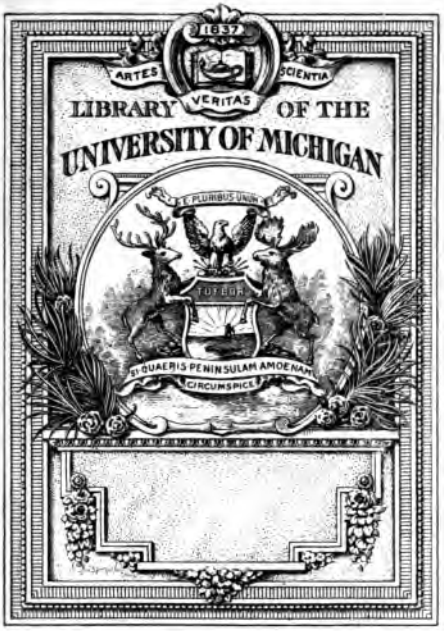
Before the Great Pillage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Before the Great Pillage

With Other Miscellanies

BY

AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.,

RECTOR OF SCARNING

Honorary Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge
Honorary Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford
Honorary Canon in the Cathedral of Norwich

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PREFACE

WHEN, some twenty years ago, the country living which I now hold was offered me by the kind friend to whom the patronage belonged, I accepted it with little hesitation, and I did so with my eyes open and not without counting the cost. I knew that in joining the ranks of the country clergy I was burning my ships and that there was no professional future before me.

I have never regretted my decision. I have found an abiding joy and pride in doing my best for my people and studying them and their ways in the present, while trying to learn something about their forefathers and *their* ways in the past.

In my first volume—entitled *Arcady, for better for worse*—I gave the world the result of my observations upon men and things as I found them. I believe it was and is a faithful picture; but there was nothing retrospective in it reaching further back than the first half of the eighteenth century.

It so happened, however, that certain antiquarian tastes, which were born with me, led me into researches here and there which appeared to me to throw some new light upon mediæval history.

The discovery of the immense body of direct evidence which the Manor Court Rolls afford regarding the incidence of the great plague of 1349; the study of the Rougham charters, which yielded such a minute insight into the life of a village community in the thirteenth century; and the extraordinary find of a prosperous country parson's annual audit for the year ending Michaelmas, 1306,[1] were instances of the fact that even in History there

[1] The first two of these papers are printed in my *Coming of the Friars;* the third in *Random Roamings.*

are still many *discoveries* to be made, and also that some men are curiously fortunate in their finds.

The essays in the present volume on *Parish Life*, as distinct from village life, and on the *Parish Priest*, as distinct from the country parson, are in great measure supplementary to or elucidatory of the earlier papers referred to. If it were at all probable that a re-arrangement of my writings should be undertaken, I should like to see these five or six papers on Mediæval Parish history published in a volume by themselves, so only that I were permitted to add two more contributions on the same lines of research, supplementary to these earlier ones.

To some readers the attempt to deal with the Baptism of Clovis may appear out of place in a volume so *English* as this is. Nevertheless, I am sure that there are others who will readily understand why this essay should be found in such company. For the student of English Origins when confronted by the thick darkness, say, of the fifth century, often finds himself mastered by a

kind of passionate impatience to break away from it and to get into the light again—anyhow—anywhere. "I can find nothing," he says to himself, "about what was passing here when the Roman legions deserted our island; let me follow if I can for a while, the movements of those fierce barbarian hosts, never at rest, a day's sail from our own coast line!"

And so the historic instinct leads him to widen his purview, and mental refreshment comes which brings with it clearer vision and a profounder appreciation of the unity of history.

As to the other trifles in the book, they must apologise for themselves.

PARISH LIFE IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE GREAT PILLAGE

PARISH LIFE IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE GREAT PILLAGE

I

WHEN the results of the Great Inquest, commonly known as the *Domesday Book*, were handed in to William the Conqueror in 1086, this island had in the thousand years preceding that great event suffered three conquests. That is, the land and the people inhabiting it had been passed over to the sway and dominion of three successive masters.

The first conquest was that by the Romans, who held the whole island from the Firth of Forth to the Channel. Their rule lasted, roughly speaking, for four centuries, and they abandoned the province of Britain at the beginning of the fifth century of our era, leaving the luckless people to take care of themselves.

The second conquest was that effected by the

Saxons and Angles—the English folk, if you prefer it—whose rule, at its widest, extended over pretty much the same stretch of territory as the Romans had brought under their obedience, with the exception of the Principality of Wales and the north-western district known as Strathclyde. The Saxons took another six centuries to consolidate the kingdoms they had won, and during the last two of those centuries they had hard work to hold their own against the Danes, who were trying to supersede them.

Finally, the Normans under their great Duke William got their firm footing here; they were the last successful invaders of our fatherland. They won it literally by the sword, held it by the sword, and in less than twenty years the Conqueror proved how thoroughly he had made England into a kingdom under a single master by the carrying out of that magnificent survey to which allusion has been made.

It was not till more than 700 years had gone by since its compilation, that the *Domesday Book* was printed, and only during the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria has this unique document been subjected to the minute and scholarly scrutiny which it so well deserves, and which is being bestowed upon it.

In the *Domesday Book* there is so much that affords a basis of certainty from which inquiries may be pushed forward into many unsolved problems of history, that it is not to be wondered at if the students of *origins*, and enthusiastic inquirers into the beginnings of our institutions should be found embracing very different views on the questions that have arisen and still remain to be answered finally. Any man less than a specialist, and a specialist fully equipped for the work, would be guilty of immense presumption in pronouncing an opinion, and still more so if he expressed himself as a dogmatist, upon the points now under discussion among some of the ablest and keenest intellects in Europe. But we can hardly be wrong in saying that the main questions which are now occupying the attention of experts resolve themselves into these: first, What did the several conquerors—Roman, Saxon, and Norman—find here when they settled among us? and, secondly, What did they do for the nation they subdued?

The difficulty of dealing with these two questions in the case of the Roman occupation is rendered almost insuperable, because it seems certain that before the coming of the Romans there never had been anything approaching to a united England. We have to take into account differences of race

and differences in civilisation, which render it impossible for us to make any generalisations that can be relied on. Thus much, however, may be safely affirmed: that our Roman conquerors did find organised communities, settled in defined areas, and probably differing in their *constitution* very widely according as they were met with in the east or the west, the north or the south. It is probable that, with the wisdom which characterised their foreign policy, the Romans did just what our English rulers in India did, and are still doing—*i.e.*, they left the old areas, whether of the "village community" or any other organised social or political unit, as little disturbed as possible; they left the people such self-government as they had attained to. There is no evidence of such a clean sweep of old laws, and old sentiments, and old judicial procedure (if one may use the term) as was made in Ireland by the English conquerors when they suppressed the Brehon laws in that unhappy island. The result was that when the next conquerors took possession of the land they must have found a number of *survivals* in the social, political, and economical condition of different parts of the country. But it is difficult to believe that the centralising instincts of Rome did not impose upon the subject population some form of coercive

administration which, while leaving to the mixed people, passing under the name of Britons, a certain measure of self-government, superadded thereto some machinery for dealing out even justice as between man and man, such as might afford security for the lives and property of all subjects of the Roman Empire. How that machinery worked in detail we shall never know, but that it must have been carried on in certain definite geographical areas we can hardly help assuming. It will go some way towards helping us to a coherent theory if we take it for granted that what Professor Maitland calls the *geographical unit* of the Conqueror's survey, namely the *vil*, was of Roman origin; that it was in the main identical with what the Saxon folk called the *tun*, the town, or the township; and that the dwellers in that area were by those same Saxons organised into a community. presided over by the *reeve*, an official with fiscal as well as judicial duties to discharge.

When the Normans came in they found the *vils* or *townships* still enjoying a certain measure of self-government. It was the policy of the new conquerors to substitute for this the government by a *lord* over the inhabitants of the old area, the lord to be responsible to the sovereign for the taxes levied from the community, and the inhabitants

of the area being bound to render allegiance, service and tribute to the lord, who was their master and *quasi*-chieftain. When this came to pass the *vil* of the Romans had passed out of the stage of being the *township* of the Saxons, and had become the *manor* of the Norman rulers. The change was gradual, and it must not be supposed that it was effected by some *coup de main*, so that every *vil* became at once a manor, or that every manor constituted a *vil*. All that can be said seems to be that in the course of a century or so the *manorial system*, as it is called, became dominant, and that, as a rule, over that geographical area which constituted the Roman *vil* and the Saxon *township* the lords of the manors were petty kings, exercising authority, exacting homage, and imposing burdens on their "*tenants*," *i.e.*, on the inhabitants of the old townships.

But long before this great revolution had come about a much greater revolution had taken effect up and down the length and breadth of the land. When Rome loosened her hold of Britain, Christianity was the established religion of the empire, and Britain was in some sense or other a Christian land. It was that or nothing. Two centuries later the Saxons had almost as effectually blotted out any organised Christian Church, in the eastern half

at least, of Britain, as the Moslems, a century later, had blotted it out in North Africa, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Then came the new era, the prodigious awakening, and before the seventh century closed, Britain was a Christian land once more.

A momentous change ensued. How it was brought about at all, again it may be said, we shall never know ; but that, during the Saxon occupation, the geographical areas of the townships up and down the land became little territories subject to the rule and influence of another functionary — this time not a political, but a religious, personage—to wit, the *priest;* and that the priest exercised a very real and substantial authority over the community inhabiting the area of the township or the *vil,* admits of no question. That it was Archbishop Theodore who, in the seventh century, "divided England into parishes" is a mere fable ; but the fact remains that, however slowly or however gradually, it came about at last, every geographical area, whether occupied by a community of co-operative Socialists—for it really amounted to that—or occupied by a community with a *constitution,* which may be said to be that of a limited monarchy on a small scale, became *also* the home of a community which in religious matters was brought under the rule of an ecclesiastical

Rector as he was in fact, and as he got to be called. When this had come about the *vil* or the township, without ceasing to be either the one or the other, became at the same time the priest's domain; and whatever designation the area might receive viewed as a political unit, it was henceforth called the *parish*, and the people living in that area, of whatever status, condition, or degree, became his *parishioners*. As such they were members of a community over which no lord of the manor nor any other political magnate, had any sort of authority; in matters religious and ecclesiastical these personages had not a word to say.

The word *Parish* indicated originally the geographical area over which the jurisdiction of a *Bishop* extended. It was not till a later time, and when that area had been subdivided into smaller areas, each of which was committed to the oversight of a *priest*, responsible for such functions as only a priest could discharge, that the smaller area got to be called the *parish*, while the larger area, comprehending an aggregate of parishes, was called the bishop's *diocese*. As time went on, by a confusion in language of which abundant examples might be given, the name, which was strictly a designation of the geographical area, got to be applied to the community inhabiting that area; and

thus the word parish is, even in our own days, used sometimes to indicate the area inhabited by the community, and sometimes the community itself.

In the latter sense the parish was a purely religious organisation, distinct in its origin, its working, and its aims from the manor, the township, or the tithing, *though composed of the same personnel, man for man,* "The parish was the community of the township organised for Church purposes and subject to Church discipline, with a constitution which recognised the rights of the whole body as an aggregate, and the right of every adult member, *whether man or woman,* to a voice in self-government, but at the same time kept the self-governing community under a system of inspection and restraint by a central authority outside the parish boundaries." [1]

The community had its own assembly—the parish meeting—which was a deliberative assembly. It had its own officers, who might be either men or women, duly elected, sometimes for a year, sometimes for life, but in all cases subject to being dismissed for flagrant offences. The larger number of these officials had well-defined duties to discharge, and were paid for their services out of funds pro-

[1] Bishop Hobhouse, in "Somerset Record Society," vol. iv. Preface, p. ix.

vided by the parishioners. The finance of the parish presents some difficulty ; but a strict account was kept of all moneys received and paid, and the balance-sheet laid before the annual meeting of the community assembled in the nave of the church, where a kind of audit was held and discussion ensued upon such measures as were of serious importance and concern to the whole body of the parishioners.

The president or chairman of the church council or parish meeting was the rector of the parish or his deputy ; but he was by no means a "lord over God's heritage." There is no evidence—but quite the contrary—to show that he initiated to any great extent the subjects of debate ; and the income raised for parish purposes, which not infrequently was considerable, was not under his control, nor did it pass through his hands.

The trustees for the parish property and the responsible representatives of the parish were the churchwardens, who were very rarely less than two in number ; and in the case of the larger parishes they had assessors, who shared with them the burdens and the responsibilities of duties which were not seldom irksome. The wardens were elected annually. The office was an honorary one, and often entailed some risk and expense.

The permanent officials of the parish, beginning at the parish clerk, the grave-digger, watchman, keeper of the processional cross, and others who, for the present at any rate, need not be specified, *were the paid servants of the parish.* They were in no sense the nominees or subordinates of the rector; they were supported by the parishioners, and removable, when removable at all, by the parishioners, who presented the offender to the rural dean, from whom an appeal lay to the archdeacon; and occasionally such an appeal might be carried to the bishop, whose decision was final.

The property belonging to the parishes during the centuries before the great spoliation was enormous, and was always growing. It consisted of houses and lands; of flocks and herds; of precious jewels and costly vessels of silver and gold; of ornaments and church furniture; of bells and candlesticks, crosses and organs, and tapestry and banners; of vestments which were miracles of splendour in their colours and materials and incomparable artistic finish of needlework; not to speak of the fine linen and the veils, the carpets and the hangings; and last, not least, the service-books, which were continually needing to be mended, bound, or replaced by new copies, and that at a cost which we moderns even now find it difficult to accept as credible.

All this immense accumulation of treasure and wealth was strictly the property of the parish, and was held, as I have said, in trust for the community by the churchwardens, elected in the assembly of the church council or parish meeting. In the Record Office there is one most precious manuscript, which contains a minute account of the contents of every church in the Archdeaconry of Norwich in the year 1368. It is, in fact, a return of parish property to be found in the churches of the Archdeaconry during that year. For years I have been continually worried and consumed by the desire to have that manuscript transcribed and printed—a manuscript which would be hailed by wise men as one of the most valuable contributions to parochial history which has ever been made public. But, alas! this is a wicked world, and I have never been able to find the money to pay for transcribing and publishing, for the benefit of a favoured few, this deeply interesting record; and this generation has gone mad on bicycles and other vanities, and has no money to spare for more desirable and less dangerous amusements. And so poor men, whose crime is that they love to peer into the past—a crime that is quite unpardonable, because it is so ridiculously useless—such poor men are kept a great deal too short of the ways and means

to allow of their indulging in a hobby whereby their fellow-creatures would be greatly benefited, if only they could be taught to see that the past—even the queer old crumpled-up past—has something to teach the present, for all the self-complacency which contributes to make the aforesaid present so cheerful and so proud.[1]

Now it must be understood that all this enormous amount of property (which if it were in existence now and were brought to the hammer would represent a gross value of several millions of pounds sterling) belonged to the *parishes*. It no more belonged to the clergy, the parsons, the parish priests, than it belonged to the lords of the manors. Hundreds of the vestments and ornaments are expressly set down in these inventories as having been presented by the officiating clergy themselves: presented, *i.e.*, to the parishioners, and passing over to the parishioners as parish property—the

[1] A few days after this paper appeared in print it was my happiness to receive a letter from a lady, then an entire stranger to me, offering to defray the expense of *transcribing* the MS. referred to in the text. A week later came a similar offer of a very liberal contribution towards the cost of printing the work which, from its nature, could never pay its expenses if thrown upon the market. The task of editing it is necessarily very laborious, and some time must elapse before the volume can be issued from the press.

parishioners, who had the right of custody of that property and the power, within certain limits, of dealing with it as parish property.

And this property was, as I have said, always growing and increasing in value. It was rare—very rare—for any man or woman of substance enough to make a will to forget to leave some sort of legacy to the parish, *i.e.*, to the community assembling in the church. Those legacies varied greatly, according to the wealth or poverty of the testators. Very common were the bequests of a poor widow's wedding-ring. Never a year passed without the parish accounts showing that articles of dress, brass pots, lamps, candlesticks, honey, wax, were left by the poorest; sheep and cattle and lands, great goblets, and occasionally considerable sums of money, being bequeathed by the well-to-do. The churchwardens, when at the end of the year they went out of office, were required to hand in a strict account for every pennyworth they had received. They set down what this or that article had been sold for—the rings, the kettles, the brooches, the cups—the rents received for the houses, lands, or for the use of the flocks and herds; and *per contra* they told what expenses they had been put to, and they finished up the account by showing the balance, whether in money or goods, which they handed

over to those who succeeded them in their office. This brings me to the question what those expenses were.

First and foremost, and of course by far the largest portion of the expenditure, was that which the maintenance of the fabric of the church and the conduct of the worship in the church entailed.

As to the fabric, again, it must be borne in mind that it was the property of the parish. There are two most mischievous and widespread mistakes, which people have been making and repeating for the last two or three centuries, with regard to the building of the parish churches in England, which I am never tired of protesting against. The first is the stupid and ignorant assertion that the monks built our parish churches.

It is impossible to enter into the matter here. But it would be not a whit more absurd and nonsensical to say that the wonderful amount of money spent upon the rebuilding and restoration of our parish churches during the last fifty years had been contributed in the main by Nonconformists, than to say that the monastic bodies built the parish churches in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. It is hardly too much to say that from some points of view the monastic bodies were themselves nonconformists. The monster grievance against which

the beneficed clergy had to complain and which thousands of parishes in England to this day have to complain of, was and is that the monasteries robbed the parishes of their endowments; and as for building churches for any one except themselves, they were about as likely to build them as to build cavalry barracks!

The second delusion—a delusion almost more widespread than the other—is that the *squires* built the churches. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there *were no squires*—that is the naked truth. In the great majority of country places there were no wealthy men to be found. The country gentleman, as we understand the term now, was a creature hardly known; he had hardly come into existence. Take note of that, you young men and maidens with a taste for historical research, and spend the next year or two in proving that I am wrong, or in satisfying yourselves that I am right. Correct me or confirm me.

Who did build the churches, then? The parishes built the churches, and the parishes in all cases kept them in repair. In the fourteenth century it was far, far more rare for a church to be built by some rich man than it is now, just because the number of rich men in the country was incomparably fewer than their number is to-day. But as to keeping the

churches in repair, the parish had no choice in the matter. The bishops and the archdeacons were always looking after the parishioners. The episcopal registers are full of instances of churches that are ordered to be enlarged, re-roofed, reglazed, rebuilt, after a fire or after being struck by lightning. The work is ordered to be done by a certain date, and in a manner to satisfy the requirements of the said archdeacons, who stood to the parishioners almost exactly in the same relation as H.M. Inspectors do to the wretched inhabitants of a district which is required to build a school, add on a class-room, satisfy the requirements of the last Code, and provide a new playground, a new floor, new apparatus, new everything—and who do it, too, to the amazement of themselves and their neigbours, and who most wonderfully find the money (though where it comes from in a thousand instances it would take all the ingenuity of man or the beasts of the field to explain), till the thing is actually done, and then everybody is pleased, and they begin to boast of the excellence of the school which they have provided for themselves!

When a man first comes to look into the injunctions laid upon all sorts of poor little places to build, to alter, to make additions to the churches, which are to be found in the bishops' registers, his hair

almost stands on end. He is tempted to exclaim, "The people couldn't do it! Why, a seven-shilling rate in the pound for three years would not pay for it! They couldn't do it!" By and by he is compelled to exclaim again, "They couldn't do it—but they did it for all that!" And when they had done it—built their church, added a tower, then a spire, then an aisle, then a side-chapel or two—then they became so proud of their own achievements and were so delighted with their churches that they made up their minds to get all they could out of their churches.

And thus it came to pass that all that was joyous and gay in their lives, all that was beautiful and ennobling, all that was happy in their recollections, all that was best in what they imagined, all that was elevating in their dreams and their hopes and their aspirations—all came to them from the influence which their churches exercised upon them. The dreary round of toil, from which they could not escape; the staggering behind the bullocks that dragged the plough through the furrows; the hovels in which they huddled—such hovels as you may see to-day in the clachans of the Highlands—where the smoke from the smouldering fire escaped through a hole in the roof; the coarse food, that at best brought them satiety without satisfaction;

the enforced labour; the aimless, purposeless monotony—

> The long mechanic pacings to and fro,
> The set grey life and apathetic end;

—what charm, what hope, what incentive to honourable ambition could all this afford?

If it had not been for the other side of the picture —for the blessed relief and the utter change in their surroundings which the churches afforded to the villages of the fourteenth century—the people must infallibly have become more brutal, stupid, sodden, and cruel with every successive generation, as some theorists have maintained that the Anglo-Saxon invaders were in process of becoming during the five centuries of their occupation—five centuries, after all that can be said on the other side, which were centuries of fearfully slow progress, till the Norman Conquest came upon them with a thousand new refinements and a thousand new interests, and the revelation of a new horizon widening out in all directions; and not till then did what Carlyle calls "Pot-bellied Saxondom" pass away and the real development of the English people begin.

All the tendency of the feudal system, working through the machinery of the manorial courts, was to *keep the people down.* All the tendency of the

parochial system, working through the parish council, holding its assemblies in the churches, where the people met on equal terms as children and servants of the living God and members of one body in Christ Jesus, was to *lift the people up.*

In these assemblies there was no distinction between lord and vassal, high and low, rich and poor; in them the people learnt the worth of being free. Here were the schools in which, in the slow course of centuries, they were diciplined to self-help, self-reliance, and self-respect—virtues which, it may be, are slowly learnt, but whereby alone a nation acquires a true conception of what liberty means, and at last gets to see that the ground of all our claims to enjoy the rights of manhood or of citizenship rests upon the grand fact of our being all members of a Divine community, and so entitled to the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

In proportion as the people realised that their churches were, somehow or other—and of course they realised it only very, very slowly and very gradually—the very bulwarks of their liberty, and that, however much they might be in bondage to the lords of the manors, as *parishioners*, at any rate, they were free men and free women, in that proportion did they love their churches: there, at any rate, their rights were inviolable.

But, granted that the people in the villages found the money or the materials for the fabrics, who carried out the work, made the plans, and executed them? Who were the actual builders?

The answer to this question used to be given in a tone of unhesitating certainty, such as is eminently comforting to people who are easily satisfied. That answer used to be: "Oh! the builders of our churches were the Freemasons. The Freemasons went scampering about in great gangs, and they settled themselves down in a district, and they ran up a church in no time. . . ." And when any too rudely inquisitive gentleman made so bold as to ask, "Well, but who were the Freemasons?" the crushing reply was always ready, "Pray, sir, are you a Freemason?" And if with shame and confusion of face you said, "No," then you were asked, "How, sir, can you seriously expect that the secrets of the sacred craft will be revealed to you!" Of course you felt small, and you naturally dropped the subject.

But though I am no Freemason, and am therefore a despicable creature, I may be silenced and yet not convinced. And I am bold to affirm that I no more believe that the Freemasons, whoever the Freemasons may have been, built our churches than that they built Noah's ark.

The evidence is abundant and positive, and is increasing upon us year by year, that the work done upon the fabrics of our churches, and the other work done in the beautifying of the interior of our churches, such as the wood carving of our screens, the painting of the lovely figures in the panels of those screens, the embroidery of the banners and vestments, the frescoes on the walls, the engraving of the monumental brasses, the stained glass in the windows, and all that vast aggregate of artistic achievements which existed in immense profusion in our village churches till the frightful spoliation of those churches in the sixteenth century stripped them bare—all this was executed by local craftsmen. The evidence for this is accumulating upon us every year, as one antiquary after another succeeds in unearthing fragments of pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts.

We have actual contracts for church building and church repairing undertaken by village contractors. We have the cost of a rood-screen paid to a village carpenter, of painting executed by local artists. We find the names of artificers, described as *aurifaber*, or *worker in gold and silver*, living in a parish which could never have had five hundred inhabitants; we find the people in another place casting a new bell and making the mould for it themselves; we find

the blacksmith of another place forging the iron-work for the church door, or we get a payment entered for the carving of the bench-ends in a little church five hundred years ago, which bench-ends are to be seen in that church at the present moment. And we get fairly bewildered by the astonishing wealth of skill and artistic taste and æsthetic feeling which there must have been in this England of ours in times which till lately we had assumed to be barbaric times. Bewildered, I say, because we cannot understand how it all came to a dead-stop in a single generation, not knowing that the frightful spoliation of our churches and other parish buildings, and the outrageous plunder of the parish gilds in the reign of Edward the Sixth, by the horrible band of robbers that carried on their detestable work, effected such a hideous obliteration, such a clean sweep of the precious treasures that were dispersed in rich profusion over the whole land, that a dull despair of ever replacing what had been ruthlessly pillaged crushed the spirit of the whole nation, and art died out in rural England, and King Whitewash and Queen Ugliness ruled supreme for centuries.

But the keeping up of the mere fabric of the church was but the beginning of the burdens so cheerfully borne by the people of the mediæval

parish. Only a little less onerous was the duty of keeping up the religious services in the church.

The people were never weary of taking part in the elaborate ritual which had been growing in pomp and magnificence for hundreds of years, when the sixteenth century opened. How was it that high and low did so dearly love going to church? How was it that the more saints' days and church festivals there were enjoined, the better the people liked it?

There were many reasons which may be mentioned; but there is one reason which has been, I think, overlooked, and which affords an illustration of what was said before, viz., that our churches were the great strongholds of the sentiment of liberty and the great reminders to the people of their rights as freemen.

The tenants of a manor, from the very beginning of the manorial system, were bound to render certain personal services to the lord of the manor, and actually to perform tasks of manual labour at the lord's bidding, to an extent which it is very difficult for us nowadays to understand.

These *services* implied that for so many days in the year the lord might claim from the tenant his best toil without paying him fair wages for that toil. The tenant, in fact, had to keep the lord's demesne land (which we may call the home farm) in

cultivation before he began upon his own little strip or allotment.

There was no getting off these services, which were all set down in what are called the Manorial Extents. And as long as the services were rigorously exacted the case of the tenants of a manor was very little better than downright slavery. But here the Church stepped in, and put forth its counterclaim upon the time of the lord's tenants. Roger and Hans and Hodge might be bound to give so many days' work for the tillage of the demesne land. But on this day, or that day, or the other day, there was a feast of the Church to be kept, and on each of those days Hans and Hodge were bound to pay suit and service and do homage to the Lord our God. There was a conflict between the Divine and the human Lord.

To begin with, the seventh day is a *holy* day. On that day, at any rate, the serf or the villein, the cottager or the ploughman, shall do no manner of work! Or, again, Roger, the holder of such-and-such a strip of land, was bound by what we should now call his lease to do his prescribed task work on every Thursday in the summer months. But on Holy Thursday there is another great feast of the Lord — the Feast of the Ascension. On that Thursday he is due in the house of God. There-

fore on that day he is a free man. Or it might be that by the constitution of the manor a court ought to be held on the second Tuesday in June, on which day all the homage — *i.e.*, all the tenants of the manor—would be required to put in an appearance. But suppose in the year 1340 the Feast of St. Barnabas chanced to fall upon that second Tuesday. "Then we, the parishioners, are due at the church, to keep the feast there; for was not our church dedicated to St. Barnabas? And is it to be heard of that we should be absent when the Feast of the Dedication is going to be celebrated? Clearly the manor court must be held some other day, for our festivals are high days and holy days, and we must not appear before the Lord empty."

It was inevitable that these holy days should tend to increase in number, and equally inevitable that the festivals, beginning by being *holy* days, would rapidly become *holidays*, feasting days, days of revelry, days of merriment; days when the young men shot for a prize at the *butts*;[1] days when the

[1] There is a long strip of land immediately adjoining the north boundary of the churchyard of Beeston-next-Mileham in Norfolk which was formerly the practising ground for the young archers of the parish. It is still called *the butts*, and is, if I mistake not, still parish land.

