some clergyman had introduced Gregorian chants into his church. Now Gregorian music is, doubtless, very fine and grand when chanted by a strong choir, led by a powerful organ; but when village choirs essay to sing these chants the result is often most painful. Bishop Wilberforce found it so, and after a somewhat prolonged and dreary dose of Gregorians, he ventured to suggest to the rector of the parish that perhaps they were a little unsuited to a country choir. The rector prided himself on the music, and said:

"David sang his psalms to Gregorian melodies."

"Then I don't wonder Saul cast his javelin at him," replied the bishop.

On another occasion he visited a church where there was an old-fashioned service with a choir led by several musical instruments, the vicar and musicians rather priding themselves on their abilities. The vicar asked him afterwards:

"What did you think of our choir?"

"Well," replied the bishop, "the singers go before, and the minstrels follow after."

On one occasion he was trying to move the generosity of some rich but stingy magnate, and to get him to subscribe to the diocesan funds. The rich but stingy person, in answer to his appeal, said:

"I shall be happy to give my mite."

"I always thought there were two," quickly retorted the bishop.

The Blenheim story is worth repeating, though it is well known. The bishop was staying at the palace with a large house party, Lord Palmerston, then Premier of England, being among the guests of the Duke of Marlborough. The question arose one Sunday morning as to who should drive and who should walk to church. It ended in the Premier and the Duke driving with some of the ladies,

THE RIGHT REVEREND SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, D.D.

BISHOP OF OXFORD (1845-1869)
BISHOP OF WINCHESTER (1869-1873)

From the painting by George Richmond, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery

and the bishop, with some other guests, walking. During their walk through the park it began to rain, and Palmerston, seated comfortably in the carriage, passed the bishop struggling with an umbrella. So the Premier put his head out of the carriage window, and said:

> "'How blest is he who ne'er consents
> By ill advice to walk'";

to which Wilberforce answered immediately:

> "'Nor stands in sinners' ways, nor sits
> Where men profanely talk.'"

This verse, of course, is Tate and Brady's version of the first verse of Psalm i., a poetical effort which is happily almost unknown to the men of this generation. It recalls another witticism of the bishop. When he was driving with Lady Burdett-Coutts towards Columbia Market, something was said which brought up the word "drysalter."

"Does your lordship know what a drysalter is?" asked the baroness.

"Certainly—Tate and Brady, a veritable dry-Psalter," immediately replied the bishop.

Sometimes he could with difficulty restrain a sharp rejoinder when the words spoken would have given mortal offence. He had many passages-of-arms with Lord Westbury, and after one of these violent attacks in the House of Lords, Bishop Wilberforce met the Chancellor at the door of the House. Lord Westbury had just resigned the Great Seal, and was not in a very good humour. Meeting the bishop he said:

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

The bishop remarked afterwards that he was never more tempted in his life to finish the quotation. He,

however, restrained himself, and simply asked the Chancellor—

"Does your lordship remember the end of the passage?"

"We lawyers are not in the habit of quoting half a sentence without knowing the whole," replied Westbury austerely.

"No doubt," said the bishop afterwards, "he went home and looked the verse out in the family Bible, when he would see, 'Yea, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work iniquity.'"

Well do I remember the pathetic figure of Charles Neate, Fellow of Oriel, who kicked the Chancellor down the steps in the precincts of the court, maddened by his abusive tongue. Every one sympathised with Mr. Neate, but, of course, he had to be dis-barred, and he spent his last day at Oriel and was somewhat a trial to the staid Fellows in the Common Room.

Endless stories are told of good Bishop Wilberforce. He never disclosed the fact that he was the author of the review of "The Early Years of the Prince Consort" in the *Quarterly Review.* He had written this at the request of Queen Victoria, regarding the work less from a purely literary point of view than as a cry from the heart of the Queen for her people's sympathy. All he ever said was, "The review in the *Quarterly* exactly describes my view."

When travelling one day on the railway, as the train drew up to a station, he overheard a working man say to one of his mates—

"I say, Bill, there's Soapy Sam in the next carriage; I should like him to tell us the road to heaven."

The Bishop put his head out of the carriage window, and said—

"So, my man, you want to know the way to heaven. You must take the first turn to the right, and keep straight on."

The origin of the sobriquet "Soapy Sam" has been the

occasion of much dispute. A child once asked him why he got this nickname. He replied:

"Because I have so much dirty work to do, and I always come out of it with clean hands."

At the opening of Culham College his own initials, S. O., and those of Alfred Pott, the first Principal, for many years Archdeacon of Berkshire, who died recently, appeared on either side of the porch. The initials when conjoined read S. O. A. P. It is said in his Life that the bishop's quick eye was the first to detect it, but I have been told by one who was present that the decoration was hastily removed before his advent.

In dealing with the clergy he always showed remarkable tact. When he was travelling one day on the Great Western Railway with his archdeacon, a country parson, who was attired in breeches and gaiters and bore a riding-whip, got into the same carriage at some roadside station. The bishop always prided himself on remembering faces and names and addressed the clergyman—

"How are you, my dear A——, and how is the dear grey mare?"

The parson was much flattered by the bishop's recollection not only of himself but of his steed. The archdeacon subsequently expressed astonishment at this instance of his wonderful memory.

"How did you know that Mr. A—— had a grey mare?"

"My dear archdeacon, of course I noticed the white hairs on the parson's riding-breeches."

The mystery was solved.

Another parson, who had no good reputation, once wrote to the bishop complaining that some one had maligned him to his lordship. To this the bishop replied:

"Reverend sir, no one has maligned you."

Apparently the sarcasm missed fire, as the parson showed the letter to his neighbours as a testimony to character.

Squires and parsons sometimes disagree. A clergyman named Rice and a cantankerous squire were at loggerheads, and the latter complained to the bishop expressing his determination to grind the poor parson down.

"No, no, Mr. ——; I would not do that," replied the bishop; "you see, his name is Rice, and if you grind him down, he will be ground Rice—nasty sticky stuff!"

George Cruikshank is the authority for the story of Wilberforce's rhyming powers, exhibited at Cuddesdon one day when his guests were playing at making rhymes to certain words which were given. The two words were "Cassowary" and "Timbuctoo," certainly posers. Cruikshank could not face them, and passed them on to the bishop, who immediately proposed the impromptu:

"If I were a Cassowary,
On the plains of Timbuctoo,
I'd eat up every missionary,
Black coat and hymn-book too."

Two of his young friends, undergraduates of Oxford, nicknamed Hophni and Phinehas, were lounging about the hall of Cuddesdon Palace, chanting the Lutheran refrain, "The Devil is Dead." The bishop walked gently up to them, and in his most caressing manner, placing one hand on each head, said in consolatory tone, "Alas! poor orphans."

He was always fond of riding, and was a fearless horseman. At Brightstone he is remembered to have ridden up a cliff from the beach where you would have thought no horse could go. The Rev. M. J. Bacon recollects that the bishop took a confirmation at Lambourn one morning when Milman, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, was the vicar, and was due at Mr. Bacon's father's church in the afternoon. Both bishop and vicar were keen horsemen, both were bulky, clumsily made men, and both had a remarkably clumsy, though firm, seat on a horse,

something like a sack overhanging the withers. The distance was three miles by road, but a mile was saved by going across country. Across country they went at a rattling gallop, taking every fence on the way, and a roughish bit of country it was. It must have been a novel sight.

Bishop Milman had a remarkably loud and raucous voice, which he could in no way control. Mr. Bacon recollects the effect produced on the congregation of his father's church when Milman gave out as his text, "A still, small voice," of course in a voice of thunder.

I believe that the following story is told of Bishop Wilberforce:

Some curate, in the days when the Darwinian theories were startling men's minds, once said to him:

"I don't see that it would have made any difference to me if my great-great-grandfather had been an ape."

"No," replied the bishop, "perhaps not; but it would have made some difference to your great-great-grandmother."

Humour seems to be inherent in the possessors of the See of Oxford. The great historian of the nineteenth century, the wise prelate, scholar, teacher, and divine, a man greatly beloved by all who knew him and who experienced the charm of his curious personality, Dr. Stubbs, had a wonderful gift of humour. He was so true, faithful, sincere himself, that he had a great dread of unreality, of appearing to be in any way insincere, and would often turn into jest some statement or joke about some subject which dull-witted, ponderous, and earnest people deemed most important and most serious.

Thus a fussy clergyman wrote to Bishop Stubbs a long letter, asking his lordship's opinion as to whether it was requisite to have a faculty in order to place some curtains behind the altar of his church as a reredos. The bishop replied stating his reasons for the proposed arrange-

ment. But these did not satisfy the clergyman, who must needs write another long letter with regard to the subject of his reredos. He received a prompt and curt reply—

"Dear——

"Hang your curtains.

"Yours truly,

"W. Oxon."

He disliked very much the complaints which squires and churchwardens sometimes made to him about hard-working parish priests. Thus, on one occasion, a layman came to him with sad complaints about the enormities of some vicar, his ritualistic practices and observances.

"Why, my lord, before he begins his sermon he actually kisses his stole!" said this irate personage.

"Well, well, Mr. So-and-so, perhaps that is better than if he stole his kiss," replied the bishop.

Another good churchwarden complained to his lordship of a curate who dared to wear a hood that somewhat resembled that of an Oxford Master of Arts and who could boast of no academic distinction.

"The man has a lie upon his back, my lord," said the complainer.

"Don't say that, Mr. Jones; say 'a false-hood.'"

A clergyman applied to him for leave of absence for three months in order to visit the Holy Land. "My dear ——, go to Jericho. Yours ever, W. Oxon," was the characteristic reply.

Bishop Stubbs, though a High Churchman, did not much care for the outward and visible signs of advanced churchmanship, and when some enthusiastic ladies wished to make for him a cope was heard to declare that he would much rather have half a dozen new shirts.

He was present one day at a meeting of school managers who were discussing the finances of the school. One item of expenditure was a certain sum for the salary

of an occasional monitor. One of the managers asked, "What is an occasional monitor?" The bishop replied without a moment's hesitation, "The Nonconformist conscience."

We all know the delightful experience of leaving carking care behind and going away for a holiday. Exuberant spirits naturally burst forth on such occasions, and no one can experience the relief more than a hard-worked bishop. Bishop Stubbs was evidently in this frame of mind on one occasion when he was starting for a holiday and drove to Oxford station, where an obsequious porter rushed to the carriage window and inquired, "How many articles, my lord?"

"Thirty-nine," replied the bishop with unmoved countenance. The porter set to work to remove the episcopal baggage from the carriage, and proceeded to count the various "articles" and could not discover the full complement of "thirty-nine." He reported:

"Very sorry, my lord, I can only find fifteen."

"Ah!" said the bishop, "you must be a Dissenter." The humour was doubtless lost upon the porter, as it was upon a certain lady of our acquaintance, who, when this story was told, did not see the point or why other people were laughing, and then gravely expressed amazement that a bishop should require so large an amount of luggage as "thirty-nine articles."

He loved to surprise people. When talking to some girls in a High School he said to them:

"Now, what book beginning with B has a bishop to study most?"

"The Bible," replied a demure little maid.

"No, Bradshaw," said the bishop with one of his bright, mischievous smiles.

It is well known that he was translated from Chester to Oxford, and when he migrated he was received with open arms by many old and attached friends. After a luncheon

at Christ Church, during which many congratulatory speeches were made and many kind things said, which sorely tried his spirit, the bishop was walking with one of his archdeacons and suddenly propounded the following riddle:

"Why am I like Homer?"

The archdeacon was not good at riddles and expressed his inability to solve the problem.

"Because," replied the bishop, with a heavy sigh, "I have suffered so grievously from translation."

His smart sayings are innumerable. To a curate who offered to carry his bag he said:

"You'll not find it heavy; it has not got my sermon in it."

"Have you your chaplain with you, my lord?" asked a rector who was welcoming the bishop for some ecclesiastical function. The bishop opened his vestment-bag and looked everywhere in it and then gravely said:

"I can't find him anywhere."

At some service the organ suddenly stopped in the midst of a hymn, when the bishop was heard to exclaim "Blow the organ!"

At Chester Cathedral towards the close of a Christmastide service the verger asked him in very solemn tones:

"Have you any further use for the mace, my lord?"

"No; take it away and put it in the pudding," said the bishop.

There was a Mr. Cook, who did not get on very well with his parishioners. Bishop Stubbs remarked:

"Cook has made rather a hash of it."

A friend of the writer wrote a guide to Silchester, the ancient Roman city, and persuaded the bishop to write a preface to the volume. Staying at a squire's house, he was talking to the daughter of his host and expressed a wish to see Silchester.

"Have you never seen it?" asked the lady. "Why, you wrote about it!"

"Well, I thought of refusing to write that preface at first, as I had not visited the place; but then I reflected that many of my cloth have never been to heaven, and may never be there, yet they speak about it, so I consented to write about Silchester."

His wonderful flow of wit was displayed particularly in those delightful humorous verses which he occasionally wrote in letters to his friends. Thus he wrote to the Bishop of Norwich, who kept no carriage:

"The Bishop once in days of yore
Would drive about in coach and four;
And when the bishops dropped their wigs
They drove about in single gigs.
But now so handy have we got,
That if you want us on the spot
Just drop a penny in the slot."

When he was most depressed and weary he would ease his vexed spirit by scribbling a humorous verse. Readers of the Lives which have been written of him will find many such brightly written poems. Thus when his soul was terribly distressed by having to sit as an assessor in the Lincoln case he could scribble to his chaplain, Canon Holmes:

"The merits next of end and side
How can his Grace decide on,
Whilst arguments have ne'er an end
And counsel so much side on?"

And many other verses follow, written in a similar style. He was much struck by the patience and learning of good Archbishop Benson in the conduct of the case. "His Grace is grace itself and patience on a monument of books." "Where does his Grace get his patience? Is it from the Stores?" But he heartily disliked the whole business. "Oh! the wearing weariness of it all! Once

the earth was without form and void; now it is full of forms and has not ceased to be void, judging by empty heads and hard chairs." [1]

Canon Beeching tells the following story of the bishop. It was the morning after a banquet, and a solicitous friend who had sat by the bishop the evening before, happening to meet him in the street, asked whether he got home all right. The bishop looked slightly surprised at the question, but at once added, with an apparent gleam of comprehension, "Oh, thank you, yes; it was only my boots that were tight."

Meetings always wearied him. On one occasion he had to open a bazaar and then attend a meeting of the Diocesan Board. He expressed to a leading lady of the diocese his deep regret on being obliged to leave the bazaar so early, pleading the necessity of his attendance at the latter function. The lady inquired:

"And what is a Diocesan Board, my lord?"

"My dear madam," replied the bishop, "if that meeting lasts a long time I shall be a Diocesan bored."

But there are other prelates whose sayings must be recorded. The letter of Bishop Blomfield to one of his refractory clergy, whose views of ritual did not correspond with his own, is a witness of terse wit and savage humour. The clergyman in defending his ritual quoted the authority of St. Ambrose. The bishop replied:

"SIR,—St. Ambrose was not the Bishop of London, and I am.—Yours, &c., W. LOND."

This same caustic prelate, when looking at the stone pulpit in the church of S——, remarked, "I should have preferred a wooden one; it would seem more appropriate." And this reminds one of Sidney Smith's advice to the members of a Corporation who were consulting together

[1] *William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford*, by W. H. Hutton.

about the erection of some wooden panels: "Put your heads together, gentlemen, and it will be done at once."

It was Archbishop Magee who enunciated the two qualifications necessary for the holder of the episcopal office, namely: to suffer fools gladly and to answer letters by return of post.

Some lady once took him to hear a certain preacher who had something of a reputation as an orator and was certainly long-winded. On returning home the lady said:

"A saint in the pulpit, my lord."

"Yes, and a martyr in the pew," replied Magee.

He could be very critical and severe on preachers. On one sermon he remarked that "it had not enough gospel in it to save the soul of a tom-tit." And this reminds one of Spurgeon's condemnation of a discourse containing nothing but "platitudes which would not convert a fly."

It was Archbishop Magee who uttered the well-known saying, when a waiter dropped some hot soup down his neck:

"Is there any layman present who will kindly express my feelings?"

Knowing the immense needs of the Church his righteous soul was often vexed by absurd ideas and proposals for wasting money on ridiculous fads. "There are such fools in the world," he exclaimed one day; "I expect to hear some day a proposal for the rebuilding of Noah's Ark."

The name of the bishop who was guilty of the following witticism is, I believe, lost to posterity. A disconsolate husband, having lost his wife, put upon her tomb, "The light of mine eyes has gone out." He quickly married again. The bishop suggested the additional line, "And I have struck another match."

Many stories are told of Archbishop Temple's gruffness, rudeness, and brusqueness, but these do not mar the memory of a wonderful personality, an honest, true-

hearted man, a wise and fearless prelate who bore the strain of his high office for many years, guided the great ship of the Church through many storms, and nobly did his best. He was doubtless a temple without "polished corners," but a great bishop for all that. He was humble-minded too. Once he asked one of his clergy to tell him anything which prevented him from getting on well with the parsons of his diocese. This clergyman took him at his word and gave him some wise and sound advice. He said:

"If you could be but a little more civil to them."

"Much obliged," replied the Archbishop in his gruff voice; "I'll try to remember."

He could never stand nonsense and unreality. He was present in a church one evening when the vicar, who was no great orator, was going to preach. In the vestry, before the service, the vicar said:

"I always pledge myself to preach in the evening extempore."

The Archbishop lifted up his hands and said, "Kneel down; I absolve you from your pledge."

Not all bishops are musical, but Archbishop Temple loved hearty singing, and when Bishop of London he was passing by a mission church and was attracted by the sweet sounds, and entered and sat down in the congregation. A hymn was being sung with a swinging tune, and the bishop felt drawn to sing himself; but a working man who was musical, standing next to him, found he could not sing with this untuneful, loud voice at his ear; so he stopped. Others stopped also for the same reason. The musical working man, not in the least recognising the bishop, nudged him and said,

"Dry up, mister; you're spoiling the whole show!"

A clergyman came to him to ask permission to hold a small living which adjoined that of which he was already the incumbent. If the Archbishop saw fit to grant his

request the parson could defy the Pluralities Act and hold the second living *in commendam.*

"And how far is this other church from your present one, Mr. ——?" asked the Archbishop.

"About two miles, as the crow flies," replied the parson.

"But you're not a crow, and you sha'nt have it."

There was nothing more to be said.

He was staying at a big house and had to leave by an early train. Time was short, and Temple wanted his breakfast. Among the guests was a young man of the foolish type, who, being the only other early riser, thought it necessary to make conversation and amuse the prelate. He began by telling him a wonderful story of an aunt of his who intended to travel by a certain train, but was too late for it. The train was wrecked, and thus the lady's life was saved.

"Now, do not you think that her escape was most providential?" asked the young man.

"Can't say. I do not know your aunt," replied the Archbishop in his usual rasping voice, as he gulped down his second cup of coffee.

It was Archbishop Temple who complained that when he stayed with a parson, "They always give me 'The Church's One Foundation' and cold chicken, and I hate them both." A bishop of a more sentimental turn was recently staying with one of his country clergy. About the breakfast hour he heard the strains of "Rock of Ages" sounding through the house. At the breakfast-table he remarked how sweetly the hymn sounded. Then said the vicar's last born, "That was cook." The bishop expressed pleasure at the melodies of the cook. "She always sings 'Rock of Ages' to boil the eggs," said the child; "three verses for soft-boiled, five for hard"!

This reminds one of the story of the London vicar who liked to have a hymn sung at family prayers. In order to interest his servants he allowed them to choose the hymns.

One day his lady complimented the cook on her selection, and said,

"What a nice hymn you chose."

"Yes, mum, it's the number of my policeman!"

Bishop Creighton had a wonderful gift for sharp epigram. He had just received a dreary deputation, when a friend asked him, "How are you?" He replied:

"As well as can be expected, when every ass in this diocese thinks he has a right to come and bray in my study."

Another time he said:

"No people do so much harm as those who go about doing good."

One of his sayings was:

"You can do anything, as long as you don't apologise."

And of newspapers he said:

"It is the duty of the newspapers to tell us what to do. It is our duty not to do it."

Archbishop Trench, in his old age, was in constant fear of paralysis. At a dinner party one evening the lady whom he took in to dinner heard him muttering to himself, "Come at last; come at last; total insensibility of the right limb."

The lady relieved his mind by saying:

'It may comfort you to learn that it was my leg which you have been pinching all this time!"

One bishop, when taking Confirmations, did not like the profusion of hairpins which held the locks of the female candidates, and was heard to say:

"I take the lads, but I leave the young porcupines to my horny-handed suffragan."

The latter would in consequence well earn the title conferred by the East Anglian folk of the "Sufferin' Bishop."

When Canon Lloyd was consecrated Bishop of Thetford, Suffragan Bishop of Norwich, his title puzzled the peasantry of East Anglia, who would occasionally post-

pone the confirmation of their children until the arrival of a "real" bishop, rather than have their offspring "bishoped" in a makeshift manner by what they called a "sufferin'" bishop.

On one occasion Bishop Lloyd noticed in a village he was visiting the flag on the church tower flying at half-mast, and inquired of the sexton:

"Who is dead?"

"There ain't nobody dead," explained that official, "but we don't fly no higher for 'sufferin'' bishops; we only give the hull length of the pole to the real bishop."

Bishops are very human. It is reported that one of the Bench was in a storm at sea. The ship was in difficulties, and the captain said, "We must trust in Providence now." The prelate is reported to have said, "Oh! I hope it has not come to that!" I do not believe the story, nor yet that other one of a very hard-working bishop to whom the specialist said:

"You will be in heaven in three months unless you go abroad and take a rest."

"Oh! then I'll go abroad at once," replied the bishop.

Bishop Short, of St. Asaph's, was once questioning some children, and asked them:

"Now, tell me, who am I?" intending to explain to them the teaching of the Church with regard to episcopacy. He begged them not to be afraid, but to speak out boldly.

Remembering some previous instruction about the need of repentance, they shouted with one accord:

"You are a miserable sinner."

The answer was unexpected, though doubtless theologically correct.

Archbishop Whately was once catechising on the Creed, and the children had prepared each clause and used to repeat it one by one. When the article about Pontius Pilate was reached there was a silence, which was at length broken by a boy's voice:

"Please, sir, Pontius Pilate has the measles!"

The boy whose turn it was to repeat that clause was absent.

I can scarcely credit the story of a bishop who was catechising some children in a church near his palace, which was attended by the members of his own household. He was rather a pompous bishop, and asked the children:

"Who is it that sees all and knows all, and before whom even I am a mere worm?"

Episcopal page-boy: "Please, sir, the missus."

He must have looked even more foolish than Bishop Alexander did, who, seeing a little boy trying to reach up to ring a bell, kindly did it for him, when the little boy cried out, "Now run!"

Or that other bishop who was politely asked by a little maid to open a gate for her.

"Certainly, my child, I will," said the good-natured bishop, pushing open the gate, which did not seem a very difficult task.

"Why did you ask me to open the gate for you?"

"Please, sir, because it's painted."

The bishop looked at his gloves. It was!

Bishop King had once to endure much from a little maid. He took a seat one day in a London park. The chair was low, the bishop old, and he had to make some effort to rise. A little ten-year-old girl came up and said, "Shall I help you, sir?"

The bishop replied, much touched by the child's thoughtfulness, "It is very kind of you, my dear; but do you think you are strong enough?"

"Oh yes! I have often helped my daddy when he was much drunker than you are!"

Surprises sometimes are in store for bishops. There was an ordination approaching, and some candidates for the ministry were invited to the palace for their examination and preparation for holy orders. One of the candidates

failed to pass the examination, being rather deficient in the knowledge of that wonderful work, Butler's *Analogy*. Before leaving the palace the bishop spoke a few kind words to him, expressing the hope that he would present himself at the next ordination and be able then to pass satisfactorily.

"Don't forget the Butler," said the bishop.

"Oh no, my lord; that is all right; I gave him half a crown this morning."

Candidates sometimes give amazing answers. One candidate described a cherub as "an infant angel who died before baptism and will undoubtedly be saved." Another, in writing out the Nicene Creed, began, "I believe in all things visible and invisible," which Bishop Walsham How described as "a magnificent grasp of faith."

Stories of the sparkling wit and humour of this dearly beloved prelate are very numerous, but they have been so well told by his son and are so well known that they need not be here repeated. But I may just mention his account of his sermon preached at Dewsbury on the occasion of a Co-operative Congress in the afternoon, the morning and evening discourses being preached at Dissenting chapels. He said, "I console myself with the thought that the middle is the most nutritious part of a sandwich." His epigram on episcopal pastorals against ritualism in 1875, which were evidently inspired by Archbishop Tait, should be recorded again:

> "When the bishops agree on the things they deplore,
> We must give them due credit for *esprit de corps*;
> Unless, by the way, it were truer to state
> That the spirit which moves them is *esprit de tête*."

Bishop Selwyn, of Lichfield, had plenty of humour, rather sardonic at times. One clergyman in his diocese was a great traveller, and often boasted in the pulpit and in society of the extent and variety of his wanderings.

"My brethren, it has been my lot to travel much. I have been in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America," was his usual form of address. Meeting Selwyn one evening at dinner, he was boring his neighbour with an account of his Ulysses-like wanderings, saying, "I've been in every quarter of the globe, and I do not know where next to go for a holiday."

A deep voice came from the other side of the table, "Try your own parish, Mr. ——."

Bishop John Selwyn, whom I knew, was a splendid character. When a plague of small-pox broke out at Wolverhampton, he set to work to visit and nurse the sufferers. One patient was a drover, a very rough character and a leader of infidelity. This man said to Selwyn, "Parsons are no different to any one else, only for the coats." Off came Selwyn's coat in a moment, and he offered to change. The man became a staunch friend, won over by Selwyn's ready wit and excessive earnestness and kindness.

American bishops have sometimes a keen satire. A candidate for holy orders was being examined before Bishop Griswold. One of the examiners was pressing a young candidate with questions as to whether it were possible for heathen men to be saved who had never heard of the Saviour. The bishop finally asked:

"My young friend, what do the Scriptures say on the subject?"

"They do not say anything, bishop," was the reply.

"Well," said the bishop, "I would advise you to follow their example."

The following reply is somewhat caustic. A conceited young cleric once said to an American prelate:

"Do you not think that I may well feel flattered that so great a crowd came to hear me preach?"

"No," was the answer, "for twice as many would have come to see you hanged?"

Another pert cleric said to Bishop Griswold :

"My sermon is long to-day; do you think we had better omit the ante-communion ?"

"Certainly," replied the bishop, "if you are sure you have something better for the flock of Christ than the Commandments of God, the Epistle, and Gospel."

The story of the "muscular Christian," Bishop Otey, of Tennessee, is a good one. He was once making a missionary journey through Arkansas and the Indian territory, and on his arrival at Natchez he said to the landlord of the hotel :

"I have been travelling for a week, night and day, in a mail wagon, and I want a good room, for I am tired."

"I am sorry," answered the landlord, "but I think there is not a vacant room in Natchez ; there is a horse-race, a Methodist conference, and a political convention in the city, and every house is crowded. The only thing I can give you is a shakedown."

Then, observing the bishop's tired face, he exclaimed : "Bishop, the best room in my house is rented to a noted gambler who usually remains out all night and seldom gets in before breakfast. If you will take the risk, you shall have his room ; but if he should come in I can promise you there will be a row."

The bishop decided to take the risk. At about four o'clock the gambler returned, and shaking the bishop angrily, exclaimed :

"Get out of my room, or I'll soon put you out !"

The bishop, the mildest of men, raised himself on one elbow, so that it brought the muscles of his arm into full relief, and said quietly :

"My friend, before you put me out, will you have the kindness to feel my arm ?"

The man put his hand on the bishop's arm, and then said respectfully :

"Stranger, you can stay."

The Bishop of Tuam, Ireland, was somewhat hard pressed, and had to prepare a charge for his clergy. He consulted his chaplain, and asked him to draw up a suitable address. The chaplain carried out the injunction of the bishop, and relied largely upon the published charge of an English bishop, appropriating a considerable amount of it. The English bishop's attention was called to this reproduction of his episcopal utterances in the charge of the Bishop of Tuam; but he took the matter very placidly, and remarked that evidently his brother had not understood the difference between *meum* and *Tuam*.

An American clergyman, Dominie Johnson, used to wait at the factory door at closing time to speak a kind word to the operatives. One day an infidel among them said:

"Dominie, you believe in the devil; I would like to see the devil."

"Have a little patience, my friend," was the calm reply.

This story reminds me of a distinguished prelate of the Roman Catholic Church, who exercised much influence over the people of Ghent. Passing along the street one day he had occasion to pass the door of the Radical Club, upon the steps of which stood several foremost members of the anti-clerical party.

"*Les prêtres a l'enfer!*" shouted one of them.

The cleric turned round with the blandest of smiles, and making a profound bow to his tormentor, replied, "*Après vous, monsieur.*"

The victory was complete, and the young man retreated hurriedly, amid the laughter of his companions.

Humour is of great service sometimes in parrying indiscreet and unwise questions. Archbishop Benson found it so when, just before the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln, a lady asked him across the table at a dinner, "Is anything interesting going to take place at the trial on Tuesday, your grace?"

The Archbishop replied promptly, "Yes, indeed. I have had a guillotine erected in the library, and the Bishop of Lincoln will come in led by Sir Walter Phillimore, and lay his head down. It will be most affecting; and then the axe will fall, and I have arranged that it shall come down on Sir Walter's head instead of the bishop's, and the bishop will rise and execute a fandango. Do you know what that is?"

His daughter, just before the trial, told her father that some one had been asking the porter, whose office it was to show to visitors the Lambeth Library, which was the celebrated book that was bound in the skin of a bishop.

The Archbishop replied, "Tell him to say that it is just waiting to be rebound."

Many other instances might be given of episcopal wit, but enough examples have, perhaps, been recorded which show that the "saving grace of humour" is not quite lost in spite of all the troubles and trials of a bishop's life, his endless anxieties and worries, and the terrible responsibilities which "the care of all the Churches" entail upon him.

CHAPTER VI

THE ELIZABETHAN PARSON AND SOME OTHERS

THE Church emerged from the Reformation pillaged, shorn, and impoverished. It had been robbed on all sides. The fabric of the churches had been injured and mutilated. Their furniture and sacred vessels had gone to swell the hideous heap of spoil that a rapacious king, greedy courtiers, and other avaricious people had amassed on the pretence of putting down "superstition." Robbery was in the air; no class was exempt. The highest seized on the confiscated lands of the monasteries, and other less exalted persons took the opportunity of possessing themselves of a chalice to be melted down, or a portion of a vestment or altar-cloth to serve for adorning their own houses, without respect either to the source whence it was derived or the means by which it was obtained. Here are some examples of this unrighteous peculation:

"*Item.* Th' inhabitants of Stoetford say that Lorde Morley hathe Resayved into his handes out of the Churche Box of the town aforesaid iiij$^{li.}$

"*Item.* Mychaell Cammyswell hathe embessillede a Crose & ij candellstickes of silver from the churche.

"*Item.* S$^{r.}$ Willyam Candyshe, Knighte, late of Northhawe, hathe taken into his handes owte of the said churche a challise of silver.

"*Item.* S$^{r.}$ Thomas Josylyne of Essex, Knight, hath

taken into his hands from the church of Sabbrytchworth a Rytch Coppe and a Suytte of vestmentes, the true Coolores and vallue thereof we know not.

"*Item.* Jonsone, layte of Alburye, about V yeares past, cam into the church of Alburie, & for money that the vicar of the same towne ought [owed] him, took away their forcible a challise."

Parsons, too, were sometimes guilty of making away with the church goods, as well as churchwardens, though lords and knights were the chief sinners. The Commission of January, 1553, ordered the confiscation of such of the church goods as could be turned into money and paid into the Exchequer. One chalice was ordered to be left in a church, and others taken and melted down for the king's privy purse. Here are the words addressed to the Commissioners:

"We do further give unto you full power & authority immediately to collect or cause to be collected & brought together all & singular ready money, plate, & jewels certified by our Commissioners to remain in any church, guild, Brothered, Fraternity or company, in any shire, county, or place within this realm of England, causing the said money to be delivered by indenture to our use to the hands of our trusty servant Sir Edmond Peckham Knight, & causing the said plate & jewels to be delivered likewise by Indenture to our use to the hands of the master of our Jewel house for the time being. We give unto you authority to leave . . . one or two chalices by your discretion." There is a clause ordering the Commissioners to discover the names of any who have purloined any goods, and to recover their value.

And yet this Royal Commission has the shamelessness to speak of promoting "God's glory" and the king's "honour." The bells, too, were ordered to be taken down and sold for God's glory and the king's honour, save one big bell and the "Saunce Bell," or sanctus bell,

which was rung at the Elevation of the Host. This, being small, had little value in the eyes of the greedy Commissioners, who cared little about "superstitious uses." One would have thought that such zealous Protestant reformers would have made an especial onslaught on Sanctus bells; but these were of little value, and therefore might be left. The inventories made by these Commissioners have been published. Our Berkshire lists were printed some time ago by Mr. Walter Money, the learned antiquary of Newbury, to whose valuable notes I am indebted, and he states that they afford some notion of the beauty and costliness of the ornaments with which even our smaller parish churches had been, by the devotion and piety of the parishioners, endowed. Even after all the ornaments adjudged to be superstitious had been cleared away, according to the royal Injunctions of 1548, after Protestant zeal had had its way and unlawful peculation had had its fling, there was much remaining for the grasping hand of the Crown to melt down, or turn into money, in order to benefit the royal exchequer.

There is a little village in Berkshire called Boxford, quite a small place. Here is the list of church goods which the Commissioners found there, and which had escaped previous ravages:

"One challice, a cross of copper & gilt, another cross of timber covered with brass, one cope of blue velvet embroidered with images of angles, one vestment of the same suit with an albe of Lockeram,[1] two vestments of Dornexe,[2] and three other very old, two old & coarse albes of Lockeram, two old copes of Dornexe, iiij altar cloths of linen cloth, two corporals with two cases whereof one is embroidered, two surplices, & one rochet, one bible & the paraphrases of Erasmus in English, seven banners

[1] A fine linen cloth made in Brittany (cf. *Coriolanus*, Act ii. sc. 1).

[2] A rich sort of stuff interwoven with gold and silver, made at Tournay, which was formerly called Dorneck, in Flanders.

of lockeram & one streamer all painted, three front cloths for altars whereof one of them is with panes of white damask & black satin, & the other two of old vestments, two towels of linen, iiij candlesticks of latten[1] & two standertes[2] before the high altar of latten, a lent vail[3] before the high altar with panes blue and white, two candlesticks of latten and five branches, a peace,[4] three great bells with one saunce bell xx^c, one canopy of cloth, a covering of Dornixe for the Sepulchre, two cruets of pewter, a holy-water pot of latten, a linen cloth to draw before the rood. And all the said parcels safely to be kept & preserved, & all the same & every parcel thereof to be forthcoming at all times when it shall be of them [the churchwardens] required."

This inventory of the goods of one small church enables us to judge of the wealth of our country churches before they were despoiled. When the Elizabethan parson entered upon his duties all these rich and beautiful adornments had vanished. Brasses had been torn from the floors. The church was wrecked.

Nor was this his only misfortune. He discovered that his income was in accordance with his despoiled church. The dissolution of the monasteries had played havoc with the endowments of the living. These monasteries had always been eager to procure the impropriation of tithes; in other words, to become rectors of the parishes, appointing one of the monks as vicar of a benefice and paying him a stipend. A monk was pledged to poverty, and required little for his food and raiment, and he could always rely upon his monastery. When the dissolution came the rich courtiers seized upon the impropriated

[1] An alloy of copper and zinc.
[2] Large standard candlesticks.
[3] The Lent cloth, hung before the altar during Lent.
[4] A Pax.

tithes and never restored them to the Church, to which they lawfully belonged. Hence arose the race of lay-impropriators, lay-rectors, whose misdeeds are recorded by Spelman in his *History of Sacrilege*, and more recently in the *Sacred Tenth*, by Dr. Lansdale. The arch-spoiler, Henry VIII., having secured for himself a fairly large portion of monastic property, was obliged to deal round "blood-money" to his confederates who had helped him to the spoil. To many of the nobility and his "faithful Commons" he gave, or sold, many of the tithes which had been appropriated by the monasteries in thousands of parishes. Grove, in his *Alienated Tithes*, states:

"Judging from the names of the parties who had grants of tithes for 'service,' the probability is that the 'service' rendered was that of aiding the Crown in plundering the religious houses. Those noblemen and others, who assisted the Crown in robbing the Church, were amply rewarded by a share of that spoil which they had helped the sovereign to seize. Hence they had grants for 'service.' On the other hand, there were some who had grants for the service of disclosing 'concealed' lands, once belonging to the Church. Those who thus profited the State, and benefited themselves at the expense of religion, must be considered on a par with the men who aided the Crown in its original spoliation of the Church."

The whole nefarious process is fully exposed in the works to which I have referred. Moreover, in the reign of Elizabeth a fine little business was transacted. The lands of bishoprics were seized and the sees re-endowed with their appropriated tithes. Thus hundreds of parishes were forced to contribute to episcopal incomes, which were thus maintained by the tithes which ought to have been devoted to the sustenance of the parochial clergy. Some of these recipients of Church property were despicable rascals—*e.g.*, Christopher Hatton, "the dancing Lord

Chancellor." He bagged no less than 105 grants of tithes, besides Ely Place, the property in London of the Bishop of Ely.[1] We need not concern ourselves with the punishment which often followed the sacrilege. "The property consecrated to God in the service of the Church has, generally, when alienated to secular purposes, brought misfortune to its possessors, whether by strange accidents, by violent death, by loss of wealth, or—and that chiefly—by failure of heirs male; and that such property hardly ever continues long in one family." So Spelman asserts, and history shows startling proofs of this theory. We might begin with Wolsey, who suppressed forty monasteries, employing five agents. One was killed in a duel, and the second was hanged for killing him; the third drowned himself in a well; the fourth, a rich man, died a beggar; and Dr. Allen, the fifth, having been made Archbishop of Dublin, was cruelly murdered. The fate of Wolsey is too well known to require mention, while the Pope who granted the licence for destroying those monasteries was defeated in war, driven out of Rome, taken prisoner, scorned, ransomed, and at last poisoned. Look at that long list of spoliators. Examine their fates. Thomas Cromwell was beheaded, Cranmer burnt, Tonstal imprisoned. Seventeen dukes, marquises, and earls, and twenty-seven barons and Members of Parliament, who consented to the spoliation of the Church and took part in it, suffered divers calamities. Thomas Lord Audley of Walden died without male issue. Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was sent to the tower with his son and heir, Henry, Earl of Surrey, who was beheaded, and whose son shared his father's fate. The family of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, died out

[1] It is remarkable that at the present time more than three million pounds sterling of tithes are in lay hands, whereas the whole amount received by the parochial clergy is only £2,412,105. Cf. Henry Grove's *Alienated Tithes*, Introduction, p. 9.

soon, as also did that of the Marquis of Dorset, the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Arundel, and the Earl of Shrewsbury. The Earl of Essex fell from his horse and broke his neck. The worst of all the spoliators, Protector Somerset, whose thirst for sacrilege was insatiable, who demolished a church and some episcopal houses in order to build for himself Somerset House, desecrated graves and pulled down the greater part of the Church of St. John of Jerusalem, Smithfield, in order to provide materials for his mansion, was beheaded. And so on with the rest. "Did these men," asks Spelman, "die the common death of all men, or were they visited after the manner of all men? If not, we must believe they provoked the Lord." Although the present holders of impropriated tithe have not been guilty of the sins of their predecessors, who originally acquired money given to God, His Church and the poor, they might consider whether it might not be right to restore that which has been filched from the Church, and give it back to its sacred uses.

The result of all this robbery was disastrous to the poor parson of the Elizabethan age. He awoke to find himself beggared. Nor were his misfortunes complete yet. The dissolution of the monasteries had had a disastrous effect on the Universities. Many of the poorer students had been supported by the monastic houses, or were lodged in the Oxford and Cambridge monasteries, and by the destruction of these institutions were cast adrift. The numbers of students soon began to dwindle, studies languished, professors left the Universities, and young men, weary of changes and disputations, no longer flocked to the abodes of learning, but devoted their careers to trades and mercantile pursuits. Hence the Universities, which had been the nursing mothers of parsons, ceased to furnish a good supply of the "inferior clergy," as rectors, vicars, and curates are sometimes styled. Fuller speaks of the "mean

ministers" of that age, and says that "the best that could be gotten were placed in pastoral charges. Alas! tolerability was eminency in that age. A rush-candle seemed a torch, where no brighter light was ever seen before. Surely, preaching now ran very low, if it be true what I read, that Mr. Tavernour, of Water-Eaton, in Oxfordshire, high sheriff of the county, came in pure charity, not ostentation, and gave the scholars a sermon in St. Mary's, with his gold chain about his neck, and his sword by his side, beginning with the words: 'Arriving at the mount of St. Mary's in the stony stage where I now stand, I have brought you some fine biscuits, baked in the oven of charity, and carefully conserved for the chickens of the Church, the sparrows of the Spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation.'"

But in spite of Fuller's talk of "mean ministers" these "chickens of the Church" often grew up into noble birds. And the bishops and archdeacons made strenuous efforts to increase the learning of the clergy. By a careful study of the archdeacon's visitations of the St. Alban's archdeaconry much important information concerning clerical discipline has recently been gathered. This discipline was extraordinarily strict, compared with anything that exists now. Every minister in 1586 who was "no preacher or M of artes" was obliged to write monthly an exposition of one chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and to show this to his nearest brother minister who was a licensed preacher; and each quarter these exercises were to be shown to the judge of the archidiaconal court, in order that it might be seen how the clergy had progressed in their studies. The archdeacon used to examine "the inferior sort of clergy," and amongst these were Henry Atkins, vicar of Little Horwood, and Robert Dawncey, vicar of Winslow. The former after examination was declared to be "not competent," but at length he improved, obtained a licence, and was reported to be preaching "painfully

and diligently in his parish." A "painful preacher" was a complimentary term, signifying a painstaking preacher, not one who caused pain to his hearers. The returns show that the duties of the clergy were adequately discharged, and that the condition of affairs was generally good.

Much has been written about the clergy of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods which is entirely false, and the greatest traducer of parsons is Macaulay. He has a famous passage about the sins and shortcomings of the clergy of the age, which is referred to again and again and accepted and approved by scholarly historians as if it were gospel truth. It is true that owing to the confiscation of the revenues of the Church the incomes of the parsons had decreased, and that the abolition of celibacy had somewhat increased their wants; it is also said that this latter had deprived them of the dignity that belongs to a separate caste; but the possession of a lawful wife was, probably, regarded as more dignified, more in accordance with their holy calling, than the illicit unions which prevailed before in far too many cases. But in the interest of historical truth, as well as in defence of the parsons of the period, it is necessary to examine Macaulay's brilliant writing, a great part of which is pure myth. He was speaking mainly of the parsons of the Restoration period, who were in fact the most powerful and famous in the annals of the English Church since the Reformation; but he continually refers to the Eiizabethan times, and it may not be inconvenient to examine the passage in this place, and with the help of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Churchill Babington, who wrote *Macaulay's Character of the Clergy Considered* (1849), we will essay the task. As the former writer observes, one reader, perhaps, in a thousand could for and by himselt correct, qualify, or even confute Macaulay's glittering but exaggerated description. The other nine hundred and ninety-nine lie wholly at his mercy.

Macaulay begins by stating that the Reformation altered the place of the parson in society.

"Down to the middle of the reign of Henry VIII. no line of life bore so inviting an aspect to ambitious and covetous natures as the priesthood. Then came a violent revolution. The abolition of the monasteries deprived the Church at once of the greater part of her wealth, and of her predominance in the Upper House of Parliament. There was no longer an Abbot of Glastonbury or an Abbot of Reading seated among the peers, and possessed of revenues equal to those of a powerful earl. The princely splendour of William of Wykeham and of William of Waynflete had disappeared. The scarlet hat of the cardinal, the silver cross of the legate, were no more. The clergy had also lost the ascendancy which is the natural reward of superior mental cultivation. Once the circumstance that a man could read had raised a presumption that he was in orders. But in an age which produced such laymen as William Cecil and Nicholas Bacon, Roger Ascham and Thomas Smith, Walter Mildmay and Francis Walsingham, there was no reason for calling away prelates from their dioceses to negotiate treaties, to superintend the finances, or to administer justice. The spiritual character not only ceased to be a qualification for high civil office, but began to be regarded as a disqualification. Those worldly motives, therefore, which had formerly induced so many able, aspiring, and high-born youths to assume the ecclesiastical habit ceased to operate. Not one parish in two hundred then afforded what a man of family considered as a maintenance. There were still indeed prizes in the Church: but they were few; and even the highest were mean, when compared with the glory which had once surrounded the princes of the hierarchy. The state kept by Parker and Grindal seemed beggarly to those who remembered the imperial pomp of Wolsey, his palaces, which had become the favourite abodes of royalty, Whitehall and Hampton Court, the three sumptuous tables daily spread in his refectory, the forty-four gorgeous copes in his chapel, his running footmen in rich liveries, and his bodyguards with gilded pole-axes. Then the sacerdotal office lost its attraction for the higher classes. During the century which followed the accession of Elizabeth, scarce a single person of noble descent took orders. At the close of the reign of Charles II., two sons of peers were bishops; four or five sons of peers were priests, and held valuable preferment: but these rare exceptions did not take away the reproach which lay on the body. The clergy were regarded as, on the whole, a plebeian

class. And, indeed, for one who made the figure of a gentleman, ten were mere menial servants. A large proportion of those divines who had no benefices, or whose benefices were too small to afford a comfortable revenue, lived in the houses of laymen. It had long been evident that this practice tended to degrade the priestly character. Laud had exerted himself to effect a change; and Charles I. had repeatedly issued positive orders that none but men of high rank should presume to keep domestic chaplains. But these injunctions had become obsolete. Indeed, during the domination of the Puritans, many of the ejected ministers of the Church of England could obtain bread and shelter only by attaching themselves to the households of Royalist gentlemen; and the habits which had been formed in those times of trouble continued long after the re-establishment of monarchy and episcopacy. In the mansions of men of liberal sentiments and cultivated understandings, the chaplain was doubtless treated with urbanity and kindness. His conversation, his literary assistance, his spiritual advice, were considered as an ample return for his food, his lodging, and his stipend. But this was not the general feeling of the country gentleman. The coarse and ignorant squire who thought that it belonged to his dignity to have grace said every day at his table by an ecclesiastic in full canonicals, found means to reconcile dignity with economy. A young Levite—such was the phrase then in use—might be had for his board, a small garret, and ten pounds a year, and might not only perform his own professional functions, might not only be the most patient of butts and of listeners, might not only be always ready in fine weather for bowls, and in rainy weather for shovel-board, but might also save the expense of a gardener or a groom. Sometimes the reverend gentleman nailed up apricots, and sometimes he curried the coach-horses. He cast up the farrier's bills. He walked ten miles with a message or a parcel. He was permitted to dine with the family; but he was expected to content himself with the plainest fare. He might fill himself with the corned beef and the carrots; but as soon as the tarts and cheese-cakes made their appearance, he quitted his seat, and stood aloof till he was summoned to return thanks for the repast, from a greater part of which he had been excluded.

