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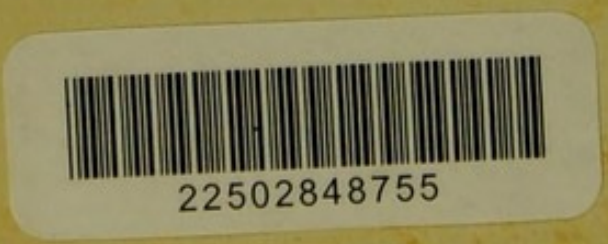

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J. W. Burne.

For The Rev^d.
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with kind regards
J. W. B.

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PARSON AND PEASANT

SOME

Chapters of their Natural History

BY

J. B. BURNE, M.A., OXON.

RECTOR OF WASING, BERKS

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METHUEN AND CO.

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

FRANCIS RIVERS,

PEASANT AND PARISH CLERK,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED

BY HIS PARSON.

SOME of the following chapters have appeared in a Magazine; they take their place here by the courtesy of Messrs. HODDER & STOUGHTON, to whom my best thanks are offered for permission to make use of them.

J. B. B.

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PARSON AND PEASANT.

I.

PARSON, PARSONAGE, AND PARISH.

MUCH has been said and written lately in favour of brotherhoods, little companies of clergy living to themselves, with the sole aim of impressing their character and teaching upon those among whom they are set down. Such clergy, altogether free from domestic obligations, may well be credited with a singleness of purpose and a concentrated energy which under ordinary conditions of life can hardly be maintained: on the other hand some avenues of usefulness are of necessity closed to them; family life and its sympathies will in great measure be beyond their reach to share; many points of contact with lay people, which are always being offered to housekeeping parsons, to bachelor clerics do not present themselves. A celibate clergy therefore finds its natural

place rather among the masses of great towns, to stir up enthusiasm, to organize guilds, and in manifold ways to interest for good the younger artisans with whose feelings, tastes, and pursuits of amusement they may be supposed to have much in common. But to the peasantry and to the classes which employ them a married clergy is most acceptable, and, I venture to think, most useful. The strain of work is not so great upon the country parson but that, without neglect of duty, he may entertain household cares ; the youth of the parish are not so distinct from the married folks as to require very separate and engrossing tendance ; he is comparatively at leisure to attend to the multifarious interests with which he is mixed up ; his cure includes several ranks of people, each demanding his sympathy and good offices ; the squire, the farmer, the small tradesman, the labourer, and particularly the womankind belonging to them all, look to a parson whom they trust to give out from his heart and head the counsel, or encouragement, or comfort which their peculiar cases need ; the cricket or the football field he will visit, but unless he can hold the first place there he will be content to assist as a spectator : his work lies in the homes of his people

rather than in the playground or at the Institute, and he is not fully equipped for what they expect of him unless he has himself a home with which their own can be in touch. The clergyman who would minister among rural families had best be a family man—a parsonage is the natural complement of a country parson.

The influence which it is possible for him to exert must very frequently be indirect; and his success in spiritual things will, to a degree which he is perhaps unwilling to acknowledge, be advanced or hindered by his social acceptability or the want of it. I do not mean only that good breeding which shall insure him the *entrée* to the Big House, but an easy, pleasant carriage which, without effort on his part, wins him place in the good graces of rich and poor alike, and opens a road for his higher gifts to work on them.

We some of us know to our cost that the best of doctrine and exhortation may have a soporific or even an irritating effect, if conveyed to the hearer by an utterance monotonous or unmusical: not because he has come to church on purpose to be charmed with variety of cadence or with sweet sounds, but because the absence of these, whether it should or should not do so, makes what

he came to hear so distasteful that it fails to edify him. And many failures of the parson *out* of church may be traced to a like cause—to some quaint mannerism, or coldness of address, or even ungainly gesture, and ill-fitting clothes. Now the least exacting parishioner would be scarcely content with a clergyman who should be *only* well-mannered and pleasant to look upon ; he would probably scout the notion that he was to be caught with such chaff; but, nevertheless, these surface virtues do very much recommend the parson's sterling qualities to his good opinion, and may make all the difference between cordiality and offence in his attitude towards the parson's doings. And therefore it is that the small matters which suggest this chapter should not be ignored by the most spiritual-minded among us. It is no use trying to separate ministerial from private life, the people will be sure to take them together, if not to confuse them ; it becomes therefore a serious duty to look to the merest trifles that may affect our work, not only in ourselves but in our surroundings.

I would not for the world charge country folks with excessive curiosity, but they certainly do take great interest in the parsonage, its works

and ways. We live like bees in a glass hive; no turnkey in a corridor watches more curiously at the grating of each cell upon his beat than does the parochial eye peer into our homes. It is perfectly well known, depend upon it, to my people whether I am, or am not, rather short with my wife, fretful to my children, and of a calcitrant behaviour towards my little dog; whether Missis does or does not go into tantrums; whether my boys are, which they are not, what the speech of a licentious age calls "cheeky"; whether culinary failure is stormed at or sulked over, or philosophically borne with. To the cupboard wherein hangs my skeleton the parish has doubtless a skeleton key. But even if the details of one's home life are not so accurately known as I suppose them to be, the state of things at the parsonage is, for all purposes of parish judgment upon it, apparent enough from the evidence which each member of the household carries about in habitual expression and tone, illustrated as these cannot help being now and again by words dropped carelessly and *not* carelessly picked up. The first condition of good parsoning then is to make the *parsonage* good through and through; for that is ὀμφαλὸς παροικίας, which being freely translated means

"the hub of the parish," more central than Delphi, and perhaps more regarded in its little world.

So the parsonage may do excellent work by its mere existence; but by its action, without setting itself consciously to reform its neighbours, it may gain further influence in several ways.

And, for the sort of influence which I am contemplating, the clergyman's family, and he himself sometimes for that matter, will do well to look out upon folks about them, not as parishioners to be worked at, but as men and women to be lived with. Their sacerdotal caste will be readily acknowledged; it will secure them a welcome nearly always, and at least as much deference as is good for them. The less it is asserted, or even implied, by themselves, the more good perhaps they will do.

Here they are then, the parsonage and its inmates, set down among hundreds, few or many, of people in various ranks of life, of various ages, tastes, education, and environment: to what end are they set here?

It may be to give home lessons on domestic economy; or to deliver clinical lectures upon irregular church-going; or to chasten the native taste in millinery and hairdressing; or to teach

how privation may be exchanged for luxury by shredding cabbage-leaves into hot water and calling the result "excellent soup." All these have their sincere and earnest pursuers; and with such ambitious ends to choose from I am almost ashamed to suggest another for the parsonage to attempt. It is just possible however that the final cause of the parsonage may be—I mention it under my breath—to keep the parish in good humour with the parson.

I shall not, I trust, be taken to suggest any currying favour, by unworthy concession to gentlefolks, or by occult bribery of the poor, or by flattering the weaknesses of those whom it is desirable to get at; this seems to be a case in which the end is best attained by those who aim at it least carefully. An open, genial, confiding temper in parishioners is that which promises best for the parson's work among them, and such a temper is induced by amiable frankness and delicate sympathy. Accordingly, they perhaps are most likely to succeed who not only forget clerical associations, but who forget also their social rank. There is small risk of the parish forgetting either; whether as ladies pure and simple, or as the parson's ladies, the position of

the parson's family is pretty safe with country people. I know of nothing to endanger it but, what must be well nigh unheard of, an immoderate assertion of its claims ; this then may take its chance. It is a privilege of the parson's kin to move among his people as the equals of them all ; they have no temptation to court one set of them, or to patronize another, or to subsidize a third. It is theirs of right to offer acquaintance, nearer or more distant, with all who will accept it, giving and receiving social pleasure wherever opportunity presents itself for such interchange, and to admit within the charmed circle of friendship those of whatever rank who prove themselves worthy of esteem and love.

Such an attitude as this with respect to the parish is quite distinct from that of other lay helpers, and as such I am regarding it. It can be taken up by no one outside the parsonage—for those within, it is their natural and very graceful attitude—but, what is more to the purpose, it is that by which they can best help the parson ; they are doing no less a work than making for him and maintaining a genial atmosphere most favourable to the exercise of his highest functions, and, if he is unhappily, as some of us are, thin-skinned,

such an atmosphere is almost indispensable for his success.

But the parsonage cannot take up this line without much tact and energy and self-sacrifice on the part of its inmates.

I dare not suppose that in the greater number of cases such an acquaintance with parishioners of all ranks will be sought for its own sake, though, if it is cheerfully cultivated, I venture to think it will be found as interesting as mere acquaintance is found usually; and the idea of near friendship with any whose tastes and associations are so out of keeping with their own will by our belongings generally be scarce entertained at first. Yet, as I need hardly say, the intercourse which I am pleading for can never be successful till it becomes a pleasure to *both* parties; and a real pleasure it may come to be, not for the work's sake only, but for the grateful sympathy it calls forth, if accidental differences can but be overlooked and the many points of contact which must exist between all Christian human natures be prized and kept in view. There must be up-hill work before this pleasure is arrived at on the parsonage side, and with the best intention in the world the intercourse of the par-

sonage with the parish will fail of its right end unless its lines are prudently set out beforehand, and some practical details are considered.

I will not pretend to draw out a policy for the parsonage, nor should I escape severe strictures upon my presumption at the hands of its inmates were I to attempt it. A notion or two upon social intercourse with parishioners however I will very timidly suggest.

And as a first step to success in this regard I will mention an easy, cheerful way of meeting people out of doors. This comes so naturally to many whom I know that they may wonder that such a thing should be so much as spoken of; but to others, if I may judge them by myself, it is by no means such a matter of course. In what I am about to say it will be more polite perhaps to transfer the subject from the family to my own person.

Well, suppose on coming down some warm morning I find a fire fit to roast an ox and in good earnest scorching the chair-backs, but failing to make the kettle boil on account of its (not the fire's but the kettle's) too recent importation and previous low temperature—now here is a state of things which I never could endure with unques-

tioning resignation. I *do* question with some vigour, and the answers I receive rather prompt me to breakfast hurriedly and to go about my business. I meet Mrs. Jones, a shining light at Ebenezer across the way. Now there are a number of topics which Mrs. Jones and I are equally interested in, her children are, I know, down with the measles, and by a remarkable coincidence my own were similarly afflicted some years ago; Mrs. Jones doesn't like the east wind, no more do I; Mrs. Jones holds stringent views with regard to the hymeneal tendencies of female domestics, with which views I am supposing myself cordially to concur. Here is a wide field for what might be pleasant and profitable talk, and at another moment I should sedulously cultivate it; but now, if you believe me, I leave these mutually agreeable subjects of converse to express, abruptly and with scarce a word of preface, my deep disappointment that Mrs. Jones did not find it convenient to attend yesterday's missionary meeting; her parting look fills me with the sense of having somehow failed to improve the occasion. It will take much pulpit eloquence in the future to convert Mrs. Jones. But, to speak seriously, I know nothing that helps more in the long run to keep

things straight with parishioners and that is at the same time harder to carry out, than the being "always the same to them," as they say; by which they mean, not the accosting them always with the same professional smile and pump-handle movement of effusive salutation, but the being always alike ready to be interested and to interest them.

After casual intercourse comes the paying visits of more or less ceremony to the parishioners at home. And here the avoidance of uncomfortable topics is as much an obligation of courtesy as it is at like interviews in the wider world. Moreover upon this depends very much the usefulness of such visiting. I am not, of course, speaking of visits paid for a special parochial purpose, or of the parson's ministerial visits, they stand on wholly distinct ground; but where the object is to awaken or to encourage sympathy, the stream of one's conversation had best skirt the rocks that lie in its direct course rather than attempt to bear them down.

Where the resources of the parsonage allow of such a luxury, the occasional entertainment of parishioners is a great means of bringing out kindly feelings—not that the giving away food

in one's own house, any more than the carrying it to theirs necessarily has this effect; it will by itself at best make people grateful, which is not the end which I am proposing. Nor does the consciousness of alms received in any shape tend always to sweeten the disposition of a man—it is the subtle charm that hangs about the relation of host and guest which gives parsonage hospitality its influence upon the parish. The gentle check which that relation puts upon a self-asserting spirit on one side and on the other upon a spirit of dictation; the genial effect of kindness, offered without patronage and accepted without a crushing sense of obligation; the easy confidence which gourd-like grows up in a night under the parsonage roof. These things are well worth some trouble to bring about, for they go far to form that honest and good heart in which the seed which the parson sows will most readily bear fruit.

The mass meeting of parishioners at a school feast is a convenient way of receiving them, but I conceive it to be the least desirable and effective. We are apt to overlook what I believe to be a fact, that between poor old Betty in the almshouse and the chief farmer's wife, Mrs. Jones, as between Mrs. Jones and the squire's lady, there

are ascending grades as numerous and as tacitly acknowledged as intervene between the squire's lady and Her Gracious Majesty; that the same social aspirations from below and exclusiveness above beset the parish gathering which are supposed to invade a state ball. Where these are there must be friction, and along with friction not always the mild virtues which sanguine folks look for to result from the free exhibition of tea and plum-cake.

I would rather advocate, if I might, a more costly and troublesome, and therefore, of course, a much rarer entertainment where it can be given. The invitation of a few now and again as occasion makes it natural and complimentary to ask them; the grouping one's guests with the same care as that with which one groups a little dinner; the conversation just local enough to set people at their ease, and so general as to make them forget they are parishioners; talk, not of their affairs only, but of one's own, so far as may be prudent and may interest them; the study of their likes and dislikes, even in the small matter of food, if one happens to know them; the friendliness of one's farewell, even solicitude for the due packing up in the family-coach, or for cap-box and

over-shoes: these are some features of parsonage hospitality which may make the guests smile with their eyes as well as with their teeth when the parson next visits them at home, not then as their companion but as their priest.

It does not fall within the scope of these pages, happily, to speak of the country parson under his more serious aspects; happily for *me*, or in relating my experience I might feel bound to confess to much which I would willingly forget. But there are some less heinous errors into which I am led from time to time, and with respect to these I beg leave to make my shrift.

This will be done most easily by describing the sort of thing which is apt to happen when I go into the parish.

(i.) I am under the temptation, and I too often yield to it, of sloping about the place with aims somewhat unformed; gossip, not always edifying or even quite harmless, will now and again intrude upon my ministrations. I wish I had purpose enough to set apart special hours for parish work, and to feel as bound to keep them as a bank clerk is bound to his desk.

(ii.) My custom is to visit the school on certain days, and I am tolerably regular; but conscience

reminds me of mornings on which the rain fell straight or a gale was blowing from the east, when I casually remarked to my wife at breakfast that there would not be a full school; and unless, with her as seemingly casual reply "Perhaps not," she had given me a look to the effect that she was rather ashamed of me, I should have continued to sit over the fire and read yesterday's *Times*.

(iii.) I should, I do believe, have made a better start the other afternoon had not Mr. Smith been just then coming up the village. He, being of equine proclivities, was of course curious to learn whether I had sold that little mare of mine; and there followed as naturally a talk about her. Now I do not know that I could have spoken to direct spiritual purpose on this head, but I need not perhaps have lingered so fondly upon the good points of that little mare of mine. Above all, why did I hurry off at last without informing my parishioner that she was wont to puff a good deal up hill, and had once nearly kicked us out?

(iv.) This haste may or may not have come of eagerness to be rid of things mundane; it may possibly have resulted from the glimpse I at the moment caught of Miss Brown emerging from old Jones's cottage. Here was my chance, for you

must know that Miss Brown is not only an active helper in the parish but a real churchwoman, heart and soul ; she was just then, as I found, struck with some fresh sign of the old man's patient cheerfulness, and it would have been no more than natural for me to follow out her mood by speaking profitably, and as a parson should, about the lessons which long illness teaches ; but to my shame, I passed by all that to set up a roving talk, of which the salient points were last Sunday's better congregation, and the approaching nuptials of young Robinson, together with his probable lapse into schism, and the loss to the choir of his bass voice.

(v.) I had nearly reached the house which it was my special object to visit, when our doctor came driving by at a great pace. Now I had long meant to speak to him about his church-attendance, so, in pursuance of my resolve to do some good parsoning that afternoon, I with scant preface plunged into a preachment about "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." Unfortunately however for my success I had not come to the personal application of that text before he, who is wont to be of most gentle speech, broke in with "Bless the

man, how can I stand talking here while Farmer James lies in the road ever so far off, with his neck broken for aught I know!" So saying he gave a flick to his old horse and left me, the word of exhortation still hovering on my lips.

(vi.) I did not pay my intended visit after all, for I was a little upset, and I thought it better to walk off my irritation. I had hardly recovered before my churchwarden loomed in the distance; when he came up I asked him by way of salutation why he was not at Ascot as usual, it being Cup Day. My spirits were, I suppose, on the rebound, and I was minded to be merry. He gave some accidental reason which I forget; but I well remember his adding that "In these times if you would have a man do his work you must be there to see." "Yes," said the parson lightly, "'six days shall thy neighbour do all that thou hast to do,' that is their reading of the fourth commandment on week-days." His eyes twinkled at this ancient pleasantry, which was, I suppose, new to him; but I saw a doubtful grieved expression come into them directly, and having in his kind manner asked after the parsonage, he went his way, leaving me to ruminate on the wisdom of clerical joking, and on old Fuller's stern dictum, "Jest not with the two-edged

sword of God's word; will nothing please thee to wash thy hands in but the font? or to drink healths in but the church chalice?"

(vii.) I have not even yet quite made my shrift, but must ask you to bear with the confession of false steps which I have taken about a sick-room. I cannot accuse myself of intentional rudeness or want of consideration, but—

Have I not on some wet day burst in upon a nervous invalid as if the storm had driven me to his side, rapping with the ferrule of my umbrella on the floor to shake the rain off it, while in what must have seemed to him blustering tones I congratulated him upon his immunity from exposure to the weather?