The croft on which the Free School at Swaffham in the same county is built, "is now called the *shooting land*," says

maidens held the bridge over the stream, and allowed none of the young men to pass without paying toll, the sum levied being duly paid into the hands of the churchwardens and accounted for in the annual balance-sheet; days when I suspect, too, that the village alehouses were closed, and yet when the people met together for a *church ale*, as the gathering was called—days, above all, when there were miracle plays acted, or historic plays, when Robin Hood was the prominent figure, or the great fight between St. George and the dragon was represented with a gruesome realism, and the unhappy dragon was cruelly battered by the mighty Saint who showed off his terrible prowess. Then there were the Rogation days, when the people—mind! the *parishioners*—went in procession to walk the bounds, *not* of the manor—that be far from us—but of the parish, with the priest at their head and the cross-bearer leading the way, and the minstrels following after; and there was much romping and tumbling and practical joking, and often, I doubt not, a good deal of very plain speaking against the lord and the lord's steward, and the bailiff and the bailiff's wife, and all the unpopular functionaries.

But besides all this there were small associations,

Blomefield, writing about the year 1740" ("History of Norfolk," vol vi. p. 216, n. 2).

called gilds, the members of which were bound to devote a certain portion of their time and their money and their energies to keep up the special commemoration and the special worship of some saint's chapel or shrine, which was sometimes set up in a corner of the church, and provided with an altar of its own, and served by a chaplain who was actually paid by the subscriptions or freewill offerings of the members of the gild whose servant he was. Frequently there were half a dozen of these brotherhoods, who met on different days in the year; and frequently—indeed, one may say usually —there was a church house, a kind of parish club, in which the gilds held their meetings and transacted their business. Sometimes this church house was called the gild hall; for you must not make the mistake of thinking that the church houses were places of residence for the clergy. Nothing of that kind. The church house or gild hall grew up as an institution which had become necessary when the social life of the parish had outgrown the accommodation which the church could afford, and when, indeed, there was just a trifle too much boisterous merriment and too little religious seriousness and sobriety to allow of the assemblies being held in the church at all. The church house in many places became one of the most important buildings in a

parish, and in the little town of Dereham, in Norfolk, the church house or gild hall is still, I think, the largest house in the town, and is inhabited by a gentleman who still points to the vestiges of its former importance. When the great fire took place at Dereham, in 1581, which destroyed almost the whole town, the gild hall or church house, from being well built of stone, was almost the only building in the place which escaped the terrible conflagration. These church houses, when the parishes and the gilds were plundered of their movables and money, appear to have been left unnoticed by the robbers, and after being kept in repair for a generation or two, and let at a low rent to tenants who were not likely to spend anything upon them, they were allowed to fall into ruins for the most part, or were sold for the benefit of the parishes, and the proceeds applied to such objects as the churchwardens of a later time were inclined to favour. This, however, is a branch of my subject which requires much more attention than it has yet received.

During the last twenty years much time and research have been bestowed by students of our social history upon a class of documents which exist in immense numbers, and which are known as

the Rolls of the Manor Courts. These documents tell us a great deal about the sins and offences, the quarrels and the misdemeanors, sometimes too about the troubles and the wrongs and the sufferings, of the people during the centuries loosely designated as the "Middle Ages." But these documents tell almost nothing about the other side—the bright side of village life. Indeed, it may be said that the Court Rolls give us pretty much the same notion of the habits of the people in those days as we should get from the reports of the police-courts regarding the habits of the people in our own days. When, in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, naughty people cribbed their neighbour's apples; when they trespassed upon their neighbour's land, and appropriated here a faggot or there a bough of a tree that the wind had blown down; when they would not pay their debts, or punched one another's noses, or cheated or slandered one another; when they milked a neighbour's cow, or ploughed up a furrow from somebody else's land, or shouldered a sheaf of oats from the other side of the boundary, and pitched it on to their own stack; when a young man and a young woman fell so violently in love with each other that nothing would stop them from going and getting married without waiting to get leave and licence from the lord of the manor—then

each and all of these *peccadillos* came under the notice of the court leet or the manor court, as the case might be, and the offender's name and his offence were duly entered upon the Rolls, and there they are by the thousands and tens of thousands.

But though we are all miserable sinners, yet, be it spoken in all seriousness and earnestness, our lives are not passed in doing "what we hadn't ought to," as we say in Norfolk; life has its laughter as well as its tears, and a nation grows up to greatness by its innocent amusements, by its gradual rising in the scale of civilisation and intelligence, by culture and refinement, by the potent influences which a higher scale of comfort in the home and a higher standard of beauty in art exercise upon the generations as they pass. If you want to watch this progress, or if you want to compare the morals and manners of one age with those of another, you must not confine yourself to the study of the police-reports. There you will not find the bright side of life, whether in the nineteenth century or in the fourteenth. You must go elsewhere.

The main source of information on this side is to be found in the accounts of the churchwardens, which year by year have been made up for every parish in England for many centuries, and which at one time must have been only less voluminous

than the Rolls of the Manor Courts. Unhappily, one of the inevitable consequences of what I have called the *pillage* of the parishes was the neglect of this class of records, insomuch that examples of churchwardens' accounts earlier than the sixteenth century are rarely to be met with; they are few and far to seek. Nevertheless, there is reason for believing that many more of them are still preserved in out-of-the-way nooks and corners than is generally supposed, and that by careful search many more may yet be recovered. The curious facts which they reveal to us, the light they throw upon the old life, the suggestions which they make to us when we endeavour to utilise their evidence, what they tell and what they hint, and what they leave unsaid with the eloquence of silence—all this must be dealt with in another chapter.

II

WHEN it is remembered that at the beginning of the sixteenth century every parish in England was an organised community, which had for centuries enjoyed the management of its own affairs according to a financial system that was in the main identical through the length and breadth of the land, it becomes obvious that at the time referred to there must have existed thousands, and tens of thousands, of records containing important evidences of the social and religious life of the parishes during ages past.

These records consisted chiefly of those balance sheets laid before the parishioners in open meeting at the annual audit, and known as the churchwardens' accounts. It will be sufficient for the present to confine our attention to these accounts, though it may be as well to warn my readers that there are other documents besides these which inquirers who set themselves to make a thorough

study of parochial antiquities will have to reckon with.

Down to within quite recent times so utterly was the corporate life of our parishes neglected, overlooked, and forgotten that it is only during the last thirty years or so that the very existence of the churchwardens' accounts has been noticed even by county historians. It may safely be said that up to the present moment hardly fifty of these collections of parish balance sheets have been printed; though, after all the wanton destruction and ignorant neglect that has for so long characterised our treatment of local records, it will probably be proved that in hundreds of parishes some fragments, more or less complete, may be still hidden away in old corners and mouldering in our village and town chests. These are the drift and salvage of unnumbered books and memoranda utilised for generations to light the vestry fire on Sundays, or even for less honourable purposes. Yet when we come to look into these old-world story books—at first sight so dull and monotonous—what a new light begins to shine upon a condition of affairs which has now passed away, upon the old order which has changed for ever, upon a phase of our national life which helped so powerfully in the evolution of the new

order under which we live, and which itself in its turn must pass and change into we know not what.[1]

The first question that people ask when they are told that our churches were built, kept in repair, and furnished with a profusion of ornaments in the old days is, Where did they get the money from? To answer this question it is necessary to deal with the financial system in our parishes anterior to the *great pillage.*

. . . . .

Let me, however, at this point explain what I do *not* mean when I talk about the pillage. I have little or nothing to say in these papers about the suppression of the monasteries; I do not touch upon that; I am very little concerned with that. When I talk

[1] The most important collection of churchwardens' accounts which has yet been published is that issued by the Somerset Record Society in 1890, under the very able editorship of that veteran scholar and antiquary Bishop Hobhouse. The volume contains transcripts and full analyses of the accounts of six parishes in Somerset ranging over a period of two hundred years, the earliest beginning as far back as A.D. 1349, the latest concerned with 1560. The Bishop's preface furnishes an admirable introduction to the whole subject, and it is hardly too much to say that its appearance marks an era in a new branch of historical investigation.

about *the great pillage*, I mean that horrible and outrageous looting of our churches other than conventual, and the robbing of the people of this country of property in land and movables, which property had actually been inherited by them as members of those organised religious communities known as parishes. It is necessary to emphasise the fact that in the general scramble of *the Terror* under Henry the Eighth, and of the *anarchy* in the days of Edward the Sixth, there was only one class that was permitted to retain any large portion of its endowments. The monasteries were plundered even to their very pots and pans. Almshouses in which old men and women were fed and clothed were robbed to the last pound, the poor almsfolk being turned out in the cold at an hour's warning to beg their bread. Hospitals for the sick and needy, sometimes magnificently provided with nurses and chaplains, whose very *raison d'être* was that they were to look after and care for those who were past caring for themselves, these were stripped of all their belongings, the inmates sent out to hobble into some convenient dry ditch to lie down and die in, or to crawl into some barn or hovel, there to be tended, not without fear of consequences, by some kindly man or woman who could not bear to see a suffering fellow-

creature drop down and die at their own door-posts.[1]

We talk with a great deal of indignation of the *Tammany ring*. The day will come when some one will write the story of two other *rings*: the ring of the miscreants who robbed the monasteries in the reign of Henry the Eighth was the first; but the ring of the robbers who robbed the poor and helpless in the reign of Edward the Sixth was ten times worse than the first.

The Universities only just escaped the general confiscation; the friendly societies and benefit clubs and the gilds did not escape. The accumulated wealth of centuries, their houses and lands, their money, their vessels of silver and their vessels of gold, their ancient cups and goblets and salvers, even to their very chairs and tables, were all set down in inventories and catalogues, and all swept

[1] Men and brethen, you doubtless think this mere exaggeration. If you do, and if you have the will to learn the plain, unvarnished truth and the means to pay an expert duly equipped for the task, give that expert a commission to write a history of the Grand Hospital of St. Mary's, Newark (one among many such hospitals), an account of what it was, and what it was doing say in 1540, and of its utter desolation and ruin less than ten years after, when the lust of gain in the spirit of Cain was master of the situation, and men in high places, of high birth, and even of high culture, found the spirit of the age too strong for them.

into the great robbers' hoard. Last, not least, the immense treasures in the churches, the joy and boast of every man and woman and child in England, who day by day and week by week assembled to worship in the old houses of God, which they and their fathers had built, and whose every vestment and chalice, and candlestick and banner, organs and bells, and picture and image, and altar and shrine they looked upon as their own, and part of their birthright—all these were torn away by the rudest spoilers, carted off, they knew not whither, with jeers and scoffs and ribald shoutings, while none dared raise a hand or let his voice be heard above the whisper of a prayer of bitter grief and agony.

One class was spared. The clergy of this Church of England of ours, managed to retain some of their endowments; but if the boy king had lived another three years there is good reason for believing that these too would have gone.

All this monstrous and incalculable havoc, *lasting hardly more than six years*, is what I mean when I talk about The Great Pillage.

. . . . .

The income of the *Parish* community was administered, as we have seen, by the churchwardens,

who had annually to give an account of the receipts and expenditure. The wardens were not usually the *collectors* of the revenues, two or more receivers (*receptores*) being appointed for getting in the various contributions or dues from the parishioners. The sources of this annual income were very various.

(1) To begin with, most parishes—perhaps all parishes—had some real property in land, and occasionally in houses too. The land usually consisted of a number of small and scattered parcels, which had been left to the community from time to time, or made over to them by well-disposed parishioners, and were sometimes held under conditions of providing for some special services in the Church. Besides this it was not at all uncommon for a parish to be possessed of a small flock of sheep; and many parishes owned a herd of cows, usually let out to farm, and doubtless to the highest bidder.[1] Thus, as late as 1552, the wardens of Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berks, set down "the hire of eight sheep that belongeth to the Church." At Elmscote, in Essex, in 1543, there was a herd of fifteen cows let out to provide for the lights at the various altars. Twenty years later the fifteen had been reduced to nine, the rent now being distributed among *the poor*. We country folk know what that

[1] See Ashley's "Economic History," vol. i. part ii. p. 311.

means, and we note, too, that in the old days there was no such thing as a Poor Rate, the poor in the old days having no need for any special tax or rate or tribute to insure their being kept from starvation.

(2) The legacies bequeathed by the people in their wills; money, jewelry, silver goblets, and other valuables, rings, and "pairs of beads," or *rosaries*. I have already mentioned that these ornaments were sometimes, but not always, turned into money. Sometimes they were utilised to adorn the images, especially of the Blessed Virgin, or some favourite saint; sometimes they were kept as *stock—i.e.*, as a "reserved fund," to be drawn upon in some financial crisis.

(3) In many parishes the "upper classes," or those who were well-to-do, were expected to submit to a kind of assessment or voluntary rate, according to methods which we cannot now explain. Thus, in the wardens' accounts of Swaffham in Norfolk, and in those of Walberswick and Blyburgh in Suffolk, we meet with lists of *proferers* who are somewhat large contributors to the Church funds. In the two Suffolk parishes the *proferers* were evidently owners of fishing boats, and their *profers* appear to have been regulated according to the amount of fish taken during the season.

(4) The collections in the churches—generally

designated as *gatherings*—seem to have been made as occasion required. There seems to have been no rule in making these gatherings, and it is probable that they were resorted to when the funds in the hands of the wardens were low. I have found as many as ten *gatherings* in a single year.

(5) Another source of revenue was the fees exacted *by the parish* for the burial of "people of importance" who desired to be laid in the church itself. The significance of this must not be passed over. It should be remembered that the surface of the soil of the churchyard was part of the parson's freehold. Any parishioner had a right of sepulture in *God's acre;* but the parson could always claim his fee for "breaking the soil," and this was a source of income to him. So with the chancel—that too was the parson's freehold—and for burial there, in the most holy part of the church, very considerable fees were from time to time claimed and paid. But the church itself—*i.e.*, the nave—was the property of the *parish*, and when a local magnate specially desired to be buried there, he, or his executors, had to make his bargain with the churchwardens, and with them alone. This will explain the following entries in the "Walberswick Accounts" (1498): "Received *for the soul* of Sir Harry Barbour, 6s. 8d."; and again, in 1466: "Mem. Nicholas

Browne granted *to the church* 20s. for bringing of his wife in the church. And a gravestone to be laid upon the grave."

(6) Among the most profitable sources of revenue known to the wardens were the great festive entertainments called the *church ales.* They have almost their exact counterparts in our modern *public dinners* for charitable (?) purposes, such as the annual dinner for the Literary Fund or for the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy; and the *public teas* so common among the Nonconformist bodies. They were held in the church houses, which were well furnished with all the necessary appliances for cooking, brewing, and for giving accommodation for a large company. Often a generous parishioner would provide a bullock or a sheep or two for the entertainment, and another good-natured man would offer a quarter of malt to be brewed for the occasion. The skins of the slaughtered sheep are often entered on the credit side of the accounts, and occasionally smaller contributions of spices and other condiments were offered. Of course the inevitable collection followed; and, according to the goodness of the feast, the number of the guests, or their satisfaction with the arrangements made, the amount of donations was large or small.

(7) Supplementary to all these ordinary sources of income there came in the continual subsidiary loans without interest, and liberal *levies* which the gilds were continually affording to the parish funds. I do not yet feel that I am qualified to speak with any confidence or anything approaching authority on the subject of the gilds. Indeed, I must confess that many difficulties which beset the financial arrangements of these bodies remain hitherto, for me, unexplained. They were benefit clubs, they were savings banks, they were social unions, and, like every other association in the Middle Ages, they were *religious* bodies, so religious that they were continually building special chapels for themselves, and they had chaplains of their own who received a regular stipend. Frequently they were splendidly provided with magnificent copes and banners and hangings, and large stores of costly chalices and jewelled service books used on festive occasions in the worship of the gild chapel. I have never met with the least indication that the gilds were at any moment other than solvent. So far from this, the gilds appear to have always had money in hand; and I suspect that in many cases they must have done some banking business on a small scale by taking care of thrifty people's savings, and by lending money in small sums on security. This, at

I suspect, they did a little in the way of pawnbroking, guarding, however, against the risk of lending "upon *usury*" by charging not for the loan of *money*, but perhaps charging fees for the custody of the deposits on which advances were made. Be that as it may, however, it is abundantly clear that the gilds were very powerful supporters of the needs of the parish. One meets with them continually making large loans to the churchwardens when any extraordinary expenses were being incurred. In fact, when the parish was in a difficulty for money to carry on any improvements or repairs, the gilds were always to be relied on to afford the necessary aid.

Over and above these regular sources of income the wardens had other ways and means to trust to. Certainly in the fifteenth century, and how much earlier I cannot say, seats in the churches were appropriated to "the better sort," and an annual rent charged for them. These seats were assigned apparently to women almost exclusively. The practice, however, seems to have been by no means common, and in the country churches was probably rare.

So entirely was the life of the parish saturated with religious sentiment and with religious observances that even the most frivolous or the most boisterous amusements of the people were, directly

or indirectly, under the supervision of the churchwardens. And this brings us to the dramatic entertainments so popular among all classes in the Middle Ages. As in Pagan Greece and Pagan Rome, the origin of dramatic performances and dramatic literature must be sought in the rude religious mummeries which formed part of the worship of some heathen god; so our own theatrical representations, with all their modern splendour and artistic display, are but the survivals—or must we say they exhibit the evolution?—of the pageants, mysteries, or religious plays of the Middle Ages. There is reason for believing that the performance of these curious dramas to large assemblies of ignorant Christian people dates back from very early times. This is, however, not the place to plunge into so obscure a subject as the history of the drama, whether in England or elsewhere. There is no need to try to get behind the twelfth century, when, as Thomas of Walsingham tells us, a very learned and otherwise estimable clergyman named Geoffrey of Gorham, who afterwards became sixteenth abbot, of St. Albans, distinguished himself by writing a certain play—*quem "Miracula" vulgariter appellamus*—on Saint Catherine. Geoffrey was at the time head master of the school at Dunstable, and, wishing to make the first representation of his play con-

spicuously magnificent, he sent to St. Albans to borrow certain very precious copes, and possibly other vestments, from his friend the abbot there. By ill luck a fearful fire broke out in poor Geoffrey's house, and all the copes, together with his own books, were burnt, which so affected the poor man that nothing would satisfy his anguished mind but that then and there he must offer himself as a monk to the great abbey and give himself to the strict service of God—*seipsum reddidit in holocaustum Deo.* In process of time he became abbot, and so was able to make good the loss which had been sustained.[1] From this time notices of these sacred dramas become frequent; and if any one wants to know more about them there are "lots of jolly books" which he may refer to in the Chester Plays, and the Coventry Plays, and the Townely Mysteries, and a great deal more on which I cannot dwell here.[2] Let me, however, suggest to any one interested in such matters that if he can pick up a copy of "A Collection of English Miracle Plays," published with a valuable introduction at Basle in

[1] "Gesta Abbatum Monast. Si. Albani." Rolls series, vol. i. p. 72.

[2] See the important extracts, &c., from the "Lincoln Liber. Albus," on the gilds and miracle plays; and on the inventories in "The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries," vol. xvii. (second series).

1838, by William Marriott, Ph.D. he should use his opportunity and buy that book, for it is a scarce one.

It is commonly believed that these plays were acted in the churches. I have a strong suspicion that instances of the church being used for such representations except in very early times were rare. Ecclesiastical feeling was soon opposed to such desecration, and there were many orders issued against the practice, and some against even using the churchyard for such performances. I have met, indeed, with one instance where the church porch was fitted up with seats or benches for the spectators to sit on, the stage being evidently set up outside in the churchyard. But it is difficult to believe that as the churches became more and more crowded with monuments, ornaments, altars, and religious furniture of all kinds, the naves could have lent themselves for scenic performance, and moreover the sentiment of reverence for the church as a place of worship was always growing, and the clergy and religious orders set their faces against this desecration of the house of God. Nor is this all. The concourse of people attending these plays was sometimes very large, the players many, and the scenery and stage demanded a considerable space. In the accounts of the churchwardens of Basing-

bourne, in Cambridgeshire, there is a notice of the performance of the miracle play of St. George. It was evidently a monster performance, for no fewer than twenty-seven neighbouring parishes contributed towards the expenses. Obviously such an audience could not have been accommodated in any village church, and accordingly a charge for the hire of a field in which the performance took place is duly entered. Similar entries for rent of a meadow or piece of ground occur now and then elsewhere. The attractions of these miracle plays went on steadily increasing as the scenery and dresses became more elaborate, and they continued to be acted in the towns long after they had quite ceased to be represented in the country; for this very good reason—if for no other—that in the towns here and there the gilds managed to keep some portion of their possessions, and among them their "stage properties" and the buildings in which the plays were acted.

The actors in these parish dramas appear to have received no wages for their acting except the meat and drink which was the inevitable concomitant of all public gatherings; the honour of representing St. George or St. Catherine, Balaam or John the Baptist, an angel or a demon, was its own reward. As, they tell me, *was* the case at Ober Ammergau

till lately, so it was among us, a man who had taken the part of Judas, or Moses, or Pharaoh seems to have often retained the name of the character in which he had appeared on the stage for some time after the performance. Hence we get such grotesque charges as the following: "For Adam to make a pair of hosen," "for a coat to Robin Hood," "for 5 ells of canvas for a coat for Maid Marian," "for a coat for God" (!) "for a pair of shoes for the devil" (!)

This part of my subject is so full of interest, and there is so much that might be said upon it, that I have been tempted to dwell upon it at greater length than I had intended. The point to be kept in view, however, is that these plays were a considerable source of revenue to the parishes in which they were acted. The profits accrued to the parish funds, and when one parish was fortunate enough to have a large stock of dresses or other stage apparatus, it was not uncommon for these to be let out on hire to another parish which was less well provided with such necessaries.

So far we have been dealing with the regular income of the parishes. But, over and above these, there was, as I have already noticed, an enormous aggregate of *dead capital* which was always going

on growing, and which, while it was a source of pride and delight to the members of the parish communities—exactly as family jewels or other heirlooms are to those who claim, during life, the exclusive use of them—so it was now and then a source of expense too to the parishes, which were bound to keep these *heirlooms* in serviceable repair, and from time to time to renew them. Edward the Third (A.D. 1327–1377) is said to have taken great interest in clocks, and to have given a great stimulus to their general introduction in England. At the beginning of the fifteenth century there seems to have been quite a mania for setting up parish clocks. They were, doubtless, clumsy affairs, and they were certainly very expensive luxuries. It is rare to find any parish accounts of the fifteenth century without finding a clock mentioned. It was always wanting mending, and it required a functionary to look after it, who usually took a contract for a year, but it was the joy and pride of the parish. After the middle of the sixteenth century one rarely or ever meets with any allusion to the clock in the country parishes. Why? Not only because the parish funds had been stolen and the parish income had disappeared, but because in the *Pillage* the parish bells had been among the first things to pull down and sell. That is, in Queen Elizabeth's days, there were no bells for the clocks to strike on!

The bells, too, were a constant expense to the parish in the old days. They were always being rung, and always wanting new bell-ropes, new clappers, and new hanging. Not only so, but in the incessant use to which they were put day and night the bells were always getting cracked. Then there was a new bell to be provided, or it might be a new peal; but so self-supporting were the parishes, even in "the very country," that there was never any difficulty in casting a new bell. There were no great bell-founders in great centres of industry, as is the case now. The constant demand for this or that skilled artificer went far to create the supply; the bell was wanted, and somehow—somehow—it was made on the spot, or by some cunning man a few miles off. To carry a big bell, say twenty or thirty miles, over such roads as existed in the fifteenth century, would be a very serious expense indeed. To the craftsmen of those days it was a much easier matter to make the bell where it was going to be hung than to drag it along up hill and down dale at the serious risk of breaking it in transit.

So with the church books. They were in constant use, and though they were written on vellum or parchment the wear and tear was always heavy. When the archdeacon, or his official, made his

visitation to a church—and in the time we are dealing with the visitations were very serious inquests, and sometimes much dreaded—the first thing he looked into was the condition of the service books. They were brought before him for inspection, and every flaw or defect was noted. "Mr. Churchwarden, I cannot let this missal pass or that lectionary. You will provide new copies before I come next, or the parish will, &c., &c." We actually hear of churchwardens, in dread of what was hanging over them, *borrowing* books and vestments from a neighbouring parish and presenting them as their own. The trick must have been practised pretty often, for special pains and penalties were pronounced upon such as should be guilty of such a fraud. But when a service book was ordered to be bound, or repaired, or condemned, the writing of a new one or the mending of the old ones had to be submitted to with the best grace possible, and no time was to be lost. Very frequently we find a charge on the accounts for the writing of a new book; and frequently the parish priest or one of the chaplains has the job—he glad enough to get it—and he is paid by the parish—observe again by *the parish*—for his work.

Entries of money paid for "repairing of the church books" and for "mending of vestments"

are constantly occurring. There seems to have been a class of itinerant workmen who went from place to place patching up the shabby vestments and rebinding the books. Thus, in the accounts of the parish of Denton, in Norfolk, we have (A.D. 1520) charges "for mending of vestments . . . for linen cloth and buckram and satin of Cyprus and ribbon bought for the said vestments . . . and for boarding of the said vestment-maker." Again, in the wardens' accounts (A.D. 1525) of Bungay, in Suffolk, we find ". . . paid to the bookbinder for 2 days and a half . . . for his board . . . and for parchment for to mend the said book." Two years later there occurs ". . . paid to the embroiderer [*browder*] for his work and for his boarding." Two years later again the charges for binding the service books and repairing vestments are so unusually heavy that one can hardly help guessing that the Archdeacon had come down very severely upon the parishioners of St. Mary in Bungay. One Gerrard was paid for "3 calf skins for the reparacion of the books"; another worthy named Gyrling had furnished "3 skins [query sheepskins] to the reparacion of the books" . . . and "4 red skins for the books"; while the bookbinder, whose name is not given, and the *writer* had received liberal wages besides being boarded for five weeks and an extra allowance for

"certain skins, glue, vellum, and for mending certain books" which had not been included in the original contract. In the same account William Bode is paid "for mending certain copes and vestments and mending the best Banner," the wardens providing "sewing silk for the vestments." Eighty years earlier one of the parish chaplains of Southwold, in Suffolk, Sir Edmund by name, receives a sum equal to £7 or £8 in our time "for making a Manual"—one of the smaller service books—which I think must have been somewhat liberally illuminated by the worthy scribe. The *organs*—they are always named in the plural—were another source of expense to the parishes. They too were always requiring mending or tuning or otherwise looking to, and though they did not cost as much as the articles above named, yet they were an ecclesiastical luxury which, like all other luxuries in daily use, entailed a frequent outlay upon their proud possessors.

The real wealth of the churches, however, consisted in the vast accumulations of gold and silver vessels of various kinds, and the gorgeous vestments only used on special occasions, which were kept in the Sacristies or Treasuries of the parish churches. No one who has not had his attention drawn to the old inventories of such splendid churches as the

cathedrals of Exeter or St. Paul's can have anything like an adequate idea of the prodigious accumulations of wealth which some of our more important churches in England boasted of in the fifteenth century. I am not dealing with these instances, however; I confine myself to such parish churches as were to be found all over the land; and if I had not so strong a desire, as I have, to rescue the word *parish* from the grip of ignorant blunderers who have gone so far as to make us forget what that word connotes, I should have spoken of *village* churches rather than parish churches. My wish is, however, to draw attention to the country parishes and their churches rather than to the town parishes, though, of course, on this subject what is true of the country parishes was much more true of town parishes. The more thriving the people were the more they spent upon their churches, and the strong feeling of proprietorship in those churches led to great rivalry among contiguous parishes in the towns as well as in the rural districts. Happily, the inventories of the contents of churches which were from time to time handed in to the bishops or archdeacons on their periodical visitation have been preserved in larger numbers than the churchwardens' accounts.