"Perhaps after some years of service he was presented to a living sufficient to support him; but he often found it necessary to purchase his preferment by a species of Simony, which furnished an inexhaustible subject of pleasantry to three or four generations of scoffers. With his cure he was expected to take a wife. The wife had ordinarily been in the patron's service; and it was well if she

was not suspected of standing too high in the patron's favour. Indeed, the nature of the matrimonial connections which the clergymen of that age were in the habit of forming is the most certain indication of the place which the order held in the social system. An Oxonian, writing a few months after the death of Charles II., complained bitterly, not only that the country attorney and the country apothecary looked down with disdain on the country clergyman, but that one of the lessons most earnestly inculcated on every girl of honourable family was to give no encouragement to a lover in orders; and that, if any young lady forgot this precept, she was almost as much disgraced as by an illicit amour. Clarendon, who assuredly bore no ill will to the Church, mentions it as a sign of the confusion of ranks which the great rebellion had produced, that some damsels of noble families had bestowed themselves on divines. A waiting woman was generally considered as the most suitable helpmate for a parson. Queen Elizabeth, as head of the Church, had given what seemed to be a formal sanction to this prejudice, by issuing special orders that no clergyman should presume to marry a servant girl, without the consent of the master or mistress. During several generations accordingly the relation between priests and handmaidens was a theme of endless jest; nor would it be easy to find, in the comedy of the seventeenth century, a single instance of a clergyman who wins a spouse above the rank of a cook. Even so late as the time of George II., the keenest of all observers of life and manners, himself a priest, remarked that, in a great household, the chaplain was a resource of a lady's-maid, whose character had been blown upon, and who was therefore forced to give up hopes of catching the steward.

"In general the divine who quitted his chaplainship for a benefice and a wife, found that he had only exchanged one class of vexation for another. Not one living in fifty enabled the incumbent to bring up his family comfortably. As children multiplied and grew, the household of the priest became more and more beggarly. Holes appeared more and more plainly in the thatch of his parsonage and in his single cassock. Often it was only by toiling on his glebe, by feeding swine, and by loading dung-carts, that he could obtain daily bread; nor did his utmost exertions always prevent the bailiffs from taking his concordance and his inkstand in execution. It was a white day on which he was admitted into the kitchen of a great house, and regaled by the servants with cold meat and ale. His children were brought up like the children of the surrounding peasantry. His boys followed the plough; and his girls went out to service. Study he found impossible; for the

advowson of the living would hardly have sold for a sum sufficient to purchase a good theological library; and he might be considered as unusually lucky if he had ten or twelve dog-eared volumes among the pots and pans on his shelves. Even a keen and strong intellect might be expected to rust in so unfavourable a situation."

Such is the indictment—a very severe one. It will be seen that it is exaggerated and untrue in almost every particular. It is true that prizes in the Church were fewer than before the Reformation, but that did not deter men whose hearts were in their work from becoming clergymen. Loaves and fishes may make the wrong sort of parsons, but it is unjust to say that the bulk of the clergy were attracted to the Church by prizes of preferment. These were fewer than before the Reformation, but more than twice the number of noble families were represented in the ministry than in the preceding period. Macaulay seems to have depended much for his information on Eachard's work on *Causes of the Contempt of the Clergy*, the inaccuracies of which were pointed out, especially in a contemporary work entitled the *Vindication of the Clergy*. As regards Macaulay's statement that the parsons belonged to a plebeian class, it is founded on Eachard's complaint that the gentry do not send their sons into the Church. We have direct testimony to the opposite. Archdeacon Oley says "the nobility and gentry do not think their relatives degraded by receiving holy orders," and Anthony Wood, in his *Life of Compton*, states that "holy orders were the readiest way of preferment for the younger sons of noblemen." Jeremy Collier said: "As for the gentry, there are not many good families in England, but either have or have had a clergyman in them. In short the priesthood is the profession of a gentleman."

Eachard attributes the cause of the mischief, with regard to the low state of the parsons of his day, to the fact that they were taught in grammar schools, until they were sixteen or seventeen years of age, in pure slavery to a few

Latin and Greek words. The education given at Eton and other public schools at the present time is not generally deemed insufficient for boys who wish to work; and yet we have heard the complaint of Eachard echoed any time during the last fifty years. Macaulay abuses the Universities; but Burnet states that "learning was then very high at Oxford," and Barrow says that Greek authors of every kind were studied, poets, philosophers, histories, scholiasts, Plato, Aristotle, &c. There does not seem to have been very much amiss. As regards the marriage of the clergy, Macaulay condescends to give no authority for his libel on the purity of the brides of clerics. He quotes, certainly, the saying of Clarendon to the effect that it seemed strange that damsels of noble families should have bestowed themselves on divines. Clarendon does say so; but he is speaking of "the several sects in Religion," and of the ministers of these denominations; and it is impossible for any man, holding the views which he did, to intend to designate the Church of England as a sect. It was left for later times to call that Church a sect and her teaching denominationalism. "These divines of the times" were the Nonconformist ministers, not the young men recently ordained after the Restoration and of the ordinary age for marriage. Macaulay also quotes the Injunctions of Queen Elizabeth, who was strongly in favour of clerical celibacy, and this particular injunction was intended to prevent parsons from marrying at all, and to place restrictions in their way, rather than to suggest the sort of marriage which they were expected to make, and Collyer notes the strangeness of the order as being inconsistent with the usage of his time. It was not unusual for parsons to marry for "beauty, riches, and honour," as George Herbert warns them against such an action; and Pepys declares the extreme satisfaction with which he would give his sister to his friend Cumberland, who was a parson. Nelson speaks in high praise of Bull's marrying a clergyman's

daughter, because "he preferred piety and virtue to the advantages which, for the most part, influence the minds of men on such occasions."

Macaulay calls to his aid the plays and play-writers of the seventeenth century. This is rather remarkable. The theatres of the reign of Charles II. reflected the corruptness and dissoluteness of the Court. Consider the condition of the Stage in those days and you would not be surprised to hear sarcasms and hard words said of the parsons. "Their praise was censure, and their censure praise." Even in modern days of refinement and good taste it sometimes happens that a certain class of parsons of the type of the "Private Secretary" escape not the satire of the playwright, and create much amusement for the audience. But no one in his senses would deem such plays an attack upon the whole race of parsons. No one in his senses would take the "Private Secretary" as a true type of the clergyman of the present day, or draw deductions from it as regards their want of manliness, their stupidity and absurdity. So even certain plays of the later Stuart times are not evidence of the kind of marriages contracted by the parsons of that period. Moreover, Macaulay forgets to quote the preface to one of the plays to which he refers. The author expressly states: "For reflecting upon the Church of England, no learned or wise divine of the Church will believe me guilty of it. . . . A foolish lord or knight is daily represented; nor are there any so silly to believe it an abuse to their order." The whole argument of our brilliant historian falls to the ground when we see how wrong he was in his allegation that the clergy were mostly in a state of menial servants, and made corresponding marriages.

With regard to the incomes of the clergy, I have already alluded to the cause of their poverty, and if poverty be a disgrace, the charge must lie on those laymen who had purloined the property of the Church, not on their

unhappy victims. But no one now thinks any the worse of a parson who happens to hold a poor living; and there are hundreds of clergymen at the present day who are no better off than those of Charles II.'s time. It is somewhat difficult to estimate in figures the incomes of the clergy of that period, and Macaulay judiciously avoids the task. He states in general terms that not one living in fifty enabled the incumbent to bring up a family comfortably; that hence the vicars had to take up manual employments, were fed in the kitchens of the great, that study was impossible on account of the scarcity of books, and that their children were like those of peasants. In order to refute such statements we might refer to George Herbert's *Country Parson*, who complains that the clergy are censured because they do *not* make tents, as St. Paul did, nor hold the plough, nor thrash, nor do other menial tasks. Walker, in his *Sufferings of the Clergy*, speaks of it as a special hardship that in the time of the Commonwealth they should have been driven to such occupations. Evidently it was not customary for the parsons to plough and sow and act the part of an agricultural labourer. Even in our own day an archbishop boasted that, when he was a youth, he could plough the straightest furrow in the fields of his native village, and no one thought any the worse of him for saying so.

Macaulay's authority, Eachard, speaks of the extreme poverty of the parsons of his day, and states that there were hundreds of livings of the value of £20 to £30 a year. The value of money has increased since his time, and in order to estimate the present value of such moneys it is usual to multiply them by four. These livings would, therefore, now be reckoned at £80 or £120, and many clergy now get no more. Walker estimates the value of livings then at £40 to £45, which would be equal to £160 to £180, an amount, if not affluent, which would enable the parson to live and to furnish his table with fare which

(according to George Herbert) "is plain and common, but wholesome, consisting most of mutton, beef, and veal; if he adds anything for a great day or a stranger, his garden or orchard supplies it, or his barn and yard." He keeps poultry and pigs. Herbert's remarks on these are quaint and worth quoting: "There are two things which as they are unuseful to man—the one for smallness, as crumbs, and dirt and things thereinto fallen—God hath provided creatures for both: for the first poultry, for the second swine. These save man the labour, and doing that which either he could not do, or was not fit for him to do, by taking both sorts of food into them, do as it were dress and prepare both for man in themselves by growing themselves fit for his table." As the parson had mutton, beef, and veal, poultry, pork, and bacon, he did not fare very badly. Of course, the lives of the squire and the clergyman were less refined in those days than they are now; but the social position of the parson relatively to other members of society must have been much the same as it is now. Macaulay is fond of referring to plays. Here is a description of a country parson from the *Magnetic Lady*, by Ben Jonson, first published in 1640, and produced on the stage in 1632, before the Civil War and Puritan triumph drove the parson from his flock:

"COMPASS.

"He is the prelate of the parish here,
And governs all the games, appoints the cheer.
Writes down the bill of fare, pricks all the guests,
Makes all the matches and the marriage feasts—
Without the ward: draws all the parish wills,
Designs the legacies, and strokes the gills
Of the chief mourners: and whoever lacks
Of all the kindred he hath first his blacks.
Thus holds he weddings up and burials
As the main thing: with the gossips' stalls
Their pews; he's top still at the public mess;
Comforts the widow and the fatherless

> In funeral sade; sits 'bove the alderman;
> For of the wardmote quest he better can
> The mystery than the Levitic law:
> That piece of clerkship doth his vestry awe.
> He is, as he conceives himself, a fine
> Well-furnished and apparelled divine."[1]

There was not much amiss with the position of this worthy old man, who was certainly a "prelate of his parish," and a somewhat fussy autocrat.

The statement of the historian that the sons of clerics followed the plough, and that their daughters went into service, is pure fable. It is an unpardonable statement, as the contemporary authorities are not obscure and are easily obtainable. Fuller states that the children of the clergymen of his day have been as successful as the sons of men of other professions. George Herbert, Beveridge's *Private Thoughts*, Dr. Sprat's sermon on the *Sons of the Clergy Corporation* in 1678, and White Kennet's *Collectanea Curiosa* might be quoted. The last author states that many of the poorer clergy indulge the inclinations of their sons by breeding them to a good competence of school learning, though they are afterwards unable to support them at the Universities, an inability which many poor parsons at the present time share with them, and yet in no way brings contempt on the clerical office.

With regard to clerical libraries, Macaulay speaks disparagingly of the parson's "ten or twelve dog-eared volumes" which repose on his shelves "among the pots and pans." If they were "dog-eared" it is evident they were much read, and ten or twelve solid folio tomes have much in them. But this statement of the scantily furnished libraries of the parsons is entirely mythical. It is based upon our friend Eachard again, who talks of the parson equipped with six or seven books together with

[1] Ben Jonson's *Magnetic Lady*, Act i. sc. 1 Mr. Baring-Gould has kindly referred me to this quaint description of an old parson.

a bundle of sermons. The error was exposed at the time by the writer of the *Vindication of the Clergy*, whereupon Eachard replies: "The case is this; whether there be not here and there a clergyman so ignorant as that it might be wished he was wiser. For my own part I went and guessed at random, and thought there might be one or so." This somewhat cuts the ground from under the feet of the brilliant historian, and makes him look rather absurd.

A few parsons of the period were, perhaps, ignorant; therefore all must be deemed so and unhesitatingly condemned. From other sources we may gather how learned the clergy were. Walker, in his *Sufferings of the Clergy*, shows that clerical libraries to the value of £500 and £600 were robbed and plundered by the Puritan purloiners of Church property. George Herbert states that "the country parson hath read the Fathers, and the schoolmen, and the later writers, or a good proportion of all, out of which he hath compiled a book and body of divinity which is the storehouse of his sermons, and which he preacheth all his life; but diversely clothed, illustrated and enlarged." The diocese of St. David's was poor, but Bishop Bull considered the reading of the Fathers of the first three centuries at least not only as useful, but absolutely necessary to support the character of a priest. Bishop Burnet's *Pastoral Care* shows that clerical reading was quite as great then as a bishop would require now from a clergyman, and no one could, as a rule, be ordained without a University degree, which was a proof that he was no unlearned person. Macaulay, indeed, says that there was no lack of parsons distinguished by their abilities and learning; but he adds that they were stationed at the Universities, the Cathedrals, or in London. It is certainly true that many brilliant men resided at these centres, but he seems to have been ignorant of the long list of scholars who sent forth from country parsonages works

on divinity that were then, and in most cases are now, after two hundred and fifty years, valued and esteemed. What shall we say of Towerson, Puller, Sherlock, Norris, Fulwood, Fuller, Kettlewell, Beveridge, and a host of others?

All Macaulay's charges seem to break down, and he was evidently wrong on every point by omission or exaggeration. Because books were then difficult to obtain, and the manner of all classes somewhat rude and homely; because cases of low birth and conduct were occasionally met with; because a smaller number of well-born young men might have been taking holy orders during the Commonwealth period, when few ordinations took place; because some bishops were lowly born, though of great learning and ability; because of all this, for one parson who made the figure of a gentleman, ten were mere menial servants.

There must have been some reason for this strange and savage attack by the historian on the whole race of parsons, and this reason is not far to seek. It was the result of political animus. The clergy of the period were unmitigated Tories, and therefore hateful to Macaulay. His account is pure romance. It is pleasant to read, especially for a layman who has a little grievance against the parsons, but it is entirely imaginary. I cannot conclude this exposure of these false charges better than by quoting the words of the Quarterly Reviewer,[1] who was none other than the late learned Prime Minister of England, to whose researches I am indebted for much that has been herein stated. Mr. Gladstone wrote:

"While history, in the form of romance, is commonly used to glorify a little our poor humanity, the illusions of this romance in the form of history go only to dishonour and degrade. That Williams, that Burnet, that Milton, should have personal embellishment much beyond their

[1] *Quarterly Review*, 1876.

due is no intolerable evil. But the case becomes far more grievous when a great historian, impelled by his headstrong and headlong imagination, traduces alike individuals and orders, and hurls them into a hot and flaming inferno ot his own."

We will recall some of the names of the leading lights of the period. There was Richard Hooker, a man renowned for his learning and piety and for his supreme humility. Lovingly is his portrait drawn by the master-hand of Izaak Walton. "Judicious" he was, save in the choice of a wife, to whom we shall refer later on. He was the champion of the Church of England, the brave defender of her doctrine and discipline, whose *Ecclesiastical Polity* will live as long as she exists. The saintly George Herbert, the sweet singer and divine poet, enriched his own and many succeeding ages with his pious and harmonious verse, and left behind the memory of a holy life, unspotted from the world. *The Temple* is the storehouse of heavenly musings, wherein many gems are gathered for the delight and edification of all ages. Once he had ambitious dreams of courtly favour; but these were laid aside when he resolved to take Orders, realising that he could never do too much for Him "that hath done so much for me as to make me a Christian. And I will labour to be like my Saviour by making humility lovely in the eyes of men, and by following the merciful and meek example of my dear Jesus." That was his resolution, and that he was enabled to keep. He lived the life of a model parish priest at Bemerton. He used to assemble his family and household for daily service in the chapel adjoining his rectory, and when the bell tolled the ploughmen rested from their labours that they might offer their devotions with him. He dearly loved music, and played lute and viol. At Salisbury there was a kind of musical society, and thither he would go twice a week to play his part, after rejoicing in the Cathedral

service. He held that religion does not banish mirth, but only moderates and sets rules to it.

Associated with the holy Herbert is the memory of Nicholas Ferrar and his community at Little Gidding. This holy man gathered a company of his kindred together, and of those who loved a devout life, to the number of about thirty, and in the parish church or in the oratory of the manor-house they served God day and night, joining in the daily services and chanting or reading the whole Psalter in every twenty-four hours. The community was divided into companies, and constantly during the night the watch-bell sounded, and part of the family arose from their beds to continue the course of Psalms that had been omitted during the day. Prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures were daily practised by the members of the community, and many of the clergy used to frequent these services, and spend a week or more in what we should now call "retreat" with them. This community at Little Gidding lasted ten years after Ferrar's death, which occurred in 1637, and was dispersed during the Civil War.

Another noted Churchman was John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's (1573–1631). His mother was of the family of Sir Thomas More, and clung steadfastly to the "old religion." Indeed, he seems to have had some leanings that way, but he studied the controversies that raged, ransacked Bellarmine's treatises, and remained a true and loyal English Churchman. He became secretary to Lord Ellesmere, Lord Chancellor, who treated him as a friend; but he must needs fall in love with his lordship's niece, who returned his affection. There was a furious storm, for, as Izaak Walton says, "love is a flattering mischief, that hath denied aged and wise men a foresight of those evils that too often prove to be the children of that blind father." It was all very sad. The lovers met, married secretly, and then the trouble came. The lady's father

stormed, Donne was discharged and imprisoned, and well might he write to his wife:

JOHN DONNE, ANNE DONNE, UN-DONE.

Ultimately, he thought of taking Orders with much hesitation, "for which kings, if they think so, are not good enough." King James admired his talents and his book *Pseudo-martyr.* Three years he waited for ordination, and then, as Walton says, "the Church gained a second St. Austin; for I think none was so like him before his conversion, none so like St. Austin after it; and if his youth had the infirmities of the one, his age had the excellence of the other; the learning and holiness of both." The facetious James, when conferring on him the deanery of St. Paul's, said, "Dr. Donne, I have invited you to dinner; and though you sit not down with me, yet I will carve to you of a dish that I know you love well; for knowing you love London, I do therefore make you Dean of St. Paul's; and when I have dined, then do you take your beloved dish home to your study, say grace there to yourself, and much good may it do you."

A last name must be added, though this chapter has grown to too great a length—that of a man famous in literature, if not in theology, Robert Herrick. The graceful singer, the poet of country life, was vicar of Dean Prior, Devonshire, and in the society of rustics and yeomen he devised those quaint rhymes and tender verses that made him famous. He was original. Once when his congregation was very inattentive he threw his sermon at their heads. He used his poetry as a means for instructing his flock, and sometimes made epigrams on Master Mudge, or Prickles, or Mistress Bridget, or other troublesome folk; and we can imagine him returning home, chuckling over some rhymed joke with which he had set the rustics grinning at some grotesque offender against truth or decency. He was ejected from his living during the

GEORGE HERBERT

FROM THE 1674 EDITION OF *THE TEMPLE*, THE FIRST PUBLISHED WITH HIS PORTRAIT

Commonwealth, and was not sorry to return to his beloved London. He deemed his sojourn in remote Devonshire "a long and irksome banishment." But at the Restoration he returned to his secluded village, and there ended his days in quietude and peace. His verse will live as long as the love of true lyrical poetry lasts, and Herrick's name will not be forgotten.

CHAPTER VII

CHAPLAINS, LECTURERS, AND ASSISTANT CURATES

CLERICAL poverty has produced many evils. Foremost among them was the race of the hangers-on to the families of the great, the tame Levites as they were called, or Mess-Johns, or trencher-chaplains, who acted as domestic clergymen, of whom Macaulay wrote so scornfully.[1]

Hall in his *Satires* paints a painful picture of the poor chaplain's lot:

> "A gentle squire would gladly entertain
> Into his house some trencher-chappelain,
> Some willing man that might instruct his sons,
> And that could stand to good conditions.
> First, that he lie upon the truckle bed,
> While his young master lieth overhead;
> Second, that he do on no default
> Ever presume to sit above the salt;
> Third, that he never change his trencher twice;
> Fourth, that he use all common courtesies,
> Sit bare at meals, and one half rise and wait;
> Last, that he never his young master beat,
> But he must ask his mother to define
> How many jerks she would his breech should line;
> All these observed, he would contented be,
> To give five markes and winter liverie."

[1] Vide, p. 102.

The poor wretch was treated like an upper menial, and was the butt of the squire's jests and the children's mischievous pranks. The servants treated him in a familiar fashion, and he was dismissed from the dinner-table as soon as the pastry appeared, "picking his teeth and sighing, with his hat under his arm." He used to make great ravages on all the dishes that stood near him, and to distinguish himself by the voracity of his appetite lest he should not have time to gorge himself. If, greatly daring, he presumed to stay till the pastry course arrived and help himself to tarts and sweetmeats, he rendered himself liable to be reproached by the lady of the house for having a sweet tooth. The poet Gay alludes to the early dismissal of the parson from the board in his rhymes:

> "Cheese that the table's closing rites denies,
> And bid me with the unwilling chaplain rise."

A cry of relief was heard through the hall when the chaplain had departed, the guests feeling themselves free to shout and swear and drink, without the censuring words or looks of the poor cleric. The Nonjuror Leslie remarks on this unhappy state of affairs:

"Chaplains are now reckoned under the notion of servants; instead of being appointed by bishops, it was left to every one's fancy (and some very unable to judge) to take in and take out at their pleasure, as they do their footmen, that they may be wholly subservient to their humour and their follies, sometimes to their vices; and to play upon the chaplain is often the best part of the entertainment, and religion suffers with it."

Crabbe was domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland and was treated with great kindness and consideration. Being of lowly origin he was somewhat unaccustomed to the ways of polite society, and he did not find his path always easy. According to his latest and most complete

biographer, Monsieur René Huchon, "his duties were somewhat delicate ; if his advice was asked, he had to reply discreetly, without appearing to claim the privileges of an intimate friend ; if the Duchess brought him one of her children to be scolded for swearing, it was necessary to measure out the blame so as to spare the mother's feelings, and preserve the respect due to the little 'lord' of four years old. He had to provide poetical effusions for the lady visitors to the castle, and sometimes the guests at the ducal table were rather trying, as he shows in one of his tales, wherein appear the lines :

> "With wine before thee, and with wits beside,
> Do not in strength of reasoning powers confide ;
> What seems to thee convincing, certain, plain,
> They will deny, and dare thee to maintain ;
> Men gay and noisy will o'erwhelm thy sense,
> Then loudly laugh at truth's and thy expense ;
> Why the kind ladies will do all they can
> To check their mirth and cry '*The good young man.*'"

Politics, too, literally embittered his cup, and "more than once he was compelled to take a glass of salt-water because he refused to join in Tory toasts," his political leanings being opposed to those of his patron. Our French author who recalls this coarse and unmannerly joke must have been somewhat disgusted with the pleasantries of polite society in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century ; and Crabbe longed to escape from ducal halls and "have a little hut, that he might hide his head in, where never guest might dare molest unwelcome and unbidden."

If Crabbe suffered somewhat in such high society, what must the trencher-chaplain have endured in the manor-house of a boorish and unlettered squire ? He often sank to the level of a boon companion, and well might George Herbert warn these men with regard to their conduct. He gravely counsels :

"Let not chaplains think themselves so free as many of them do, and, because they have different names, think their office different. Doubtless they are parsons of the families they live in, and are entertained to that end either by an open or implicit covenant. . . . They are not to be over-submissive or base, but to keep up with the lord and lady of the house, and to preserve a boldness with them and all, even so far as reproof to their face when occasion calls, but seasonably and discreetly. They who do not thus, while they remember their earthly lord, do much forget their heavenly; they wrong the priesthood, neglect their duty, and shall be so far from that which they seek with their over-submissiveness and cringing, that they shall ever be despised. They who for hope of promotion neglect any necessary admonition or reproof, sell (with Judas) their Lord and Master."

During the later half of the eighteenth century "Mess-Johns" were not so plentiful and the domestic chaplain became a *rara avis*. Boswell remarked on this, arguing that there was less religion in the nation than formerly, since there was no longer a chaplain in every great family. Dr. Johnson replied, "Neither do you find any of the State servants in great families. There is a change in the customs." It was well, perhaps, that there was this change, both for the sake of the tame Levite and also for the dignity of religion.

Lecturers.

Another class of parsons, who were often as thorns in the sides of the rectors and vicars, were the lecturers. These were in most cases independent of the incumbents, being appointed by corporations of towns, by private endowment, or by the people, the electors being small tradesfolk who had leanings towards Puritanism. Heylin's *Cyprianus Anglicus*, in delightfully quaint

language, describes the race and their origin. He says: "The Reformers had great care for the keeping of the people in good stomach, not cloying them by continual preaching, or homilising, but limiting them to once a day, as appears by the rubric after the Nicene (or rather Constantinopolitan) Creed. Lectures upon week-days were not raised upon this foundation, but were brought in afterwards, by Travers and the rest, towards the latter end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, from the new fashion of Geneva, the lecturer being superadded to the parson or vicar, as the doctor was to the pastor in some foreign churches. Nor were they raised so much out of care and conscience, for training of the people in the ways of Faith and Piety, as to advance a faction, and to alienate the people's minds from the Government and Forms of Worship here by law established. For these lecturers, having no dependence on the Bishops, nor taking the oath of canonical obedience to them, nor subscribing to the Doctrine and Established Ceremonies, made in their work to please those patrons, on whose arbitrary maintenance they were planted, and consequently to carry on the Puritan interest which their Patrons drove at. A generation of men, neither Lay nor clergy, having no place at all in the Prayers of the Church, where we find mention only of Bishops, Pastors, and Curates, nor being taken notice of in the terms of Law, as being neither Parsons nor Vicars, or to speak them in vulgar proverb, neither flesh nor fish nor good red herring—no creature in the world so like them as the bats or rere-mice, being neither birds nor beasts, and yet both together. Had these men been looked upon in time, before their numbers were increased, and their power grown formidable, before the people went a madding after new inventions, most of the mischief which have thence insued might have been prevented. And had there been more homilies and less sermonising, in which the Preacher every time speaks his own factious

and erroneous sense, the people might have been trained up in no less knowledge, but in much more obedience than they have been in latter times."

Archbishop Laud, whose Life Heylin wrote, under the title *Cyprianus Anglicus*, issued instructions with regard to these lecturers, and ordered that they should be licensed in the Court of Faculties, only on the recommendation of the bishop of the diocese in which the lecturers served. Bishops were ordered by Canon 33 not to ordain without a title; but even bishops have been known to break rules, though they require obedience from their clergy. They were not very strict in requiring a title from those whom they ordained. Hence arose a race of indigent clerics "who either thrust themselves into gentlemen's houses to teach their children, and sometimes officiate at the table's end, or othewise to undertake stipendiary lectures wherever they could find entertainment, to the great fomenting of Faction in the State, the Danger of Schism in the Church, and the ruin of both."

Such was the origin and development of lectureships. In my book on the *Parish Clerk* I have told the story of the lecturer and his ways at Barnstaple, how he stirred up the people against the vicar, and nearly drove the poor man mad by his underhand proceedings. This creature, being independent of the bishop and dependent only on the corporation of the town, attracted a party to himself, refused to obey the vicar in the matter of wearing a surplice, accused him of consorting with tipplers in ale-houses, and worried him exceedingly. For the rest of this edifying story I would refer the reader to my former book. Many works refer to the evils of the system, though it may be remarked that these London lectureships were held by many learned divines. Nichols tells of the glories of the Lecture of St. Lawrence Jewry. "Though but moderately endowed in point of profit, it was long considered as the post of honour. It had been possessed by a remarkable

succession of the most able and celebrated preachers, of whom were the Archbishops Tillotson and Sharp; and it was usually attended by a variety of persons of the first note and eminence, particularly by numbers of the clergy, not only of the younger sort but several also of long-standing and established character." Another writer describes the lectures as being "convocations of divines." But lecturers had their day, and several causes contributed to their decease. In the nineteenth century the city population drifted into the suburbs; new parishes sprang up, the parochial clergy increased in numbers, and the London lectures ceased to have that dignity and importance which once characterised them.

Assistant Curates.

The curate has sometimes been known to rank among the superior clergy, if the saying of a Master of Trinity be true: "No one is infallible, not even the youngest curate amongst us." Sometimes the modern curate is a little superior. His condition has greatly changed since the beginning of the last century, when Sydney Smith thus described his peculiarities:

"A curate—there is something which excites compassion in the very name of curate! A learned man in a hovel, with sermons and saucepans, lexicons and bacon, Hebrew books and ragged children, good and patient; a comforter and a preacher; the first and purest pauper of the hamlet."

Those were the days of wretched pluralism, when a few fortunates had livings showered down upon them, which they never visited except once a year, in order to receive their tithe, and left in the charge of a poor curate, who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year," or less. No wonder this was a scandal on account of the unequal distribution of the revenues of the Church, when some bishops, like his

lordship of Durham, had a princely income, when by the hateful system of pluralism rectors, deans, and canons could hold many livings and receive some thousands a year, and poor curates were left to starve on a munificent stipend of £20 or £30. You will find in the early numbers of *Punch* how vigorously the humorists of sixty years ago satirised these terrible inequalities.

Nous avons changé tout cela. The Rev. Lord Sydney Godolphin Osborne, an excellent and opulent clergyman, once described the country parson as a person with a pony and trap. Now the curate has the trap, and the vicar too often starves in his vicarage. The curate can be no longer described as "a learned man in a hovel," though his lodgings may not be very pretentious, nor does he seem to live in an atmosphere of lexicons and Hebrew books. He is learned in the annals of Henley, and deep in the lore of inter-University competitions. He can tell you how many centuries "W. G." has scored (if they can be computed by ordinary arithmetic), and photographs of illustrious cricketers adorn his walls. One of the characters of a well-known opera sings:

> "I was a pale young curate then,"

who received presents of worked slippers and comforters from the admiring ladies of his congregations. If stage curates are still pale, it is because they are hopelessly out of date. It was all quite correct in the days of Dickens, when the advice was given to Charles Honeyman to cough during the prayers, because "the women liked a consumptive parson, sir." The modern typical curate has been thus described: "A smart, clean, well-set-up youth, with face closely shaved and hair cut short. He no longer wears, except on occasions of state, a decayed 'topper' and a long coat with buttons as numerous as the Articles of the Church of England. In his daily avocation he wears a

short, round jacket, a silver watch-chain crossing his waistcoat, dark trousers turned up at the bottoms, serviceable shooting boots, and a black straw hat. He has an air, indescribable but unmistakable, of having lived an out-of-door life, and even though his present lot be cast in a slum, he looks as if he only required a few weeks' training to regain the physical trim in which he left Oxford or Cambridge." To this, in the case of the country curate, should be added that he can play a fine game of croquet, may be depended upon to hold his own in a tennis tournament, and to keep up his wicket at a critical juncture in the village match ; and he would make a respectable golfer if he had only sufficient time to give to that exacting pastime to become proficient. That is a luxury to be looked forward to when he becomes a bishop, as he deserves to do some day.

Many stories are told of curates. The days of the meek and mild curate are past, and the race is extinct of the sort of curate who, when breakfasting with his bishop, was served with an egg which had lost its freshness. "I'm afraid that egg is bad, Mr. —— ; pray send it away." "Oh, my lord, it is quite good enough for me ; parts of it are excellent," the curate is reported to have replied.

The affectionate regard of the ladies of the congregation for the curate has often been the subject of epigrammatic remark. Perhaps the wittiest is the well-known rhyme :

> "The ladies praise the curate's eyes—
> I never see their light divine ;
> For when he prays he closes his,
> And when he preaches closes mine."

These mistakes, born of inexperience, have often been recorded and laughed over. A curate was once giving out the banns of two couples who hoped to be married, and rather astonished the congregation by saying, instead of

the usual "This is for the first [second, or third] time of asking," "The first are last, the last first." Another curate asked for the prayers of the congregation for "a family crossing the Atlantic and for other sick persons." Another, when asked by his bishop to write a sermon on "Plain and Practical Arguments for Infant Baptism," produced the following weird statement: "In ancient times, when people bathed their whole bodies, baptism by immersion was usual; but in the present day, when people only wash their hands and faces, baptism by sprinkling or effusion is considered sufficient." Evidently he was no advocate for the morning tub.

The amazing activities of the old-time curate are well set forth in Dean Swift's verses on his colleague, who is made to say:

> "I marched three miles through scorching sand,
> With zeal in heart and notes in hand;
> I rode four more to Great St. Mary,
> Using four legs when two were weary.
> To three fair virgins I did tie men
> In the close bands of pleasing Hymen;
> I dipped two babes in holy water,
> And purified their mothers after.
> Within an hour and eke an half
> I preached three congregations deaf,
> Which, thundering out with lungs long-winded,
> I chopped so fast that few were minded.
> My emblem, the laborious sun,
> Saw all these mighty labours done
> Before one race of his was run.
> All this performed by Robert Hewit;
> What mortal else could e'er go through it?"

We may contrast this picture of the old-time curate with that drawn by a modern bard of his successor. The zealous labours of the modern curate are multitudinous, and what the Church of England would do without her gallant band of brave-hearted curates no man knoweth.

Mr. Harold Begbie sings his praises in no slender or false tones when he ranks him among the "Common Heroes" who fights a good fight against evil. He sings:

"Where the footlights flame not, where Life goes maimed and dumb,
He keeps a candle burning in dog-hole and in slum;
And in the noisome garret, beside the squalid bed,
His fingers smooth the pillow for the dying docker's head.

. . . . . .

He goes where brave men falter, he pleads where law is not
He fills the mouths of orphans, he turns the drunken sot;
His coat is green and threadbare, his cheeks are worn and thin—
Fine linen irks their shoulders who war with Crime and Sin.

Not a booby, not a noodle, not a simpleton and ninny—
Happy little curate, with your honest heart uncowed;
Never yet did knave or noddy take the throat of vice and shoddy,
Fighting for redemption where the Devil's laugh is loud."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CLERGY

HARROWING pictures have been often painted of the terrible trials of the "Black Bartholomew" sufferer, of the Nonconformist divines who were ejected from their livings at the Restoration of the Church and the Monarchy. They were, it is said, the victims of a cruel and malignant persecution, and were wrongfully despoiled of their benefices. Two thousand glorious "martyrs" suffered for the cause of right and truth, and patiently bore their severe trials for the sake of the gospel. Bartholomew Day, 1662, in England, when these ministers were ejected, was compared with the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris on the festival of that saint. It is a sad and grievous spectacle, a picture painted with deep and sombre colours. Perhaps it may be well to examine it more closely, and try to discover whether it is an exact representation of actual truth, or whether it owes its conception to the vivid imagination of divers artists.

What are the facts of the case? During the Great Rebellion, when Cromwell and his Parliament were in power, some terrible sufferings were endured by the clergy of the Church of England. By sequestration, plunder, usurpation, and other methods they were driven from their livings, stripped of every penny that could be discovered, and sent with their miserable families to beg or to starve. Thousands were imprisoned and brutally

used, confined in the holds of ships or in dark and dreary dungeons. Indeed, it was proposed to sell some of the most eminent of them to the Turks for slaves. Some were murdered, all were persecuted on account of their fidelity to their Church and king. Many were condemned and punished without trial, or even without a summons; others were accused and judged guilty on the testimony of worthless and abandoned wretches; and others driven from their parsonages at the arbitrary will of some governor or *nouveau riche* whom the winds of rebellion had blown into power. From 1640 to 1660 these sufferings were endured. Rude soldiers, entering the parsonages, plundering and ravaging, drove out the lawfully ordained minister of the parish and carried him off to prison; and this was done often at the instigation of some black-browed Puritan who desired the living for himself, and forthwith took possession of it, eating for years the bread of the starving family whom he had driven out, to which he had no more right than the open thief or robber had to that which he steals on the highway. No less than ten thousand clergy of the Church of England, whose only fault was their loyalty to their king and Church, so suffered during those twenty years of wrong and spoliation.

When the Restoration came and the king "enjoyed his own again" the period of oppression was passed. Those of the clergy who had been turned out of their livings and had not been starved to death were restored to their parishes, and consequently very many who, for fourteen years or more, had been feeding on the plunder of them were forced, though with much reluctance, to give them up to their rightful owners. Some of the intruding ministers were, however, allowed to keep their livings, to which they had succeeded by plunder or usurpation, when the former possessors were discovered to be dead, or did not think fit to claim them again. At first no harsh restrictions or demands were laid upon the in-

truders, and they remained comfortably settled in their benefices. But it was absolutely necessary that the teaching and doctrine of the Church should be complied with and her discipline restored; and for this purpose the Book of Common Prayer was revised and its use enforced upon all incumbents. The Act of Uniformity was passed, a most reasonable and necessary law, which ordered that every parson should declare "his assent and consent to the use of all things in the said book" on pain of his being deprived of his promotion. He had also to subscribe a declaration that it was unlawful to take up arms against the king, and renounce the Covenant, which advocated the extirpation of episcopacy. It was surely necessary for clergymen who intended to continue in the Church to obey the laws of the Church, and uphold the three Orders of the ministry, which have ever been an essential of true ecclesiastical government. When the Act came into force some two thousand persons were dispossessed. A large number of them were compelled to give up the livings to the rightful owners who had been deprived of them by plunder and usurpation. Another large batch were curates who were merely silenced and prevented from obtaining preferment in the future on account of their erroneous views. Many were not parsons at all, mere mechanics, tradesfolk, troopers who had served in the rebel army, had taken to preaching and violently established themselves in country rectories or vicarages. They had no Orders at all. Others were outrageous fanatics and heretics, Independents, Anabaptists, Millenaries, and sectaries of many sorts. Is it conceivable that such men could have been permitted to act as parish priests, as clergymen of the Church of England? What kind of Church would she have been if she had retained within her fold, as officers and leaders, men of such divers opinions, of such antagonistic principles, of such strange characters and antecedents?

Moreover, they were ejected, or silenced, by a regular and unquestioned law, with no violence to their persons, or loss of goods, furniture, books, and other possessions; whereas the poor, unfortunate, rightful parsons, victims of the Commonwealth tyranny, were deprived of their property, their books, and even of their liberty, haled before tribunals, and confined in prisons. A certain Dr. Calamy, who drew up the case of ejected ministers, the sufferers of the English "St. Bartholomew," drew a harrowing picture of their woes, but his portraits are so distorted, his statements so fallacious, his descriptions so exaggerated, that no reliance can be placed upon his pleadings. He was wonderfully clever, amazingly successful. He was able to arouse the sympathy of thousands for these poor, suffering, intruding ministers, who had ousted the lawfully ordained and rightful clergy from their parishes, eaten stolen meats for eighteen years, were many of them not Churchmen at all, and then grumbled because they had to turn out and make way for the lawful holders of the benefices. Dr. Calamy was an expert, the most successful special pleader of his age. He would have made a large fortune at the criminal court by ingeniously weaving beautiful "fairy tales" for the benefit of suspected prisoners who were on the point of receiving somewhat severe sentences. The roguish-looking person who had purloined a purse with violence from the pocket of an unsuspecting citizen, who had danced upon a policeman, and half-murdered his wife was really a most kind-hearted, generous man, the only son of his widowed mother, and adorned with every grace and virtue. The jury smiles at the gentle savage, sheds tears over him, and quite forgets to sympathise with the wounded policeman, the injured wife, the robbed citizen. So did Dr. Calamy arouse the sympathies of the multitude for the victims of 1662. He compared their sufferings with those of the martyrs who died in the Arian, Vandal, and Popish

persecutions. The Christian world had never seen such abominable cruelties heaped upon such humble, godly, holy men, and the Christian world, instructed by Dr. Calamy, forgot that these same humble, godly, holy men had been the chief agents in the persecution of the ejected Church of England clergymen who had been called upon to endure tenfold the amount of suffering which fell to the lot of the Nonconformist preachers.

We will try to understand the methods which were adopted to get rid of "malignant ministers," and give some instances of the sufferings which they endured. Their chief fault in the eyes of the Parliamentary party was that they were loyal to the cause of the king and the Church, and therefore they must be ruined and destroyed. The first method adopted was to accuse these episcopal clergy of being Papists in disguise (an accusation which sounds somewhat familiar to modern ears), of laziness, idleness, ignorance, enemies to godliness, scandalous, and immoral. These reports were spread rapidly throughout the country by Puritanical ministers, by the "humble, godly, and holy men" of whom Dr. Calamy writes so sweetly. Then committees were appointed by Parliament for imprisoning and sequestering these "ignorant and scandalous ministers," *i.e.*, the loyal and episcopal clergy. These proved useful and effectual, and many of the most prominent of the parsons were caused to endure adequate sufferings. But this process was too slow. Each county, each town, must have its committee, in order that spies and informers might be more easily obtained, and the clergy expelled and imprisoned more quickly. Cathedral chapters were next attacked and their revenues confiscated, and the Universities purged of all persons who had any pretence either to learning or loyalty.

Some of the charges brought against the clergy are worth recording. Mr. Blackbourn, of Rivington, in Lancashire, was summoned and accused of the terrible crime of

"kneeling down when he first came into the desk or pulpit." The Vicar of Chorley was accused of frequenting malignant company, that is, the society of men loyal to their king; and some of his accusers swore that his family had dared to work on the fast-days appointed by Parliament, that he had declared he would maintain the ceremonies, the surplice, and Book of Common Prayer; that he had never publicly manifested any sorrow for his malignancy; that he spoke against the Parliament and for the king; that he entertained cavaliers, neglected singing psalms in his family, swore by his faith; that he was at a horse-race on Barlow Moor. Another parson was suspended and sequestered who had been accused of going to a horse-race, sitting tippling in an alehouse where was fiddling, and being present at a bowling on a common alehouse bowling-green, charges which were false and fabricated by malice.

A new sport was devised, that of clergy-baiting, and it was most successfully carried on. The committee for scandalous ministers encouraged "some factious neighbours to charge the clergy as being criminals either in the way of drinking, idleness, negligence, &c., or else of insufficiency, and so they were accounted scandalous ministers." One of the men they accused complained that he was disabled thereby from doing Christ any more service, and that when he returned home "the drunken crew, whose vicious lives he had often inveighed against, and their children too, would point at him as he went along the streets and say, 'There goes a scandalous minister; there goes he that was in gaol with his fellow-rogues the other day.'" A witness of the proceedings of one of these committees thus describes what he saw and heard:

"Mine ears still tingle at the loud clamours and shoutings there made in derision of grave and reverend divines by that rabble of sectaries, which daily flocked

thither to see their new pastime." When the clergymen were brought and placed before the committee like heinous malefactors at the bar, these amiable judges greeted their prisoners with such polite terms as "Saucy Jacks," "Base fellows," Brazen-faced fellows," and in great scorn pulled off the cap of a learned orthodox doctor to see if he were not a "shaven Popish priest."

Having first injured the credit of the orthodox divines, they then proceeded to eject, plunder, and imprison them. The common gaols and compters were full of them, and new ones had to be devised. The bishops' houses in London were used for this purpose and converted into dungeons. Lambeth Palace, the houses of the Bishops of Ely, London, Lincoln, and Winchester at Southwark were utilised, and one Dr. Alexander Leighton, keeper of the prisoners at Lambeth, "persecuted the purses of the loyal clergy with as much rigour and severity as his masters did their persons." The deanery of St. Paul's and Gresham College were also used as prisons. And then there were the ships, in which the poor clergy were kept under decks and no friend suffered to come to them, by which treatment many lost their lives. The author of the *Mercurius Rusticus* thus describes their sufferings:

"They were put under hatches where the decks were so low that they could not stand upright, and yet were denied stools to sit on, or so much as a burthen of straw to lie on. Into this Little-ease, in a small ship, they crowded no less than four-score prisoners of quality; and that they might stifle one another, having no more breath than what they sucked from one another's mouths, most maliciously and certainly to a murderous intent, they stopped up all the small auger holes and all other inlets which might relieve them with fresh air. An act of such horrid barbarism that no age, no story, no rebellion can parallel."

Amongst those who suffered these terrible woes was the

learned Dr. Sterne, Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, and rector of Yeovilton, Somerset, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle and then Archbishop of York; and also Dr. Beale, Master of St. John's College, and Dr. Martin, of Queens'.

It is hardly to be conceived that these same "pious" folk, who are represented as models of Christian resignatian and of every virtue, should have devised such cruelties; and yet these pale before the atrocious designs which were in contemplation. It was proposed to send these grave and reverend divines to the plantations, or to Algiers, there to be sold for slaves to the Turks. Mr. Dugdale states that Rigby not only exposed them for sale, but found purchasers also, and had contracted with two merchants for their disposal. Happily, this fiendish plan was not carried into effect, as far as it can be ascertained.

The worst part of all this business was that most of these dark deeds were done without any trial, or even a pretence of one. Many of the clergy were condemned, dispossessed of all their goods, imprisoned, separated from their families, who were left to starve, without trial or examination of any kind. The proceedings before the committees were mock trials, wherein justice and law had no place. "The complaints," wrote Lord Clarendon, were frequently exhibited "by a few rabble and meanest of the people against the judgment of the parish." Another writer states that "all accusations against any, though the best of ministers, by the most malicious and lewdest persons," were invited by ordinance, encouraged and admitted without any proof at all. Naturally, "any knave or fool in the parish, whom reproof of his sins had made the minister's enemy," then had his opportunity, and a large number of parsons were turned out of their parishes upon the evidence of such worthless witnesses.

A few instances may be given of the sufferings endured patiently by some of the parsons of this unhappy period;

many volumes would be required to record them all. Dr. Isaac Bargrave was Dean of Canterbury at the beginning of the Rebellion. One night at a late hour the plunderers broke into his house, when he was absent, and "forced his virtuous good lady to dance attendance after them with nothing but her nightgown cast about her, as she was roused out of bed." Her son they carried off as a prisoner to Dover Castle, and the doctor was captured at an inn at Gravesend by troopers who rushed into his chamber with their swords drawn, and carried him to the Fleet Prison. He languished there three weeks and was then released, but being an aged man the sufferings which he had undergone soon closed his life.

Dr. Turner was seized by a party of horsemen during service at his living of Fetcham. They took the Book of Common Prayer and trod it underfoot before his face, put the surplice on one of the troopers, tied round with an orange scarf, and then marched him off a prisoner to the "White Lion" in Southwark. A mean wretch named Fisher succeeded him, and when he came to turn Dr. Turner out of his rectory, Mrs. Turner was close upon her confinement. The doctor craved leave that his wife might stay until her trouble was over, but this act of humanity was denied him, and the poor lady had to go at once in spite of her condition. Curiously enough when the rector was restored to his own again and Fisher had to depart, the wife of the latter was in a like state, and he made the like request. Dr. Turner reminded him of his refusal, but replied, "You shall see I am a Christian. In the name of God let her tarry and welcome."

So many wives and children were driven out of parsonage homes without any means for their sustenance, that even the merciless members of the committees were forced to do something for them, and decreed that one-fifth of the value of the living should be paid by the intruding ministers to the families of the dispossessed. This was

something, but unfortunately these intruding ministers, these "godly and holy men," victims of the English "Bartholomew," frequently utterly refused to pay their fifths. Such an one was John Francis of East Ilsley, in our county of Berks, who dispossessed the Rev. Joseph Barnes, who had a wife and seven children. He would pay no fifths or anything else. Mr. Barnes sent one of his little daughters to him, hoping that her tender pleading might move the wretch to compassion. But it was all in vain. When the little girl told her sorrowful tale, and said that without the money they would all starve, this barbarous wretch retured the inhuman answer that "Starving was as near a way to heaven as any other." Retributive justice brought back Mr. Barnes to Ilsley, and Francis fled the country lest he should be compelled to pay the arrears of fifths which was recoverable by law.