Have I never, as I made my first inquiries, sent my gaze wandering about the room to fasten at last upon a bit of real Chippendale or a too utterly precious old brass candlestick?

And when about to sit down beside him, have I never curiously eyed the seat, and with much care wiped it, lest vulgar dust should be transferred to my reverend person?

And, when I have sat down before him, has it never been in the military sense of laying siege to the unhappy man, settling myself with grim con-

tent, as who should say "I've got you at last my friend!"?

And, when I should begin to do mine office, have I never turned the leaves backward and forward with an indecision which must to the patient have been irritating to the last degree?

And, the office ended, have I never by rubbing my knees betrayed undue solicitude for a becoming re-entrance upon the vain world?

Lastly, have I always called to mind what were my own feelings in time of sickness? how the presence even of my brother was a weariness, and how I wished him heartily at Jericho before he had talked to me ten minutes?

(viii.) One more reminiscence and I have done, it is connected with visits of condolence.

I had not been long in Holy Orders before it became my duty to make such a visit to a lower middle-class widow of a few days; to this end I had honestly tried to imagine the feelings of this lady, and to prepare for due response I had searched various repositories of fit topics, so that I was in a decidedly sensational condition when I got to the house. And indeed the first appearance of the mourner, her deep crape, her weepers (for this was long ago), her fixed counte-

nance, all claimed my utmost sympathy, and would have gained it, had not some words let fall in her reception of me betrayed the real matter of her grief—the loss of position, of property, rather than the loss of her love. She at once began in a hard voice to deliver herself of those very common-places which lay garnered in my memory for her good. I was confounded; for I perceived at once the mere vanity of expressions which, till I heard them at her mouth, had seemed the properest for myself as comforter to adopt. I resolved to have nothing to do thenceforth with such parrot utterance of truism as

"That 'Other friends remain,'
"That 'Loss is common to the race';
for "common is the common-place,"
of "vacant chaff well meant for grain."

II.

THE PARSON IN SMALL HEALTH.

I WISH just now to be taken for the sort of parson of whom female parishioners are wont to say to each other between porch and lych-gate, "Poor, dear man, he's not over and above strong!" Their tone is more disparaging than compassionate; it means that I can't hurl my sentences from the pulpit like a Son of Thunder; that I'm not always bustling about; that, worse than all, I don't go to tea wherever and whenever I am asked. In fact I'm not of much account by their reckoning; nor indeed by my own reckoning, am I! Certainly not this morning, for this is one of my bad days. I am only just down, though the bronze old scythe-bearer on the mantel-piece dins into my ears that it is noon. You must not think that I keep such hours generally. I'm in the habit, I assure

you, of taking the first class in Holy Scripture, and you know the registers close at 9.50. Breakfast in bed has no charm for me, though I endure it sometimes from mere inability to get up. However I am not writing for the advertisement of my weak health, but I should like to fix upon paper some thoughts which wander up and down my mind on such mornings as this, when, having sent into the school my *æger* with a request that the master will represent me with the first class, I am wont to catechize myself.

I begin languidly to think of that first class, and to wonder how it is getting on. Vanity whispers (for man is vain, and especially parson-man)—vanity whispers that it is getting on only so so ; that they want me to help them through that little matter of fire-brands between foxes' tails, which should in course be to-day's lesson ; that Mr. Smith, though he is a St. Mark's man, and just a little *tête montée*, therefore has not the clue, which I flatter myself I possess, to its inner sense. However Mr. Smith and his shortcomings are not in question now. Didn't I speak of catechizing myself? First of all with regard to these fire-brands and the rest of it : perhaps such places of Scripture are unduly prominent in my habitual teaching ;

the subjects interest me, but then I don't give a lesson for the purpose of being interested. There they stand, poor children, on a bad morning like this, with damp clothes hanging about them and half a breakfast inside ; is it fair that I should use "the religious hour," as Mr. Smith calls it, to practise upon them my crotchets of exegesis ? To be sure, it may exercise their minds ; but won't there be enough of that when the turn comes which "My Lords" claim for recurring decimals and the analysis of sentences ? I have a great mind to drop Old Testament difficulties for the present, and see if I can't speak a little comfortably to them about Jesus Christ, and His loving heart, and His care for each one of themselves ; about the life which He led down here, and why He went through it all ; about the blessings which will come to them of His grace if they say their prayers and try to be like Him.

The word "prayer" reminds me of another of my faults which, in the hurry of busy days, I too frequently commit. I hear the lower classes say their morning or evening prayer with one accord ; I see such a prayer written out from memory by the older scholars, and so I carefully ascertain that the prayer is known. But, sitting here face to face

with the reality of things, I feel that this part of my work has been scamped ; that I have in this direction missed many chances of shepherding the lambs of my flock ; that repeating their morning and evening prayer together and in public is not quite wholesome, even for young children. For, as Parson Herbert says,

"Prayers
Are among the privatest of men's affairs."

I am inclined to think one's time would not be wasted, though one's patience might be tried, by interviewing each child once in so many months upon the matter, and in this way making sure not only that the prayer is known by heart, but that it is understood, and above all regularly used.

It is time however that I say the office. The morning has gone by, but I can't help it. I do not say common prayer "daily throughout the year," as I am enjoined to do ; I wish I did. To have daily service in the church might be more than I could manage, but the time-table of my work should at all events leave a space for this duty, and there can be no better preparation for shepherding than this breakfast of prayer and praise and Scripture lection, if taken with appetite

and digested leisurely. That it should be so taken and enjoyed is not, I grieve to say, a matter of course; the wording is so trite upon my tongue, the ideas have by this time so blunted the edge of my apprehension, that I too often utter and even think it all without conscious effort or impression felt; and if this is so with myself, what must be the effect upon those whose worship I lead in common prayer? I can partly guess it from my holiday experience of church service, from the chill that has on more than one occasion crept over me as I listened to *vox et præterea nihil;* a string of sounds, more or less articulate, but of unvarying cadence and altogether inexpressive. I was going to say "monotonous," but the word, proper enough otherwise, might in this connection confound itself with "monotone," and such saying of common prayer as we technically call by this name I am far from deprecating; indeed to speak on one note is by no means incompatible with due expression. I have however in my thoughts just now a reading of prayers which has been inexpressive for the sufficient reason that there was at the moment present to my consciousness little or nothing which the words should have expressed. I cannot tax myself with irreverent unthoughtful-

ness in public ministration ; it has been absence of mind rather than of spirit which has now and again betrayed me into a featureless delivery, or, as has sometimes happened, which was much worse, into a misleading delivery ; *e.g.*, as often as I say the second collect for peace at Matins I am not, I hope, without desire for that blessing ; but I am sometimes so imperfectly alive to the true import of the petition as by false emphasis to betray the congregation into the narrowest Calvinism, saying, in a voice that my wife at all events has called "sonorous," "in knowledge of *Whom* standeth our eternal life." Again, when the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity comes round I am, I trust, honestly anxious in a general way that the congregation should do God's will ; but, my apprehension of the collect not being immediately alert, I lead the people to pray that they may cheerfully accomplish what they suppose God would in their circumstances Himself have *done*. Thinking the thing over as I sit here I am painfully aware of such inadvertences, and fear lest some who have prayed in the spirit with me, have failed through my fault to pray with a right understanding also. I am resolved to spend my next enforced leisure in a fresh study of the too-familiar words. Meanwhile I will next Sunday

see how far I can make pause and emphasis give the sense of them; and, without falling into a tiresome cadence, cease running aimlessly up and down the narrow compass of my voice.

The more I consider it, the more difficult does it seem to say common prayer as it should be said, so hard is it to hit the mean between preaching and mere recital. A man of my nervous temperament is rather addicted to the first of these extremes. I fear that I must have too frequently shocked the taste, if I have not hurt the feelings, of some fellow-worshippers, by supplication well-nigh lachrymose, or by extravagant jubilance of thanksgiving, according to the mood that had possession of me; and yet to sink one's personality would seem to be a worse fault. I think perhaps if I were to cultivate presence of mind in church I might do better—by realizing how various are the needs and griefs and joys of those about me, and in how different degrees of intensity they feel them; by realizing the insignificance of my own preoccupations compared with the sum of theirs; by realizing above all the immediate Divine presence in our midst; by thus endeavouring to take in the whole situation and to preserve full consciousness of it, I may less inadequately say the

service, as the mouthpiece of the congregation as well as of myself.

But, the worst of it is, I have small faith in self-culture with regard to this, and even in the domestic treatment of my bad habits. I believe I know no more how I read than I know how my coat fits behind. I want some one to do for me what the tailor's twin mirrors do, to show me myself all round. It is no use asking Mrs. B., for she is as accustomed as I am to my cadence; and—though of this I am not quite sure—as blind to my imperfections. I would consult my boys and girls, but that the critical faculty of ingenuous youth seems to have so far outgrown the sympathetic nowadays as to induce in them a handling of personal characteristics too playfully candid for my susceptibilities to endure.

It is an inconvenience of such indisposition as I suffer that a subject which has once fastened upon me will keep worrying my poor head, so that I can't for ever so long think the last of it. I will however at all events write no more at present about reading prayers.

I wonder if all neuralgico-bilious parsons are as touchy as I am, and as easily mistake molehills for mountains. I cannot suppose myself to be the

sole possessor of this attribute, and yet the botherations for which it lets me in are more ridiculously embarrassing than any that I have heard others tell of. It was but last Sunday that I strode out of the vestry in a fume, and got well into the Psalms before I could pull myself together or shake off the flutter of outraged dignity into which I had been thrown by a premature cessation of the ting-tang. Thinks I, "This is just like our foolish sexton; because the next parish has a church clock he thinks it must give the time to every one! Haven't I told him to hang on to that melancholy bell till he sees me, if it is for half an hour? I can't have this, you know; and what's more I won't!" Now *there* was a pretty temper in which to address the "Dearly beloved brethren." And after all it was poor Jeremiah's care for the seating of some stranger that had broken off his tintinambulation.

I must get the better of this fretfulness, for while it points me out a mare's-nest grievance at every turn, its indulgence must sadly take from the weight of my remonstrance upon just occasion. I am far from thinking that just occasion may not arise when, for example, not personal inportance but the dignity of one's office is seriously com-

promised, nor do I think that such occasion should be ignored ; but to bear one's self successfully, or even decently, under the circumstances, one must be rid of the little jealousies of self-love which magnify the offence, when they do not absolutely invent it.

Such nervous susceptibility, as I like to call it—which however might be given a worse name—is apt to strain my relations with the school teachers. I fail sometimes to remember that they too may be neuralgic and bilious, and that the pretty waywardness of children may have upon them an effect even less tranquillizing than the barometric changes which I make responsible for my own slight eccentricities. It was thus, I have since thought, that about this time last year I lost a mistress who promised well. The bitter winds had kept me indoors for a fortnight, when, one fine morning, I determined to venture as far as the school. As I went in, the stuffiness of the place contrasted painfully with the clear air outside. "For goodness' sake, girl," I said, "open that window. I wonder you don't all faint." The monitor looked for a moment at her mistress, who stood in front giving out dictation, and then she did as I had told her. The older lady flashed back upon me a storm signal, but I blindly

and perversely rushed upon my fate. The exact dialogue that ensued I have, not unwillingly, forgotten; but I believe her to have been impertinent, while I know I was—well—eloquent rather than polite; and the afternoon brought me her "ultimatum," smelling superfluously of musk. I suspect that, had I bethought me of Miss Perks's sore throat, which Mrs. B. had the day previously brought me news of, and had I interviewed her in private upon the subject of ventilation, that able female might be our mistress now, and the stuffiness have been got rid of.

No greater drawback attends my frequent spells of seclusion than the breach of continuity in my relations with subordinates which it entails. During such an interval they have naturally been drifting their own way, while I have been as naturally exaggerating their decadence to myself, and determining to set things right when I can get about. That favourable moment finds my corked-down energy in a state of aggravated effervescence, while theirs, having lain the while exposed on draught, so to speak, is flat—perhaps even a little sour. I am brisk, and peremptory as it seems to them; to me they seem inert because they are not all agog. At that first meeting let me henceforth

scrutinize and note all as keenly as I will, but there and then find no fault—be bland and cheery; afterwards, when observation has been verified and all circumstances considered, what must be said will be temperately expressed and received without irritation.

My mind has been fussing all this time about matters merely professional; and indeed, when they have been looked after as they should be, I have no energy left to entertain wider interests. This is another misfortune of small health: it keeps me in a groove, always among the same people, and, excellent as they are, I should like, or at least feel I ought to like, other companionship sometimes. Churchwardens and sidesmen and Sunday-school teachers are not all-sufficing; and however comforting to my self-esteem may be the sweet deference of district visitors, it does not necessarily deepen my spiritual life nor even brace my intellect. As I have such rare chance of converse with my equals, unless one of our own profession in pity looks me up, I am in danger of becoming just a thought local, perhaps even narrow, in spite of the Church newspaper which I diligently read. The sense of this peril was sadly borne in upon me the other day, when, for a

wonder, we dined with some rich people who live just out of the town; theirs is a house to which the guests seem bidden by lot. I, therefore, being a mild mediæval parson, was told off with a young lady in moss-green velvet and a *pince-nez*. She came down upon me with queries like an avalanche—"Wasn't Buffalo Bill interesting?" "Wasn't the Dean at the 'Court' well made up?" I suppose I looked rather blank, for, after waiting for my slow reply, she changed the subject. "Didn't I think Chopin divine?" and "Wasn't Mozart too awfully 'tuney'?" She found even this would not do, so, with prompt countermarch which did her credit, she inquired demurely, as a queer look came into her eyes, "Had we an organ in our church or a harmonium?" I thereupon did my best to interest her; but, though I narrated with some detail the tiff I had about double chants with the lady who plays for us, my success was, I fear, imperfect. I put this down, of course, to the trifling character of my companion, but it did occur to me that, had I been more used to converse with all sorts of people, I might have hit at last upon some topic the discussion of which would have been profitable as well as pleasant to us both. I may say privately that though Mrs. B.,

on our return journey, alluded to this lady as "a pert minx," for my part I thought her rather nice.

I believe I am getting better, for this last meditation is a little flippant.

I think I will, if the sun shines, go about the parish after lunch; my susceptible condition will make me perhaps more patient of old Chutnee's incessant grumbling about the weather; and I am not so dismal in the company of those who are downright ill; but oh! how I wish I could make my visits without running the gauntlet of trivial salutation! This is, I do believe, my hardest work when, as to-day, I am not up to much. To be met by some burly person with "This is something like spring, sir!" and to feel in my marrow the unwitting force of his remark, while I jerk out in the intervals of coughing, "Fine bracing air, Mr. East;" or to stand at a breezy corner long minutes talking about things in general—to speak in the filial tongue, "I *do* bar this." When there are no wounds to bind up, why may not a poor priest pass by on the other side!

I know there is only too good reason why;—because, if he does, he will huff some one or other, and lose ground with several; because a parson must bring himself to give and take chatter as if

he liked it, if he would be accounted "nice"; and if he is not so accounted, no learning or diligence or piety will fill his church. Here lies the secret of my friend Hornblower's success—not that he fails beyond his brethren in the above virtues, but it is his genial way with people that open their hearts to him. We wretched ones, of quick nerves and halting speech, may call it clap-trap; but there are few happier gifts than that of readiness to say a pleasant word to parishioners as we meet them. On my worst days, thank goodness, I am not backward to go at once to a bedside and do mine office there, if I am summoned—invalidism has not brought me to that pass; but it is the visiting people who boast of being "lusty and strong"—the Pharisees of health—this it is that tries me at such times. I shrink from starting on my round—for round I must go, and not straight there and back as I should like to go. The parson's mission is, I take it, a veritable *errand:* he must follow the example of S. Aidan,[1] who travelled on foot "that he might turn aside to talk" (Bede); he can't pay his sick visit and have done with it, like the doctor; but he must seem to wander about, turning aside here and there—stop-

[1] Missionary from Iona to Northumbria, *circ.* A.D. 634.

ping to air his ignorance of things bucolic with Farmer Brown; to drop into Simpkins's emporium, and persuade him to put a church notice in his windows; or to condole with the vapours of Miss Robinson the mantua-maker, who declares she is "that low she can't abear herself." "*Hoc opus, hic labor est*," but, laborious as it is, without such casual shepherding the day's work will be half a failure; and, in spite of being "not quite the thing," he had better face it cheerfully if he wants to come home at ease in his mind.

I know Hornblower would laugh at me for all this, but let me tell that agreeable fellow not to be puffed up, for his good temper comes most of it of a good digestion; besides, he has no nerves to speak of—has he no bowels? I mean of compassion.

This weakliness is not, I am bound to say, in all respects a hindrance to my work. Did I, as I never will, set up a "*speculum parochiale*," and gauge my pastorate by the sum of parochial acts I was able to record therein, I should show in these days to some disadvantage perhaps compared with my younger, robuster self, and the poor people tell my wife that I am "not so loud of late years"; but, on the other hand, I do believe that I get

nearer than I did to those who want me most; that the troubled and the infirm are more at home with me; that, suffering what I do from the ever-flowing commonplace of a kind friend who no sooner hears I am unwell than he drops in at once "to cheer me up," as he humorously puts it—suffering thus, I am quicker to perceive a faint, weary look in the much-enduring sick. I do not now, any more than does the Rubric, "call upon him to hear sermons" clinically delivered. I pray with him more than I used to do; his mood, rather than mine, suggests my talk to him; my own weakness has taught me to treat him tenderly. Again, I am forced to spare my steps and my breath; but I have learned by this necessity to work on system, and to think out beforehand what I have to say. I am not, as I was once, proud to know that the devout said of me, when they saw me hurrying about, "so unwearied and energetic!" but I think in all humility that my weariness can energize to some purpose in a shambling sort of way.