Many of them have been printed, and many more

are readily accessible to those who can read them. The inventories of St. Lawrence, Reading, from which Mr. Kerry has given some copious extracts, show that the church plate of that parish—let alone the vestments—was extremely magnificent, and he estimates that its total weight must have exceeded 700 ounces when the inventory was made in 1523. Much of this was of parcel gilt, and some of the chalices, basins, crosses, and candlesticks were of exquisite and priceless workmanship. Even more remarkable than the Reading treasures, however, were those which were set down in the inventory of Long Melford church in 1529, from which it appears that the gold and silver vessels almost weighed 900 ounces, exclusive of jewels, rings, enamelled girdles, buckles, and the like, some of them studded with precious stones. The value of the vestments of cloth of gold, and other costly materials, miracles of daintiest needlework, is incalculable. Long Melford was at this time a flourishing little Suffolk town, in which the *clothiers* were carrying on a large trade, and money was being made by employers and employed.

The "Black Book" of Swaffham, in Norfolk, contains an earlier inventory of the church goods of this parish; unfortunately it is a mere fragment. Even so, the list of vestments and ornaments fills seven

small folio pages, though some of the pages which contained the lists of the church plate are missing.

It may be asked if all these vast accumulations of treasure did not tempt the cupidity of robbers to break in upon the sacristies of the churches, or the "strong rooms"—the term occurs in the old writings—of the gilds? Of course they did. In large and important churches, where it was well known that there were great hoards stored up, it was no uncommon practice for a watchman to sleep in a chamber constructed for him in the church, and in the articles of inquiry at the bishop's visitations we find it asked: Whether such a watchman regularly slept in the church, as his duty was? Ecclesiastical censures were frightfully severe upon those guilty of the crime of sacrilege; but they were not terrible enough to prevent church robbers from breaking open the sacristies when so much was to be gained by a burglary. Thus in the Swaffham list of plate—so provokingly defective—we are told that on the night of Easter Sunday, 1475, three chalices had been stolen and carried off. The thieves seem to have been disturbed in their work, for a great chalice of silver gilt, *magni ponderis*, a pix, and two silver basins for the high altar had been left behind, and how much more we shall never know. At Long Melford, on the 13th of January, 1531, there

appears to have been a great robbery of plate from the treasury, which we learn was in a room over the vestry, and the thieves got off with a large amount of plunder. There is no need to multiply instances, for we are continually finding mention of such robberies of church property, and I am sorry to say the parsons did not always show an example of strict honesty in these matters, as when one of them appropriated a valuable cushion to his own use, and another—I forget where—had filched an old but handsomely broidered cloth from the church which he served and used it as a coverlet for his own bed. The poor man may have been cold, but he need not have denied the theft when he was charged with it, as it seems he did, for one witness came forward and testified that he had himself seen the broidered cloth upon the reverend gentleman's bed with his own eyes!

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I fear I have taxed my readers' patience more than enough; for most people hate details, and on details they will not dwell for long. Having got thus far in an inquiry which has been really of a very superficial character, it must suffice to state my conviction, which becomes stronger and stronger the further that inquiry is carried, that the property of one kind or another owned by the parish com-

munities throughout England in the first half of the fifteenth century must have amounted to an aggregate which represented millions of money. It remains to inquire what became of it, and how it vanished as it did.

The ninth and last Parliament of King Henry the Eighth assembled at Westminster on the 23rd of November, 1545. The great Act of the session was "An Act for the dissolution of chantries, hospitals, and free chapels," in which were included those remarkable foundations known as secular *colleges* or collegiate churches about which so little has hitherto been written and about which much remains to be written by some one qualified to treat of them.[1] It was enacted that all these foundations with all that belonged to them should be forthwith surrendered to the King *during the term of his natural life*, without inquest before a jury or any other circumstance, and, before the end of the year, colleges, hospitals, chantries, and free chapels were falling rapidly to the King. Mr. Dixon, in his very able "History of the Church of England from the Abolition of the

[1] I have touched lightly on the subject of these colleges, and especially upon a group of them in Norfolk and Suffolk, which were founded and endowed during the fourteenth century, in my lamented friend Mr. Crabbe's "History of the Parish of Thompson, co. Norfolk," 4to (A. H. Goose, Norwich, 1892), p. 25, Introd. note.

Roman Jurisdiction," has given a brief—too brief—account of these institutions.[1] They had long been threatened, and it had long been felt that now that the vast possessions of the monasteries great and small had been squandered and nothing remained of them, the colleges and chantries must be confiscated next. The plundering went on apace. "For all that, the King's purse remained as empty as ever, and his mysterious beggary was unappeased still." But though the Court of Augmentation did its work with unparalleled expedition—or, as one may say, with the most shameless haste—the hundreds of hospitals and colleges that were waiting for the spoilers could not be abolished without some legal formalities, and when Henry the Eighth died, in January, 1547, there were hundreds of them still standing, and the King's *life interest* (!) in them had come to an end. That little difficulty was soon got over, and what had been granted to King Henry was soon granted to his son, now upon the throne. It makes one sick to read the hateful story! Proclamations, injunctions, orders of the council, and what not came out in swarms, all having the same object, the plundering of all corporate property—chantries and chapels of ease, hospitals, colleges, gilds—"all were handed over to the Crown." *To*

[1] Vol. ii. p. 379.

the Crown, forsooth! the crown that weighed so heavily upon the brows of the sad boy king, now scarce twelve years old.

I am not qualified to tell the story of those three or four years which were chiefly taken up with the plunder of the poor by the rich. It is an unwritten chapter of English history, and has long been waiting to be told. But let one caution be offered to those who may set themselves to this great task. Let them beware how they fall into the old mistake which has led us all astray for so long. Let them get rid of the old assumption that this monstrous robbery was a necessary part of what we call the Reformation. Religion had just about as much to do with this business as religion had to do with the September massacres at Paris in 1792. In the latter case, the mob went raving mad with the lust of blood; in the former case, the richer classes went raving mad with the lust of gain.

The most startling fact in the long series of surprises which meets us, as the events of the first two years of King Edward's reign pass before our view, is that during all this time the old ritual was still kept up in all our churches. The *Mass* was still said or sung, prayers for the dead were still offered up, and in an unknown tongue; and Henry the Eighth in his last will left vast sums to be spent

in masses for his own soul. The church formularies and church ritual had all this time been subjected to very insignificant changes indeed. It was not till May, 1549, that the first Prayer Book of Edward the Sixth was issued. After its publication no other form of prayer was allowed. The old service books were at once doomed. Then, for the first time, the people found themselves actually forbidden to use those sacred vessels, ornaments, vestments, and the like which they and their forefathers had delighted in for centuries, which had been for them integral parts of their religious observances, and had been in their ignorance not only signs and symbols of the faith they professed and had been taught, but their helps and supports in every act of adoration, of prayer and praise.

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"But was it not all a mere mass of superstitious and gross credulity, and were not these benighted creatures grovelling in the mire and groping—if they were groping—in a darkness that might be felt?"

Well, suppose I say Yes! and say it with a sigh. Does that prevent me from calling to mind a profound saying that Coleridge taught me, say, fifty years ago? "My friends, a clothing even of withered leaves is better than bareness."

"Why, this man is a renegade. He wants all the abominations of the scarlet woman brought back again!"

Does he? How little you know him!

"He's a Crypto Papist! a mummer—a man who scrapes and bows up and down the aisles, and kisses the pavement, and is given over to antics.

> "He's a traitor, blasphemer, and what's wuss'n those,
> He puts all his atheism in dreffful bad prose!"

Nevertheless, my friends, or my foes—if I have any—truth has an awkward way of getting a hearing sooner or later, and, while some yell and bawl "Question," others wait and listen.

. . . . .

The plunderers were astute men in that age of systematic plunder. Doubtless they had foreseen what was coming. The spoil of the chantries and hospitals and gilds had given them a grand haul; but if there was more to get, why should not they have it? So an Act was passed that all such books heretofore used or still preserved in the churches, and all images, pictures, and other ornaments as being "things corrupt . . . vain, and superstitious, and, as it were, a preparation to superstition," should be destroyed, burnt, or otherwise defaced. But the

scramble had begun long before this. Why should people wait for the clumsy machinery of Parliament to be set in motion? There was such a general and widespread anticipation of what was coming that almost immediately after the death of King Henry men of all classes began to fall upon the spoil. Sometimes the churchwardens themselves were authorised to lay hands on the church goods, and were not slow to use their opportunities; sometimes commissioners were sent down to the parishes from the council; sometimes emissaries from the bishops appear to have taken part in the confiscation. In three years it may be said that almost all the parish churches in England had been looted; before the end of the King's reign there had been a clean sweep of all that was worth stealing from the parish chests, or the church walls, or the church treasuries. In the next generation there were churches by the score that possessed not even a surplice; there were others that had not even a chalice; and others again in considerable numbers which were described as "ruinated." When the Second Book of Homilies was issued in 1562 already we find the homilist indignantly exclaiming: "It is a sin and shame to see so many churches so ruinous and so foully decayed, almost in every corner. . . . Suffer them not," he adds, "to be defiled with rain and weather,

with dung of doves and owls, stares and choughs, and other filthiness, as it is foul and lamentable to behold in many places of this country." And yet what else could have been looked for? The great pillage was nothing less than this—the *Disendowment of all the Parishes in England.* Nothing was left to the parish community but the bare walls of the church fabric, stripped of every "thing of beauty" on which the eyes had delighted to rest. No church was allowed to retain more than a single bell. The beautiful art of campanology almost died out. The organs were sold for the price of the pipes; the old music, the old melodies, were hushed, for praising God in an unknown tongue was prohibited. The old gatherings in the gildhalls came to an end.

It is nonsense, it is absolutely contrary to fact, to say that it was owing to the suppression of the monasteries that new devices were resorted to to save the poor from starving. Pauperism came in, not by the Suppression of the Monasteries, but by the *Disendowment of the Parishes.*

Compare the churchwardens' accounts of any county parish in the fifteenth century with those of the same parish in the seventeeth or eighteenth, and what a change has come over the scene! In the earlier documents, when we have learnt to read

them aright, there is interest and liveliness in every line. In the later ones there are everywhere indications that the parishioners are only vying with one another to keep down the rates; the lead is sold off the roof and replaced by thatch; there is higgling between one party and another party as to whether twopence or threepence a dozen shall be paid for sparrows or their eggs; there is a division, decided in the negative, as to whether there shall be a new rope to ring the solitary bell; there is a squabble about the fences of the churchyard; there is a presentment that hogs were rooting up the graves; the parish meeting is attended by threes and fours, there is an atmosphere of meanness and squalor pervading the shrivelled assemblies. The one piece of property that remains to the parishioners is the parish church: only the ghost of the old parish community survived.

Then came a time when some cunning parishioners here and there began to see a chance of getting rid of their liabilities as parishioners, and began to feel "conscientious objections" to contribute to the maintenance of the fabric in which they seldom or ever appeared. The Quakers showed the first example: it was soon followed. Thus far the parishes were only *disendowed*, it remained for them to be *disestablished*. That began when, as the

phrase is, church rates were abolished—*i.e.*, when no one who objected to contribute to the maintenance of the church could be compelled to pay for the use of it. As I read, that act was a bribe to people not to belong to the old parish community.

But the end came when the Local Government Act of 1894 became the law of the land. By that Act the old parish communities were formally *disestablished.* The parish was defined to be "a *place* for which a separate overseer is or can be appointed." In the new parish council or parish meeting the parish priest as such has no *locus standi,* nor have the churchwardens: the old constitution of the parish community has gone.

Meanwhile the parish churches remain. Again I ask, as I have often asked before, To whom do the churches belong? There are some at any rate in every "place for which a separate overseer is or can be appointed" who still are joyfully willing to take upon themselves the liability to keep the church in repair; some who gladly avail themselves of the privilege of worshipping in the old houses of God where generations of their fathers worshipped during centuries gone by; some who have no wish to interfere with the liberty of conscience and the freedom of worship which others so strongly claim.

But these men and women have their rights too, and one of these rights is that they shall not be liable to be interfered with, or their liberty be restricted by every noisy brawler who may object, or choose to protest, against the ritual sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority, or the doctrine wisely or unwisely preached in the churches maintained at the "worshippers'" cost.

Some of us seeing things as they are, and accepting the logic of facts, are not afraid of their *parishes* being *disestablished*, any more than they are scared when compelled to confess that they were *disendowed* three centuries ago. Some of us are quite awake to the fact that the disestablishment of *the Church* is one thing, and that the disestablishment of the *parish* is quite another. But we who take up this position do think strongly that the time has come when the ownership of the churches up and down the land should be handed over to somebody, and they count it an outrage and a monstrous injustice that every religious body in this land of ours should be able to claim its place of worship as its own, whether that body be Jew or Gentile, Roman, Greek, or Mormonite, Quaker, Wesleyan, Muggletonian, or Independent, but that they who for the present have the use of the, say, 20,000 parish churches in England should be enjoying that use

on little more than sufferance, and should not be able to call their churches their own.

. . . . .

"Why can't we get the Bishops to move?" asks one and another. "They are our leaders, they ought to know their own mind!" Alas! only once in the history of the Reformed Church of England have the Bishops as a body known their own mind; then, when those seven were thrown into the Tower —and then the hearts of Englishmen throbbed with a mighty burst of enthusiastic loyalty—the nation rose up as one man to acknowledge with gratitude the heroism of their episcopal leaders. Alas! again I say alas! there was another occasion when the Bishops as a body "knew their own minds." It was when twenty Bishops in the House of Lords voted solid against Lord Grey's second Reform Bill. There was only one dissentient! The Bill was thrown out for that time: but what next?

The Anglican Bishops of this Reformed Church of England never have started any forward movement: they have followed public opinion, not led it. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Church Missionary Society did not enter upon their

several magnificent careers at the suggestion of our Bishops. Even in that glorious war against the accursed horrors of slavery were they the Bishops who led the van? Of late years things have gone from bad to worse; we expect from "our leaders" such restless activity (if that is the word) as leaves no time for serious thought—such perpetual "serving of tables" as, according to the Twelve Apostles, was inconsistent with the exercise of the higher Apostolic functions. We need statesmanship, and we look for it in vain.

Now, as heretofore, the hope of the future of the Anglican Church in this crisis that we all have to face is to be sought elsewhere than in the leadership of those whom we should all be glad and proud to follow, if they would or could lead us.

NOTE.—While the Council of Constance was holding its sessions for the Reform of the Church and other good purposes, the English Bishops gave a banquet to the Burghers of the city on *Sunday*, January 24, 1417, "followed by a 'Comœdia sacra,' evidently a sort of mystery play in Latin on the subject of the nativity of Christ, the worship of the magi, and the worship of the Holy Innocents." [Life of Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury, in the *Dict. of Nat. Biography*.]

THE PARISH PRIEST IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE REFORMATION

night at Oxford, where a certain measure of hospitality would be offered by several of the colleges, and where, brought into touch with academic life and academic thought, they might be afforded the opportunity of learning from the Divinity Professors and others what were the latest results of research and inquiry arrived at by professional students in the domains of Exegesis, Scientific Theology, and History.

The Oxford experiment proved successful; and during the Long Vacation of 1894 it was repeated at Cambridge. The lecturers who took part in the movement were professors of the University, and such scholars and men of learning as were believed to have something to say, and to be in some sort specialists in this or that line of study. I could not but feel gratified when a request was made to me that I should deliver one of these lectures. The subject was left to me, and the novelty of it commended itself to the Committee. Since its delivery I have been asked by many to publish it.

With some few excisions it is printed pretty much as it was delivered.

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By the term Parish Priest we understand an official responsible for the spiritual oversight of the

inhabitants of a certain geographical area which we call the *Parish.*

But here we are at once face to face with a problem surrounded with difficulties.

In the first five centuries at least after Christ, the word παροικία was used almost exclusively to denote what we now call the Bishop's Diocese. The province of Gaul—meaning by that the great stretch of country now embracing Belgium and France—was in the fifth century divided into some sixty odd *civitates;* and though I am not prepared to say that each *civitas* had its bishop, yet it is, in the main, true that to every *civitas* a bishop had already been assigned, whose *stool* (as Mr. Freeman was pleased to phrase it) was set up in the chief town of that *civitas.* The chief town gave him his title; the *civitas* was his παροικία or parish.

It is to be remembered that, as in the Apostolic age the work of converting the world started from the great towns, so was this emphatically the case in Gaul. How early or how late the practice became general of calling the country cure the Parish and the Episcopal See the Diocese I have never been able to discover. As early as the fourth century we find mention of country churches with lands belonging to them, and in the next century the numbers of these foundations so much increased that Sidonius

(A.D. 433–488) mentions a visitation he made of the rural churches in his diocese (Auvergne), and we notice that by this time these settlements are sometimes called *Parochiæ* and sometimes *Dioceses.* Later on, Gregory of Tours (A.D. 539–593) more often calls the country cures *Dioceses* and the *Episcopal* See the *Parochia.* But, call them what you will, we are fairly well instructed as to the manner in which the country parishes (as we call them now) rose up in Gaul; and I have a suspicion that what was true of Gaul was true, *mutatis mutandis,* of Britain. I have a suspicion that if we had for British history anything approaching to that wealth of original sources which we have for early French history during the first five or six centuries of our era, we should have evidence that some—perhaps many—of our English parishes existed as ecclesiastical parishes, with pretty much the same boundaries as they have to-day, and are survivals of a condition of affairs anterior to the Saxon Conquest.[1]

Be that as it may, however, there are indications that the parish priest all through the Saxon times held a position of greater independence relatively

[1] Compare Haddan and Stubbs' "Councils," i. 124, "British Church Endowments claimed by the Saxon Church."

to the bishops than he held on the other side of the Channel.

Two of these indications are worth drawing your attention to for more than one reason. (1) Among us in pre-Norman times *Archdeacons* are hardly heard of. Bishop Stubbs reminds us that the first person who is called archdeacon is Wulfred, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 805; and he adds that the office of archdeacon is only once mentioned in the Northumbrian Priest's Laws.

The fact is so significant that I must beg you to pardon a digression (which is really not a digression) while I try to explain the significance.

You all remember that in the Apostolic age it was found necessary very early to appoint *deacons*, who were to be the administrators of the finances of the Church. In the same way it came to pass that, when the revenues of the bishops in Gaul became almost unwieldy, it became necessary that the revenues of the see should be placed under the management and supervision of an official who should regulate the expenditure and its distribution, keep the very voluminous accounts, and strike the annual debit and credit balance.

This was all the more necessary in Gaul, because all the endowments in a diocese were paid into the episcopal exchequer and were under the bishop's

control. He apportioned to each priest his income, and, even where local funds were forthcoming, the priest resident in a certain cure was required to account for such rents or dues as were derived from local sources, presumably paying the balance, if any, to the common chest of the diocese. The accounts in all cases were sent in to the *archdeacon;* and if I may be allowed the expression, the archdeacon would annually present his *Budget* to the bishop, whose First Lord of the Treasury or Chancellor of the Exchequer he was.

This, I say, was the case in Gaul. It seems that no such unification of diocesan revenues ever existed in Britain. If anything of the kind had prevailed among us in Anglo-Saxon times we must have heard of the archdeacon's work or of the archdeacon's office. As it is, we hear almost nothing of the one or the other till after the Norman Conquest, and then we hear a great deal too much. But then the titular and territorial archdeacon has become an altogether different kind of functionary from him with whom we are concerned when we speak of the earlier archdeacons in the Gallican Church.

(2) Besides the archdeacons there was another class of clergy whom we hear nothing of in England till late in the eighth century, but of whom we are perpetually hearing in Gaul almost from the earliest times—I mean the Canons.

The first instance of the very name canons occurring in English history is in the report of two bishops who were sent into Britain in 789 by Pope Adrian the First, and who were the first ambassadors or (if you choose to call them by the term which acquired a certain disagreeable meaning in the later times) the first *legates* who came to spy out the land since the famous mission of Augustine two centuries before.[1] And here again I am compelled to say something to explain who these canons were. For we hear so much of the canons in later times, of the rivalry between them and the monks, and of their relation to the parish priests, that it is almost impossible to understand the ecclesiastical history of these times—or indeed of later times either—until we get something like a clear notion of who and what these canons were.

As I have said before, the Gallican bishops were very wealthy and very powerful territorial magnates; they were, in fact, what many prelates in Austria are called to this day—Prince-Bishops. The setting

[1] "This is probably the first use of the word *canonici* in the sense of canons living in communities, but without monastic vows, that occurs in English Church history; indeed, the rule of Chrodogang, the first canonical rule, was only published about fifty years before this, and the title does not become common until much later." Haddan and Stubbs' "Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents," iii. 461.

apart of separate estates for the maintenance of clergy in this or that manor or district was hardly heard of even so late as the fifth century. The earliest authoritative ordinance laying it down that every rural district should have a parsonage-house, and that only after the building of that house should the bishop allow a priest to take possession of the church and officiate there, is to be found in a Capitular of Louis le Debonnaire—or, as we ought to translate his name, Louis the Devout—in the year 818 or 819.[1] In the same Capitular there follows an ordinance that in future in all new *villæ*, where new churches were built, the tithes should be bestowed upon those same churches—*i.e.*, should not be paid into the common chest of the episcopal see. This appears to have been a novel arrangement, and implies, I think, that a feeling was growing against such centralisation of Church revenues as tended to make the country clergy too absolutely dependent upon their diocesan. Obviously the dealing with these huge revenues necessitated the employment of a large staff of trained subordinates engaged in mere office work, analogous to what we understand among ourselves by the Civil Service. This small army of officials was

[1] "Capitularia Regum Francorum." Ed. Boret, 1883, section 138, § 10–12.

occupied mainly in dealing with the official business of the see; and, as there was a Chancellor of the Exchequer as I have ventured to call him—the archdeacon—so also there would be a certain number of heads of departments or chief clerks, who would be required to be more or less in strict personal relations with the bishop from day to day. These, as being more concerned with office work than with pastoral work, were in the first instance, and indeed for some centuries, called the Episcopal Clerks, or *Clerici.* They were entrusted with important responsibilities and sometimes very arduous duties—education, church extension, discipline, and the like, not to speak of the immense correspondence which fell upon them and the delicate diplomacy which they might be called on to undertake at an hour's notice. These *clerici* were sure to be the ablest and most efficient ecclesiastics in the diocese, and had their residence in the episcopal house, which soon got to be called the bishop's Palatium, as the emperor's residence was called *his* Palatium, the internal organisation of the one being modelled upon that of the other.

In both cases the discipline of the palace was necessarily as strict as the discipline of a man-of-war; but in the bishop's palace that discipline would assume an ecclesiastical and religious character.

The great officials of the bishop's palace holding high office were bound to conform to certain observances laid down in a certain code, differing in different dioceses. But in all cases they lived by a rule, a κανών, as the Greek word called it. Not improbably on entering upon their office they "kissed hands," as the Ministers of the Crown do now, and undertook formally to observe the κανών, and so were included among the *Canonici*.

As time went on it became necessary to plant more than one or two of these *Government Houses*, as we may call them, in various parts of the diocese, with a prior or superior as head; such houses being supposed to keep up the *etiquette*, and to observe the rule or κανών of the episcopal Palatium. Little by little the close connection between these houses, lying at a distance from the central seat of government became weakened. The discipline tended, inevitably, to grow lax where the face of the bishop was seldom seen, and his presence was not to be feared. Gradually, too, the canons in the distant houses were put upon their own resources, and were allowed to appropriate to their own use— *i.e.*, to the support of the community—the revenues which in the first instance they had been sent to administer for diocesan purposes. Then a worse development ensued. The canons in the outlying houses pro-

ceeded to apportion among themselves these estates, and each canon became a tenant for life of his share of the estates. Then came in the practice of non-residence. There was no longer a common table, nor any life in common, and, in point of fact, the canonry or prebend became only a better and more lucrative benefice with little work and a good income —more or less of a sinecure; though it must be allowed that such prizes were for the most part bestowed upon the better educated of the clergy—for the most part they were the prizes which fell to the abler, the more cultivated, the more deserving.

Many attempts were made from time to time to restore discipline in these canon's houses. Chrodogang, Bishop of Metz, in the eighth century, drew up a Rule for his *Canonici*, and this rule was adopted by other bishops, who, under the authority of Charlemagne's *Admonitio Generalis* (A.D. 789),[1] attempted with more or less success to force it upon their canons. Later, it seems that the canons themselves here and there showed a desire to return to a better way; and we find many of these corporations associated, no one knows how, under a pretended rule of St. Augustine, which they professed to follow and conform to. These canons, who observed a certain rule of life, which they were

[1] It is printed by Boret in the "Capitularia," section 22.

expected to obey even in small things, got to be called the *Canons Regular,* or canons living together under a rule; while the others, who somehow were in possession of the estates, and lived pretty much as they pleased, were known as Secular Canons, or canons *who were living in the world,* and conforming to the secular life under no particular rule or strict canonical discipline.

Outside these canons, again, whether secular or regular, were the monks or dwellers in the monasteries; but about them, for many good reasons, I can enter into no details now.

. . . . .

Having indulged in these two digressions by way of introduction, I am the better able to enter now upon the main subject before us.

Our sources of information regarding the Anglo-Saxon parish priests are not so meagre as is generally assumed by those who have not given their attention to the subject. They may be said to begin with those documents which belong to the days of Archbishop Theodore, who came among us in 668, and who continued to preside over the Church of England till 690.[1] Theodore's *Penitential* belongs

[1] It is a very horrible document. It may be found in Haddan and Stubbs' "Councils," vol. iii. pp. 173–203. On the subject of these Penitentials, see Bishop Stubbs' "Lectures on Mediæval and Modern History," p. 296.

to a class of documents which the Bishop of Oxford describes as "lists of sins and their penances," drawn up for a people only partially delivered from heathen abominations and superstitions, and which had already been issued by the Frankish bishops and the Merovingian kings under their influence. These penitentials were, indeed, private or *quasi*-private compilations, and it was not till the eighth and ninth centuries that even in Gaul they obtained the force of legislative enactments. But, viewed as reflections of the age in which they were drawn up, they are of inestimable value. Theodore's *Penitential* shows us that the organisation of the Church in Britain was in many respects very unlike that of Gaul, or as we might now call it, Frankland; there was, indeed, some discipline among the clergy, but there was clearly more laxity than among their brethren on the other side of the Channel. In some important matters they did not conform to the usages and practices of the Roman Church.

Sunday was strictly observed. The timber churches were apparently often moved from one place to another. Many of the clergy knew no Latin;[2] and, by what sounds like a compromise, it was ordered that in future they should be required at least to say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and

[2] See Green's "Making of England," p. 139.

read the Lessons in that language. At the same time, it is clear that these clergy were recognised as the guides and teachers of the people, and that their ministry was accepted with remarkable docility. Their influence was an influence for good. Outside the sphere in which these men were discharging their functions there were monasteries, which were the homes of such learning as was to be acquired through the medium of Latin ; seminaries in which the sons of wealthy men like the father of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, sent their boys to receive the higher education. But the epistles of St. Boniface show us that outside the cloisters the people at large were instructed in the elements of the Christian faith by the secular priests, and that they were probably the teachers of that native poetry which was always becoming more and more Christian in its character—such poetry as the people were generally familiar with, such as Boniface himself had learnt in his youth and did not forget in his manhood, such too, as Beda loved and quoted on his deathbed. It was in Theodore's time that, on the 24th of September, 673, a council was held at Hertford, where all the Anglo-Saxon bishops except one assembled; and here, among other things, it was resolved that in future a synod should be held annually at a place called Clovesho, a place which

recent discoveries have gone far to show was situated near Mildenhall, in Cambridgeshire; and the records of at least ten of these Clovesho synods have been preserved, bringing us down to the times when the Danes were ravaging the country with fire and sword.