A hard fate befell Lewis Alcock, rector of North Stoneham, Hampshire, an old man, who had held his living for fifty years. He was plundered and barbarously used, the chief agent in rifling his house being an ungrateful wretch of a trooper whom he rescued from poverty when a boy and brought up. The old man meekly bore the ransacking of his house by this ungrateful wretch and his covetous crew, but could not forbear weeping when he saw this villain seize his surplice and put it on, girding a sword about it and riding off in triumph through the village. A successor was appointed, but Mr. Alcock was a brave old clergyman, and would not give up his house where he had lived for half a century to any upstart intruder. So he caused his bed to be brought down into his parlour, kept his guns well charged, had a watch every night, and declared himself resolved not to deliver up his house to the usurper but with his life. The intruding minister wisely kept away and lived in another house until the death of the gallant old rector. Another

parson when turned out of his house built a hut under the trees near his churchyard fence, and there lived for a week with his wife and a large family; and when he procured three eggs and some sticks, and was trying to light a fire in the church-porch to boil his eggs, some of his kind-hearted adversaries broke his eggs and kicked away the fire. Happily he lived to be restored to his rectory, though his sufferings were great.

Some of the parsons took not lightly the spoiling of their houses, though resistance was usually vain. The troopers usually demanded money. Mr. Forrest, of Bovey-Tracy, when £30 was required from him for the Parliament, replied that "he would lend it to them to buy halters to hang them all." One clergyman, the Rev. Amias Hext, B.D., rector of Badcary, Somerset, who suffered imprisonment for a year, drew up the following complaint, which was found among his papers:

"In this confinement I am debarred of seven things dear to me:

1. The society and company of my wife.
2. The company and comfort of my children.
3. The fellowship and comfort of my parishioners.
4. The want of the benefit of my living.
5. The restraint of the exercise of my function.
6. The abridgment of my liberty.
7. The want of the use of books."

We can imagine the poor learned divine pining in his prison, dreaming of his wife, his bairns and people, and as a scholar sighing for a sight of his tomes and the peaceful security of his study.

It would be tedious to quote many examples of the tyranny from which the parsons of England suffered during that relentless, cruel time. The whole country was full of them. Almost every parish witnessed the same scenes the insolent troopers marching into the church during divine service, presenting their muskets at the clergyman

and turning him out of the church, the frightened and scared congregation, the malicious triumph of the zealots and Puritan faction. And then there was the defacing of the church, the breaking of stained-glass windows, the pulling down of the royal arms, and, in some cases, of the tables of the Ten Commandments. It was fitting that these should have been removed when so many were being broken. And then there was the sad scene at the rectory—the dazed clergyman, the frightened wife, the screaming children, the breaking up of the pleasant home, rude soldiers tearing and breaking furniture, seizing everything that was valuable, and damaging everything that was of little worth. All the trinkets and jewels, family paintings, pieces of plate, all the treasures and nicknacks which many years of happy wedded life had collected, all had to pass through their polluted fingers, and the greedy eyes of the intruding minister, one of Cromwell's troopers, some ignorant mechanic or base-born nail-maker, were fastened on the prey, eager not to miss each chance advantage. There on the road-side, beneath the trees of the church-yard, stood the little disconsolate group of ejected martyrs, the fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, with no roof to shelter them, no food to eat, no money to buy any. Where are all the people whom they have fed and nourished, comforted and helped in times of sickness and distress? Will no one aid them now? Probably there are some bold enough to face these black-browed rogues, these troopers and their crew. But it requires some courage to support a falling cause in the presence of triumphant rebellion. Good and charitable neighbours would secretly convey to the distressed family some bread and eggs and milk, and find for them temporary lodgings, and the poor persecuted parson would turn his hand to some trade, or labour in the fields, or gather contributions from his Royalist friends. But there were so many who needed help, and the Royalist laity were so pillaged

and distressed themselves that they could give little; and not a few of the clergy were like the poor parson of Badby-cum-Newnham, who "used to come home sometimes with but a groat in his pocket and was glad to eat a barley-pudding stirred with water."

Many died from the sufferings which they were called upon to endure, but not a few lived on till the Restoration of the Monarchy and the Church, and it is pleasant to reflect that in the evening of their lives they were permitted to reside again in their old homes surrounded by their children, welcomed with the tumultuous greetings of their parishioners, and to read again the Church of England service in their village churches from which they had been debarred so long. And no doubt the poor persecuted parson, as he sat down in his familiar study—then, alas! shorn of all its books, never to be recovered—would take up his Bible, which had accompanied him through all his wanderings and woes, place his spectacles on his nose, look out the text for his Sunday's sermon, and write it down with trembling fingers, "Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all."

CHAPTER IX

THE SUPERIOR CLERGY

THE oldest episcopal officer seems to have been the archdeacon who, in early times, acted as the bishop's secretary and companion in travel, and occasionally as his interpreter.[1] There appears to have been some mystery about him. In later times, as we shall see presently, some difficulty arose as to an exact definition of his duties. He is mentioned by St. Jerome and other writers of the fourth century, and therefore must have been in existence at that period. Jerome says, "Let the deacons choose from among their number one whom they know to be industrious, and let them call him archdeacon." The primitive archdeacon used to attend the bishop to the altar, order all things relating to the inferior clergy and the ministrations of the church ; assist the bishop in the management of the episcopal revenues, help him in preaching and in ordaining inferior clergy, and to censure them when they are guilty of any misdemeanour.[2] He was, therefore, a very busy person, and has long been known as the *oculus episcopi*, whose duty it is to see, mark, and learn about the affairs of the diocese, the conditions of the churches, and the lives of the clergy. His nearness to the bishop led to his advancement as a powerful person in the diocese, and at the beginning of the seventh century he attained to his

[1] *Constitutional History*, by Dr. Stubbs, i. 258.
[2] *Ecclesiastical Law*, by Sir W. Phillimore, i. 236.

full rank of inspector of the district under the authority of the prelate. In England the first person who bore the title was a certain Wulfred, who was the archdeacon to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 803 A.D. No archdeaconry was assigned to him in this country until the twelfth century, the district over which he presided usually corresponding with the county. He was a very important officer in Saxon times, and it was dangerous to disobey him. According to the Northumbrian Priest's Law, if a priest disobeyed the order of an archdeacon he had to pay 12 *ores*. Gradually he began to exercise judicial functions, and after the Conquest had his own Court, wherein Canon Law ruled, and before which all spiritual questions were tried and all clerics or officers of the Church judged.

The system was excellent but the individuals were somewhat faulty. Many of the archdeacons who flourished before the Reformation were not above reproach. They were not all very saintly characters. There was an archdeacon of Berkshire, Edmund de la Beche, who came of an ancient and distinguished family, whose monuments are the glory of the little church of Aldworth. This Edmund was a most audacious militant person. He assisted in the escape of Lords Audley and Berkeley from Wallingford Castle in 1323, gaining an entrance by a postern near the Thames; but he was caught and imprisoned at Pomfret. He did not remain there long, as four years later he led a company of Oxford citizens and townsfolk of Abingdon, at midnight, in a great body, with torches and candles, and burned the manor of Northcott, belonging to the Abbey of Abingdon, after which they set upon the Abbey itself and ransacked it in a terrible manner, killing some and putting to flight the rest of the monks. Some of the ringleaders were hanged at Wallingford, but the archdeacon again obtained pardon, and ended his wild life in 1365.

Nor was an archdeacon of Oxford, who flourished in the early part of the next century, any better. He is described by Dr. Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford University, as "an illiterate idiot, the son of a mad knight, who, for being the companion, or rather the fool, of the sons of a great family of the blood royal, was made Archdeacon of Oxford before he was eighteen years old, and got soon after two rich rectories and twelve prebends. I asked him one day what he thought of learning.

"'I despise it,' he said. 'I have better livings than you great doctors, and believe as much as any of you.'

"'What do you believe?' said I.

"'I believe,' said he, 'that there are three Gods in one Person; I believe all that God believes.'"

With such characters in view we are not surprised to find that archdeacons in the Middle Ages were unpopular. They were often unclerical, sometimes disreputable, always overpaid. A writer in the Oxford Diocesan Magazine states that in 1526 archdeacons often received by fees, livings, and prebendals about £250 a year, which he estimates at about £5,000 in modern money. The above examples of archdeacons were not very exceptional, and John of Salisbury was led by his observance of them to propound the question: "Can an archdeacon be saved?" Young men, like the "illiterate idiot" mentioned above, who had obtained the favour of a powerful family, or who were of noble birth or distinguished at college, often obtained archdeaconries "at an age at which in England a boy is articled to an attorney."[1] It was quite sufficient for them to attain to the order of sub-deacon. Sometimes judges were appointed to the office, it being convenient to the State to pay them out of ecclesiastical revenues. Thus the great Martin de Pateshall was Archdeacon of Norwich. Judicial duties frequently fell to the lot of an archdeacon, and a judge would naturally discharge them well; but he

[1] Stubbs, *Lectures on Mediæval History*, p. 302.

was no parson, or a very indifferent one. These archdeacons also were very corrupt and extortionate, as a piece of parchment at Lincoln, which records the answer of the Archbishop of Canterbury to certain accusers about the year 1260, plainly testifies. The archbishop in his judgment says:

"As for the Archdeacons of Buckingham, Taunton, and Salop, they are transgressors of the sacred canons and apostolic constitutions, and are accursed, because they hold more than one benefice with cure of souls, beside their archdeaconries, without a dispensation from the apostolic see; also because they take procurations from churches, but do not visit them in person, as they are bounden; wherefore by the papal decree they have incurred the curse of God and of His vicar on earth; also, because in their visitations they exceed the number of equipages (*evectionum*) decreed by the Council; also, because they keep back a great part of the pence of St. Peter, collected in their archdeaconries, defrauding the Roman Church, and committing theft. Also, they transgress the canons and are accursed, because they take money from churches and their rectors for chrism and holy oil; also, because they take money from offenders who are brought before them, and because of these presents leave their sins unpunished. For these and many other offences in which they are involved, they are marked with an ill-repute, and also lie under various sentences of excommunication, both by authority of the canon and by authority of judges, whether ordinary or delegate."

The archbishop would have had no difficulty in condemning other archdeacons of similar offences. When they visited unfortunate rectors and vicars in order to see that the church goods and other matters relating to the parish were in good order, they came with a large retinue, of servants and officials, who all rode horses; hence the poor rector's stables were crowded and his larder emptied.

So great was the abuse that the Lateran Council passed stringent regulations limiting the number of horses and men that the archdeacon might bring with him. In judicial matters these archdeacons were not above receiving bribes when giving judgments. They received from the incumbents certain fees called procurations and synodals. The first was for the providing food and accommodation for the archdeacon and his retinue on the occasion of his visits to the parish, and the latter for his expenses when he held a synod. These fees were very extortionate, and no wonder the receiver of them, often a bad and worthless man, was not exactly popular.

The following epitaph which Walter Mapes, the witty Archdeacon of Oxford in the time of Henry I., suggested for himself, rather bears out the frivolous character of these worthies:

> "Mihi est propositum in tabernâ mori,
> Vinum sit appositum morientis ori;
> Ut dicant, cum venient, angelorum chori
> 'Deus sit propitius hinc potatori!'"

This has been freely translated:

> "I propose to end my days in a tavern drinking;
> May some Christian hold the glass to me when I am shrinking;
> That the Cherubim may say when they see me sinking,
> 'God be merciful to a soul of this gentleman's way of thinking!'"

It is refreshing to turn away from such sorry archdeacons. Since the Reformation their morals, their work, their reputation, and their stipends have all been reformed, and now they are the patterns of respectability, popularity, and under-payment.

What are the duties of an archdeacon? There is a well-known answer to this, but it is not well known that this answer was given in the House of Commons in reply to the query of an inquisitive member. The Chancellor of

the Exchequer, Lord Althorp, was proposing a grant for the salary of the Archdeacon of Bengal, when Mr. Hume asked the question. His lordship could not well define the duties, and sent messengers to the Upper House to consult the bishops. One bishop defined an archdeacon as a bishop's *aide-de-camp*, another as *oculus episcopi.* Neither of these answers satisfied the Chancellor, who sent a friend to Bishop Blomfield of London, who immediately replied that "An archdeacon is an ecclesiastical officer who performs archidiaconal functions." This answer quite satisfied the House of Commons.

In spite of this lucid definition of an archdeacon's duties the world is sometimes ignorant of their importance. One farmer once asked his neighbour, "What is a visitation?" and received the strange reply:

"Parsons all meet together to swop sermons."

"Well," replied the farmer, "if that's so, I'm sure our man always gets the worst of the exchange."

One of the archdeacon's duties is to admit the churchwardens to their important office; and formerly they had to take an oath of obedience, for which now, I believe, a declaration has been substituted. This oath has troubled some people who have wanted to know things. One of them, like the farmer, asked what was an archdeacon's visitation, and was informed:

"Oh, the archdeacon comes to swear at the churchwardens!"

"I'm not surprised," was the quaint rejoinder.

A parish clerk once gave out the unusual notice: "The archdeacon will attend on Wednesday next at Southwell to swear at the churchwardens." It is not recorded whether many ventured to face the official and endure the ordeal.

In the Archdeacon's Court ecclesiastical offences were tried as late as the close of the seventeenth century, and wills were proved. Some parishes are known as Peculiars, not that there is anything very peculiar about them, except

that they were free from the tyranny and exactions of the ancient race of archdeacons. The incumbent of a Peculiar was not required to pay procurations and synodals, and offences were tried in the Court of the Peculiar, and wills were proved there, and not in that of the archdeacon. Prebendal churches, churches on manors owned by archbishops or bishops, like Newington, Oxfordshire, which belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury, or Sonning, Berkshire, the property of the Bishops of Salisbury, churches belonging to some few privileged monasteries, or to the order of the Templars, were exempt from the archdeacon's rule, and were deemed Peculiars. Now archdeacons are always such good friends, charming companions, and zealous men, that it would be a misfortune to possess a Peculiar and to be deprived of the visit of one who does his utmost to lighten the burdens of the hard-worked or lonely clergy, and to cheer them and encourage them by his advice and presence.

An amusing story is told of an archdeacon who, when a curate, married his first rector's sister, his senior by twenty years. When he became an archdeacon he was dining out with his wife one night, and was asked by his host's butler his name. He gave it as the Venerable Archdeacon B—— and Mrs. B——. They were duly announced as "Archdeacon B—— and the Venerable Mrs. B——."

Deans and Chapters.

The subject of deans and chapters is not devoid of complication. At Oxford we were told the story of a pompous Dean of Christ Church, who (I may add for the benefit of readers who are not Oxford men) is the Head of "the House" as well as Dean of the Cathedral, and the Dean of my old college, Oriel, who is merely one of the Fellows appointed to attend to the details of college management and the discipline of undergraduates.

The following letter once found its way to the pompous Dean:

"The Dean of Oriel presents his compliments to the Dean of Christ Church, and requests the pleasure of his company at dinner on," &c.

The Pompous One liked not that his title should be shared by an inferior officer, and replied:

"Alexander the Great sends his compliments to Alexander the coppersmith, and regrets," &c.

There were deans and deans, and chapters and chapters, and it is difficult to explain fully their origin and signification. We have also deanries, or deaneries, and rural deans, and about the meanings and titles of these peoples opinions are somewhat vague. We call cathedral deans "Very Reverend," bishops "Right Reverend," and some one suggested that rural deans should be addressed as "Rather Reverend." Perhaps it may be worth while to inquire what is the meaning of these dignified titles. According to Lyndwood there were three kinds of chapters—that of a cathedral church, that of a monastery of regulars, and that of a collegiate church of secular canons, where there were collected together persons living a life in common. In the cathedral chapter the dean and canons formed a council to aid the bishop in all cases of difficulty. It was their duty to see that the worship of God in the great mother-church of the diocese was conducted in the most decent, constant, and solemn manner. The cathedral was the temple of the diocese, as the parochial churches corresponded to the synagogues. The duty of the dean and canons was to arrange that constant praying and hymns, preaching and celebration of sacraments, should be carried on in the most public and solemn manner. These services were to be models for example of all other churches, and also to enable devout people to know whither they might go to offer up their prayers and thanksgiving to God.

Deanries, or deaneries, seem to have been formed on the model of the civil government. Just as in Saxon times each shire was divided into hundreds, and each hundred consisted usually of ten districts or tithings, over each of which a constable was appointed; so each diocese was divided into deanries, decennaries or tithings, each of which was the district of ten parishes or churches. Over each district a dean was appointed. In cities or large towns this officer was called the dean of the city or town; and in the country he was designated rural dean.

A similar kind of arrangement was made in large monasteries of the Benedictine order. The convent was divided into decuries, in which the dean or tenth monk presided over the other nine, superintended their work, visited their cells, kept them in order at meals, directed their studies, and guided their consciences. For this purpose they held chapters and discussed the affairs of the monasteries, and imposed penalties, acting, however, entirely under the authority of the abbot. Where there were many decuries in an abbey, the senior dean had a special pre-eminence, and looked after the conduct of all the other deans. The dean of an Oxford or Cambridge College seems to have derived his authority and his office in this manner, and also the dean of a cathedral. In the first ages the bishop and his clergy lived together in a sort of missionary college, the clergy being sent about the diocese to preach and convert the people. Afterwards they were established in parishes, and a college of priests or secular canons was reserved at the cathedral centre of the diocese to assist the bishop by their counsel and constantly to celebrate the divine offices in the mother-church. In this college each tenth person had an inspecting and presiding power, till, later on, the senior or principal dean swallowed up the office of all the inferiors, and, under the bishop, was the head and governor of the whole society. The word "chapter" is derived from *capitulum*, being a kind

of *head*, to assist the bishop, and to rule and govern the diocese during the vacation of the see. We still have some collegiate churches, such as Westminster and Windsor, where there is no episcopal see, and the old collegiate churches of Manchester and Ripon have been in modern times converted into cathedrals.

The chapter of a cathedral consists of prebendaries or canons, presided over by the dean. People sometimes confuse between a prebend and a prebendary. The former is the office or stipend of that office; the latter is the person who holds the office. The word is derived from the Latin *a præbendo*, *i.e.*, from the assistance which the Church affords the fortunate holder of the office in providing him with the necessaries of life. Land and moneys have been left in former days especially for the purpose of endowing a prebend, *in præbendam*, for the maintenance of a secular priest or regular canon to serve in some cathedral.

It is curious to note the gradual loss of control exercised by the bishop over the dean and chapter, who are now in many cathedrals almost independent of him. The late Bishop of Durham complained to one of the canons: "I have been looking through the statutes of the cathedral, and I find that I have no power at all."

The canon diplomatically remarked, "Well, my lord, you can attend the services and preach whenever you like. What more do you want?"

The bishop somehow did not appear quite satisfied.

Sometimes there have been cases when there was no love lost between the dean and some of the canons. There were serious differences at one time between a canon of Canterbury and the dean. The canon was in residence and had to attend during his month a prescribed number of services, and to be in his stall before the commencement of the Psalms. He had, unfortunately, been rather remiss, and unless he attended a particular

Evensong he could not claim his three months' residence, and would have to serve for another spell. But he was detained, and the Psalms had just begun before he gained his stall. The dean whispered, "Too late, sir; you will have to begin all over again." The canon, with great presence of mind, marched to the reader and said, "The dean says you must begin all over again." Much astonished the official obeyed the order, the situation was saved, the canon delighted, and the dean discomfited.

The Acts of 1840 and subsequent years have wrought many changes in our cathedral chapters. Some new canonries have been founded, but a large number suppressed. They have called into being a new institution of honorary canons. They suspended all the canonries except one in the collegiate church of Southwell, an unfortunate proceeding which ought to be rescinded, and made many other violent revolutions. They made sundry regulations about minor canons, under which term they included all vicars-choral, and other clerics who were members of a cathedral or collegiate church choir. All these changes are, no doubt, for the best in this best of all possible worlds, but some of the proceedings of the Commissioners were certainly high-handed and revolutionary, and their wisdom and fairness in disposing of the wealth which accrues to them for suppressed canonries and episcopal estates have sometimes been questioned.

But in spite of some changes the glorious cathedrals remain, where for centuries the anthems of praise, the prayer of faith, and the divine services were offered. In the glow of a summer's evening its heavenly architecture stands out, a mass of wondrous beauty, telling of the skill of the masons and craftsmen of olden days who put their hearts into their work and wrought so surely and so well. The greensward of the close, bounded by its low wall and high-towering elms, wherein the rooks caw and guard their nests, speaks of peace and joy that is not of earth. We

walk through the cloisters that once echoed with the tread of sandaled monks and saw them illuminating and copying wonderful missals, antiphonaries, and other books we value so highly now. The deanery is close at hand, a venerable home of peace and learning; and the canons' houses tell of centuries of devoted service to God's Church, wherein many a distinguished scholar, able preacher, and learned writer has lived and sent forth his burning message to the world, and now lies at peace in the quiet minster.

CHAPTER X

THE PARSON IN LITERATURE

THE parson appears oftentimes in the literature of every age, and this distinction testifies to his importance. Some descriptions are flattering, others much the reverse; but on the whole he is tenderly treated; his good deeds and his attention to his duties are recorded with much respect, while the glaring faults and eccentricities of individuals escape not the lash of satire.

The Rev. Leonard Bacon of Southey's *Love Story* is a good specimen of old-time parson, who held a small living in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Left an orphan, educated by some wealthy relatives at a grammar school, and having through their influence gained a scholarship, to which his own deserts might have entitled him, he went to the University and obtained a fellowship. "Leonard was made of Nature's finest clay, and Nature had tempered it with the choicest dews of heaven." The story of his love may be left to more romantic scribes and may be studied in the original. He took his bride to his living, a few miles from Doncaster. The house was as humble as the benefice, which was worth less than £50 a year; but it was soon made the neatest cottage in the country round, and upon a happier dwelling the sun never shone. A few acres of good glebe were attached to it, and the garden was large enough to afford healthful and pleasureable employment to its owners. A good kitchen was its

best room, and in its furniture an Observantine friar would have seen nothing that he could have condemned as superfluous. His college and Latin school-books, with a few volumes presented to him by the more grateful of his pupils, composed his library; they were either books of needful reference, or such as upon every fresh perusal might afford new delight. But he had obtained the use of the church library at Doncaster by a payment of twenty shillings, according to the terms of the foundation. Folios from that collection might be kept three months, and as there were many works in it of solid content as well as sterling value, he was in no such want of intellectual food, as too many of his brethren are. The parish contained between five and six hundred souls. There was no one of higher rank among them than entitled him, according to the custom of those days, to be styled gentleman upon his tombstone. They were plain people, who had neither manufactories to corrupt, alehouses to brutalise, nor newspapers to mislead them. At first coming among them he had won their good-will by his affability and benign conduct, and he had afterwards gained their respect and affection in an equal degree. Of his preaching I will tell in another chapter.

Such was the amiable character depicted by the poet Southey, a good type and a faithful picture of hundreds of country clerics who quietly did their duty without any fuss or ostentation. The immortal Dr. Syntax, the hero of Combe's poem, is another type of old-fashioned cleric. The poet thus describes him:

> "Of Church preferment he had none;
> Nay, all his hopes of that had gone;
> He felt that he content must be
> With drudging in a curacy.
> Indeed on every Sabbath-day
> Through eight long miles he took his way
> To preach, to grumble, and to pray;

To cheer the good, to warn the sinner,
And—if he got it—eat a dinner :
To bury these, to christen those,
And marry such fond folks as chose
To change the tenor of their life
And risk the matrimonial strife.
Thus were his weekly journeys made
'Neath summer suns and wintry shade ;
And all his gains, it would appear,
Were only thirty pounds a year."

He undertook various adventures, rode gaily his horse in "search of a wife" "of consolation," and to find "the picturesque." He introduces us to various other clerics. There is the greedy old rector "Dr. Squees'em," who drew a thousand from a living and left a poor curate to starve with a large family on three-score pounds ; and when the latter craved ten pounds more a year on account of his increasing "olive-branches," cruelly replied :

"Such suits as yours may well miscarry,
For beggars should not dare to marry."

Another parson, Dr. Worthy, dearly loved by his sexton, was worthy of his name and well earned the gratified sexton's eulogy. Here is his epitaph :

"For fifty years the pastor trod
The way commanded him of God ;
For fifty years his flock he fed
With that divine celestial bread
Which nourishes the better part,
And fortifies man's failing heart.
His wide, his hospitable door
Was ever open to the poor ;
While he was sought for counsel sage
By every rank and every age.
That counsel sage he always gave,
To warn, to strengthen, and to save :
He sought the sheep that went astray,
And pointed out the better way :

> But while he with his smiles approved
> The virtue he so dearly loved,
> He did not spare the harsher part,
> To probe the ulcer to the heart;
> He sternly gave the wholesome pain
> That brought it back to health again.
> Thus the commands of Heav'n his guide,
> He liv'd—and then in peace he died."

We cannot follow the learned doctor's adventures, so humorously depicted by Rowlandson.

At length he died, and then:

> "The village wept, the hamlets round
> Crowded the consecrated ground;
> And waited there to see the end
> Of Pastor, Teacher, Father, Friend."

Sir Roger de Coverley was fortunate in having an excellent chaplain, with whom he lived on terms of great friendship. The *Spectator* describes him as a venerable man who had lived in the squire's house about thirty years, a person of good sense and some learning, of a very regular life and obliging conversation. Sir Roger tells how, being afraid of being insulted with Latin and Greek at his own table, he desired a friend to find for him "a clergyman rather of plain sense than much learning, of a good aspect, a clear voice, and sociable temper; and, if possible, a man that understood a little of backgammon." The gentleman selected had all the above qualifications, aud was a good scholar, though he did not show it. Sir Roger gave him the parsonage of the parish, and had settled upon him a good annuity. He ventured daily to ask the knight for some benefactions for the tenants, but never for himself. There had never been a lawsuit in the parish since he had lived among them; if any dispute arose they applied to him for the decision. At his first coming Sir Roger made him a present of all the

good sermons which had been printed in English, and only begged of him that every Sunday he would pronounce one of them in the pulpit. Accordingly the chaplain digested them into such a series that they followed one another naturally, and made a continued system of practical divinity. Sir Roger presently asked the chaplain, "'Who preaches to-morrow?' (for it was Saturday night), and was told the Bishop of St. Asaph in the morning and Dr. South in the afternoon. He then showed us his list of preachers for the whole year, where I saw with a great deal of pleasure Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Sanderson, Dr. Barrow, Dr. Calamy, with several living authors who have published discourses of practical divinity. I no sooner saw this venerable man in the pulpit but I very much approved of my friend's insisting upon the qualifications of a good aspect and a clear voice; for I was so charmed with the gracefulness of his figure and delivery, as well as with the discourse he pronounced, that I think I never passed any time more to my satisfaction. A sermon repeated after this manner is like the composition of a poet in the mouth of a graceful actor. I could heartily wish that more of our country clergy would follow his example; and, instead of wasting their spirits in laborious compositions of their own, would endeavour after a handsome elocution, and all those other talents that are proper to enforce what has been penned by greater masters. This would not only be more easy to themselves, but more edifying to the people."

Very different from this account of the *good* relations existing between Sir Roger and his chaplain is the picture drawn by the *Spectator* of another parish, where the squire and parson were at loggerheads. They lived in a perpetual state of war. "The parson is always preaching at the squire, and the squire, to be revenged on the parson, never comes to church. The squire has made all his tenants atheists and tithe-stealers, while the parson

instructs them every Sunday in the dignity of his order, and insinuates to them, in almost every sermon, that he is a better man than his patron. In short, matters are come to such an extremity that the squire has not said his prayers, either in public or private, this half-year; and that the parson threatens him, if he does not mend his manners, to pray for him in the face of the whole congregation. Feuds of this nature, though too frequent in the country, are very fatal to the ordinary people, who are so used to be dazzled with riches that they pay as much deference to the understanding of a man of an estate as of a man of learning, and are very hardly brought to regard any truth, how important soever it may be, that is preached to them, when they know there are several men of five hundred a year who do not believe it."

Fielding draws a charming picture of the country parson in his novel *Joseph Andrews*, and throughout his books clerical types are constantly appearing, and where the characters are worthy, are drawn tenderly and carefully and with a gentle touch. George Eliot and Anthony Trollope have, perhaps, introduced into their novels more numerous clerical types, and the former has applied the microscope more constantly in the revealing the inner life of spiritual pastors; but Fielding's gallery of clerical portraits is well worthy of close study, revealing, as it does, some of the changes which have taken place in the condition of parsons since his day. The writer of an article in the *Treasury* wisely remarks that "though outward details have changed, on the whole parson nature, which is but human nature after all, has not changed. There are Supples and Thwackums, and Trullibers, Dr. Harrisons, and Abraham Adamses among the clergy still. Indeed, probably in no other profession could so many men of the type of the last-named be mentioned, not that it is by any means a common type. And the troubles of the parson were pretty much what they

are now. The age was rough and rude, in spite of its artificiality, and perhaps the parson shared a little in its roughness. But he had then, as now, to fight manfully against corruption and vice, and may have been as successful as in these days of over-organisation."

The sketch of Abraham Adams is delightful. He was an excellent scholar, a perfect master of the Greek and Latin languages, had a good knowledge of the Oriental tongues, and could read French, Italian, and Spanish. A severe student, he had treasured up a fund of learning rarely to be met with in a University. He was a man of good service, good parts, and good-nature; but as entirely ignorant of the ways of the world as an infant. As he had never any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly, and brave; but simplicity was his characteristic. Such passions as malice and envy were to him unknown. His virtue and his other qualifications made him an agreeable companion, and had so much endeared and well-recommended him to a bishop that at the age of fifty he was provided with a handsome income of twenty-three pounds a year; with which he could not make any great figure, because he lived in a dear country, and was a little encumbered with a wife and six children. Fielding usually makes his parsons poor; but their poverty he deems no disgrace to them, but rather to those who accepted their ministrations and yet refused to provide for their needs. One of his clerics remarks, "I apprehend my order is not the object of scorn, nor that I can become so, unless by being a disgrace to it, which I hope poverty will never be called."

Parson Adams, according to the hero, Joseph Andrews, was "the best man in the world," and he richly deserves that title. Fielding intended to depict a character of perfect simplicity, a thoroughly good-hearted man. We see him in sore straits for money, smoking his pipe, his constant friend and comfort in his afflictions, leaning over

the rails of the gallery of an inn-yard, meditating deeply, assisted by the inspiring fumes of tobacco. He had on a nightcap drawn over his wig, and a short great-coat, which half covered his cassock. He was rather indignant because the landlord, Tow-wouse, would not advance him three guineas upon the security of a volume of manuscript sermons which he was taking to a publisher. He meets his brother cleric, Mr. Barnabas, and takes part of a bowl of punch with him, an exciseman, and the doctor. The parsons immediately begin to " talk shop," and their companions listen to a full hour's discourse on small tithes, and then a dissertation on the hardships of the inferior clergy, and then poor old Parson Adams's unlucky sermons, which Barnabas tells him nobody will read and no publisher print. He had set out for London on purpose to present these sermons to the attention of a publisher. They were, he thought, safe in his saddle-bags; but lo! they were left behind at home!

We see him again trudging homewards, his mind perfectly at ease, contemplating a passage in Æschylus, which entertained him for a good three miles; riding his clerk's horse which had such a propensity for kneeling that one would have thought that it had been his trade as well as his master's; happily the parson's legs when he was riding this curious steed almost touched the ground, so that he experienced little inconvenience from the animal's antics. There he stands, snapping his fingers over his head, terribly perturbed at the inhuman words of a landlord, knocking down his host, and covered with blood as the result of the encounter. People constantly take advantage of his simplicity. He believes every one is as honest and guileless as himself, and is terribly shocked when he finds out his mistake. Brave he is, as he wields his crabstick or doubles his fist to protect an innocent victim. How he rejoices in the happiness of others! He teaches and exhorts. He is a spiritual Don Quixote, daring all dangers for the cause

of right and justice, and of God; and though he sometimes gets into strange and ridiculous situations, though he has many foibles and extravagances, we love him all the more for his eccentricities, and agree with Joseph that he is "the best man in the world."

Parson Barnabas, who appears in the same novel, is of a different type. He is not an unworthy cleric, though he has many weaknesses and much vanity. He comes at once when sent for to minister to poor Joseph lying sick at an inn; but he does not fail to drink a cup of tea with the landlady and a bowl of punch with the landlord, before he performs his perfunctory ministrations to Joseph. After the youth had told Barnabas that he had repented of his faults, the parson proceeded to prayer with all the expedition he was master of, as some company were then waiting for him in the parlour, where the ingredients for punch were all in readiness, but no one could squeeze the oranges till he came. He was a very vain creature, very dictatorial, and mightily impressed with his dignity and importance; he prides himself on his knowledge of the law and on the excellence of his sermons: three bishops had said that they were the best that ever were written, and were even better than Tillotson's discourses, though he was a good writer and said things very well. This Parson Barnabas is not a very pleasant person. His type is not quite extinct, and clerical vanity with regard to sermon-writing has survived.

A far different type is sketched in the person of Parson Trulliber, "whom Adams found stript to his waistcoat, with an apron on and a pail in his hands, just come from serving his hogs; for Mr. Trulliber was a parson on Sundays, but all the other six days might be more properly called a farmer. He occupied a small piece of land of his own, besides which he rented a considerable deal more. His wife milked his cows, managed his dairy, and followed the market with butter and eggs. The hogs fell chiefly to

his care, which he carefully waited on at home and attended to fairs; on which occasion he was liable to many jokes, his own size being with much ale rendered little inferior to the beasts he sold. His voice was loud and hoarse and his accent extremely broad. To complete the whole, he had a stateliness in his gait when he walked, not unlike that of a goose, only he stalked slower."

Such was the outward appearance of this coarse clerical type. His inner man corresponded with the outward, and he was a striking contrast to the amiable, simple, and devout Adams. The readers of Fielding will remember that Parson Adams needed a few shillings to pay his score at an inn, and went to borrow it from Trulliber, who imagined that he was come to buy hogs, and was grievously disappointed when at last the nature of his visitor's errand was disclosed to this churlish and ill-mannered wretch. Trulliber scornfully refuses to lay up treasure in heaven by lending Adams seven shillings, accuses him of being a robber, an impostor, a vagabond, threatens him with violence, and behaves like a boor. There is a charming contrast between the simple Christianity of the one and the vulgar selfishness of the other. Adams was right in discharging his parting shot at the hog-keeper, when he said that he was sorry to see such men in Orders.

Fielding's novel *Amelia* reveals another type of excellent clergyman in the person of Dr. Harrison, who is described by one of the characters in the story as "one of the best men in the world, and an honour to the sacred order to which he belongs." He has a strong and singular way of expressing himself on all occasions, especially when he is affected with anything. He is a scholar and a gentleman, broad-minded and tolerant, and full of sound common-sense and ripe experience. He scorns the idea that "Christianity is a matter of theory and not a rule for our practice." Bravely does he defend the innocent from the attacks of rakes and snobs. Half his fortune he has

given away in charity or been defrauded of by the plausible tales of insidious friends. It is splendid to hear him thundering away at the vices to be shunned by the clergy—avarice, ambition, and pride—dinning into the ears of a young clerical cub, who is a pattern of uppishness, the folly of that "saucy passion, pride." He is the best of comforters, and owing to his excessive good-nature, his keen penetration into the human mind, and his great experience, he is wonderfully proficient. He has a very homely house, adorned with no luxuries, save books and the prints of Mr. Hogarth, whom he calls a moral satirist. All his parishioners, whom he treats as his children, regard him as their common father. Once a week he constantly visits every house in the parish, examines, commends and rebukes, as he finds occasion. A very model parson, a very highly-finished portrait of an excellent parish priest, "well worthy of the cloth he wore, and that is, I think, the highest character a man can obtain."

Fielding's *Tom Jones* also has some clerics, not so lovable and attractive as Adams and Harrison, but worthy men in their way. There is Parson Thwackum, the clerical pedagogue, a learned, honest, and worthy man, though blest with a temper; and Parson Supple, who, as his name implies, yields to the arbitrary tyranny of his brutal squire and patron, and, except on one memorable occasion, dares not to denounce the violent way of the passionate old man or to resist his intolerable tyranny. The writer's sketches of these clerics of the old school are extremely valuable, and help us to realise the kind of men who held livings about the middle of the eighteenth century, and who, with few exceptions, were worthy of their sacred calling.

What a beautiful character has the vicar whom Goldsmith places in his *Deserted Village!* It is said that the original of this charming portrait was the poet's father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith. The virtues of his brother

Henry were probably present in his mind to complete the delineation.

> "A man he was to all the country dear,
> And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
> Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
> Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place:
> Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
> By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour:
> Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
> More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.
>
> . . . . .
>
> At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
> His looks adorned the venerable place;
> Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
> And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.
> The service past, around the pious man,
> With steady zeal each honest rustic ran;
> E'en children follow'd, with endearing wile,
> And pluck'd his gown to share the good man's smile."

The delightful sketch of this worthy vicar has a companion portrait drawn by the same artist in his *Vicar of Wakefield*. The vicar does not describe himself, but his character is revealed throughout the book. The old-fashioned parsonage is drawn by a faithful hand. The vicar says:

"Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind and a prattling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green. My farm consisted of about twenty acres of excellent land, having given a hundred pounds for my predecessor's goodwill. Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little enclosures, the elms and hedge-rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. My house consisted of but one storey, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness; the walls on the inside were nicely whitewashed, and my daughters undertook to adorn them with pictures of their own designing.

Though the same room served us for parlour and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates, coppers being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved, and did not want richer furniture. There were three other apartments—one for my wife and me, another for our two daughters, within our own, and the third with two beds for the rest of the children."

There were many such homely parsonages in the eighteenth century. Most of them have disappeared, and given place to more imposing buildings. In this little house the vicar and his family passed their frugal life, rising with the sun, and in the evening assembling around a neat hearth and pleasant fire. "Nor were we without guests; sometimes Farmer Flamborough, our talkative neighbour, and often the blind piper, would pay us a visit, and taste our gooseberry wine; for the making of which we had lost neither the receipt nor the reputation. These harmless people had several ways of being good company: while one played, the other would sing some soothing ballad, 'Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-night,' or 'The Cruelty of Barbara Allen.' The night was concluded in the manner we began the morning, by the youngest boys being appointed to read the lessons of the day; and he that read loudest, distinctest, and best was to have an halfpenny to put into the poor's box."

Dr. Primrose, in the days of his poverty, like most of his contemporaries, differed little in social standing from the farmers amongst whom he dwelt. He himself went to the fair to sell his colt, and thought it not derogatory to his position to have a friendly glass with the purchasers over the transaction at an inn. His relations with his people were most friendly, and he was intensely beloved by his flock. When he arrived the whole neighbourhood came out to meet him dressed in their finest clothes, and preceded

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD

BY W. P. FRITH

by a pipe and tabor. A feast was provided, and "what the conversation wanted in wit was made up in laughter." And when dire troubles came, and the sheriff's officers were taking the poor vicar to a debtor's prison, his people came gallantly to the rescue, and would have half-killed the officers if the kind vicar had not prevented them.

But we must leave this much-wronged parson, and discover other worthies of the profession. Their names are legion, and we can only take some of the most important who have appeared in literature. George Crabbe, a parson himself, was not blind to some of the weaknesses of his clerical neighbours, and, though he tells us that he hated "the satiric muse," could not avoid depicting the foibles of human nature. Here is his portrait of a country parson, a cringing cleric who led a blameless life but was entirely without character:

"Our Priest was cheerful, and in season gay,
His frequent visits seldom fail'd to please;
Easy himself, he sought his neighbour's ease.

. . . . .

Few now remember when the mild young man
Ruddy and fair, his Sunday task began.
Simple he was and loved the simple truth,
Yet had some useful cunning from his youth;
A cunning never to dishonour lent,
And rather for defence than conquest meant;
'Twas fear of power, with some desire to rise,
But not enough to make him enemies;
He ever aim'd to please; and to offend
Was ever cautious: for he sought a friend.
Fiddling and fishing were his arts: at times
He alter'd sermons, and he aim'd at rhymes;
And his fair friends, not yet intent on cards,
Oft he amused with riddles and charades.
Mild were his doctrines, and not one discourse
But gained in softness what it lost in force:
Kind his opinions; he would not receive
An ill report, nor evil act believe."

This gentle priest preached mild platitudes with unctuous amiability. He had "a soft, soothing look" which, like his visits, "never failed to please." Once he narrowly escaped wedlock, wooing with faint ardour a maid whose mother, a widow, thought that perhaps his heart was set on the elder lady.

> "Smiling he came, he smiled when he withdrew,
> And paid the same attention to the two;
> Meeting and parting without joy or pain,
> He seemed to come that he might go again."

The maid preferred a more ardent lover, and the vicar had to content himself with "ancient females," to whom he was gravely courteous, presented flowers from his garden with "moral compliment," and with whom he gossiped on local happenings. His views upon ecclesiastical matters were characterised by his accustomed calmness, dreading all innovations, and the daring conduct of his younger brethren who wore a surplice "lacking hood and band," and preferred the "New Version" of the Psalms of David to the old Sternhold and Hopkins. But let the poet himself describe him:

> "Though mild benevolence our Priest possess d,
> 'Twas but by wishes or by words expressed.
> Circles in water, as they wider flow,
> The less conspicuous in their progress grow,
> And when at last they touch upon the shore,
> Distinction ceases, and they're viewed no more.
> His love, like the last circle, all embraced,
> But with effect that never could be traced.
> Now rests our Vicar. They who knew him best
> Proclaim his life t' have been entirely—rest.
> The rich approved,—of them in awe he stood;
> The poor admired,—they all believed him good;
> The old and serious of his habits spoke;
> The frank and youthful loved his pleasant joke;
> Mothers approved a safe, contented guest,
> And daughters one who backed each small request;

In him his flock found nothing to condemn;
Him sectaries liked,—he never troubled them:
No trifles fail'd his yielding mind to please,
And all his passions sunk in early ease;
Not one so old has left this world of sin,
More like the being when he entered in."

Such was Crabbe's parson—not a flattering sketch. Some of the type may still be seen, and are accounted good, harmless folk, and attain to preferment and the approval of prelates on account of the "safeness" of their views and the subserviousness of their manners, though perhaps they may not quite exhibit the surpassing excellences of Crabbe's vicar. A great modern writer, Mr. Baring-Gould, in one of his novels, the *Red Spider*, sketched another of these amiable clerics, who "never in the pulpit insisted on a doctrine lest he should offend a Dissenter, nor on a duty lest he should make a Churchman uneasy."

Crabbe tells us of other parsons in his *Parish Register*, who repose in their peaceful tombs. There was good Master Addle, who looked very dignified and noble, adorned with college gown and parish hood, filling well his sevenfold surplice. When he had mounted the pulpit he sat down to meditate, doubtless, and there—

"He sat and seem'd as in his study's chair,
For while the anthem swell'd, and when it ceased,
Th' expecting people view'd their slumbering priest."

Then there was Parson Peele, skilful at shearing his flock; Doctor Grandspear, a very charitable soul; and then a raving young Methodistical Evangelical, who ranted and startled the villagers:

"Loud grew his voice, to threat'ning swell'd his look;
Above, below, on either side he gazed.
No more he read his preachments pure and plain,
But launch'd outright, and rose and sank again,
At times he smiled in scorn, at times he wept."

He told them much of "conviction coming like lightning," of "guests of grace"; but his fervent zeal was too great for his feeble body. Upon his death-bed he raves against all the good deeds which he had done. He exclaims:

> "The good I've wrought still rankles in my mind;
> My alms-deeds all, and every deed I've done;
> My moral-rags defile me every one."

The poet thus gently satirises the extreme ideas of this enthusiastic young cleric, who would have nought but justification by faith without its fruit, good works. He contrasts the sleepy Parson Addle with this fiery preacher's zeal, the two extremes between which the clergy of the eighteenth century oscillated, and Crabbe prefers the golden mean which he himself professed to hold.

George Eliot's descriptions of clerical types are well known. How well does she describe the quaint old church of Shepperton and its primitive services, the village orchestra with its bassoon, two key-bugles, a carpenter understood to have an amazing power of singing "counter," two lesser musical lights, and the clerk! The anthem was the great attraction, in which the key-bugles always ran away at a great pace, while the bassoon every now and then boomed a flying shot after them. But our attention is mainly concerned with the parsons who officiated at Shepperton. There was Mr. Gilfil, an excellent old gentleman, who smoked very long pipes and preached very short sermons. A plain, good-hearted man, he did not shine in the more spiritual functions of his office. He had a large heap of short sermons, rather yellow and worn at the edges. Two of these he used every Sunday without much trouble in selecting them, and one he preached at Shepperton and the other at Knebley in the afternoon, where he rode on horseback, and forgot to remove his spurs. The farmers would as soon have thought of criticising the moon as their pastor. He belonged to the course of

nature, like markets and toll-gates and dirty bank-notes. He was an immense favourite with these farmers, knew all about the breeds of cows and horses, was easy and pleasant with his bucolic neighbours, and was respected by them as a gentleman and a clergyman. His sermons inculcated morality. No difficult doctrines, no attempts to raise the spiritual nature, no unfolding of the Life of God-Incarnate or of the Spirit's gracious dower could be found therein. Do right, and it will be better for you; do wrong, and you will suffer—that seems to have been their essence. Mr. Gilfil was no boor in society, in spite of his vernacular talk with his rustic and homely manners, but was a welcome guest at some of the best houses in the neighbourhood, where he behaved with courtly ways and graceful gallantry. How well does the brilliant writer tell his pathetic love-story, which roused his soul when life was young and his heart full of passion and tenderness! And we bid a tender farewell to the grey-haired man who filled his pocket with sugar-plums for the little children, whose most biting words were directed against the evil-doing of the rich man, and who, with all his social pipes and slipshod talk, never sank below the highest level of his parishioners' respect.

Poor, patient Amos Barton, curate of Shepperton, is a different type. How he lived on eighty pounds a year and brought up six children was one of the mysteries of the world, a mystery that still requires solving in many clerical households. Eighty pounds a year is one pound ten shillings and eightpence a week. A mechanic, a carpenter, a cabman, a collier, would strike if he received such wages. But the parson does not strike; he only endures his woes. Sympathetic eyes cannot read undimmed the troubled story of Amos Barton's career and that of his poor, brave wife. Amos is no hero; a little fussy man, not very brilliant, not quite a gentleman, his preaching "like a Belgian railway-horn which shows praiseworthy intentions

inadequately fulfilled" ; but he was very honest and faithful, eager and zealous in the discharge of his duties, and the pathos of his heartrending troubles endears him to us and makes us forget his peculiarities and his defects.

The late Poet-Laureate did not forget to draw a picture of parsons. He tells in his "Maud" of the fashionable curate and his mode of rendering the service:

> "She came to the village church,
> And sat by a pillar alone.
>
> . . . . .
>
> And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger
> And thicker, until I heard no longer
> The snowy-banded dilettante,
> Delicate-handed Priest intone."

But his portrait in "The May Queen" is painted in different colours, and is one of the finest in literature:

> "But that good man, the clergyman, has told me words of peace;
> O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver hair!
> And blessings on his whole life long, until he meets me there!
> O blessings on his kindly heart, and on his silver head—
> A thousand times I blessed him as he knelt beside my bed.
> He taught me all the mercy, for he showed me all the sin;
> Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's *One* will let me in."

There is an admirable portrait of an old-time parson drawn by the inimitable pen of Winthrop Mackworth Praed in his poem on *The Vicar*. It is rather long for quotation, but the verses are so good, and the picture so perfect, that I cannot refrain from printing it *in extenso*.

> "Some years ago, ere Time and Taste
> Had turned our parish topsy-turvy,
> When Darnel Park was Darnel Waste
> And roads as little known as scurvy,

The man who lost his way between
  St. Mary's Hill and Sandy Thicket,
Was always shown across the green,
  And guided to the Parson's wicket.