But here comes Mrs. B. with my Liebig. I will write one more little sentence while it cools, feebly testifying to the personal inconvenience of chronic delicacy.

To live on tonics, and yet feel but half alive ; to be told by the poor that I "do look awful bad, that's a sure thing," and be thought the while by my neighbours to have nothing the matter with me ; to know it said that I am hipped, and am absurdly sorry for myself ; to look out upon the world through tinted spectacles, and to take my walks abroad in goloshes—these things are a real nuisance, "do you know," O muscular Christian friends ! who say superciliously of such as I that we "enjoy small health."

III.

THE PEASANT AT SCHOOL.

I DO not mean the loquacious biped in a blue blouse whom the word may possibly suggest—nothing so picturesque and strange. I would call my hero "Hodge," but that I would not for the world nickname a person whom I so much respect. "Villager" occurs to me, but then he does not always live in a village; so I fall back upon "peasant"—*paysan*, which I take to be French for "a working man of the country."

It is with boys and girls among country people that we are just now concerned. They are workers; though they play about like other children, they must weed the garden, and fetch and carry, and wheel the "pram."[1] For one of them it is no joke to be a child. With such work, however, we have

[1] Short for perambulator.

not to do : all that happens out of school hours ; and only during these are they public property and a public care.

I. Time was when schooling to the peasant child meant rest rather than toil—not only at the dame's school, where surreptitious diversion alternated with Bible reading, and was relieved of monotony by sudden onslaught of the spectacled mistress ; the National school, too, was in my early days a pleasant, leisurely institution. Much time was given to Catechism and Holy Scripture—subjects which were so taught as to exercise the children's memory without strain upon their intellect : there was good progress made also with ciphering and roundhand, as well as reading aloud, but all worked at low pressure ; home-lessons did not as yet make somnambulists of the scholars, nor did prospect of inspection bring the teacher sleepless nights. All this is changed now—for the better, as some think ; anyhow, the affair is business-like and rather grim.

Those first efforts to educate the working class were necessarily imperfect ; both because for lack of experience they could be but tentative, and by reason also of the prejudice against labourers' book-learning, which among farmers was at that

time universal, and hangs even now about the bucolic mind. The children's memory was laden with Old Testament facts, from which it was seldom attempted to draw a moral; the "reading round" of the Gospel, and the repetition by rote of Scripture texts failed to arouse the spiritual sense; while arithmetic as it was then taught, being a collection of rules whose principles even the teacher seldom grasped, left the reasoning faculty still dormant. There were, as may be supposed, bright exceptions in every neighbourhood; and in most schools two or three tall girls at the top could "go on" fearfully and wonderfully about the Judges and their exploits. But the "waist" of the school, the class which is now represented by Standards III. and IV., learned very little, and that little was soon unlearned in the long vacant hours of bird-starving, or baby-minding, or weary plodding beside the plough-team. All the children, however, learned one lesson which stuck by most of them, viz. to do as they were told; and the older girls learned thoroughly one other, viz. to ply the needle.

This state of things was gradually improved upon by the Government inspection, which from the first has been entrusted to men of keen in-

telligence, if not always of much technical experience; these brought with them at their visit a breadth of view which found in the clergyman quick sympathy for the most part, but staggered the average teacher, and unmistakably showed the inefficient that their slow race was run. These last retired presently to more congenial avocations, and the able teachers, after the first shock pulling themselves together, responded honestly to the new claims made upon them.

The years immediately preceding 1870 were fruitful in the real education of working people; and where circumstances favoured—a parson-manager sensible as well as zealous, a well-trained kindly teacher, and sufficient funds—a school second to none at the present time was the result. The parson, alive more than ever to the importance of the school as a chief field within his pastorate, and stirred up by "my Lords" to urge on secular instruction, grew at once more apt to teach things spiritual, and skilled in the details of management; the teacher, made the parson's friend, and encouraged by his constant help, more thoroughly educated the children by the instruction which he had been trained to impart; while these answered to his efforts by

regular attendance and eagerness to learn. Still one defect could be met with in all but the best schools: the infants were well cared for, but the classes next above them were more or less sacrificed to the highest—the bird-starvers and baby-minders were not much the forwarder.

It was prevalence of this shortcoming that mainly led to the new departure of "payment by results," and the consequent examination of each child above the age of infancy. By such a change in the character of inspection, both the responsibility and the influence of the inspector were lessened, while the strain upon the scholars and the school staff was amazingly increased. A higher average of attainment by this means came about, but it was brought to pass at grievous cost: the general tone of the school suffered both in morals and conduct, for attention to these was crowded out of the teacher's mind by anxiety to secure a full grant on account of every child, however dull; the lives of the less gifted were made a burden to them by the process of cramming which alone could level them up; the teacher's health not unfrequently broke down under the harass and labour which this process brought him; the time set apart for religious

instruction was too often trenched upon, and as the inspector's visit drew near was in some schools altogether diverted from its purpose; that visit itself degenerated into a scramble to get through the schedule of unhappy examinees; there were but few minutes left in which to take friendly counsel with the managers, or to let the teacher have his say; luncheon swallowed, the parting guest was sped swiftly to the up train, leaving no trace behind but the duplicate list of "passes," our mercenary reckoning upon a big cheque, and hope for the poor children that for a season they would cease to walk in their sleep.

Such a system could not but be protested against in course of time. The public sense, hostile from the first, found utterance in the Royal Commissioners' Report of 1889. Their suggestions have not been adopted by "my Lords" *en bloc*, but these august personages in their Code of 1890 have deigned to countermarch a good way; a school's efficiency is no longer gauged by "the percentage of passes"; "greater variety, freedom, and breadth," both of "aim and method," are encouraged; "the importance of conduct and moral training" is recognized;[1] the "dull and delicate"

[1] *Instructions on Code*, 1890, p. 3.

are not to be "unduly pressed."[1] All this points to a healthier bringing up of the young peasantry. The task, however, of managers and teachers is not much lightened: as the examination was before more mechanical than they liked, so now the inspector's *ipse dixit* will be all-powerful; and it may be arbitrary, for one need not be a materialist to suspect that digestion affects even an inspector's judgment, and that kidneys broiled too hard may have far-reaching consequences.

II. But enough about the agents of peasant teaching. I will come to the material upon which they energize—the scholars; they must, under any system, have no easy time of it, considering their tender years. It is one of the privileges of gentlefolks to postpone for a while the stress of brain work. Preparatory schools give Latin grammar in small doses, with much play and good spells of idleness intervening; but such luxury is not for peasant children—they cannot spare the time. If they are to learn anything, it must be before they can earn wages; so they begin early, for their life's work must of necessity be set about so soon. Our sons are fortunate beyond their fellows if they can be off our hands, or rather

[1] Code, 1890, Art. 101, *b* (i.).

their names be not seen upon our cheques, at the age of twenty-two; and they are more likely to be in this position whose childhood has been in a measure uninstructed. One such I know who could not read pleasurably to himself till he was nine years old, and was what is called backward at fourteen. Some professions indeed demand an earlier proficiency: the candidates for them lose the privilege I speak of, and in this respect have a disadvantage in common with the working class; like these, they cannot spare the time. A studious childhood must in all ranks be a hard lot. But in view of immediate results to a primary school it is by no means a failure. Standard VI. supposes considerable acquirement, as well of the three R's as of one or more specific subjects. A quick girl may at the age of twelve leave school with a vast amount of facts in her head and with some facility of composition—a result satisfactory to the managers, flattering to the teacher, a gain all round except to the girl herself. But she is by this time off the register; more girls are coming on to win high grants and be a credit to the school; as for her, the inspector has been and gone and done with her—she may go. As do prize vegetables after the show, she passes away some-

where, a marvel of culture, but just a little tasteless and attenuate perhaps—like forced asparagus.

But, unlike asparagus, she is not esculent, and she has a future. Having got thus far with my paper, I bethought me to interview our cook upon this subject; and, pursuing the Socratic method, I extorted the admission that at the age of thirteen she had left school in no higher standard than No. IV. This would not have helped me much but for the after-information, for which I am indebted to my wife, that this young person, who can now write a very decent letter, declares of her brother, who went through the whole course, and retired with flying colours in Standard VI., that "he now spells that bad she can hardly make it out." This it will be admitted is a case in point, and though it does not by itself warrant, it at least illustrates, my conclusion that the results of the late system are not as lasting as the Department reckoned on, while congenital energy may for practical purposes supply later on the defects of instruction. The fact is that an immature brain cannot retain at all in proportion as it can absorb; however congested by the waters of erudition, it is no sooner exposed to the burden and heat of day labour, than it com-

mences to dry up like a wet sponge in the sun. In face of this difficulty we can attach no blame to the teacher: he has in good faith done his best, but child nature was against him. The system cannot, I fear, be so summarily acquitted: the subjects taught have been ambitious, while the child's main requirements, the three Rs excepted, have till recently been overlooked. Grammar and geography may or may not be indispensable to the mental kit of ploughmen and housemaids, but such subjects have been seldom so taught as to be useful in after life. An elaborate nomenclature—subject and predicate, and Heaven knows what—has been poured into the memory, while the art of clearly and precisely expressing thought upon familiar matters has not been sufficiently cultivated. Children, who can tell off in a breath the comparative heights of all the mountains in the world, do not know which way to look—north, south, east, or west—for their county town. Might not grammar begin at all events with the correction of some colloquial errors? and the use of the globes be preceded by a lesson or two in front of the parish map? Such teaching of "common things" might sometimes, one thinks, be substituted for the

object-lessons which, with such painful circumlocution, go about to convince little boys and girls that glass is brittle and sugar sweet.

The so-called "specific subjects" can scarcely be available hereafter, unless the study of them is continued when the children have passed from the day-school to their life's work, and this for the peasantry is difficult. Evening classes for improvement are organized in towns, with, I believe, considerable success. The occupations of young people there are often sedentary, or at most involve no continuous hard labour. The day's work done, there remains physical energy enough to make mental exercise possible, and even a refreshment, after the routine of desk or counter; besides, the Institute or Reading-room is for townsmen within easy reach: but none of these favouring conditions exist on the countryside. To be sure night-schools used to be well attended, and did good work in years gone by, in spite of muddy lanes to be tramped through and the grievous struggle against sleep. They flourished because the scholars were driven to diligence and self-denial by the conviction that they must read and write and cipher if they would hold their own with the generation which was treading on their heels. But this incitement

has years ago lost its force: all have known something of the three Rs at the day-school, and though to many there remains but the remembrance of possessing these accomplishments, that remembrance is enough to set aside all desire to regain them by going to school again. So the night-school after the old model is no longer a success, except perhaps in very remote districts. Something higher and more skilled must take its place if there is to be evening instruction; but the demand for culture is not urgent, nor is its supply procurable in our villages for the most part. A parson here and there may get the big boys round him, whom by dint of energy and peculiar gifts he may interest in the elements of history or science; but the dead weight of listlessness which a day's ploughing leaves behind is at last too much for both himself and the class to contend against. I say nothing of Bible classes, for they meet generally on Sunday, and in other respects stand on different ground: happily for the well-being of our people they are numerous and successful. For the carrying on of higher secular instruction, evening classes are not in the country a practicable means, and no other means is at hand—a valid argument, as some think,

against the sacrifice of much time to higher subjects in rural primary schools.

Cookery and laundry work for the older girls stand out in contrast with other specific subjects, as being directly useful to them all. But profitable instruction in these presents much difficulty. To provide the necessary plant for washing and getting up linen will be beyond the resources of small village schools; and one fails to see at first sight how "an ordinary class-room"[1] can be so adapted for cooking-lessons as not to interfere with its use for subjects that are indispensable. The practical teaching however will be the most difficult matter. If ample funds are at the disposal of managers—as will often be the case where the squire's lady can be interested—both kitchen and laundry, well found in all modern appliances for their purpose, may be annexed to the school buildings; but will hot plates and the steaming apparatus and the gas stove go far to make cooks of those whose whole *batterie de cuisine* must consist of an old saucepan and a faulty gridiron? or will hot closets teach the art of so drying clothes on a wet day as to provoke no strong language from a jaded husband in his dinner hour? With all deference to

[1] *Instructions on the Code*, 1890, p. 40.

theorists, a country parson takes leave to suggest that no process of cookery or laundry work should be taught in school which cannot in a cottage be carried out. Possibly "my Lords" have in view the training for domestic service in establishments where appliances are at hand;[1] but not many girls in a school will rise to this; and it is at least questionable whether such teaching as can be had in school will give more than a smattering of duties which there need years of drudgery, all day and every day, so to learn as to command high wages. Will not such smattering induce rather a conceit of knowledge, tempting the autocrat below stairs to mutter, "Oh! she's no good. I can't abide such ways. What's missus thinking of?"

In saying that school life is no easy one, I left it for this page to add that the burden is heaviest on the less capable and the nervous temperaments, specially as inspection day draws near: when the storm has gone by and all is once more serene, the children's spirits rise at once, for with them, as with animals, the imminent alone is fearful. A few indeed may be said to sit habitually among thorns: these are either young pickles who will gladly suffer

[1] N.B. The Education Department, judging from their *Instructions to Inspectresses*, 1890, seem fully alive to this.

much for the sake of dear mischief ; or dunces who soon become pachyderms, mind and body ; or high-strung little souls who, in school or out, will be always worried about something: but with a good minority success enlivens the school time, and the harder these work, short of exhaustion, the more blithesome they are. For children cannot be miserable long together ; and if, as we are told, in squalid East End courts and amid dire privation, their laughter rings, it is no marvel that in the dinner-time of a country school there should be boisterous mirth.

This pleasant dinner-time has its temptations, and is some anxiety to the teacher, lest romping lead to evil, as it does sometimes unquestionably ; but evil may be suspected without real cause. In peasant children, no less than in their elders, we are apt to mistake bad manners for something terribly worse ; and it is a mistake which we should beware of falling into, if we would keep touch with them and hope to raise their tone. We are so used to gentleness of speech and gesture that rude ways sadly shock us ; yet, however we may wish them softened, we must carefully discriminate between these and vicious ways. Nor is a peasant child the better always for a demure behaviour, so taking at

first sight ; it is in most cases but veneer, and is very apt to chip. They who care for child-nature pure and simple will, in the ill-mannered even, find much good to work upon. Only observe the ways of school children at their Treat ; how careful of the crockery with which mother has entrusted them ; how watchful for the little ones that they shall have their share of what is going ; how they stow toys and sweets away for the sick brother or sister at home—here are signs of good stuff which will repay our pains to mould it into better shape. They have their faults, these children of the soil ; greedy they are, most of them, but how seldom have they their fill of creature comforts ! and are not our children greedy too ? The children of the poor have less regard for truth than we should like to see in them, but has not this been stifled by heavy hands laid on them, not always justly ? Untruthfulness is perhaps their besetting sin, and to uproot this should be a chief aim of their education.

III. Upon the subject of peasant schooling I should like to add a word about parents and their attitude to the instruction which is given, or rather imposed upon, their children. With the more shrewd of them, it is, I believe, an attitude of amusement not unmixed with pride. As to the three

Rs they are very much in earnest; this amount of instruction they will, with us or without us, procure their children, of whom they are devotedly fond for the most part, and for whose advancement they will make great sacrifices. Generally too, even among the less God-fearing, there is a grave anxiety that they shall be taught religion, as the word is understood by the working class. So much is this the case that they are few of them content with the Board School alone, but are used to supplement the instruction to be had there by teaching of some sort or other on Sunday: whether it shall be received in connection with the church or with chapel is, compared with our solicitude, a matter of indifference to them. In our Sunday-schools there are, as a rule, many children of Nonconformists. That aggressive Dissenters should send their children to the parson's school to be taken with the rest to church is indeed surprising to us, until we remember that most such religionists regard the spiritual food offered to the young as of small consequence, what sort it is; for in their idea the human soul until converted is in so bad case that it can hardly be made worse or better by instruction; and they wait complacently for the moment when the unregenerate shall be brought once for

all to an assured consciousness of salvation. This notion is seldom expressed openly, but it seems really to underlie the readiness with which some of them give their children into our charge on Sunday. With regard to grammar and geography and the rest, parents, however gratified by the learning which their children parade at home for their benefit, consider our efforts in this direction to be made chiefly for our own delectation, and they good-naturedly fall in with our humour. Their attitude in this respect is not unlike that of a certain labourer towards a friend of mine who had taken part in a village entertainment. He had with much pains blacked his face, and knocked his head about with a tambourine, after the approved fashion. Happening next day to come across this man, whom he recognized as a member of the last night's audience, my friend asked if he would like to witness a second performance. "Oh! I don't mind, sir, if it is a pleasure *to you*," he said; an answer for which this entertainer of the people was not prepared.

The parents' attitude is much the same as regards the alternative of Voluntary or Board schools. The typical peasant is above or below the considerations which weigh with the advocates of either. His party spirit is not concerned with

this question, nor does he trouble himself about the comparative expense of the rival systems. The one necessary with him is to secure for his children so much book-learning as shall put them in the way to spread some butter on their bread, and to lighten the toil of life: this he feels sure of getting at whichever school is within reach, and at a cost which he can easily afford. To the religious question, as we understand it, he is, I have said, indifferent. The Bible is read everywhere: that is, speaking generally, enough for him; with what comment it is read he does not inquire: he is not greatly exercised if he learns that all comment is omitted. For protection of the few who have, or profess to have, scruples on this head, there is in Voluntary schools the conscience clause—a clause which, throughout a long experience of diocesan inspection, I have known to be insisted on very rarely indeed.