At one of these synods, held under the presidency of Archbishop Cuthbert in 747—*i.e.*, about fifty years after Theodore's death—the decrees, though, as usual, in great part imported from abroad, contain some enactments of peculiar interest.[1] The bishops are to visit their several dioceses (*Parochiæ*) every year to make themselves known to their people, and to warn them against heathen practices. They are to be careful to ordain no one to the priesthood till they are assured that the candidate is fitted by his life and doctrine to act as a shepherd of souls (c. 6). The priests themselves are (c. 8) to give themselves heart and life to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and to keep themselves from all worldly callings; they are to be diligent in visiting their people, and to be sober in their talk and in their conduct (c. 9). They are to explain the meaning of the Sacrament, translating to those who do not understand them the words used in the prayers offered, and especially to teach

[1] Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils and Documents," vol. iii. p. 362.

them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and the spiritual significance of the ritual, in which the people were to bear a part (c. 10). They are warned against any unauthorised departure from the order of service. They are not to sing in the churches like the heathen bards did, nor in theatrical fashion to play tricks with sacred words, but to follow the established order of plain song in a simple and serious manner, and if they cannot sing (c. 12) they are to read distinctly, and unpretentiously.

These and other ordinances of the council the bishops are to make known to all at their visitations, and command all to observe, trying to correct that which needs mending and enforce that which is enjoined.

In the MS. records of this council which have come down to us the names of the bishops only who were present have been preserved. It is otherwise with some other of the synods which were assembled afterwards at Clovesho and elsewhere.

Thus, at a Clovesho council held on the 12th of October, 803, under the presidency of Archbishop Æthelheard, we get what appears to be a complete list of those who were summoned and attended.[1]

Thirteen bishops, including the Primate, were present. The normal number of representatives

[1] Haddan and Stubbs, u.s., iii. 541.

from each diocese (including the bishop of the see) was seven. But among these seven the abbots of the monasteries in the several dioceses appear to have taken their seats as representatives of the regulars or monastic bodies; though where there was no monastery, as in the dioceses of Elmham and of Rochester, the six who came with their bishop were all parish priests. From Canterbury the single archdeacon mentioned attends as a supernumerary. The number of signatures all told is ninety-three, of whom the secular or parish priests are fifty-five, while the regulars number only twenty-five.

Twenty-one years later—*i.e.*, when the incursions of the Danes were beginning to cause serious anxiety —we have the record of another Clovesho synod at which Archbishop Wulfred presided. Eleven bishops attended, and, according to one account, fifty parish priests, though the signatures of only thirty-seven have been preserved. The monasteries by this time had suffered grievously in some parts of the country from the Danes, and we need not be surprised that no more than seven abbots were among the signatories. The significance of these lists is very great. It is clear that at the beginning of the ninth century —thirty or forty years before Alfred was born—the parish priests were by no means the poor creatures that a cursory reader of such history as emanated

from the cloisters would lead us to believe they were. On the contrary, there were among them men of consideration and weight who were perfectly qualified to take their places in council side by side with the greatest abbots in the land, to travel from one end of England to the other that their voices might be heard in the debates, and, moreover, when the religious houses had been harried and burnt by the Vikings, these same priests were ready to fill up the vacant seats in the assemblies of the Church and to rally round their bishops whenever and withersoever they might be summoned to attend and deliver their judgments or tender their advice in times of peril and perplexity.

Unhappily, so great has been at all times the exclusiveness and arrogance which have characterised monastic literature, and especially when monks have been writing about the past of their own houses or their own Order, that they have taken little or no account of the parish priests and their doings; but have adopted when speaking of them precisely the same tone which is observable in the language of some among ourselves. The very name of secular clergy was to the monk almost a name of reproach; and, just as among our Nonconformists nowadays no man is a "member of a Christian Church" except he be a member of a Dissenting congregation,

so, for centuries, only they who were members of a monastic body and under monastic vows were spoken of as *religious*. Then, and then only, was he or she (as the case might be) said to have "entered religion." The phrase is still used in the present day.

. . . . .

Meanwhile, all through the Anglo-Saxon era we find the parish priests quite able to hold their own as teaching, preaching, working clergymen. In the monasteries the Latin language appears to have been used as a rule, and among them the Roman ritual was universal. There are good reasons for believing that in the parish churches the Latin service was disliked, and even translated into the vernacular; for everybody in Gaul could speak Latin or understood it. In Britain the people loved their own language; to them the Roman speech was jargon and something worse.

The people could not be induced to learn Latin except in the monasteries and in some few schools more or less in connection with them. It was the interest of the parish priests to keep up the sentiment of the people in favour of their native language, and the people *would* have translations of the Scriptures, which the parish priests could

supply and did supply; and that there were among those parish priests no inconsiderable number of men deserving in that age to be called scholars and students is abundantly evident.

Bede himself (*ob.* 732) acknowledges his great obligations to a certain London priest—I suppose we may call him a London *clergyman*—named Nothelm, who had made transcripts for him of valuable documents. Nothelm appears to have been one of the most learned men of his time, and eventually became Archbishop of Canterbury, dying there in 739.[1] In the British Museum, among the Cotton MSS., we have a remarkable catalogue which a certain Athelstan, in the pride of his heart, drew up of the books which he had collected and was apparently very proud of. Athelstan appears to have lived about a generation after Bede. I hold him to have been a country parson, and shall continue to assert and maintain the same till some personage of adequate audacity shall succeed in proving the negative. Athelstan names with a certain serious joy two important volumes which he says he had obtained from another parish priest named Alfwold.

[1] On Nothelm, see Mr. Plummer's "Bede," vol. ii. p. 2. He was apparently in communication with Bede at least fifteen or twenty years before Bede's death, and long before his own promotion to the Episcopate.

But Athelstan and Alfwold are only two of many such clergymen as were men of books and study in that eighth century. Alcuin—of whom it may be said that Charlemagne looked to him for effecting the great educational reform which the illustrious Emperor hoped to bring about—Alcuin writes of England at this time as the home of libraries and learned men. And this is just what our King Alfred says of his country in the next century, when he deplores the havoc and ruin which the Danes had wrought. In the preface to Gregory's "Pastorale" he mentions how "before all was spoiled and burned, *the churches throughout the whole English nation* stood filled with treasures and with books, and also with a great multitude of God's servants;" but he adds elsewhere that, in making this very translation in which such a memorable lament occurs, he had received important help, not only from Archbishop Plegmund and Bishop Asser, but from two *mass priests—i.e.*, parish priests—whom he names.

But when the great King bewails the decay of learning in Britain during the generation or so preceding his own, we must take such laments with some little reserve, just as we must receive the language of Ælfric the grammarian in the next century with all cautious allowance; for Ælfric himself tells us that a parish priest was his own first

teacher. And we may take it as pretty certain that when Ælfric wrote those homilies of his which were so widely circulated, they were the parish priests who bought them or copied them, and preached them in their churches. People came and listened to them too; and preaching other people's sermons is not such a very reprehensible practice—it rather goes a little way to prove that the preachers are *not* idlers, *not* drones. And let me, before I pass on, remind you that the saintly Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, was one of these good people who busied themselves in writing sermons for others to preach, and that he tells us himself that he was no monk, but that he began his career as a country parson quietly doing his best for his people, making no bounce and never dreaming of promotion.

Nor was the social position of the Saxon working clergy by any means as low as some have been inclined to infer from the silence or the covert sneers of writers who breathed the air of the cloisters.

There is in the "Cartularium Saxonicum" a very interesting will, made by a certain priest named Werhard, about the year 832.[1] He describes him-

[1] "Cartularium Saxonicum." W. de Gray Birch, vol. i. p. 558, No. 402.

self as a kinsman of Archbishop Wulfred, who had lately died. The Archbishop had purchased some property in Kent and Middlesex, which he made over to Werhard in honourable trust. The income was to be applied, not for the enrichment of any monastery, but for the support of the poor in certain parishes which are named. As for Werhard's own property (which he expressly tells us was his patrimony), that he bequeaths to Christ Church, Canterbury. The monks at Christ Church took very good care of their *evidences*, and to this we owe our knowledge of Werhard; his will was the title to the lands he bequeathed to their house, and if he had not so bequeathed it we should never have heard of him or of Wulfred's bequest to the poor. Exactly in the same way do we owe our knowledge of another parish priest, Erdulf ("Cart." ii., 589), to whom King Edred, Alfred's grandson, left a life interest in a considerable estate. The reversion of that estate devolved to the new Minster at Winchester, and Erdulf's will, as a matter of course, would be deposited among the archives of the monastery. So, again, we owe our knowledge of the bequests made to some parish priests by a great personage named Byhrtric, because Byhrtric left also large legacies to the Canterbury monasteries. The great Alfred himself left legacies to fifty parish

priests, as no doubt other rich men did from time to time.

If the working clergy suffered, as of course they did, by the frightful ravages of the Danes, they certainly did not suffer to anything approaching the extent that the monasteries suffered. How greatly *they* suffered may be learnt by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, where we read, under the year 870, that Archbishop Ceolnoth "commanded his private priests, and also some of the Vill priests, that they should help the few monks who remained to do God's service . . . for," it adds, "there was strife and sorrow over England; and therefore the clerks remained with the monks."

I beg you to note these words. The Archbishop's *private priests* in the one clause are the *clerks* of the other, and they are the same *Clerici* whom we have heard of before as secular canons; that is, they are the staff-officers or officials of the bishops, while the Vill priests are the country parsons or parish priests, with whom we are now immediately concerned.

It has been said that this entry in the Chronicle marks the extinction of the old monasticism in England. Extinction is, perhaps, too strong a word; but it is undoubtedly true that in this, the first year of King Alfred's reign, things were at their worst in the religious houses throughout the land.

It looks very much as if this measure of the Archbishop's was a desperate attempt to fill the ruined monasteries, where possible, with the secular or parish clergy, rather than allow the conventual life and the conventual buildings to be abandoned.

The attempt may be said to have proved a failure. It was inevitable that it should be a failure; for the single reason that the secular clergy were as a rule married men, and when they were draughted into the old monasteries they took their wives and children with them. This was not only true of the parish priests, but it was true even of the secular canons, if we may judge from the Rule of Chrodogang. They, too, were bound originally by no vows; nor does the obligation of celibacy appear to have been imposed upon them by any other penalty than such as was enforced in the case of fellows of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge fifty years ago.

When, in the tenth century, the great revival of monasticism came about all over Europe and the wave of enthusiasm rolled on to England, then the cry of the monks was loud against the scandal of the old monasteries being filled by the secular canons, and the contest between the one Order and the other went on actually down to the Norman Conquest. Five years before that event, Edward

the Confessor was engaged in building his famous monastery at Westminster for monks who, with their abbot at their head, officiated at the King's funeral; while Harold, who claimed the other's crown, was building his famous college at Waltham for secular canons, some of whom were, and all might have been, married men.

It really seemed a matter of uncertainty down to the coming of the Normans which were to gain the day—the men of Rule, whose idol was the artificial and unnatural life of celibates in the cloister, or the men of Principle, whose contention was that the law of Christ allowed of freedom, and who claimed that Christ's ministers might be of Paul the celibate or of Peter the married man, and yet both might be of Christ and doing His work in the world.

. . . . .

During the first half of the eleventh century there is good reason for believing that the secular clergy, including the parish priests, in England had never before been so numerous. Not only so, but that relatively to the rest of the population they have never since been so rich or occupied so strong a position. In the Domsday Survey hardly more than 1,700 churches are mentioned, but it is agreed on all hands that this represents very inadequately indeed

the whole number that must have been in existence at the time of the Conquest. That number must certainly have run into thousands. Every one of these churches had its endowments in the shape of tithes and offerings. Every one had its glebe.

On the other hand, the monasteries had by no means recovered from the devastation wrought by the Danes. Many of the smaller houses had been entirely blotted out, and it may be doubted whether there were forty monasteries worth mentioning that were at this time in working order from the Tyne to the Exe.[1] It may indeed almost be said that at this time the parish priests had it all their own way; and I am afraid that these clergy were none the better for their prosperity, rather that their riches had done them harm in more ways than one.

Soon the fashion began of founding new monasteries. The cry was raised that only by the revival of the stricter religious life of the cloister could priests and people be reformed. The tide turned against the seculars. The monasteries rapidly became wealthy corporations enriched by lands and manors. In many instances the ownership of these

[1] How large was the number of religious houses founded in England during the period anterior to the Norman Conquest, and how terrible the devastation wrought among them by the Danes, may be estimated approximately by referring to Mr. Birch's "Fasti Monastici Œvi Saxonici," 1872.

manors carried with it the patronage of the churches upon those manors—*i.e.*, the advowsons of many parishes passed into the hands of the abbeys and priories. Then we begin to hear of a very odious form of trading in these benefices. The rectors were in many cases compelled to pay an annual rent or pension to the monastery, the compact being made with the incumbent conditionally upon his being admitted to his cure. Protests were made against these simoniacal bargains and councils legislated against them, but it still went on. Of course the parishes, the parishioners, and the clergy suffered injury and wrong; but this was as nothing to the mischief wrought by the appropriation of the income of a benefice to the support of a monastery, whereby the monasteries became the rectors of the parish, taking the whole endowment and leaving the inhabitants of the place to the care of a stipendiary. This kind of spoliation went on wholesale for more than two centuries, till at last thoughtful and right-thinking men lifted up their voices against the abomination, and by the middle of the fifteenth century the appropriations began to be discouraged, but not before well-nigh half the benefices in England had been plundered of their great tithes and glebe lands.

Concurrently with this process of disendowment,

the wealth of the clergy had made them fair game for those in power to levy from them all sorts of exactions, civil and ecclesiastical.

Twice a year they were compelled, or supposed, to attend the Diocesan Synods, and, whether they attended or not, they had to pay their fees, and perhaps higher fees for non-attendance. By this time, too, the archdeacons had become active diocesan inspectors, and their courts of inquiry were very terrible assemblies, at which heavy dues had to be paid to the officials. You catch a glimpse in Chaucer of the Archdeacon's Summoner or "Sompnour" in the "Friar's Tale." The summoner was a common informer who lived by his vile trade, and woe to the luckless parson who had incurred the enmity of some aggrieved parishioner looking out for a chance of paying off an old grudge against the rector or vicar who had been too zealous or a trifle indiscreet. The best he could do was to bribe the summoner not to bring his cause into court, where, even if the parson gained the day, the expenses might easily cripple him for months or years.

Then there were the taxes (for we may as well use our modern language), those terrible tenths and fifteenths of which we hear so much. In the year 1294 Edward the First actually demanded half a

year's income from the clergy, and, dreadful as the impost was, it had to be paid, though how the parsons found the money it is difficult to imagine.

By this time, however, the country parsons had almost ceased to be married men, though we meet with them frequently till quite the end of the thirteenth century. After that the archdeacons and the summoners between them effectually put a stop to holy matrimony among the priests of the Lord.

Nor did the steady progress of impoverishment of the working clergy end with the appropriations, the fees, and the taxes, ordinary and extraordinary. The friars had not long been working in England before they were found to be acting very seriously in the direction of lessening the income of the clergy, and especially of the town clergy, so far as their resources were derived from freewill offerings and the like.

Finally, the incomes of the clergy derivable from tuition and educational work fell off seriously with the development of the universities. Lads of promise began more and more to be sent from home to take up their residence at Cambridge or Oxford for better tuition than the parochial clergy could provide, and that happened which has come about in our own time—viz., that the income of the country parsons greatly decreased when the demand

for clerical private tutors well-nigh came to an end.

It is hardly to be wondered at if, as all these worries and exactions, this gradual shrinkage in the clerical incomes, went on so steadily, we should find indications of the social position of the country clergy beginning to decline towards the end of the fourteenth century. And these indications are not to be mistaken.

Taking the lists of presentations to our Norfolk benefices, which go back to the thirteenth century, and which in the main give the succession of incumbents in the East Anglian diocese down to the present day, and examining these lists as I find them in a single volume of Blomefield's history of the county, the following results must strike any reader :—

The great family of the Bardolfs were lords of the manor of Cantley, on the river Yare, from Norman times down to the reign of Henry the Fourth. As lords of the manor they were patrons of the rectory, and they resided in the parish. The rectors for nearly two centuries were either Bardolfs or bore the names of the great county families. The last of these aristocratic parsons of Cantley, as I may call them, was presented in 1372. After that date the rectors are evidently plebeians, of whose origin we know nothing.

The same is true in the neighbouring parish of Plumstead Parva. Down to 1360 the patrons appear to have always presented one of their own kindred. After that date the rectors are taken from a lower stratum.

At Barton, again, where the ancient family of the Lovells were resident and patrons of the living till late in the seventeenth century, the first four rectors whose appointment is recorded are Lovells—that is, the living was a family living, which was always held by some younger brother or poorer kinsman. After 1349 there are no more Lovells to be found among the rectors, nor any one else of whom there is anything to tell.

Once more. The rectory of St. Mary Beechamwell was for ages in the gift of presentation of the Chervilles (another of the proud old houses), and for generations they appear to have presented the benefice to one of their own class. After the presentation of Thomas Cherville by his father or brother Robert de Cherville about the middle of the fourteenth century, the parsons are evidently new men, and few of them even bear Norfolk names. If these instances stood alone, they would be suggestive ; but they do not by any means stand alone, and I commend this line of research to those who possess or have access to our great county

histories, or such valuable works as Mr. Hingeston-Randolph's "Registers of the Diocese of Exeter." I can only glance at the subject here.

Nevertheless, though the parish priests were growing poorer and poorer from the Conquest to the Reformation, it is noticeable that they never ceased to retain the confidence and esteem of their people from first to last. My impression is that, as they ceased to belong to the gentry class by birth, they grew into more and more favour with the commonalty. In the thousands of early charters —*i.e.*, conveyances of land and the like—which I have had the eccentric pleasure of handling and reading in my leisure hours, the names of the county parsons actually swarm among the feoffees or trustees to whom settled estates, small or large, are conveyed. So, too, in the wills of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the parish priests are so frequently appointed supervisors of wills that it is evident they were regarded as the men most to be trusted for settling any such disputes as might arise between executors and legatees. As for instances of their putting pressure upon the dying that so some benefits might accrue to themselves, I can only say that I have never met with a single instance of anything of the kind, though for thirty years I have been on the watch for one, and I have examined

and made extracts from a good many wills and testaments in my time. There's no accounting for tastes, and some monomaniacs have a taste even for old wills!

On the other hand, when we come to the wills of the clergy themselves, we see that though among them there were all those differences in wealth, birth, culture, and habits of life which are to be found among the beneficed clergy nowadays, from the successful pluralist who held two or three pieces of preferment simultaneously or the rollicking squarson who hung loosely to his clerical income because he had landed property of his own, down to the humble vicar who had hard work to make two ends meet, or the needy chaplain who had only his few household utensils and half a dozen shabby books to leave behind him, yet it is the rarest thing to meet with a parson's will in which some legacy is not left to the church in which he officiates.

And here let me observe in passing that it is a deep-rooted delusion, against which I have made it my business to protest for many years, that the great landlords forsooth built all our mediæval churches. I hold that to be an utter and mischievous delusion. Everything goes to show that the immense majority of the old churches of England were built not by the great men, but by

the small people with the clergy at their head. Where some great noble or county magnate did build a church, there you may always find his mark; his coat armour is sure to be carved upon every available stone or beam; it tells its own tale. But the small folk and the large majority of the fourteenth-century parsons had no escutcheon to display, and the sculptor amused himself in something else than heraldic shields carved upon the battlements of a tower. In the famous "Black Book of Swaffham" in Norfolk, where the names of the chief benefactors to the church are set down with rare minutenesses, there appear the names of not less than nine rectors and vicars of the parish who, in a period of less than a century, had very materially contributed to the sustentation of the fabric of the church (one of the finest in Norfolk), and had restored some really splendid gifts in the shape of service books, plate, vestments, candlesticks, and ornaments of all kinds for rendering the ritual and the service of the sanctuary as splendid and imposing as it could be made. John Bury, appointed rector of the parish in 1414, actually built the chancel as we see it now. He evidently intended to rebuild the whole church, but he was cut short in the middle of his work, and in his will he provided for the ceiling of the chancel with panels. He left his successor to complete what

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools nowadays. "My Lords require you to enlarge your school and to provide a class-room!" Alas! what lamentations follow! Take an instance or two.

Bishop Stapeldon had come down and paid a visit to the church of Staverton, near Totnes, in 1301. He had found some fault with the accommodation in the nave of the church, and apparently made some recommendations. When he came again in July, 1314, his lordship was evidently out of temper and dissatisfied. He would not be trifled with this time. He declared that the chancel was too narrow and dark, and the nave was worse. Wherefore he made order that the rector, the vicar, and the parishioners, should remedy these defects without delay, and you may depend upon it it had to be done at whatever inconvenience.[1] Some years later, the bishop paid a visit to Bradninch, near Collumpton. He found the roof of the church in a bad state (as Mr. Inspector has found perhaps yours or mine), and the parishioners are peremptorily ordered to put it in a condition of complete repair, and are allowed six months to do it in. As for the ways and means, that was their concern! Just about

[1] "The Register of Walter de Stapeldon, Bishop of Exeter (1307–1326)." By Rev. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 1892, p. 379.

the same time, again, the bishop appeared at Ilfracombe.[1] It had been represented to him that the parish church was too small. His lordship declared that was his opinion also. Wherefore it was ordered that the parishioners should lengthen their church twenty-four feet at least before next Michaelmas twelvemonth. Was there any penalty? Yes, there was; and in this case the penalty in default of carrying out the bishop's order was a sum of money to be paid to the mother church at Exeter, equivalent to an amount which in our time would be represented by £700 or £800.

But how did the unhappy creatures get the money? For instance, how did the poor people of Broadhempston—a little country parish of 2,000 acres—manage to build a brand new church on a larger scale than the old one, in the year 1401, and finish it in two years? How did the parishioners of Buckland Brewer in 1399, when their church and almost all its contents were destroyed by lightning—how did they propose to build or repair the sacred edifice? How did the parishioners of Downe St. Mary in 1413 and many another little place that might be named—how did they all manage it; and manage it, too, without being reduced to beggary? Why, exactly as you and I

[1] U.S., p. 182.

do it now! The bishop, in cases where the poor people sued humbly to him, and told him they were absolutely and utterly unable to bear the expense, gave them leave and licence to go a-begging. And who was the man who had to do the bulk of the work? And, mind, it was very hard work indeed, in days when the roads were bad and the penny post had not been dreamt of even by the most imaginative. The man who did the work then, as now, was the parson. And how well he did it the houses of God in the land testify from John o' Groat's House to the Land's End.

. . . . .

Before I close I must needs offer you one or two more hints and suggestions.

(1) The lists of ordinations in the several dioceses during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which have come down to us are more numerous than might have been expected. They show that the number of ordained persons of all ranks was very large, and they show us also plainly that instances of parish priests living isolated and lonely lives must have been rare. There were huge numbers of unbeneficed men picking up a precarious livelihood in town and country, and subsisting upon a pittance which only celibates could have managed to exist upon. The

prizes were to the blanks even fewer than they are now. But this had its advantages, such as they were. The beneficed clergy had no difficulty in finding assistance in their duties, and they were never at a loss for companionship. Moreover, licence of non-residence was very easily procured by a parson who wished to spend a year or two at the university. In many cases that licence was renewed from year to year, and it was specially common when a young man had been appointed to a benefice early in his career. In such cases the bishops occasionally insisted on his residing at Cambridge or Oxford for a time.

(2) While he was away there were sure to be two or three or sometimes half a dozen "chaplains" or chantry priests, to whom the routine work of the parish was entrusted. These men were carefully watched by the churchwardens, and any irregularities were promptly reported to the archdeacons, who did not spare them. Of course there were many clerical scamps who were a disgrace to their profession and who drifted into the ranks of the loafers. There are scamps in the medical profession, rogues in the legal profession, blacklegs among the financiers, and bankrupts among the most virtuous and upright commercial classes. But where the competition increases for every post and every place of prefer-

ment, there is at least an even chance that the best men come to the fore, and we don't judge of a class by taking the convicts and ticket-of-leave men as fair specimens of the *morale* prevalent in the rank of life to which those unfortunate persons respectively belong at their start in life.

(3) The quiet, devout, and conscientious parson, doing his duty day by day among his people, is the last man who attains to notoriety. Unless a clergyman is bent on advertising himself, the less notorious he is the better. Rogues do become notorious as soon as they are found out and their names appear in the police reports. The secular clergy before the Reformation had a very sharp look-out kept upon them, and when they tripped or went astray there were only too many people who were on the watch to expose them. Then they were heard of indeed. It is clear from such books as John Myrc's "Instructions for Parish Priests," printed by the E.E.T.S., that there was a much higher standard of feeling in a wide stratum of the people than some would have us believe. Nor were the congregations of the fourteenth century a whit less inclined to be censorious than those of the nineteenth. When the representatives of the parish of Colbroke were questioned authoritatively by their bishop regarding Sir William their vicar in the regular course of his

visitation in 1301, they said that he preached "well enough" (*suo modo*), that, "as far as he knew" (*quantum novit*), he expounded the Gospels to them, but he did not *teach* them much (*non multum eos informat*). In fact he was a very harmless sort of a humdrum man. There were lies told about him, but they *were* lies.

Pretty much the same answers are given by the chief men in the little town of Colyton. Sir Robert Blund, the vicar, was a good man (*probus homo*); he preached *quantum novit* again, but not as much as he ought in their opinion. His predecessor *was* a man; he had been wont to have classes for the instruction of all the chaplains and clerks of the Church. (Note that!) But this one was remiss in this duty. Would the lord bishop be pleased to pull him up? (*petunt quod corripiatur.*)

. . . . .

Take them all in all, I cannot resist the impression, which has become deeper and deeper upon me the more I have read and pondered, that the parochial clergy in England during the centuries between the Conquest and the Reformation numbered amongst them at all times some of the best men of their generation. To begin with, they were always loyal Englishmen. The same can at no time be said of

the monks, who from first to last were much less true subjects of the King than at heart bigoted adherents of the Pope of Rome. Chaucer's manner of speaking of the poor parson of a town reflects the feeling not only of his own time, but really reflects the estimation in which they were held at all times. Not once, not twice in our history these parish priests are to be found siding with the people against those in power, and chosen by the people to be their spokesmen when their grievances were becoming unbearable. When that great awakening came which in the good Providence of God the friars were permitted to stir, and a new life, and a new enthusiasm, and a new hunger and thirst after holiness thrilled through the throbbing heart of the nation, the response came first from the working clergy, who joined the new Reformers wherever they appeared—not without some grumbling that the new men absorbed large sums, in the shape of burial and marriage fees, from the poor parish priests, who could ill afford to lose them. To the last the wills of the clergy were full of legacies to the preaching friars. When, again, a new awakening came, and the Lollards went about as they did protesting against errors which were real errors, though in the way of doing it there was all the usual violence and

exaggeration of men stirred by a fiery earnestness —again they were the clergy, the working parish priests, who gave that movement its impetus; and among the parish priests there were those who did not shrink then from giving their bodies to be burned, and who showed noble instances of suffering for conscience' sake. So, too, when Wycliffe was dreaming of a great religious revolution—hoping, in fact, for the Millennium which is so long in coming—they were the poor priests of townlet and village to whom he appealed for sympathy and support, and he did not appeal in vain.

It always has been so. The men that move the world and keep it moving; the men that carry the truths of the Gospel to the hearts and consciences of a nation—and more than that, bring those truths into a nation's hearths and homes—are not the monks in the cloister, so anxious about their own precious souls that they hide themselves from their fellow-sinners till they become the victims of that pride which apes humility. More and more it is becoming evident that the men who are to act upon the masses must be in personal touch with the masses—the working clergy in hamlet and village and town.