Back flew the bolt of lissom lath;
  Fair Margaret in her tidy kirtle
Led the lorn traveller up the path,
  Through clean-clipt rows of box and myrtle;
And Don and Sancho, Tramp and Tray,
  Upon the parlour steps collected,
Wagged all their tails and seemed to say:
  'Our master knows you; you're expected.'

Up rose the Reverend Doctor Brown,
  Up rose the Doctor's 'winsome marrow';
The lady laid her knitting down,
  Her husband clasped his ponderous Barrow.
Whate'er the stranger's caste or creed,
  Pundit or papist, saint or sinner,
He found a stable for his steed,
  And welcome for himself and dinner.

If when he reached his journey's end,
  And warmed himself in court or college,
He had not gained an honest friend
  And twenty curious scraps of knowledge;
If he departed as he came,
  With no new light on love or liquor,
Good sooth the traveller was to blame,
  And not the vicarage or the vicar.

His talk was like a stream that runs
  With rapid change from rocks to roses;
It slipped from politics to puns;
  It passed from Mahomet to Moses;
Beginning with the laws which keep
  The planets in their radiant courses,
And ending with some precept deep
  For dressing eels or shoeing horses.

He was a shrewd and sound divine,
  Of loud dissent the mortal terror;
And when by dint of page and line,
  He 'stablished truth or startled error,

The Baptist found him far too deep,
  The Deist sighed with saving sorrow,
And the lean Sevile went to sleep
  And dreamt of eating pork to-morrow.

His sermon never said or showed
  That earth is foul, that Heaven is gracious,
Without refreshment on the road
  From Jerome or from Athanasius;
And sure a righteous zeal inspired
  The hand and head that penned and planned them,
For all who understood admired,
  And some who did not understand them.

He wrote, too, in a quiet way,
  Small treatises and smaller verses,
And sage remarks on chalk and clay,
  And hints to noble lords and nurses;
True histories of last year's ghost;
  Lines to a ringlet or a turban,
And trifles for the *Morning Post*
  And nothing for Sylvanus Urban.

He did not think all mischief fair,
  Although he had a knack of joking;
He did not make himself a bear,
  Although he had a taste for smoking.
And when religious sects ran mad,
  He held, in spite of all his learning,
That if a man's belief is bad,
  It will not be improved by burning.

And he was kind and loved to sit
  In the low hut or garnished cottage,
And praise the farmer's homely wit,
  And share the widow's homelier pottage.
At his approach complaint grew mild,
  And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
  The welcome that they could not utter.

He always had a tale for me
  Of Julius Cæsar or of Venus;
From him I learned the rule of three,
  Cat's-cradle, leap-frog, and Quæ genus.

I used to singe his powdered wig,
  To steal the staff he put such trust in
And make the puppy dance a jig
  When he began to quote Augustine.

Alack the change! In vain I look
  For haunts in which by boyhood trifled;
The level lawn, the trickling brook,
  The trees I climbed, the beds I rifled!
The church is larger than before,
  You reach it by a carriage entry;
It holds three hundred people more,
  And pews are fitted for the gentry.

Sit in the Vicar's seat; you'll hear
  The doctrine of a gentle Johnian;
Whose hand is white, whose voice is clear,
  Whose tone is very Ciceronian.
Where is the old man laid? Look down
  And construe on the slab before you—
'Hic jacet Gulielmus Brown,
  Vir nullâ non donandus lauro.'"

CHAPTER XI

ECCENTRIC PARSONS

IN that volume of wide range on the *Natural History of Parsons*, if it ever were written, many chapters would be devoted to their eccentricities. These differ considerably from the extravagances of great geniuses, such as those of a Rousseau, a Savage, a Burns, or a Byron, or from the affected peculiarities of lesser men who, having little talent, have adopted certain eccentric manners in the hope that the world should give them credit for brilliancy and talent. Parsonic eccentricities are of a different order. Set a refined and scholarly man down in a little country parish with no society but farmers and labourers, pigs and cows and sheep, with not an overpowering amount of work to occupy his thoughts and hands, an old housekeeper his only attendant; let him live there year in, year out, with no change, no mingling with people of like intellect and learning; and it would be remarkable if he did not develop some signs of eccentricity, if not worse. Remember, I am writing of olden days, before railways had changed everything, placed towns and villages more in touch with each other, and enabled people to "run up" to London and other great centres of population. The country parson of the olden time was a very solitary person, who seldom left his, home and parish. His intellectual horizon was "cribbed, cabined, and confined." He had no stimulating society

and his tendency was to sink to the level of his unintellectual neighbours, to adopt their rude speech and manners, to bury himself with rustic occupations, to become a boor, if nothing worse, and to adopt those strange, eccentric habits which amused or disgusted the men of his generation.

Many stories are told of the eccentricities of the Rev. W. Sewell, more commonly known as Parson Sewell, a clergyman of the old school, who was Vicar of Troutbeck, near Windermere, from 1827 to 1869, and for some years master of Keswick Grammar School. He used to combine with his clerical duties those of a farmer, and he was a keen fox-hunter. He was a tall, muscular man, and used sometimes to settle the disputes of his parishioners by physical force. On one occasion he was preaching at Wythburn Church. The pulpit was a very old one, and had come away from the wall. He had laid his sermon on the edge of it, when he caught it with his surplice and sent it down into the niche. After vainly trying to reach it he turned to his congregation and said: "T' sarmon's tummelled doon i' neak, an' Ah can't reeach it; but Ah'll read you a chapter oot o' Bible: it's worth three on't."

On another occasion he leaned over the pulpit before the sermon began and inquired of his clerk, "Have you seen owt o' two lile sheep o' mine? They're smitten i' t' ear like yours, but deeper i' t' smit."

For the benefit of south-country readers it may be necessary to explain that "smitten" is the Cumberland word for marked. The sheep belonging to each farmer have a certain mark put upon them, usually with tar, as a means of recognising them in case they stray away. This is called "smitting," or marking them, and many of these marks differ very little in appearance.

The bishop of the diocese had once come to see the Vicar of Troutbeck. On his arrival in the village he saw a solitary man salving sheep in a shed, so he inquired

where he could find the Rev. W. Sewell. "He is before you, my lord," was the reply. When the bishop had recovered from his surprise he remonstrated with him and said he thought he might have been better employed ministering to the needs of his parishioners. To this Mr. Sewell replied that if the bishop could show him some better way of helping his parishioners, he would be glad to give up salving his neighbours' sheep.

Again I must explain that it is customary after the sheep have been shorn to apply a salve to any cuts or sores, as an aid to rapid healing and as a precaution against troublesome insects; so Mr. Sewell's act was one of peculiar kindness to animals.

The old story of not offering prayer for fine weather until the wind changed is a "chestnut," but Parson Sewell is believed to be the originator of the saying, who, when asked by his clerk to say the prayer, replied in his fine vernacular, "It's nae use, Tommy, es long es' t' wind's i' this quarter." [1]

One of the most curious and eccentric characters that ever lived was the Rev. Joshua Brooks, chaplain of the old collegiate church of Manchester, who died in 1821. This church, now the cathedral church of the Diocese of Manchester, was then an ancient collegiate foundation, consisting of a Warden and Fellows, and it was the church of a large parish of nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants. Mr. Brooks was chaplain, a strange character, a famous classical scholar, but totally ignorant of human nature and the ways of the world. He began life sadly enough, the son of a violent old shoemaker of eccentric habits and impetuous temperament; from whom he doubtless inherited his passionate nature. The father was lame, and used to sit at his cottage door wearing weird clothes and a red nightcap. One day a market woman passed by

[1] These stories of Parson Sewell have been kindly sent by Mr. T. H. Browne, of Troutbeck.

and said something rude. The old fellow, on account of his lameness, could not follow her; so he sent for a sedan chair, was carried to the market, found the woman, and beat her with his crutch, until a constable came to restore order. The son, the Rev. Joshua, was just the same, a cracker ever ready to explode, a respecter of no person, who warred equally and indifferently with the passing chimney-sweep, the huckstress, the mother who came too late to be churched, and with his ecclesiastical superiors, the Wardens and Fellows. We need not follow his early career, which was highly creditable, beginning with the famous grammar school at Manchester, the nursery of many noted scholars, and ending with a University degree at Oxford, his college being Brazenose. At school he was nicknamed "Jotty Bruks," and was remarkable for his violent tempers, especially when he became the butt of the other boys, who wrote lampoons about him and scrawled on his door, "*Odi profanum Bruks et arceo.*"

The world treated him well; his frugal life, the income from his chaplaincy, his avocations as old-book vendor, classical tutor and surrogate, placed him in comfortable circumstances. But he was ever at war with the world, and loved to take part in every squabble and to reform every imaginary abuse. He lived in an old house in Long Millgate, and was waited on by an old housekeeper, a pert damsel, her niece, and kept as pets two cats, three pigeons, and a monkey. He was rather small in stature, but very stout, and his gait was a kind of shuffling amble. He was not a goodly person in appearance with his long and impending eyebrows, his large brimmed hat, his dusky brown coat and breeches, and his plain worsted stockings. He looked more like a verger or a mechanic. But on Sundays he shone resplendent with his hair combed and powdered, his handsome black suit and clean ruffled shirt, his black silk stockings and brightly-polished shoes. Ere the first bell tolled for morning service he issued from

his door attired in his silken robes, a three-cornered beaver perched on his head, and beautifully white bands pendent from his cravat. He had a shrill, unmelodious voice, a rapid utterance, and an asperity of speech which were not prepossessing. His memory was marvellous. Not only did he know the Bible from beginning to end, but he had a wonderful recollection of Greek and Latin authors.

Some of the stories about him are very ludicrous. Once he was expelled from the chapter house on account of some fiery and hasty speech, and was not allowed to return until he made an apology. This he refused to do, but he put on his surplice in an adjoining chapel of the church, and then, standing outside the chapter-house door, exclaimed to all the persons who were passing on to attend the service, "They won't let me in; they say I can't behave myself." Sometimes he would during service box the ears of a chorister for coming late; and once he clouted a boy who was singing the Kyrie after the Fifth Commandment, saying, "Hold thy noise, lad; what hast thou to do with the Fifth Commandment? Thou'st got neither father nor mother."

Another time he pounced on a youth who had seated himself in a pew reserved for clergymen, and sharply told him that only parsons and clerks might sit there.

"Well, sir, I'm a clerk," replied the youth.

"Eh! What! What clerk are you?"

"Oh! I am an attorney's clerk."

"Oh! Ah! Tha' may sit still," said the old parson.

His quarrels with every one were well known. One day he said to a witty person:

"This churchyard must be enclosed, and we shall want a lot of railing."

"That can't be, Josse," replied his friend; "there's railing enough in this church every day."

THE REVEREND JOSHUA BROOKES, A.M.
CHAPLAIN OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH, MANCHESTER

He was most casual in his conduct of the service, and often when he had finished saying his part and the choir was engaged singing he would leave his seat and go down to the side aisles and chat with any lounger till the time came for his clerical duties being required in person. Some one expressed surprise at this conduct, but he only replied, "Oh, I frequently come out while they are singing *Te Deum*."

One day he was talking in this casual way during the singing of the *Te Deum*, and remarked to one of his acquaintances, "We old men——"

"Why, how owd" (old) "art ta?" said the man.

"I'm sixty-foive," replied the Rev. Joshua.

"Sixty-foive! Why, thee's a lad; here's a penny for thee. Go buy thysel' a penny pie."

So "Josse" returned to the reading-desk to read the morning lesson a penny richer.

His eccentricities were extraordinary. When reading the Burial Service he would break off in the middle, go to a neighbouring confectioner's shop, procure a supply of horehound drops, and then return to his neglected duties and conclude the service. Easter Monday was the great day for weddings at the old church, and large numbers flocked to be married, and with so many couples it was rather difficult to get them properly sorted, as one reading of the service sufficed for all. It was on one of these occasions that some of the bridegrooms got married to the wrong brides and the parson shouted out, "Sort yourselves when you go out." It was a Lancashire custom for the bridegroom to kiss the bride directly the marriage knot was tied, and if he did not perform this duty quickly some other person might seize the opportunity. On one occasion a bridegroom attempted to kiss his neighbour's bride. The chaplain, however, was angry and pushed him back, uttering the well-known Lancashire proverb, "Friend, dip in thy own treacle."

The Rev. T. Cooper adds the following stories of these curious weddings:

"What do you want here?" in his harshest tones he asked a very youthful-looking couple.

"To be wed," was the prompt answer of the young man.

"Ugh!" grunted Brooks. "What's the world coming to? I used to marry men and women; now I marry children! Here, you silly babies, take your places!"

The usual scramble for "first kisses" would be checked by the chaplain's rough voice with "Now clear out, clear out! Do your kissing outside. There are other folks waiting to be wed. Do you think I want to be kept here all day tying up fools?"

On another occasion a child was taken to see the weddings, and stood up on a seat in order to have a better view of the proceedings. "Tell that wench to sit down!" shouted Jossy in his loud and angry voice. A little later she stood up again, and again roared the raucous voice: "Pull that wench down, I say!" and he vowed he would not go on with the service unless his order was obeyed. He was supposed to have baptized, married, and buried more persons than any one in the kingdom. A hundred baptisms a day and twenty weddings were not unusual.[1] Some babe was once presented to him for baptism adorned with a profusion of frills and furbelows, so that it was difficult for the parson to make the sign of the cross on the child's forehead. "Take off these fol-dols!" shouted Jossy, and the sponsors had to set to work to remove the obnoxious frills before his reverence would proceed.

The grammar-school boys used to make great fun of the poor old man, who on account of his passionate nature

[1] These numbers were increased in subsequent years. On February 26, 1837, 369 baptisms were performed, and in 1842 on every Sunday the banns of 150 couples were the average number published.

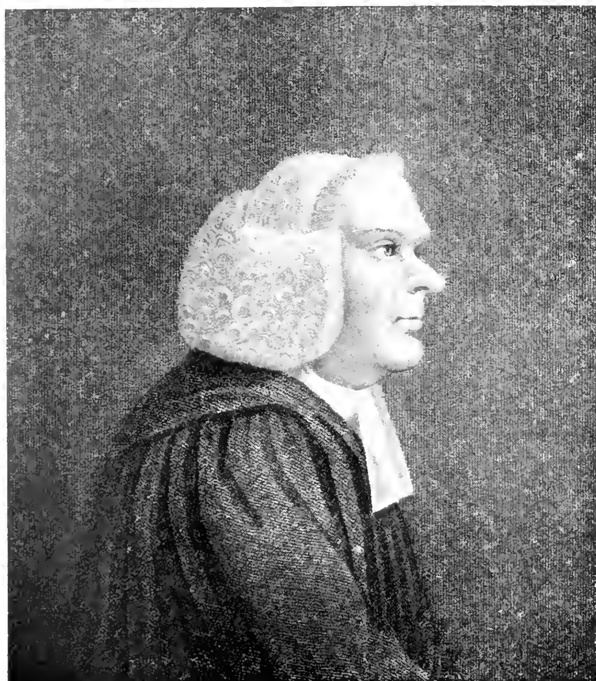
rendered excellent sport. He knew nothing of that "soft answer that turneth away wrath," and laid himself open to all kinds of insults. Once in the market-place he was reading the notice of a lost dog, a black and white spaniel, when an impudent rascal read aloud: "Lost! a black and white coloured parson; answers to the name of 'Jossy,'" &c. A terrible scene of angry and disgraceful quarrelling ensued. Such was the Rev. Joshua Brooks, a worthy man, a great scholar, a brave defender of the right, but withal a violent creature who marred his life's success by his extraordinary eccentricities.

A very eccentric but an earnest and powerful preacher, if we may judge from the effects which his sermons produced, was the Rev. John Berridge, Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge, Vicar of Everton, Bedfordshire, and chaplain to the Earl of Buchan (1716–1793). He was the son of a wealthy farmer and grazier of Kingston, in Nottinghamshire, and had an amazing career. His biographer well says that he did not move in a regular orbit, but, "like a planet, steered his course with great irregularity"; but he had splendid piety and his labours were incessant to promote the glory of God, the interests of Christ's kingdom, and the welfare of immortal souls. Although he was vicar of Everton, he conceived that his parish was the world, and, in spite of episcopal admonitions, he wandered about preaching wherever he listed. I have read some of his sermons, which do not appear to have been remarkable for their eloquence, but the effect of his preaching was extraordinary. Eye-witnesses tell of crowds being convulsed, many crying out, especially children, whose agonies were amazing. A girl was thrown into violent contortions of body, weeping aloud and incessantly during the whole service. The churches were thronged wherever he preached, people walking thither thirty or forty miles. "When poor sinners felt the sentence of death in their souls what sounds of distress did I hear!" Men shrieked and roared

aloud, or breathed like people half-strangled and gasping for life. Others fell down as dead with violence inconceivable. When the convulsions were over they sighed, were filled with peace and joy, smiled beautifully, and uttered ecstatic words, and had a clear sense of pardon, praising God with loud voices. Berridge used to preach in the open fields to five thousand people, and the same extraordinary effects were witnessed, his hearers, some slightly wounded, others miserably torn by Satan, falling down in convulsions and receiving true heartfelt conviction. Women tore up the ground with their hands, filling them with dust and with the hard-trodden grass, and people continued unconscious for hours, perfectly insensible; even bold scoffers and profane folk felt the strange force of the Spirit and were subdued after terrible agonies until body and soul were eased. Even Wesley and Whitfield never performed such feats as these.

What man was this who could thus wield the sword of the Spirit? He was destined to be a farmer, but showing great incapacity for the work, his father said that he should be sent "to be a light to the Gentiles." At Cambridge he was not remarkable for his piety. He had a keen humour, knew his *Hudibras* off by heart, and was the welcome guest at festive entertainments. Even after his ordination and his appointment to his living his teaching was not remarkable. He fluctuated between the rival systems of Arminianism and Calvinism and then adopted a less rigid faith. Talking to a friend on the works of Arminius and Calvin, he said, "I have them on my shelves in my library, where they are very quiet; if I take them down and look into them they will begin to quarrel and disagree."

He was very learned in classical lore, philosophy, logic, metaphysics, and during a long period before his itinerant preaching began used to read fifteen hours a day. His humour was evident in his sermons, and he could move a multitude to hearty laughter, as he did to tears and groans.



THE REVEREND JOHN BERRIDGE

VICAR OF EVERTON, BEDFORDSHIRE

The scenes of his itinerant preaching were in the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Hertford, and Huntingdon. Some idea of his labours may be formed from the record that he used to preach ten or twelve sermons a week and ride a hundred miles, and this he continued for more than twenty years. He did not escape persecution. Some of his followers were roughly handled. Gentry and magistrates tried to silence his preaching. But "the old Devil," as they called him, quietly went on his way. He scorned episcopal injunctions and frequently preached at Whitfield's Tabernacle in London and at the Tottenham Court Chapel, and it is not surprising that the neighbouring clergy were rather offended, because Berridge drew away all their congregations. They complained to the bishop, and one of his own people tried to deprive him of his living. He was summoned before the bishop.

"Well, Berridge, they tell me you go about preaching out of your own parish," said the bishop; "did I institute you to the livings of A——, or E——, or P——?" naming certain parishes where Berridge had preached.

"No, my lord," said Berridge, "neither do I claim any of these livings; the clergymen enjoy them undisturbed by me."

"Well, but you go and preach there, which you have no right to do."

"It is true, my lord, I was one day at E——, and there were a few poor people assembled together, and I admonished them to repent of their sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; and I remember seeing five or six clergymen that day, my lord, all out of their parishes, upon E—— bowling-green."

"Pooh!" said his lordship. "I tell you you have no right to preach out of your own parish; and if you do not desist from it, you will very likely be sent to Huntingdon Gaol."

"As to that, my lord, I have no greater liking to Huntingdon Gaol than other people; but I had rather go thither

with a good conscience than live at my liberty without one."

The bishop then tried persuasion, but it was no use; and when the bishop appealed to Canon Law, Berridge replied that there was one canon which said "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." But he was not destined to be disturbed and driven from his parish. He was at college with Pitt (Lord Chatham), and another old friend wrote to Pitt, asking him to use his influence on behalf of Berridge. Pitt wrote to the nobleman to whom the bishop was indebted for his promotion. This nobleman wrote to the bishop, "My lord, I am informed you have a very honest fellow, one Berridge, in your diocese, and that he has been ill-treated by a litigious person, who has accused him to your lordship, and wishes to turn him out of his living. You will oblige me, my lord, if you will take no notice of that person, and not suffer the honest man to be interrupted in his living."

So the bishop was obliged to bow compliance, and when the disappointed litigious person returned home he was met by his friends with the inquiry, "Have you got the old devil out?" and he replied, "No, nor do I think the very devil himself can get him out."

He could be very sarcastic at times. There was a great enthusiast, one George Bell, who imagined himself a peculiar favourite of Heaven and worked himself into a condition of enthusiastic delirium. He believed he would ascend to heaven, like Elijah, in a chariot of fire. Berridge interviewed this individual, and on account of his past kindnesses to him, claimed a favour of him: "When you are carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, I request that you will grant me the honour of being your postilion." This was spoken so sarcastically that it roused the spirit of the enthusiast, who accused Berridge of blasphemy, raved like a lunatic, and darted from the room. This person subsequently foretold the coming of Christ on a

certain night at twelve o'clock, and had many adherents, who met together to pray and await the Advent. "He is coming! He is coming!" shouted the enthusiast, and when the Saviour did not appear, Bell was so disappointed that he abandoned all religion and took to an evil course of life.

A friend once informed Berridge of the death of the Countess of Huntingdon, and he lamented the loss of another "pillar," following the deaths of Whitfield, Wesley, and his brother, saying that he too would go soon. His friend remarked that some little differences of opinion existed between them here, but that they would unite in perfect harmony in heaven. "Ah! yes, that we shall; for the Lord washed our hearts here, and He will wash our brains there."

His advice to a young country clergyman would not be agreeable to the strictest sect of teetotalers. He said, "Keep a barrel of ale in your house; and when a man comes to you with a message, or on other business, give him some refreshment, that his ears may be more open to your religious instructions." Mr. Whittingham, his curate and editor of his works, tells many stories about him which reveal his quaint humour. He came to see Berridge, hoping to be accepted as his curate. The parson regarded the young man earnestly, and observing his light-coloured waistcoat and stockings, smiling said, "If you come to be my curate, you must draw that waistcoat and those stockings up the chimney." His advice as regards preaching was remarkable:

"Lift up your voice and frighten the jackdaws out of the steeple; for if you do not cry aloud while you are young, you will not do it when you are old."

Berridge never married. He once thought of matrimony, but after praying he determined to seek a decision from his Bible, opening it at random, and fixing his eye on the first verse that presented itself. The verse from

Jeremiah xvi. 2 first caught his eye: "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters." The question was settled.

A lady from London once drove to his vicarage at Everton, announcing that the Lord had revealed it to her that she was to become his wife. This was a little startling, but Berridge was quite equal to the occasion. He replied:

"Madam, if the Lord has revealed it to you that you are to be my wife, surely He would also have revealed it to me that I was destined to be your husband; but as no such revelation has been made to me, I cannot comply with your wishes."

The poor lady had to return to London grievously disappointed.

Another lady once came to him, not to propose marriage, but to talk about herself. This she did successfully for a long time, and then arose to depart. Mr. Berridge gravely addressed her: "Madam, before you withdraw I have one piece of advice to give you, and that is, when you go into company again, after you have talked *half an hour*, without intermission, I recommend it to you to stop a while, and see if any other of the company has anything to say."

His style of preaching was very plain, and he used to avoid the use of all long words. Another cleric once preached in his church in a simple style, and was astonished when Berridge said to him in the vestry: "Brother, your sermon was good, but my people cannot understand your language." The stranger was puzzled, could not recall any hard words that he had used, and asked the vicar to name them, who replied, "You have endeavoured to prove that God is omniscient and omnipotent: but if you had said that God was almighty and knew everything, they would have understood you."

I should like to give some extracts from his sermons

which produced such tremendous effects; but these appear to be bald and simple in print, and very different from the moving orations which his remarkable personality and the influence of more than human agency caused them to be. His letters, too, are interesting and quaint reading, and also his book, *Christian World Unmasked.* His *Sion's Songs* have little poetry in them, but much pious feeling and devout expressions of his peculiar faith. His lines pasted on his clock may be quoted:

"Here my master bids me stand,
And mark the time with faithful hand;
What is his will is my delight,
To tell the hours by day, by night.
Master, be wise, and learn of me,
To serve thy God, as I serve thee."

The following epitaph, written by himself, excepting, of course, the date of his death, is inscribed on his tomb at Everton. It is curious, and sets forth his theological views and is a pronouncement of his faith and hope:

Here lie
The earthly remains of
JOHN BERRIDGE,
Late Vicar of Everton,
And an itinerant servant of Jesus Christ,
who loved his Master, and his work,
And, after running on His errands many years,
was called up to wait on Him above.
Reader,
Art thou born again?
No Salvation without a NEW BIRTH!
I was born in sin, February, 1716.
Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730.
Lived proudly on Faith and Works for Salvation
till 1754.
Admitted to Everton Vicarage, 1755.
Fled to JESUS alone for Refuge, 1756.
Fell asleep in Christ, January 22, 1793.

A contemporary of the last-named peculiar genius was the Rev. Laurence Sterne, a very different character, who was much sought after as a fashionable preacher, but was more remarkable for his wit, humour, fancy, and pathos, his knowledge of mankind, and his literary excellences, than for his qualifications for the clerical office. His duties as a parson sat lightly on him, and some of his literary productions have been pronounced unworthy of a parson's pen. Without doubt he was one of the best writers in the English language of his age. During the period following the Restoration it was the fashion for preachers to indulge in humour. Sterne seems to have revived that custom, and to have not refrained in the pulpit from the witty jest in which he so frequently indulged in society. As some of his friends used to tell him, his vein of humour was too free for the solemn colour of his coat, and his prudence lacking. Sometimes he promises to be more cautious, but denies that he has gone as far as Swift. "Swift," he says, "keeps a due distance from Rabelais; I keep a due distance from Swift, who has said a hundred things I durst not say, unless I was Dean of St. Patrick's." He was the son of an improvident father, a kind and gentle man, void of all design, and so innocent in his own intentions that he suspected no one, so that you might have cheated him ten times in a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose. This Lieutenant Roger Sterne died in 1731. Happily Laurence found a second father in his cousin the Squire of Elvington, who sent him to the University. Through the influence of his uncle he obtained the living of Sutton and became Prebendary of York. Then the living of Stillington fell to him, which he held with Sutton, where he lived twenty years, serving both parishes. He used to read and write his books, paint, fiddle, and shoot. Then Lord Falconbridge gave him the curacy of

Coxwould, which in the "glorious" days of pluralism he held in conjunction with his other livings. "Yorrick," as he was known amongst his friends, though he was not a very exemplary parson, attracted to himself many admirers. He had the kindest of hearts, and was greatly beloved by all his friends and by his parishioners. "Not a parishioner catches a hare, or a rabbit, or a trout, but he brings it as an offering to me," he writes in one of his letters. He was devoted to his daughter, Lydia. But he was of the breed of clerical jesters, and his jests came more ready to his lips than his prayers. He had his "Stella" or his "Sacharissa" in the person of his "Eliza," Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, an East India beauty, but how far jest and earnestness are mingled in his letters it is difficult to say. He was the model "diner-out," whose Cervantic spirit was ever ready to set the table in a roar, and whose laugh and jest were ever at the call of every folly that provoked them. He was engaged to dinners for three months, so Dr. Johnson said, or, according to Sir Walter Scott, "fourteen dinners deep." His jokes savoured of the age in which he lived, and were often coarse and unpleasant, like some of the situations in the *Sentimental Journey*; but perhaps it is not fair to judge a writer of one age by the standard of taste prevailing in another somewhat more refined. His end was sad. The Cervantic flame was too bright for the frail vessel that held it. His body became worn out by debilitating illness, and he died at his lodgings, No. 41, Old Bond Street, London, attended only by strangers, aged only fifty-three years. He was buried in the Bayswater burial-ground, opposite Hyde Park, and it was left to two strangers to put up a monument. The date of his death recorded on his tomb is incorrect, September 13, 1768, being substituted for March 18th in the same year. There is a gruesome story, published twenty years later in the *St. James's Chronicle*, which states that Sterne's body was carried off by body-snatchers

and conveyed to Oxford, where it was recognised in the dissecting-room by a man who had been his friend. "Alas! poor Yorrick."

Dean Swift was a kindred spirit. His wild and strange career, his amazing cleverness, his fearless, sharp, and piercing epigrams, his ready wit, his curious love affairs with the unfortunate "Varina," "Stella," and "Vanessa," his political vagaries, his vehement championship of Ireland—all this is well known, and need not be here recorded. As an example of his biting satire we may quote the epigram which he made on Holt, the Bishop of Kilmore, who on one occasion left his church during service time in order to wait on the Duke of Dorset:

"Lord Pam in the church (could you think it?) kneel'd down;
When told that the duke was just come to town—
His station despising, unawed by the place,
He flies from his God to attend to his grace.
To the court it was better to pay his devotion,
Since God had no hand in his lordship's promotion."

Keen and biting satire could go no further. The dean was particularly angry with the bishop for not indemnifying an unfortunate publisher, who was sent to prison for publishing one of his lordship's works.

He is said to have lost all chance of obtaining a bishopric by writing the following lines on the powerful and important Duchess of Somerset:

"Beware of carrots from Northumberland,
Carrots sown *Thynne* a deep root may get,
If so be they are in *Somet set;*
Their *cunnings mark* thou; for I have been told
They assassin when young and poison when old.
Root out those carrots, O thou whose name
Is backwards and forwards always the same."

The lady referred to in this flattering verse was a red-haired beauty, Elizabeth Percy, heiress of the Earl

of Northumberland, who married the Earl of Ogle, and then Thomas Thynne, the profligate owner of Longleat, who was murdered in Pall Mall in 1682 by Count Köningsmark, and subsequently the Duke of Somerset. All these names are recorded in this cunningly devised but slanderous lampoon, the last two lines, of course, referring to Queen Anne, or Anna. The Duchess had sufficient influence with her royal mistress to prevent the advancement of her calumniator.

A remarkable, popular, pious, though eccentric parson was the famous Rowland Hill (1745–1833). Like Whitfield, Berridge, and others, he loved itinerating, and crowds flocked to hear him wherever he went. He was rector of Kingston, Somersetshire, and every day in the week he used to preach. He had a country house in Wales, where he built a chapel, and during the summer he used to address crowds there and in the neighbourhood. His sermons were appreciated, not only by the uneducated, but also by the learned on account of their freshness and originality. Surrey Chapel was built for him in 1782, where he remained until his death. He was remarkable for much eccentricity of manner and quaintness of expression, and he deemed that witticisms were not out of place in the pulpit. Some of the stories told of him are remarkable, and display the rich fund of humour which characterised his quaint personality. He did not always find his text within the four corners of his Bible. A newspaper paragraph would often supply him with a subject, and on one occasion he began his sermon by shouting out, "Matches! Matches! You wonder at my text; but this morning, while I was engaged in my study, the devil whispered me, 'Ah! Rowland, your zeal is indeed noble, and how indefatigably you labour for the salvation of souls!' At that very moment a poor man passed under my window, crying 'Matches!' very lustily; and conscience told me, 'Rowland, Rowland! you never

laboured to save souls with half the zeal that this man does to sell matches.'" Dissenting ministers are sometimes rather hardly dealt with by their Boards of Governors, their Elders or Councils, and one of these oppressed victims of local tyranny was complaining to Rowland Hill of the harsh treatment which he had received. He said that he knew that the Bench of Bishops was also rather hard sometimes upon the clergy of the Church of England, and that "for his part he did not see any difference between a board and a bench." Rowland Hill smiled a sagacious smile and replied, "Pardon me, I will show you a most essential difference between the two: a board is a bench that has no legs to stand upon."

All kinds of people came to see the renowned preacher. Amongst others one day an Antinomian heretic came to him to complain of the too severe and legal gospel which he stated that Rowland Hill preached. Rowland Hill heard him patiently and then asked:

"Do you, sir, hold the Ten Commandments to be a rule of life for Christians?"

"Certainly not," replied the Antinomian.

The clergyman immediately rang the bell, and said quietly to his servant, when he appeared:

"John, show this man the door, and keep your eye on him until he is beyond the reach of my coats or other property in the hall."

His kindliness of heart was shown in a remarkable way in the case of this same servant, John. Before he entered the clergyman's service John was in great poverty, and "took to the road," meeting and robbing Rowland Hill himself. The parson handed over his watch and money, but, noticing the robber's bungling and hesitating mode of procedure, began to talk to him, heard his story of want and privation, of the sick wife and suffering children, and learned that this was his first act of robbery. He at

once took him home, and made him his servant, and the ex-highwayman served Rowland Hill faithfully and died in his service.

Many other stories are told of this eccentric divine which need not be here repeated. Enough has been said to show what sterling worth and true genius lay beneath the surface of his peculiarities.

Among eccentric parsons none were stranger than Robert Stephen Hawker, vicar of Morwenstow, true poet, a loyal Churchman, humourist, a man of a unique and winning personality, and entirely unconventional. We see him as his biographers depict him amidst the rough cliffs of the Cornish coast, marching along the desolate, wind-swept, bare hills of his lonely parish, and ministering with whole-hearted affection to his rude congregation of smugglers, wreckers, Dissenters of various hues, and a few farmers. He loved his strange flock, and entirely won their sympathy and affection. His dress was peculiar. He despised the ordinary black coat of the conventional parsonic garb. He used to wear a brown cassock in his early days, but this was an inconvenient dress for climbing the cliffs. A claret-coloured coat with long tails was his next fancy, and underneath he wore a knitted blue fisherman's jersey. A little red cross was woven into the side of the jersey in memory of the piercing of the Saviour's side by the Roman soldier's spear. The fisherman's jersey was adopted in order to denote that he was a fisher of men, and fishing boots reaching above the knees were continually worn by him. His hats were notorious. A pink or plum-coloured beaver without a brim was his favourite headgear, the colour gradually fading to pink and then to white. He had a notion that his dress somewhat conformed to that of the priests of the Eastern Church, and wished to testify the connection of the Cornish Church with the East, before ever Augustine set foot in Kent. His gloves were always crimson, which he used to wear

in church during service. "My coat is that of an Armenian archimandrite," he used to say. London folk must have been strangely moved when they saw him on one occasion with a red handkerchief bound round his head, his claret-coloured coat, his wading boots that reached up to his hips, his blue knitted jersey, and his red gloves. He never could tolerate black clothes, and defended his garb on the ground that no one would mistake him for a waiter, or an unemployed undertaker, and that it was not at variance with the 74th canon. His latest biographer tells that on one occasion when he encountered a company of clergy riding in a wagonette to a visitation, he congratulated them on "the funereal appearance of their hearse."

He used to be very fond of a "poncho," a yellow vestment, consisting of a blanket with a hole in the middle for his head. This curious garment served him as an overcoat, and gave him a somewhat striking appearance when, thus attired, he rode through the lanes of his parish on the back of a well-groomed mule—the only fitting beast, as he remarked, for a Churchman. He looked not unlike a Lama of Thibet, and used to insist that this wonderful robe was an exact copy of a priestly vestment worn by St. Padarn and St. Teilo.

No one ever had a readier tongue or a more pungent wit than the famous Vicar of Morwenstow. Even the sedate atmosphere of Oxford and the presence of three heads of colleges, his friends, did not silence him. Clad in his cassock, he was addressed by a friend:

"Why, Hawker, one would think you wanted to be taken for a head."

"About the last thing I should like to be taken for, as heads go," was his ready reply, with a roguish glance at his three companions.

A good example of his quick repartee was that remark of his made in reply to a croaking neighbour who quoted

the old proverb, "Fools build houses for wise men to live in," when Hawker was building his vicarage.

"Yes," replied the vicar, "and there is another like unto it, 'Wise men make proverbs and fools quote them.'"

His method of silencing a troublesome and lengthy speaker at a missionary meeting was ingenious. This speaker was accustomed to play with the bunch of seals attached to his watch-chain when addressing an audience. Hawker borrowed this watch with the seals in order to time the speakers. So when its owner began to address the meeting, and missed the favourite inspirer of his oratory, he began to stammer and stutter and flounder in his speech, and had to sit down after saying a few words, feeling very hot, uncomfortable, and angry. The vicar enjoyed his triumph.

His ceremonial was peculiar and original. When he was marrying a couple and the ring was produced, he would toss it into the air. Some quaint symbol was signified by this, but no one knew what it was. One of his biographers suggests that it might have meant that "marriage is more or less of a toss up." He was intensely fond of animals, especially birds, which he tamed with quite as much skill as the professor in the Tuileries Gardens. A troop of cats accompanied him to church, and played about the chancel during service. A little dog often stood by him when he celebrated, and when some one suggested that these creatures should be turned out, he protested that "all animals, clean or unclean, should find a refuge in the Ark."

He had a wonderful gift for impromptu epigram, and was ever ready with a reply. At the close of a baptismal service a sponsor respectfully inquired the amount of the fee.

"My fee?" Hawker exclaimed in a loud voice; "my fee is a thousand pounds!"

"I be feared, sir, 'tis moor'n I can pay," said the man.

"Don't you know that the sacraments of God are invaluable? that no amount of money can pay for them?"

The Vicar of Morwenstow was intensely delighted with this incident, and declared that the story would be told at every inn and cottage in Cornwall, and would teach the people to appreciate the sacraments of the Church.

On one occasion he was listening to a sermon that did not accord with his views, when suddenly a cock crew loudly outside the door. Hawker immediately whispered to his neighbour, "Listen to him! he is denying his Lord."

During an election, when Newton Fellowes posed as the champion of Protestantism, and vowed in his speech that "he would never allow himself to be priest-ridden," Hawker calmly wrote on a sheet of paper the following epigram, and passed it to the candidate:—

"Thou ridden ne'er shall be
By prophet or by priest;
Balaam is dead, and none but he
Would choose thee for his beast!"

He had an extraordinary and playful fancy, which caused him to interpret the zigzag ornament on his Norman doorway as the ripples of the Sea of Gennesareth, and even to see in the double-headed eagle a representation of the twofold effusion of the Spirit in the two dispensations. He lived in a world of spirits, which were very real to him. "The two worlds are nearer than we think," he used to say; "the air is full of invisible beings."

And then, his letters! such letters! Did any one ever write like him? Full of pathos, fun, deep thought, spiritual insight, profound mysticism, they are strange and perplexing documents at times; but when he had to plead a cause or confound an adversary, what clear, logical arguments are found therein!

Nothing pleased him better than to hoax people, and astonish them with all kinds of wild statements. He was

delighted one day, when his playful mood was on, to meet a wagonette full of people whom he stuffed with nonsense, every word of which they believed.

Dissent he abhorred, though he loved Dissenters, and some of the hardest words he uttered were levelled at the peculiar forms of Nonconformity which flourished around him. Inconsistency was his *bête noir*, and few writers have penned harder words than those which he hurled at the great Conservative and Liberal leaders, Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Gladstone. The former angered him on account of his Public Worship Regulation Act and the latter for his Disestablishment of the Irish Church. These are the lines:—

> "An English boy was born: a Jew: so then
> On the eighth day they circumcised Ben!
> Another child had birth: baptized: but still
> In public phrase surnamed The People's Will!
> Both lived impenitent, and so they died,
> And between both the Church was crucified!
> Which bore the brand? I pray thee tell me true,
> The perjured Christian, or the recreant Jew?"

Sarcasm and severe denunciation could scarcely go farther.

Robert Stephen Hawker was a faithful priest and a true friend. He carried out in his life the principles which he cut in stone over his own door:

> "Be true to Church, be kind to poor,
> O minister, for evermore."

The West of England seems to have been famous for eccentric parsons. There was a scholar-parson named West who could quote Latin by the yard, knew all the birds and beasts and insects quite as well as his parishioners, but was not remarkable for his temperance. "I hear you have a beautiful spring of water on your glebe, Mr. West," said a neighbour. "Oh yes, beautiful! surpassing! *Fons Bandu*

siæ, splendidior vitro !—water so good that I never touch it —afraid of drinking too much of it."

Mr. Baring-Gould tells of a very strange parson who, when he was old and crippled with gout, used to perform the service for the Churching of Women in his bedroom, and after the private baptism of a child was accustomed to play cards and drink rum till the small hours of the morning, and at daybreak was frequently found asleep on a violet-bed outside his study window. He was a scholar, and could quote Latin and Greek readily and fluently. His sermons were curious, if the only recorded one may be taken as an example. He was very angry on account of the breaking off of a long engagement between some young people in his parish. So next Sunday he preached on the text, "Let love be without dissimulation," after the following manner:

"You see, my dearly beloved brethren, what the Apostle says—'Let love be without dissimulation.' Now I'll tell y' what I think dissimulation is. When a young chap goes out walking with a girl—as nice a lass as ever you saw, with an uncommon fresh pair o' cheeks, and pretty black eyes too, and not a word against her character, very respectably brought up—when, I say, a young chap goes out walking with such a young woman, after church of a summer evening, seen of every one, and offers her his arm, and they look friendly like at each other, and at times he buys her a present at a fair, a ribbon or a bit of jewellery—I cannot say I have heard, and I don't say that I have seen—when, I say, dearly beloved brethren, a young chap like this goes on for more than a year, and lets everybody fancy they are going to be married—I don't mean to say that at times a young chap may not see a nice lass and admire her, and talk to her a bit, and then go away and forget her—there's no dissimulation in that; —but when he goes on a long time, and he makes her think he's very sweet upon her, and that he can't live

without her, and he gives her ribbons and jewellery that I can't particularise, because I haven't seen them—when a young chap," &c., and so on. History relates that the "young chap" and the ill-used young woman were both in church, and heard this extraordinary discourse, which had its effect. The young people were married without any dissimulation, and we trust lived happy ever afterwards.

Mr. Baring-Gould tells also how this extraordinary parson went to stay with the squire for two nights, and then, at the invitation of the butler, spent two more evenings with the servants. The squire's lady, to her amazement, discovered him in the servants' hall. Quite calmly he said, "Like Persephone, half my time above, half in the nether world." When he was asked to stay at another squire's house, he accepted the lady's invitation with pleasure, saying he would fetch some jargonelle pears, for which his garden was famous. The lady waited for him, and he appeared presently with his only luggage, an open basket with some pears in it. The rector was hardly dressed for dinner, and had no equipment for the night. The squire's lady looked puzzled and said, "Will you not *really* want something further? You will dine with us, and *sleep the night.*" The rector glanced vacantly at the lady and at his basket, and then said, "Ah! to be sure, I'll go and fetch two or three more jargonelles."

A very different eccentric parson was John Henley, who was born at Melton Mowbray in 1692, the son of the vicar. Being ambitious of wealth and fame, he left his country curacy and the Mastership of the Grammar School at Melton, and came to London, where, in a room in Butcher-row, Newport Market, he delivered amazing lectures and pushed his wares and advertised his "orations" with the impudence of a quack. Pope dubbed him in scathing lines: "Preacher at once and zany of thy age." On Sundays his sermons were on religious subjects, such as the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, or the

language in which the Saviour will speak the last sentence on mankind; while on week-days he would orate on the skits of fashion, ruffs, muffs, puffs, shoes, heels, clocks, pantofles, buskins, periwigs, &c.—a general view of the *beau monde* from before Noah's flood to the year '29. His vagaries and eccentricities were amazing, and ultimately brought him into contempt, poverty and disgrace. He appears in two of Hogarth's pictures, one of which is shown in our illustrations.

There have been parsons whose eccentricity took the form of extreme parsimony. There was Morgan Jones, curate of Blewbury, Berkshire, at the beginning of the last century, who dressed like a scarecrow and lived on half a crown a week, never using coal, though he had plenty in his shed, or meat, butter, cheese, or any such "luxuries." He wrote on scraps of paper over a thousand sermons, enjoyed good health, and strangely his name appeared as a liberal subscriber on the lists of several church societies, and sometimes he was known to give money to the poor. Another miserly parson was John Trueman, of Daventry, a rich man, who left behind him £50,000. His parsimony was revolting, and the methods adopted by this mad miser for supporting his wretched life need not be here recorded. "'Tis a mad world, my masters," and parsons have not always escaped the terrible infection, as the records of these and other eccentric characters whom we might mention effectually shows.

A MIDNIGHT CONVERSATION, BY HOGARTH

SHOWING "ORATOR" HENLEY PRESIDING AT THE PUNCH-BOWL

CHAPTER XII

THE PARSON AND HIS PEOPLE

THE relations beween the parson and his parishioners are often a little strained. Sometimes the former is fussy, dictatorial, interfering, and the people do not like him. Oftentimes the latter are stupid, obstinate, and fonder of going to the inn than to the church. Hence unpleasantness and differences of opinion arise, which lead to quarrels and open hostility.

The most hardly used man I have met with was John Lowes, vicar of Brandiston, who was executed for being a wizard in 1645, together with sixty other wretches accused of the like offence. Every one has heard of the infamous Hopkins, the supposed witch-finder, who was responsible for the deaths of countless old women accused by him of practising the Black Art. His evil eye fell upon the poor venerable Vicar of Brandiston, who was in his eightieth year. He and his assistants and some of the rabble of the place invaded the parsonage. They kept the poor man awake several nights together, and ran him backwards and forwards about the room until he was out of breath; then they rested awhile, and afterwards ran him again; and this nefarious work was carried on for several days and nights together, till he was delirious and scarcely sensible of what he said or did. In this condition his accusers made out that he confessed a familiarity with the devil. So he was condemned to death, and as Christian burial was denied

him, he calmly read the Burial Service over himself on his way to execution. The whole melancholy story is told in the parish registers of the village, in *The Suffolk Garland*, and in *Old English Social Life as told by the Parish Registers*, by Mr. Thiselton-Dyer. This is the only case which I have met with of a parson suffering the extreme penalty of the law for a supposed familiarity with the Black Arts. Others have not been so innocent as the poor old Vicar of Brandeston. There was Dr. Dee, whose fame as an astrologer I have recorded in *Books Fatal to their Authors*, and that arrant impostor, the Rev. John Darrell, who professed to have great power in casting out devils,[1] and suffered imprisonment for his pains. Happily the clergy of the present day have seldom to play the part of exorcists (for which they have to obtain a special license from their bishop), unless it be to exorcise the dominion of certain other evil "spirits" over the bodies of those who are sore vexed.

Sometimes terribly disgraceful scenes vexed the soul of the poor parson, as at Hayes, not far from London, in the year 1749, when a company of singers ordered a carpenter to pull down part of the belfry without the consent of the vicar and churchwardens, and bred disturbances in church, ringing the bells violently during service-time, and "going into the gallery to spit below." One fellow brought a pot of beer and a pipe into the church, smoking in his pew until the end of the sermon. Another rector, at Middleham, records under the head of Burials, in his register book, the names of two men whom he feels sure were "spiritually dead," on account of their scandalous behaviour and insolent words that they addressed to him. In comparison with such disgraceful disturbances the incursions of Mr. Kensit and his crew seem mere child's play.