To discuss the vexed question of Voluntary or Board Schools from the subscribers', or the rate-payers', or the Churchman's point of view does not come within the scope of this paper. The prohibition of formularies as a channel of religious teaching at Board Schools must ever in the eyes of Churchmen be their condemnation; while to

ratepayers the excessive cost of them [1] is a serious obstacle to their adoption. The support of Voluntary Schools, on the other hand, is to the subscribers a grievous and an increasing burden. For the sake of Church principle they continue to pay liberally year by year, but they protest against an institution being saddled upon them which their fellow parishioners should in justice help them to maintain. I will pursue this subject no farther than to point out one disadvantage of school management by a Board which must necessarily attend it, and will, I think, interfere with its efficiency as time goes on. I mean, the lack of constant energetic supervision. That intelligence and good intention shall be wanting there is no fear: these will be found wherever Englishmen combine for such a purpose; but the pressure of business engagements will make the daily application of these to the cause of education very difficult, while a divided responsibility must lessen the sense of personal obligation to exercise them. So long as responsibility lay with the parson, he felt bound to expend upon the school whatever

[1] The Treasurer of the Woolwich Voluntary Schools writes (*Standard*, October 21, 1890): "Whereas the education in the latter (the Board Schools) costs four pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence per child, we can educate at thirty shillings."

time and labour its successful management required: an additional and more cogent obligation lay upon him as the pastor, an obligation which he was forward to acknowledge. It came naturally within the round of his daily work to visit the school, and elsewhere he had frequent intercourse with teacher, children, and parents. He had, generally speaking, a fair acquaintance with school routine. All this must be lost, or nearly lost, to the school when it passes into the hands of a Board. For a while, probably, one or other lay-member will with regularity and perseverance attend to details; but want of technical experience will disarm or even misdirect his criticism of what is doing; he will gradually tire of making efforts which prove ineffectual or unwelcome, till at last he will confine himself to checking registers and auditing accounts—matters upon which he feels at home.

But to come back to the parents. Their anxiety about the children's education is keener than we some of us observe and people generally imagine. Our attention is so taken up with the comparatively few careless parents, and with contrivances to remedy their negligence, that we overlook sometimes the solicitude with which most of them second the teacher and watch the

progress of their children. Yet this is very noticeable. Among the chief cares of an average good mother is the starting her young ones of a morning in fair time for school. This is no easy matter: to get them properly dressed, and breakfasted, and protected against the weather, before eight o'clock, requires considerable management as well as exertion; they will play, and dawdle, and do anything rather than make haste to be off. Then the company they are like to have upon the road is a further care: there is the rude boy who will not let them alone, but delights to tease the least of them and to pick a quarrel with the rest; who tempts them to all sorts of mischief, or to play truant—he is the mother's *bête noir*, and keeps her mind troubled at the wash-tub. Who, that has seen the little group at the school gate on a wet afternoon wrap up their struggling charge, and thrust umbrellas into unwilling hands, can question the fond care of mothers? Or who can listen to the talk of Tom's proficiency or Dick's backwardness; who can witness the pride with which Matilda's slate is shown, and go away unconvinced that mothers do care very much about the progress of their children? As to the fathers,

they are less demonstrative, but even more careful for the main point. Many a man, not greatly concerned about his own way of life, is bent upon his children going the right way, and on Sunday nights will sit patiently by as, verse by verse, they spell out the appointed chapter. He sets small store by the luxuries of education; but reading, and what he takes for religion, he is sternly resolved that they shall have. If my first steps in syntax and Euclid had been looked after so mindfully, who knows but I might have turned out a scholar?

The peasant at school had, in the hardest days of "payment by results," more pleasure of his life than he has known in after years. Still better days await his children. We who wish them well shall best carry out our wish by doing the utmost to let in upon them more sunshine. Make them work by all means, but so contrive that work shall go hand in hand with pleasure in the present, and be for their future, both here and hereafter, useful—not so set upon training precocious grant-winners as upon turning out good citizens of this kingdom and of that which is to come. But my style is, I feel, growing sermonesque. I will spare my readers the peroration.

I fear this chapter is hardly up to date with respect to national schooling: the popular ideas upon this subject seem to aim rather at the instruction than the education of the masses. Both aims are good, but to old-fashioned parsons, such as I, the latter appears to be most important, and the former to be but a means to this. Such is even now the view of those immediately concerned—the parents; nor are there wanting signs of a return to this view on their part who hold the nation's purse-strings, and as a necessary consequence have chief control of our primary schools. Her Majesty's inspectors are now exhorted "not to recommend the higher grant for discipline and organization unless they are satisfied that the school is a place for the formation of right habits as well as a place for instruction" (*Instructions*, 37). This is most satisfactory, and gives promise of a wholesome change in the character and tendency of school work. We should prefer that the basis of education should be distinctly religious, believing no other to be sound: we trust that our efforts to secure this basis will not in future years be thwarted as they have been, and we hail the Code of 1890 as an earnest of better things.

IV.

THE PEASANT IN SERVICE.

ONE can hardly conceive a greater change of civilized life than comes to a peasant upon entering domestic service among gentlepeople. The buttony boy, no less than the under nurse-girl, finds a different atmosphere about him from that which he has known. Even beside the team or with the sheep he was not altogether a free agent—the carter or shepherd held him in salutary control: so long as he was with them he had to do as he was bidden, and if he objected they took sharp measures to know the reason why; but, the day's work done, he was his own master, for so soon as a boy earns his living he nowadays shakes off the restraints of home. But domestic service is quite another thing: this demands all his time during the seven days, and it is by favour only that he can

absent himself. The young rustic has no sooner got into his first place than he finds his "pipe put out," both literally and figuratively: no more lounging about on Sunday in all the glory of a small, dahlia at his button-hole, a brilliant tie, and his billycock on one side; the cylinder of civilization weighs upon his brow, and his chin is uplifted by a stiff collar. To these badges of servitude, however, he soon becomes reconciled, and if he is worth his salt he takes a certain pride in them. Many such youths I have had with me preparing for Confirmation, and for the time they have not been unsatisfactory upon the whole: if their next few years have too often belied their early promise, I have striven to remember that the middle passage between boyhood and man's estate is always a trying one to make, and that not a few who were well-nigh wrecked, have, by falling into good hands, in after life, done well.

Some upper servants with whom I have had to do have been among the best ordered of my charge; I would say "many of them," but that I am aware of less favourable features which in some cases their masters have discovered. One can scarcely wonder at their sometimes falling, for the temptations of such a position are specially

formidable to those whose early years have been passed amid the privations of peasant life. Drink is their worst temptation : when this could be withstood they have generally deserved the character they bore in my esteem. A temperate butler of long standing is as respectable a person as a pensioned ex-inspector of police, which is saying a good deal.

But it happens in the case of servants, as of other classes in the parish, that the parson is brought most in contact with womankind ; of these therefore I have most to say.

How different is the position of servants in a modern household from what was their position in old-fashioned English homes ! Almost as different in its way as was that of the Roman's *familia urbana.* For, if the power of inflicting punishment, and even of taking life, seems to place slave-owners out of comparison with the masters of such servants as Pamela, the sense of responsibility for the character and welfare of those under them was so strong in both as to form a telling and real point of likeness ; while the absence of such a feeling among the greater number of masters and mistresses in our time, and the vastly diminished influence they exercise, make it difficult to con-

sider them as holding the same place in the social system as was held by their predecessors of a past century. And the difference which a couple of generations has made in the servants is as great as that which has come over their employers. The eye of the maiden of the period looks to the hand of her mistress for nothing but possibly her soiled gloves: guidance and admonition she is prone to resent; she may be won by womanly good offices, as other women may, but she will hardly submit her personal habits to dictation, as it was once quite natural for a servant to do. The relation in which she and her mistress stand to each other she is inclined to consider as by way of bargain—a certain amount and kind of work in return for so much money.

And one must, I fear, confess that servants are not alone answerable for this state of things. A mercenary view of the domestic institution has come to be acquiesced in by some employers—as to their own side of the bargain at least—employers who, while they still hold a servant's work to be her "duty," have dropped the notion of "duty" from their idea of a mistress's vocation.

In nothing is the changed condition of these

mutual relations more apparent than in religious matters. The employers' interest in the religious character of those who lived with and worked for them was taken for granted—it was professed always and generally felt—in the days when "masters and dames caused their servants to come to the church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear and be ordered by the curate." Nor was this a mere form: it represented a feeling of responsibility on one side, and on the other of subordination in things religious which has very much passed away. The form survives in a compulsory attendance at church, and, to our shame, in some cases at the sacrament of Holy Communion; but that the spirit has departed is betrayed by the too general absence of servants out of place from the Lord's table, and even from the ordinary services of the Church.

Another scarcely less unfortunate change in this relation is the dying out of family life as regards the servants; but this is to be charged rather upon themselves than upon their employers: they are much more anxious to close the kitchen door than are mistresses to hold aloof. The excellence of the old way was not however without its mitigation. When the mistress unburdened herself of her small

worries and the maid of her love passages with equal readiness and effusion, mutual respect may have been endangered, and the indulgence of tongue carried perhaps too far. But for all that the balance is much in favour of domestic service as it was. Not merely did the mistress take a real, constant interest in her maidens, but these in turn were as interested in the family's griefs and joys; thus they were called out of their class feelings, they found and acknowledged in their place of service at least a temporary home, and their views of service were to that extent kept broad and genial.

Again, I believe that in religious matters servants of the old time were upon the whole *better learned:* not as to head-learning—the names and dates and text-book knowledge to be had at school—but in the main drift and tone of Christian teaching, and its application to their own lives, and in the duty that lay upon them to apply it so. The knowledge and conviction of these things they owed to the family prayers in which they always morning and evening joined, and to the regular Bible-reading and plain exposition on Sunday nights—a custom which widely prevailed in the generation succeeding the Wesleyan revival. Of

course in clergymen's households and in those of many lay people, especially of the middle class, such or like usage still obtains ; but in the greater number of places servants meet with little of such provision, and the less, one fears, as the social position of the family is higher.

The necessity therefore of personal communication of the parson with the servants in his parish is greater in our time than formerly, for they stand in worse need both of his friendship and his counsel. Placed among superiors and equals who are strangers to them, who have but cold interest in their welfare, and between whom and themselves confidence has not had time to ripen, servants very much want the sympathy which it is their clergyman's special province to offer, but which cannot be accepted without free intercourse. And, thrown as young servants are into a fresh life, amidst scenes and people new to them, the habits of school and of home are broken through ; much that has been learned is in danger of being forgotten ; much that could not be learned in childhood needs to be taught them ; and for the purpose of such instruction, no less than to cultivate with them friendly relations, the parson and they must come together privately from time to time.

So much for the necessity of personal communication between the clergyman and his servant parishioners; now for the difficulties of bringing this about.

I do not forget that what I have said of the changed relation of servants to the masters and mistresses is true only for the most part; that there are numerous households, especially in the country, where parlour and kitchen live side by side, or, if you will, one above another, caring for each other as of old; where each owns its duty and does it fairly well. Even in these cases the tie of service is relaxed somewhat: absolute control is no longer possible to the masters, nor do the servants look for paternal care; but the relation between them, though modified by "change of time and men's manners," is still as healthy as ever.

With the servants of such households the clergyman will not find it hard to have intercourse: he will, in general, be admitted to the hall as readily as he is welcomed in the drawing-room; or, if he thinks it better to receive than to make visits in such a case, the servants, enjoying reasonable liberty and leisure, may resort to him on occasion.

But such families are unhappily by no means the rule in our parishes; more often we have to do with those in which it seems to be held that, however the restraints of a past time belong still to domestic service, there is an end to that family interest and care which used to make those restraints easy to be borne. Masters and mistresses have ceased very much to concern themselves with servants' troubles and pleasures, their likes and dislikes, but are still jealous oftentimes of their looking for sympathy and cultivating connections out of doors. And this jealousy of interference with those whom they still look upon as in some sort their property is due sometimes to fear of the servants becoming unsettled, as it is called; of their thoughts and energies being taken off from the duties of their place: sometimes to an apprehension of their canvassing, with superfluous candour, the family goings-on. In either case, the idea of their intercourse with the parson is likely to be the reverse of acceptable, for he will talk to them, and they to him; matters will be discussed without reference to Missis's views. Then the parson is a neighbour, and some parsons are prone to gossip, and who can tell what may come of it all?

Such distrust of us, and unwillingness to give

us the *entrée*, is quite as rife among housekeepers and stewards as among masters and mistresses. It is the condition of their place that they must get the work done somehow, and, in effecting this, their chief difficulty is with the caprices of those under them. Servants are not easily met with, or easily kept, or easily managed while they consent to stay; anything that may by possibility suggest to them the thought of change, or of discontent with their position, is therefore, naturally enough, discouraged. I have been reminded, by a clergyman of some experience in these matters, that there is sometimes a less pardonable ground for the reluctance of housekeepers to bring us and under servants together—that they may themselves be guilty of practices which would ill bear publication, and awkward things might come out in conversation with Sarah Jane or John Thomas and the clergyman whom the master of the house trusts and looks to.

There are, however, further difficulties in the way of our useful communication with servants—difficulties arising not from their superiors, but from themselves. Servants are in many cases, particularly in large establishments, unwilling to have much to do with us.

The typical "big house" is a veritable concourse of atoms, made up of elements with but slight tendency to cohere—held together by monetary force. The "almighty dollar," this, and this alone, is the medium which circulates throughout, and gives the organism what life it has. Here are employers procuring labour and *employées* giving it, as beef is ordered by customers and supplied by tradesmen—for money, and for nothing else; and, worse than this, sometimes payer and payee each votes the other a nuisance, which, if he could, he would do without. And of the three estates in this distracted realm, the second and third have neither of them any tie among their members but that of a common servitude. Housekeeper, and butler, and lady's-maid, and my lord's gentleman, sit round the second table with about as much cordiality as boarders at a cheap *pension*, while each underling in the servants' hall has been known to have a separate teapot, the better to mark her isolation.

This isolated position of servants, both as a class and as individuals, tends to narrow them, and to disincline them to welcome sympathy.

The upper servants are sore at not taking rank with the farmers of the parish and their families,

as their conversance with the manners of a higher class makes them regard these as at best their equals ; so they are thrown back for companionship upon their own order. But theirs is so shifting a society—here to-day and gone to-morrow—and their several interests so often clash, that they have but rare opportunity of making friendships, and by and by lose the wish to make them. Moreover, the cold indifference they often experience from their employers holds out small inducement to seek intercourse with the parson ; for they take him to belong to the same privileged class—to be an unendowed section of it ; and, in proportion as they dislike and distrust this class, they pity or deride him according to their disposition, for a "poor gentleman" is to a pampered menial as a "mean white" is, or was, to a prosperous Yankee.

If from the housekeeper's room we make our way, by her leave, into the servants' hall, there hindrances meet us of a different kind, for the persons we seek to deal with are so different. Except in the case of footmen, and of cooks quite recently, there is little promotion from the lower rank of servants to the higher : they come of distinct classes, with different associations, habits,

and prejudices. The lower servants are, for the most part, children of the peasantry, with no better notions and habits than cottage life fosters, but with the varnish of a little learning, which, under pressure from an enlightened Legislature, the parish school so skilfully lays on. Young and raw for the most part, but lately rid of parents and pastors and masters, they use their liberty too often to do the contrary of that which they have been taught. The men drink and swear, the women backbite and dress outrageously. They are not, perhaps, after all, so bad at heart as their habits signify, but they are not eager for our acquaintance, and we make almost no way with them.

When, however, we leave these not quite serene heights and come down to lower levels, we find the servants more genial, better disposed to give us their confidence and to accept our overtures, whether in our character of clergyman or of friend. The frivolity and impertinence, of which their mistresses, a little redundantly perhaps, complain are somehow or other not always conspicuous to *us*. It may be within some one's experience to find a very monster of servant-girl depravity take her place in the Confirmation class as a modest, rather neutral young person, to all appearance

wholly incapable of the dreadful things she is reported to say and do. And indeed such servants are apt to be neither so bad as they are described, nor, I am afraid, always so good as they seem. With some, the terms upon which they have lived with the mistress, and her intercourse with them—familiarly chatty or preternaturally dignified by turns—have lessened their respect for her admonitions, and have waked to action their "little tempers." But Martha answering the door to the clergyman is completely proper and demure; she looks good-humoured, and why should she not? *He* does not worrit—at least to her knowledge: she speaks respectfully, for his weaknesses, if he has any, are veiled to her. Unlike the lower servants so frequently at the mansions, she has not learned to look upon gentlefolks with distrust; she remembers kind things done for her and hers; if she comes of Church people, she has from childhood looked up to the parson with a certain deference; if her belongings are chapel folks, the Church minister has nevertheless now and again stood their friend. So she for her part is willing enough to have relations with the parish clergyman, and is in most cases ready to receive such ministrations as he offers.

There is a lower class of servants which perhaps oftener than any comes under the country parson's notice. I mean the servant-of-all-work. Many families of the smaller tradespeople make their place a comfortable home for her; the relations with her mistress are more intimate than they could be in higher service; she is allowed more liberty, greater latitude with regard to dress, and interviews with her "young man" are more easily arranged; at the same time her food, though plain, is plentiful. In such a family the yoke of domestic service is not heavy, and some of the most respectable girls prefer a situation of this kind. But the greater number of general servants have a hard life; not through any fault of their employers or of themselves, so much as because the work to be done is too much for one pair of hands, and their strength is reduced by poor living. These girls are constantly coming home, and so the parson sees a good deal of them. Many will stay in a place only long enough to repair the deficiencies of their wardrobe, and will in a few months reappear at the old church gaily plumed and ribboned—the admiration or the envy of beholders, according as these are male or female. While their clothes last they live upon their

parents, or earn at field work, for which indeed they are most fitted, a bare livelihood. By and by the carrier jolts them to the neighbouring town, where a shilling or two spent at the register office enables them to begin again, and we lose sight of them for a while, only to be favoured with their repeated presence at ever-shortening intervals, till at last they settle down for life among the lowest peasantry from whom they sprang. Some, however, who return oftener than we like are much to be pitied. In their first place probably they were unfortunate: set to work beyond the little strength which they brought with them, their growing limbs were strained and their constitution was still further weakened by the low diet which was all that their employers could afford them. They came back sadly out of health, and, by reason of *anæmia* the doctor says, have ever since been incapable of service, except for a short spell. Would that they were as incapable of marriage! From this class come the least capable wives and mothers.