It may be true that the parish priests rarely have

been the intellectual leaders of their generation or the pioneers of science, discovery, or curious learning, though there have been times when their names, even in these matters, have not been unknown. It may, again, be true that for the trained academic intellects and the great scholars who are such by profession and who lead the van of the army of intellectual progress, such are not to be sought in the humble villages, where, perhaps, students are few. No! You must look for them here—here, where their home is; here, where you have come to listen to them and be taught by them. The gifted and the privileged few are not to be found in the lonely parsonage or the clergy house, where the ceaseless toilers among the submerged tenth and the dreadful residuum are knocking and pressing at their doors. Yet it must be calamitous, at any time, for the Church and the nation, if the leaders of the blind are growing blinder than the led, and if they who are groping and crying out so piteously for the light should find fewer and fewer of their appointed teachers qualified to show them where such light is to be found.

"ROBBING GOD"

"ROBBING GOD"

I

IT must have pained many a loyal Churchman during the past month to read some of the speeches delivered at meetings held up and down the country to protest against the Welsh Suspensory Bill.[1] For myself, I should look upon the passing of such a measure with grief and dismay, for more reasons than I care to set down here. But even were I prepared to admit that the alienation of any portion of the revenues of the Church in Wales and the diverting them into any other channel would be an unmixed evil, or were I even convinced that any measure having such an object in view would be necessarily impolitic or actually dishonest, I should still feel called upon to protest against some arguments that have been resorted to by too many of

[1] June, 1893.

the fervid orators who have denounced the Bill, and to put in an earnest caveat against the assumptions made by speakers whose position and learning and unselfish zeal deserve the respect of us all.

If it were a mere question of bowing to the authority of our ecclesiastical superiors, and the duty of remaining silent when a powerful consensus of opinion has found a voice which speaks with authority, it would be presumption on the part of any clergyman in my position to ask for a hearing; but the interests at stake are so very grave that I feel impelled to take part in the discussion that is going on, though I do so with the utmost reluctance and sorely against the grain. I do so now because I am convinced that it is of supreme importance, not only to the Church and Churchmen, but to the nation at large, that at this crisis the army of defence and the army of attack should if possible be warned against taking up positions which are untenable, and so engaging in the conflict without due consideration of the issues that are really involved.

Again and again it has been said, and continues to be said, that the spoliation of the endowments of the Established Church and their redistribution would be *robbing God*. The expression is one which I cannot but think wholly indefensible, look at the

matter in what way we may. Of course I know as well as most men do, that when in the eleventh and twelfth centuries a great or small landowner was moved to surrender a portion of his estates to what is called "pious uses," the deed of gift was worded in the form that X or Y "*gave to God* and the Church or the abbey of Z" this or that tract of land, or other endowment. I know that such transfer was, after the Conquest, almost invariably made by men or women during their lifetime, and was not the gift of the dead hand, as it is so frequently but erroneously represented to have been. But I know, too, that this expression "giving to God" meant primarily that the donors had performed an act of surrender and sacrifice whereby they deprived themselves of the enjoyment of this or that source of wealth that God might be glorified, and that others might derive benefit by the usufruct of such property as the good men or women had stript themselves of from more or less high and conscientious motives. When, as was often the case, forms of malediction were added upon all who should at any future time alienate or diminish the "free alms," this addition goes far to show that even in the "ages of faith" the *gift to God* was not always regarded as inviolable. Indeed, as time went on much of the property which had been regarded as essentially inalienable got into strange hands.

thing more, something much more, which the Seculars were not doing and were not qualified to do.

(2) The second assumption was, that wherever it became apparent that the needs of the nation, the spiritual or the educational needs, could not be adequately supplied by the old functionaries—while a new order of volunteers had arisen who claimed to be able to supply the new needs—then it was allowable, *in foro conscientiæ*, to divert endowments held under conditions supposed to be adequate formerly, and to allocate them for the maintenance of the new functionaries.

Such alienation was carried out accordingly, that so the requirements of a wider culture, a deeper sense of moral and spiritual responsibility, and a steady advance in our civilisation (using that word in its widest sense) might be to some extent provided for and their stability be secured, by at least a *grant in aid*, from the reserve of ecclesiastical property.

Thus when the rage for the cloister life was running its course and monasteries were springing up in every shire it was loudly proclaimed that these institutions were the only possible abodes of holiness. It was said and believed that only among "the religious"—*i.e.*, the men and women who

were subject to a rule of discipline, framed so as to minimise worldliness and to train the *Regulars* in the ways of godliness—could the conscience, the sentiment of aspiration, and the habits of devotion and self-surrender be quickened, stimulated, and lifted to a higher plane than the parish priests had been aiming at.

It began to be believed that the nation needed to be taught "the ways of holiness;" and in proportion as this conviction gained ground, in that proportion did fresh endowments pour in for the enrichment of the new order. The monks and nuns—rightly or wrongly—got to be looked upon as a supplementary force who were doing that which the parish priests could not do; and it was hardly a step further to claim for the newly organised volunteers a share of the ancient revenues which, it was almost broadly asserted, were not doing for the nation all that might be done with them in the interest of the community at large.

But these alienations of *Church property* did not stop at this point. It would be difficult to say how soon and when first the clergy began to claim immunity from taxation; but among us at the time of the Conquest they certainly were called upon to contribute towards the defence of the realm, and the episcopal lands especially were held under con-

dition of providing contingents of armed retainers who should support the King in his wars. Scarcely fifty years after the Conqueror's death the crusading mania had passed like a conflagration over the Continent of Europe. In process of time it reached us, with what results most people know. A belief prevailed extensively that battle with the infidels was the highest act of piety and self-sacrifice, and, as the child of that mischievous delusion, there grew up the strange institution of ecclesiastical orders of knighthood, among whom the order of the Knights Templars became the most renowned.

The Templars were looked upon as the champions of Christendom, the keepers of the Holy Sepulchre, the army of occupation in the Holy Land. Of course they were *laymen*, and their occupation was war. But the war was a holy war, forsooth; they were emphatically fighters for God. As such they too put forth their claim to participate in the income derivable from the Ecclesiastical Reserve, and the claim was very soon allowed. The consciences of the more enlightened may have been shocked, the voices of some may have been lifted up with indignation against the impudent fraud, but the twelfth century was not half over before the wealth of the Templars had become the occasion of scandal

and offence, and the more so because *churches*, *benefices*, and *tithes* had been extensively alienated in their favour; the excuse for such alienation, and its justification in Church law, being that the Templars were fighting God's battles and so were doing for the Church what the clergy could not do for themselves.

Another century went by and a new movement began. Originating in the religious upheaval which the enthusiasm of the mendicant orders gave rise to, it speedily took the form of an intellectual awakening. As educationists the Secular clergy had been found wanting: they had not been efficient as the teachers of the people. To some small extent the monks had taken over the work of their rivals in this respect. Perhaps it may be said that the Regulars had *posed* as "men of light and leading." Yet after a trial of some two or three centuries the monks too had fallen very far behind their ideal. As the homes for the studious, as nurseries for scholars pursuing their researches, as schools for the rising generation, the religious houses too had proved a failure.

The few splendid exceptions only proved the rule that the monasteries were doing less than was expected of them in the way of raising the standard of morals, devotion, and, least of all, of learning.

It was found that young Englishmen of exceptional gifts and ambitions were seeking at Paris, at Padua, at Bologna or Palermo, that education in law, medicine, or theology which they could not find at home. Thoughtful and patriotic students and scholars set themselves to supply the want of a higher culture in England, which was making itself felt unmistakably. Walter de Merton led the way, and Merton College was founded. His example was quickly followed, and Cambridge and Oxford became the real homes of learning among us before the fourteenth century was half over. But so far from the new colleges being narrowly ecclesiastical in the studies they promoted, so far from their being theological seminaries as we understand that designation now, so far from being religious houses—that is, monastic in their character—it is certain that from two at least of them monks and friars were expressly excluded, and one of the new colleges was founded for students of the Civil and Canon Law, and *for such alone.*

The founders of these colleges were pre-eminently *educational* reformers. They came forward nobly to head the party of progress in this direction, and they, in their generosity, made large sacrifices of their substance to further the great ends they had in view—sacrifices which the nation sanctioned by silencing the alienation of lands for the endowments.

But this was not all. Once more the tithes of country parishes, glebe lands, and parsonages were diverted and made over to the new foundations; the common sense of the community tacitly expressing its conviction that it was for the advantage of the people at large—yes! and for the advantage of the Church of God too—that the standard of education should be raised, and that (inasmuch as the great reserve had been handed down to promote the spiritual, moral, and intellectual well-being of the nation) it was legitimate to subsidise, from the common stock, any of those bringers-in of new things whose lives were devoted to the furtherance of any one of these ends.

All this is demonstrable from history. It is not needful, it would be mere waste of time, to prove the point with minute elaboration. To this hour such of our colleges and schools as date back to pre-Reformation days derive large portions of their incomes from Church lands and tithes which for ages had been devoted exclusively to the support of the ministers of the sanctuary. The process has always been going on. Are we now going to denounce the principle which has guided our course for well-nigh a thousand years as sacrilege? Can we seriously pretend that all these successive diversions of Church property deserved to be stigmatised as robbery?

II

THE generation of Englishmen whose happiness it was in their youth to be brought under the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is passing away. The number of those who actually knew him, saw him, heard him, and were subjected to the sway of his attractive personality is now very small. He died when I was a child; but I had hardly grown up to manhood before I had been taught to reverence his name, to give myself to an enthusiastic study of his writings, and to accept his teaching as the teaching of one whom it was almost always safe and wise to follow as a guide.

No man who watches the currents of thought that are setting in this direction or in that, and which are the resultants of forces brought into action by the onward march of discovery and the progress of science, can hold exactly to the views which sufficed for him in his younger days; for

bigotry in his political or philosophic creed can only be the intellectual vice of him whose mind does not grow.

Nevertheless, for myself, I still hold that Coleridge was one of the profound thinkers of his time, and almost the most philosophic *Conservative* that this country has ever produced. My conviction is still strong that his tractate, "On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of Each," is one of those monumental works which no thoughtful man among us ought to leave unread—and, I may add, unstudied.

If the book were always attractive in its every page; if it did not contain many curious and characteristic weaknesses — sometimes irritating, sometimes saddening; if it did not occasionally put a certain strain upon a disciple's loyalty, it would not be Coleridge's. But accept it for what it is and what it professes to be—not a scholastic treatise, but something more if also something less —and the propositions enunciated seem to me irrefragable, the conclusions arrived at unanswerable.

The two fundamental positions laid down by Coleridge are concerned, the one with the true idea of the National Church, the other with the idea of what I have called the *reserve fund* of that

National Church, and which Coleridge calls the *Nationalty.*

Of the first he says: "The *Clerisy* of the nation, or National Church, in its primary acceptation and original intention, comprehended the learned of all denominations, the sages and professors of the law and jurisprudence, of medicine and physiology, of music, of military and civil architecture, of the physical sciences, with the mathematical as the common organ of the preceding; in short, all the so-called liberal arts and sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilisation of a country, as well as the theological."

(2) Of the second—that is, the *Nationalty,* or what in common parlance we are wont to call Church property—he says as distinctly and emphatically as before: "I do *not* assert that the proceeds from the Nationalty cannot be rightfully vested except in what we now mean by clergymen and the established clergy. *I have everywhere implied the contrary.* . . . Had every rood, every peppercorn, every stone, brick, and beam been retransferred and made heritable at the 'Reformation,' no right would have been invaded, no principle of justice violated. *What the State by law*—that is, by the collective will of its functionaries at any one time assembled—*can do or suffer to be done, that the State by law can undo or inhibit.*"

Let it be noted that these are the words of a thinker who has again and again been called the *Tory Philosopher*—whose name for more than seventy years has been a name to conjure by among those who consider themselves and claim to be considered the only true Conservatives—the thinker whom not a few Progressionists (because they have never read his writings) have superciliously derided as a dreamer of whom the best that could be said was that his writings were harmless and his theories consigned to oblivion.

Yet Coleridge's "Church and State" has worked as such leaven always does work, and it would be very hard to say how much its pregnant hints and suggestions have affected the legislation of the last sixty years.

Five years after the book appeared a commission of inquiry into the state of the Church of England was issued, and in 1836 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners became a Corporation with perpetual succession and a common seal. It was the beginning of a new era. Since then we have dealt with ecclesiastical property—the *Nationalty*—on the assumption that it constitutes a fund which the Legislature had not only the right to administer for the well-being of the people, but that it was the duty of the nation too to guard against its being in any way wastefully

administered. The episcopal and capitular estates have been taken out of the control of those bodies, and readjustment of the revenues has been carried out with a high hand. Restrictions have been imposed upon the granting of leases by the tenants for life. Benefices have been divided or consolidated with small regard to the real or supposed rights of patrons. We have recognised that the *Nationalty* might legitimately be treated as a fund not necessarily limited in its application to the maintenance of clerks in Holy Orders. We have materially altered the constitution of our older Universities; we have imposed new statutes upon the older colleges; we have very seriously diminished their available incomes; we have changed the tenure by which Fellowships were held; we have almost abolished their ecclesiastical character; we have dealt in the same way with our endowed schools, and at this moment the headmasters of some of the most important among them are laymen. What results have followed upon these changes?

Fifty years ago there were twenty-four professors in the University of Cambridge, of whom five only were laymen. There are now forty professors, of whom, excluding the professors of Divinity, only three are in Holy Orders; while at Oxford, of the

forty-eight professors, excluding the professors of Divinity, again only three are clergymen. If it were worth while to compare the numbers of lay and "clerical" Fellows of Colleges respectively as they stood in 1843 and as they stand at present, the change that has come over the Universities in half a century would be even more striking.

The change may be, and is to many, a matter to be mourned over; it may have, and it has, occasioned melancholy and lugubrious vaticinations; it may or may not augur ill for the future; but the facts are not to be gainsaid. Nor can we shut our eyes to another fact—deplorable or not according to our several points of view—a fact to which attention has not been drawn with that serious insistence which its significance might well justify—a fact, too, which it is hardly conceivable should not affect our legislation in the future, because it is the outcome of our legislation in the past.

The leaders in thought and culture, in mathematical and physical science, in history, economics, linguistics, even in classical learning—the leaders in literature in its widest acceptation—are no longer to be found among the ordained clergy of the Church of England, but outside their ranks. One fact alone may serve as a most startling confirmation of these assertions. In 1843 there were ninety

Fellows of the Royal Society who were in Holy Orders. In 1893 the names of no more than sixteen clergymen of the Established Church are to be found in the roll-call of England's most illustrious brotherhood. It is worse than idle to shut our eyes to all this—the logic of facts is irresistible.

Meanwhile it is no more than their due to protest for the clergy of the Established Church that, as a body, they were never doing their pastoral work better than they are doing it now; never were they less worldly and mercenary; never were their lives more exemplary; never were they making greater sacrifices; never were they more earnestly devoted to their sacred calling. Their very zeal and unwearied labours have taught the laity to expect ever more and more at their hands. Yet with the increasing claims that have been and are made upon their services, the immense increase of the population brings home to us the certainty that it is no longer possible for the Anglican clergy to discharge all those duties—the spiritual and the religious duties—which it is of supreme importance, in the highest interest of the community, should not be neglected. It is not conceivable that we should stop at the point we have reached.

Doubtless, in the old days, the parish priests protested against the alienation of their incomes for

subsidising the monastic orders. They were not likely "to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods" when the great educational movement set in, and the founders of schools and colleges levied large contributions from the *Nationalty*, and to that extent impoverished the parish priests. But in each case the new impropriators proved to be powerful auxiliaries, stimulating the Seculars, elevating their tone, and provoking them to jealousy. In any case, the question was far less whether the alienation of the old endowments and the diversion of them into a new channel of usefulness was defensible, than whether there was not some danger of this being carried too far in favour of the new order.

What, then, is the attitude which it behoves us all to adopt when a senseless and ignorant cry has been raised for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England? Surely our first business is to press for an answer to the question, What do these men mean who take it as their shibboleth?

If they mean nothing more and nothing less than indiscriminate pillage, ending in a scramble for the spoils; if they mean stripping the clergy of their incomes, driving them out from their homes, and leaving the poor of the land to find religious teachers and pastors for themselves—then their

object is to bring about an incomparable national calamity. The inevitable consequence of such a catastrophe would be that in the domain of morals and religious sentiment, when our nobler emotions and spiritual aspirations and gentler sympathies are appealed to, there the forces of disintegration would have their full play, unchecked, uncontrolled—chaos would come again. But that cry may be changed for a better cry; it may, in God's providence, be taught to take another form, and it may then express the conviction of the people that the time has come for making a step, not backwards into darkness and religious anarchy, but forwards upon the road of intelligent reform. Whatever it may mean, it is the utmost madness and stupidity to attempt to raise against it a louder but scarcely less misleading and mischievous cry, because one which is in its essence an *assumptio falsi*.

Base the title of the Established Church to her endowments upon considerations of the highest political expediency, and you choose ground from which it will be difficult to be dislodged. Appeal to the gratitude of our countrymen, and teach them what the Anglican clergy have been and have done for their ancestors and their fatherland in the past, and you will not appeal in vain. Nay, appeal to the hopes and fears of the future if you will, and, rightly

instructed, the nation will no longer surrender themselves to those who would "make a desert and call it peace." But beware how you rashly and stubbornly insist that the formulæ, the ritual, the discipline, the general regimen of the Church as by law established, are each and all equally and indubitably of Divine origin, and that to alienate one jot or tittle of her property is to "rob GOD"!

THE CRY OF THE VILLAGES

THE CRY OF THE VILLAGES

I AM continually worried by a kind of dream which disturbs my peace of mind by day and by night, and which yet I cannot bring myself to believe is anything more than an ignorant and foolish dream, deluding me into the acceptance of half a truth as though that were as true as the whole. Call my dream a delusion if you will, but this is what it says to me with a cruel insistence.

There is, says the voice in my dream, a great and dreadful law working through all the Universe and operating in the direction of glorifying mere bigness at the expense of littleness, so that the little is for ever being absorbed and consumed, even annihilated by the huge. Moreover, this law prevails "in morals as well as mechanics," so to speak, insomuch that there are large souls that will swallow up small souls in the lapse of ages. And there are great personalities that represent a conglomerate of little

personalities devouring the feebler individuals who will be taken up and turned to better account when they cease to be separate existences at all.

My transcendental friends assure me that the Material Universe—that is the immense aggregate of worlds which are *made of matter*—so far from being infinite is demonstrably *not* infinite; on the contrary, that it is probably only one of many Universes, held in solution by the much more widely diffused *something* which is called Ether; and that there was a time when Matter existed as a vast chaos whose constituent atoms were floating in this all-embracing Ether; each separate atom self-asserting and yet acting upon and being acted upon by the rest. Then the aforesaid atoms proceeded to combine and cohere into molecules; the molecules tended to grow into masses, and the masses could not but associate into worlds. Thus, too, worlds were evolved into systems with central suns round which they moved in their orbits, while the suns supported themselves by feeding upon the vagrant refuse meteors, and occasionally devouring as their prey some unhappy little worldling which peradventure had been rejoicing in its prosperous independence. Thus the big from the beginning of time has always swallowed up the little, and so it will go on for ever and ever.

Yes! And observe, moreover, what an object lesson this little proud planet of ours affords to all beholders! There were æons during which the living creatures upon its surface ran to Bigness. Monstrous saurians—mastodons—what not, here in our northern latitudes; while down there on the distant Australian continent there grew up grim marsupial lions, voiceless, well-nigh brainless, but enormous, devouring gluttonously the lesser creatures, good only for filling the maws of their bigger brethren. Down in New Zealand there—think of the tremendous birds—Dinornis, Moas, what not?—stalking even the terrified mannikins that doubtless they put into their crops by the dozen. The same law—one is almost inclined to call it a grotesque law. And yet—and yet—and yet—somehow—another law came into force, correcting, counteracting, supplementing, the former law, till lo! Bigness had to give way to something better. But about that other law this worrying dream of mine has told me nothing. Only sometimes my mind—in revolt against the tyranny of a lopsided theory—insists on asking itself, Who knows, while all this tyranny of the Big was going on—who knows, I say, how many worlds may have exploded into their initial molecules, or died off as our little moon did, starved, in fact, by mere cold?

"Work it out into your next month's article, Mr. Gigadibs!" as Bishop Blougram says.

. . . . .

No better illustration of the operation of this law that I speak of can be found than in the way in which money tends to increase in downright bulk—huge, unwieldy, portentous—till in our days the millionaires are not only becoming every year more numerous, but the colossal fortunes in the hands of private persons are assuming proportions which baffle our imaginations when we try to understand what they mean! Think of the stupendous accumulations of X. and Y. and Z. in England and America! Think of the late Baron Hirsch and his excellent lady having died only the other day, possessed, between them, of upwards of twenty-four millions sterling! Think of the absolute impossibility of any citizen of any nation upon earth being able to spend year after year the income of such a gigantic capital on any legitimate objects! What is to be the end of it? What is to come of it? This seems at any rate inevitable, namely, that the value of mere money must go on decreasing, and probably that such decrease, when once it begins, must go on by leaps and bounds. Already we observe that some of

those precious objects which we call luxuries are fetching ever higher and higher prices. And yet, *en revanche*, the necessaries of life are getting cheaper and cheaper. Not only so, but there is one commodity which, in the lifetime of men not yet old, used to be regarded as the most certain and stable and immovable source of wealth—I mean the agricultural land of this country—has, during the last twenty years or so, immensely deteriorated in value, and is actually tending to become less and less a safe or desirable investment for capital. There are tens of thousands of acres—say hundreds of thousands—of land in England at this moment which may be bought for a sixth of what they would have fetched twenty years ago. Nor is this all. The tillers of the soil who are employers of labour, after all that has been done for them by successive Governments, declare that it is well-nigh impossible to farm at a profit by working their land after the fashion of their fathers; and the tillers of the soil who are the working peasantry in receipt of wages show an increasing reluctance to remain "upon the land"; and that though a very large number acknowledge in so many words, and others are not careful to dispute the fact, that unskilled labour in the towns is little if at all more remunerative, and leaves little if at all more margin of profit which may be laid by

than the wages now earned by the agricultural labourer.

We have no horrible slums in the villages. We have no submerged tenth of vicious and degraded men and women. We don't know what ragged children and starving, shoeless families mean. Stop your bicycles where you will at the door of any Norfolk village school—you happy ones who roam over the length and breadth of the land nowadays—go in and look at the bright, clean, joyous, and well-dressed children at their work, hear them sing, see them drawing, notice them at their play, and listen to their speech in anger or in joy. Why, the rising generation of our village children have *doubled the vocabulary* of their grandfathers, and the words that have dropped out and are almost quite forgotten, so far from being any loss, constitute a clear gain.

But when these children leave our schools they are unsettled, dissatisfied; they will not stay in the old village homes. The girls find places in the towns as domestic servants, and come back to us for a few days' holiday with the manners of *gentlewomen* (not merely *lyedies*), and become eloquent propagandists of the abominable doctrine that there is nothing like life in the towns. Their brothers believe them, and look out with keen eyes for employment upon the railway, in the police force, in

some town factory, anything except settling down upon the land. The farmers grumble, they tell you that it all comes of this high-flying education, they insist warmly and angrily that "you are educating the labouring class above their station." If you mean by "station" their *present surroundings*, the farmers are right after all. But our educational "forwards" are ready with *their* remedy. "Give them continuation classes," they cry; "provide night schools! Teach them shorthand! Try lantern slides!"

You do try these interesting experiments—especially the lantern slides—and yet it is plain that the response is languid, very discouragingly languid. The exodus from the villages goes on. The young fellows tire of being lectured and taught the methods of culture which you proclaim to be sovereign remedies to stir and vitalise the *vis inertiæ* of the bucolic mind. The County Councils are at their wits' ends to know what to do with the money at their disposal. There are whole districts which are tending to fall out of cultivation, and tending, too, to become mere deserts like the Campagna, or like the morne and melancholy wilderness where the great temples of Pæstum stand staring at the sea in their sullen loneliness, sorrowing—if ruins ever do sorrow—for the

good old times. For there were times when myriads of worshippers thronged into those stately fanes, and all the air was full of sweetest perfume travelling on and on from those famous rose gardens which supplied Baiæ and Pompeii and Naples with "table decorations" for the countless banquets, and were even hurried off to Rome itself when the south wind blew strong enough to fill the lateen sail, and the light barge laden with blossoms scudded before the breeze, making for Ostia and the Tiber.

Alas! for the dreary wastes now! Alas! for the deadly desolation! What brought it all about, that this land of flowers and fruit and busy life should have become derelict? "Oh! It was the malaria, of course! Men could not live in that pestilential air. Don't you know?"

No, I don't know! I know just the contrary. Men did not run away from the malaria. The malaria came when men had run away from the land. It is the mission of man to make the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and to make the desert rejoice; and he has done it, and is doing it for ever, consciously or unconsciously, since the beginning of time. Again and again the children of men have reclaimed the barren wastes, reclaimed them, settled upon them, subdued and mastered the

rebel swamps and jungles; bade the crawling poisonous vapours—Pass! And they did pass, till by and by the fever-haunted soil became like the Paradise of Eden, and a happy people gave thanks to the gods after their fashion, and set up their altars, and round about them youths and maidens trooped in long procession, marching in pomp of exultant festival "to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather the lilies."

To think of this dear land of ours, that was once called Merry England, becoming spotted about with huge cankerous ulcers of pampas or prairie—with never a sound of a human voice to stir the echoes, and never a happy human face to make the sunshine glad in heaven—is a thought that turns my heart sick with terror. I do not want to see our fatherland what she was—that, and only that. No putting back the clock for me. Nor should I be content to leave her as she is, and calmly speak of her as if she were no other than a faded beauty past her prime, and suffering from incipient decay. Oh, shameful! that we should acquiesce in that reproach upon ourselves, when nothing more is needed than for the sons and daughters whom she reared and fosters to be loyal to their mother.

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At this stage it may be worth our while to inquire

whether there may not be after all some sense in that not infrequent saying of our farmers that "the labourers' children are being educated above their station." For let it be said, as has often been said before, though it needs repeating, that the employers of labour in our country villages are not invariably fools—not even when they may happen to have no more than ten or twelve thousand pounds or so of capital embarked in the tillage of the soil. Of course the poor clodhoppers cannot be, and do not pretend to be, as omniscient as you wiseacres of the streets. You know everything. The incapables of the broad-acres at best know only one thing—namely, their own business—and this one thing must obviously be included in *your* everything. Nevertheless, you might stretch a point, and give them the credit of knowing just a little about their peculiar one.

"I pity his ignorance and despise him," said Miss Squeers. Could she not have got on without the contempt, and yet afforded the pity?

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To any thoughtful student of our social history during the last thirty years, few facts are more worthy of notice than the wholly different way in which our elementary schools are regarded by the dwellers in the town and country respectively. In

our country villages the school is the be-all and the end-all of human culture. The child who has passed his standards is reckoned a perfectly educated boy or girl, and it must be added that, as a rule, among our elementary teachers themselves there are few who care to dissipate this delusion. In the town, on the other hand, the elementary school is looked upon as the mere beginning and starting point from which all noble endeavours to raise the intellectual level of the masses must proceed. That the children must be taught, and taught as well as may be, has been assumed as a necessity; but that having been taught a minimum of elementary knowledge they should be left to take their chance and run wild for the rest of their lives is not to be heard of. Some of them—perhaps many of them—came from vicious homes, and live in squalid dens and cellars. Then the Augean stables must be cleansed, and the slums must be got rid of if possible, in the interest of the children that are and of those that are to be. So you set yourselves to improve your toilers' dwellings, and you erect sanitary dwellings for the poor, and you issue your appeals to the rich for this good cause and that. The more you ask the more you get, till ungrudging benevolence seems actually tending to overtake the needs of your crowded millions.