The old pew system gave rise to many troubles. The

[1] *Books Fatal to their Authors*, p. 74.

registers of Woodmancote record the arrest of Dr. Cooper, the rector, on an action of trespass for pulling down "the great pew in the chancel in which the family of the Wests had nestled themselves, by the permission of former parsons, so long that they would now have it to be their own. The Dr., thinking there was no other way to be rid of the birds but by destroying their nest, notwithstanding their big looks and threats, did downe with it. Having been once, above two years ago, by the mother of West convented before the Bishops about it, for keeping him out while it stood, who could find nothing for her, only requested the Doctor's leave for her sitting there, but now she having been long gone and forsaken it and us, her son Jacob usurping the seat and disdaining my leave, I have dispossessed in this manner, and now expect that he will doe by the law. Jacob West hath declared how unwilling he is to part with it, by his boys bringing a chair after him, to sitt in on the bare earth which he did the next day, being Sunday, after the chancel door was opened for the incomers, which made sport to the people, in that he looked like one who would have been glad to be welcome, bringing his stoole with him."[1]

Jacob West caused Dr. Cooper to be arrested for trespass. Then he fell sick and Dr. Cooper kindly attended him, and "terms of pacification" were arranged between them. But on his recovery the quarrel was renewed. Dr. Cooper was indicted before the Assizes, but the end of the trouble is not recorded, and we leave the rector waiting "for what more Mr. Jacob West can and will do."

The gradual growth of the possession of seats by families is an interesting study. Before the Reformation no seats were assigned to anybody, except to some very great families. There is no property in seats, but by degrees people imagined that their pews were their own,

[1] *Social Life as told by Parish Registers*, T. F. Thiselton-Dyer, p. 60.

and could be left in wills or charged for like a house or a piece of land. Two guineas a year was regularly paid long after our family left the parish to my father for an old family pew, wherein his sires used to sit. At the request of the vicar, when the church was re-pewed my father relinquished his "right." The Wragby registers[1] show how this "right" was acquired.

> "*Mem.*—That it was agreed by Sir Thomas Gargrave, knight, Dobson, curate, and the Kyrkewardens, that Cudbart Flemynge, of Sharleston, gent, should have to him and his successors a place in the north side of the church of Wragbie, whereat the schole was and at this present time is accustomed to be kept, so long as he or they doe pay or cause to be paid, yearlie to the poor of Wragbie or into the hands of the collectors or ch:wardens, for the time appointed, XII^d the year, there upon holie days to sytt without any interruption of any person in office or out of office."

And so it remained for more than a century.

Endless difficulties have arisen between parson and people over pews, pew-rents, faculty pews, and appropriated sittings. One amusing case may be quoted. A gentleman obtained a faculty pew, which was assigned to him and his heirs for ever and the owners and occupiers of the house in which he lived. But this house was afterwards divided into two, and then the trouble began, as the family which occupied a small part of the original messuage claimed an equal right to the pew. A legal action ensued, which was decided in favour of the claimant. Difficulties with regard to pews still linger on, in spite of the free and open Church movement, and often in country churches villagers will "leave the church," if they are disturbed in the occupation of their favourite seat. The parson's relations to his people are very intimate. He is often their lawyer, their doctor, as well as their pastor, and still they continue to place reliance in his omniscience. I have made many wills for my

[1] *Yorkshire Archæological and Topographical Journal*, pt. xlvii. p. 311.

parishioners, and hitherto they have never been invalidated. Happily the conditions of the wills are usually simple, and are not likely to lead to legal complications. I did not make the will of that vindictive old Cornishman, whose wife had threatened to dance on his grave, and who ordered his executors to bury him half a mile out at sea. In olden days the parson was the chief lawyer, and used to enter extracts from the wills which he had drawn up in the parish registers, and sometimes you will find legal forms recorded, which enabled the parson to make an inventory to a will, to certify the fitness of a person to keep a public-house, or to give a pass to a traveller. The parson also for many ages has been the peacemaker of the parish, healing differences and quarrels, these happy endings being often recorded in the parish register.

The sorrows and the joys of life have always brought parson and people together and promoted mutual sympathy. The great events in existence, the birth and christening of children, marriages, the deaths and funerals of relatives, all help to weave that network of sympathy which ought to exist between the parson and his flock.

There was a time in the year when parsons were not popular, owing to the collection of tithe. The rector had to give a tithe dinner, which was wonderfully well attended by all the farmers who had to pay half a crown or five shillings for tithe, and took care to receive full value for their money by their consumption of meat and drink. In former times each tenth sheaf was marked with a tally and claimed by the rector. Samuel Wesley at Epworth once discovered a dishonest farmer deliberately at work with a pair of shears cutting off the ears of his tithe corn and putting them in a bag. Wesley took him by the arm, marched him into the town, seized the bag, and turning it inside out before the people in the market-place, told them what the farmer had done. He then left him with his ill-gotten gain to the judgment

of his neighbours, and walked quietly home. Perhaps this judgment might not be very unfavourable to the delinquent, if Dryden's harvest-home song, introduced into his play *King Arthur*, represents the morality of the old-fashioned tithe-payers:

> "We've cheated the parson, we'll cheat him again,
> For why should a blockhead have one in ten?
> One in ten, one in ten;
> For why should a blockhead have one in ten,
> For prating so long, like a book-learned sot,
> Till pudding and dumpling burn to pot?
> Burn to pot."

There is an amusing old song called "Tithing Time," but I regret that it cannot be here transcribed. Somewhere it lies in my library, but no effort can now recover it. Possibly it may be known to my readers. Thomas Wasbourne (1608–1687) wrote some quaint verses describing the unwillingness of persons to pay tithes in his day:

> "To pay the tenth fleece they refuse,
> As shepherd's dues.
> They know a trick worth two of that;
> They can grow fat,
> And wear their fleece on their own back,
> But let him lack
> Meat, drink and cloth and everything
> Which would support and comfort bring."

There was a terrible parson who lived within the recollection of the author of a charming little book entitled *Not many Years ago.* He was a Cambridge Don, and had the best living in Devon—that of Woodley—with tithes valued at £1,000 a year. He quarrelled with the farmers and insisted upon collecting his tithe in kind. Every tenth day's milk, every tenth lamb and tenth haycock, every tenth bag of apples and potatoes, he demanded, and

THE VICAR RECEIVING HIS TITHES

his man was ever watching the farms in order to see that the rector got his dues. Every tenth day the cows were only half milked, and the cans set aside for the parson's use were often accidentally (?) knocked over. He was so pig-headed and obstinate that he became involved in a lawsuit, which he lost, and as the expenses were heavy he had to cool his heels in Exeter Gaol. This clerical Don was entirely unsuited to a country parish, and was quite out of sympathy with the squire, farmers, or his brother clergy.

A West of England ballad tells of even worse conduct than that described by Wasbourne. The people at Christmas actually starved their parson.

> "There was a man in our town,
> I knowed him well, 'twor Passon Brown,
> A man of credit and renown,
> For—he was *our* Passon.
> Passon he had got a sheep,
> Merry Christmas he would keep;
> Decent Passon he—and cheap,
> Well-spoke—and not a cross 'un."

So these good people stole the parson's sheep, which so vexed him that he died, and "Passonless was soon our town. For why? We'd starved our Passon." A very sad story truly!

Sometimes the parson obtains strange answers to his questions in the services. One day a clergyman was taking a baptism, and an elderly churchwoman was standing as godmother for the infant. He asked the usual question, "Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works," &c., and received the strange and unexpected reply, "I recommend them all." On another occasion a parson was burying a stranger, and not being quite sure of the sex of the deceased turned to a conspicuous mourner and asked *sotto voce*, "Is it a 'brother,'

or a 'sister'? The mourner replied in stentorian tones, "No relation, sir," which did not help the parson's perplexity, and was not exactly the answer he wanted.

If the people trouble the parson, he sometimes troubles and perplexes them, especially if age or eccentricity render him peculiar. Old Dr. Routh, the centenarian, sometimes gave out the banns in the presence of a couple who had been married several months. He read the Burial Service over a woman who came to be churched, and frequently lost his place in the services, usually falling back upon the Apostles' Creed.

The shyness of villages in former years was sometimes amazing. "Putting up the banns" was a terrible ordeal, and the ardour of the successful wooer was damped by the awful contemplation. But the parson had to be told. Somehow or other this simple process was regarded as equivalent to a confession of crime. It was never done in broad daylight. The visit was paid at the latest possible hour. The subject was approached not directly, but by the most baffling circumlocutions. When the vicar was inexperienced he was apt to attribute their roundabout ambiguities to the muddling effects of cider, but experience taught him otherwise. Sometimes bashfulness took more violent forms. Late one night the vicar of a parish was startled by a loud and single knock. Opening the door himself he found no one there, though he peered some time into the wintry darkness. He returned to his room, but in a few minutes was roused by the same startling summons. Running to his door he was again confronted by black nothingness and silence. When the door had been shut again a third knock resounded through the house. Again nothing. He seized his hat and walked through his garden. As he returned he noticed a dark form lurking behind a laurel bush, and in a moment dragged it out by the collar. By the light of the hall lamp a shamefaced young man was discovered, who had come

to give notice of his banns. Bashfulness, perhaps remorse, had seized him at the sound of his own knocking, and prompted him to seek the nearest hiding-place.

In days remote the parson's approval of the bride-elect was sometimes sought before the banns were published, and a shy young man would present his sweetheart to the rector "hoping as 'ow she'd do." The rector having approved the selection made by the individual, he was asked to put up the banns.

Residence in the parish is, of course, required of those who desire their banns to be proclaimed, and an expectant bride and bridegroom must qualify themselves by staying several nights in the parish where such banns are published.

"Do you sleep in the parish?" asked a rector of an intending benedict.

"Yes, sir, I have slept through several of your sermons," was the surprising answer.

The parson when baptizing the children of his flock is often troubled by the names which are given at the font. One poor babe whom I baptized had six names; they were too heavy a burden for the little one, who soon passed away from earth. You can never be quite sure whether you are intended to christen a child Ellen or Helen. I have given examples of curious names in my former book. An old rector was exasperated by some fine names which were given in answer to his query, "Name this child," and exclaimed, "I'll have no more of these fine names; I shall christen it plain 'John.'" He afterwards regretted his rashness, when told in the vestry that the child was a girl.

Dean Burgon was directed to christen a male child "Venus." He was most indignant. "How dare you ask me to call it any such name? It is not a man's name, but that of a wicked and abandoned female." The sponsor replied that the child's grandfather was so called, and soon an old man was seen tottering towards the font. Dean Burgon asked him if he was christened "Venus."

"Well, no, sir; I was christened 'Sylvanus,' but folks always call me 'Venus.'"

Politics in the pulpit are not usually desirable, although I am told that political sermons are the rule in certain other places of worship. One rector was accused of canvassing in the pulpit, and a great storm arose. Unfortunately he had written some notes on the canvassing card of one of the candidates for election, and when he raised the card to consult his notes, "Vote for B——" stared the congregation in the face. Their ruffled feelings were not easily allayed.

Long words often puzzle our rustics. A stranger was once inquiring about the vicar of a parish from one of his flock. "Is Mr. M—— the incumbent?"

"Well, sir, he's our vicar, but we don't call him an incumberance."

"Is he married?"

"No, sir, he's a calybeate."

"Is he High Church?"

"No, he's angelical"—presumedly Evangelical.

A parishioner once said to his neighbour who lived in the adjoining village, "We have the Gregorians in our church." His friend replied, "I did not know there was a family of that name in the parish." Another instance of the difficulty of the rustic with long words is that of the woman who came to the rectory to ask for "the loan of the eternity bag."

Scotch folk sometimes are very careful of their own ministers. Dr. Macleod was once sent for to visit a sick man. On arriving at the house he inquired—

"What church do you attend?"

"Barry kirk," replied the invalid.

"Why, then, did you not send for your own minister?"

"Na, na," replied the sick man, "we would not risk him. Do you no ken it's a dangerous case of typhoid?"

Many stories are told about Scotch ministers and their

flocks, and Dean Ramsay's collections reveal many quaint situations and curious specimens of humour. They are too well known to be here repeated. A friend tells me of a young minister who before the service began was rather anxious about his unruly locks, and wanted a mirror. "Can you get me a glass?" he asked the clerk. This official was absent some time, and then entered the vestry bearing a glass of whisky, and said, "Well, I've got one at last, but he will no mention it!"

Sometimes church officials are over-conscious of the dignity of their importance, and even their wives are not without a sense of reflected glory. On one occasion a new churchwarden's wife came late to church, just when the people were rising from their knees. She smiled genially and said, "Oh, pray don't rise for me; I don't expect it."

The old-time parson seldom went for a holiday. A month on the Continent was an unknown luxury to him. Perhaps his parishioners would have been all the better for the change sometimes. A gentleman once was talking to a farmer, and said, "I met your rector abroad; he did not look as if he wanted a rest." "Aye, but *we* did," was the curt and emphatic reply. An unfortunate clergyman who kindly officiated in the rector's absence was told by the churchwarden, "A much worse preacher would have done, but to tell the truth we could not find one." That reminds one of Canon Tetley's story of the rector who on his return was greeted with the remark, "I will say this for you, when you do go out, you never send us a worse one than yourself."

It is sometimes difficult to please every one. There had been a prolonged drought and so the rector prayed for rain. The next day a heavy storm raged and deluged the country. One of the parishioners remarked, "That's always the way with our parson; he always overdoes things."

The relations of parson and people are usually most intimate, friendly and harmonious. Sometimes there is "a storm in a tea-cup," but it soon blows over, if wise counsels prevail and neither party are too pig-headed and obstinate. I will conclude this chapter with a curious poem recently discovered among the family papers at Wasing Place, relating to sad disturbances in the Berkshire village of Aldermaston. All memory of the dispute has passed away, but the "Dialogue" records a sad state of affairs and a mighty quarrel about a May-pole. The "suitable reflections" are so very wise and sententious, that they are worth recording.

A DIALOGUE

Between a Country Gentleman and a Farmer, representing the true State of the Quarrel that hath long subsisted at *Aldermaston,* with suitable Reflections.

GENTLEMAN

Neighbour well met; the truth I fain wou'd learn
Of some Reports that give me great Concern.
Of late strange Rumours have assail'd my Ears,
That fill my Mind with ill-portending Fears.
Those Feuds that *Aldermaston* Town divide.—
Spring they from real Wrongs, or wounded Pride?
In Language plain, with free and honest Heart,
The Cause of Quarrel with your Priest impart.

FARMER

Good Sir, you wou'd too hard a Task command,
Had I more Words, more ready Wit at Hand
Than a plain Farmer, who can ne'er aspire
To argue Matters with a Priest, or 'Squire.
When to excess of Rage our Minds are wrought,
All Parties that contend, may be in Fault.
Now my Mind's free from partial Love or Hate,
I'll try with Truth my Story to relate.
We Farmers with our Priest at Variance are;
The Cause of this I'll honestly declare.

If we can him the chief Aggressor deem,
Can *he*, relentless, hope our just Esteem?
His Tongue was not from vile Abuse restrain'd:
This the Ill-Will of many Neighbours gain'd.
His Restless Temper ever interferes
In all Concerns, a Medler he appears.
His Railing does us simple Swains provoke
To some rough Answer, or too free a Joke.
When he shou'd gen'ral Truths in Public teach,
He does against our Persons plainly preach,
Good Ministers, that tenderly reprove,
To Penitence, and not Resentment, move.
Though rude in Speech, with Passion over-warm,
He thinks he does his Duty well perform.
Many good Qualities to him belong;
But if his Heart be good, his Head is wrong.
His Mind with much Book-Learning is supply'd;
His Zeal for Truth discretion does not guide.
    A childish Cause, unworthy to be nam'd,
His Breast of late with bitter Rage inflam'd.
To rear our May-pole, and new ornament
This Standard, all our Farmers did consent.
This Pole was long our Pride, long stood before
(Though now a Nuisance call'd) our Curate's Door.
He fum'd, he rav'd, much Mischief did foretel
From Lightning's Blast to All that near it dwell.
To the Great House he ran; infus'd the Flame
Into the 'Squire and his believing Dame.
Led by the present Feelings of the Heart,
They with blind Zeal espouse their Pastor's Part.
The Lady soon this Flame by Letters spread,
And almost robb'd our Tradesmen of their Bread.
Can you, good Sir, approve so rash a Deed?
This wild Attempt did not at last succeed.
Her Female Friend, with better Thoughts inspir'd
Yielding to Charity, with Writing tir'd,
Did to the Tradesmen help in need afford,
And on Submission to her Grace restor'd.
Why were the 'Squire and Dame so much enrag'd?
They shou'd as Mediators have engag'd?
Their milder Influence wou'd have All subdued;
No Strife or factious Riot had ensued.
Of Opposition 'tis the sad Event,

Men do much Mischief, and too late repent,
'Tis true, the May-pole oft has given Birth
To much unseason'd and indecent Mirth.
Most Villagers are riotous and bold,
And Farmers are not born to be controul'd.
Our Priest hath us presented, through some Grudge,
As grand Defaulters, to a Reverend Judge.
This Act the Doors of Peace hath closely barr'd,
And all our fondest Hopes of Union marr'd.
We now desert our proper House of Pray'r.
Like straggling Sheep to distant Folds repair.
While thus unfix'd and angry is the Mind,
From our own Shepherd, can we Comfort find?
'Tis self defence alone, a Reason fair,
That makes me these unwelcome Truths declare
In what a fad distracted State we live!
Can you, good Sir, some sage Instruction give?

GENTLEMAN

What Ills from Pride and headstrong Passions flow!
These are the Source and Origin of Woe.
By Pride from Innocence the Angels fell:
And can such Rage in Heav'nly Bosoms dwell?
Ambition damps the Joys of social Life,
And sows through ev'ry Rank the Seeds of Strife.
See! an Esquire, a Priest, (respectful Names!)
Yeomen and Tradesmen join'd by loving Dames,
About a *May-pole* in Rebellion rife!
Whilst all their Neighbours stare with wild Surprise.
Where is Man's Reason?—From what foolish Things,
What idle Trifles, serious Mischief springs!
Cou'd I the 'Squire and his brave Mate pourtray
Against a rustic Band in bold Array,
And at their side the hoary Champion draw:—
Who wou'd not Laugh that such a Picture saw?
But when we make Reflections grave and deep,
To see a Priest expos'd, who wou'd not Weep?
To raise a Laughter was not my Intent;
To work a Sense of Shame is all I meant.
'Tis my Heart's Wish that Civil Discord cease,
And Reason's Voice attune the Soul to Peace.
Whom in this Quarrel can we blameless call?

An uncomplying Spirit rules you all.
O! that my Verse had Charms to mend your Faults,
And move unquiet Souls to better Thoughts!
Let your good Sense by Charity be shewn,
'Twill cover Others Faults, and hide your Own.
View not small Foibles with too keen an Eye.
'Tis a Man's Praise to pass Transgressions by.
Where Education hath matur'd the Mind,
There greater Virtues we expect to find.
The Priest, the 'Squire, and the Partner of his Life,
Shou'd first step forth and terminate the Strife.
To ev'ry Farmer let the Curate send,
His best Respects, and treat him as a Friend,
The Yeoman's honest Heart with Joy may burn,
And all the Dues of Gratitude return.
The Worthy 'Squire with lib'ral Heart and Hand,
(His gen'rous Spouse will not his Wish withstand)
The chief Inhabitants shou'd entertain,
And let the matchless Singers lead the Train:
Thus Peace and Harmony will be restored again.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PARSON AND THE CHURCH

NO country in the world possesses such beautiful village and town churches as England. The mediæval masons have left us noble specimens of their art, and many villages possess a sweet gem of Gothic architecture wrought by men who put their hearts and lives, affection and religion into their work, and produced these unrivalled edifices. We should greatly reverence the relics of their handiwork which time has spared, and love them exceedingly. How have these churches fared at the hands of their custodians? They have been "restored," sometimes, and far too often restored off the face of the earth, and bran-new churches erected in their place in the style of "Victorian Gothic," or of Lewis Carroll's "Early Debased"—very early and very debased. Bishops are often æsthetically indifferent, while it is curiously supposed that "any architect can build a church," and the result is that the ecclesiastical fabric takes its colour from the predilections of a priest who "knows nothing about art, but does know what he likes"; from the rector who has discovered *Parker's Glossary*, or his wife who has visited some of the cathedrals, or from some architect who has been elaborately educated in the principles of Roman Renaissance, but who knows no more of Lombard or Byzantine or Gothic art than he does of the dynasties of ancient Egypt. Hence these churches of ours have

suffered terribly at the hands of such custodians. They have ruthlessly pulled down, or so heavily "restored," that if the ghost of one of the mediæval builders came to view his work he would scarcely recognise it after its severe mutilation. Well says Mr. Thomas Hardy, to restore the great carcases of mediævalism in the remote nooks of western England "seems a not less incongruous act than to set about renovating the adjoining crags themselves," and well might he sigh over the destruction and wanton pulling down of the grand old tower of Endelstow Church and the erection of what the vicar calls "a splendid tower designed by a first-rate London man—in the newest style of Gothic art and full of Christian feeling." [1]

Old churches, alas! will grow old and require some help for their quaking limbs and creaky walls. Do not kill them, as the Goths and Vandals killed the ancient church in my village half a century ago. Treat them reverently, carefully, as a cherished treasure, and let not a sacrilegious builder work his wicked will on the old fabric. Some foolish people think that if you find a Norman doorway or window the whole church is Norman, and must be restored in the Norman fashion. All the Decorated or Perpendicular windows must be pulled out and sham Norman ones inserted. If there be a bit of Renaissance work or Jacobean carving, they think all this must be cleared away. But all this is part of the history of the building written in stone, and should no more be disturbed than you would disturb a memorial of a dead father. If the parson is ignorant of the principles of architecture he should be made to learn, and not be allowed to play "ducks and drakes" with a venerable building which in a few days can be destroyed and never again replaced. Bishops should insist that the custodians of churches should know something of that which they custode. Archdeacons are supposed to inquire about the fabric of

[1] *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, by T. Hardy.

churches, but often are entirely ignorant about them. One archdeacon, when told that the windows in his church were Decorated, replied, "Oh yes, I consider them quite ornamental." The Decorated period of Gothic architecture seemed to him an unopened book.

Some wiseacres, the vicar and his churchwardens, once determined to pull down their old church and build a new one. So they met in solemn conclave, and passed the following sagacious resolutions:

"1. That a new church shall be built.

"2. That the materials of the old church shall be used in the construction of the new.

"3. That the old church shall not be pulled down until the new one be built."

How they contrived to combine the second and third resolutions history recordeth not.

Even when the church was spared the old-fashioned parson managed to be guilty of strange enormities in the embellishment and decoration of his church. Whitewash was vigorously applied to walls and pews, carvings by Grinling Gibbons, pulpit and font. If curious mural paintings adorned the walls, the hideous whitewash soon obliterated every trace, and produced "those modest hues which the native appearance of the stone so pleasantly bestows." But whitewash has one redeeming virtue: it preserves and saves for future generations treasures which otherwise might have been destroyed. Happily, all decoration of churches has not been carried out in the reckless fashion described in the following story told to me by the Rev. M. J. Bacon, of Swallowfield. An old Cambridgshire incumbent, who had done nothing to his church for years, was bidden by the archdeacon to brighten matters up a little, The whole of the woodwork wanted repainting and varnishing, a serious matter for a poor man. His wife, a very capable lady, took the matter in hand. She went to the local carpenter and wheelwright,

and bought up the whole of his stock of that particular paint with which farm-carts and wagons are painted, coarse but serviceable, and of the brightest possible red, blue, green, and yellow hues. With her own hands she painted the whole of the interior, pulpit, pews, doors, &c., and probably the wooden altar, using the colours as her fancy directed, or more probably as the various paints held out. The effect was remarkable. A succeeding rector began at once the work of restoration, scraping off the paint and substituting oak varnish; but when my correspondent took a morning service for him the work had not been completed, and he preached from a bright green pulpit.

The care of the churchyard, though it is the parson's freehold, often devolves upon the churchwardens. How tenderly should God's acre be cherished! How dear is it to those who have friends and relations sleeping in their last resting-place! In the country it is difficult to keep the churchyard like a garden, with carefully mown grass and flowers and trimmed shrubs. In olden times little care was bestowed upon them.

> "Here nauseous weeds each pile surround,
> And things obscene bestrew the ground;
> Skulls, bones, in mouldering fragments lie,
> All dreadful emblems of mortality."

Thus "God's acre" is described in Webb's collection ot epitaphs, published in 1775, a sad picture of dreariness and gloom. Until the year 1856, the churchyard of Chipping Norton was let to a butcher for grazing sheep, probably by the vicar, and for this reason it was assessed to the poor-rate in the revaluation of the borough. An old lady once told an aged correspondent[1] that she never purchased meat from old ——, the butcher, as she thought that the sheep grazing in the churchyard gave the mutton such a

[1] Mr. Charles Holmes, of Ilfracombe.

deathly taste. Even parsons turned into the churchyard their cows and horses, which trampled down the graves, as Gay tells in his "Shepherd's Week":

> "Lest her new grave the parson's cattle rage,
> For both his cow and horse the churchyard graze."

A rector once sowed part of his churchyard with turnips, and when his archdeacon objected and said that he hoped he might not see turnips again when he came in the following year, replied, "Certainly not, 'twill be barley next year."

The clerk of another parish was very indignant when he was ordered to discontinue his usual practice of growing potatoes in an unused part of God's acre. A careless and indifferent clerk, who has no reverence for either church or churchyard, who will leave untidy corners with heaps of disused decorations, and do many things he ought not, and leave undone many things which he alone can do, is a great burden to a parson and vexes his righteous soul continually.

But the clerk was no worse than his master in olden days. We have a wonderfully attractive picture of the better sort of churchyard in Gray's beautiful "Elegy," but the charming God's acre at Stoke Poges, now so carefully tended, with roses lining the path, was then "this neglected spot." And then there were the terrible epitaphs! See how they abound in rude jokes and profane jestings. Even in the precincts of a cathedral we find the following:

> "Here rests in peace a Hampshire grenadier,
> Who kill'd himself by drinking poor small beer;
> Soldier, be warned by his untimely fall,
> And when you're hot, drink strong, or none at all."

And then there are the church decorators, the good ladies who devote themselves to the adorning of the church with flowers and wreaths on great festivals. What evil do these

good people work! In former times the clerk used to decorate the church at Christmas by sticking sprigs of holly into holes at the corners of the old square pews. Then came the Oxford Movement and increased respect for ecclesiastical fabrics. The church had to be decorated at Christmas, Easter, and other great feasts, and at harvest festivals. Ladies and curates spent their time in hammering great nails into ancient woodwork. Screens, pulpits, reredos, choir-stalls, and lectern were all treated in the same barbarous fashion, and many a fine piece of carving and delicately moulded screen which had survived the iconoclastic zeal of the Puritans, have been ruined by these terrible decorators. We are learning better now: but it is too late to repair the damage done in former years.

The story of the architectural taste that prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a sorry one. The love of Gothic art had completely died. Evelyn thought that the mediæval cathedrals had no merits to redeem them from contempt, and Wren pronounced them unworthy of the name of architecture. What vandalism has been wrought in our cathedrals by such men as Wyatt! Happily the old country parson was at that time quite content with his dilapidated church, and did not attempt to "restore." Bishop Secker, in one of his charges, in 1710, gives a gloomy picture of the houses of God: "Some, I fear, have scarce been kept in necessary present repair, and others by no means duly cleared from annoyances, which must gradually bring them to decay: water undermining and rotting the foundations, earth heaped up against the outside, weeds and shrubs growing upon them . . . too frequently the floors are meanly paved, or the walls dirty or patched, or the windows ill glazed, or it may be in part stopped up . . . or they are damp, offensive, and unwholesome." The old parson thought it was quite unnecessary to keep the church clean, and perhaps agreed with the Scotch minister whose wife

replied to a visitor's request, "The pew swept and lined! My husband would think it downright Popery."

Of the disturbances caused by pews we have already spoken. It must have been trying to the old-time parson to preach to a congregation almost hidden from him and comfortably reposing in cosy, sleep-provoking structures, curtained off and concealed from his gaze. If he from his towering "three-decker" could see them, the rest of the congregation could not. It is reported that sherry and biscuits were sometimes served by a livery servant to the occupants of one of these pews, and that a squire used to have his letters and newspapers delivered to him in his pew, and to read them during the sermon. Walpole tells of a good lady who was a benefactor to Gloucester Cathedral, and imagined that the soul of her daughter had passed into a robin. The Dean and Chapter allowed her to have a pew near the high altar, with a small corner cupboard for her bird. These pews were a nuisance and a disgrace, as the main body of the church was occupied by them, and the poor folk thrust back into cold and dark corners. Galleries, unsightly and disfiguring, came into fashion at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Indeed, in some London churches there were two or three tiers of galleries, like seats in a theatre, wherein fashion loved to exalt itself over the heads of people of no fashion.

If the whitewash spared anything it spared the tables of the Ten Commandments, sometimes supported by—

> "Moses and Aaron upon a church wall,
> Holding up the Commandments for fear they should fall."

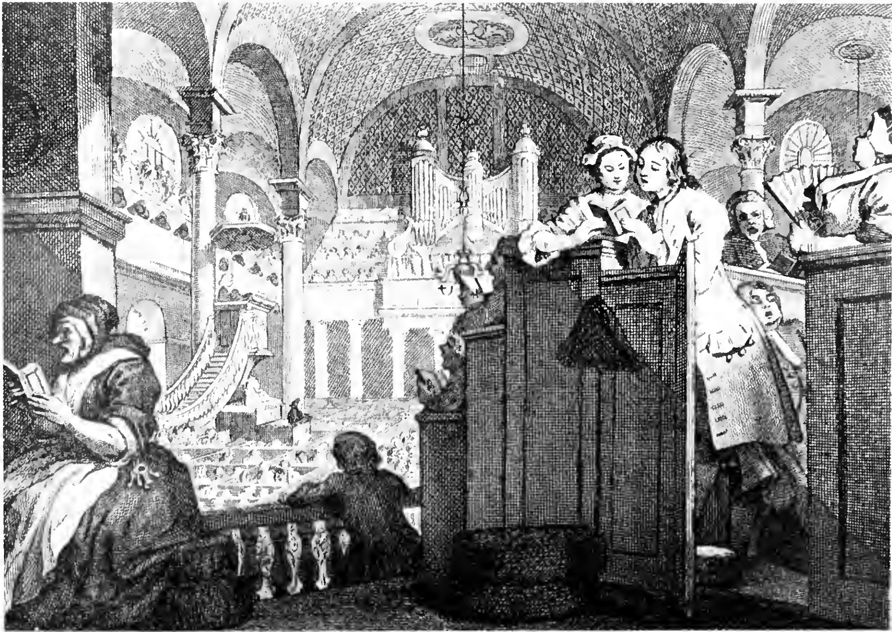
We have previously admired the mighty pulpit and its huge sounding-board crowned with a dove. The altar was usually small and insignificant, but sometimes it was embellished with odiously bad taste. What would modern people think of the altar of Leeds Parish Church, thus described with great satisfaction by the vicar in 1723:

"Our altar is adorned with three flower-pots upon three pedestals upon the wainscot, gilt, and a hovering dove upon the middle one; three cherubs over the middle panel, the middle one gilt, a piece of open carved work beneath, going down towards the middle of the velvet"? It all sounds very terrible! The sacred monogram was regarded as Popish and seldom seen, and the cross shared the same condemnation. The Rector of Whitechapel placed a picture of the Last Supper as an altar-piece, and ordered the artist to paint the portrait of Bishop Kennet of Peterborough for the face of Judas, taking care to introduce the doctor's great black patch on the forehead, lest any one might not understand the meaning of this amiable caricature so worthy of God's house! The bishop had opposed Sacheverell, the favourite of the High Church party, and so merited the displeasure of this good rector. Of course its removal was at once ordered.

In country churches the services were not very frequent. Three or four parishes were grouped together, and one parson tried to divide himself into as many parts, and take as many services as he could, perhaps one in each church. The attendance was meagre, and in London during the early part of the eighteenth century when people did attend they behaved badly. Irreverence was constant. Persons looked about, whispered, talked, and laughed or slept. Sometimes people followed the Dutch fashion of William III. and kept their hats on during service. The poor Vicar of Codrington in 1692 suffered terrible things. He found people playing cards on the Communion-table, and when they chose the churchwardens they used to sit in the Sanctuary smoking and drinking, the clerk gravely saying, with a pipe in his mouth, that such had been their custom for the last sixty years. Such were some of the troubles which our predecessors had to contend with.

In the changes which our churches have witnessed the

parson, doubtless, played a prominent part, and was often a very ineffective custodian of his church's treasures. Those valuable churchwardens' account-books, old registers, records of briefs, and much else, are often missing from the parish chest. Fonts and screens, hour-glass frames, relics of funeral achievements, heraldic helme, crests, gauntlets, coat-armour, and fragments of banners have been removed and carted away as "old rubbish." But we are learning better now, and the modern parson is not usually so woefully ignorant as to despise the treasures which his church contains, or so careless about their safety as his predecessors.



AN OLD-TIME CHURCH WITH ITS "THREE DECKER"

(HOGARTH'S "INDUSTRIOUS 'PRENTICE")

CHAPTER XIV

THE PARSON PREACHING

"THE country parson preacheth constantly; the pulpit is his joy and his throne." So wrote the saintly George Herbert, when pulpits began to multiply in England, and those quaint and curious Jacobean structures arose and astonished the eyes of the rustics. It must not be supposed that, although mediæval pulpits are comparatively rare, the duty of preaching was neglected in pre-Reformation times. There is abundant evidence to the contrary. Chaucer's "poure parson of a town" used certainly to instruct his flock. Sermons were not so frequent as they are now. In the thirteenth century every priest was ordered to instruct his people four times a year in the vernacular, explaining the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the evangelical precepts, and other sacred truths. Elsewhere we find orders issued for this to be done every Sunday and holiday. Moreover books were issued for the guidance of preachers, and, as we have seen, at visitations the sidesmen were asked whether the clergyman gave them proper instruction, and some amusing answers were received, showing that the rustic of the fifteenth century was not unlike his modern descendant in posing as a severe critic of his rector's sermons.

The preaching of the Elizabethan divines was often delightfully quaint and curious. There was a certain Thomas Drant, the first metrical translator of Horace in

the English language, who preached a famous Spital Sermon on the Poverty of the Clergy. Thus he discoursed:

"Howbeit I am not ignorant how many a poor minister of these times is like Elizas" (Elisha, see 2 Kings iv. 10). "He had not pen, nor ink, nor table, nor candlestick, but as his hosts allowed him; and these poor God's men must be helped by their host or hosts, or one friend or another, with coat and cap, and cup and candle, and study and table, or else they shall be harbourless and helpless; and needs must I further yet say, that in many a poor scholar in the universities Christ Himself is full of hunger and necessity. These be the noble sons of the prophets, and most apt of all others to be the builders of God's temple; yet have I seen many a good wit many a long day kept low and lean, or to be made broken with hunger and abject with poverty. I do not know the liberality of this city towards both these places, only this I can say, that less than the tenth part of that which is nothing but surfeit and sickness to the great excessive eaters of this town, would cherish and cheer up hungry and thirsty Christ in those His hunger-starved members right well." Vigorously does the preacher reproach the city for its gluttony, and coarsely graphic are his delineations. Perhaps he had dined recently with some of the City companies. The menus of the period reveal an amazing abundance of good fare; perhaps, like some other preachers, he had partaken of the dainties, enjoyed his dinner, and then posed as an advocate for "the simple life." However, few modern clergy would have been so very plain in their denunciations in the presence of the civic authorities and over-fed aldermen. This is what Mr. Drant said: "Lord, here is the rich glutton to be seen up and down and round about the town. Their horses *chew* and *sper* upon gold and silver, and their mules go under rich velvet. Dogs are dear unto them, and feed

most daintily. Here is scarcely anything in the upper sort, but many a foolish Nabal scruping and scoutching, eating and drinking, and suddenly and unworthily dying. The eyes of Judah are said to be red with drinking, but much of this people have their faces red with continual quaffing and carousing. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be full of bread, but these Londoners are more than full, for they are even bursten with banqueting, and sore and sick with surfeiting. Lord, Thou whistlest to them, and they hear Thee not; Thou sendest Thy plague among them, and they mind Thee not. Lord, we are lean; Lord, we are faint; Lord, we are miserable; Lord, we are Thy members. Lord, therefore, Thou art lean; Lord, Thou art faint; Lord, Thou art miserable."

A noble band of able and convincing "painful" preachers were the clergy of the early Reformation period. A study of those fifty-five volumes of the Parker Society's publications, containing the writings of Ridley, Sandys, Pilkington, Roger Hutchinson, Grindal, Hooper, Cranmer, Coverdale, Jewel, James Calfhill, Whitgift, Woolton, Nowell, and others, shows that there were giants in the earth in those days. These were erroneously styled the "Fathers of the English Church," but the English Church did not begin at the Reformation, and knows no Fathers, but the "ancient Fathers" to whose authority she appeals so frequently in the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer. Of these famous men Latimer is the best example the English Church can show of the popular preacher. Andrewes and Donne and some others appeal to educated minds, but Latimer addresses himself to the consciences of Englishmen of all classes, and inculcates continually the law of righteousness. Every one knows the title of his Sermons on the Card, but I expect that few people nowadays have read them. "Now ye have heard what is meant by this first card, and how ye ought to play. Next Sunday I will deal you a card of the same suit," were the familiar

words he used.[1] By this conceit the popular preacher strove to catch the attention of Cambridge undergraduates, and to inculcate wholesome lessons. Here is an extract taken from the second Sermon on the Card, which is a good example of his style and method:

"Be not ashamed to do thy Master's and Lord's will and commandment. Go, as I said, unto thy neighbour that is offended by thee, and reconcile him whom thou hast lost by thy unkind words, by thy scorns, mocks, and other disdainous words and behaviour, and be not nice to ask of him the cause why he is displeased with thee: require of him charitably to remit; and cease not till you both depart, one from the other, true brethren in Christ. Come not to thy neighbour whom thou hast offended, and give him a pennyworth of ale, or a banquet, and so make him a fair countenance, thinking that by thy drink or dinner he will show thee like countenance. I grant you may both laugh and make good cheer, and yet there may remain a bag of rusty malice, twenty years old, in thy neighbour's bosom."

His sermons throw light on the condition of the country at the time, the effect of the dissolution of the monasteries on rural life, the development of the wool trade, the decay of agriculture, and the increase of beggars. It would take too long to quote that interesting passage which describes his yeoman father's household, and of the decay of education owing to suppression of schools. He used to attract the attention of his hearers by his good stories and merry tales, *e.g.*, of the good lady who always attended the preachings at the church of St. Thomas of Acres, the mercers' chapel, because "she never failed to get a good nap there." He was very homely in his illustrations. He speaks of the covetous man's mind being always "on his

[1] Fuller writes that when, a century later, a clergyman imitated these familiar allusions he was interrupted by peals of laughter from his congregation.

AN OLD HOUR GLASS AT NAISEMORE

halfpenny," of the swineherd calling his pigs, saying: "Come to thy mingle-mangle, come pur, come pur," and translates "*Num et vos seducti estis?*" "What, ye brain-sick fools, ye hoddy-pecks, ye doddy-pouls, ye huddes, are ye seduced also?" It must be remembered that the people were very ignorant in his day, and in spite of the instructions with regard to preaching in pre-Reformation days, the mass of the poor folk could not even recite the Lord's Prayer.

Sermons used to be terribly long. George Herbert says: "The parson exceeds not an hour in preaching, because all ages have thought that a competency," and in order to remind the preacher of the flight of time the hour-glass became a constant addition to the Jacobean pulpit. But its restraining influence was not always exercised, and some preachers delighted in turning the glass. A rector of Bilbury, Gloucestershire, used always to do this, and preached sermons which lasted two hours. The squire of the parish used to retire after the text had been given out, and return in time for the blessing. Daniel Burgess of whimsical memory never preached without an hour-glass, and he frequently saw the sand run out three times during one sermon. On one occasion he was preaching against drunkenness, and some of his hearers began to yawn at the end of the single glass, but Daniel was not to be silenced by a yawn; he turned his time-keeper, desired his congregation to be patient awhile longer, for he had much more to say about the sin of drunkenness; "therefore," he added, "my friends and brethren, we will have another glass, and then——!"

The Commonwealth preachers were terrible sinners in the matter of the length of their sermons, preaching being then considered the essential part of the service, far more important than worshipping and praying to God. One Stephen Marshall astonished his hearers by declaring at the beginning of his sermon that he divided his text into

twenty-four parts. It is said that one of the congregation took alarm, and started off home for his nightcap and slippers.

The seventeenth and eighteenth century preacher used to choose strange and curious titles for his sermons in order to attract the attention of the vulgar. Here are a few of these titles:

"Baruch's Sore Gently Opened, and then Salve Skilfully Applied." "The Church's Bowel-complaint." "The Snuffers of Divine Love." "The Spiritual Mustard-pot to make the Soul Sneeze with Devotion." "A Pack of Cards to win Christ." "The Nail hit on the Head." "The Wheel Turned." "Two Sticks made One." "Cuckledom's Glory; or, the Horns of the Righteous Exalted." "A Funeral Handkerchief." "Sixpennyworth of the Divine Spirit."

With such strange fodder did the former pastors feed the sheep of the flock of Christ.

The preaching of old sermons, suitable at one time to some special occasion which had passed away, has been a snare to some preachers. The Great Plague in London called forth many pulpit utterances which were intended to show that the dread visitation was a punishment for great national sins. Unfortunately a preacher, being hurriedly called to address a congregation, took up one of these discourses, and astonished the inhabitants of a country town, after reproving vice, by saying: "For these vices it is that God hath visited you and your families with that cruel scourge, the plague, which is now spreading everywhere in this town." The people were terribly frightened, and the Mayor at once advanced to the pulpit and exclaimed:

"For God's sake, sir, where is the plague, that I may take measures to prevent it spreading?"

The preacher calmly answered:

"The plague, sir? I know nothing about the plague; but whether it is in the town or not, it is in my sermon."

An Irish clergyman, who was of the *genus* "guinea-pig," inherited a large collection of his father's sermons, who had been the vicar of a parish for many years. The son, when taking the duty at a country church, where he had never been before, armed with one of his sire's sermons taken at random, rather astonished the congregation by beginning his discourse: "Dear brethren, as this is the fortieth anniversary of my first coming to this parish," &c.

A Hampshire clergyman who lived in the hop district, who was learned in study of the eyes, and often read papers at the Ophthalmic Society's meetings, once found himself in a somewhat similar quandary. One Sunday morning, when in the pulpit, he pulled out his sermon, as he thought, but to his horror discovered that it was one of his lectures on optics. He was greatly distressed and knew not what to do. At last he began, "My brethren, the text I am about to give you is so well known to you that it is immaterial to give you the reference: 'The eye of the Lord seeth all things.'" He then read his lecture on optics. After service he met some of the farmers, and one of them told him what a capital sermon it was and how much they all enjoyed it, "but I know you'll excuse me, sir; there was one mistake as you made all through the sermon—you kept on calling 'em *hop sticks;* now we all in this part of the country call them *hop poles*."

In Charles II.'s time it was the fashion to introduce humour into sermons. Dr. Robert South was one of the lights of the seventeenth century. On one occasion, preaching before the Court, he observed that most of his congregation were asleep. Suddenly he called out to Lord Lauderdale, "I am sorry to interrupt your repose, my lord; but I beg you not to snore so loudly lest you awaken his Majesty." On another occasion, when preaching on the text, "The lot is cast into the bag," he made the following curious remarks: "And who that beheld such a bankrupt, beggarly fellow as Cromwell, first enter-

ing Parliament with a threadbare torn cloak, greasy hat, neither of them, perhaps, paid for, would have suspected that in the space of so few years he should be the cause of the murder of one king and of the banishment of another, and ascend the throne?" Charles II., when he heard this, fell into a fit of laughter, and turning to Dr. South's patron, Mr. Lawrence Hyde, afterwards Lord Rochester, said, "Odds fish, Lorry, your chaplain must be a bishop. Put me in mind of him at the next death." Bishop Burnet says of him that he laboured much to compose his sermons, and in the pulpit worked up his body when he came to a piece of wit. This was so pungent as to occasionally violate the sanctity of the pulpit. Perhaps his curate at Islip caught something of the same complaint, when, being disappointed of a chapelry which he expected South to procure for him, he took for his text, when preaching in his rector's presence, "Promotion cometh neither from the east nor the west, nor yet from *the* (thee) South."

Another startling preacher described the terrors of the Last Judgment so vividly as to draw forth the fears and shrieks of hearers. Suddenly he bade them dry their tears, as he had something more awful to say. There was a dead silence. Then he added: "Yes! it is awful to think that a few minutes after leaving this church you will treat all you have heard as a tale that is told."

Dr. Richard Bentley, of whimsical memory, the learned Cambridge divine, has left us an example of tremendous eloquence in his sermon preached before the University on Gunpowder-plot Day, 1715. It is remarkable as having been unscrupulously "borrowed" by Sterne, and inserted into the sermon read by Corporal Trim in *Tristram Shandy*. After speaking of the various corruptions introduced into Christianity by the Romish clergy, such as purgatory, pardons, relics, &c., he proceeds: "I might now go on to show you a more dismal scene of

impostures—*judicia Dei*—the judgments of God, as they blasphemously called them, when no human evidence could be found—their trials by ordeal—by taking a red-hot iron in the hand—by putting the naked arm into hot, boiling water—by sinking or swimming in pools and rivers, when bound fast hand and foot—all of them borrowed or copied from pagan knavery and superstition; and so manageable, by arts and sleights, that the party could be found guilty or innocent, just as the priests pleased, who were always the tryers. What bribes were hereby procured, what false legacies extorted? What malice and revenge executed? On all which, if we should fully dilate and expatiate, the intended tragedy of this day, which now calls for our consideration, would scarce appear extraordinary." He then states that the fate designed for the victims of this Plot would have been far better than the slow "anguish of mock trials and the peaceful executions by fire and faggot. If the other schemes have appeared to be the shop, the warehouse of Popery, this may be justly called its slaughter-house and its shambles. Hither are haled poor creatures (I should rather have said *rich*, for that gives the most frequent suspicion of heresy), without any accuser, without allegation of any fault. They must inform against themselves, and make confession of something heretical, or else undergo the discipline of various tortures—a regular system of ingenious cruelty, composed by the united skill and long successive experience of the best engineers and artificers of torment. That savage saying of Caligula's, horrible to speak or hear, and fit only to be writ in blood—*Ita feri, ut se mori sentiat*, is here heightened and improved. *Ita se mori sentiat, ut ne moriatur*, say these merciful inquisitors. The force, the effect of every rack, every agony, are exactly understood. This stretch, that strangulation, is the utmost nature can bear; the least addition will overpower it: this posture keeps the weak soul hanging on the lip, ready

to leave the carcass and yet not suffered to take its wing; this extends and prolongs the very moment of expiration; continues the pangs of dying without the ease and benefit of death. O pious and proper methods for the propagation of the faith! O true and genuine Vicar of Christ, the God of Mercy, and the Lord of Peace!" Well might the Corporal express his feeling of the tremendous energy of this sermon, by saying "he would not read another word of it for all the world."

Laurence Sterne revived in his time the introduction of humour into sermons. Taking for his text, "It is better to go into the house of weeping than into the house of laughter," he exclaimed, "That I deny. Sorrow is better than laughter for a crack-brained Carthusian, I grant, but not for men of the world." In his sermon on Shimei, he cried, "Thou hast corrupted posterity; go where you will you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through mire and clay. Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune." Dr. Johnson and Sir Walter Scott liked his sermons, which are fuller of literary talk than of doctrine. Yet Johnson, who held a high estimation of both bishops and clergy, was very severe on parsons who assumed the lax jollity of men of the world. "This merriment of parsons is mighty offensive," the doctor once said, in the hearing of some of these light-hearted clerics, at a party at Mrs. Beauclerk's.