Now—to turn from the difficulties in the way of our communication with servants, and to suppose them got over—the means by which we may establish and keep up relations with them are various.

In the first place we may get to know more of their antecedents than we often do. It is a distinct gain to be aware of their general character, their religious proclivities, and the class from which they come. I have frequently, as I suppose most of us have, communicated with the clergyman of a parish in which one of my people has taken service, that he might have and might use this advantage; and I have sometimes received a like communication. This practice would, I think, if it were general, help us very much. But the information which we thus receive should be used with caution. I am not inclined to avail myself of it by way of introduction either to mistress or servant; for I might bring upon our order the suspicion with the mistress of an organized scheme of priestly interference, while the servant might feel herself under a kind of police surveillance. But, used for our direction in the beginning of acquaintance, and in the course of it to supply topics of conversation which shall be pleasant to the servant, and by degrees to make her feel that, though sojourning in a strange land, her home is not unknown to, nor its interests unthought of, by one who offers to be her friend—used in this way, whatever we can learn of a servant's past is valuable, and any

system that will bring us such information we should gladly adopt. And here I must mention two institutions of which I am a good deal enamoured.

The "Girls' Friendly" and the "Women's Help" Societies appear to maintain beneficial relations with servants throughout England, at the same time that they are careful to disarm suspicion of interference. The work is done by ladies generally, who from their fellow-feeling with mistresses are likely to do it with less friction than even a parson would; and one of their professed objects is to establish relations between him and young servants in his parish. These Societies go upon the principle that no wholesome communication with servants can be held but through the employers in the first instance, and afterwards with their sanction. And this principle should of course guide ourselves. Mistresses, fortunately for us, are not so wholly averse to talking about their servants but that we may without much difficulty enter upon the subject with them, and even pursue it to what length we please. If we plainly show that our object is simply to make the maids better Christians, and that we take it to be a necessary condition of their Christian life that they shall do their

duty as servants, we shall generally, I hope, enlist the good will of the mistresses to countenance our endeavours; so the first step will be attained. Once having free access, our course with regard to servants will be much the same as with other parishioners of the same age, except that our intercourse with them can hardly be frequent, and is liable to be cut short by their sudden removal. This drawback however will but increase our carefulness to make the best of such opportunities as present themselves.

And to put opportunities in the servants' way, I know no better means than a lending library: not a businesslike array of brown paper covers, with hours and rules and lines fixed by a Medo-Persic law, but a shelf or two of pleasant books in their gay bindings, which the girls know they may freely come and take and return at their convenience. I do not mean that the parson is to be at the call of every one at all hours; but some member of his family—in one case that I know a servant—will usually exchange the books, and the clergyman will be made aware of the application of any one in particular whom he wishes to see personally. Thus much is said, not in disparagement of more systematic procedure in the way of

parish literature supply, but to point out a means of having occasionally to do with servants, apart from stated and formal visits. These of course more directly invite the exercise of our pastoral functions, though we shall exercise them at such times to better purpose according as we have more successfully cultivated friendship in a casual way.

The season of preparing for Confirmation is almost universally acknowledged both by mistresses and servants as a time for the latter's frequent and near converse with the clergyman. It is an opportunity for spiritual guidance which offers only once, and which we are all equally anxious, though not all—I speak for myself—equally able, to make the most of.

Classes in preparation for Holy Communion, held at short intervals, are a means of ministration to servants which some have used with success. I have now and again been enabled in this way to keep up acquaintance which would have otherwise dropped through.

Severe illness, again, gives us natural and allowed occasion for ministering to a servant; but as it generally happens that she is removed so soon as there is risk of her being laid up for

any length of time, this occasion does not frequently arise, and that soul's cure falls into other hands, often to the servant's advantage—at least if she goes home; for there she may be ministered to by one who has known her from childhood, and with whom she associates her best feelings and the remembrance of her happiest years.

I must not omit the being "called upon to hear sermons" as a means of servants' spiritual improvement, a means the more valuable because some, who every Sunday sit before us to be moved by it, may never be approached in the week-time. We are not always sufficiently alive to the presence of servants in church. That they are in a measure bound, many of them, to attend once upon the Sunday our ministrations, should make us all much concerned to give them that to listen to which shall not bore them but may do them good.

To so much as I have written about the peasant in service I will but add these general cautions, which I try to keep present to my own mind—first, to mistresses, that in their management of a household they remember that servants have the same weakness and strength, the same tendencies to good and to evil, with themselves; secondly, to my

reverend brethren, if of their charity they will suffer the word of exhortation : (1) that we should not gossip with servants and take such gossip to be a doing of God service ; (2) that servants are not to be treated as a separate class, but as members of a Church in which all, to spiritual intents, are on a level.

V.

THE PEASANT "BEHAVING PRETTY."

WE all alike, rich and poor, have a standard by which we speak and act—it is the public opinion of our class; but the poor have besides a standard set them which, outwardly at all events, they acknowledge. This is the opinion of the class above them. We are as servile as they can be to maxims of conduct which are current in our set: we would not drink afternoon tea out of the saucer, or signify the end of that refreshment by leaving the spoon in our cup, for worlds unknown; any more than would a well-mannered labouring man fall to at a feast of ceremony till each of the company had been duly served. High and low keep faithfully the unwritten laws of the caste to which they respectively belong; but, beyond this point, there is a difference: we should, I sup-

pose, talk and move in presence of a duchess much as we are wont to do among our lady friends; while cottagers, on the other hand, when conversing with those above them, adopt, as of course, a distinct tone and attitude.

These artificial manners of peasant folk are what I am venturing to call "behaving pretty"—by which homely phrase I would be understood to mean their habits of thought, and speech, and behaviour when brought in contact with the classes above them.

I. I will first advert to the company manners of peasant folk in conversation—the part they take in dialogue, and specially the way in which they answer more or less direct questions.

Now, it cannot be denied, I fear, that the weakest of them under temptation, and the worst among the strong ones upon small provocation, do sometimes lie in the parson's face; but I am inclined to think they very seldom do: they know well enough our reverence for truth, and they are indulgent to this prejudice of ours; moreover the least reflective among them are alive to the unprofitableness of the lie direct. Of indirect falsehood I shall have something to say later on.

A noticeable feature of their answering is that

it frequently addresses itself to what they suppose us to be thinking of rather than to our verbal question. Why, otherwise, when I happen to ask about Tryphena's teething, am I favoured with an assortment of reasons for Tryphosa's absence from school? and how comes it that my expressed anxiety on the score of Mrs. Griggs's health should be met by a modest confession on her part that she "*had* got rather behind with her club"? The blame of this sort of thing, if there is blame, does not perhaps lie altogether with the respondent: former pastoral visits have shown her that, however anxious the shepherd may be for the flock's well-being in a general way, his immediate aim is to make the sheep do what he tells them; and, when they don't, he is apt to be—shall I say? rather put out; so she is forward to deprecate his displeasure. Neither is it blameworthy in the parson to have school attendance, and church going, and club paying on his mind during parish visitation; though, the more subordinate such cares are to a deep, ever-present longing for the growth in grace of each soul of his cure, the more simply will each meet his overtures, and the fewer crooked answers will he get.

To say that labouring people talk to us in the

sense that they suppose will be acceptable would be saying no worse of them than might be said of most well-bred people with whom we hold converse, were it not for considerations of advantage to be gained which one feels must naturally occur to them, and may prompt their good manners. I would fain think that admiration pure and simple forced from Betty Bunce the avowal with respect to my last Sunday's sermon that "beautiful it were, surely"; but conscience reminds me that, on one of my former visits, I had betrayed a decided taste for such sweet words; and I am painfully aware that gratitude, and the promise of its substantial fruits, must have beamed radiant from my face on that occasion: therefore I *cannot* think so. I am led, on the other hand, to think this—that much which is least worthy and self-respectful in my poor people's talk I unconsciously lead up to; that their time-serving speech is too often but the counterpart of some unworthiness latent in myself; and that we must bring with us a single mind, as well as good intention, if at our visits we would have their "converse be sincere."

There is a variety of this artificial tone among the poor which makes us blush for them, but with which we may well deal tenderly, considering the

necessities which suggest it. I mean the *mendicant* answer—to be told how the doctor says a piece of new flannel is the best cure for lumbago, or how "the poor dear is that nice she won't eat nothink as we has to give her," with an accent on the "we." This presents an aspect of poverty at once abject and pathetic; the level of comfort must be so low, and the moral fibre must be so lax, before such observations can be, as one knows they are, things of course. By the wise parson they will at the time be systematically ignored: he will see through such feints as clearly as the relieving officer; but while Mr. Pounce is down upon them sharp, with stern sense of duty to the Board, his reverence will take the more excellent way—he will frown at the whining petition, but somehow, by and by, that poor old body will find itself warm and clothed; and when, for the weak stomach's sake whose *special* weakness is port wine, he ministers just a little of that slandered drink, he will do it with grave words of caution, but will not for pity's sake add bark to embitter the gift. And I have heard this atrocity boasted of.

II. Beggarly talk is, however, a habit of the poor peasantry which it will do no good to dwell on: let us turn to another pretty behaving of

theirs, the private theatricals which they enact for our behoof, and which we assist at with much complaisance.

The road-side, the cottage floor, the turnip field—"all the world's a stage" for this rustic drama. Only the other day I played my part and John Hodge played his, each from our own side of the sheep hurdles: we acted much to our satisfaction a scene of that well-worn piece "The Parson and the Shepherd"—the scene, you know, in which the parson, by cunning questions about the other's craft, seeks to prove himself a born flock-master; and the shepherd, who is on Sunday a local preacher, would in turn be taken for a master of polemics on the strength of some half-dozen texts quoted unctuously through the nose. I wonder what the dog thought of it all as he lay hard by, keen, silent critic of the performance?

It would be hard upon us both to call this a farce. A scene, however, which the cat lay blinking at down street the same afternoon was a bit of veritable genteel comedy. In this also a parson played, but his part was quite subordinate—a mere foil to the chief character. She was an ex-lady's-maid—the mistress of what in the course of dialogue she gracefully alluded to as "'er 'umble 'ome."

The scene was laid in a small parlour—dim, damp, and dingy: to the left a sofa profusely antimacassared; an arm-chair to the right, its seat-springs pointing sharply upward; in the centre a loo-table, whereon stood a vase of artificial flowers flanked by polite literature—*Ballroom Etiquette* on one side and on the other *Lyrics of a Lone One.* The parson is discovered peering gloomily about, with a distention of nostril that indicates the presence of unwelcome odours. To him enters a pinched female leading a reluctant child—a child draped like a stale fashion-book, but with the quaint negligence of Ophelia even to her tousled locks. Then, to speak technically, the stage business begins. By way of introduction to what I hope may prove a visit interesting to myself and profitable to my new parishioner, I ask for tidings of her late mistress, whom I happen to know; meaning to pass on shortly to an honest eulogium upon my friend's estimable qualities, and the example of good Churchmanship which she sets the household. But the little harmless question looses upon me such a flood of fashionable talk as quite frustrates my pastoral intent: her young ladies are to be presented, she says, and then asks in the same breath if I have ever been at Court? "No! not

even seen the procession ? the band in their lovely gold coats, and the white horse with the kettle-drums —how he stands the noise she can't think, nor how the man with the 'corney' can play, jogging along like that." I try desperately to make a diversion by expressing the hope that she is at length pleasantly settled ; but this closes her town gossip only to open her budget of grievances. She declares the neighbours to be a low lot ; for her part she hasn't a soul to speak to ; and, as to putting her sweet Angela to school, "John is always bothering about it, but there is no seminaries here as there was at ''Ackney,' where she had her schoolding. To be sure there's the National Schoold ; but she can't, and she never won't, send the child among all the scum of the place"—here the sweet Angela, becoming restless, treads on the cat's tail, and gets scratched through her grimy socks, and the curtain falls upon my retreat under cover of a howl.

Then there is the miracle play, so to speak, and it is perhaps as painful a performance as any. The prima donna is a person of advanced years, and of questionable antecedents, as I was informed on coming to the parish. The room is aggressively neat and spotless : a large Bible lies open beside her ; on a shelf behind the door there stands, *not* so

openly, a black bottle. The parson, cleaving to old use, reads a Scripture portion, even here where the Bible is never shut. He reads of some concerning whom it is asked in the sacred page whether they "were sinners above all the Galilæans, that they suffered such things"—a tale of blood to which she listens with grim pleasure. He is moved to say something of repentance, but she forestalls him. "Ah, sir, *I* was a sinner once, tenfold worse a child of hell than those you've been a reading of; but, thank the Lord, I can now sing Hallelujah. I am a saved soul, I *am*—a brand snatched from the burning—and have been this three years and seven months come the blessed Sabbath." She makes bold to ask if he, the minister, is saved, and hints shocking things about dumb dogs. The parson, poor man, is no match for such as she.

Now I would not for the world say that such scenes are all pretence, deliberately conceived and carried out of deceitful purpose: neither shepherd, nor lady's-maid, nor canting old woman, meant to tell or to act a lie; but I do gather from these interviews that in many such with my poor people there is more or less unreality, and not all of it on their side.

It is hard to say how we may best strike at the

root of this tendency to make-believe, or whether we should strike at it at all while it is harmless. With the classes above, a little ridicule would go far to put an end to it ; but working people don't see the point of that, happily for themselves ; and what we meant as raillery they would most likely take for insult. One thing is certain—the less of the actor there is about one's self the less will be their simulation ; they will forget to play a part if they see us terribly in earnest.

All of us have, I suppose, our histrionics on occasion. We of the cloth have our professional handshakes, and our wives their company smile ; the girls, sweet innocents, do mince a little sometimes ; and circumstances will induce even Charles the careless, my youngest boy, to look out over his dog-collar with an assumption of grave manhood wholly premature. If, then, Charles's industrial cotemporary, upon the very threshold of our night-school, puffs the clay of manhood, and sets his cap at an angle that belongs to the full-blown navvy ; if the subdued accents of our parlour-maid, and her pretty manners, present a marked contrast to her speech and tone when in controversy with cook ; if her mother's smiling welcome upon my visit accords not altogether with sounds muscular

and vocal which issued from inside but a minute since; if the sentiments, so Conservative and Churchman-like, of which old Daniel delivered himself as we walked homewards together scarce tally perhaps with words of his which, unlistened for, had once reached me from behind the hedge—shall I ascribe such subterfuge to the graceless depravity of a class, and not rather to the temptation which assails all men and women to be "merely players," and should I not best combat these histrionics of the poor by schooling myself to more transparent simpleness of word and action and intent?

III. There is one respect in which women of the working class are, in Aristotle's sense, born actors;[1] I mean in respect of the native eloquence with which they can state their case or rebut a charge against them. I might, in more than one cottage matron of my acquaintance, with a mere prick of the tongue, reopen veins of rhetoric which, for sublimity, pathos, and wealth of topics, would astonish the philosopher aforesaid, were he in the flesh; but I am spared the guilt of such base vivisection for the purpose of this chapter because my readers are sure to have had some experience

[1] φύσει ὑποκριτικαί, Arist., *Rhet.*, iii. 1, 7.

of the declamatory female, and even this allusion to her gifts reminds one or other of a *mauvais quart d'heure.*

IV. A more mischievous simulation than those I have yet noticed is that of one, generally a woman, who, feigning herself to be a just person and the friend of virtue, poisons the parson's mind with half-lies about her neighbours. "I am sorry to say, sir—and I wouldn't have Mrs. Sprightly on no account hear as I said it—but, sir, I think you oughter be told what goings-on there is at that house down the lane. He's not so much to blame, pore young man; but the bare-faced way she carries on with him—and she old enough to be his mother—it's disgusting, I call it"; and so on, and so on: the truth being that Mrs. S. is a cheery sort of person with whom every one is ready to pass the time of day, and she gets in consequence more harmless attentions from the gentlemen than does my bilious-minded informant. If this heinous offence of hers is aggravated by the fact of her recent Confirmation, or of her having joined a communicants' class, the attack upon her character will be the more virulent.

Now the mischief of such scandal under the

guise of a regard for morals lies in the false position with the parson into which it at once brings Mrs. S. He may have a high opinion of her, and, if he is young, he straightway becomes her champion ; then the mouth of the deceitful is opened upon them both, the parson is goaded into unchastened speech, and the lady's name suffers further hurt. Or those venomed hints have stuck in the parson's mind ; his frank intercourse with Mrs. S. gives place to an attitude of armed suspicion ; she feels that his respect is passing from her, and this sorely tries her self-respect ; the good habits she was forming are irksome to her now that the countenance is withdrawn which helped her to persevere ; and she is in a fair way to earn the character with which she is falsely credited.