But *pari passu* with the magnificent activity shown in providing suitable dwellings for the workers, others are showing as great and noble a zeal in their endeavours to make the lives of their poor brethren more joyous, more interesting, more rational, more human. You lay out parks and recreation grounds, build museums and art galleries, libraries, and lecture halls. You make vice difficult, and amusement refining. There is nothing in the whole world that can compare with the exhibitions which are open to the poorest in London, and no better music than that which a poor fellow out of work may listen to at his leisure when the bands play.

Nor is it only in the great capital of the Empire that all this wealth in the means of innocent enjoyment is provided for the million. Birmingham and Liverpool and Manchester and Sheffield, and many another of our large cities, vie with one another in the conspicuous examples they afford of that magnanimous foresight which is always on the look-out for new channels of beneficence. For let it be remembered that only a small part of all this money spent in advancing the happiness and well-being of the wage-earners has been paid for out of Imperial or local taxation.

Even granting that the great bulk of the cost of

building and keeping up our schools has come out of rates and taxes, our hospitals in the main are supported by voluntary contributions, and churches "of all denominations" are being built with more or less splendour every year by private munificence. Even colleges and universities are founded and endowed by the grand liberality of rich men here and there and everywhere. What can be more splendid than the starting up of the University of Liverpool, as if by magic, during the too short career of its first accomplished principal, at whose suggestion a dozen or more Liverpool merchants have provided for the maintenance in perpetuity of as many professorial chairs? Even this glorious generosity seems not unlikely to be surpassed by the men of Birmingham, who have resolved to have another university of their own. But, indeed, the wonderful work done, and the sacrifices made by the citizens of Birmingham in the interest of the working classes, are almost bewildering when one comes to count up the vast sums that have been expended in a city which as yet only takes the sixth place in the Empire, and whose population hardly amounts to a ninth of the enormous aggregate of London.[1]

[1] See a remarkable article in the May number of the *Century Magazine*, by an American gentleman, Mr. George F. Parker, entitled "An Object Lesson in Municipal Government."

It would be beyond my purpose to deal with all those schemes for improving the condition of the working classes which are occupying the attention and stimulating the expenditure of such bodies as the London County Council and their humbler and only a little less ambitious urban imitators. The point which requires to be insisted on is that in the large towns the munificence of the rich is rapidly tending to overtake the legitimate needs of the masses, and that quite new dangers are threatening us. Already the administration of our charity funds requires close and continued watching to minimise the leakage, to detect the frauds, to stop the extravagance and waste which seem almost inseparable from the dispensing of large funds among those for whom they were intended. The existence of the Charity Organisation Society indicates that already the army of well-meaning philanthropists requires a vigilance committee to supervise their varied, ever-varying operations, and a special force of detective officers to protect them from the organised robbery of begging-letter impostors and the knavery of professional tramps. A comfortable income may be made by plausible plunderers who prey upon the weak and indolent; and there is no lack of foolish, mischievous people, who recklessly throw about guineas without caring who gets

them, and can never be brought to understand that scrambling money in the streets with lavish profusion is very much nearer to a crime than a virtue.

Yet, on the whole, the munificence of the rich in the towns has been directed with a certain measure of wisdom and prudence to a great end; and that end has been to afford every kind of chance to the working-man to rise step by step to the top of that ladder which we have heard so much of. The elementary school is but the beginning of the townsman's education; there the children of the operatives are *not* "educated above their station," because education with them is a continuous process always going on; all their surroundings exercising upon them a refining and elevating influence through an elaborate machinery which the best men are proud to help in keeping at work, and in enlarging its sphere of usefulness, till it is as if among the favoured townsfolk the path of vice and crime were becoming the only way which it is hard to tread, and the broad and smooth way the road that leads upwards towards the higher life and higher ideals. The artisans of the towns have everything within their reach that may conduce to their happiness and well-being. Is there not some little risk of turning them into the spoilt children of this our age?

When they call out for sugar-plums they get them. Anything to keep them quiet—sometimes a bicycle, sometimes a pianoforte, sometimes a holiday at the seaside. We shall hear them crying for the moon before long. When they get *there* they'll want to get back again, and you'll have to fetch them home!

Contrast all these surroundings with those of the young agricultural labourer. He has "passed his standards," as the phrase is—and what then? He goes to work upon the land. There is a common belief that this is a dull and stupid life, dismally lacking in interest, and that the labour required is such as any half-witted bumpkin can do as well as another. I recommend my omniscient friends of the cities who are possessed by this delusion to get up at six o'clock one fine autumn morning and look on while a field of twenty or thirty acres is being *set out* for ploughing; or to try his hand at thatching a stack or making a wattle fence. The first of these tasks is what the lie-a-bed very rarely sees, but when he does see he will look on with no little perplexity and amazement. Unhappily, we in the country do not use the terms "skilled and unskilled labour," but the things signified by those terms respectively we have a very clear appreciation of. The mischief is that we are losing all skilled labourers alarmingly.

We have ourselves to blame in great measure for this. The root of the evil may be traced very far back, and this is not the time to dwell upon it; but the reason of our best men going from us is not far to seek. It lies in this, that all agricultural labourers are supposed to have a right to receive the same wage, whatever the quality and character of their work may be; till it has become an axiom that the worst man should get the same pay as the best, and the best has no such career before him as the consciousness of superiority over his fellows convinces him he has a right to look forward to. A lad of seventeen or eighteen may have learnt the trick of hanging on to a plough after a fashion; he can hoe; he can dig; he can load a cart with manure; but he is afraid of a horse (not at all an uncommon failing), and he's not much to be trusted with the cows. Nevertheless, he claims "a man's wages." Yes! and he gets them. That is, he earns as much as his father or his brothers do; they may be "skilled labourers," if we only used that term; he may be "half a fool"—that term we have!

But he's a man, and a man's wage he claims. On the other hand, *he* may be the only really skilled labourer of the family, and he knows that he will earn no more than they or a dozen shifty fellows who are hardly worth their salt. Except only in

harvest time, all the year round his work is over at four o'clock in the afternoon. What is he to do with his magnificent allowance of leisure? Libraries? Reading Rooms? Museums? Recreation Ground? Picture Gallery? Lecture Hall? Public Garden? Swimming Bath? Gymnasium? Who is to find any of these things for him? A paternal Government? What! a paternal Government have any care for Hodge? Or the ratepayers? Well, that *may* come when *all* the rates are laid upon the parson's tithe; but as long as the farmers and shopkeepers are still called upon to pay *some* rates, you'll not get quite unnecessary luxuries provided for the labourers, young and old, at the expense of the ratepayers.

Even in the towns these things, as I have said, were provided in the first instance by the rich for the poor. Think of what Mr. Quintin Hogg has been doing for the children of the working classes for years past through that unique "means of grace"—the Polytechnic! It is to me a subject of continual wonder that there is so very little coarse vice to be found in our villages. The young fellows have simply nothing to do for a good thousand hours a year. Has Satan forsaken them that their idle hands hang down by their sides, numbed by mere apathy that makes one yawn to watch? Put

the case of two harmless, hulking lads when the day's work is done lighting upon the original idea of taking a stroll in the gleesome isle of Ely.

"Where shall us go, Tom?"

"Dunno! Fur as Forty-foot drain?"

"Come on!"

Not a hedge to blur the horizon. Not a tree for a bird to build in. Not a "public" to stop at. Not a human being to "holler" to. Not a log to sit down on. Not a rat to throw a stone at. Straight as a ruler lies the road—it *lies*, it never *runs*—between a pair of black and forbidding dykes too wide to jump over. Why in the name of common sense should those two lads go shambling along together for miles at a stretch, only to reach the Forty-foot drain—unless it be to drown themselves in the dark water, the only conceivable form of pleasurable excitement which could offer itself to such forlorn ones?

We in the land of sweetness and light—of course I mean Norfolk—are not as yet so badly off as that, and yet things are not very gay with us. We have still some aspects of nature to charm and allure us; but the old village life has all faded away—vanished. The rollicking and the practical joking, the dancing round the Maypole, the fighting in the backyard of the alehouse, the stone-throwing, and the mischief

—we can't bring it back. Who would wish to bring it all back? Barbarism has been replaced by respectability. But is there nothing between bull-baiting and cockfighting, with all the evil that was inseparable from these things, and the condition of moral, social, and intellectual atrophy into which we are sinking, till the very bullocks are scared and the lambs begin to scamper away in fear at the sound of a boisterous laugh?

> Pillion and pack have left their track:
> Dead is the "Tally-ho."
> Steam rails cut down each festive crown
> Of the old world and slow.
> Jack-in-the-green no more is seen,
> Nor Maypole in the street;
> No mummers play on Christmas Day:
> St. George is obsolete.

By no means the least serious trouble that we are suffering from is that love-making—"sweethearting" we call it among us—is positively dying out. The girls run away from us before the lads are old enough to take to "spooning." By all but universal assent it is agreed among the townsfolk that domestic servants cannot be bred and reared in the streets. So nothing remains but that the housemaids and the nurses and the parlourmaids should be hunted down from every happy village in the east or the west, and so our girls get snapped up like the bullfinches by

the birdcatchers. At fourteen years of age away they go into service, receiving even at starting such wages as are enough to turn their young heads. Our farmers meet with the greatest difficulty in finding a maid-of-all-work. There are *no* girls of sixteen or seventeen to be found in our villages. Do you expect the nightingales to sing in your thickets when there are no hen birds to reward them for their song? Not they. They'll set the leaves a-tremble for a day or two, but their amorous patience is soon exhausted. Away they fly to where the bride hides and flutters—*et se cupit ante videri!*

If peradventure there should appear a comely lass or two at the Rectory, or at the gentleman farmer's or the doctor's yonder, she is just a trifle coy—"praywd," Colin calls her when her chin is perked up at sermon time. She will not *walk* with the first aspirant to her attention. She somehow makes it felt, if she does not make it known, that she expects a house to live in; and if she is to settle down in the village that house must be other than a couple of rooms in a Peabody mansion five floors up from the basement. Yes! and to the honour of the young suitor, he too thinks that such a bride as she is worthier of something better than the wretched tumble-down shanty in which he himself was born and bred. It is hardly more than a year ago since

a fine manly lad said to me: "I ain't a-going to marry till we've got some better housen than they places down there!" pointing over his shoulder. It is curious to note how this sentiment is slowly acting in the direction of lessening the number of early marriages amongst young men. I know of ten or a dozen unmarried men in a parish of less than seven hundred inhabitants, varying in age from five and twenty to two or three and forty—and four of these are looked upon as "confirmed old bachelors," who profess themselves to be averse from matrimony. This is how the education of the rustics has been "above their station." They *are* educated above their station—that is, they revolt from being housed worse than the cattle.

But who is to provide decent houses for the agricultural labourer? The landlords nowadays cannot live in their own houses, and eagerly let them to provide themselves with more modest homes elsewhere. The land may actually be said not to be paying its expenses.

If you doubt that, take the trouble to read the Duke of Bedford's remarkable account of his stewardship in regard to his immense landed estates. Even in the best days it appears, according to his Grace's summary, that there is nothing to be made in the long run out of the broad acres, if generous

treatment or even justice is shown to the wage-earners among the peasantry. But when extensive tracts of land, with good buildings too, are letting in Essex and Suffolk and Norfolk at a rental of five or six shillings an acre, where is the margin to come from wherewith to build houses for the labourers?

It is, however, when some outbreak of serious sickness falls upon our villages that the dreadful condition of the cottages in some of our country parishes becomes shockingly apparent. When a whole family has been stricken, and the worst is over; and the weakened and the half-alive cannot render to the delirious or the half-dead the simplest service—when a house is *reeking* with fever or small-pox, God help those who cannot help themselves! The excellent association for providing nurses for the poor in the county of Norfolk, which has been worked so well for many years past, and is working so well under very able management, has been an untold blessing to many poor sufferers. But there are whole parishes where a night nurse could not find a bed for herself to lie on, and where a day nurse could not find a slop-pail. I must needs put the matter bluntly; they who have had some experience of grave sickness in out-of-the-way hamlets—and they only—know what I mean.

I never heard of a country village in my

experience, with even a rudimentary dispensary, where the most simple means and appliances absolutely necessary for accidents and sudden emergencies are kept ready at hand. Yet there are many parishes where the nearest medical man lives five miles off. On one occasion I happened to drop in at a cottage where a girl had tripped and fallen against a pane of glass and "punctured an artery," as I was afterwards informed on the authority of the sapient medico. Gush! gush! gush! spurted the red blood out from near the temple. I put my finger upon the spot and shrieked for something—anything to stop the flow! The girl would have bled to death in an hour. I rigged up a *tourniquet*—is that what they call the thing?—with *a bit of cheese-rind*—which "lent itself to the occasion"—some dirty rag, string, and two broken lead pencils. And if that young person's forehead wasn't pretty deeply seamed with the whipcord before the surgeon appeared, it wasn't my fault!

But the most pitiable object in our village communities is a poor fellow "on his club," as the phrase goes; that is, a man suffering from a hurt or some chronic malady, and whom the doctor has certified is unable to work, and who therefore receives a weekly allowance from his club as long as he remains on the sick list. The unhappy wretch

may not even handle a tool; he may not drive in a nail; he may not carry a parcel or go on a message; he may not sit down in a public-house—during all his *sick time.* Moreover, he is jealously watched by the other members of the club, and if he be of a cheerful temperament, he is pretty sure to be reported as *shamming.* As often as not the poor fellow has a garden where the potatoes want moulding up, or an allotment where the wheat badly wants hoeing. Not a bit of it! He may stare at the tall thistles and sigh, but anything in the semblance of labour is denied him! How he must envy his children at the school! And what a warning he must be to those same children if they ever think of their poor father's *station in life,* beyond which they are being educated so fast! Some few years ago I put up a seat for these unfortunates with a fairly comfortable back, at what used to be called "Wicked Corner" in the old days, and now bears the honoured name of "Church Corner." It is pathetic to see the sickly and the old slowly making their way there and sitting in the sunshine. Now and then a tired tramp sits himself down in a slouching way. He's not allowed to stay there many minutes. "That ain't made for the like o' he," growled a soured old pauper in explanation to me one day. "Lawk! If we let him alone, he'd lie

down there and go to sleep and usurp [There's a pretty word for you !] other folks' rec-re-a-tion ! "

So it has come to this, that *our* only notion of a recreation ground is a deal board with a rail to lean against, at the edge of a ditch and facing the north-east wind ! Not that we have not our cricket field, and a good one too ; but we hold it on the kindly sufferance of Farmer Wade, who keeps it in order and lets us have the use of it rent free. But then he's a trump, he is, and if he's not a lineal descendent of the General Wade who made the great military roads up in the north there, and has the credit of having invented the kilt to clothe the nakedness of the Highlanders, he deserves to be !

" What fun it must be to look down from the Pleiades ! " said Euphemia Maud the sly and too poetical ! " What fun it must be ! " she cried, taking very good care to be within earshot of the present writer when the cricket match was going on. But Laura Gladys—a little monitor she—was equal to the occasion. " Ah ! But I'd rather be a mermaid, while all the merry mermen under the sea would feel their immortality die in their hearts for the love of me ! " " Ah ! sir, that's what's ruining us ! the gals a-talking that kind of stuff. It ain't Christian-like, that ain't ! " growled old Jim Dawes, one of the old but extinct King Coles, who, " though a learned

soul, neither write nor read could he!" "They're a-educating 'em above their station, that's where it is!"

No! No! Why shouldn't they learn their poetry, and write it, too, if they like? Bless their darling bright eyes! The real mischief is that the *education* all comes to a dead stop among us when they've done with the school. The grim prose of life supervenes with a cruel solution of continuity, and the future is mere vacuity.

We want our "station" improved—not our education lessened and impaired.

The poor in the towns have had everything done for them; *their* cry is listened to almost before it is uttered. The poor toilers in the rural districts are fretfully told to help themselves. How *can* they help themselves? They *must*, unless they are to disappear out of the land—they must sue *in forma pauperis*. They want everything that the townsman claims already as his right: water to drink—houses to live in—resting-places in their weariness—nursing in their sore sickness—common halls, be they ever so humble, where they may hope to get *some* innocent amusement, diversion, instruction, and rational companionship. Who is to give them these things?—the landlords? the tenant farmers? the parsons? Such an one as "this humble indi-

vidual who now addresses you," and who for years past has not derived from his fat benefice enough to provide him with house rent in a second-rate country town?

What mockery to bid our poor rustics look to the old helpers, who themselves are hanging on by their eye-lids to their ever-waning resources! This is no pessimist's whine. It is but the sad cry of those who beg only for the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table.

Of late we have had more than enough talk about the crisis in the Church, and been working ourselves into a kind of St. Vitus dance because a few hundred clerical nondescripts are threatening to bring back Paganism into our worship, and offering to rid us of the burden of our innermost secrets by polluting others with the recitals of things which we would fain hide from our very selves. Tush! This is not the crisis. It is only one of the many tricks of the devil and his angels to throw dust in our eyes and to keep us from seeing what the real social and national crisis is which confronts us in very truth.

With fair land and good land literally *dirt cheap*, with vast accumulations of untold wealth for which the owners can find no investment, with men and women positively troubled and perplexed by the

burden of their riches, and an anxious question, increasing in distinctness, coming up from many a conscience-stricken heart, and asking painfully, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—here is a blessed opportunity for adding to the sum of happiness among the peasantry of England such as never offered itself before, such as may never—will never—occur again if we let this chance go by.

After painfully studying this matter in many of its aspects, and especially as it affects what we may call the *open parishes*, I affirm without hesitation that almost any village in England might be changed in a few years into "a model parish" by the wise expenditure of such an amount of capital as would be a mere insignificant contribution to the vast outlay which our large towns are absorbing annually. Moreover that such an outlay would provide for all the needs of our villagers in perpetuity. God knows I do not grudge the townsmen anything that may promote their happiness and well-being—in the best sense of those words. What I do deeply deplore and protest against is that our poor peasantry should have been so absolutely neglected by the philanthropists as they have been during the time when they were least able to help themselves, until at last they are being driven away from the homes of their fathers in despair of

ever seeing any improvement in their own surroundings.

Actually as I was writing these lines certain Reports of the *Peabody Fund* and of the *Guinness Trust* were laid upon my table. From the Report of the Peabody Trustees it appears that at the end of the year 1898 their capital expenditure in land and buildings had amounted to £1,250,390 10s. 8d., which had been spent in providing 5,121 separate dwellings comprising 11,367 rooms, the average rent of each room being 2s. 6d. a week. *The rent in all cases including the free use of water, laundries, sculleries, and bathrooms.*

The Guinness Trustees report that at an outlay of less than £300,000, they "have provided 2,208 separate dwellings containing 4,568 rooms, besides *laundries, club-rooms, costers' sheds, perambulator sheds, &c.* . . . The average weekly earnings of each *family* in residence was 18s. 1¼d. The average weekly rent of each room was 1s. 10¼d., covering *chimney sweeping and the use of Venetian blinds, baths, and hot-water supply.*" It is added, "club or common rooms are provided and supplied with papers, books, games, &c.;" this last "&c." refers among other luxuries to "*the boiling water supplied from urns morning and evening for making tea.*"

With us in the country things have been allowed

to slide too long to permit of our hoping that we can recover lost ground by any *coup de main*. But is there not splendid encouragement for all good men and women of large resources to abstain from frittering away their money in a lavish and an inconsiderate way, and to urge them to concentrate their efforts upon some really great object? What greater encouragement could be looked for than that which the immense improvement in the condition of the poor in our large cities during a single generation affords? What greater encouragement, I say, than the success of the noble sacrifices made and the example set by such benefactors as Mr. Peabody and Lord Iveagh?

History repeats itself. The time has come when one of those great repetitions of history, which are never mere imitations, seems to invite us to make a new departure. I plead for our rural communities; I plead for what remains of that sturdy peasantry which were not so very long ago the very pith and marrow, the very backbone of a great people. I plead to you, the rich in this world's wealth, that you should be as ready to give of your overflowing resources only as freely, and not less grandly, in the direction of *Social Reform* as your fathers did, centuries ago, in the direction of Religious Reform. Their immense sacrifices for the furtherance of

what they believed to be the religious elevation of their generation succeeded in exercising an incalculable leverage upon all classes, and all classes, high and low, were verily and indeed lifted up thereby.

It remains for the men of the present generation to work on different lines, and peradventure by a somewhat different machinery, for the moral and social uplifting of their contemporaries, and for those that may come after. The masses can no longer be left to the Church alone, to deal with as may seem good in the sight of the very best and most earnest and most high-minded of her hierarchy. The masses will not rest satisfied with all that the Church or the Churches have to offer. Let us not be ashamed or afraid to make that confession, however humiliating it may seem to the pride or the assumption of some good men among us.

That the masses, whether in town or country, can do without religion, I, for one, no more believe than I believe that they can do without water or air. But for all that, I can just as little believe that you can feed and clothe, or even educate the masses by religion alone. It seems to me conceivable that the day may come when men, looking back with larger, other eyes than ours upon the long processes

and successive steps whereby God has been schooling and training the successive generations of mankind, may recognise with thankfulness and awe that He has used the magnificent sacrifices and the magnificent labours of His chosen servants in His Church to prepare the men of the future for a higher order of things than that we can yet forecast or imagine. The end of things is not yet. May it not be that we are but at the beginning of the new order which shall change and transcend the old?

Be that as it may, we have much work to do if we are not content basely to leave things as they are—tamely acquiescing in a condition of affairs which will take some generous endeavours to amend.

"The inhabitants of the village ceased!" pealed forth the fiery-hearted prophetess in the bad times, her soul aflame with indignant grief at the craven hearts among the princes. Ay, "the inhabitants of the villages ceased—until that I Deborah arose—I arose a mother in Israel!" Is there no patriot Deborah in our times, to rise above the wail of lamentation, and to take the gallant leadership of those "who willingly offer themselves"?

THE BAPTISM OF CLOVIS

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THERE is nothing which indicates more strikingly the growth of the historic sentiment among all classes during the last twenty or thirty years than the fashion which has sprung up of celebrating the anniversary of some great event in the remote past, or the birth or death of some distinguished or heroic personage. These celebrations have been rapidly increasing upon us of late, not without causing some little bewilderment to worthy people whose knowledge of history is not their strong point. They are surprised to hear that Hungary, for instance, can lay claim to a millennium of anything; or that there could be any reason why excited experts should go into hysterics because eight centuries had actually been completed since the Domesday Book was drawn up; or that there was so much that was worth remembering at Durham or Ely or Norwich all those hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Cynical Philistines, on the

other hand, have been prone to ask whether it might not be just as well to let bygones be bygones —whether we are any the better for loading our memories with facts which have travelled down to us from so very long ago that a critical age may be prepared to question whether they are likely to be true; or whether, if true in the main, much of the glamour which surrounds them may not be due to the mists through which we look back at them— inasmuch as "the past will win a glory from its being far," and also inasmuch as we are agreed that "distance lends enchantment to the view."

It is always better to let the cynics have their say and to forbear from arguing with them. We and they do not stand upon the same platform, nor start from the same premises. In this particular instance they are in an evil case as being a small sect of unfortunates who count themselves wiser than the rest of us, and yet who are bound to find themselves more and more in a hopeless and soured minority. The spirit of the age is against them, and, however little they may be able to understand it, the truth is that the cynics are always behind, never before, their time.

Our near neighbours across the Channel have of late been throwing themselves with a great deal of excitement into one anniversary which in its multi-

farious pomps and ceremonies made a strong appeal on the one side to the patriotism of Frenchmen, and on the other side to the religious beliefs and aspirations and hopes of the devout and fervent millions of the Catholic population of the great Republic. The Government betrayed no little anxiety as to what might come of it all, and actually put forth stringent orders to restrain the French bishops from meeting in too large numbers simultaneously, lest a religious demonstration on too large a scale should result in some frenzied outbreak which might be dangerous to the public welfare. *Surtout pas trop de religion!* seems to be the ruling principle of philosophers who profess unbounded liberty of thought.

And yet this great French anniversary celebrated nothing worse than the baptism of Clovis, King of the Franks, in the Cathedral of Reims, on Christmas Day, 496—the baptism, that is, of the man whom Frenchmen regard as the founder of their national institutions, the beginner of their national life, the establisher of their national faith, the saviour of European society in an age when things were tending towards chaos. Whether this view of the case be anything but a hugely exaggerated view is one question—that it is the view of the average Frenchman whom one meets by the

wayside, and who has anything to say of Clovis, is hardly a question at all. Much less is it a question that the event commemorated by this anniversary in France was one of almost incalculable importance in its influence upon the social, religious, and political sentiments and beliefs of European peoples, nations and languages down to the present hour, and that it marked an epoch in the history of the world.

Who were these Franks? When Julius Cæsar, after eight years of ceaseless warfare, effected the complete subjugation of Gaul, fifty-one years before our era, Rome found herself not only with a new dependency to govern, but she found herself with a new race to take account of—a race which for centuries afterwards became an enormous source of wealth and power to the Empire. Gaul in its widest extent comprehended all that is now included in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Alsace-Lorraine.

The inhabitants of this wide territory were of the same blood, with a religion and with a polity of their own. They had something like national assemblies; they had a powerful priesthood, which exercised great influence over the people; they were brave, intelligent, rich, and civilised up to that

point at which a nation is prepared to assimilate and absorb whatever better things its neighbours or its masters may have to offer. What the Celts are to-day, that they were on the Loire and Seine in Cæsar's days; and what that means I must refer to the great historian of Rome to tell those who would fain know.[1] The point is, those Gauls were Celts; while on the other side of the Rhine there were the teeming and restless Teutonic peoples, who for some time past had been finding their own land too strait for them. Not only that, but the climate and the soil of the South were a clime and a soil of a land of promise; for generations the Teutons had longed to possess that good land so much better than their own. It was in consequence of a great emigration from the upper Rhine by some of these German tribes, resolved on finding a new home for themselves across the river that Cæsar was sent to drive them back. The end was that the Rhine became the boundary between Rome and Germany. When Gaul became a Roman province it was supremely necessary to defend it against the barbarians who should try to cross over. All along its left bank, from Mayence to Cologne, there was a wide belt which was in fact a gigantic military district

[1] Mommsen, "History of Rome," book v. chap. vii. vol i. part i. p. 286, English translation.

occupied by an army of no less than eight legions, or an aggregate of 100,000 men, cantoned in fifty fortresses or fortified camps. Up and down the stream two fleets were always moving, watching the navigation and the movements of the dwellers on the opposite bank, who were continually threatening to force a passage across the barrier and pour in upon the plains of Gaul.

It was not long before it was found politic to cut off the northern portion of the new territory, and make of it a new prefecture, under the name of Gallia Belgica. Draw a line on the map from Dieppe to Strasburg, and you may take it that the triangle of which this line is the base, and the Rhine with the coast along the North Sea and the Channel the other two sides, roughly indicates the boundaries of this province, of which in the fourth century the father of St. Ambrose was the governor. Under the wise administration of the Romans this country became one of the most thriving and prosperous dependencies of the Empire. When the poet Ausonius made a voyage hither in the middle of the fourth century, he was enraptured with what he saw as he sailed down the Moselle, more beautiful and more populous than it is to-day. Trèves was accounted the fourth city of the Empire. It possessed what may be called a university, in which, under the

supervision of Lactantius, Constantine's son Crispus probably pursued his studies. Here St. Ambrose was born, and here St. Jerome seems to have spent some years; and here we are told he went through one of those religious crises in his life which determined his after career. By this time, and perhaps a century at least before this time, the Belgic Gaul was emphatically a Christian land. Soissons, Strasburg, and Reims had each its bishop, and at Trèves there was an archbishop or metropolitan. Trade, commerce, manufactures, and literature too, flourished to a far greater extent than, till comparatively lately, has been thought. Paris, or Lutetia, in the fourth century could not compare with the splendour of the Belgic cities. Between Reims or Trèves and Bordeaux there was no city of any great extent and importance, except perhaps Tours, which was the centre of South Gallic as Reims was of Belgic Christianity.