The taking of texts has sometimes entailed serious consequences. Dr. Sheridan lost all chance of preferment by unfortunately, on the birthday of King George I., when preaching before the Court, selecting the verse: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." It has often been said that Dean Hook lost a bishopric by taking the text, when preaching before Queen Victoria, "Hear the Church." Archbishop Whately said that he might as well have chosen the words, "Hang all the Lords and Parliament." But the truth of the story has been denied, and it

is extremely improbable that the late Queen would have been offended by such a sermon or opposed the preferment of so good a man.

Extempore preaching has been responsible for many unfortunate slips. An eloquent preacher once admonished his hearers with the sage advice, "Let not the world rob you of the peace which it can neither give nor take away." Another, discoursing upon the Cities of the Plain, described them as "Cities now so utterly perished, that it is doubtful whether they ever existed."

A curate once seriously offended the members of his congregation by remarking in his sermon, "Some people come to church to show off their best clothes; but I am thankful to see that none of you, dear friends, can have come for that purpose." Another young cleric got rather mixed in his metaphors, and astonished his hearers by saying, "Is there a spark of grace in any heart here? Water it! Water it!"; and another remarked in the pulpit, "I am sorry to see so many absent friends."

I have already alluded to the Rev. Leonard Bacon, of Southey's *Love Story*. His preaching never fell short of fifteen minutes in length, and seldom extended to half an hour. One sermon on each Sunday was deemed sufficient, and was generally abridged from some good old divine. His own compositions were few; and his whole stock might be considered scanty in these days; but there was not one in it which would not well bear repetition, and the more observant of his congregation liked that they should be repeated. His habit of freely resorting to the divines of an older age proceeded from his own good sense and natural humility. His only ambition was to be useful, and to think of distinguishing himself in any way would for him, he well knew, be an idle dream. His congregation, though illiterate, noticed a difference in the style of his sermons when they were derived from Bishop Hall or Sanderson, or Jeremy Taylor, or Barrow, or South, or

Scott, but never troubled themselves about the cause not being in the least aware of it. That all, even of the adults, would listen and that all even of those who did would do anything more than hear he was too well acquainted with human nature to expect.

A woman in humble life was asked one day on the way back from church whether she had understood the sermon. "Wud I hae the presumption?" was her simple and contented answer.

Some people with much devotion always look up the text in their Bibles when it is given out by the preacher. A very cantankerous old gentleman used to attend a church I wot of, and a very charming lady who had designs upon a legacy was diligent in finding the places for him in his hymn-book and Prayer-book. The parson began his sermon with the words, "It is written in the fifth chapter of St. John's Gospel at the sixth verse. . . ." The kind lady looked out the place and handed the Bible to the cantankerous gentleman, who declined it with a wave of his hand, saying, "I'll take his word for it," as if the only object of searching the Scriptures for the text was to convict the parson of a mistake in case he had made one.

Fuller tells of the difficulty of ever arousing much interest in the minds of old-fashioned congregations, who were too dull and dense to understand the sermon, and never made much effort to try. Here is a story which bears this out.

"Well, Master Jackson," said the parson, walking homeward after service with an industrious labourer, who was a constant attendant: "Well, Master Jackson, Sunday must be a blessed day of rest for you, who work so hard all the week. And you make a good use of the day, for you are always to be seen at church."

"Ah, sir," replied Jackson, "it is indeed a blessed day. I works hard enough all the week, and then I comes to

church o' Sundays, and sets me down, and lays my legs up, and thinks o' nothing."

Can anything be more disheartening to a poor country parson than to have a congregation composed of such people, of men and women who "think o' nothing," whose minds are asleep, if not their bodies?

A vicar of a considerable village one mile from a town, after putting on his gown to preach, used to ascend the pulpit, read a collect, and give out his text. You were not at all sure even then that he would preach a sermon, for on many occasions, both in summer and winter, he did not, but would say, "I have a beautiful sermon to preach to you on the text I have given out, but" (*summer*) "it is such a beautiful afternoon, that I think you will gain as much good by revelling in the sunshine and noticing the Almighty's work"; or (*winter*) "it is really so bitterly cold this afternoon that I am sure we should all be better by being near our own comfortable fire-sides," ending with, "So now to God," &c.[1]

It sometimes unfortunately happens that parsons forget to bring their sermons with them to church. If the rectory is near the church the mistake is easily remedied, but if they are far separated, or if the parson is preaching in another parish, some little inconvenience may be caused. Even a learned and able extempore orator, who is now an American bishop, was once placed in this difficulty. He had promised to preach an important sermon to a large and educated congregation. He had prepared and written it most carefully. The sermon-case in which he thought he had placed it was in his cassock pocket. He marched to the pulpit of this church in Oxford, placed his sermon-case unopened on the desk, and when the last strains of the hymn preceding the sermon had died away, he opened his case, and discovered—a blank! He had scarcely a moment to recall the text and recover from the shock;

[1] Contributed by Mr. William Williams, of Bristol.

but there is little doubt that he came through the ordeal fairly well.

Preaching to one's own people in a country church, the situation is not so trying. But in former days, when extempore preaching was not so usual, and parsons always wrote their sermons, which, mellowed with age, did duty again and again, it was not so easy for them to dispense with the MS. In the early years of the last century the village of Wolvercote had no resident clergyman, and the church was served from Oxford by a college tutor who was a stranger to the congregation. On one occasion the intending preacher mounted the pulpit, and then discovered that he was without his sermon. He showed some hesitation, an awkward pause ensued, the congregation remained expectant, and then the clergyman pronounced the ascription, "Now to God the Father," &c., and immediately descended the stairs without any observation or explanation. This seems to have made more impression upon the minds of the congregation than the most eloquent discourse. In 1830 it was told by Mr. Williams, the son of the principal farmer in Wolvercote, to my kind and aged correspondent Dr. Charles Holmes, of Ilfracombe, and after the lapse of nearly a century is here recorded.

The sporting parson the Rev. Thomas Chambers, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and rector of Swerford, was more ingenious. On one occasion, about the year 1847, when in the pulpit, he found that he had left his sermon on his study table. So he beckoned to his groom and factotum, and told him to run to the house and bring it. The hymn before the sermon was dying away, and the groom had not returned. Something had to be done. So the rector gravely announced:

"I have been so much pleased with the singing of this hymn, that I am sure I am expressing the feeling of the congregation when I ask that the last verse may be sung again."

The rector used to add when telling the story, "Although I knew John was bad on his pins, as soon as I had started them I would have backed him for a hundred (pounds)."

It is, perhaps, not an unusual thing for a clergyman to preach learned sermons which are entirely above the heads of his congregation. Even in the present day, although people are more educated than they used to be, or at least have a smattering of knowledge, such sermons are not unknown. The old-time parson had often to contend with gross ignorance and an entirely unlearned audience. But this did not daunt him. The Dean of Hereford tells me of a wonderful old parson who flourished in Shropshire, a man learned in the writings of the Fathers, who used to discourse wonderful sermons, take great folio volumes into the pulpit, and read extracts and notes in order to prove some obscure point of doctrinal theology. His congregation was entirely composed of illiterate farmers and rustics, and his sermons were very long and very abstruse and delivered with much vigour, as if the preacher were arguing with some learned antagonist, or uttering some pronouncement upon which the faith of Christendom depended. It was a dark, wintry afternoon. The candles were lighted in the pulpit, and there stood the preacher surrounded by great tomes, to which he occasionally referred, and was thoroughly wound up. Time went on: the few farmers in the church were tired and wanted to get home to tea. Gradually they slunk away, favoured by the darkness of the church, and there was no one left but his clerk. He bore patiently some long quotations from Augustine and other divines, and at last could stand it no longer. So he addressed the preacher:

"Sir, when you've done, p'r'aps you'll blow out them candles, lock the door, and put key under th' mat."

So the parson was left in solitude to finish his discourse.

Dean Herbert, of Manchester, a pronounced Whig of the Charles James Fox school, when preaching in the old collegiate church of that city, now the cathedral, was rather fond of occasionally inveighing against the teaching of the Fathers. His views were very divergent from those of the worthy and learned Canon Parkinson. Upon one occasion the Dean administered a severe philippic upon Tertullian. Canon Parkinson was annoyed, but he only remarked:

"Well, Mr. Dean, Betty Jones"—a poor old woman, and a regular worshipper at the collegiate church in those days—"will never care to read Tertullian again, after your attack and exposure of his character."

These two worthies, the canon and the dean, were always having passages of arms, and sometimes the Dean got the better of his doughty antagonist. In this church two candlesticks and candles always stood on the altar, and had been there ever since the time of Edward VI., being the two great lights mentioned as permitted ornaments in every church. When the dean was away from the cathedral, for some reason the candles were removed from the sticks. The dean happening to return, found the candles again missing, and complained to the canon:

"Parkinson, Parkinson, how is it that when I am here the candles are not disturbed, but during my absence they are removed?"

"Well, Mr. Dean," replied the courteous canon, "you see it is a natural inference: when you are away the light is gone."

"Oh! Ah! I see; and I leave the sticks behind me," a rejoinder which no one would more enjoy than the canon himself.

Canon Parkinson was a wonderful man, with an amazing readiness in speaking on any occasion. He was a great favourite with the operatives of Manchester

and entirely fearless. They asked him to preside at some meeting in the days of the Chartist agitation and riots. He readily assented, and was, perhaps, the only clergyman who would have ventured among them, or whom they would have invited to their meetings. Passions were roused at the time, and strange language used by these enraged workers, before which pale the most rabid utterances of the modern Socialists. After a violent Antinomian harangue from one of the leaders of the Chartist movement, the old canon greeted him with a few words which aroused the laughter of the men and poured ridicule on the orator:

"That's right, Jim—thee stick to *Faith*—the less thee says about *Works* the better."

Another evidence of his ready wit was shown at a Students' Debating Society at St. Bees. One of the debaters, in a very excited manner and with strong indignation in his tones, inquired:

"What, sir, would the Apostle Paul have said could he have seen the life of luxury led by our present race of prelates and Church dignitaries, rolling about in their carriages, and living in their palatial residences?"

"Well," replied the canon with a merry glance, "I should think he would have remarked that 'things in the Church are decidedly looking up.'"

It is always well in preaching to use language which the congregation can understand. They make woeful mistakes sometimes. A Buckinghamshire rector once gave out the text "First Hebrews 9 and 10," whereupon an old-fashioned farmer called out "And a very pretty tipple too; *I* brews eight!" He explained afterwards to the rector that he meant eight bushels of malt to the hogshead. The rector called on him a few days later, pronounced the brewing excellent, and explained his text more fully and satisfactorily.

Bishop Blomfield had on one occasion to mourn over

the invincible ignorance of mankind. Preaching in Chesterfield to a congregation of country bumpkins, he took care to deliver an elementary sermon upon the text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Having, however, a misgiving that even this simple discourse might not be properly appreciated by the congregation, the bishop asked its representative, the churchwarden, his opinion of the sermon. "Eh, Mr. Blomfield, it wor a fine sermon; it wor that. But I cannot help still thinking myself that there *be* a God."

Bishop Blomfield owed to his sharp tongue and peremptory manner his early nickname of "Mr. Snaptrace." He had earned his nickname as Rector of Dunton, and earned it justly, to judge from a letter he wrote in 1816 about the subject of a Visitation sermon he was to preach at Aylesbury. "I was thinking," he writes in this letter to a friend, "of discussing the utility of learning to the clerical profession; but the mention of this might give offence to my worthy brethren in the Archdeaconry of Bucks, since it would be unpolite to hold forth in praise of a fair complexion to a party of negresses."

The good bishop was a little too severe upon the clergy, or the parsons of Buckinghamshire in his day must have been far below the general standard of clerical learning. Who can sum up the wisdom both of earth and heaven which has found utterance in our English pulpits? Volumes of sermons still flow from the press, and few of them do not contain some original thoughts, some devout meditations on holy truths which are eternally new as they are revealed to each man's soul. It has been often said that we have too many sermons in these days, and that the parson is unduly burdened by having to preach two or three times every week to the same congregation. Is that so? To any one who reads, studies, and meditates, the burden should not be so very insupportable. And as for hearing sermons the layman will,

perhaps, sometimes think of good George Herbert's sage counsel:

> "Judge not the preacher, for he is thy judge,
> If thou mislike him thou conceiv'st him not.
> God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge
> To pick out treasures from an earthen pot.
> The worst speak something good: if all want sense
> God takes a text, and preacheth patience."

CHAPTER XV

THE PARSON'S WIFE

NO book relating to the parson would be complete without a chapter devoted to his greatest comfort in life, the gentle consoler in all his many troubles, disappointments, and perplexities, his indefatigable helper in all his good works. She is one of the peculiar institutions of the English Church, and on the whole she is one to be proud of. There was a time when our English rectories and vicarages knew no such gentle occupant, and in other countries where the Roman Faith is dominant there is no such person, as celibacy is the enforced rule of the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy of the Eastern Church are allowed to marry, but the priest's wife is too often, like the priest himself, one whose education has been neglected, and who has but small influence with the laity. It is not much otherwise with the wives of the Protestant clergy of Northern Europe. The German Frau Pastorin may be, and very often is, a lady; but the difference between her and the vicaress is, that though she has an official title, which the Englishwoman has not, she has no official position. The English parson's wife, from the day she enters her vicarage, has a well-defined and assured place in the parochial hierarchy; and if she chooses, she usually occupies it without question. If for any reason the rectory lacks its mistress, the rector will undoubtedly hear of it. The old women will tell him, "We wants a lady at the

rectory, sir," and unless he be "one of them calybeats," as an old dame dubbed a determined celibate, he will doubtless be willing to oblige, if for no other reason.

The whole story of the gradual growth of celibacy is too long to be here narrated. "St. Peter was himself a married man," our marriage service assures us, and St. Paul contends that he and his brother apostles had "power to lead about a wife." During the fifth and sixth centuries there seems to have arisen a growing opinion in favour of celibacy. No General Council, however, ventured to prohibit such marriages; but Roman Pontiffs seemed ever eager to enforce celibacy. The Eastern Church always contended for freedom, and the Trullan Council in 691 A.D. expressly sanctions clerical marriages, and grounds its sanctions on the "apostolical canons," a decision which has never been revoked.

In the Western Church Popes thundered against such abominations as married priests, but in countries where the authority of the Roman Pontiff was not fully established, in Spain, Lombardy, Gaul, and Germany, clerical marriages were frequent. "Tell it not in Gath—or Rome" the Bishop of Chur, in the Grisons, in the seventh century, had a wife; nor was she ashamed of her position, but boldly signed documents styling herself *episcopa* or *antistita curiensis*. In our own country the priests of the British Church seem to have been married men, if we may judge from a question which Augustine asked of Gregory the Great. Saxon priests married in spite of Roman laws, nor were their marriages annulled or their children declared illegitimate until the latter part of the twelfth century.

St. Dunstan in England amongst his many reforms caused the clergy to put away their wives or to abandon their benefices, but his reformation was short lived, and grievous evils arose from the enforcement of celibacy. In the eleventh century both bishops and clergy in Italy and Germany had wives, and also those in Normandy and

Brittany. What excuse did they give for such conduct? It was forbidden by their Church. Perhaps they thought that it was a mere matter of ecclesiastical discipline, and not enjoined by the laws of God. They found that those who were responsible for the maintenance of the canons were not inclined to interfere with them, if there were no scandal, no open flaunting of their conduct. If a powerful bishop who resented interference had a wife, why should not a humble pastor? At any rate their conduct was better than that of those who lived uncleanly. Such, perhaps, were the thoughts of the parson of the period when he attempted to justify his conduct.

When the Pope and his subordinates tried more and more to enforce celibacy terrible evils were the results, which cannot be recorded here. They cannot be glossed over or explained away. The greatest of our English historians, writing of the parsons of the Middle Ages, states that "by the necessity of celibacy they were cut off from the interests of domestic life, relieved from the obligations to labour for wives and families of their own, and thus left at leisure for mischief of many sorts. Every town contained thus a number of idle men, whose religious duties filled but a small portion of their time, who had no secular responsibilities, and whose standard of moral conduct was formed upon a very low ideal. The history of clerical celibacy, in England as elsewhere, is indeed tender ground; the benefits which it is supposed to secure are the personal purity of the individual, his separation from secular ways and interests, and his entire devotion to the work of God and the Church. But the results, as legal and historical records show us, were very different. Instead of personal purity there is a long story of licensed and unlicensed concubinage, and, appendant to it, much miscellaneous profligacy and a general low tone of morality in the very point that is supposed to be secured."[1]

[1] *Constitutional History*, by W. Stubbs, D.D., Bishop of Oxford.

This is the conclusion of a wise and impartial historian, and he goes on to show that instead of a greater spirituality resulting from celibacy there was greater frivolity and much coarse vice. The higher classes of the clergy, it is refreshing to find, were free from any general faults of this kind. It is true that many of the twelfth-century bishops were fathers of families; but after that period the character of the English bishops was above reproach, save Bishop Burnall, who had five sons *nepotes suos seu filios* and several daughters *consanguineas ne dicam filias*, as a chronicler records.

However perfect in theory, the system never seems to have worked well in practice, and it was well that the marriage of clergy was again permitted after the Reformation. In that as in many other ecclesiastical concerns the Church of England only reverted to primitive practices. The parson's wife was again allowed to enter the doors of the rectory, and brought with her much happiness, more refined manners, many graces and virtues to which the old building had for some centuries been a stranger.

One of the first married parsons was Matthew Parker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. He and Margaret fell in love in the days of Henry VIII., and were engaged to each other for seven years, refusing to be married on account of the laws of clerical celibacy. Other rich suitors sought her hand, but she was faithful to him whom the laws of Holy Church forbade her to marry. When the restriction was withdrawn, they wedded, and Margaret was such a good wife that Ridley asked whether she had a sister, as he thought that if he could find one like her, he would abandon his resolution to remain a celibate. During the troubled times of persecution she showed wonderful patience in all her anxieties and much industry in helping to relieve her husband's wants; and when prosperity dawned, and Parker was raised to the throne of Canterbury, she remained the same good, pious, humble-minded

lady who had done so much to help her spouse during the various phases of his chequered life.

But there are wives—and wives. And not all the good parsons, or the good laymen, obtained treasures in that which has been pronounced the matrimonial lottery. The learned Richard Hooker was a great sufferer in this respect. The story of his courtship and wedding is curious. He was sent from Oxford by his College to preach at St. Paul's Cross, London, and journeyed thither for the purpose on horseback, much against his inclination, arriving wet, weary, and weather-beaten at the house where the preachers usually lodged. This was called the Shunammite's house, because there the preachers at St. Paul's Cross were entertained free of charge for three or four days. It was kept by Mr. and Mrs. Churchman, and the latter took special care of the wet and weary Mr. Hooker, giving him a warm bed and some excellent cordials for a cold, so that he was able to perform his duty. He was grateful to the good lady, who had seen better days, and so grateful that he believed all she said, especially when she told him that "he was a man of tender constitution; and that it was best for him to have a wife that might prove a nurse for him; such a one as might both prolong his life and make it more comfortable; and such a one she could and would provide for him, if he thought fit to marry." The good woman had determined that he should marry her daughter Joan, "who brought him neither beauty nor portion; and for her conditions, they were too like that wife's which is by Solomon compared to a dripping house; so that he had no reason to rejoice in the wife of his youth, but rather to say with the holy prophet, 'Woe is me that I am constrained to have my habitation in the tents of Kedar.'"

So humorously does Izaak Walton describe the beginnings of this unhappy marriage. A more unfortunate match was never made. Poor Hooker, the judicious as he is called in other matters, the most injudicious in this, was

drawn from the tranquillity of his college, from that garden of piety, of pleasure, of peace, and a sweet communion, into the thorny wilderness of a busy world, into those corroding cares that attend a married priest and a country parsonage. He was appointed to the living of Drayton-Beauchamp in Buckinghamshire in 1584, and found his wife a great trial to his patience. He was visited by his affectionate pupils Edwin Sandys and George Cranmer, who found him tending sheep in a field with the *Odes of Horace* in his hand, his servant having gone home to dinner and to assist his wife in some household duties. Walton quaintly describes the scene:

"When his servant returned and released him his two pupils attended him unto his house, where their best entertainment was quiet company, which was presently denied them; for Richard was called to rock the cradle, and their welcome was so like this, that they stayed but next morning, which was time enough to discover and to pity their tutor's condition; and having in that time remembered and paraphrased on many of the innocent recreations of their younger days, and by other such-like diversions given him as much present pleasure as their acceptable company and discourse could afford him, they were forced to leave him in the company of his wife, and seek themselves quieter lodgings. But at their parting from him Mr. Cranmer said:

"'Good tutor, I am sorry your lot is fallen in no better ground as to your parsonage, and more sorry your wife proves not a more comfortable companion after you have wearied your thoughts in your restless studies.'

"To whom the good man replied:

"'My dear George, if saints have usually a double share in the miseries of this life, I that am nothing ought not to repine at what our wise Creator hath appointed me, but labour, as indeed I do daily, to submit to His will, and possess my soul in patience and peace.'"

Mrs. Hooker must have been a sore trial to the good man for the remainder of his life. She survived her husband, and Churchmen are disposed to be very angry with her, not only on account of her harassing treatment of the quiet and peace-loving scholar, but because of her being accessory to the destruction of some portions of the books of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. She was, as it will have been gathered, an ignorant woman, and knew nothing of the value of her husband's writings. The three last books of his famous work were, it is believed, finished, and after his death Archbishop Whitgift began to make some inquiries concerning them, and the poor woman at length confessed that "one Mr. Clark and another minister that dwelt near Canterbury, came to her, and desired that they might go into her husband's study and look upon some of his writings; and that there they two burnt and tore many of them, assuring her that they were writings not fit to be seen, and that she knew nothing more concerning them." Thus the world is poorer by the loss of some of Hooker's works, and a pretty controversy arose about the genuineness of the last three books, which are said to have been completed by Dr. John Spencer from the rough draughts made by the author, though "they showed some shadows of resemblances to their father's face." The wife who was the cause of all this trouble quickly married again and died all within the space of four months. "But she is dead and let her other infirmities be buried with her," charitably concludes Master Izaak Walton.

As a contrast to Mrs. Hooker we will take the good wife of George Herbert. Their marriage was a hasty one, being concluded the third day after their first meeting; but, like many hasty marriages, it was never repented at leisure, "for the eternal Lover of mankind made them happy in each other's mutual and equal affections and compliance; indeed, so happy that there never was any opposition betwixt them, unless it were a contest which should most

incline to a compliance with the other's desires. And though this begot, and continued in them, such a mutual love, and joy, and content, as was no way defective; yet this mutual content, and love, and joy, did receive a daily augmentation by such daily obligingness to each other, as still added such new affluences to the former fulness of their divine souls, as was only improvable in heaven, where they now enjoy it." [1]

When he became Rector of Bemerton he gave her some homely advice which might have benefited the soul of Mrs. Proudy and other clerical wives of a like temper. He said to her:

"You are now a minister's wife, and must now so far forget your father's house, as not to claim a precedence of any of your parishioners; for you are to know that a priest's wife can challenge no precedence or place but that which she purchases by her obliging humility; and I am sure places so purchased do best become them. And let me tell you that I am so good a herald as to assure you that this is truth."

Many wives would have been offended, especially as she was a great lady, the daughter of the Squire of Bainton, Charles Danvers, a near kinsman of the Earl of Danby; but Mrs. Herbert was not of the stamp of Mrs. Proudy. She assured her husband that she would observe his rules with cheerful willingness. Her meekness and humility obtained for her the love and respect of all, and "this love followed her in all places as inseparably as shadows follow substances in sunshine." She was his almoner too, to whom he paid a tenth penny of what he received for tithes, and gave her power to dispose a tenth of the corn that came yearly to his barn, for the poor of his parish. She would often render an account of her stewardship, rejoiced in the employment, and spent the money in buying blankets and shoes for such poor people as she knew to

[1] *Life of George Herbert*, by Izaak Walton.

stand most in need of them. Was there ever a better parson's wife?

After Herbert's death she mourned for him and used to say, "Oh! that I had, like holy Mary, the mother of Jesus, treasured up all his sayings in my heart; but since I have not been able to do that, I will labour to live like him, that where he now is, I may be also." She was often heard to say, "Oh! that I had died for him." Her affection for her husband, however, did not prevent her from marrying again, her second spouse being Sir Robert Cook, of Highnam, Gloucestershire.

This part of the lady's conduct rather reminds one of the late Dr. Wordsworth, who made a romantic marriage. He first saw the lady in a gallery at the Louvre, and admired her exceedingly. He was introduced to her, married her, and then lost her at the birth of her child. He was, perhaps, the most graceful Latin poet of his age, and wrote the following beautiful lines for her epitaph, which defied translation until the late Lord Derby assayed the task. These are the lines:

M. S.
Conjugis Dulcissimæ
CAROLITTÆ WORDSWORTH,
quæ
Vixdum facta mater
Ex amplexu mariti
Sublata est
Nocte Ascensionis Domini
Maiæ x. MDCCCXXXIX.
I, nimium dilecta, vocat Deus: I, bona nostræ
Pars animæ: mærens altera disce sequi.

Lord Derby's translation runs as follows:

"Too dearly loved, thy God hath called thee: go,
Go, thou best portion of this widowed heart;
And then, poor remnant, lingering here in woe,
So learn to follow as no more to part."

It is a very touching and beautiful epitaph, but of course the overwhelmed and deserted husband quickly married again, and therein resembled Mrs. Herbert. It must have been also a little trying to Sir Robert Cook to hear so much of the lady's saintly husband, as she would often take occasion to mention the name of George Herbert, and to say, "That name must live in her memory till she put off mortality."

It was not Sir Robert, but a later martyr who, hearing his lady constantly singing the praises of her first husband, whose many virtues contrasted so strongly with his own failings, was driven to ask a friend the conundrum:

"Who was the most perfect man who ever lived?" His friend was not prepared to ransack the pages of history, and pleaded ignorance.

"My wife's first husband," replied the martyr.

Rowland Hill had an excellent and methodical wife, who used to keep a note of all his various engagements, which were extremely numerous, and when announcing them from the pulpit the preacher used to look to her on naming every place to see if he was correct. He always relied upon her accuracy, and every morning at breakfast he was accustomed to say, "Where do I preach to-day?"

It is not necessary to record here the terrible woes which the wives of clergymen endured during that terrible time when their husbands were driven from their livings during the Commonwealth period. I have already told some of the sad stories of that dreadful time, of the patient endurance shown by brave and tender women, the mothers of families, who were cruelly banished from their homes, often left destitute, with few friends who dared to succour them, while they saw their husbands seized by rough soldiers and carried off to horrible dungeons. That must have been a woeful time for poor parsons' wives. Some of these heartbreaking stories I have already told, and the curious reader

may find many more, if he will study that large folio volume, Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy.*

But instances of the devotion of the wives of clergymen are not confined to periods of downright persecution and of the triumph of political sectaries. John Wesley's wife was a Xantippe of the first order. He loved and would have married a young and beautiful widow, Grace Murray, but his brother Charles and Whitfield were opposed to his marrying at all, and they persuaded her to give up all thoughts of marrying the evangelist preacher and to wed a Calvinist preacher named Bennet. Wesley poured out the sorrows of his soul in prose and verse, and consoled himself by marrying a Mrs. Vizelle, a widow with four children and a fortune. She at first took an interest in his work and accompanied him in his wanderings; but she grew tired of the discomforts, hated the people with whom he associated, grew jealous, and plagued him in every way Southey says of her: "By her outrageous jealousy and abominable temper she deserves to be classed in a triad with Xantippe and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives." Finally she left her husband, and Wesley wrote in his Journal: "I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her; I will not recall her." A tombstone at Camberwell records her virtues as a woman, parent, and friend, but fortunately says nothing about her qualities as a wife.

Wesley's mother, Susannah, the devoted wife of Samuel Wesley, Rector of South Ormsby, and afterwards of Epworth, was a wonderful lady; of her he wrote:

"She graced my humble roof and blest my life;
Blest me by a far greater name than wife;
Yet still I bore an undisputed sway,
Nor was't her task, but pleasure, to obey.
Scarce thought, much less could act, what I denied,
In our lone house there was no room for pride,
Nor need I e'er direct what still was right;
She studied my convenience and delight;

> Nor did I for her care ungrateful prove,
> But only used my power to show her love.
> Whate'er she asked I gave, without reproach or grudge,
> For still the reason asked, and I was judge.
> All my commands, requests at her fair hands,
> And her requests to me were all commands.
> To others' thresholds rarely she'd incline,
> Her house her pleasure was, and she was mine.
> Rarely abroad, or never but with me,
> Or when by pity called or charity."

Poor lady! she had terrible trials to undergo, terrible troubles, always struggling with poverty, bore nineteen children, saw her husband arrested for debt and confined in Lincoln Castle, and endured many hardships with consummate bravery and Christian resignation.

The records of parsons' wives are not very numerous. You find them mentioned in the biographies of ecclesiastical dignitaries, or can discover some graceful allusion to them as the able and willing helpers of their husbands; but no history records the heroic, self-sacrificing, and ungrudging labours of the thousands of brave women who have linked their lot with clergymen and spent themselves in the service of the Church and in their duty to their husbands and children. They have gone out with their loved ones to distant lands, daring the dangers of a dreaded climate and of the savagery of wild heathen folk, comforting the lonely missionaries in all the anxieties and disappointments incident to all spiritual work, and dying as martyrs by their side. The parson's wife has here in England endured reproach, borne terrible privations and crushing poverty, scheming to make decent clothes for her children, to get them educated and well started in life, trying to wear a cheerful smile and a glad countenance for the sake of her poor husband, when her heart was aching and well-nigh broken by her calamities. She has been

a mother to the village, a comforter to the sorrowful, a nurse of the sick, a healer of dissensions, and an encourager of every good work. And all this she has done without the applause or even the knowledge of the world. No one knows of her struggles, her self-sacrifice, her brave heart that has borne her up aided by that secret source of grace which she knows so well how to seek and find. The whole story of the parson's wife is full of pathos, the deepest, the most touching, the most convincing, that the world has ever witnessed.

Their husbands have sometimes been a trial to them, especially the minister of the kirk who when preaching saw his wife asleep and called out "Susan! I dinna marry ye for yer wealth, sin ye had none. And I dinna marry ye for yer beauty—that the hail congregation can see. And if ye hae no grace, I hae made but a sair bargain wi' ye." What Susan said when she got home is not recorded.

De Quincey tells us of a very shrewish parson's wife, Mrs. Andrew Bell, whose husband, Dr. Bell, held several livings, was of a miserly nature, and died a rich man. Mrs. Bell could not endure him and was divorced; but she revenged herself by writing countless letters to him endorsed outside with such pleasing address as these:

"To that supreme of rogues, who looks the hangdog that he is, Doctor (such a Doctor!) Andrew Bell."

"To the ape of apes, and the knave of knaves, who is recorded once to have paid a debt—but a small one, you may be sure, it was that he selected for this wonderful experiment—in fact it was 4½d. Had it been on the other side of 6d., he would have died before he could have achieved so dreadful a sacrifice."

For years she carried on this malignant persecution, ingeniously varying her style of abuse.

The sagacious "owlet of Owlstone Edge" has much to say about parsons' wives. He heard his mother observe

that: "If one hears little of the good done by the parsons, one hears nothing at all of the good done by their wives. And yet there is no class of person in this country which do a tithe of the good that they do. I believe that not a year passes but two or three score of parsons' wives are brought to their graves, fairly worn out by work to which they have devoted themselves. Many a martyr of whom the world has never heard will come from their ranks. Old Father Owl thinks that parsons' wives do not lose much by not being talked about, and after his kind prefer the shade to the moonlight. If the wife does not find happiness in her daily round of duties, it is ordinarily her own fault. She often spends her days in retirement, has many thankless errands, many discouragements and disappointments. But her course often lies amid ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. She is the friend, parent, adviser of young and old, the mother of the parish, a sister of mercy who requires no vows to help her to do her duty, a blessing to the parish.

We have heard the, perhaps a little stern, precept of George Herbert which he addressed to his wife when he began his career at Bemerton Rectory. Let us see his ideals as recorded in the *Country Parson*, the kind of perfect old-time parson's wife who came up to his exalted notions. "The parson's wife is either religious, or night and day he is winning her to it. Instead of the qualities of the world, he requires only three of her: First, a training up of her children and maids in the fear of God, with prayers, and catechising, and all religious duties. Secondly, a curing and healing of all wounds and sores with her own hands, which skill either she brought with her, or he takes care she shall learn it of some religious neighbour. Thirdly, a providing for her family in such sort as that neither they want a competent sustentation nor her husband be brought in debt."

The *Country Parson* seems to think that the wife's main

duties are in her home; but later on he says "When they (the members of the clerical household) go abroad, his wife among her neighbours is the beginner of good discourses," and we have already seen what a wise almoner Mrs. Herbert was under the guidance of her good husband. But parochial work in the modern sense does not seem to have been a necessary part of her duty in the opinion of the saintly writer. Mrs. Herbert did not emulate the propensity of the modern vicaress, who manifests an occasional disposition to take too active a part in the government of the parish and in the direction of assistant-curates. A young clergyman is reported to have said, not long ago, that he had refused three curacies, because the rector's wife had been too prominent in parochial affairs. He did not mind having a master, but he did not want a mistress as well.

The old-fashioned parson's wife did not seek to be the mistress of curates. Take Mrs. Meek, the good wife of the Vicar of Hallowleigh, a friend of the Owlet. She was a pattern of the old-time vicaress. Her day was a busy one. At an early hour she gave out some milk to a few poor folk, medicine to some sick people, and dressed a scalded foot. After breakfast she attended to her household duties, and so planned that some of the food prepared for the home should be suitable for some village invalids. Beggars, or "creepers" as some independent body in the village called them the other day, troubled her with tales of woe. She taught a class in the old dames' school and looked in at the infants. Sunday clubs then claimed her attention. After dinner she visited the sick, dressed wounds, and attended to those parochial affairs which are best left to female delicacy and tenderness. She had no carriage, and when she got home other parishioners were there with their tales of woe or misfortune which required her ministrations. Her home life, her care for her husband, children, and servants, were not the weakest points

in her character, and she was content with her lot, and had not a desire beyond it, so far as this world is concerned.

Other types are not all so satisfactory. There is the discontented wife, who is always sighing for her husband's preferment, for a living in the West End of London, for more congenial society, and for everything that she has not. There is the foolish wife, who is always "fussing and worriting about nothing," trying in vain to drive stubborn folk instead of leading them by the strong cords of love; the magnificent lady, who hunts and drives about in her carriage and pair, never enters a cottage or school and sends her housekeeper with dainties to the sick; the despondent wife, who is always discouraging her husband and getting him to relax his efforts; the strong-minded lady, who rules everybody, including her husband and children, with a rod of iron and forgets that people have hearts; the "fast" lady, who rides and shoots and smokes and flirts and cares naught for the village folk; the vulgar wife, who apes the grand lady and neglects her children and her home; the governing body, who knows nothing of the qualities of the "ministering angel." Some of these strange specimens may be sometimes found within the walls of rectories or vicarages. But they are not commonly met with. They are freaks, rarities, happily very scarce. Taking them as a class, you will find that the wives of the English clergy must be admitted to hold the very first rank among Christian gentlewomen. Their patience, self-denial, and self-devotion, their careful management of their own household, their love for the poor people of the parishes, deserve the highest praise, a reward that they would be the last to seek. They need no eulogy save that which the daily lives of most of them afford.

CHAPTER XVI

PARISH CLERKS AND CHOIRS

I HAVE told many stories of old parish clerks and their manners and customs in a previous volume, but the subject is far from being exhausted and the close connection between the higher and lower occupants of the "three-decker" warrants me in giving some further anecdotes of an interesting personage. After the publication of *The Parish Clerk* very numerous correspondents from all parts of the country kindly sent me descriptions of old-fashioned services, of old-time clerks and parsons and village choirs, and almost furnished material for a second volume. It is not my intention to write another book on the subject, but only to record here some of the best of the scenes of old church life and manners which were not uncommon thirty or forty years ago and to mention some of the illustrious holders of the office whose memories should not be forgotten.

Our first scene is a country parish lying some six or eight miles from its nearest town and long retaining its old habits, while the march of civilisation, the railway and the schoolmaster were reducing more enlightened places to a dreary uniformity. Although it is pleasing to think that we can all read and write, that we are gradually learning to forget the dialect of the county in which we were born, that old country songs are passing away and the same music-hall tunes are whistled or sung in the

lanes of Kent and on the moors of Yorkshire, yet there are times when one heaves a sigh over the older and more picturesque state of things. In the old-world village of which we are writing the farmer paid, as he does now, a weekly visit to his market town, with his good lady seated beside him in his trap. She sat behind her butter and eggs in the market, while he transacted a good deal of business (beyond the range of the feminine intellect) in the taproom of his inn and at the street corner. The carrier's cart carried a weekly load of portly female forms to the same town at a moderate price and pace. Occasionally a soldier on furlough visited us and condescendingly drank mugs of beer, paid for by admiring friends, at the village public-house, while he told tales of barrack towns or foreign parts. But except for these communications with the great world the life of the parish was self-centred. We followed our own ways, developed our own types, and admired our own characters. The parish clerk was in our eyes almost as great a man as the Colonial Secretary. The parish schoolmaster was to us a model of learning. Deeper theology could not be found than in the sermons of our vicar, which no one pretended to understand. Dukes and earls were all very well in their way, but we did not desire anything more elevated than our squire, whose snores behind his high pew accompanied every sermon. The fame of Sims Reeves had not reached us, but we should probably have thought little of him in comparison with the parish clerk, whose rendering of "The Mistletoe Bough," that weird and awesome legend, at the annual choir supper was a thing that had been enjoyed for the last twenty-five years.

The parish clerk! Though he has long been in his grave, memory still lingers fondly round his glossy forehead and tall form, bent by the first touches of rheumatism, and sternly complacent manners. He was not impeccable, though by office almost ecclesiastical. Once a year, when

the annual day of the Oddfellows' Club (called The Club) came round, he regularly broke out. He remained drunk for two days, and on the third day came and apologised to the vicar. The rest of the year he was immaculate. The memory of this annual outbreak did not detract from his dignified manner as he robed the vicar in the sight of the congregation (the parish church did not contain a vestry). During this ceremony the parish clerk, in tones which he thought subdued and deferential, communicated to his superior interesting items of parish news—the birth of this one or the death of that one. The service itself he regarded as a duologue between himself and his vicar, and at first resented as an innovation any general responses from the congregation; but he was obliged to yield to the times and only insisted on his superiority by always keeping three words ahead of the rest.

Of his singing we were justly proud. There had been a time when he played a flute in the choir loft, giving time to the rest (each armed with his favourite instrument) by emphatic strokes of his foot, but the vicar found the miscellaneous effect of such a band too powerful for the church and introduced a harmonium. The tenderest feelings of the musicians were wounded, and the parish clerk led a secession. The flute was publicly burnt, and next Sunday the clerk might have been seen sitting with the rest of the congregation as if he were just an ordinary mortal man. But time and tact had soothing power. He returned to the choir loft as a singer, and for the rest of his life was the cynosure of neighbouring parishes. The simple hymn or psalm tune had not sufficient scope for him; he embroidered them with the most remarkable shakes and quavers, runs and trills. Harmony "saw him spurn her bounded reign," and the panting accompanist "toiled after him in vain." He had the most remarkable way of producing whistling notes through a cavity between his front teeth, and in latter years his arrangements for

supplying himself with sufficient breath sounded like the audible creaking of bellows behind an organ.

As for our choir there was nothing uniform or monotonous about that. At the present day the surplice has penetrated deep into the country, and even where the surplice is still regarded as a rag of popery the choir seats are generally occupied by a row of shock-haired little boys of the same age and inches. But in our gallery there was the most pleasing diversity. Master Dolphin, the village Nestor, whose drab shorts and blue worsted stockings surmounted by a cunningly embroidered smock were relics of an older civilisation, occupied the seat he had occupied any time these fifty years. He contributed little to the general harmony, it is true, except a quavering note or two, for most of the breath he had left was exhausted during the ascent of the gallery stairs. But there was a flavour of the good old times about him, and we missed him when he joined his own generation in the churchyard. The tenor, who was a tall, lantern-jawed young farmer, suspected of writing poetry, had an immense reputation. It was well known that he disdained singing by ear and could read off at sight the most intricate tunes. On consideration his reputation must have been easily earned, for even his nearest neighbour in the gallery failed to catch his highly-trained notes, though it were heresy to say so. Our prima donna (the local dressmaker) had an excellent shrill voice, and generally rose superior to any mere book tunes. Her ambition was to soar (harmoniously speaking) above all her compeers in the gallery. "Jerusalem the Golden" was her favourite hymn. When it was over and she resumed her seat after excursions into the empyrean of song inexpressible by mere human notes there was a complacent smile upon her face, as of one who had shown the aspiring trebles who sat behind her that rivalry was impossible. There was only one part of the choir that changed. These were the young men who sat

in the back row. Their presence was not due to any musical aptitude. They were acutely conscious of their position and made elaborate efforts to appear unconcerned, to look as if they had just dropped in by accident. The truth was they were keeping company with one or other of our trebles, and it was love that drew them up the gallery stairs. Such was the ordinary Sunday service in an obscure West of England village.

A very curious scene was once witnessed in an old church in Lancashire and was described by the late Rev. John Brame, Secretary of the Additional Curates Society, whose power of telling stories was inimitable. I cannot tell it in the same racy, effective manner, but it is too good to be forgotten. Mr. Brame was preaching for his Society. The church had a three-decker pulpit, and before ascending to its topmost storey the rector remarked:

"When you have finished your discourse will you have the goodness to lean over and tap me on the head, and then I will lean over and tap the clerk on the head, and then we will have the collection."

This surprising performance was effectively carried out, and gravely the reverend divines did their duty, and the clerk sprang up to attention and handed round the plate. Possibly the rector feared that sleep might seal the eyes of himself and his faithful servitor, and to prevent a catastrophe this singular and ingenious device was adopted.

Few can remember the days when the clerk read the Lessons and the sad hash that he made of them. One such worthy could not be broken of the habit which he had formed of passing remarks on what he read. He had gone through the story of Sisera and Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite. When he had finished he said in a voice audible to the whole congregation, "What things they wimen be! Bad lot, bad lot, all of 'em!" Another clerk when reading a chapter from the Acts of the Apostles introduced a new character, one "Step Hen."

Examples of longevity, faithfulness, and devotion to duty have poured in upon me since *The Parish Clerk* was published, and I can only record a few of these. William Tull, the clerk of Bear Wood Church, Berkshire, was one of these faithful old servants of the Church. He reigned forty-six years, from 1846 to 1892. He had a stentorian voice, and I can well remember his "A-a-mens," so loud and strong. He put in his "H's" where they were not wanted, and omitted them where they were, his announcement of the "Hevenin' 'ymn" being very emphatic. On week-days he worked at the sawmill on the Bear Wood estate of Mr. Walter, and the size of the muscles of his arms was remarkable, and he and his contemporary, Maynard, the sexton and bell-ringer, would ever be ready to fight anybody on the side opposed to that of the squire.

Another old parish clerk, Mr. James Rutland, of the Church of St. Nicholas, Taplow, who had been clerk since 1874, at the advanced age of eighty-one years has just passed away. He was a great antiquary and skilled archæologist. His private museum contains a great store of antiquarian treasures, and he has written a history of his parish.

I have told the story of the faithful clerk, William Hobbes of St. Andrew's, Plymouth, who during the Civil War period in the absence of any clergyman undertook to perform the last rites of the Church on the body of a parishioner, using the service for the Burial of the Dead contained in the Book of Common Prayer. The Puritans threatened to throw him into the same grave if he came there again with his "Mass-book" to bury anybody. A companion portrait to this good clerk is that of Nathaniel Bussell, who officiated in the parish of Christow-on-the-Teign. During the Civil War period a company of the soldiers of Fairfax came to spoil and desecrate the church. The clerk was fetched, and the officer demanded from him the keys of the sacred building. But Bussell was of the

stuff of which martyrs are made, and would not hand over the keys of his beloved church to these impious desecrators. They threatened him in vain, and at last shot him dead in the church porch. He was buried where he fell, and his gravestone still marks the spot, the resting-place of the martyr-clerk.

The frequent hereditary nature of the office is shown in the case of the parish clerks of Seal, near Sevenoaks, where it was held by successive members of the family of Walter for upwards of two hundred years, ever since the time of Archbishop Laud. Mr. John Walter, the last of this race, died in 1854, having been clerk of the church for about forty years.

Jonathan Hiscox was the much respected parish clerk of Kew, and served the office fifty-six years, dying in 1853 at the age of eighty-six years. The late Duke of Cambridge caused his portrait to be painted and placed in the vestry of the church, and her Majesty Queen Victoria used to add £5 a year to his salary on account of her admiration for the venerable man.

I am able to add a few names of learned clerks to those which have already been mentioned. John Webster, a dramatic poet of the seventeenth century, was clerk of the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, and a member of the Company of Merchant Taylors. He wrote *The White Devil, or Tragedy of P. Giordano Ursino, Duke of Brachiano, with the Life and Death of Vittoria Corombano, the famous Venetian Courtezan*, 1612; *The Devil's Law Case*, before 1619, revived at Sadlers Wells in 1851; *The Duchess of Malfi, a Tragedy*, 1616; *Appius and Virginia, a Tragedy*, 1609; and possibly collaborated with W. Rowley in *A Cure for a Cuckold*, 1661. He was the author of a pageant exhibited in 1624 by the Merchant Taylors' Company in honour of Sir John Goare, Lord Mayor, and he assisted Decker in writing Wyatt's history.

Another learned clerk was William Aurerell, clerk of

THE PORCH OF CHRISTOW CHURCH, WHEREIN NICHOLAS BURSALL, THE MARTYR CLERK, WAS SHOT

St. Peter-upon-Cornhill, and also master of the ancient Grammar School of St. Peter's at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. He kept the parish register, which shows evidences of the writer's scholarly attainments. He displays a sound knowledge of Latin and also of Greek, and the penmanship is elegant and often highly ornamented. The register contains some excellent Latin verse translated by the learned clerk, which is quaint and curious, but the poem is too long to quote. After the title the following verse appears, written in vermilion :

> "This booke contains the names of mortal men,
> But there's a book with characters of gold,
> Not writ with inke, with pensilie, or with pen,
> Wheare God's elect for ever are enrolled ;
> The Booke of Life, where labour thou to bee,
> Before this booke hath once registred thee."

There are verses, also, commemorating the death of Queen Elizabeth and accession of James I. He records that in 1603 there were buried in London 30,578 persons who had died of the plague, and amongst them two of his favourite scholars, to whom he was much attached. He records their names and their virtues, and closes each description with a pathetic couplet. The memory of his own child and of Gillian Aurerell, his wife, is recorded with most affectionate words. It was evidently customary for the parish clerks to read homilies or sermons. The following curious entry in the vestry book of this church shows that prior to the year 1575 this custom was observed there :

"1575, September 22nd. Agreed that Robert Mydelton, our Clarke, shall not saye any more serments publickly in this Churche."

One of the duties of the clerk was to act as dog-whipper and sluggard-waker. Both elders and youngsters were formerly liable to be rudely awakened from their slumbers.

The sluggard-waker used a long staff with a knob at the end for forcibly rousing a male sleeper, while at the other end was a fox's brush for gently disturbing a somnolent female. About the year 1825 the sluggard-waker was very prominent at Woodstock Church. He walked about the nave and aisles during service-time shod in list slippers and carrying a long wand. The almshouse women, who wore large white poke-bonnets, constructed with some very hard material, occupied a long pew near the pulpit. One Sunday the "waker" sighted his prey, one of the old women at the distant end of the pew, nodding. He approached warily, and intended to give her a little gentle reminder with his wand. But his zeal was too great. He struck with far more vigour than he had intended, with a resulting loud crack which echoed through the church, startled the preacher when he was just beginning his "thirdly," and caused a loud titter to arise from the boys present, of whom my correspondent[1] was one; but "things went very well then," and the service proceeded without interruption.