As to the best line to take with cottagers who force upon us conversation about their neighbours, the shortest way no doubt is to stop it at once with some remark upon the expediency of minding one's own business ; and in case of gross slander it is probably the right way. But it may happen that the tale is to one's knowledge not altogether without foundation, and then such abrupt setting-down will look like indifference to

evil-doing. Or it may be that one is not certain of the informant's bad faith: possibly she is simply telling what she thinks it behoves one to know, and to refuse her a hearing would be unkind and even unjust. Then again there is no question but the parson stands in real need of trustworthy information; and, to breathe no word uncomplimentary to his lady-kind, one may dare to say (the doors being shut for fear of them) that information, of which they do not happen to be the channel, is not in every case to be rejected. And there is yet another thing: speaking for self and friends who have not Charlotte Brontë's faculty for "making out," I have to confess that, in converse with the average cottager, the children and the potatoes and John's *terrāble* cough together will not always serve for prologue and epilogue wherewith to sandwich the word of exhortation; and that I am fain therefore to suffer if I do not introduce a reference to personal matters which directly concern neither of us.

On the whole, it may be said perhaps that the parson has it much in his power to neutralize the mischief of such talk. If he takes with him about the parish a real anxiety for the good of his people with as real a dislike of gossip for gossip's sake, he

will generally be able to disarm ill-nature without rudeness, and, without encouraging scandal, to learn what he ought to know. One does however have to do with a cottager now and again at once so malevolent and so clever that for one's own sake she—for it is nearly always *she*—must be kept at arm's length; but this will not be best done by uncompromising suppression: a calm, stern adherence to common-place will checkmate any schemes to one's own or the neighbours' hurt, and will suffice to show so quick-witted a person that one takes her at her worth.

V. I come at last to that sense of hypocrisy which has monopolized the word. Hypocrisy, in the vulgar tongue, is, not cleverness of rejoinder nor the actor's art, nor persuasive ready speech—it is a course of wilful lying by act or by implication.

The most zealous apologist for the peasantry cannot say that this vice is unknown among them. Newspapers not seldom record the finding of wealth left behind by some wretched person who lived on charity. Sickness, again, is sometimes simulated for a long course of years, and with such skill as to impose even upon the doctors; so it is not surprising that kind ladies, and ourselves too, should

sometimes be taken in, considering the difficulty, without close medical examination, of ascertaining the exact truth. I look back with satisfaction upon the exposure of one such case as a set-off against several in which, I make no doubt, I have been victimized. A young person, whom I had long visited regularly as a confirmed invalid, tripped one night out of a "Tom and Jerry" blooming and festive, in response to a message which had been sent in. That the friend awaiting her proved to be the parson must have been a disappointment, and was apparently disconcerting. I say this was a satisfaction, because the case was so clear; but it has not, I trust, left me suspicious of chronic ailments which have claimed my sympathy and help. In comparison of real pain and weakness, that which is deliberately feigned is rare indeed.

Of that last, worst hypocrisy—the simulating holiness for lucre's sake—I have seen but little. The sober Churchmanship which generally prevails among those who have influence in a country parish withholds its countenance from vagaries of religionism, sincere or feigned. I will leave this phase of simulation, then, for those to discuss who may be conversant with it.

There is but one more observation with respect

to pretence among poor people in the country which I will trouble you with—it is by way of excuse for them : they are under considerable temptation to play a part. I believe that upon the whole the dispensation under which they live—I mean squire and parson and good ladies, nursing fathers and nursing mothers, all looking after them so kindly—I believe that this results in a fair level of respectability as well as of comfort ; but the very obvious advantage of standing well with the powers, and the as evident drawback of getting into their black books, do provoke in the more politic a counterfeit of parochial virtue, to which they have the additional encouragement of their experience, teaching them as it does that they need by no means despair of counterfeiting successfully. Then again we can hardly realize the bent of character which is induced by a system of domiciliary inspection—visits of surprise, involving perhaps important interests, not soup and flannel merely, but, it may be, the continuance of employment, even the maintenance of a home.

And, to place one's self for a moment in their position, were my neighbourhood pervaded by a mild-mannered gentleman in black, who could, when I next met him, and perhaps would, transfer

a coin worth the sixth of my week's income from his pocket to my respectful palm, I dare not think what feats of the histrionic art I might attempt for the benefit of that superior but impressionable being.

VI.

THE PEASANT SHOPPING.

PARISHES within a mile or two of a town have always had many advantages; among them a chief one has concerned the working people, that of buying little luxuries as well as the necessaries of life at a price bearing some proportion to their value. But outlying parishes, such as mine, nine or ten miles from a town, were until of late sadly off in the way of marketing. Among the goody tales of my childhood there was one which gave a graphic description of rural commerce in the last century; it was about a "silk slip," and the troubles into which it led its purchaser. From this it appeared that shopping in the country was very much effected by dealing with the itinerant pedlar—not the poor vagrant who now barters cottons and tape for bones and rabbit-skins at the

back door, but a well-fed sturdy pedestrian with a pack and a case like a small street organ hanging before and behind from his shoulder. He took each house in turn, and was as welcome, perhaps almost as much looked for, at the mansion as at the humblest cottage. Ushered into the presence of "my lady" and her daughters, he would descant with glib but respectful eloquence before them upon the merits of his wares, not a few of which had the greater attraction in their eyes from the suspicion of "contraband" which he would hint at; for our fair sisters have ever loved a bargain at the expense of Her Majesty's customs. Such a pedlar has been long since driven off his beat; railways, and before them fast coaches, have carried into the towns all those who could afford conveyance, they at the same time brought goods into remote places, so the village shop succeeded to the pack of the pedlar. But population was too sparse and money too scarce in rural districts for luxuries to find a market there, so the village shop did no more than supply necessaries to the peasantry who by their occupations as well as by their poverty were kept at home. The expense of travel has of late years so much diminished and facilities of locomotion so greatly increased, that all classes at

this time move easily upon their errands; and towns would have long ago attracted to themselves all the trade, did not the necessity of labour still prevent poor country folks from profiting by the advantages for shopping which they offer. The village shops therefore have done a fair business ever since the pedlar ceased his rounds. But till quite lately the articles to be had in them were both dear and of indifferent quality; they did not return to the peasant-purchaser his money's worth. He was at considerable disadvantage in various ways. As he had neither time nor means to frequent a town where he might learn the current price of commodities, he was through want of knowledge unable to determine the due rate of purchase, nor was the shopkeeper himself much better informed, who fixed his prices therefore rather according to what he could persuade his customers to give than to the rates prevailing in the central market. The absence of competition again kept things dear; these little shops being few and far apart, the labourer and his family were constrained to deal at that one which was within reach, and therefore to pay what was demanded. This practical monopoly of custom gave the shopman opportunity and offered him

strong temptation to supply a bad article; there was nothing for it but to buy what he kept in stock, and if he was unscrupulous he would abuse this advantage to force goods upon his customers which were damaged, and in an open market almost unsaleable. Even if he practised no tricks of trade the goods he dealt in might be of inferior quality. To replenish his canisters and shelves he seldom made a personal visit to the warehouse, but relied upon a few samples which the "outrider" brought him at long intervals; he was therefore as dependent upon the tradesmen in the neighbouring town as his rustic customers were upon himself, and he dealt at equal disadvantage.

But the great blot upon village commerce, an injury to vendor and purchaser alike, was the prevailing system of credit. Some customers no doubt paid across the counter for what they had; but spending their whole wages week by week as they did, most of them were without resource when though accident or sickness or slack work there was no money coming in; yet food they must have somehow or other, and the only feasible way to get it was by contracting a debt with the shopman. He could no more afford to lie out of his money than could the customer exist without the

necessaries of life; he therefore set such a price upon what he sold as would recoup him for giving credit. Many accounts would remain on his books for a long while, some would never be discharged, and having but a small capital at his command he in turn found himself unable to meet the payments due from him to the wholesale tradesman. His debt increased until there was no hope of doing more than pay an instalment on account from time to time, then the creditor had him altogether at his mercy; for fear lest supplies should be withheld and so his shop be closed, the poor man was forced to accept whatever goods were consigned to him without demur as to their price or quality. No wonder that the villagers paid dearly for indifferent goods!

There is a class of goods much used at present by working people which till of late years was not invented. I mean meat and fish of various kinds cooked or otherwise prepared abroad, and preserved in tin cases hermetically sealed. The consumption of these has enormously increased throughout the country districts as well as in towns, but they do not always reach the peasant in the best condition; the little shop he deals with has often only inferior brands on sale, and

much which there is not frequent call for must lie upon its shelves till the freshness is passed, not merely from the glaring picture outside but from the contents, carefully sealed up as they may have been. A like drawback attaches to much of the general stock which is not in constant demand. Old shop-worn goods, a sad loss to the tradesman if it becomes what is called "dead stock," and to the purchaser, if by chance he asks for and buys such an article, a grievous disappointment.

One necessary of life, for children at all events, a peasant finds it at this time harder than ever to obtain: for milk he is dependent on the farmer, who in many cases has none to spare on account of the contract he has made with some milkseller at a distance. The hideous cans which roll so noisily about the station platform carry off to infant citizens the nourishment which children of the village need as much as they. Here and there a working man, more enterprising than the rest, will keep a goat or two for milk; but not many cottages abut on common land, and Billy or Nanny if penned in a woodhouse will not thrive. Condensed milk, which the village shop sometimes professes to supply, is a substitute not much in favour with poor folks, and is besides expensive;

so that their children have nothing but the teapot on the hob to run to, or a cup of cocoa which without milk is not enticing.

The village shopman deals in a number of small wares at a great profit doubtless when the sale of them is quick; but they must for a long time remain unsold, and some fall into the condition of "dead stock." Among the oftenest called for of this kind are "sweeties," so dear to children; no small percentage of a father's earnings is spent upon them. If they can be had pure they are wholesome enough and always a great delight. Simple medicines again are in request; they however deteriorate sadly by long keeping, and the chemist does not always supply them to the village shop of the same quality as to his own customers.

The working class had a difficulty in old times which has to a great extent been remedied of late years—that of purchasing dress. Time was when the small fal-lals which at once exercise and delight the feminine mind, gentle and simple, were to be had only in a town, at extravagant cost and with but a poor assortment to choose from; they had indeed to be done without by working womankind, except as occasional luxuries which rural

sentiment offered in recognition of their charms. We all remember the damsel's lament that—

"Johnny's so long at the fair,"

and the reason of it, that

"He promised he'd buy her a bunch of blue ribbons
To tie up her bonny brown hair."

There are well-meaning people who regret the present cheapness and variety of such gauds; but their standard of virtue (for other folks) is above my aspiration; unruly nature makes it difficult for me to see much harm in a young person's desire to be gracious in the eyes of her friends. Necessary clothing was as hard to procure as that which was chiefly decorative: linsey and blue linen, plain though they were, cost money when wages were very low; cloth was dear by the time it had been rudely fitted to a peasant's back, and when supplemented by a long waistcoat of red plush, hard and wiry, was Sunday best for half his life. Such a man must at this day be poor indeed who cannot appear at church in a cloth suit of pretty recent fashion; and his wife walks shame-faced among her neighbours in a high bonnet when bonnets are worn low. The taste for variety of apparel has descended upon them both, and local trade

is forward to indulge it ; cheap fabrics of all colours and textures are displayed in the village shop, and indeed are for the most part excellent of their kind in all respects but those of substance and durability ; here is the great shortcoming which goes far to neutralize their low price. Another disadvantage has this cheap clothing ; both form and substance are alike unsuited for week-day wear ; and yet it has to be worn by the ditcher or the ploughman because it so soon gets too shabby to be his garb of ceremony. Clothing fit for labour in the fields used to be separate dress, or if the old best clothes had to descend to such service they were hidden by that most useful and far from unsightly garment the smock-frock. It is a thousand pities that the smock has been made to give place to the slop—a dismal makeshift which only serves to expose the poverty beneath. The stalwart labourer now too often protrudes his limbs through garments which look like the refuse of a pawnshop. Who does not know, and if he is uncharitable scoff at, the shiny buttonless tail coat which had been black but now parodies the autumnal tints? Who does not sigh when he remembers the roomy smock, with its cunning work about the breast and shoulders, of substance

enough to keep out wind and rain? It is now very rarely seen. This however is the customers' fault, for which the shopman is in no way responsible; his business is to sell what they want to buy, and in no respect does the modern village shop show more favourably than in the variety and cheapness of the clothing which it supplies.

He who undertakes to satisfy village requirements must not be too severely reflected on if the goods he offers are of second quality, and something above market price is claimed for them. With regard to price there is this further to be said, that some articles which he sells he has to parcel out minutely, and the purchaser of a pennyworth as much expects the turn of the scale to be on his side as he who buys a hundredweight; a pound of tea sold in such retail cannot but lose something by the process.

Few that are conversant with the peasant's ways and means will think my account of his shopping over-coloured, nor that I have done him or the salesman an injustice; much has had to be endured by both. Things, however, are so far better than they were with respect to village trade, that what I have written may perhaps some of it be discounted at the present time without departure from truth

upon the whole. But something of this improvement may I think be attributed to the co-operative method of supply, a description of which I shall attempt. Its own advantages will I hope be made sufficiently apparent; but, over and above the character of a co-operative store in itself, the example it has set, and the pressure it has put upon village trade will commend it to those who take an intelligent and practical interest in the peasant's shopping.

CO-OPERATIVE STORES IN VILLAGES.

I.

I do not propose to discuss the co-operative movement generally—a movement which, whether as to distribution or production, has its strenuous advocates and its determined enemies, by whom the principle of the thing as well as its working has been sufficiently ventilated: I will but say with regard to co-operative distribution that justice has sometimes been forgotten and even self-interest sacrificed in the restless desire to buy very cheap.

It was not through love of the co-operative principle in itself that I resolved to attempt its introduction among my parishioners. I have always thought, and still think, that between the merchant and the consumer there is good room for the retail

tradesman ; and that he may justly claim to hold his ground and should be supported in that claim, except in a case where circumstances are much against the consumers and he takes undue advantage of their position. Now we find in many villages both these exceptions in full force ; as I have said before, distance often makes it impossible for working people to go to the best market, while want of ready money would quite as often prevent their buying if they could get there. On the other hand the little shopkeeper of the place admits them to, and even presses upon them, a short credit, in consideration of which he doles out to his customers the necessaries of life of such quality and at such price as suits him.

To mitigate these evils among our villagers we had long thought of opening a private store at which to sell them genuine articles for a price which should just cover the expenses. This plan might have done good in some directions, but there was much to be said against it : the institution, so far as regarded the labour given to it, would have been a charity, and charity seemed to be misplaced where the good end could be otherwise arrived at ; there would have been no general interest felt in the institution beyond the mere liking for a cheap shop ;

and such an institution would have interfered, unwarrantably, as some thought, with the course of ordinary fair trade.

The idea of a private store was not wholly given up when it came to my knowledge that a clergyman in the next county had opened a village co-operative store and had, in the face of some opposition, carried it on successfully for three months. Placing myself in communication with this gentleman I learned through his kindness enough of the lines upon which he was working to induce me to think seriously of trying the like experiment in our parish. It was not long before the course of circumstances cleared the ground for us. Our two little shops had been losing custom for a long while. One of them was, at the first report of our intention, given up by the old lady who kept it, and she retired to live with her relations ; the other, kept by another old lady, an invalid, must, I ascertained, soon die out, and was actually disposed of in a short time by an arrangement with which she was entirely satisfied, and which relieved her of some anxiety. We had thus a fair field for working the co-operative principle, which further conversation with my good friend persuaded me might, in spite of theoretical objections, be profitably applied

to the dealings of our small community. Our squire and his wife, together with representatives of I think every class amongst us, were so good as to fall in with this view. The result was that at the commencement of the year 1870 our "Co-operative Industrial and Provident Society, Limited" was set going.

I have spoken of our opportunity and how it came about, because opportunity has much to do not with the success only but with the expedience and even the justice of such an enterprise; for we are bound to consider both the feeling of the parish generally and the interest of each class in it: and if by establishing what seems to be a benefit to the poor, we estrange the middle class from us and cut off from upright tradesmen their means of living, we do perhaps more harm than good. Not that vested interests are always to baulk such reform; it is enough that they have room left them for honest business. The disturbance of a parish is, at least from the parson's point of view, a more serious matter; and without giving in to the maxim of "peace at any price," my brethren will agree that particular reforms are of doubtful benefit where they stir up strife, It is said that "everything is possible to him who waits;" and by wait-

ing one may sometimes do with common consent that which was much opposed at its first suggestion. Even the village shop must change hands some time or other; and a way may be found to hasten the process which shall be as acceptable to the retiring tradesman as to those who would supersede him.

When the occasion serves, which it will do sooner or later in most cases, the establishment of a co-operative store will prove, and I may say has proved to a village the source of real

Benefits.

1. The first, not the chief, but the most tangible, benefit is the supply of common necessaries of good quality at market price.

But I must be careful not to overstate the case. I was before undertaking this affair under the impression that it would be very easy to procure good things by paying for them, and as easy to sell them with a good margin for profit at a rate much below that of an ordinary shop. I awoke from that pleasant dream only too soon. Some of the best and largest wholesale dealers would have nothing to do with us; their response to my commercial overtures was brief if not absolutely rude. Big tradesmen we found to be about as reliable and

scrupulous as little shopkeepers when they met with a customer who knew nothing of his business. At the same time from the waste made by an inefficient salesman, the want of that unremitting supervision which few but proprietors who live by the trade will give, the expense of management, and the small profit possible to be made upon the staple articles of food ; from these and other causes we found it difficult indeed to sell good things cheap. And if the attempt is made to sell at the lowest remunerative price, it is apt to end in failure, since it is hard to calculate what will be upon the whole neither more nor less than remunerative ; a penny, even a half-penny, taken from the price of one of the chief articles in demand may make the difference between a fair surplus and a deficit at the quarter's end.