It was within the borders of this much-favoured land that the Franks had succeeded in establishing themselves at least as early as the beginning of the fifth century, when Rome had been compelled to withdraw the legions from the defence of the Rhine, and had left the Belgian Celts to protect themselves. We first meet with the name of Franks in the year 242, when they were so inconsiderable a company

that a tribune of a legion could disperse and crush them; and during the third and fourth centuries we come upon them as mere bands of marauders, always beaten and put to flight, but collecting again in formidable associations, as gatherings of outlaws on a small scale have been wont to do in unsettled times, and are likely to do again. In the latter half of the fourth century the pressure upon the Goths and German tribes by the movements of the Huns was continually increasing, and forcing the former across the Danube and the latter across the Rhine. Gradually and somewhat rapidly these Franks appear to have become constituted into something like a nation, and under the name of Ripuarian and Salian Franks—the one hovering upon the right bank of the Rhine, the others roaming among the fastnesses of the lowlands at the mouth of the Schelde or the great forests of the Silva Carbonaria and the Ardennes—had developed into a disciplined force which even Attila and Aëtius had to reckon with, and whose tactics in warfare were peculiarly their own. When Attila crossed the Rhine somewhere near its mouth, he appears to have driven the Franks before him, only to make them join the legions of Aëtius; and under this commander they contributed materially to the reverse which the Huns suffered at Châlons. Attila led his hosts back

across the Rhine at Cologne, and as he retreated we may reasonably infer that the Franks followed in his wake and returned to their settlements in the Belgian province.

At this point in Frankish history we find ourselves very much in the dark. We are confronted by legend and fable; mythical personages appear out of the mists, and names of kings who are like the knights of King Arthur, and of whose actual existence grave doubts have been expressed by scholars with a right to the opinions they hold. Meanwhile we have not yet found a distinct answer to the question who these Franks were, and whether they were in any true sense a nation when we hear of them first, or whether they only grew into an organic polity out of a mere aggregate of hungry and desperate vagabonds, pretty much in the same way that Saxons and Frisians and Angles, and other marauders who poured into Britian when the island was deserted by the Roman legions, became consolidated into a nation among ourselves.

The tendency of German scholars is to maintain the view that the Franks were the lineal descendants of one or other of those Teutonic peoples whose valour and whose virtues Tacitus has immortalised;[1]

[1] Not "German scholars," however, only. The most extravagant of the supporters of this view was M. Moët de la Forte

and one of the last supporters of this theory has gone so far as to suggest that they were the decendants of that great group of tribes whom Tacitus calls the Istævones, and who claimed to be descended from the gods of the land. How these people lost the old name and got to adopt the more modern one we are not informed. Gibbon, with that unique sagacity of his, forbears from anything which could pledge himself to more than a single phrase might express, and speaks as if there could be no doubt that the Franks were a *confederacy;* implying that their early organisation was the result of a settled compact among the members of which it was composed. On the other hand, the French school of historians, under the inspiration of a thinker of brilliant genius, the late M. Fustel de Coulanges, rejects even the theory of a confederacy of Germanic tribes, and, dismissing it as a pure hypothesis lacking any evidence for its support, denounces with vehement emphasis the notion that the Franks, when we come upon them first in the third century, were a *nation* at all.[1] M. Fustel, with his usual

Maison in his extremely learned work "Les Francs, eur origin et leur histoire," 2 vols., 8vo (Paris, 1868).

[1] "L'Invasion Germanique et la fin de 'Empire" (Paris, 1891). See the brilliant tenth chapter of the Second Book, p. 460 *et seq.*

exhaustive elaboration and argumentative force, insists that, long before the third century, those German tribes of whom Tacitus wrote—perhaps more as a philosopher than as an historian—had, by their continual internecine wars and by the frightful and pitiless slaughter inflicted upon them by Rome, ceased to exist as organised clans or tribes; and that the Franks were the mere scattered survivors—the wrecks—of the Chauci, Catti, Cherusci, and Sigambri, who were simply swept away like the doomed aborigines of America and Africa; that their very names would have been blotted out of human memory if it had not been that the bards and popular singers of a later time kept up the old traditions of their fabled prowess. This view, in the main, seems to the present writer the only view that serves to explain the facts that have come down to us, and the only view that helps us to account for the origin and significance of the name Franks which these people earned or adopted, and in which they gloried. For the word seems to mean *Roamers* or *Wanderers*, and may well have been applied to restless companies of soldiers of fortune who, as we know they did, were ready to take service in the Roman armies (in which some of them rose to be commanders of eminence) or, failing to find what they sought in

the way of pay, engage in expeditions on their own account—like the White Companies of the Middle Ages—wandering as far as Spain, or preying upon the outskirts of the Rhenish border when the chance of making a raid occurred, as it must have done from time to time.

The passage of the Danube by the Visigoths in 376 was the beginning of the end for Rome's imperial prestige. The passage of the Rhine thirty years later was, as Gibbon pronounced, the invasion that sealed the fate of Roman civilisation. Burgundians and Suevi and Vandals came pouring in upon the broad lands and cities made ready for the spoil. The stream went rushing over Western Europe; it did not stop till it had overflowed Gaul and Spain and North Africa. Everywhere there was pillage, devastation, obliteration. Four times during that dreadful fifth century was Rome herself stormed and sacked. Practically, however much theorists of the *doctrinaire* class may protest against the admission, the Roman Empire in the West came to an end in the year 476; it was Charlemagne who restored it and once again made the name of Roman Emperor a reality. But while the Teuton hordes were spreading themselves over the more southerly regions, plundering, burning, and slaying, the Franks in the old Belgic

province were, as far as appears, content to remain at home. They were not all men of war, there were those who were tillers of the soil; the land could not be left desert. Moreover, though the fighting class might be pagans, if anything, all below the heroes were Christians, with a strong attachment for and confidence in their clergy, and an almost unbounded reverence for their bishops, in whose hands the civil administration was left: they were the arbiters of all disputes which did not require to be settled by the sword—their word was law. The true Franks, as by this time they had got to call themselves—the Franks who were the warrior class and looked down with immeasurable contempt upon priests and people in whose veins no royal blood was coursing—they let their hair grow to its full length and fall over their shoulders (in battle they managed to pack it under their helmets); ferocious and careless of life, they knew no fear, and loved fighting for fighting's sake, as men love hunting for hunting's sake while recking nothing of the quarry. But these haughty swashbucklers all boasted of their divine origin—whatever that might mean—and every one of them, in his own opinion, was worthy to be a king. Such "kings" were for ever starting up among them, enjoying here and there a brief reign. The time

was sure to come when some strong man, higher by a head and shoulders than all the rest, like Saul, the son of Kish—a man of force of will and power of brain, masterful, irresistible—a king by the grace of God indeed—should win the ascendency which none could gainsay, and who at some great crisis should be recognised as the peerless leader and commander of the people. When such a man was firmly seated on his throne he would be likely to think of founding a dynasty. And thus it came to pass.

When, in the spring of that dreadful year 451, Attila led his enormous hosts across the Rhine, he seems to have passed that river at several points, extending his front all along the bank from Strasburg as far as Cologne.[1] He himself with the central force appears to have got possession of Coblentz and laid waste the valley of the Moselle. The right wing of the invading army, crossing at Cologne, made straight for the valley of the Meuse, and, finding themselves in face of the Carbonarian forest, revenged themselves for their disappointment at discovering less booty than they looked for by perpetrating every kind of hideous cruelty upon the miserable inhabitants wherever they came. This seems to have been

[1] See M. Amédée Thierry's "Attila" (Paris, 1865), vol. i. p. 136 *et seq.*

the army that at one time threatened Paris and spread agonies of terror among the panic-stricken inhabitants. What Joan of Arc did for Orleans a thousand years later, that Genoveva, the sainted heroine of the fifth century, is said to have done for Paris. But the truth seems to be that Attila, though giving a certain measure of licence to his auxiliaries, had no design of letting them go their own way. He had a definite plan of campaign: his objective was Orleans, and the scattered hosts, though allowed to ravage and slay, were to be concentrated at Châlons-sur-Marne for a forward movement against the Visigoths. At the right moment the pack of bloodhounds that were plundering here and there were called back to heel when they had advanced no further to the west than Reims, from which place the legends seem to indicate that they were summoned to headquarters before they had had time to complete the looting of the defenceless city. All that portion of Belgic Gaul to the west of a line from the right bank of the Marne below Châlons, and taking in the whole basin of the Schelde, suffered comparatively little from the Huns; and when Attila, foiled at Orleans and compelled to retreat from Châlons, made his way back again to the right bank of the Rhine, Belgic Gaul found itself nominally indeed still a Roman province

—but in point of fact it was a territory that was derelict. If the people could find themselves a king, there was little or nothing to prevent them from making their choice.

Some ten years after the death of Attila, two strong men were rivals for the supremacy over this no man's land: Egidius, a representative of a powerful family among the Gallo-Romans of the south, and therefore probably of Celtic blood, represented the old Roman domination; and Childeric, son of Meroveus the Frank, and therefore presumably sprung from a Teutonic stock. Egidius perhaps bore the title of "King of the Romans," Childeric that of King of the Franks; the first held his court at Soissons, the second at Tournay.[1]

In the autumn of 464 Egidius died of the plague; he left a son behind him, Syagrius by name, who succeeded to his father's possessions and was "king" at Soissons. Two years later to Childeric a son was born, Clovis, the real founder of the empire of the Franks. Of his boyhood and early youth we know hardly anything; indeed only this, that his father died in 481 and that the lad of fifteen succeeded to the crown. From the time of the

[1] *Soissons*, on the left bank of the Aisne, midway between Reims and Compiègne. *Tournay*, on the Upper Schelde.

young hero's birth till the year 486, *i.e.*, till he was twenty years old, there is a provoking blank in Frankish history. We are left to conjecture what course events were taking by reasoning back from the crisis that came at last. It looks as if Clovis, during the first five years of his reign, was making his preparations for what was inevitable, and was extending his influence in the basin of the Schelde and along the left bank of the Meuse. Probably, too, he pushed southward and westward as far as the Somme, making himself master of Cambray, Arras, and Thérouanne—possibly too of Boulogne.

To the south of the Somme were the rich valleys of the Aisne and of the Marne, and further still there were the boundless possibilities which invited with irresistible allurement the ambition of a young warrior whose heart was all aflame with thoughts of conquest.

Observe that Soissons was at this time almost the richest and the most beautiful city of Belgic Gaul. When the mixed multitude of barbarians rushed across the Rhine in 406, Soissons had escaped the havoc. When Attila, again, and his motley host spread themselves over the Belgic plains, Soissons once more was spared. It had its aqueducts, its churches — six or eight of them, it seems — its

splendid palace for the governors of the city in the old Roman times; great roads ran from it to Amiens on the west, to Reims on the south-east, to Vermand on the north. There had been great factories here of military engines, and farms; outside the city walls there were splendid monuments to the nobles whom Soissons delighted to honour. And but a day's journey off there were Rouen and Beauvais, and Senlis and Meaux and, noblest and grandest of all, Reims, where the great bishop, the sainted Remigius (about whom there is so much to tell, if this were the time and place to tell it), was exercising a mighty moral and intellectual influence which to the fierce men of battle was inexplicable, awful, and at times inspired in them a mysterious, overmastering dread. All this goodly region seems to have been in some sort Syagrius's patrimony; it counted as his kingdom. And he called himself a king by right of imperial appointment; he and none other was *Rex Romanorum*.

A Roman forsooth! A Roman! When there was no longer any emperor nearer than Constantinople, and when ten years before this the giant Odoacer had scornfully flouted the puppets that were playing at sovereignty on the Tiber and had gone very far indeed to make the world recognise that Rome's empire, in the West at any rate, was a

sham. Let the new nationalities rouse themselves and awake from their dreams; there had been enough of dreaming! The time had come when such a born king of men as Clovis—he was twenty years old now—could no longer tolerate the empty fiction of a Rex Romanorum on his borders.

"Let us bring this matter to an issue, thou and I. Let us look one another in the face and play the game of battle for high stakes and *not* for love. Let us see which is the stronger, thou of the Celtic blood or I the Teuton—thou the Roman, I the barbarian. Let us see whether the land shall be mine or thine!"

So they joined battle a league or two to the north of Soissons. Syagrius, with the remnants, or it may be the shadows, of the Roman legions in Gaul and such other men-at-war as he could muster, was smitten hip and thigh and his army was scattered, and he himself fled away to the court of the Visigoths at Toulouse. Thence they sent him back in chains to Soissons; and there Clovis smote off his head. For the duties of hospitality—or any other duties for that matter—and the softer emotions of pity or generosity—or any other soft emotions—existed only in embryo in those terrible days; such virtues were for women and priests to talk about, not for men of the flowing locks and

the sword that wins plunder and carves out empires for such as can greatly dare.[1]

There was no stopping now. To the long-haired Franks victory meant pillage unsparing. Soissons was sacked, the churches looted, the sacred vessels piled up in giant mounds of plunder for division among the spoilers. Hence that famous incident of the chalice or vase that St. Remigius—if it were he—begged might be reserved. Clovis would fain have kept it back; an unnamed fierce soldier shivered it with his battle-axe. But take note that already we find the grim king in some intimate relations with the Gallic episcopate. The bishops were clearly a power to reckon with; if the Franks were to go on conquering and to conquer, the Church, through her clergy, must be left to govern the lands that were won. In that fifth century there was no country—not even Italy—that was from end to end so completely Christianised as Gaul. The Church was the only organised force that men looked to for protection, for justice, for hope of salvation in this world and the next. "The Church," as one has well put it,[2] "had grown in esteem and

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, "L'Invasion Germanique," p. 490, where all accessible original sources are not only referred to but quoted.

[2] Dean Kitchin, "History of France," vol. i. book i. chap. vii.

wealth . . . the bishops became both spiritual and temporal lords. The bishop, invested by the simple barbarians with a strange sanctity, was listened to with awe. His confidence in his mission, his high training, his dress, his education, the spiritual power he asserted—all deeply touched his conqueror. It is said that even Attila carried Lupus, Bishop of Troyes, with him to the Rhine that he might get the benefit of his sanctity as a kind of charm. Remigius certainly acquired a mighty influence over Clovis."

The king had by this time deserted Tournay; he made Soissons his residence now. But Soissons might be a fortress or might be a palace; forty miles off to the eastward lay Reims, the city which was regarded in the fifth century as the religious metropolis of all Gaul to the north of the Loire, as Tours was, and perhaps more truly was, the sacred city of the south. Reims had not only its amphitheatre, its baths, "which Constantine the Great had built there," its triumphal arches, "one of which remains," its circuit of walls, and, outside these, splendid villas which represented the wealth and grandeur of the neighbourhood, in that happy fourth century of our era when there were no dangers from barbarian invasions; but the city was rich in churches and oratories, tombs of saints and

martyrs with a local reputation, and, above all, the cathedral, then of small proportions as compared with the superb and magnificent edifice which now stands up proudly as the matchless triumph of mediæval architecture and the despair of our modern artists, who have lost touch with the enthusiasm and the aspirations of the past. Obviously Reims in that year, 486, swarmed with clergy, all held well in hand under the authority and discipline of a prelate whose courage, sanctity, elevation of character, quickness of wit, and lofty wisdom contributed to secure to him as boundless an ascendency over those who had everything to gain by peace as Clovis himself, colossal as his image appears to us as we look back upon him, could exercise by the tremendous force of his irresistible will upon the grizzly warriors who had everything to gain by war. A sort of tacit understanding seems to have been come to, which was but the continuation of the understanding between the Romans and the Celtic nobility and landed gentry in the earlier times. The Franks were to be men of the sword. The bishops were to be the civil rulers—of the subdued.

The men who make empires for themselves are and must always be men of policy as well as men of war. Clovis was both to a pre-eminent degree. He saw that with the effective support of the bishops,

in whose hands the administration of the country lay, there would be no fear of any revolt of the people. He was a pagan, as were the majority of his Frankish captains, but this paganism of theirs was rather a confused superstition than a religion; a matter of omens and magic and sorcery, of witches and prophetesses and unmeaning observances and irrational terrors. We hardly hear anything of gods or demons, and, I think, nothing of temples or idols or sacrifices—the Franks knew not what they believed. As for these Christian folk, somehow they were the better for their creed; let them keep to it, why meddle with them? Yes! and there was something more. Those other barbarian invaders had got themselves wrong with the bishops and clergy in the lands where they had settled. Vandals and Visigoths and Burgundians were not pagans; they were professing Christians, and had brought a form of Christianity with them which was hateful to the people whom they had subdued. These latter called it a degradation of Christianity; they branded it with the name of Heresy; they spat at the heretics whom they stigmatised as the worst of all heretics, Arians to wit, and shut them out of their churches where they dared till they should renounce and abjure their errors. Then was war in the gates! Visigoths and Burgundians and Vandals turned

persecutors of the orthodox creed, and there was variance and hatred between the new comers and the old dwellers in the conquered lands. Dissension everywhere, harmony nowhere. Only Theodoric the Great, Arian though he were, let his people believe and worship pretty much as they pleased; even the very Jews he would protect and defend. Clovis saw that the man who had the bishops of Gaul on his side would become master of Gaul from end to end. From the first he pursued the policy of conciliating them; and in all the wars and annexations of territory that were crowded into the next few years, and which ended in making him master of all Gaul north of the Loire, the clergy were his staunch supporters. In humbling the Arians he was strengthening his bishops and himself.

Then came a proud moment for the king. In 492 Theodoric the Great asked for the hand of Adolfleda, one of the sisters of Clovis, in marriage. It was an alliance which brought together in friendly relations the two greatest potentates in Europe, though the empire of Theodoric did not last. Clovis was in his twenty-sixth year, and was still unmarried; he, too, determined to take a wife, but she should be a princess. Along the eastern borders of his dominions there lay the Burgundian kingdom. This

people were settled in the valley of the Rhone; they, too, were Arians. Be it remembered, as I hinted just now, that this Arianism—this *exotic* as I may say—this outlandish religion imported from foreign parts, necessarily brought it about that between the dominant new rulers of the land and the older tillers of the soil, with their bishops and clergy at their head, there were "strained relations"; much in the same way as it is over more than half of Ireland now, when the landlords profess one faith and the masses another.

In these days there were two brothers who were "kings" of the Burgundians; the one, Gondebald, reigned at Vienne on the Rhone, the other, Godegisil, at Geneva. There had been a third brother, Chilperc, who had reigned at Lyon, but he had lately died, leaving a widow—she was *not* an Arian, but one of the orthodox Catholics—and a daughter Clotilda, who was being brought up under her mother's care. When Chilperic died, mother and daughter put themselves under the protection of Godegisil at Geneva, and there, says the chronicler, they busied themselves in works of charity and devotion. Of course we are told that Clotilda was beautiful as well as good, and certainly she was zealous for her religion and true to her mother's creed. There are some reasons for believing that

Godegisil himself had less sympathy with the Arian heresy than his brother Gondebald. Clovis asked for the hand of Clotilda, apparently at the same time that Theodoric had made his advances to Clovis for his sister's hand; and in the year 492 [or 493?] the nuptials of the pagan king of the Franks with the Christian maiden were celebrated with great pomp at Soissons. The event produced a profound impression; it clearly was sanctioned by the Church, it opened out a great future for the faith once delivered to the saints—for is it not written that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife?"—it seemed to foreshadow that the Gospel might have great triumphs to exult in even in the near future. In very truth the marriage of Clovis was one of those events the consequences of which it is difficult to exaggerate.

Clovis, looked at from our modern standpoint, was a monster of wickedness—cruel, false, relentless, implacable, fiercely vindictive, sparing none in his wrath, and, if we may believe all that is told of his atrocities, with a certain wild beast's joy in blood-shed. But this savage with the tiger's temper was not profligate. He was the only one of his race who, as far as we know, was true to the woman who was his wife, and the only one whose relations with the other sex exhibit anything approaching to tender-

ness and romance. The wandering loves of the Merovingians are continually befouling the pages of Gregory of Tours. They are scarcely less shocking and detestable than the wanton carnage. But on Clovis his wife Clotilda never ceased to exercise an influence for good.

In her presence there appears to have flashed upon him now and then gleams of the inner light that comes from God. She spoke to him out of her own experience of the beauty of holiness. She had a mysterious language which prattled of "the soul" and "the spirit," words that, coming from her, might for all he knew have some occult meaning. So much of the thing men call their hearts this woman had made him suspect there might be under that shaggy bosom of his, something that thrilled with a tremor that was not all animal passion as he gazed into her unfathomable eyes. She spoke to him of the Crucified—the highest, holiest manhood, the human and Divine—that came to suffer and save; the strong Son of God, "stronger even than thou, my Clovis! Yea, very much stronger than thou!"

Then a child was born to the pair. There was an heir to the throne. "Christ claims him," said Clotilda, and Clovis acknowledged the claim. So the babe was brought to the font in the Cathedral of

Bishop of Soissons. The fame of the elder brother and the splendour of his genius—his moral and his intellectual genius—have tended, perhaps unfairly, to rob the younger of his due. It can hardly have been but that the continued presence of one or other of the brothers—their example, their conversation, and the high estimation in which they were held—must have made itself felt, and that the "continual dropping" was doing its work.

In the year 496 the crisis came. The Franks by this time had become what the Roman legions were in the first half of the fourth century, the warders of the left bank of the Rhine. On the right bank there had grown up a strong people whom Julian had tried conclusions with — whom Probus, a hundred years before Julian, had attempted to keep back by constructing that tremendous rampart known as the "Devil's Dyke," and which proved such a vain defence against these same Alamanni only a few years later. Gradually the Alamanni had become a great host, fierce and aggressive, bent on conquest. They seem to have crossed the Rhine at Coblentz, and were threatening to wrest the valley of the Moselle from the Franks now settled there. What followed we are not told, for at this point we are once more tantalised by the

silence of historians; and where the final conflict took place we cannot tell. As the battle raged, the issue seemed to be dreadfully doubtful, for the Alamanni were gaining ground, the Franks were giving way. In the heart of their great leader there came a horror, a weird shiver of dread. Were the gods, from whom he was sprung, forsaking him at this supreme moment? Was there to be no more help from them? He lifted up his hands to heaven and a cry came from his lips: "O Thou, Jesus Christ, whom my Clotilda proclaims to be the Son of the living God Thou who art said to give help to those in trouble and victory to those that hope in Thee. Give me but a token of that power of Thine which the people called by Thy name affirm that they have found in Thee, and I too will believe in Thee and be baptized in Thy name! For, lo! my gods have gone away from me, and I find they have no might. Thee now I call to mine aid! In Thee will I trust to grant me deliverance from the foe!" The answer came with no lightnings from heaven nor any thunders from the clouds; but in the king's heart there blazed forth the flame of a new enthusiasm. The wavering and half-beaten Franks rallied, charged, and drove the barbarian host before them as chaff before the wind. Their leader was slain on the field. Of the

Alamanni we hear no more. "On that day," says one, "the centre of gravity of history was changed." By which I suppose he means that stable equilibrium for European society in the future was to depend not upon the support which mere brute force could supply, but upon that which it could receive from the spiritual and moral forces which are the real arbiters of human destiny. On that day, whatever there was that was good in the old civilisation was saved from shipwreck. The cause of progress for our race became identified with the cause of the Christian Church. A new era had begun.

Clovis kept his promise. It was a hard promise to keep, and nothing can show how immense was the influence which the barbarian conqueror exercised over those wild warriors than that they joined him by the thousand in renouncing the old gods of war and in bowing their knees to the Prince of Peace. History has many instances of the same acceptance of the gospel by a rude people where their king has had the courage to show them the way. But the significance of this great event lay here, in that Clovis dared to take the first great step. Others might follow, he led.

Between the great victory over the Alamanni and Christmas Day 496 some months elapsed. Of course

there are the usual traditions, legends, peradventure too, devout inventions, some of them one would wish to be able to believe; but for the most part they come to us from sources that are not above suspicion. As for the magnificence of the ceremonial when the king was admitted to the font, it may be read in the pages of Gregory of Tours, and in this instance we can hardly be wrong in thinking that the good man's pen, so far from exaggerating, was not by any means equal to the occasion. Reims was all astir with the men of war and the men of peace. No such magnificent ceremonial had ever been seen, at any rate north of the Alps. Through the streets of Reims, lined by his Franks on this side and on that, Clovis walked, the Bishop Remigius holding him by the hand, conducting him on his way to the cathedral church. Banners and tapestry were, we are told, hung out from the windows as the procession moved on—bishops of the province and ecclesiastics of this grade and of that, in cope and chasuble and dalmatic, gorgeous in colour and dazzling with gems and gold, singing the praises of the Lamb of God in barbaric tones that a hundred years later were brought into new measures and lifted to the glorious level of the Gregorian chants. As they entered the great western doors, where the

blaze of a myriad tapers was wellnigh lost in the clouds of incense that filled the church with an overpowering fragrance, Clovis for one moment paused. "Is this the heaven that ye bring me to?" he asked of the Bishop, who still held his hand. "Nay! my king; this is not heaven, but it is the way to heaven for thee!"

The great moment came at last. The saintly Bishop, standing by the font, was really the commanding figure at that solemn moment. "Bend low thy head, Sigambrian," cried he. "Adore thou that which aforetime thou gavest to the flames! Let the flames have now what aforetime thou didst adore!"

. . . . .

There is no need to carry on the story of Clovis and his conquests to the end. It is a story which is not edifying—at any rate not edifying to those who, as they read the great dramas of the ages behind us, have no eyes but for the acting of the puppets on the stage. It is for the philosophic historian to justify the ways of God to men. I do but aim at pointing out briefly the meaning of a single anniversary and the transcendent importance of the event. Few great conquerors have achieved so much as Clovis with resources, at first

sight, so inadequate to the success achieved. When he died he was but forty-five years old. At fifteen he began his career as little more than a leader of outlaws; he ended by being king of almost the whole land from the Pyrenees to the Rhine. He founded a dynasty, but he did very much more: he founded an empire. The dynasty came to an end, the empire lasted. For wellnigh four hundred years after that Christmas baptism at Reims, there was no people in Europe, except the Franks, which developed into an organised national community or could boast of an uninterrupted national history. If the title of the First Christian King which has been bestowed upon him be something more than he deserved, it still remains true that he was the first barbarian chieftain whose profession of Christianity was the beginning of that recognition of the Gospel as the religion of his people which since his days no European sovereign has ventured to regard as the ground of his claim to rule. If in any real sense he was a Christian at all, if his daily life was in hideous contrast to the creed he professed, and his career was a hideous reproach upon the religion which he called his own—so much the worse for him, we may perhaps be inclined to say. But he was not the first, nor by any means the last, whom God has used to work out His divine purposes and,

in spite of themselves, their errors, or their crimes, to assist in the evolution of the Kingdom of Heaven.[1]

[In writing about Frankish history I adhere to the French way of spelling proper names. I do so for more reasons than one, but especially for this reason—that it is the simplest way of escaping from the chaotic *orthography* (?) which modern writers with Germanic tendencies seem to flounder about in. M. Fustel gives a dozen forms of the name "Clovis," and Guizot almost as many of the name "Clotilda," for which authorities may be adduced. Romans and Teutons were sorely puzzled to spell the Celtic names phonetically.]