Unfortunately, by degrees a great injustice arose. The elders, both farmers and labourers, men and women, were permitted to slumber if they pleased; but if any youngster felt that *opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum*, the long stick fell with unerring whack upon the urchin's head. This was manifestly unfair. So thought the worthy squire of Kinvere, in Staffordshire, who said to the clerk one day:

"It is hardly just to wake only the boys. I'll give you five shillings, Thomas, if you'll rap on the head some of the elders. I note several farmers sleep."

Next Sunday was a brilliant hot day, and in the afternoon the squire himself went to sleep, and was roused by a rap on his bald head. Starting up, he saw the clerk holding out his hand:

[1] Mr. Charles Holmes, of Ilfracombe, aged 91 years.

"I'll trouble you, sir, for your crown now."

The squire paid.

Harry Hills, of Woodley, Devon, must have been a delightful old clerk, one of the race of "Nature's gentlemen." "An Elderly Bachelor," the author of *Not Many Years Ago*, remembers him well, with his swallow-tailed coat, corduroy breeches, knitted worsted stockings, and tied-up shoes. He was clerk and sexton and brewer, one of those old-fashioned itinerant brewers who went about to the houses of the squires and farmers when every family had their own brewhouse and made their ale or cider on the premises. He always greeted his superiors with "Your servant, sir," and addressed them as "Your honour," old-fashioned courtesies that have almost expired. He loved to respond alone in church, and when a farmer dared to read the alternate verses in the Psalms he greeted him with, "Come, now, Farmer Brown, be it yew or I?" Farmer Brown was silent. At funerals he always liked to make things "aisy and comfortable-like both for the dead and the living." One day a stranger, wishing to obtain some fly-fishing, said to him:

"Can you tell me if I should have any chance of practising 'the gentle art' here?"

Hills replied: "Well, we have many pretty and nice young ladies hereabouts; but I can't tell ye what they might say to your honour on such a point as that—or if so be that their feythers would reckon yew a gude enough partner for 'em; but ye might try what yew can dew."

He was a most worthy clerk, and no one could replace his true politeness, fine presence, and simple dignity.

Wolborough, Devon, is rich in still possessing a representative of the ancient office of parish clerk, and the more so as he is one whose recollections and experiences go back to the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Mr. Roberts recently kept his ninetieth birthday, having been

born in Wolborough Street in 1817. He was educated in the Church schools of the parish, and here he has lived all through his long life. To Mr. Roberts belongs the distinction of being the senior Church worker of the parish, if not of the whole diocese. Early in life he became a Sunday-school teacher, and in 1840 he began to act as deputy parish clerk for Mr. Samuel Hannaford, his uncle, upon whose death in 1863 he was appointed parish clerk. He has, therefore, been an active worker for the Church continuously in this one parish for about seventy-five years, and it would be difficult to find any other, in Devon or elsewhere, whose record can exceed or approach this splendid one.

For many years he was in business as a hat manufacturer, like his father before him; he was also assistant-overseer and collector of Crown taxes. He has had many descendants to the third and fourth generations. To him were born five children and twenty grandchildren; already he has twelve great-grandchildren. Mr. Roberts comes of an old family of Wolborough Church-folk on his mother's side. Her father, Henry Hannaford, played the bass viol in Wolborough Church, one of her brothers was parish clerk, and others were singers in the choir. Mr. Roberts well remembers their musical efforts in the western gallery there on a Sunday morning.

Mr. Roberts has served under four rectors of Wolborough, and, during Mr. Clack's long non-resident incumbency of fifty-three years, under five or six curates-in-charge, while he has seen the coming and going of innumerable assistant curates.

Since Mr. Roberts was made parish clerk in 1863, and up to midsummer, 1907, 1,395 marriages and 5,926 burials have been registered at Wolborough, at nearly all of which he has assisted in person, as well as at many more during the twenty-three years of his deputy clerkship. Of his earlier predecessors in office little is known.

The Rev. E. C. Long, of Newton Abbot, who has kindly sent the preceding account, has searched the registers, and in the earliest volume found the following entry, which he has translated from the Latin original :—

> "1625. On the 14th day of July, was buried Richard Larimoe. He was at the time parish clerk of Wolborough ; it is difficult to understand how much he was esteemed for the unusual care which he exercised in that office : he is dead, and mourned by all."

The last clerk but one belonged to the old Wolborough family of Snelling, which is still in existence.

I have already mentioned the name of Mr. Edward J. Lupson, the much respected parish clerk of Great Yarmouth, who was a great authority on the history of the important church in which he officiated and the author of several books. The following additional information he kindly sent a few weeks before his death :

Mr. Lupson's father was born and was married in the century before the last. He entered the world in the year 1773, and he was married March 27, 1794. Father and son have not only lived, but were married men, in three centuries. Mr. Thomas Lupson, a schoolmaster, was appointed the Parish Clerk of St. Botolph's Church, Cambridge, and entered upon the duties on the first Sunday in the nineteenth century. He was parish clerk fifty years. His son, who had been his deputy a few years, was chosen to be his successor. He distinctly remembers the musicians tuning their instruments in the chancel just before the commencement of the service, and can vividly picture in his mind's eye John Fuller, the sexton, going round during service with his snuffers, and snuffing the "dip" candles with which the church was lighted, and how we watched him to see how many he snuffed out. The minister, it may be mentioned, was at that time favoured with four mould candles in the pulpit, and at intervals he

had to pause in his preaching whilst engaged in snuffing them. Mr. Lupson resigned the office of Parish Clerk in 1854, on leaving Cambridge to become one of the Scripture Readers in Great Yarmouth, under the Rev. George Hills, who afterwards became Bishop of British Columbia. In 1863 he was appointed Parish Clerk of Great Yarmouth. It is as unusual for a parish clerk as it is a common occurrence for a clergyman to change his sphere of duty in the church. This is probably the only instance that can be brought forward of a layman being parish clerk of two churches situate nearly ninety miles apart. During the forty-four years Mr. Lupson held the office he was but one Sunday away from Yarmouth, and it may be added that he officially attended 12,426 marriages and gave away 1,315 brides.

Another veteran in the service of the Church is Mr. William Kenward, who is eighty-six years of age, and has held the office of parish clerk and sexton of Wivelsfield Church, Sussex, for a period of fifty-seven years. He combines with his ecclesiastical duties that of village postmaster, his appointment dating back sixty years.

Yet another veteran is Mr. Elijah Lindley, parish clerk of Burton Joyce, near Nottingham. It was in February, 1844, that he was first elected to his present position, but he held the office of organ-blower for six years prior, and he has served under five vicars. He is now in his eighty-third year, and is still residing in the same house in which he was born. In his official capacity he has assisted at over 1,500 baptisms, 300 marriages, and nearly 1,100 funerals, and for the latter has dug all the graves himself.

The late Rector of Ingham, the Rev. John Roumien, tells me of his former clerk, James Banham, who was born in that village in 1802, became clerk and sexton in 1835, resigned in 1892, and died three years later. Mr. Roumien writes: "Although your account of many old men quite puts in the shade my clerk, James Banham, perhaps, how-

ever, I may get a little satisfaction in doubting whether any of your worthies could dig a 6-ft. grave within a month of their ninetieth birthday." It was rather remarkable that although this wonderful old man was the son of a simple agricultural labourer, he never mispronounced his words, though perhaps he was very "Suffolky" in his intonation.

About fifty years ago a Mr. Stead was vicar of Rottingdean, near Brighton, and he had a curious, plain-spoken old clerk with whom he was on very intimate terms. One day the clerk exclaimed, "My, Muster Stead, how white your teeth be! May be you clean 'em?" The vicar admitted that he did. Some days after this conversation the old fellow was suffering from a violent cold in the head. The vicar expressed his sympathy, but the clerk replied, grumbling: "It's all along o' you, Muster Stead. You said you cleaned your teeth, so I cleaned mine, and it gived me this 'ere bad cold."

Clerks often speak their mind with a boldness and candour of which their pastors and masters are scarcely capable. There is an old Cheshire clerk at a village near Chester who boasts that he has been clerk and sexton under seven rectors. One Sunday, after the service had commenced, a lady arrived breathless in the porch, where the old fellow was on duty. "Oh dear, Charles," she exclaimed, "I am afraid I am late."

"Yow're never nawthin' else," drawled the candid Charles.

Irish churches can tell of some extraordinary clerks. The Rev. J. O. Hannay, rector of Westport, Co. Mayo, informs me of an autocratic clerk who flourished in his grandfather's time, and who would not allow any one to interrupt the ordinary duet which went on, the parson and clerk being the only performers. On one occasion an English visitor ventured to repeat the responses audibly. The clerk was greatly scandalised, and, standing up in his

seat, rebuked the stranger in these words: "Sir, either you or I must quit." Another clerk in Co. Down used to boggle at "Leviathan" in the Psalms, calling it Lĕvĭāā-thēn, which so annoyed the rector that whenever the word occurred in the Psalms for the day *he changed the day of the month!*

In a Northamptonshire village the clerk, as usual, gave out the hymns and read the first line. One hymn began with "Hail! Thou source of every blessing." The clerk pronounced the words "Ale! thou source of every blessing." He was rather fond of his glass, and the congregation deemed it appropriate. He used to start the singing with a tuning-fork; but one day all went wrong, until the cheery voice of the churchwarden echoed through the church, "Try wance moure, William."

The anthem, as I have said, was often the cause of many troubles. Mr. Frowde tells a Devonshire story of the days of stringed instruments. The clerk gave out the anthem "Who is the King of Glory?" In the pause which followed a voice was heard throughout the church, "Here, Tom, hand up the rosin; us'll soon let 'em know who's the King o' Glory!"[1]

An ambitious choir on one occasion resolved to sing the *Te Deum*, a somewhat unusual feat for country choristers. It was sung very loudly, the string and wind instruments bellowing forth unmelodious sounds. Directly the performance was finished the clergyman began to read in a calm voice the Second Lesson, which appropriately began with the words, "When the uproar was ceased," &c.

There is a clerk still living in a Berkshire parish who is a great character, and endless stories of his eccentricities are told. He possesses more than a fair share of Berkshire obstinacy. He goes his own way, and has a peculiar snort when he triumphs over his enemies and "gangs his

[1] Mrs. Whichello, of Tattenhall, has kindly contributed some of the above stories.

own gait." One of his peculiarities is to advance the hands of the church clock every Sunday morning before service, and no reasoning with him can stop him. Hence most of the congregation arrive very late. One Sunday both churchwardens came long after the service had begun, and attacked him afterwards. One of them said to him:

"John, how much did you put that clock on?"

"Oh, I can't rightly say; I'm not sure."

"John, it is much too fast," says the warden, holding up his watch.

"Oh! be it? I just puts up my hand and gives him a push; I can't say how much he went on."

Exeunt churchwardens. John smiles after them, snorts, and does the same next Sunday.

Funerals after cremation he cannot hold with. He calls them "improper funerals," and says, "I do hate them in *my* churchyard."

Once he was honoured by a request to join the Parish Council. "Certainly not," he replied; "I calls it a society for hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness."

One family in the parish, the members of which usually forgot to inform either the parson or the clerk about a wedding, baptism, or funeral, made John furious. He exclaimed to his vicar, "You can ask Mr. B——, if any of that there family wants to get married or *buried*, they allus makes a muddle of it."

George Bromley was clerk at Birstall church, near Leeds, in the sixties. A correspondent tells me that before the church was restored there were galleries, and the vestry was at the west end. There were three clergymen, and as they marched down the church with "old Bromley" in the rear they formed quite a formidable procession. Bromley was a little, bent old man, such as Yorkshire people describe as going along with "his heead in 'is shovin." He would go shambling along with the big book under his arm, wearing a blue and white

neck-kerchief with a stock, his coat being an old dress-coat with rather long swallow-tails. In those days Easter dues, or Church rates, were compulsory by law, and were regarded as a great "sere" by Yorkshire folk who were unwilling to pay them. Old Bromley delighted in them, and loved to extract them by fair means or foul. He would not scruple to seize pieces of furniture or goods of any description. From a reluctant householder he took a chest of drawers, and from a grocer a big cheese. The village was in a ferment. A procession was formed by the indignant parishioners, headed by a band of music, and the chest of drawers was borne in triumphant protest. They started from the vicarage and paraded the village. The vicar was an old, saintly man, the Rev. — Heald. My informant was a member of his Bible-class, which he was conducting at the vicarage just when the band struck up. It was too much for him. He entirely broke down, and sobbed like a child. Another incident occurred at a factory a little way out of the village, when the clerk went to exact his Easter dues. The mob seized him and put him into a "skep," as they call it in Yorkshire, a large basket used for hoisting cotton from the lorries to the higher floors of a mill. Old Bromley was placed in this "skep," which they hooked on to the crane, and hoisted him up four or five storeys, where they kept him prisoner until he promised never to come and collect his obnoxious dues there again. Happily a wealthy gentleman in the parish bought up these Easter dues, and relieved the parish from an unwelcome burden. During the later part of his life "old Bromley," like many old people, when sitting still could not keep awake, and often the preacher, to his great disgust, was compelled to deliver his discourse to the accompaniment of Bromley's snores. One Advent Sunday the vicar was preaching on the Parable of the Ten Virgins. All was very still and solemn, as befitted the occasion, when just

as the preacher was quoting the words, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept," the old clerk, as if to emphasise the words, gave out one of his greatest snores! The effect was rather trying to the congregation, and few could refrain from smiling.

Humphry Nichols, parish clerk of Manchester, in early Victorian days became, long before his death at the age of eighty-nine, one of Lancashire's greatest benefactors. His shabby attire and old-fashioned gingham umbrella with a horn handle were a familiar sight at Shudehill Market, also the printed cotton handkerchief in which he carried home his frugal purchases. Self-denying, he would put a bank-note in an old envelope and leave it at some needy person's house without waiting for an acknowledgment. One day, when he was in his eighty-second year, he called at the office of the treasurer of Manchester Infirmary, and not finding him in, took up a scrap of paper which was on the desk and wrote: "H. Nichols will be obliged if Mr. Shelmerdine will be at H. N.'s office to-morrow, Friday morning, by ten o'clock, on urgent business." The treasurer called, as requested, and found Nichols sitting with his overcoat on, and without a fire in the grate, though it was very cold weather. He had jotted down, on a small slip of paper, a list of 108 notes, from £5 to £500, which, with £70 in gold, in all £7,000, he handed over to the treasurer without receipt or acknowledgment. He gave £8,000 at other times to the infirmary funds, making a total of £15,000. The next day he called at Warrington Rectory, and told the rector, who caught sight of him at the door—the footman was sending him round to the back—that he had come to give a trifle of money to the fund for the widows and orphans of the clergy. The rector, the Hon. and Rev. H. Powys, afterwards Bishop of Sodor and Man, was treasurer of the clergy charities of the dioceses of Chester and Manchester. On being brought into the study Nichols produced, out of a shabby old

pocket-book a very dirty bank-note for £500, to which he kept adding till he had put down £7,000. "Tell that fine gentleman of yours," said he, with reference to the footman, "to be civil to an old man even if he should happen to wear a shabby coat."

Many instances of curious notices given out in church by parish clerks have been recorded. A correspondent tells me of yet another, which hails from Dorset, and runs as follows:

"I 'ereby give notice that there will be no sarvice in this 'ere church this adernoon" (afternoon). "Cos why? The lamps be friz" (frozen).

One of the strangest notices ever given out in a church comes from Devonshire. Unfortunately, the occasion was an important one. A new organ had been introduced, a little wheezy instrument, and the congregation had assembled for a formal grand opening. But, unhappily, there had been damp weather all the week, and the leather of the bellows had become unglued. After a few ineffectual attempts with the keys, followed by a whizz of escaping air, the clerk marched down to inspect the instrument, and, after a whispered confabulation, proclaimed, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is to give notice that the orgin won't play to-day, as he's bust his belly."

Another clerk in Staffordshire, who used to give out the "tew 'underd and tewty-tewth 'im," was sagaciously instructed to call a vestry meeting to ascertain "what colour to whitewash the church."

What a terrible infliction the singing of the old metrical Psalms must have been in the days when the schoolmaster was less known and few of the congregation could read! In order to accommodate the unlearned the clerk read two lines aloud—these were sung; then the next two, and they were sung; and so on to the end of a long Psalm, of indifferent metre with a dreary tune. But there was an infliction worse than a metrical hymn, and that

was an anthem. In Washfield Church, Devon—pray note the name of the parish—there was a favourite anthem founded on the words, "Wash me throughly from my wickedness," &c. One portion of the choir sang out, "Wash me! Wash me!" to which the decani side responded, "Wash me! Wash me!" and then all washed together. The anthem had been carefully chosen as appropriate to the name of the parish for "Revel Sunday."

Tradition says that at Long Ashton Church, near Bristol, whither several townspeople used to flock on Sunday afternoons, the clerk used to shout out from the west gallery, "If any of you musical chaps be 'ere fra Bristol, cum up i' th' gallery and gie us a 'and wi' tha hanthem." At a Devonshire church the singing was vile, but the singers were proud of it, and when a daring curate, wearied with the noise, ventured to give out in a mild voice, "There will be no singing this afternoon," a shout from the singing gallery greeted him with "But there will!" and there was!

About the year 1845 the parish clerk of Great Rollright, Oxfordshire, was an eccentric individual of irregular habits, who posed as the village oracle. At burials he always appeared in boots with flaming yellow tops—he was a cobbler—and never stood quietly a moment during the service. After "earth to earth" was said he clapped his hands several times loudly over the grave, and drawing a large red handkerchief from his pocket, blew two or three stentorian blasts, which completely drowned the voice of the minister.[1]

The clerk, as I have recorded elsewhere, was often the village schoolmaster. His standard of teaching was not, perhaps, equal to the requirements of the modern Board of Education. One of these worthies had been instruct-

[1] Dr. Charles Holmes, of Ilfracombe, remembers this curious scene, and has kindly sent this description of it.

ing his class in how they had been made—how that, by a good Providence, the children had been given eyes wherewith to see, a nose to smell withal, ears to hear, hands to handle, and feet to run. Thereupon one boy broke out in a howl. When asked what was the matter with him, he replied :

"I be crying 'cos I be badly made. It's my nose as runs, and not my feet."

The popularity of parsons sometimes depends upon accidental circumstances. One day some one asked a clerk :

"How do you like the new vicar?"

The clerk replied :

"He's a very good man, but he doesn't come up to the old un."

"How's that?"

"Th' old vicar's clothes fitted me a deal better."

The clerk used to collect the alms of the faithful. When a new vicar came to a country church, he was much scandalised to see the clerk after service in the vestry deliberately taking half a crown out of the alms-dish, and rebuked him severely for his dishonesty. But the clerk was conscious of no wrongdoing, and replied :

"Why, whatever are you talking about? I've led off with that there half-crown for the last twenty years."

Clerkly epitaphs are numerous, and a chapter on the subject appears in my book. Here is one that is new to me, and appeared in the *Guardian* among the musical notes of that excellent authority who signs himself *Diapason*. The epitaph is to be found in Warnham churchyard, near Horsham, Sussex, and reads :

"Sacred to the memory of

MICHAEL TURNER,

Clerk and Sexton of this Parish for fifty years, from
January 17th, 1830, to January 20th, 1880.
Born May 25th, 1796 : Died December 18th, 1885.

His duty done, beneath this stone
  Old Michael lies at rest,
His rustic rig, his song, his jig
  Were ever of the best.

With nodding head, the choir he led
  That none should start too soon;
The second too, he sang full true,
  His viol played the tune.

And when at last his age had passed
  One hundred—less eleven,
With faithful cling to fiddle-string,
  He sang himself to heaven."

In a glass case in the church are preserved old Michael's viol, tuning-fork, and music books.

Who wrote all the poetical epitaphs in our churches and churchyards? That is a difficult question to answer. The chronicling of the numerous virtues must have been done mechanically, and supplied at "so much a yard." But some of the verses are excellent. The poet William Hayley was particularly fond of composing epitaphs, of which he showed a book full to his friend Mr. Carey, the author of the "Lives of the Poets." This is one that he wrote to the memory of Henry Hammond, parish clerk of Eastham, Sussex, which Mr. Carey pronounces to be one of the best in the English language:

"An active spirit in a little frame,
This honest man the path of duty trod;
Toil'd while he could, and when death's darkness came
Sought in calm hope his recompense from God.
His sons, who love him, to his merit just
Raised this plain stone to guard their parent's dust."

Hayley also wrote the epitaph on William Bayant, aged 91, parish clerk of the same village, who died in 1779. The verses are far superior to most of the poetic efforts found on tombstones:

"By sportive youth and busy manhood blest,
Here, thou meek father of our village, rest.
If length of days in toilsome duties spent,
With cheerful honesty and mild content,
If age endured with firm and patient mind,
If life with willing piety resigned,
If these are certain proofs of human worth
Which, dear to Heaven, demand the praise of earth,
E'en pride shall venerate this humble sod,
That holds a Christian worthy of his God."

An old Essex clerk's opinions of his vicars, as recorded by the Rev. W. Heygate, must not be omitted, and although the verses are long, they are too good to be disregarded, especially as they are little known.

"How many vicars have I seed? best part o' half a score,
But I be old and shaky now, shan't see many more.
There's more changes 'mong the Parsons than on the Steeple Bells,
And like enough there'll yet be more for anything I tells.
I've know'd Parsons walk to market and druv their own pigs,
And some on 'em ride a horseback, and some on 'em in gigs.
Now its Phaeton or pony shay, wife, darters and all.
The bigger the young uns grus to, they make their father look small.
I've know'd rich vicars and poor uns; I've seed both short and tall,
And our old burial surplice is bound to fit 'em all;
My missus as lies by the porch, she tuckt it up and down,
Till 'ta wouldn't ston tucks no longer no more nor her old gown.
One said as how the poor old clerk answer'd a'most too slow.
Another 'Nit so fast,' or 'Soft-like,' or may be 'Not so low.'
One says 'That Amen was mine'; another, 'That was for you';
Bless their hearts, they might say it all, if I know'd what to do.
Some went straight on right through whatever there was to be said,
Some skips out bits like, as not good enough to be read.
It fares strange that ministers doan't do their work by rule,
I've often thought as Parsons should go to a Parsons' school.

Some preached in the surplice, I 'llows, because they hadn't no gound,
They wasn't for scruples of conscience, but took things as they found.
Our last vicar—poor man—made a deal of preaching in black:
But there wasn't no more in his head for what he wore on his back.
He was one for the Sarmint, and not so much for the Prayer,
He wouldn't a clent the old place, but left it just as it were.
Our church was holly choked up, and every pew was a box,
And every box has Jacks in it, as there are fleas in a fox.
For all the gals was peeping over the side at the boys.
Like bees in a bottle the church kept buzzing with their noise.
The churchwarden he heard nothing, for he was sound asleep:
He never minded the boys, less they was keeping his sheep.
First came my desk, then the parson's; the pulpit top 'o that,
Like yer neck, and then yer face, and then over all yer hat.
We sang then in the gallery with fiddle and clarionet;
If yer'd once heard our band, sir, tain't likely you'd forget,
If the Parson should wish they'd change the tune by next Lord's day,
They pops flute and fiddle in bags, and goes right clean away.
Bless yer, I could tell yer o' things, yer would never think true,
How they put their hats in the font and the communion too;
How when the Westry met they took the old Table out,
Put on ink-horn and books, and sat the chancel round about;
Cushions and cloth and books too, takin' the old church right round,
Surplice, shovel and broom, they would na ha' fetched half a crownd.
Commandments to boot, they was the only good-lookin' things,
Wi' yellow cherubs between 'em, and nout but heads and wings.
Howsomdever I'm glad it's all gone, pews, pulpit and all,
It bant so snug for the big folks, but more snug for the small.
It fares more easy to hear, and you can kneel if you will,
And I doan't want my old white wan' to keep the young folks still.
And my second missus finds the place more easy to keep,
For benches is better than pews, when you comes for to sweep.

There never worn't no vicar who coomed down here to reside,
Till five and thirty years I 'llows, come next Whitsuntide.
Bishop Blomfield that was, he told him, as how he must go,
And he worn't the man to ston it, if you wor to say no.
Parson Myles was a hunter, and could gallop thro' a prayer,
Right straight ahead over everything and stop him who dare.
A weddin' 'ud come to 'amazement' 'most as soon as begun,
And afore they well know'd where they was, they found themselves one.
He was a kind gentleman truly, but not much of a priest;
No great hand at a fast day, but a rare un at a feast.
When he com'd to die, he was right sorry ye may depend:
A' the more, says he to me, because 'twas too late to mend.
Master Smith who was cross about ridin' over the land,
He sent for him, and humbled himself, and gave 'im his hand.
He says to me 'I've been a sinner, and may God forgive,'
Says I, 'Cheer up, sir, maybe you'll show a change, if you live.'
He left all he had to the church, the schools, and for bread;
And anyhow he's done a dale o' good since he's been dead.
Next there come a young man who warn't no great things in his looks,
He fared as though he'd read away all hisself in his books.
He hadn't no voice. Leastwise he spoke very weakly and low,
And talked o' things in the Sarmint that our people doan't know.
Then he walked up a stech[1] like, straight on, and never looked round;
He didn't see folk, beein' as his eyes wor fixed on the ground.
He'd speak sharp, I counts to some. But he was gentle and mild
To old and poor folks like me. He might ha' been my own child.
When one o' they Chaplers said, just like some o' their fine ways,
'I'll look in on you, sir,' meanin' the church, 'one o' these fine days';
He answers the man pretty sharp, as he turned him about,
The Lord's much beholden to you. Pray don't put yourself out,'
He built the church up substantial when 'most ready to fall;
And clent it right out, pews and hat pegs, Commandments and all.

[1] Furrow.

The bells were always a-ringing, for to church he would go,
Saints' days, and all days, rain or bangie, or kivered with snow,
He'd sit all night with a poor man, lying on his bed.
They loved him when he wor alive, and more sin he's been dead.
Folks talked loud agin him, as how he was goin' to Rome;
I know'd quite well where he was goin'—'twere to his long home.
When they brought him here the last time, there wasn't hardly one eye,
Men, women, and children, all the parish like, that was dry.
They forgot their matters agin him they used to complain,
I wonder how they'd do by him if he were wi' us again.
I told him he were too strict for us, and then he would sigh,
But God grant us to be like him, afore we comes to die.
He is hard by the church path there, under that 'ere stone cross,
I believe it's his gain to go, but I knows it's my loss.
I can't talk no more about him, my talk is well nigh done,
I knows he had faults, but we've got a thousand to his one.
Then comes the last vicar, and he swept th' ornimints away,
And he never had no sarvices only on the Lord's Day.
He was a man for a Sarmint, and 'twas a rare long spell,
'Tworn't for that, I counts, folks 'ud 'a liked him right well.
He preached agin three P's, Publicks, Pusey, and Pope;
And a dale about Faith, and not so much o' Love, nor o' Hope.
He was rael kind to poor men, 'ticular to them as 'ud talk
O' faith and experience, tho' they didn't know cheese from chalk.
He said the Chapel Preacher were quite as good in his eyes.
Thinks I, 'Much better then, bein' as he ain't half the price.'
His name at meetin' and preachin' was most ways to be seen,
He was too good for us, maybe, for they made him a Dean.
So our present vicar got the church, what ain't been here long;
And he fares as if he counts the t'other all in the wrong.
But I'm sick o' these changes, and doan't know what to be at:
For if this baant taken on handy, why then it is that.
What's the waly o' the rubric, as they call that small print,
If Parsons themselves don't know, or else won't 'bide by what's in't.
But I'm getting old, and it terrifies me, does this cough;
And the old clerk's last days on earth can't be werry far off.'

CHAPTER XVII

THE HUNTING PARSON

THE hunting parson is almost as extinct as the dodo. Not quite. He still survives here and there, and that not without advantage to himself and his neighbours. A great sporting writer, Whyte Melville, I believe, somewhere laments the disappearance of the parson from the hunting-field, wherein he often exercised a really good influence. He was usually not over-well mounted, knew nothing of the luxury of a second horse, but by his skill in "the sport of kings," by his clever horsemanship and perfect knowledge of the country, he could hold his own, and was never far behind the first rank. Some wise clerics, a few weeks ago, assembled for their clerical meeting, and discussed the question as to whether a parson ought to hunt; and they came to the admirable and altogether delightful conclusion that it was permissible for a parson to hunt on a bicycle, but not on horseback! The riders of bicycles are not particularly welcome to the followers of a hunt. They are usually in the way, and if parsons took largely to hunting on wheels, the master, in spite of his respect for the cloth, might have some difficulty in repressing hard language, and a new cause for the unpopularity of the clergy might arise. There is no reason why a clergyman should not hunt occasionally, if he can ride well, and does not make himself ridiculous, as poor Crabbe did, when he went out hunting with his patron's famous Belvoir pack.

Of course there are good and bad hunting parsons. We shall discover specimens of both types. There were few better clergymen than the late Canon Kingsley, my neighbour at Eversley. Few men exercised a more beneficial influence on his age, and his memory is revered and loved by his former friends and parishioners. And yet he loved a day's hunting, and was none the worse for it. It is a bad sign if the parsons become a feeble and effeminate race, and to follow hounds is a better form of recreation than going to afternoon tea-parties.

The writers of sporting annals often allude to the hunting parson, and express the pleasure which their presence affords to the followers of chase. Collyns, the author of *The Chase of the Wild Red Deer*, mentions the popular prejudice against the hunting by clerics, and states: "For myself, I will say that, without wishing to see the dignitaries of the Church again maintaining their kennels of hounds, I should feel regret if I were to miss from the field the familiar faces of some of those members of the clergy who now join in the sport of our country, and whose presence is always welcomed at the covert side."

Crabbe gives a very vivid description of the bad type of sporting parson:

> "A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday task
> As much as God or man can fairly ask;
> The rest he gives to loves or labours light,
> To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
> None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,
> To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;
> A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
> And, skilled at whist, devotes the nights to play;
> Then, while such honours bloom around his head,
> Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,
> To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
> To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?"

Cowper, too, with his evangelical opinions, heartily dis-

liked the hunting parson. In his "Progress of Error" he thus vilifies the race:

> "Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
> A cassocked huntsman, and a fiddling priest."

If we were to go back to history, we should find that the sporting parson has a somewhat ancient lineage. Abbots and bishops kept hounds and huntsmen in mediæval times, and very stern defenders were they of their sporting rights and most careful preservers of their game. In Salisbury Cathedral there is a famous brass memorial of good Bishop Wyvill, who was very eager to preserve his castle and chase at Sherborne. An account of his warlike and hunting propensities will be found in our chapter on Bishops.

Cardinal Wolsey seems not to have scorned the chase. Sir Thomas Heneage invited him to come to East Hampstead for "pastyme together for two or three days," and also to bring his greyhounds with him.

The favourite tutor of Queen Elizabeth, Roger Ascham, the learned scholar and divine, Prebendary of Wetwang in the Cathedral of York, "a man greatly beloved," was devoted to sport. His work, *Toxophilus; the School or Partitions of Schooting, in two books*, won for him royal favour. He was skilful in the use of the bow, and doubtless instructed his royal mistress how to bring down the deer in the forest of Windsor. In later life he took pleasure in cock-fighting, a strange sport for a reverend scholar. Indeed, he intended to publish a treatise on the cock-pit in order "to satisfy some that be more curious in marking other men's doings, than careful in mending their own faults." Dr. Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, when preaching his funeral sermon, said that he never knew any man live more honestly or die more Christianly, defending his noted fondness for sport by asking, "What should hinder Roger Ascham from having his honest diversions, from using his bow or engaging in the *alectryomachia?*"

Queen Bess said that she would rather have thrown ten thousand pounds into the sea than have lost her Ascham. This shows that her Majesty must have been very devotedly attached to her good tutor, as she was not very fond of throwing away money.

Even post-Reformation sporting bishops were not unknown. Archbishop Abbot had an unfortunate day's sport at Bramhill, which embittered his life. He was invited by Lord Zouch to hunt and kill a buck. The keeper ran amongst the herd of deer to bring them up to the fairer mark, whilst the Archbishop, sitting on his horse, let loose a barbed arrow from a cross-bow, and, unfortunately, hit the keeper, who died immediately. The report of the man's death flew faster than the arrow that killed him. The Archbishop had many enemies. The vicars and rectors found him austere and unsympathetic, as he had never held a living and knew nothing of the difficulties of a pastoral charge. His brother bishops coveted his high office, and would have liked to see him removed. So a howl was raised against the Archbishop. The canons were discussed, and every one cited Councils and Synods, who, before the event, were ignorant about them. Numerous questions were raised. Was it lawful for a clergyman to hunt? St. Jerome had stated that "a hunter is never a holy man." The Council of Orleans had decreed that "it is not lawful for a bishop, priest, or deacon to have dogs for hunting or hawks." The three kinds of hunting were discussed, *oppressiva*, *arenaria*, *saltuosa*, and it was held that a parson might not indulge in the first two sorts, but that it was lawful to exercise himself in the last. The controversy increased. The question of the various kinds of homicide arose, *ex necessitate*, *ex voluntate*, *ex casu*, the Archbishop's accident naturally falling under the third category. There was a mighty flutter in the clerical dovecots. Sir Edward Coke, the greatest lawyer of his age, was consulted. He was engaged in a game at bowls, but

he was quite able to answer the question, "Is it lawful for a bishop to hunt in a park by the laws of the realm?" "Yes," the lawyer replied, "he may hunt by the laws of this realm by this very token, that there is an old law that a bishop, when dying, is to leave his pack of dogs to the king's free use and disposal."

The Archbishop did not lack friends in his trouble. "Brethren, be not too busy to condemn any for uncanonicals according to the strictness thereof, lest we render ourselves in the same condition," said good Lancelot Andrews, Bishop of Winchester, to some of his episcopal brethren. King James, who delighted in hunting, grieved for the unhappy prelate. "It might have been my chance or thine," he said to one of his lords when talking over the accident. Abbot had retired to his almshouse at Guildford, founded by him, and still standing. Encouraged by the king's sympathy, he returned to Lambeth, and began again to perform his sacred duties. Some, however, of the bishops-elect, with over-tender consciences, refused or scrupled to be consecrated by him. The accident embittered his life. He used to keep a monthly fast on a Tuesday, the fatal day in the week whereon the accident happened, and during his life he gave £20 a year to the keeper's widow, who quickly consoled herself and married again.

Another sporting bishop was good Bishop Juxon, who attended Charles I. on the scaffold. During the Protectorate he retired to his own manor of Little Compton, Gloucestershire, where, as Whitelocke records, "he delighted in hunting, and kept a pack of good hounds, and had them so well ordered and hunted, chiefly by his own skill and direction, that they exceeded all other hounds in England for the pleasant and orderly hunting of them." On one occasion his lordship's hounds, rebelliously running through Chipping Norton churchyard during the time the Puritans were engaged in public worship, grievously offended them.

A member of this pious assembly was sent to complain of the affair to Oliver Cromwell.

"Pray," said the Protector, "do you think that the bishop prevailed on the hare to run through the churchyard at that time?"

"No, and please your Highness, I did not directly say he did; but through the holy ground the hare did go at that time."

"Get you gone!" rejoined Cromwell, "and let me hear no such frivolous complaints; whilst the bishop continues not to give my Government any offence, let him enjoy his diversion of hunting unmolested."

Oliver loved hunting himself, and therefore, doubtless, had some sympathy with sporting Bishop Juxon.

St. John's College, Oxford, owes something to Juxon's hunting. One day when he was out with his hounds he discovered a quarry of greenish marble at Bletchingdon, and this was used for the new buildings of the college erected in 1636.

But we are concerned mainly with times less remote. An excellent example of a sporting parson was the Rev. John Russell, "Jack Russell" as he is always called, perpetual curate of Swymbridge, the last of the genuine West Country race of hunting clerics, and a worthy representative thereof. He was by no means neglectful of his clerical duties. He regularly visited the sick in his parish; he had the reputation of being very charitable. He often used to complain, in his quaint way, of his constant "tightness of the chest." A good preacher, he was often in request to plead the cause of diocesan and charitable institutions, which benefited largely by his forcible appeals. Honest, manly, straightforward, he was much respected, and his lovable nature endeared him to a large circle of friends, who were never tired of singing the praises of "Jack Russell."

He was one of the best types of the hunting Devonshire

parsons of his time, though this is not the highest praise. He was popular enough, but his conception of clerical duty was scarcely very high. His love of sport made him selfish, and he ran through a fortune of £50,000 of his wife's money. His horse-dealing transactions were not always creditable, and there is an amusing story of how he tried to sell a blind horse to his neighbour Froude, and of the shrewdness of that rascally parson, to whom we shall refer presently.

He was devoted to sport. Hunting was ever his delight. He had a wonderful hardihood and immense powers of endurance, which lasted almost to the end of his long life. He would ride long distances to a meet, hunt his hounds all day, and return home at night from points frequently far more distant than even the morning meet. It is wonderful how the hardihood of even the frame of such a stalwart master could have borne the strain. An old letter of his tells how he rode twenty miles to a meet at Iddesleigh, found a fox and killed him during an awful thunderstorm, then rode to Ash, dined and danced till one o'clock. He slept two hours, and was off at three o'clock, riding fifty miles to Bodmin to the meet of the pack of his friend Tom Hext. He hunted all day, dined with his old friend Pomeroy Gilbert, and did not get to bed till the small hours—"much against my rule," he adds. Early to bed was his motto, and he liked not the convivial evenings which were often spent by the squires of Devonshire, nor had he any taste for card-playing and gambling, in which they often indulged. After those two hard days' sport he "rested" the third day, if walking several miles to a country fair could be called resting. At three o'clock in the morning he rode back to Iddesleigh, took out the hounds, found a fox at Dowland, and killed him close to the Schoolmaster Inn in Chawleigh parish, twelve miles as the crow flies, and then rode twenty miles to Tordown, sitting down to dinner at six o'clock, and all the hounds in their kennels,

J. Russell

THE REVEREND "JACK" RUSSELL

Russell being quite happy and comfortable, and in no way fatigued by his extraordinary exertions.

He had wonderful tact in dealing with all conditions of men. Before he established his pack foxes used to meet a cruel death at the hands of the farmers and rustics in his part of the country. When a fox was tracked to its earth they used to ring the church-bell, calling the villagers together, and dispatch poor Reynard with spades and guns and pitchforks. Russell waged war against these proceedings, meeting at first with much opposition, the threatening strength of his powerful arm and hunting crop being once or twice forcible arguments. He, however, soon secured the co-operation, goodwill, and friendship of the farmers and rustics, who became the best fox-preservers in the county of Devon. "Do ee cum and gi' us a bit o' sport, sir," was the constant cry of these men, and Russell did not disappoint them.

The biographer of Jack Russell, a sporting parson like himself, tells of many famous runs and many deeds of hard and adventurous riding. Russell rode twelve stone, and could only afford to keep three horses. He was continually pressed by *res augusta domi*, and used to save his steeds as much as possible, and yet rarely failed to be close to his hounds. His will was law with his neighbours. On one occasion a jury of farmers condemned a poor fellow to be hanged for sheep-stealing. Russell protested afterwards to one of the jurymen:

"Why, Jem, Tom Square was a quiet man and a good neighbour, and never stole a sheep before. It was a pity you did not speak up for him and save his life."

The good man replied:

"Bless us, Mister Russell, you doan't zay so! If us had on'y but know'd they was your honour's thoughts, us would have put it right, fai'. But then, my lord judge said he did ought to be hanged—and zo us hanged un. But,

bless ee, if us had on'y knaw'd yeur honour cared about un, us wid ha' put it right in quick time."

Mrs. Russell used to accompany her husband, and was a bold rider and good horsewoman. On one occasion it is recorded that she held a forward place in a long trying run of over two hours. Mr. Baring-Gould tells the story of a Bishop of Exeter requesting Russell to give up a pack of harriers which he had started when his fox-hounds had gone and their master was over eighty years of age.

"Mr. Russell, I hear you have a pack of hounds. Is it true?"

"It is. I won't deny it, my lord."

"Well, Mr. Russell, it seems to me rather unsuitable for a clergyman to keep a pack. I do not ask you to give up hunting, for I know it would not be possible for you to exist without *that*. But will you, to oblige me, give up the pack?"

"Do y' ask it as a personal favour, my lord?"

"Yes, Mr. Russell, as a personal favour."

"Very well, then, my lord, I will."

"Thank you, thank you." The Bishop, moved by his readiness, held out his hand. "Give me your hand, Mr. Russell; you are—you really are—a good fellow."

Jack Russell gave his great fist to the Bishop, who pressed it warmly. As they thus stood hand in hand, Jack said:

"I won't deceive you—not for the world, my lord. I'll give up the pack, sure enough—but Mrs. Russell will keep it instead of me."

The Bishop dropped his hand, sorely disappointed.

The Bishops of Exeter waged a long and continuous warfare against the sporting parsons of the West with very little success. There were in the thirties about twenty clergymen who kept hounds, and amongst them some of the best and most accomplished sportsmen of the day.

I may mention the names of the Rev. J. Pomeroy Gilbert, the Rev. H. Farr Yeatman, who would be hard to beat in any hunting-field; the Rev. W. H. Karslake, of Dolton; the Rev. A. F. Luttrell, of East Quantockshead; and the Rev. Peter Glubb, of Little Torrington. There were many others, besides such clerics as the Rev. Edward Clarke, of St. Dominick, and the Rev. John Templar, who hunted regularly, but did not keep hounds. In fact it is said that when Henry Philpotts first came to the Diocese of Exeter and was travelling in his episcopal coach, he witnessed a run; and observing a large number of black-coated riders, he concluded that some fearful epidemic had visited the countryside and that most of the men were in mourning. His chaplain, who knew the country better, did not undeceive him. One of these black-coated gentlemen said to the Bishop one day:

"I am told, my lord, that you object to my hunting."

"Dear me," replied his lordship, with a perfectly courteous smile, "who could have told you so? What I object to is, that you should ever do anything else." Whereby it may be gathered that Henry of Exeter could be peculiarly sarcastic.

Sometimes Jack Russell's curates followed their vicar to the chase, and apochryphal stories were told of his testing the voices of rival applicants for the office by asking them to give "view-holloas," and selecting the most accomplished hunting vocalist; but his biographer assures me that such stories are myths. Jack Russell appears to us modern folk as belonging to a very remote past; yet he died not so very long ago, in the year 1883, having lived to the great age of eighty-seven years. He sleeps in the quiet churchyard at Swymbridge, by the side of his wife, whose death nearly broke his heart. Whatever contentious folk may say against his ardent love of sport, he was a worthy, kind-hearted man. He discharged his clerical duties with some degree of earnestness and success. He had two

churches to serve, those of Swymbridge and Landkey. His predecessor was content with only one service in each church on Sundays. Russell used to have four services in Swymbridge alone. The income of the living was only £180 a year, and on account of his second church, Landkey, he was obliged to provide a curate. Hence his clerical income was practically *nil*. He wrought many improvements in his parish, built schools and a district church, made Landkey into a separate parish, and restored the interesting church of Swymbridge. Though he loved hunting, we should form a false estimate of Jack Russell's character if we failed to notice his attention to some part, at least, of his clerical duties, and only thought of him as a sporting parson.

In my book on *The Parish Clerk* I have recorded many instances of the extraordinary notices which the venerable holders of that office have given out in church. The sporting proclivities of rectors and vicars caused many a blunder on the part of the clerk, many too literal explanations of the causes which led to the parson's absence. Thus the Rev. John Boyce, rector of Sherwell, wished to abandon the afternoon service, as he desired to accept the invitation of Sir Thomas Acland to hunt with him on the Monday morning across the wild moorland. He explained all this very carefully to the clerk, who announced the rector's intentions in the following terms:

"This is vor to give notiss—there be no sarvice to this church this arternoon ; 'caus' maester is a-going over the moor a-stag-hunting wi' Sir Thomas."

It seems to have been thought a matter of supreme indifference in the days of the careless hunting parson to abandon a service, or even two services, on Sunday in order to enable a sporting rector to attend a favourite meet. Lord Frederick Beauclerk, vicar of Redbourn Herts, and his curate, the Rev. W. S. Wade, were both

hunting parsons of the old school, and the affairs of the parish were conducted in a very lax and careless manner. Thus the clerk was told to give out the following notice one Sunday morning:

"The vicar is goin' on Friday to the throwin'-off of the Leicestershire 'ounds; consequently he will not be back till Monday next week. Therefore next Sunday there will be no sarvice in this church on that day."

Other forms of sport claimed their adherents, and sometimes necessitated the abandonment of a service. Thus a clerk once announced that there would be no service in the church on the following Sunday, because the rector was going grouse-shooting; and another announcement was made of a similar nature, "becos maester meyans to get to Worthing to-night to be in good toime for reayces to-morrow morning."

Many stories are current about sporting parsons. An archdeacon once asked a cleric who was more familiar with the chase than with ecclesiastical terms:

"Have you a terrier?"

For the information of the unlearned, I may say that a terrier is a book or roll in which the lands belonging to a church or corporation are duly described, and has no relation to a delightful breed of dog, an excellent specimen of which is now sitting by my side and anxious for me to close my books and cease this writing. The sporting parson replied to the inquiry of the archdeacon:

"No, sir, I have no terrier, but I can lend you a capital brace of pointers."

Marriages and funerals often interfered with the pleasures of sport-loving parsons. An old parishioner, aged eighty-five years, told me that when he was about to be married he and his intended bride entered the church at the time appointed, but there was no rector. He had gone hunting, and the expectant couple had to wait until the following day for the tying of the marriage knot.

"I could have had him unfrocked, sir, but it weren't worth the bother," the old man said to me.

Old hunting songs frequently enrol the parson among the heroes of the day. Thus the favourite old ditty, "We'll all go a-hunting to-day," after telling of the judge and the doctor and other celebrities hurrying through their business in order to arrive at the meet, has a verse on the parson, who somewhat abridges the marriage service for the sake of hunting:

> "The village bells chime, there's a wedding at nine,
> And the parson unites the fond pair;
> Then he hears the sweet sound of the horn and the hound,
> And he knows 'tis his time to be there.
> Says he, for your welfare I'll pray;
> I regret I no longer can stay.
> Now you're safely made one,
> I must quickly be gone;
> For I must go a-hunting to-day.
> We'll all go a-hunting to-day,
> All nature is smiling and gay,
> So we'll join the glad throng that goes laughing along,
> And we'll all go a-hunting to-day."

Mr. Baring-Gould quotes another old hunting song called "Parson Hogg," which tells of a careless hunting cleric who was no credit to his cloth. It is printed in *Songs of the West*, a magnificent collection of traditional songs and ballads of the West of England, made by Mr. Baring-Gould and Mr. Fleetwood Shephard. It runs as follows:

> "Mass Parson Hogg shall now maintain
> The burden of my song, sir!
> A single life perforce he led,
> Of constitution strong, sir.
> Sing Tally ho! sing Tally ho!
> Sing Tally ho! why zounds, sir!
> He mounts his mare to hunt the hare,
> Sing Tally ho! the hounds, sir.

And every day he goes to mass
He first pulls on his boot, sir!
That, should the beagles chance to pass,
He may join in pursuit, sir!
Sing Tally ho! &c.

That Parson little loveth prayer,
And pater night and morn, sir!
For bell and book hath little care,
But dearly loves the horn, sir!
Sing Tally ho! &c.

St. Stephen's Day that holy man
He went a pair to wed, sir!
When as the service was begun,
Puss by the churchyard sped, sir!
Sing Tally ho! &c.