On this among several accounts we found it better to sell goods to all comers at the current market price ; this could be without difficulty ascertained, and by so dealing we disarmed the suspicion of attempting to undersell the neighbouring shops. It came to the same thing with respect to the members as if a low price had been arbitrarily fixed ; or rather it was to their advantage, for their dividend would be increased by the additional profit thus

made upon the purchases of non-members: but setting this aside, the members, while they paid as much over the counter as other customers, received their discount for ready money in the form of dividend, declared upon the quarter's profits, and divided among them according to the amount of each member's purchases. And so people gradually found it answer to deal at the store; even non-members, inasmuch as they got good things for at all events the same price as at the old village shop they paid for very indifferent things; but members especially found their account in it because, when the balance-sheet was made out, they received a certain sum which coming in this way was clear gain to them.

2. Working people get by degrees to see the advantage of ready money dealing. This is a second and more important benefit of the store. To enlarge upon it would be no better than to write headings for a child's copybook, so merely commonplace is the lesson which teaches the honesty and prudence of buying only what we can pay for; but I will venture to remind parsons of what has perhaps been the experience of most of us, that among our poorer parishioners those who live habitually free from debt are also those who

live most christianly; not the most demonstrative, nor always the most open to emotional appeals; but, speaking for myself at least, I have found such to be upon the whole most satisfactory as regards their moral and spiritual condition, so far as I have known it after long acquaintance with them and their neighbours. This does not of course hold good without exception; there is a morose, defiant honesty which belongs to a hard nature and a most unchristian temper. However that be, most poor people admit the advantage of paying at once for what they buy, and the comfort of being a little before the world, even if they are not alive to the higher recommendations of such a course. It is the difficulty of managing their affairs otherwise that leads most of them into debt at the village shop; the town is perhaps a long way off, and if they must deal at home they are tempted to take credit, as it makes no difference in the prices they must give; but the great hindrance to cash payments with many is the uncertainty of their income: bricklayers and their labourers for instance cannot hope to earn wages all the winter through, and a village peasantry has many such as they among its number, jobbing men of various callings with whom work is irregular.

This is so great a difficulty that a strictly ready-money shop of the ordinary kind could in a village perhaps hardly live in competition with a credit shop liberally and honestly carried on ; but the co-operative society attempts, and to a great extent succeeds in the attempt, to remove this difficulty. A member's share of the dividend declared at the end of each quarter need not be withdrawn at once, but may remain to his credit as long as he pleases, interest at five per cent accruing upon all sums left with the society for three months or upwards. A member withdrawing his twelve months' dividend at the year's end, say at Christmas, can live upon it while it lasts. For example, suppose a member had spent ten shillings a week at our store throughout last year ; he would by Christmas have had £2 12*s.* to receive out of the profits, the dividend having been two shillings in the pound. With this sum he could have purchased at the same rate for upwards of five weeks during the year 1890, and when he got into work again he would have had all he earned to do what he liked with, instead of so much going to the shop every week to pay off old scores.

To this extent the question is answered "What is a man to do when he is out of work if he cannot

get trust?" he will at all events have money at the store to draw on: often no doubt the dearth of work lasts much longer than does the sum standing to the member's credit; but even then he is little worse inconvenienced than he would be under the old system; for I apprehend that, except in specially secure cases, the village shopman does not give more than three weeks or a month's trust. This advantage, which is absolutely without drawback for such as are in regular employment, would not result upon the principle of selling goods as cheaply as possible; the customers would of course get the same value for their money, but the secondary and more important benefits of the institution would be lost, as no fund would be laying up against a rainy day. Those who have a regular income can by this method use the store as a savings bank, and a fund can be thus accumulated with much less effort than in the usual way. A member has but to suffer that to be written to his credit which it has cost him no privation to save, and the growing sum lies at five per cent. interest, whereas the saving bank gives but two and three-quarters per cent. To prevent however the monopoly of shares by those who are attracted simply by the advantages which the store offers for investment, sums

above a certain amount, say ten pounds, might be suffered to bear no more than two and a half per cent interest.

3. There is still another, an indirect advantage which we have found in this undertaking: it has certainly brought a number of us closer together; given us a common interest by which we have got to know, and I believe in many instances to like each other better. Labourer, tailor, coachman, gardener, parson, squire (and for a long time squire's wife) all sit together fortnightly in cheerful conclave, and have equal voice in the discussion of purchases, prices, and other details of the shop's management. Each member of this committee has some experience or some ideas to communicate, and small matters are canvassed with a freedom and an absence of dictation from individuals which give room for every one's knowledge and judgment to come to the front. This to some business men may seem to be beside the purpose; but none can think it so to whom a good understanding between class and class is matter of importance. Apart however from moral and social considerations, it is necessary to the well-being of the store that members, and especially the committee, should work heartily together. Such a society is isolated from

commercial intercourse ; by a few tradesmen, as I have mentioned, it is even boycotted : information of trade matters is jealously withheld by neighbouring shopkeepers ; while the secretary, or other person chiefly instrumental in carrying on the business, can in the beginning at all events know but little about it practically. Unless therefore an active interest is taken in the affair by many besides himself, by those in particular whose calling gives them insight into its working, and whose habits of trade enable them to conduct it profitably, the store may languish. From want of knowledge purchases will be made at a disadvantage in point of kind and price and quality, while goods will often be sold too cheap through a wish to deal liberally with customers. Losses will occur from damage in curing and keeping bacon, in baking bread, and in the management of stock on hand ; but if each committeeman brings his special knowledge to bear upon the business as it comes before him, there will be but few questions which will not from one or other find a satisfactory answer, and thus mistakes will be avoided and prosperity made surer. It is the wisdom of the promoter of such a society to become gradually less prominent in the arrangement of business details, and the degree in

which he can do this safely will be the measure of his success, and of the growth of the co-operative principle among the members. Whatever success the store meets with out of proportion to this growth is more or less hollow and will not last. This is the more important to be attended to by the parson, because he cannot, and ought not, to keep a shop; but this he will have to do at last unless he sets out with the determination to make the store self-supporting in respect not of funds only but of management. His interest in the thing need not at all slacken on this account, nor should he be less careful and watchful for its welfare; but the burden will be gradually lifted from his shoulders, and room will be made for those to work who are fitter and no less zealous than himself; he will therefore make the committee parties to all that is done. I should not suggest the likelihood of his doing otherwise, did I not remember how sorely I was tempted myself to take another course; so much present annoyance is avoided, and immediate results seem so much more readily attainable by thinking and acting *for* one's people instead of *with* them.

As to the composition of the committee, it is of much importance to get some chief customers among the working people to serve on it. This

will not only give the class for whose benefit the store exists, a livelier interest in its business, but will supply information with respect to quality and price, which can hardly be gained otherwise ; for as I have said, the tradesmen around will withhold such information if they can. Moreover, the requirements of the village will be better understood. Not that the committeemen, poor fellows, are really representative ; they are mere delegates of their respective wives ; and if those ladies would but favour us with their presence on committee, business would be more keenly looked after if not more rapidly transacted. As the case stands they are prone to send through their humble consorts exaggerated complaints and rather crude suggestions, neither of which, however, may on any account be disregarded. There is nevertheless much zeal shown by some committeemen high and low ; not only do we discuss together ways and means, but we pass deliberate judgment upon the samples which our manager submits to us. Cheering it is to contemplate the fervour with which one of us will pronounce upon salt butter, that "it is lovely," at the end of a long-drawn sniff over the same. This exercise of the senses is I believe to the majority a real enjoyment fore-

casting supper, though I for my part fail to find equal satisfaction in the retrospect which, by the performance of this duty, is suggested to one who has lately dined.

From the benefits of a co-operative store I will now pass on to its

Working.

Before I set down what occurs to me on this head as useful to record about our co-operative store, I may mention that the population of the parish is something under 600, that we live some miles, in fact quite out of walking distance, from a town; and that most of the custom is to be looked for from our own people, though some foreigners, passing through the village about their work, deal with us casually. I have told how circumstances cleared the ground for us to start as keeping the one general shop in the village; but I should add that there were shops in our near neighbourhood from which goods were brought and offered to the people daily at their doors, and that an extensive old-established trade was and is still done by a respectable grocer from the nearest town. With regard to those neighbour shops I should say that through our competition, as we presume, their

goods have become better and cheaper. This is a benefit to which, as it is indirect, I have not yet referred; it is one, however, which we had principally in view when we undertook the small village trade; for, as I have I think already hinted, the chief reason for combining to procure necessaries by our own management was that these were not to be had through the ordinary channel, from the retailer, whose natural business it was to provide them. We had at starting no wish to supplant him permanently, our purpose rather was to awaken him to his real interest and to a sounder conduct of his affairs; this purpose we have in part, at least, achieved. It is a fact beyond dispute that the small shops in our neighbourhood have much improved of late years, an improvement which is owing among other causes to the flourishing existence in their midst of a co-operative store. In a district where the retail tradesman completely answers the purpose of the consumers in point of quality, price, and variety of goods, the expediency of their co-operating in order to the supply of these is perhaps open to some question.

The first step which my good squire and I took to set up shop was to call a meeting in the schoolroom, at which the principles of co-operation and

the outlines of our proposal should be laid before the people. The meeting was well attended, as was likely to be the case upon a matter at once so new and of such general interest. I have said how much we were indebted to the kind offices of neighbouring gentlemen; their eloquence and the business knowledge of one of them did very much to quicken the interest of their hearers and to give it practical direction. In the result the meeting was adjourned to a night later on, when a definite scheme should be proposed, samples of various goods be submitted, and details be arranged. This second meeting was also a success. We had in the interval put ourselves in communication with wholesale houses which had been recommended to us, and we had sketched the outline of our co-operative society much upon the plan of one which my friend, whom I have mentioned, had already set on foot. We had besides so far posted ourselves in the market price of various commodities as to be able to carry on an intelligent discussion upon the value of the samples which lay before us. Women were the prominent personages at this second meeting; they evinced a knowledge of business, a shrewd discernment, and an aptness for management such as their class is not always

credited with by the Ladies Bountiful. They approved both of quality and price upon the whole, and, which was even more welcome to us, they talked freely and pleasantly about the proposed undertaking.

I cannot say that we had cordial support from the middle class, nor had we altogether expected it, for farmers and tradespeople are a good deal connected; and besides this sympathy of acquaintanceship there is a tenderness for each other's commercial interest—specially among the ladies. Butter and eggs and poultry may soon fall upon a cheaper market if plums and currants begin to be undersold. There was, however, no opposition; at worst the scheme was looked upon from this side as one of the crazes by which "Big House" and Parsonage were from time to time liable to be possessed, while the class for whose benefit the store was intended seemed to think the thing worth a trial, and with this encouragement we at once set to work.

By this time about thirty-five members were enrolled, and at the year's end this number was increased to forty; they subscribed together something under two hundred pounds in shares of one pound, and this was the capital with which we began.

By the kindness of the squire we had the house and shop at a rent of eight pounds ; increased after some time to ten guineas, and at present standing at twenty pounds ; such fittings as were fixtures we took at a valuation, and we added some plant which was absolutely necessary.

To stock our shop was no easy matter in the absence of experience ; we had recourse to the wholesale houses which I have mentioned, and their consignments were for the most part satisfactory. But we made mistakes—for example, our purist notions set us against *mixing ;* the consequence was that a tea, which answered honestly to its name, was both unpalatable to our customers and too dear for them ; nor until we had humbled ourselves to "blend" teas together, like other retail folks, could we meet their views. Again, in the matter of sugar the same purist notions led us to abjure *pieces.* I mean by "pieces" the luscious compound, so fine in grain and so beautifully pale, which is not moist sugar at all, but a curious product of chemical science which does duty for the real thing in cottage sugar-basins (and in great ladies' store-rooms for that matter), and with such acceptance that a large proportion of our customers will have nothing else to this day ; so

we had to deal in this spurious but popular and not unwholesome article. Then we would buy a case of raisins, first-class fruit they were, and so we took care to label them; but a critical public picked out abortive specimens which they held up for our contemplation, and remarked dubiously upon the lack-lustre appearance of the sample; so we learned by degrees that plums had to be "cleansed," the technical term for rubbing them with treacly fingers through a sieve. Another thing: I had seen at the squire's table truffles and caviare and other condiments, which I had likewise tasted with some relish; these I was informed could be had in tins or bottles at a moderate price, so the store went in for a few of them, as it was part of our plan that the custom of the Court should be given us. Well, we sold one bottle, and the rest was for years valued quarterly till it sank among the dead stock, and there it is to this day for aught I know. Here was a great error, of such importance that I must for a little dwell upon it.

I should like to impress it upon the promoters of such a scheme as ours that the committee of management should lay themselves out to encourage small village custom rather than to execute large orders of the gentry. This last we

are specially inclined to do, because in our first eagerness to succeed we not only purchase ourselves whatever we can possibly procure at the store, but we zealously invite the custom of our friends, and are secretly annoyed perhaps that these do not at once break with their old tradesmen and make what seems to us no great sacrifice for the public good. But besides that this is generally no better than robbing Peter to pay Paul, it fails in the long run to advance the enterprise ; friends most readily and kindly patronise the store for a while, but they look for the same varied assortment of goods, luxuries as well as necessaries, the same neat-handedness, the same obsequious tact as they have been wont to find in the leading shop of their county town, and they are of course disappointed ; so their custom by and by falls off and, what is worse, the store gets an ill name among them. Meanwhile, by their short-lived patronage, the weekly receipts are for a time artificially raised, the members get too rosy an idea of their prospects, and the salesman is tempted to neglect poorer customers in his eagerness to serve the gentlefolks. All this comes of forgetting the real purpose of such a store, viz., to take the place of a little village shop, and of forgetting the

standard by which its success is to be gauged, viz., the extent to which it satisfies the needs of village customers. If these things are kept in view by the committee, they will be most careful to provide—not profuse variety or marvels of cheapness, but the standing requirements of a working man's family, of good quality at fair price, and they will be watchful to secure the salesman's best attention to those customers for whom the store is in the first place intended. Their richer neighbours will no doubt come among the rest for articles of common need, and by such dealing they will give the store a legitimate, not a charitable, support; but gentlefolks will never be the mainstay of such a business, and it is not of first importance to tout for their custom.

We had difficulty too in respect of the quantity as well as the kind of goods in demand. Well acquainted as I thought myself with the parishioners, I had altogether failed to anticipate such a run as we had upon "first Corks" and "home-cured," or the indifference with which low-class salt butter and American bacon were regarded. There is, by the way, no better evidence than this of the peasant's improved condition.

Then we were subject to rebuffs, the more

galling because they were so civil. A city magnate would present his compliments to us, and beg to say that, in justice to his customers in the trade, he did not deal with co-operative stores; and, when we succeeded in our purchase, the satisfaction was not always unalloyed. It taxed even a parson's self-esteem to run the gauntlet between rows of young men, brilliant with white shirt-sleeves, and grinning humorously behind crates and bales, on one's way upwards to the throne of Rhadamanthus, as he sat like "the king in his counting-house." His demure but amused countenance, and the compassionate patronage with which he bowed me out, with much

> "Washing of hands with invisible soap
> In imperceptible water,"

haunted me long after I had stammered out the order and had shyly paid for a dozen cheap hair-brushes and as many sixpenny sponges—"merely this and nothing more," as I remember Poe's Raven to have remarked. This was an experience which it would be a severe trial to my weak-kneed temperament to undergo a second time. Again, it was a thought distracting upon a Saturday, when one had come to page 15, and was in the

midst of "thirdly, my Christian brethren," to receive a hurried visit from our salesman with the news that he was quite out of bulls'-eyes, and that the "Turkish Delight," was almost gone; or with an urgent request that I would come over and speak to Mrs. Crusty, for "she do go on that worriting about the twopence farthing which her Polly should have taken home out of a shilling she gave her, and my wife is certain sure as she gave the girl her change back right enough."

With regard to the purchase of goods, we found at last that in most cases it answers the purpose best to deal with a central wholesale co-operative store in London, which keeps all such articles as are in general demand at a store like ours. We thus got rid of the difficulty about buying the small parcels which we required from merchant tradesmen, and we lay up by degrees at this store a reserve fund by leaving the dividends on our purchases to accumulate to our credit. The advantages of the wholesale co-operative society can scarcely be over-estimated; travellers are thence sent round periodically to smaller stores to hear complaints and to give advice. The central board of this society supplies also speakers

to attend meetings preliminary to the establishment of retail stores; in this and some other respects the facilities for starting new societies are much greater than when we commenced twenty years ago. All purchases however are not made with the central co-operative society; we are still customers of a few wholesale houses, whose goods are in such demand that we can buy them in sufficient quantity to preserve their respect, and, as a consequence, their good treatment of us.

When the store was thoroughly established—*i.e.* after the first two years, during which I did my best to carry it on under the direction of the committee—we found it advisable to have a stores manager, under whose superintendence the salesmen should work, and who should take his instructions from the committee at their weekly or fortnightly meetings. The stores manager receives an *honorarium* of (I believe) twelve pounds yearly; he purchases goods and transacts the general business. It will be readily understood that a fit person is not always to be met with. He must be conversant with the business both of purchase and of sale; and he should have a keenness and breadth of character which will lead him to be watchful and particular without fussiness and un-

due suspicion. It is fortunate if, as is happily our case, such a man can be found among the members; he will then take to the work for its own sake, and be content with a complimentary gift, thus relieving the society of serious expense.

Quite as important a member of the staff is the salesman, and a good one is hard to come by. He may be stupid, and get wrong in his accounts; he may, on the other hand, be "too clever by half," and then worse things follow. A good meat salter or baker will perhaps be curt with customers who on Saturday night clamour for pennyworths of hair-oil; while the obliging shopman will sometimes make ropy bread and let hoppers consume the bacon. I think we have fared best with a man who has already had some training in a retail shop; the knowledge which such a man has gained is valuable, and any questionable tricks of the trade which he may have picked up with it may be gently suppressed. The salesman should at all events bake and cure bacon well, for cottagers but rarely make their own bread in these days; and with regard to bacon, the home-cured is very generally preferred, besides that pig-meat from which the flitches have been cut is a great convenience to customers and is always

saleable, indeed I have myself had constantly to bespeak it a week in advance. The payment of the salesman is perhaps best arranged by way of commission upon the value of goods sold, a certain minimum salary being guaranteed him. About ninepence in the pound seems to be a fair commission if he lives rent free; this upon our present annual take of about 1,900*l.*, would give him not quite *27s. 6d.* a week.