[1] This Essay was written and ready for the press before the magnificent monograph on Clovis by Professor Kurth, of Liège, came under my notice. This book, published by Mame at Tours in 1896, was issued as a memorial volume—"*consacré . . . au glorieux anniversaire du Baptème de Reims qui a fait de la France, il y a quatorze cent ans, la fille ainée de l'Église.*"—In all respects it is a book worthy of the occasion.

PART II

MISCELLANEA

DAVID AND JONATHAN

DAVID AND JONATHAN

TWO or three times in my life have I kept a tortoise. No! That is an exaggeration. I have never succeeded in keeping one; he never would stay. He crawled about fitfully, for the most part hiding himself from human eyes, till the autumn drew on; then he vanished and never appeared again. The last tortoise I had I bought out of a large tray of tortoises in Croton market. He was a fraud. I put him in my garden, and he was no more seen—not a vestige of him ever turned up again. Yet it was in the month of June, when, if ever, tortoises ought to be lively and gay. I suppose he was too gay, and finding himself at liberty he started upon his *Wanderjahr*, and continued roaming till he fell asleep, famished and lonely. I had arrived at the conviction that, as a class, tortoises were uninteresting creatures, when, as summer was fainting away in the arms of autumn this year, I went to visit my kinsfolk in Devon, and lo! to my unspeakable

amazement, I made the acquaintance of a tortoise who answered to his name and who came when he was called.

Life is full of mysteries, but among the most unfathomable of those mysteries is the strange power that some men have over the lower animals. Have I not seen with my own eyes a lumbering, coarse lout of eighteen, whom all the laws on the Statute Book could not deter from rambling in the copses by day and poaching obstinately by night—have I not seen him with a full-grown stoat in his breeches pocket, which he handled as carelessly as if it had been a bunch of tow! I would not have had that stoat in *my* breeches pockets for ten minutes at the price of one thousand pounds sterling. The fierce little devil would have burrowed into my bowels in five seconds and left me a mangled corpse. Yet "the varmint," as his owner called him, was on terms of the most affectionate intimacy with this lout of a lad, though the acquaintance between the two was not of a week's standing. But I never heard of or saw a tame tortoise till the other day, and his name is David.

The Lady Laura is my cousin, and if I choose to give her brevet rank who shall hinder me? She is sweet to look at, gentle and good—the very ideal of what an English lady should be. "She must have

been very lovely sixty years ago," said one to me, and I made reply, "She couldn't have been as beautiful as now!" All her life she has been a tamer of birds and dogs and horses, and it has all been effected by infinite gentleness, infinite patience, an almost entire absence of fear, perfect health and a full measure of physical strength and brain power, a vivacious manner, and a temper always under control; if, indeed, it could be conceived that she ever "lost her temper," as the phrase is, or ever discovered that she had one.

The Lady Laura lives in a cottage, with a garden in front of the house and another behind; and with her live her daughter and her servants. They form a quiet, happy household, and they find their joy in the round of their domestic duties. It is a life which may be called *Idyllic*. Five years ago David appeared upon the scene. He was young then, very inexperienced, and of small proportions—say, four inches across. The Lady Laura resolved she would win his confidence, improve his manners, develop his intellect, and give him a first-rate education. Every day during that first summer he was looked after, and not allowed to go his own way. Half a dozen times every morning he was called by his name and bribed with a lettuce-leaf or some other favourite vegetable. In the midst of

a meal he had his food taken from him and only restored when he moved in answer to the sound of his name. As the summer began to wane David had begun to exhibit some intelligence; at any rate, to this extent—that as the noontide was drawing on he would appear at the drawing-room windows waiting for his lettuce, and feebly notice the Lady Laura only, stolidly hiding his diminished head when any one else ventured to address him with unbecoming familiarity. In October he ceased to feed, and began to hide himself. Then he set himself to burrow, slowly working away as a mole does, until he had gone below stairs, as you may say; and being covered over with soil, and apparently nothing else, he fell asleep and woke no more, and never came to any call. In April next year he appeared one sunny morning at his old place quietly waiting. His mistress opened the windows softly and called the creature loudly by his name. David put forth his head, looked out, peered round, and seemed to be asking for food. It was evident that he had not forgotten his name. After this the second year's training began. Before the second summer was ended David not only came whenever his name was called, but he had begun to exhibit something like personal attachment for his mistress, and to follow her about the garden,

Before the second summer was ended he was looked upon as having arrived at years of discretion, and they gave him his liberty without watching him as much as heretofore. Next year his education appeared to be complete. He would frequently wander into the drawing-room, climbing queerly over the sill of the French windows, and usually finding his way to his mistress's feet, who was never tired of calling him David. It was clear that the sound of her voice exercised a certain fascination upon him; it was pleasant music to his rudimentary ears.

But people will be so officious! One day a well-meaning person brought a second tortoise as an offering to the Lady Laura, and as it was a four-footed thing, and so incapable of talking nonsense or gossip, it was accepted as a welcome accession to the small menagerie. Of course, it was turned loose in the front garden. What do you suppose was the effect upon David? David ran away!

It was in the dog days. There could be no thought of David burying himself at such a time. Moreover, he had increased so much in bulk that he was more than double the size he had been when first he appeared on the scene; he could not so easily be hidden now. But he had run away. There could be no doubt about it. There was

sadness and lamentation, and much calling for David, but David had run away. Later in the evening, as the sun was going down, a young man from the village, five hundred yards off, brought the tidings that the truant might be recovered and brought back by any one who had the courage to pick him up and carry him off; as for himself, he had a superstitious horror of poisonous reptiles, and touch him he would not, "if it was ever so."

David was restored to the bosom of his family! But next morning there came a new surprise. The second tortoise had been promptly named Jonathan, in the confident hope that a firm friendship would be cemented between the two *Chersians*, and David and Jonathan were introduced to one another in form. Then Jonathan slowly walked off, and David followed him. I regret to say that he hissed at the interloper; he positively jeered at him, as who should say, "What have I to do with thee?"

An hour later there were strange sounds, as of one tapping at a nail. They went out to see what it was all about, and lo! there was David pounding at Jonathan after a fashion which few human eyes have seen in this island. Jonathan was far the smaller and weaker of the two, and David was evidently bent on driving him off the premises. It was a deadly fight, and there could be little doubt

as to what the issue would be. David had a method of his own. He got himself abreast of his smaller rival, then with a sort of a spring—think of a jumping tortoise!—he drew in his head, and at the same moment butted fiercely at little Jonathan with a bang, doing his best to turn him over, but only succeeding in dreadfully shaking his interior. In a minute or so came a second assault, and then a third, and how it would have ended none can say, for at this point the mistress of the garden intervened, and the battle was brought to a close.

Since that day David and Jonathan have managed to live together with only an occasional fight. But they are not friends. No! they are not friends. Jonathan seems to be a stupid tortoise; will not answer to his name, is timid, solitary in his habits, accepts the lower position which alone he is able to occupy; he never presumes to creep up into the drawing-room frequented by David when the whim takes him, and he keeps away from the favourite haunt of his superior congener. In fact, he is sad and cowed. But even Jonathan is beginning to exhibit signs of a kind of embryonic intelligence. He is young and inexperienced as yet; but my gentle cousin will tame him too some day. Even he will come to her at last, for she is too patient and too fascinating to be other than irresistible.

Nevertheless, I have some misgivings; I cannot but think that Jonathan is not a name to which even an intelligent tortoise would ever respond with alacrity. It is a dull and deadening sound to most ears, like the boom of a big cannon. Whereas those sharp dentals, one at the beginning the other at the end of "David," would appeal to the tympanum of any living thing that has the ghost of an ear. Whether a tortoise has a tympanum I am not, however, in a position to decide.

ADAM AND EVE

ADAM AND EVE

IN the *Illustrated London News* of November 20, 1894, there appeared a certain frivolous paper upon the life and doings of two happy tortoises that had been living for a few years under the benign influences which a gracious kinswoman of mine is wont to shed upon all things animate and inanimate that bask in the sunshine of her smile. It is not to report upon these two favoured creatures that I write to-day—they are alive and well, thank you; but I have a little lost my interest in them, my pride in them, in fact. If I may use a vulgar expression, I will venture to say that the noses of these tortoises of the Lady Laura have been put out of joint of late. I have come into relation with other tortoises that are more noticeable than they. First and foremost, I have discovered that the city of Norwich is famous for tortoises, and deserves to be more famous still by reason of their being able to boast of a very accomplished historiographer, who has written more

intelligently and more gracefully about these animals than any naturalist ever wrote before. Sir Peter Eade is a physician and a man of science, and has been a keeper of tortoises thirteen years and more. He weighs them, he watches them, he feeds them, he appeals to their intellects, to their memory of the past, to their hopes of the future; but he finds them deaf to his voice, charm he never so wisely. The worst of it, however, is that he has arrived at the belief that his two tortoises are both males, each pursuing his monotonous celibate life, and each avoiding to some extent the society of the other. I suspect that they are moody, disappointed animals, that one would slay the other if there were a lettuce to gain by the crime, and that no love is lost between them. I know not what their names are, but I know what they ought to be called. Clearly they should be known among tortoises as Cain and Abel. One of them, indeed, shows a marked preference to slices of apple—hence the suggestion of his name; the other, just because his brother prefers that fruit, turns away from it with marks of displeasure. This brother *must* be Cain. These tortoises are ambitious tortoises. Sir Peter tells how when green peas are in season, Cain and Abel make violent efforts to climb up his trousers to get at the green peas in his pockets. Nay! that even without any thought of

satisfying the cravings of his maw, one of them has been known to try and climb a tree—or something like it—only to get nearer the sun in the heavens. Both are moody and rageful when the clouds come and darken the heavens with their gloom. The larger of these brethren, is, however, but a poor little object—in 1892 he weighed no more than 3 lbs. 3½ oz.—and when he does not thrive, mayhap he is pining for he knows not what. He has a heart brimful of love to give away, and none comes to claim it. Poor, desolate Abel!

In that same city of Norwich, however, there is another tortoise, who may well be called Methuselah. He is said to be "an old inhabitant of this city." He is known to have lived there for at least thirty years. He shows no signs of infirmity, and he weighs 6½ lbs. The hermit life seems to suit him, and all I have to say of him is that his life has been virtuous, his tastes innocent, and his deportment grave, not to say sanctimonious—a good specimen, in short, of what an anchorite ought to be: frugal in his diet, seldom smiling, never violent.

Within the last week or so I have had the privilege of being introduced to a happy wedded pair of tortoises who exhibit all the signs of perfect connubial felicity. In the year 1845 they were presented to Miss Biddell, of Ipswich, and under her

rowing under the carpet, conscious that to do so is wrong, but sure at the same time that what is wrong is pleasant. Observe that even among the dreamy tortoises the belief is prevalent that Paradise without the excitement of disobedience would lose some of its charm.

CU CU !

CU CU!

"Am I your bird? I mean to shift my bush."—TAMING OF THE SHREW.

I HAVE lately learnt a new fact about the Cu Cu: I am seriously assured that he is a bird of ill-omen. I was visiting Maria Games, struck down with somewhat serious symptoms. Her aunt was sitting by the bedside. Twenty yards or so from the window stands an old ash with a dead branch, looking gaunt and forbidding. Suddenly the familiar voice greeted us—"Cu Cu! Cu Cu! Cu Cu!" I went to the window, looked out, and saw the bird moving about in its restless way, calling and calling, again and again; then away it flew, its voice seeming to gather strength in its flight till it disappeared from the view. When I turned round from the window I saw Aunt Jane with both hands up to her ears. "Has he stopped, sir?" I nodded. Then she took her hands down. "Oh, sir! I can't abear that

bird!" She looked scared and mysterious. She followed me downstairs to the door. "I doubt we shall never keep our M'roiah! My husband is quite upset wi' it; he says he'd like to borrow a gun; he can't abear it neither. Two years ago that bird came just in the same way, and then father died; and last year that came again, and my baby died; and now it's always here, and you may depend M'roiah 'll go next. Some folks call him the coffin bird, and I'm thinking they're right, sir—I can't abear it!"

Hereupon I laughed lightly. "Afraid of a Cu Cu? Why, he's only crowing. He is only calling to the other Cu Cus to come and fight him if they dare. That sort of bird is a poor, forlorn sort of a thing. There are half a dozen cocks for every hen, and so the cocks won't let the hen have a house of her own, and they hunt her about, and they never give her a chance of bringing up her family as decent mothers should. But as to coffins, pooh! They know nothing about coffins; unless you mean that 'Cu Cu!' sounds like a cough."

Aunt Jane was more than incredulous; she was irritated by my scepticism. Then, in a vain attempt to comfort her, I told her how, a year ago, I was driving on a certain road, and checked my horse as we were going up a hill, when, lo! almost within

reach of my whip a Cu Cu lit upon the fence and called to me as I passed, and I told her how it followed me for some minutes, passing and lighting on the rails, and staring at me quite close, and, as it were, talking to me, till I pulled up to look more closely at it, and then it flew away. The good woman was awestruck. "What, *on dead wood, sir?*" "Dead wood! Why, it was a rotten old post and rail fence." "Wasn't you afraid, sir?" No, I was *not* afraid, and no harm came to me, and I wished I could see that Cu Cu again. As for killing the poor bird, let her tell her husband from me that mischief would be sure to come of that. Certain sure. I wouldn't have the man to kill a Cu Cu, I wouldn't. Let him be warned in time!

I believe and hope that I have saved that Cu Cu's life for once. You don't know how solemnly I can speak when I try. But has any one else ever heard of the *coffin bird?* And is the funereal character which this name seems to have given him to be accounted for by his being called in some places the *coughing* bird? The name and the ill-omens attached to his appearance are, at any rate, quite new to me!

. . . . .

I am afraid my poor jackdaws have suffered very

severely this winter. I have not seen one wheeling round the church-tower this spring; and I cannot account for the fact that never once during the hard winter did a single jackdaw come down to our feeding-ground. But our thrushes and blackbirds are quite multitudinous, and I am sure they ought to be, for the bushels of provender that have been provided for them in various forms are past telling. A great neighbour of mine was lamenting the other day that hardly a thrush was to be seen in his park. "How often did they feed them?" "Never missed a day," was the reply. "Every day after breakfast." Alas! woe to the bird that has one meal a day, and only one, when the snow is eighteen inches deep on the ground and the thermometer below zero! Fancy you and me being satisfied with afternoon tea—one cup, with two pieces of thin bread and butter—to keep body and soul together for four-and-twenty hours, and that liberal fare being all we had to depend upon for two months together! The terrible discipline of the monks of La Trappe would be luxurious gluttony compared with that. But how many days should we last? Try it, my robust brothers, and advertise yourselves for exhibition at the Royal Aquarium as miracles of prolonged abstinence! We were very proud indeed to hear of a little damsel's lament as she passed our gate

in that dreadful January, and saw the crowd of blackbirds gobbling up their supper: "Oh, mother, why can't *we* have such fat birds as the lady shepherd has?" Are the little darlings grateful? I am afraid I must answer, "Not a bit of it." They no more trust me than if I were a tom cat. Though the thrushes have been building in the yew-hedges close by the front door, yet the first brood, of four, has cleared out without saying a word of thank you or good-bye. Between the lower nature and the higher there is apt to be a great gulf fixed; the two have so little in common. Moreover, taking man in the concrete, I often doubt where the higher nature is to be found. Looking back upon the ages of pillage and slaughter—and slave-hunting, for has there not been enough and to spare of that, too?—what has man done to the birds that they should trust us? I have lost irretrievably, and quite undeservedly, the confidence even of my sweet-voiced canary. It is enough to make any man sad at heart to think about it. There was a time when he would come and take a hemp-seed from between my lips, and a primrose from my fingers. But these are things of the past. One day, two summers ago, the door of his cage and the window were both left open, and he vanished. What weeping there would have been if there had been children in the house! As it was,

we were only very silent—a little gulpy, and curiously disinclined to look one another in the face. Eight-and-forty hours later came hopeful tidings. One of our cottagers two miles off had captured a "yaller sparrer," and had got it in a basket.

It was eventide, but a horse was harnessed and a man sent for it with the dog-cart, and a cage with him, and in half an hour back came our little Pippi, only just alive, and unable to stand. The man had seen the poor bird, who had taken refuge in a barn, faint and frightened of course, and in the excitement of the chase had put his big-booted foot upon the poor thing, and so secured his prey. We did what we could, but he has only one foot left, and that has no more than three claws, one behind and two in front. You see I spare you technicalities, but the other leg is footless and sadly maimed. Well! well! That's nearly two years ago, and as I write he is singing his old gentle song—that bird never screamed a *scream* in his life—and he must be happy after a fashion, for he sings from morn to dewy eve, but he has never *trusted* me since that sad occurrence with the outer world and that enlarged experience of man and his ways. He bids me good morning regularly; sometimes he speaks to me with an air of half-forgiving tolerance; but he cannot forget that I am human, and in his heart of hearts I verily believe he

thinks, and cannot get rid of the conviction, that I set that shepherd to tread upon him; and let me and mine say what we will, his opinion is that all men are alike—some a good deal worse, but none much better than beasts of prey.

MOLES

MOLES

I AM the man who hath seen a mole's eye glittering at him! Yes! It was on a day when we were on a roaming ramble in Roxburghshire, and sauntering about somewhere near Melrose. As we were peering about in a pleasant shady something or other, lo! I saw a mighty Scotchman plucking away from a moving piece of earth a tiny little human creature, dangerously full of curiosity, who was burning with a desire to find out what that diminutive earthquake meant. "Coom awa'! coom awa'!" said the big giant [N.B. I do not pretend to be able to transliterate that barbaric dialect, the writing of which some deluded ones regard as a beautiful though difficult accomplishment]. "Coom awa'! Et'll bite ye!" I made a grab at the embryo earthquake and clutched a baby mole! The giant, with all the signs of hysterical terror, started back, plucking the child from the impending perils that loomed so

horribly near; but when he saw that I had the lovely little mole in my hand and was examining it minutely, was just a little reassured, and even bent over to look. "Ah! weel noo!" said the giant in his barbaric and raucous form of speech, "es et verry ferocious?" I said "No," and I showed him the strange little animal, clothed in a beautiful silver grey satin. The orbit of its eye had not yet closed up, as the learned tell me it does soon after the young mole is born, and there was the bright little eye exposed to mine and glittering with a quite indescribable glitter as I gazed. Whether there was any "speculation in those orbs" I will not undertake to say, but I feasted on the strange sight, which I suspect hardly one man in a hundred thousand in Great Britain has seen; and, having finished with this atom of subterraneous life, I gently laid it down in the centre of the earthquake, watched it give a sly little wriggle, and bestowed upon it my blessing, thanking the powers that be that I was not a "collector," and that I did not go about slaying things to put their shrivelled carcasses in a glass case, and gloat over my skill in lessening the sum total of animal life, which I like to think has its rich abundance of enjoyment while it lasts. Why should we murder the poor moles? Why should we sanction the murder of them? Why should

we not protest against their being massacred wholesale?

When I was a child, my nurse used to make my flesh creep by threatening me, when I was naughty, that I should be "put in the bury-hole and be dug up by the resurrection man, and have my teeth sold to the dentist, to make sets of 'em for the fine ladies!" To be dug up by "a resurrection man" was no uncommon thing in those days, or at any rate it had been common enough not very long before I was born, as a recent writer on this gruesome subject has shown. Of course a resurrection man was to my childish imagination the most grim of all conceivable ogres; but when it came to such frightful details of anticipation, as one may say, and I had to imagine the extraction of my teeth from my young jaw for trade purposes, and was moreover left quite uncertain as to whether this diabolical and ultra-diabolical operation would be performed upon me alive or dead, can you wonder if I got to regard a resurrection man as a very prince of demons—an unearthly because an unearthing demon who would stop at nothing? But, when we come to reflect upon his crimes, is not a mole-catcher worse—very much worse—than the old-fashioned resurrection man? The old culprit at any rate waited to operate upon the buried dead: he waited till his

victim was cold in his grave. The other traps the living and catches him in his infernally contrived snares when he is "all alive, oh!"; has no pity, no shame, no remorse, and, when all is said and done, makes a contemptibly small profit by his trade of murder.

The district in which I pass my lowly life is just now suffering for its sins in the way of mole-slaying, by the natural operation of those Divine laws, which grind slowly, though they grind exceeding small. There is a deeply-rooted superstition prevalent among the peasantry that moles are only mischievous and destructive vermin. Nay, there is a little bunch or collection of idle superstitions acting to the discredit of the moles—for instance, that they bring rain when it is not wanted; that they haunt the churchyards and prey upon our forefathers; that they cause tremendous floods by burrowing through great embankments that keep back the sea from lands that, but for those banks, would be submerged; that their *earth putts* (such is the pronunciation of that obscure expression) are poisonous to the soil around them; and other such slanderous and malignant accusations. For there were days when men believed in the devil very much more firmly, and, I may add, more intelligently and practically, than they believed in the Heavenly

Father; when evil was far, far more present with them than good; when "blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands" were brought home to them with much more aggressive and unceasing menace and mischief than those gracious and beneficent forces which help to rid us of these manifestations of the malignity of matter; times when Nature was so tyrannous and man so weak, when the evil one was always haunting their infantine imaginations, and when goodness was so very far away, had to be waited for so long, to be hoped for against hope, and was so very rare and so hard to find out—in those days men found that the easiest explanation of everything that happened to them was to say the devil did it. Everything that brought pain and loss and ruin came from the goblins that were grubbing and growling in the bowels of the cruel earth, where Hate was king, restless for ever!

> Meanwhile the best way to escape his ire
> Was not to seem too happy!

So the poor little moles came in for their share of the blame that attached to all the things that were; and we, the heirs of all the ages, have an heritage of mischief from our distant progenitors, the gibbering

bipeds with their haunting fears and rudimentary speech and "foreheads villanous low."

And now we are beginning to suffer for our misbeliefs. I know I speak for the unpitied. I belong to the unpitied classes; for who pities the parsons in what Donne calls "the very country"? Yet our sorrows may come to extend even to you, you of the breed of Dives, who fare sumptuously every day. Would it be a small thing to you if you should find yourselves suddenly robbed of the joy of strawberry jam? Yet that is what we are coming to, perhaps much sooner than you know. We, the unpitied, have few luxuries left us, but among those few are our strawberry beds. In my humble way I am proud of mine. This year I had about one hundred and fifty square yards of strawberry beds in this garden of mine. A month ago the promise of a crop was so great, and the unripe fruit so splendid to look at, that I began to think I might turn an honest penny by them to help to pay, perhaps, a penny in the pound of my land tax. Alas! I have not had six strawberries to eat; the whole surface of the beds is one picture of devastation and repulsive rottenness. They have been consumed by millions of *ground beetles, Ophonus ruficorius* or *Pteristochus vulgaris;* it makes the smallest possible difference to me which, but some

people do dearly love long names. These beetles are in my garden as common as dirt; they are winged things; they burrow in the ground, and there, it is said, they propagate their detestable progeny in the day time; in the night season they come up from their lairs and cover the surface of the beds till the foliage is overspread with them as by a quivering pall. Bring a lantern, and lo! they scuttle away. The fiends have one remnant of virtue left to them: they know what a guilty shame means. Creeping things they are not, for they run *mutatis mutandis* with the speed of antelopes when disturbed. "The land is as the Garden of Eden before them; behind them a desolate wilderness." Already in this district men have begun to call them *locusts*. This, to us, terrible scourge has come upon us as a veritable visitation. The market gardeners are walking about with tears in their eyes. Some sanguine optimists are suggesting that the Lord Mayor—I mean *the* Lord Mayor—should at once set on foot a public subscription for all sufferers from the plague—except only the country parsons.

Some politicians suggest that we should move for a commission of inquiry. One man—you need not ask who—wrote up straight to the Royal Agricultural Society, and received by return of post a very interesting pamphlet, affording a vast deal of infor-

mation on the subject of ground beetles in general and of these beetles in particular, by Mr. Cecil Warburton, which will delight the curious; but when it comes to deal with the remedies, alas! there are none that the gifted author of the pamphlet believes in. The real fact is that these "locusts" are by nature *carnivorous*, and have suddenly given up eating other pests like themselves because they have increased so enormously upon their prey that they have been driven to devour fruits and even flowers now that they cannot find such flesh meat as they would dine upon if it were there. But there is another melancholy fact concerning them, and that is that these *ground beetles*, who have begun to eat up the fruits of the soil, and who by and by will return to their carnivorous habits by feeding upon babies in their cradles and the two-year-old little toddlers in their perambulators, have gone on increasing at an awful and inconceivable rate of geometrical progression, because their natural enemies, the *moles*, have been for a long time in this district undergoing a process of extermination; and what is to be the end of it all none can say.

And this brings me back to my moles. A mole is one of the most interesting and instructive of animals, if only you take the trouble to study him.

We have had delightful monographs on the frog, on the crayfish, on the common domestic fly; but I know no satisfactory bookling on the mole. May I suggest that some gifted naturalist should set to work upon this subject and witch the world with the tale that he might unfold? There are those who assure us that the mole is a survival of the megatherium, and that he is the only living thing which still possesses a peculiarly formed *finger* on his broad hand, the only known analogue of a similar *toe* on the hind foot of the extinct *glyptodon*. Also it is certain that, though the mole has no external ears, yet no animal that we are familiar with has such exquisite sense of hearing. His sense of touch seems to be diffused over all the surface of his little body, and some of the learned assure us that those little eyes, which in the full-grown animal are hard to find, are furnished with a certain muscle which can be contracted or expanded at will, insomuch that your mole may just keep his eyes open or closed, according to circumstances — an invaluable accomplishment, such as courtiers, diplomatists, *et hoc genus omne* may be forgiven if, when they hear of, they too desire to have.

Then there are those marvellous fortresses, habitations, hunting-grounds, and the rest which the

moles construct, and about which it is not my province to speak—the domed citadel, the tortuous galleries, the dormitory, the magazines of food, and the wells or reservoirs of water—yes, actually *wells!* —that they dig; and then the romance of their lives! their loves and wars and bloody battles, with the plentiful banquet and repast when the conqueror comes home, and where Mrs. Mole receives her lord to four o'clock tea (some seriously insist that literally and punctually it is always at four o'clock), though, instead of muffins, there is a plate of *skinned earthworms* provided for her dainty lord—only as a treat, though! only as a treat!

The main point to be kept in view, however, in all this is that the voracity of the mole is prodigious. The number of wireworms found in a mole's stomach, as it has been reported to me, is almost incredible. The larvæ of beetles and other wild beasts hostile to man and enemies to human progress, civilization, and culture that a hundred moles would consume in a year, they say, we could count by millions; and some calculators, great in mathematics, talk even of millions of millions. Certain it it that in the present depressed condition of agriculture it is difficult to estimate how much serious mischief is being done by exterminating one of the

farmer's best and most influential friends—the mole. To wage a stupid and ignorant war against this beneficent ally of his is "to give himself away" indeed.

What I want to know—speaking as a very humble inquirer, speaking as a poor down-trodden sufferer, speaking as an irritated Esquimaux or Greenlander might speak if, to his dismay, he arrived at that mountain—I forget where—on which the stunted brambles grow that afford the poor wretch his one annual treat of vegetable food, which gladdens his heart during his fortnight's holiday while he gorges himself with whale blubber and blackberries—speaking, I say, as that poor savage might be expected to speak who should find that that mountain of joy and hope had been devastated of all its stunted brambles by a convulsion of nature; what I want to know, and what I suspect others will soon be longing and asking eagerly to know, is, How can we get back our moles? How can we allure them hither? Can any one make it known to the moles that we have hereabouts such a wealth of ground beetles and wireworms as would suffice to fatten whole legions of moles for years? They shall not be molested (no pun, if you please!), but treated with the utmost respect and consideration; and already there is a talk of saddling the resurrection