He shut his book. "Come on," he said,
"I'll pray and bless no more, sir!"
He drew the surplice o'er his head,
And started for the door, sir!
Sing Tally ho! &c.

In pulpit Parson Hogg was strong,
He preached without a book, sir!
And to the point, but never long,
And this the text he took, sir!
O Tally ho! O Tally ho!
Dearly beloved—zounds, sir!
I mount my mare to hunt the hare,
Singing Tally ho! the hounds, sir."

One of the worst specimens of his class was the Rev. John Froude, Vicar of Knowstone, the original of Parson Chowne, of Blackmore's novel, *The Maid of Sker*. If all the accounts of him are true, he must have been possessed of the devil and abandoned to evil. He came of gentle birth, was soured and cheated in his younger days, and then his hand was turned against every man, and he ruled the countryside with the power of a malignant fiend. Woe to the man who dared to resist him! His goods, his life,

would assuredly pay the forfeit. Froude had at his beck and call a set of young farmers and grooms who, controlled by fear or for sake of reward, were ever ready to do his bidding. The firing of an offender's stacks was a frequent punishment. The novelist tells of a race of naked savages who lived not far from the rectory, and were sent on errands of vengeance and to terrify the neighbourhood. Froude fed them with the refuse of his hounds' food and entirely controlled them, treating them much in the same way as he did his dogs. But this part of the story is imaginary. It was said that if he had turned his talents to good account he might have attained to any success, and that he might even have been a bishop if he had chosen. For this, says the author of *The Maid of Sker*, he possessed some qualifications, "for his choicest pleasure was found in tormenting his fellow-parsons." His mode of dealing with bishops was unique and original. His strange conduct naturally aroused the attention of his diocesans. One of these, more determined than his predecessors, determined to beard the lion in his den, and drove in state in his coach-and-four to Froude's vicarage. After repeated knockings at the door, the housekeeper, Sally, a somewhat sour-faced individual, at length opened it and showed a distressed face, stating that her master was very ill and that the bishop had just come in time to minister to him. The bishop ascended the stairs and entered the sick man's room, where there was a good array of medicine bottles and the poor invalid lying in a bed in great agony, his face red and inflamed with black patches upon it. The servant informed his lordship that her poor master had the plague, and was not likely to live many hours. The bishop, not being a courageous man, fled quickly down the stairs and drove away in hot haste. The parson leaped from his bed, pulled a mask from his face, and appeared in hunting togs, ready to follow his hounds when the bishop was safely away from the neighbourhood.

Another Bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts, determined to bring this terrible parson to his knees, and ordered him to attend his visitation. Froude wrote to say that he would be hunting on the day fixed for the gathering of clerics, and if the fox ran in the right direction he would be delighted to meet his lordship, at any rate to dine with him, suggesting that the bishop should bring his two archdeacons with him and have a rubber at whist, the points not to exceed a guinea. This did not please the bishop, who resolved to visit this black sheep of his clerical flock. The parson got wind of his coming, and summoned all his vassals and serfs, who were ordered to bring their spades and pickaxes and dig up the road, making a large trench. Into this they carted the contents of a black, unwholesome bog, covering it with loose gravel so that it had the appearance of a sound road.

The work was scarcely finished when the bishop drove along in his state-carriage drawn by six horses, and attended by his footmen and coachman. All was going well when suddenly the coach and horses, bishop and footmen, were wallowing in the black oose of a mighty bog. Henry of Exeter was not to be daunted even by such trifles, and proceeded to the rectory, carrying with him much black oose. He was greeted by the parson, who placed before him a bottle of brandy and two tumblers, and bade him help himself. The bishop declined, and Froude helped himself freely. [There are who say that he never drank, but delighted in making others imbibe too much.] Then the following conversation is reported to have taken place :

"You keep hounds, I hear," said the bishop.

"No, my lord, the hounds keep me."

"I do not understand."

"Well, then, you must be stupid. They stock my larder with hares. You don't suppose I should have hares on my table unless they were caught for me. There's no butcher for miles and miles, and I can't get a joint but once in a

fortnight maybe. What should I do without rabbits and hares?"

"Mr. Froude, I've been told that you have men in here drinking and fighting."

"It's a lie! I admit that they drink—every man drinks since he was a baby—but fighting in my dining-room! No, my lord! Directly they begin to fight I take 'em by the scruff of the neck and turn them out into the churchyard, and let 'em fight out their difference among the tombs."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Froude, that I have heard some very queer and unsatisfactory tales concerning you."

"I dare say you have, my lord. So have I of your lordship, very unpleasant and nasty tales, when I've been to Torrington and Bideford fairs. But when I do, I say it's a parcel of —— lies. And when next you hear any of these tales about me, then you say, 'I know John Froude very well—drunk out of his bottle of brandy—I swear that all these tales about him are a parcel of lies.'" [1]

Another version of this story states that the parson pretended to be stone deaf, "deaf as a haddock," the result of a chill, and could not hear a word that the bishop said. When the bishop declined to drink brandy, he ordered his servant to bring a glass "hot and strong for the bishop"; and when the latter began to make troublesome inquiries, Froude was as deaf as a post and talked of the merits of brandy as a cure for a cold, the neglect of which stimulant being the cause of his terrible lack of hearing.

Even Henry of Exeter could work no reformation in the heart of this fiendish parson.

Blackmore tells of the diabolical trick which he served upon "Captain Vellacot," a fancy name for a Devonshire

[1] *Old Country Life*, by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, p. 156.

baronet, who had offended the parson in some way. The baronet suffered in consequence the loss of his ricks; but this minor detail was forgotten and forgiven when the two met at a fair, and Froude made himself particularly pleasant to his victim, and they dined together at an inn. Then the baronet showed the parson a young horse which he had just purchased. Froude liked the steed and would have bought it, but the baronet refused his offer, and thus brought upon himself dire vengeance. They parted in the most friendly manner; but the parson slipped back quietly into the stable and placed a hemp-seed beneath the lids of the horse's eyes. During the ride homewards the heat and moisture burst the skin of the berry, which shot forth red fire over the tissues of the eyeballs and drove the horse mad. The poor baronet was thrown and brought home on a hurdle with several bones broken, and the horse had to be shot. It was ill-luck to incur the hatred of Froude. I know not whether the story of the strange clerical meeting at his rectory be true, at which he provided some refreshment, brandy and hot water steaming in kettles on the hob; but the hot water was not hot water, it was strong whisky, and the mixture was too powerful for clerics and led to disastrous results.

Mr. Baring-Gould, in his recent book on Devonshire folk, tells the following true but disgraceful story:

Between services on Sunday Froude gave his young curate, who was dining with him and some of his former friends, too much of his soft but strong ale. He disliked the young fellow, who was a bit of a clown and uncouth, and did it out of malice. The curate, quite ignorant of the headiness of the ale, inadvertently got fuddled. The conversation turned on a monstrous pig that Froude had killed, and which was hung up in his outhouse, and he invited his guests to accompany him and view the carcass and estimate the weight. One thought it weighed so many stones; others thought differently. Froude said it weighed

just the same as his curate, who was fat. The rough farmers demurred to the rector's estimate, and, finding an empty corn-sack, they thrust the intoxicated ecclesiastic into it, and hanging him up to the end of the beam, shouted with delight as the curate brought the weight down. Meanwhile, the bells were ringing for Evensong, but they left the curate hung up in the sack, where he slept uncomfortably. The congregation assembled for church and waited. Froude would not officiate, and the curate was incapable of doing so.

The story of Froude's marriage has been well told by Mr. Baring-Gould in *Old Country Life.* He had paid some insolent attention to a farmer's daughter, and her brothers were resolved that he should marry her. When he had drunk too freely they made him sign a paper undertaking to marry her, or to forfeit £10,000. In the morning he regretted his error, did not see any way to escape from the bargain, and rather than sacrifice the money, married the lady. She had cause to bewail her fate. On the journey in a coach to her new home she dared to dispute some statement of her spouse, and was immediately ordered to get out of the carriage and to go wherever she minded. Froude drove on gaily to the vicarage, enjoyed alone his wedding-feast, and an hour or two later a humbled and bedraggled bride entered the house, resolving never again to dispute her husband's word. Froude would have made an excellent Petruchio.

His clerical duties sat easily upon him. He served two churches whenever he felt inclined. No one ever dared to stay away from service when he ordered them to go. He galloped to church at break-neck speed and stabled his horse in the vestry during the service. His parishioners were rather fearful when they were ordered to church, as the summons was a sign that he was offended with them, and might probably order their ricks to be fired during their absence. On one occasion his

hounds broke loose when he was just about to begin his sermon. He heard them as they rushed past the church, his favourite hound, Towler, giving tongue. He called out to the clerk to run and seize the hare, or Towler would tear it to bits. The clerk performed this clerical duty, secured the hare, brought it back with him, flung it under his seat until the sermon and service were happily concluded. According to *The Maid of Sker* the parson was severely bitten by one of his hounds, and died a horrible death from hydrophobia, being smothered at last by his bosom friend Jack Hannaford, vicar of Wellclose. Mr. Baring-Gould states that his end was not so tragic but not less miserable. His tyrannical rule was broken with age. His power, he felt, was gone; and this caused such outbursts of mortified rage that he became a wreck physically and mentally, and died in wretchedness.

His successor, Prebendary Matthews, had a terrible experience when he first came to Knowstone. The whole village seemed full of wild, savage men, who threatened his life and acknowledged no law. Fortunately Mr. Matthews was a man of powerful physique, but he found it absolutely necessary in the early years of his incumbency to go about armed, and used to discharge a shot from his revolver when he sallied forth from the vicarage, in order to show that he could not be attacked with impunity. By wonderful tact and perseverance he won the hearts of these lawless folk and thoroughly reformed the parish, a task of which few men could have been capable.

Jack Hannaford, Froude's friend and companion in many an outrage and in the hunting-field, was a strong and powerful giant, said to have been the strongest man in England and the most expert and dangerous fighter and wrestler of his age. Like Froude, he kept a pack of hounds. In *The Maid of Sker* it is recorded of him that "he looked a good yard and a half round the chest, and his arms were like oak-saplings." His voice was so

powerful that in reading the Collects or the Lessons, or even the Burial Service, no man in the British realm was fit to say "Amen" to him. This had something to do with the size of his chest, and perhaps may have helped to increase it. His sermons also were done in a style that women would come miles to enjoy; "beginning very soft and sweet, so as to melt the milder ones; and then of a sudden roaring greatly with all the contents of enormous lungs, so as to ring all round the sides of the strongest weaker vessels. And as for the men, what could they think, when the preacher could drub any six of them?"

An aged friend who knew Devonshire well used to tell sad stories of this clerical bruiser, who used to fight any tramp or prize-fighter who dared to come to Wellclose Parsonage and challenge his supremacy. No one had any chance against his mighty fists and powerful muscles. Only once was he beaten, and that at Exeter by a Welshman, when the pugilistic parson was the worse for liquor. Next morning, having recovered from his debauch, he followed that Welshman over hill and down dale, until he reached Taffy's home in some obscure village, and there and then renewed the contest and utterly thrashed him. "That will teach you not to lay a hand on Jack Hannaford again when he is drunk!" said the parson. "If you wish to fight him again, call at Wellclose Parsonage, and he'll be ready for you." On one occasion he supplied the place of a noted pugilist who was taken ill and could not appear at a prize-fighting exhibition at Taunton. Jack Hannaford was sent for, and stripped himself, showed his muscles and his skill in the noble science, to the great delight and admiration of the townsfolk, who had no notion but that they were beholding the professional bruiser. Unfortunately Lord Lundy was in the tent and recognised him. Hannaford saw that he was discovered, and immediately went over to his lordship and whispered, "Mum, my lord. The second best man in England was

laid on the shelf, so they had to send for the best man to take his place." Lord Lundy was discreet and did not betray him.

It may be imagined that such a powerful and pugnacious parson was rather a terror to the countryside. Everybody feared him, and the farmers used to bribe the guard to put him into a separate compartment and lock him in, when travelling by train, lest he should want to challenge and fight any of them in a railway carriage. Prebendary Matthews, Froude's successor, once met him at an hotel where he was staying. Hannaford came in and began using coarse and bad language in the presence of the landlady, and Mr. Matthews felt bound to protest. Hannaford had his coat off in a minute and wanted to fight, and needed some pacifying.

Pugilistic parsons are now rare, save that occasionally one hears of a clever boxing curate taming the wild young hooligans who attend his Young Men's Club, and finding a way to their hearts and to their respect by knocking them down. It is a very effectual mode of inculcating home truths, and doubtless does good. No such object ever animated Jack Hannaford or Parson Froude, and it is well that the race died with them.

One of the bad sporting parsons was William Moreton, vicar of Willenhall, Staffordshire,[1] who was said to be an illegitimate scion of the Royal Family, resembled them in appearance, and was at college with the Duke of York. He came to his living in 1783, and was a typical specimen of his class, an enthusiastic cock-fighter, and a "three-bottle man." Soon after his arrival the old mocking doggerel was applied to Willehall:

"A tumble-down church,
A totter'ng steeple,
A drunken parson,
And a wicked people."

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[1] F. W. Hackwood, *Annals of Willenhall* (*Midland Evening News*).

He was a fine reader and his sermons was well written; he had a dignified bearing and a commanding presence. He candidly admitted his shortcomings as a clergyman, and told his people to do what he said, not what he did. Some of the stories told about him are doubtless apochryphal, and in spite of his eccentricities, his drinking, and cock-fighting, he exercised an extraordinary influence over the rough population of the district, over which he ruled for fifty years. It is, however, not surprising that in the parish of such a clergyman Dissent firmly established itself and has ever since held its own. Moreton died in 1834. It must have been somewhat difficult for his curate to preach the funeral sermon, but he abstained from following the usual practice of the time, which bestowed indiscriminate praise upon the departed, and his concluding words are worth recording:

"May every occasion like the present bring instruction and edification to your souls. May the failings which you have witnessed and lamented in others urge you to examine and correct your own; and when their removal makes you think on the nature of the account they will have to render, may you be awakened to scrutinise your own stewardship; and instead of recording the sins of the departed, seek to be delivered, whilst the Redeemer invites you, from those which are a burden to your consciences."

We have had some famous hunting parsons in Berkshire, notably the Rev. Henry Ellis St. John, who was formerly rector of the parish in which I now live, which he held in the days of pluralism, together with the adjoining parish of Finchampstead. He was lord of the manor of West Court, where he kept a famous pack of hounds. He began hunting, at the beginning of the last century, with a scratch pack, each farmer who hunted with him bringing one or two dogs, and thus forming a trencher-fed pack, which hunted both hare and fox, sometimes with the aid of a steady old foxhound. In 1810 he bought the Duke

of Bridgwater's pack and took regularly to fox-hunting, The historian of the Vine Hunt, himself a clergyman, records that in 1812 he saw Mr. St. John find a fox at Waltham Wood, and after a long run lost it behind Quidhampton. Thirty years afterwards, as he was sitting with Mr. St. John at the Board of Guardians, in the old Town Hall at Wokingham, he asked him if he remembered the circumstance. His answer was characteristic, showing his ardent love of hunting :

"Recollect it? of course I do! Now, do you know, I never could make out to this day where the fox could have got to," as if he had been thinking of it ever since.

Another noted North Country sporting parson used to ride from his rectory to his church across country, rather a rough bit of country, down a steep hill and up another. His parishioners used to stand in the churchyard and watch his progress with keen relish, expressing themselves enthusiastically as one fence after another was safely negotiated. They used to say, "He's safely over the single," "Now he's at the double," "What will he do at the rails?" "He's well over," and the last obstacle he cleared was the churchyard wall, saving his time by three minutes.

Another sporting rector was about to leave the rectory on his way to church. The little tinkling bell announced that he had five minutes. He rang for his valet and said, "John, don't you hear the saddling bell? Bring the colours." The valet immediately fetched surplice and hood, and arrayed his master for the service.

A sporting parson was once severely taken to task by one of his grave parishioners, who told him that it was extremely wrong for him to carry a gun and shoot rabbits on his glebe, concluding with the remark :

"I do not see in my Bible that the Apostles went out shooting."

Perhaps the sport-loving vicar thought it well to answer a fool according to his folly, and frivolously replied :

"No; sport was bad in Palestine; they went fishing instead."

A blind hunting parson is a *rara avis*. Such was the Rev. Edward Stokes, rector of Blaby, Leicestershire, in 1748. He lived to the age of ninety-three, and discharged his clerical duties faithfully. When he hunted, a groom always accompanied him, and when a leap was to be taken, rang a bell, and the hedge was negotiated in safety.

The old Vine Hunt had many black-coated followers, and these hunting parsons were said to be some of the best sportsmen in the field. There was the Rev. Edward St. John, of Ashe Park, brother of Mr. St. John, rector of Finchampstead and Barkham, who had a full share of the family taste for hunting, and always knew what the hounds were about, and when to turn, and when to make play, without looking to any one else, or showing the least jealousy of others being before him. There was the Rev. John Orde, of Winslade, a thorough sportsman; an old rector of Baughurst, a gentleman of most inexpressive countenance, who seldom spoke, and was never in the first flight, but loved hunting in his own way; and there was the Rev. Thomas Chute, the brother of the master of the Vine Hunt, a bold rider and grand sportsman, who usually resided on the family estates in Norfolk, but hunted with the Vine. In Mr. Chute's field clergymen happened to form almost a majority of the gentlemen who regularly hunted with him, because there were in his time several unbeneficed parsons, of private fortune, residing in the country, who were fond of hunting. The Rev. Austen Leigh, the historian of the Vine, writing in 1865, states that within his recollection a great change had taken place in the society of the hunting-field from the almost total withdrawal of the clergy from it. In his early days any country clergyman was expected to hunt, if he liked it, just as much as he was expected to dine out with his

neighbours; nor was he supposed to derogate from his character, or to impair his influence with his parishioners, by the one indulgence more than by the other. The withdrawal of the clergy from the hunting-field in those days had doubtless been accompanied by a greater devotion to the duties of their calling; but to the society in the hunting-field the loss of this class of men may, perhaps, have had rather a lowering tendency. Charles Kingsley was an immense favourite with the followers of Mr. Garth, and dearly loved a ride with the hounds. In one of his books he describes the hunting scene which he came upon, *quite by accident*, during one of his morning rides. He tells how he was tempted to follow, but he remembered some sick old woman whom he ought to visit, and felt that he would think better of himself, and that his readers would think better of him, if he rode homewards and abandoned the chase. However, he did not always have a sick old woman to visit, and was well known in the hunting-field. No one but a true lover of hunting and of hounds could have written those lines, descriptive of a hunting scene, which occur in his *Ode to the North-East Wind:*

"Chime ye dappled darlings,
Through the sleet and snow;
Who can over-ride you?
Let the horses go!
Chime ye dappled darlings,
Down the roaring blast;
You shall see a fox die
Ere an hour be past."

We need not concern ourselves with the causes which have led to the disappearance of the parson from the hunting-field. It may be increased devotion to duty; it may be what Jack Russell used so often to suffer from, "tightness of the chest," a complaint which is sorely felt in many a clerical household; it may be that many

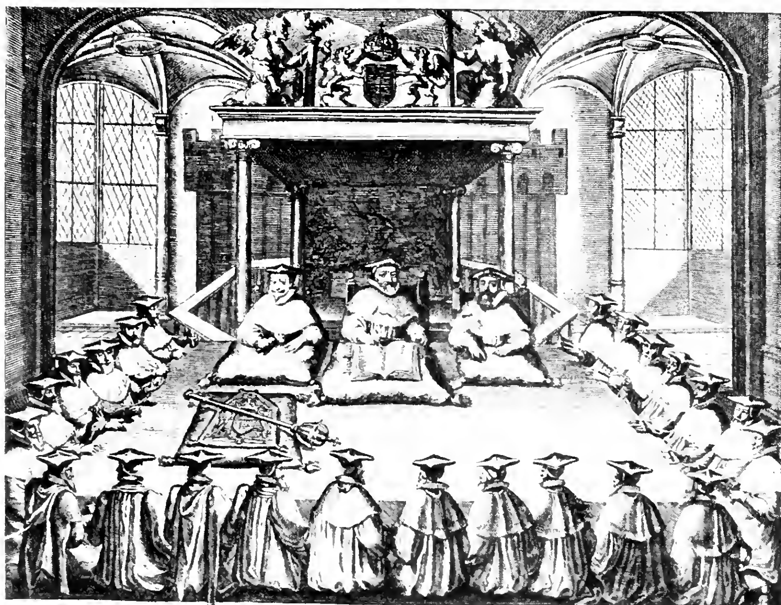
parsons in these days are drawn from the ranks of those who never rode a horse in their lives or heard a hunting-horn. If parsons hunt now they do no wrong. It is absurd to say, "You may boat, shoot, fish, play cricket, or lawn-tennis, and ride—but not with hounds, except on a bicycle!" An old clergyman who had been severely attacked for his love of the chase, once said, "I only wish my hours of recreation had all been spent as happily and as innocently as in the hunting-field; but point out to me the moral turpitude of hunting, and I'll never follow a hound again."

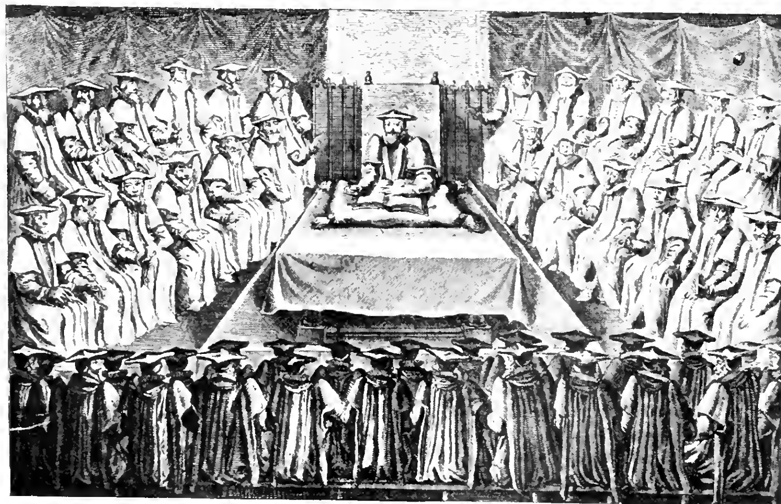
CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARSON'S DRESS

AS with secular persons, fashions have exercised sway over the dress of parsons, who, in spite of episcopal admonitions, have often sought to approximate it to that worn by laymen. We find archdeacons in the Middle Ages reproving young clerics for wearing short tunics and carrying weapons and daggers just like persons engaged in worldly callings. The Constitutions of Cardinal Ottoboni laid down strict rules with regard to clerical attire, the proper tonsure, the shaving of beards, and English bishops strove to enforce his regulations, and had some difficulty in persuading their parsons to refrain from growing beards or moustaches. One cardinal complained that the English mediæval clergy looked more like soldiers than priests, who gave serious cause of offence not only on account of their dress but also in their general manners and gait and in their silly, open-mouthed laugh. They were ordered to wear a cassock which was to be well above the ankles, and this was to be closed and not open like a cloak. The decent apparel of the English clergy after the Reformation was strictly enjoined by the Canons. The framers of these declare that "a prescript form of decent and comely apparel" for the clergy was always ordered, so that they might be had in reverence and be known to the people and thereby receive the honour and estimation due to the special Messengers and Ministers of Almighty God. They

regret the "newfangleness of apparel" which some factious persons had introduced, and hope that it may soon die out. The superior clergy and incumbents are ordered to wear gowns with standing collars and sleeves straight at the hands, or wide sleeves, as are used in the Universities, with hoods and tippets of silk or sarcenet and square caps. The curious old print of the meetings of Convocation shows this clerical attire. During their journeys parsons are ordered to wear cloaks with sleeves, commonly called priests' cloaks, without guards, welts, long buttons, or cuts. It is, perhaps, not generally known that no ecclesiastical person shall wear any coif or wrought nightcap, but only plain nightcaps of black silk, satin, or velvet. In private houses parsons may use any comely and scholar-like apparel, provided it be not cut or pinkt; and that in public they go not in doublet and hose, without coats or cassocks; and that they wear not any light-coloured stockings. These were the prescribed rules for clerical dress ordered in 1603. Fashions have changed somewhat since then. In Fielding's time country parsons always wore their cassocks, which were quite short, and over them they wore great-coats when walking. Fielding tells of Parson Adams who "presented a figure which would have moved laughter in many, for his cassock had just fallen down below his great-coat, that is to say, it reached his knees, whereas the skirts of his great-coat descended no lower than half-way down his thighs." Parsons wore also knee-breeches, buckled shoes, a black cocked-hat, and banns. A bishop's or archdeacon's apron is a development or reminiscence of this ancient form of cassock. Town parsons in the time of Queen Anne wore silk cassocks and a flowing gown when they walked through the streets, but the shape of the gown declared the Church party to which the wearer belonged. An M.A. gown denoted a Tory; pudding-sleeves or mourning gowns were the badges of the Whigs. Cassocks gradually went out of fashion.





THE UPPER AND LOWER HOUSES OF CONVOCATION

1623-1624, A.D.

Dean Swift attired himself in "a light camlet, faced with red velvet and silver buckles." Then we hear of brown coats, plaid or white waistcoats, white stockings and leathern breeches, and some country parsons dressed themselves like farmers and neglected all clerical garb.

When the fashion for wigs came in the parson was in no way behind his age, in spite of the early denunciations of the Fathers of the Church that wigs were invented by the devil, and that women who wore them were guilty of a mortal sin. Tillotson was the first parson who wore a wig, and refers in one of his sermons to the change of fashion, recalling the time when "ministers, whatever their text was, did either find or make occasion to reprove the great sin of long hair." Charles II. condemned the practice together with smoking and reading sermons, but in spite of royal displeasure the parsons of his period took liberally to wearing wigs. In order not to disturb the ponderous headgear, the shape of the surplice was altered and was made open down the front, so as to enable the clergyman to place it round his shoulders, and not to require him, as in the old-fashioned and modern surplices, to put it on by putting his head through the hole at the top. They had wigs of divers shapes, as Swift says:

> "We who wear our wigs
> With fantail and with snake,"

and some wore full-bottomed wigs and other fashionable shapes. John Chubbe wrote in 1765 a book—*Free Advice to a Young Clergyman*—strongly advising the young preacher to wear a wig, till age made his own hair respectable. Bishop Randolph was the first to break through the custom, but did not escape the censure of George IV., and the fashion was not extinct in 1858, when Archbishop Sumner wore a wig at the marriage of the Princess Royal of England.[1]

[1] *At the Sign of the Barber's Pole,* by W. Andrews.

The old Derby Uncle Toby jugs give a caricature of an old-fashioned parson who wears a wig. His cassock has gone, and he wears a clerical black coat with bands, a sporting waistcoat, white stockings, and buckled shoes. So devoted was an old West Country parson to his wig that in his old age he resigned his living and retired to a neighbouring town because there was no barber nearer who could curl his wig. Fierce controversy has raged upon the subject of clergymen wearing beards and moustaches. The portraits of ancient worthies of the Church show that these were not unfashionable. Some of the bishops in the sixties inveighed against them, notably the Bishop of Rochester in 1861, and books were written on the subject, such as James Ward's *Defence of the Beard*, and *An Apology for the Beard, addressed to Men in General, and to the Clergy in Particular.* A Bishop of London was mightily offended with an East End vicar who had grown a beard, and to whose Church the bishop was coming for a Confirmation. He sent a message ordering him to shave, and threatening if the vicar refused to hold the service in another church. The vicar was not to be beaten. He replied that he was quite willing to take his candidates to another church, and would give out in church next Sunday the reason for the change. The bishop foresaw an amused press and a laughing people, and wisely retracted. Some parsons still persist in wearing military moustaches in spite of episcopal disapprobation, but "all or none" seems to be the usual and wisest rule.

In church during Divine Service the parson usually wore a surplice, though this innocent vestment has not escaped the denunciations of the Puritan. It has been called by amiable writers "a fool's coat," "a Babylonish garment," "a rag of the whore of Babylon," "a habit of the priests of Isis," and other pleasing epithets. It was the cause of those shameful "Surplice Riots" that disturbed

the calm of the City of Exeter, when Dr. Coleridge, Vicar of Thoverton, was mobbed after preaching at St. Sidwell's, and Francis Courtenay, the vicar, was assaulted by a yelling crowd of two thousand savages, who covered him with filth and rotten eggs and struck at him with sticks which the police could scarcely ward off. He was a young, quiet, gentle man, and was hurried by these attacks to a premature death. Such was the feeling of the period that the *Times* actually defended the conduct of the mob, and bade the bishop put down the "boyish nonsense" of the young clergyman wearing a surplice.[1]

Tom Hood poured scorn on these surplice riots in the well-known lines:

"A very pretty public stir
Is making down at Exeter,
About the surplice fashion;
And many bitter words and rude
Are interchanged about the feud,
And much unchristian passion.
For me, I neither know nor care,
Whether a parson ought to wear
A black dress, or a white one,
Plagued with a trouble of my own,
A wife who preaches in her gown,
And lectures in her night one."

Preaching gowns were almost universal in towns, but in country churches a surplice, "dirty and contemptible with age," was used both in pulpit and reading-desk.

It would, however, take too long to write of the parson's ecclesiastical vestments, and the curious reader will find all he needs in the recent Report published by the Committee of the Upper House of Convocation. We are not of the number of those who "shrink from a Ritualist as they would from a snake or dismiss him contemptuously as possessed of the idle vanity of a peacock." Nor do we

[1] *Not Many Years Ago*, by an Elderly Bachelor, 1898.

regard the other side "as wild boars out of the wood bent on rooting up all that is decent and beautiful." It is well that the slovenliness of the old-fashioned parson, his torn and stained surplice and his black gown, should have passed away into the limbo of forgotten things, and that a more reverent order of service, more care for the fabric of the Church, the externals of Divine worship, and the dress of the minister, should have replaced the carelessness of former days. The Ornaments Rubric does not exclude the use of vestments other than the surplice, but whether it be wise or advisable to introduce the use of such vestments into any or every church may well be left to "that regulated and varied liberty suitable to local conditions," that liberty which, according to the Bishop of Salisbury, has produced on the whole a fine type of character among the English clergy.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME ODDS AND ENDS

I

A CLERICAL DIARIST

OLD diaries are always interesting, and we are fortunate in possessing the daily chronicle of a Sussex parson, who was rector of Horsted Keynes in the Commonwealth and later Stuart period. His diary begins with the year 1655 and ends in 1679.[1] He was a very methodical, concise, and good-tempered personage, and these records help us to understand what was the daily life of a parson of that period. He was a Royalist, but of the breed of the Vicar of Bray, whose virtues the well-known old ballad sets forth.

He was formerly a chaplain in the Royal Army, was taken prisoner, and then "compounded," and was appointed to his living. He kept very accurate accounts of the prices which he paid for his goods and of his receipts from tithe and other sources of revenue, and these throw much light upon the ordinary affairs and country life of the seventeenth century. Goods were bought from travelling packmen. He tells how he bought his blankets and bolsters from Will. Clowson, "who comes about the country with his packs on horseback." He

[1] *Sussex Archæological Collections,* vol. i.

was fortunate in procuring a man-servant for £5 a year and a maid for £3. The number of communicants was large, numbering on an average 180 persons. He was sorely troubled on two occasions by the immorality of his servants. The rector rejoiced greatly at the Restoration, and poured forth his panegyrics in the finest Latin; but his taxes increased, and this vexed his righteous soul. A ninepenny rate and again a threepenny rate for the poor, besides the King's taxes, besides hearth-money and poll-tax! Who could stand such burdens? It is curious to note that the ladies of the period indulged in smoking, as the Rector records, "Tobacco for my wife, 3d." He was a very temperate man, but one evening he confesses *in Latin* that, when he had begun prayers with his family he was so overpowered with the effects of some perry that he had taken, not knowing how strong that liquor was, that he was obliged to break off abruptly. "O God, lay not this sin to my charge!" he prays.

The country rector was not quite without news of the events that were taking place in the great world, and Gazettes and news-letters used to find their way to the rectory on payment of small sums to John Morley, the carrier. Sometimes he played cards for money, as the following entry shows, "To Mrs. Stapley I lost 1s. at cards." Nor did he forget the laws of hospitality, as we find him entertaining twelve persons at the Tiger Inn, Lindfield, which cost him £1 4s., besides 7s. 7d. for beer, bread, and tobacco, besides 5s. for three bottles of sack, and 8d. "for horse meate." He frequently rode to London, where he made several purchases, including a new hat which cost him £1 and a lute-string hood for his wife. And so the quiet days passed away, and the diary proceeds until the fatal month of August, 1679, when he records that he paid "for a cephalic playster and julep and for something to make me sleep." The end was near, and the parish register records the following sad entry:

"Mr. Giles Moore, Minister of this parish, was buryed the 3rd of October, 1679." Peace to his ashes!

II

The Vicar of Bray

This worthy has made his village famous throughout England on account of his versatile principles and convenient changes of opinion. The real Vicar of Bray was one Simon D'Allyn who held the vicarage from the time of Henry VIII. to that of Queen Elizabeth, though the writer of the famous ballad transferred him to a later troublous period, and made him begin in the reign of Charles I. and end with that of George I. I have examined the registers at Bray, and there was no vicar who ruled there for so long a period as the real "vicar." Fuller quaintly wrote:

Proverb: The Vicar of Bray will be Vicar of Bray still.

The vivacious vicar hereof, living under King Henry VIII., King Edward VI., Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, was first a Papist, then a Protestant, then a Papist, then a Protestant again. He had seen some martyrs burnt (two miles off) at Windsor, and found this fire too hot for his tender temper. This vicar being taxed by one for being a turncoat and an inconsistent changeling—"Not so," said he, "for I always kept my principle, which is this—to live and die Vicar of Bray. Such are many nowadays who, though they cannot turn the wind, will turn their mills and set them so that wheresoever it bloweth their grist shall certainly be grinded."

The celebrated ballad of the vicar is said to have

been devised by an officer in Colonel Fuller's regiment in the time of George I., and runs as follows:

"In good King Charles's golden days,
When loyalty had no harm in't,
A zealous High Churchman I was,
And so I got preferment.
To teach my flock I never miss'd,
Kings were by God appointed,
And they are damned who dare resist,
Or touch the Lord's anointed.

CHORUS

And this is law I will maintain,
Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king shall reign,
I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir.

When Royal James obtained the throne,
And Popery grew in fashion,
The penal laws I hooted down,
And read the Declaration;
The Church of Rome I found would fit
Full well my constitution;
And I had been a Jesuit,
But for the Revolution.
Chorus—And this, &c.

When William, our deliverer, came
To heal the nation's grievance,
Then I turned cat-in-pan again,
And swore to him allegiance.
Old principles I did revoke,
Set conscience at a distance;
Passive obedience was a joke,
A jest was non-resistance.
Chorus—And this, &c.

When glorious Anne became our Queen,
The Church of England's glory,
Another face of things was seen,
And I became a Tory;

Occasional conformists' case—
  I damned such moderation,
And thought the Church in danger was
  By such prevarication.
      Chorus—And this, &c.

When George in pudding-time came o'er,
  And moderate men looked big, sir,
My principles I changed once more,
  And so became a Whig, sir.
And thus preferment I procured
  From our Faith's great Defender,
And almost every day abjured
  The Pope and the Pretender.
      Chorus—And this, &c.

The illustrious House of Hanover
  And Protestant Succession,
By these I lustily will swear,
  While they can keep possession.
For in my faith and loyalty
  I never once will falter,
But George my king shall ever be—
  Except the times do alter."
      Chorus—And this, &c.

A terrible slanderer of the clergy once addressed the landlord of the "Orkney Arms," now "Skindles," Maidenhead, suggesting that his inn sign should be changed to that of "The Vicar." The *Gentleman's Magazine* contains these disrespectful verses:

"Friend Isaac, 'tis strange you that live so near Bray
  Should not set up the sign of 'The Vicar';
Though it may be an odd one, you cannot but say
  It must needs be a sign of good liquor."

The rejoinder is equally scurrilous:

"Indeed, master poet, your reason's but poor,
  For the vicar would think it a sin
To stay like a booby and lounge at the door;
  'Twere a sign 'twas bad liquor within."

Another vicar of Bray obtained notoriety. King James I. once lost his way when hunting, and came alone to the "Bear" at Maidenhead, and asked for some dinner. He was told that, being Lent, there was nothing in the house save some fish, which was being cooked for the Vicar of Bray and his curate, who were dining upstairs. The king said: "Go up to them, and say that there is a gentleman here who gives his humble service to them, and would be much obliged to them if they would give him leave to dine with them." Consent was readily obtained, and the dinner passed off very pleasantly. When the reckoning came the king said: "Gentlemen, I know not what to do; I left home in haste, and forgot to take any money in my pocket, and am really without a shilling." "A pretty fellow, indeed," quoth the vicar, "to come and get a dinner from us in this way! No, no; you must settle it with the landlord; I'll not pay for your dinner, I promise you." The curate said: "Oh, sir, do not speak thus to the gentleman: I'll pay his reckoning and think myself well repaid for his entertaining conversation." The king thanked the curate, and said he certainly would repay him. Scarce was the conversation over when a great noise was heard in the "Bear" yard—horns blowing; lords, gentlemen, and yeomen shouting, "Has anything been heard of his Majesty? Has he passed this way?" The king opened the balcony door and presented himself. Instantly there were a hundred bent knees. The poor vicar then bent his knee and begged pardon, saying he did not know it was his Majesty, or ——. The king replied, "Oh, mon! I forgive you; you shall be vicar of Bray still, I promise you"; and, turning to the curate, "and as there is a canonry of Windsor now vacant, you, mon, shall have it." In such nice easy ways was church preferment arranged in the good days of King James I.

III

AN INVENTIVE PARSON

Some clergymen have been of an inventive mind, and foremost among them was the Rev. William Lee, the inventor of the stocking-loom, in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Aubrey says he was a student of Oxford (he was probably at Cambridge), and Aaron Hill tells a pretty story of this young man, who—

> ". . . falling in love with and marrying an innkeeper's daughter lost his fellowship by it, and soon fell into extreme poverty. They became miserable; not so much from their own sufferings, as from the dread of what would become of their unborn infant. Their only support was from knitting stockings, at which the woman was very expert. But sitting constantly together, and the scholar often fixing his eyes on the dexterous management of the needles by his wife, he thought it was possible to contrive a little loom to do the work more expeditiously. This thought he communicated to his wife. He joined his head to her hands, and the endeavour succeeded to their wish. Thus the stocking-loom was invented, by means of which he made himself and his family happy and left this nation indebted to him for the export of silk stockings in great quantities. He became a man of considerable wealth."

This picture is somewhat fanciful. William was curate of Calverton when he perfected his machine. He was probably never married. He removed to London and sought the favour of and a patent of monopoly from the queen. This was refused, on the ground that it would interfere with the poor people who earned their bread by knitting. He had hopes that King James would have granted his petition; but again disappointment followed him. He was invited to France, and earned much praise, establishing himself at Rouen. Henry IV. promised him royal support, but was assassinated before a patent was granted. Poverty and distress fell upon him, and he died

in Paris of a broken heart in 1610, sharing the fate of many inventors. He laid the foundation of a wonderful industry, and the teeming millions of Nottingham, Leicester, Chemnitz, Apolda, Troyes, and Nîmes, are witnesses of the value of his invention. His portrait, by Balderston, has disappeared, but the figure of a clergyman in the arms of the Frame-Work-Knitters Company of London is supposed to be a representation of the Rev. William Lee.

IV

One parson has added a new word to the English language. To grangerise is to take a book and add to it a crowd of additional illustrations, old prints and drawings being pressed into the service. The word is derived from the Rev. James Granger, vicar of Shiplake, Oxfordshire, who died in 1776. He was a great collector of engraved portraits, and used them for extra illustrating historical works. He was the author of the *Biographical History of England.*

V

Fleet Parsons and Others

If before the Marriage Act of 1753 we had wandered within the liberties of the Fleet, on the south side of Ludgate Hill, we should have found some dirty taverns, "The Rainbow," "Bishop Blaize," or "The Hand and Pen," and in the windows some strange notices, such as—

"Weddings Performed here."

"A Church of England Clergyman always on the Premises."

"Weddings Performed Cheap," etc., etc.

THE REVEREND JAMES GRANGER
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY CHARLES BROTHERSON

Here, according to a curious law, or in disregard of the law, a strange race of clerics, whose gowns were as ragged as their reputations, lived and married couples without any publication of banns or licence, to the great scandal of the Church and the corruption of the people. No consent of parents or guardians was deemed necessary. The Liberty was beyond the jurisdiction of the bishop, and the clergy who performed these marriages were the lowest offscourings of the profession, men who had sunk very low indeed, drunkards and beggars, who eked out a precarious existence by celebrating these shameless weddings. The Chaplain of the Fleet described by Sir Walter Besant in his novel of that name, is a type of the Fleet parson, and the scenes depicted are true to life. Another notorious offender was Alexander Keith, the proprietor of a small chapel in Mayfair. He used to marry at the rate of six thousand couples a year. Many notable people were married by him, including the Duke of Hamilton and the youngest of the Miss Gunnings, a curtain-ring being used for the ceremony. Keith's registers are preserved in St. George's, Hanover Square.

VI

Coffee-houses

In the days of coffee-houses the members of each trade or profession had their own favourite resort. St. Paul's Coffee House in St. Paul's Churchyard was the principal one frequented by parsons. It was not a very attractive place—a long room that reeked of tobacco and rum, coffee, chocolate, and tea, and the company consisted chiefly of "tattered crapes," who flocked to London to be hired by the rectors and vicars for occasional duty. Their gowns were battered, their wigs had seen better days, their bands had lost their whiteness, and they were a sorry lot of men,

who either through misfortune or fault had lost caste and sunk down to the lot of the unsuccessful, while some fell into disreputable courses. But these were the exceptions, the black sheep which will be found in every age and in every class. Even in the darkest times of the Hanoverian period Bentley boldly asserts that the whole clergy of England were the light and glory of Christianity, and when a Scotchman dared to talk to Dr. Johnson of fat bishops and drowsy deans, he received the stern and cutting reply, "Sir, you know no more of our Church than a Hottentot."

VII

Some Epitaphs

As this book is now drawing to a close it may be well to record one or two epitaphs which show that the parson has not always passed away "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung." We will begin with that of an archbishop which rather savours of "the pride that apes humility":

"Hic jacet Samuel Harsnett,
Quondam vicarius hujus ecclesiæ,
Primo indignus episcopus Cicestriensis,
Deinde indignior episcopus Norvicensis,
Demum indignissimus Archiepiscopus Eboracensis."

Of Archbishop Secker we read:

"When Secker lived, he showed how seers should live;
When Secker taught, Heaven opened to the eye;
When Secker gave, we saw how angels give;
When Secker died, we knew e'en saints must die."

Bishop Andrews had an epitaph redolent of his age:—

"He left the face of our dull hemisphere
All one great eye, all drowned in one great tear."

Dean Butler, of Lincoln, invented an epitaph for himself, which was *not* recorded on his tomb:

"Willing, but weak and witless, one lies here
Who died without a teapot, or a tear."

In olden days it was not unusual for a person to prepare his epitaph and even his gravestone before his death. The following from Manxland reads curiously:

"Here underlyeth ye body of ye Reverend Mr. Patrick Thompson, minister of God's word forty years, at present vicar of Kirk Braddan, aged 67 anno 1678. Deceased ye 24th of April 1689."

Punning epitaphs are always objectionable, but they seem to have appealed to our forefathers. The following epitaph on Dr. William Cole, dean of Lincoln, who died in 1600, formerly adorned his tomb in the cathedral, but has been fortunately removed:

"Reader, behold the pious pattern here
Of true devotion and of holy fear.
He sought God's glory and the Church's good
Idle idol worship he withstood.
Yet dyed in peace whose body here doth lie
In expectation of eternity.
And when the latter trump of heaven shall blow,
Cole, now rak'd up in ashes, then shall glow."

Lincoln has another of these punning epitaphs on Dr. Otwell Hill:

"'Tis Otwell Hill, a holy Hill,
And truly, sooth to say,
Upon this Hill he praised still
The Lord both night and day.
Upon this Hill, this Hill did cry
Aloud the Scripture letter,
And strove your wicked villains by
Good conduct to make better.

And now this Hill, thro' understones,
Has the Lord's Hill to lie on;
For Lincoln Hill has got his bones,
His soul the Hill of Zion."

Kettlethorpe, in the same county, has a tablet to the memory of "Johannes Becke, quondam Rector istius ecclesiæ," who died 1597, with the lines:

"I am a Becke, or river as you know,
And wat'rd here ye church, ye schole, ye pore,
While God did make my springes here for to flow;
But now my fountain stopt, it runs no more;
From Church and schole mi life ys now bereft,
But to ye pore four poundes I yearly left."

Hereford Cathedral has a monument to the memory of Bishop Theophilus Field, successively Bishop of Llandaff, St. David's, and Hereford, who died 1636, with the inscription:

"The Sun that light unto three churches gave
Is set; this Field is buried in a grave.
This Sun shall rise, this Field renew his flowers,
This sweetness breathe for ages, not for hours."

There is a punning epitaph in a Staffordshire church on the Rev. James Whitehall, beginning with—

"White was his name and whiter than this stone."

But we have perhaps had sufficient of these grave jests. The following epitaph to the memory of a missionary was not intended to be humorous, but a lack of humour on the part of the compilers allowed it to be inscribed:

"To the Memory of ——.
Murdered by his Black Servant.
'Well done, good and faithful servant.'
MATT. xxv. 23."

We will conclude with some lines of Goldsmith, which were happily adopted for a clergyman's epitaph:

> "To soothe and help the wretched was his pride,
> And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
> And as a bird each fond endearment tries
> To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
> He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
> Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way."

CHAPTER XX

CONCLUSION

THE subject of the old-time parson is inexhaustible, and another volume might be readily filled with an account of his virtues, his failings, his patience, and his eccentricities. But this book has already swelled into too stout a volume, and its further growth must be severely checked. I have not attempted to describe all the self-sacrificing lives of the English clergy, to tell of all the heroes of the profession, their bravery, their poverty, their humility. That would be a large library which contained all the Lives of the English pastors, and many of their Lives are not recorded save in the memories of a few simple-minded folk, and naught but their names engraved upon their tombstones and their handwriting in the parish registers serve as their memorials. The old-time parson has been the physician of his flock, a counsellor to the foolish, a reprover of the wicked, an encourager of the lowly and meek-hearted, a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow, the supporter of the aged, and the guide to the young. As Old Fuller says : " Our minister lives sermons ; he is ever as hospitable as his estate will permit, and makes every alms two by his cheerful giving it. He loveth to live in a well-repaired house that he may serve God therein more cheerfully, and lying on his death-bed he bequeaths to each of his parishioners his precepts and example for a

legacy, and they in requital erect every one a monument for him in their hearts." Conditions have changed somewhat since Fuller wrote. The forces of evil, the opposition of the world, the strife and contention of rival sects and factions which set the battle in array against the great national Church of England, the encroachments of the State, tend to make the lot of the modern parson less peaceful, and to add to his burdens. He may sometimes feel inclined to regard with envy the peaceful days of his predecessors, but may reflect that each age has its difficulties, and that his Church, which has been so wonderfully preserved during countless periods of storm and stress, may still continue to send forth her sacred message to the people of England and to do her duty to the world. May the parsons and prelates be enabled to maintain the reputation which they gained in former days, who "for their living, preaching, and writing, have been the main champions of truth against error, of learning against ignorance, of piety against profaneness, of religion against superstition, of unity and order against faction and confusion, verifying the judicious observation of foreigners:

"'CLERUS BRITANNIÆ GLORIA MUNDI.'"

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