The purchase of goods should be in all cases for cash; this is no more than the ready-money system of sale supposes, and as that is essential to the moral effect of the store, so is this necessary to its financial success. The old village shop owed its failure very much to buying upon credit: so soon as the town grocer got the little tradesman well upon his books, he could shoot the rubbish of his grand shop on to the village counter at his own price. I do not say that this was generally done; but there was certainly a strong temptation to such a course, and but slight power of resistance on the part of the small shopkeeper. Apart from the direct gain by the discount allowed upon wholesale purchases for cash, the simpler bookkeeping and the easier valuation of the business recommend the system. The bookkeeping

should be as little complicated as possible ; indeed a day-book for the salesman, together with the store manager's cash-book and his ledger, are all that are required, besides the memorandum-book which each shareholder has, in which every purchase is entered as he makes it, and the items of which are added up quarterly in order to compute his share of the dividend. Sometimes a series of metal tokens are used for this purpose instead of entries in a book ; but this is a system which perhaps gives more room for fraud, and is certainly more expensive to establish. An entry of each transaction across the counter should be made in the salesman's day-book ; and, but for the labour it would entail, in the case of a shareholder his name might be added as a check to the entry in his own book. We have been content to see the amount clearly set down in figures against the name of the article sold. Each day's receipts and payments are entered by the manager in his cash-book, and are read out of it to the next committee meeting. The ledger he makes up quarterly, and from its pages draws the balance-sheet, examples of which I have annexed to this paper.

You will observe that the value of goods in

stock is an important item of the balance-sheet. This value is determined by the quarterly stock-taking, a rather troublesome but most necessary affair. It may best be undertaken by a member of the committee who has a knowledge of retail business; with the salesman's help he will weigh each article, and have the weight and cost price entered against its name upon a schedule prepared beforehand. The present value (not the selling price) may then be set down in a parallel column by the stores manager, who, being acquainted with the condition of the stock, can allow for damage: the sum of this column will of course give the value of goods in stock. Unless the stock-taking is carefully and thoroughly gone through by a disinterested person, no reliance can be placed upon the balance-sheet; it is therefore worth while to remunerate the stock-taker liberally, and to close the shop for a day that he may work undisturbed.

A patient exact audit of the quarterly account is as necessary as the stock-taking, and should be entrusted to an educated member of the society, who should be assisted by one of the peasantry; this will ensure a complete examination of the books and vouchers at the same time that it will

by degrees give the members for whose benefit the society exists a full knowledge of its working. As the year's balance-sheet has to be sent to the chief registrar, according to a form which his office will supply, it will be convenient to adopt this form in the first instance. This audit will give the members an opportunity to observe upon the state of the society's affairs at the meeting which receives the balance-sheet; their observations will be the chief source of information for the shareholders, and should be made therefore in detail, and in such genial homely fashion as to invite general discussion, a thing which is hard to bring about at a meeting of villagers with their squire in the chair and a parson by his side.

There are two matters of detail upon each of which I should like to say a word—dead stock and fixed stock. It is difficult to prevent the *dead stock* accumulating without undue restriction of variety in the articles which the shop supplies; to have to tell a chance customer that we do not keep the article he calls for is not pleasant, but this must be faced on occasion, if we would not have a mass of unsaleable goods upon our hands. A short experience will show the committee what articles are in regular or frequent demand, and their dealing had

better be confined to these, in spite of whatever outsiders may say about "nothing to be got at the co-op." *Fixed Stock* represents the "plant," *i.e.* such furniture as the shopkeeping requires. Promoters of a store are under the temptation to make these fittings, as well as the premises, too smart and pretentious; there is field no doubt in towns for considerable display, but village people at home do not care for gay windows and polished brass so much as they do for wares good and cheap; and to spend capital needlessly in this way lays a charge upon the profits by increasing the interest to be paid; so we had better keep down the item of fixed stock, and at the same time allow for its depreciation. There is however a limit to the simplicity which I am advocating; as the business grows it needs more room for its convenient transaction, and the taste for advertisement by an attractive outside, as well as the appreciation of it by customers, is increasing among all classes, the peasantry not excepted. On both these grounds we have lately found it expedient to enlarge and beautify our shop; and the larger turnover we have effected, and the better dividend we have earned, cannot but be in part at least ascribed to this improvement.

At the quarterly meeting, the minutes of the

last meeting having been duly read, confirmed, and signed by the chairman, and the balance-sheet read, the balance available for division is declared, *i.e.* the net profit on the quarter's business, after all expenses paid and all deductions made, including five per cent interest on the capital. Then comes a question which no shareholder entertains with indifference, viz., What shall be the dividend upon members' purchases?

We will take the net profit in a certain quarter to be six per cent.; now this would be the dividend supposing all customers were members, and so entitled to receive their share. But if, as is often the case, half the receipts have been taken from non-members, the profit available for division among the members will be as much as twelve per cent., or above half-a-crown in the pound. But though such a sum is available for division, it should not all of it be divided; the dividend should, in the first years at all events, be much smaller even than the balance of profit seems to warrant. The percentage of net profit upon the *whole* custom is the real index to the state of the society's affairs, and by this the dividend to members on their purchases should be determined. Whatever beyond this may remain should be

written off to a reserve fund; or, if members clamour for its division, should be distributed in the form of bonus, as something occasional, over and above what should be reasonably expected. For, you will observe, not only may profits vary very much upon the whole, but as the members become more numerous, in a limited business like that of a village store, the outside customers will decrease. Many who at first gave the shop their custom without share of the profits, now being members will put in their claim to a share of the dividend; the sum of members' purchases will gradually exceed that of the purchases of non-members; the balance of profit upon these last will diminish until it may almost disappear, and the amount to be divided among members will be little more than the percentage upon their own custom. Let this percentage from the first be taken as the measure of the dividend, and there will be no risk of diminished dividends in after years from the conversion of outside custom into that of members. Some societies give half the dividend to non-members on their purchases; a provision which may increase the number of such customers, but it is more applicable to town than to village trade.

I have now given an imperfect account of the

benefits and the working of a village Co-operative Store; an institution which by many doubtless is considered to interfere with the balance of supply and demand, and which seems to others to be unfit for the Parson to spend time and energy upon. The first objection lies in a measure against all sumptuary reforms, but against this perhaps as little as against any. The last objection I cannot admit the force of, who hold the parson's mission to be so divine that nothing of human good can be foreign to it.

CO-OPERATIVE, INDUSTRIAL, AND PROVIDENT SOCIETY, LIMITED.

TRADE ACCOUNT.

PAID.	Average of 20 years.			1889.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Stock-in-Trade, 1st Jan.	237	5	0	290	13	3
Purchases of Goods	1397	19	1	1671	18	6
Working Expenses	98	14	10	119	8	10
Interest on Capital	11	6	9	15	9	1
Depreciation of Fixed Stock	1	15	10	2	0	0
Total Paid	£1747	1	6	£2099	9	8

RECEIVED.	Average of 20 years.			1889.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Profit undivided, 1st Jan.	14	10	5	29	5	9
Sales of Goods	1540	2	6	1897	8	3
Interest and Profit on Investment	7	11	8	10	7	3
Entrance Fees (1s. each)	0	4	0	0	3	0
Stock-in-Trade, 31st Dec.	249	11	8	283	15	3
Total Received	£1812	0	3	£2220	19	6
Deduct Total Paid	1747	1	6	2099	9	8
Net Profit	£64	18	9	£121	9	10

Roughly speaking, therefore—

The goods were sold at a gross profit of 10 per cent. annually, of 13 per cent. in 1889.

The goods were sold at an expense of $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. annually, of $6\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. in 1889.

The goods were sold at a net profit of $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. annually, of $6\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. in 1889.

The dividend on members' purchases was 6 per cent. (1s. 2d. in the pound) annually, of 8 per cent. (1s. $7\frac{1}{2}$d. in the pound) in 1889.

The number of members was on the average about 40 annually, in 1889 it was 53.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31ST, 1889.

CASH ACCOUNT.

Receipts.

	£	s.	d.
Received o/c shares	78	1	10
Entrance Fees		3	0
Interest and Profit on Investment	10	7	3
Sales of Goods	1897	8	3½
	£1986	0	4½

Payments.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Balance due end of last year				12	13	1
Payment o/c Shares				32	6	6
Dividends Paid to Members				87	6	6
Interest on Capital				15	9	1
Rent	£20	0	0			
Salaries and Wages	95	2	7			
Other Expenses	4	6	3			
				119	8	10
Goods Purchased	1639	9	0			
Carriage of do.	32	9	6			
				1671	18	6
Investments				10	7	3
Balance, 28th Dec., 1889				36	10	7½
				£1986	0	4½

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31ST, 1889.

TRADE ACCOUNT.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Stock-in-Trade beginning of Year	290	13	3	Balance Undivided beginning of Year	29	5	9
Purchases of Goods	1671	18	6	Sale of Goods	1897	8	3½
Working Expenses	119	8	10	Interest and Profit on Investments	10	7	3
Interest on Capital	15	9	1	Entrance Fees	0	3	0
Depreciation	2	0	0	Stock-in-Trade end of year	283	15	3
Balance, Profit, applied as follows :—							
Dividend to Members 87 6 6							
Balance Undivided 34 3 4½							
	121	9	10½				
	£2220	19	6½		£2220	19	6½

BALANCE SHEET OF FUNDS AND EFFECTS.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Share Capital	334	1	5	Cash Invested in Co-op. Wholesale Soc.	45	8	11
Reserve Fund	16	0	0	Fixed Stock	32	0	0
Deposits of Members	18	10	0	Cash in Till	5	0	0
Balance of Profit	34	3	4½	Stock-in-Trade	283	15	3
				Balance in hand	36	10	7½
	£402	14	9½		£402	14	9½

VII.

THE PEASANT AFTER HOURS.

THE toil of a day labourer, though not except at harvest time very severe, is sufficiently exhausting and protracted to disincline him for much effort in the short interval of his leisure. The carter must begin no later than five o'clock in the morning to dress and to feed his team, the other work-people are met by the farmer or bailiff at half-past six o'clock and must have previously breakfasted; though in winter the hours are somewhat shortened, ten hours work including the dinner-time are for the most part expected of the farm hand. By the time he has walked a mile or two to his cottage and has finished supper, there remain even in the long days but two hours before bed-time, if he would be strong and in good case on the morrow. There are some in every parish

who curtail the night's rest to work on their own account, and young men have always a reserve of vigour and good spirits to spend upon amusement, but the sum at the week's end, whether of bye-work or of play, cannot be large.

Bye-work, therefore, is not the most important feature in a peasant's life. There are, however, home duties which the careful cottager will after hours busy himself about; the pig must be fed, firewood chopped, and water drawn. Above all there is the garden to cultivate; his wife will doubtless through the day do her best to lighten the work which awaits him, but much will of necessity be left for him to do. As to the garden in particular, though she and the children may be suffered to pull up a few weeds, he keeps for himself the whole culture and management.

The pride which many cottagers take in their gardens is delightful to observe; and considering the short time they can bestow, and the want of manure (for many of them cannot keep a pig) their success is no less to be admired. A garden to be both neat and fruitful must have a great deal of labour as well as judgment given to it, even if it be but the eighth of an acre. Between seedness and ingathering the beds call for con-

stant attention. In a wet time the weeds will get head in spite of perpetual hoeing; besides what the produce requires both of labour and care, there is trimming of hedges and grass paths, as well as the more interesting tendance of the flower bed, to be looked after; through all the long spring and summer garden work is never done with, and so long as there is daylight after hours a peasant who is fond of his garden will be at some work upon it.

The culture of a garden should find its sufficient reward in the pleasure and moderate profit which it affords; but labouring men do not, all of them, so appreciate these as to take much trouble for their sake; some cottages in each neighbourhood are therefore little better than lodging places in a wilderness. To meet this indifference and to stimulate good cottage gardening a Show of produce is generally effective; when a man sees in the tangible form of a gold piece the result of his neighbour's rising up early and so late taking rest, there springs up in him a rivalry prompting him to do the like. Nor is the benefit of a garden show confined to him; a cottager who does not need this inducement is much interested in the survey of prize vegetables, he learns something

about the best kinds and the best method of raising them ; even the time of Mr. Sprouts, the Squire's gardener, is by no means thrown away upon his official criticism of fine produce grown without the many advantages he enjoys. That such competition among neighbours is not in all respects beneficial is no more than may be said of all human efforts to do good. It must be confessed that Brown, who does not possess in full measure the particular vegetable of which he has produced some gigantic specimens, is certainly exposed to the temptation of completing his exhibit from the gardens of Jones or Robinson, or of both; and if the whole show is entirely honest and above board, industry and skill will not always win. The best soil and the fullest leisure will at length bring the prizes year by year into the same few hands which are so favoured; nor can the cleverest handicapper prevent this happening in the long run. The fact is, that like other tonics, this of prize-giving wears itself out after a time ; when the bad gardens have been fairly levelled up by the stimulus of a garden show, it may be good policy to withhold this inducement for some years, and apply it afresh when the need of it is again felt. A chief reason for continuing

to offer prizes when they have ceased to serve their first purpose is the difficulty of collecting subscriptions which have been suffered to lapse, and consequently of reviving an institution which has lain in abeyance; but to present an annual bonus for good gardening to those who without it would do their utmost is much like administering tonics regularly to people in rude health; and the effect may be the same, in the second case to undermine the constitution, in the first to weaken the moral fibre.

So long as love of horticulture or care for the family's reasonable comfort is the motive for labour additional to the day's work, there can be nothing said to its prejudice, rather should it be encouraged as giving brightness to the dull round of toil; but I have known many instances of a labourer's putting mischievous strain upon his powers from a motive less worthy, but not at all peculiar to energetic men of his class. The greed of gain takes hold of one here and there, goading him on to hire ground in addition to his sufficient garden, and laying on him a yoke of toil too heavy for him to bear unless, as happens I fear sometimes, he learns to lighten it by subtracting from the day's work some labour which he is paid to expend.

For such men the allotment system is a snare, however beneficial it may be otherwise; strength and endurance have their limits which cannot with impunity be overstepped. On the other hand, where the houses of a village have no gardens attached, or have gardens too small for the wants of a family, allotment ground is a great boon; there will generally be resident among the farm labourers a few artisans or jobbing men, whose work is irregular, and who therefore have much time upon their hands; these may, I believe, cultivote half an acre profitably: for a man in regular field work a single rood will probably be enough. Such small holdings are doubtless to be had in most places by the mere action of supply and demand; but the legislature has lately thought well to secure its acquisition by direct enactment, by the Allotments Act of 1887, and that of 1890.

By the first of these it is provided that, where a voluntary arrangement cannot be made, the sanitary authority shall, upon the demand of six electors or ratepayers of the parish, buy or hire what land is necessary, and shall let it to the labouring population at a reasonable rent, avoiding, as far as possible, in the compulsory purchase

inconvenience to any owner. The allotment may not be sublet, nor may a building for habitation be erected upon it : the land to be let in allotments is to be improved and adapted for the purpose by the sanitary authority. It is to be let impartially to such tenants as may appear to be suitable; not more than one acre is to be let to any one person for the purpose of cultivation, but provision of common pasture land for cattle is to be made where possible and expedient. The Act of 1890 provides for moving the County Council to make the above arrangements in default of the sanitary authority; and for the use of the parish school house, free of charge after due notice to the managers, for the discussion of any question relating to allotments. These Acts are to be had from Messrs. Spottiswoode, East Harding Street, Fleet Street, E.C., for the sum of twopence and one halfpenny respectively besides postage.

These Acts, it is to be observed, contemplate no larger area of allotment than may be cultivated by an artisan or farm labourer without detriment to his regular calling. Their limit of one acre is liberal for this purpose ; even a journeyman shoemaker or tailor will find so much land a considerable tax upon him, while a man who has to spend

the long day at field work may well be content with a fourth of this quantity. Its thorough cultivation will take up his whole spare time and strength; if corn is grown upon an allotment a difficulty may arise at harvest time; dewy eve is not favourable to the housing of grain, and no other time may be at the disposal of an allotment tenant. This difficulty was much felt in Northamptonshire last harvest; the labourers on some farms left the work they had engaged to do in order to save their own little crops. However, in parts of southern England, there seems to be a great desire to possess an allotment, a desire which should be met cheerfully by both farmers and landowners. There is small fear but the craving will pass away so soon as experience teaches that it cannot be profitably indulged.

A much larger holding than the Allotments Act provide for is eagerly sought for by one or other who has got together a little money and could give his whole time to its cultivation; but the anxiety and risk of such a venture go far to counterbalance the possible gain; and even the luxury of working for no master but one's self may be too dearly bought at the cost of a man's peace of mind. The tenant of a few acres will certainly live a

harder life upon the whole than the ordinary farm hand, and will probably be not much richer at the year's end. So *petite culture* does not hold out so gaudy a prospect to the individual engaged in it as has sometimes been supposed. But to the peasant population of a district it is an advantage to have one or more such little farmers in their neighbourhood, from whom to purchase necessities and comforts which those who farm largely are not willing to sell. Butter, eggs, and more especially milk, are among the chief requirements of a family; the absence of them makes the labourer's fare hard indeed, and if they are not to be had but with great difficulty or of inferior quality the comfort of his life is seriously interfered with. For good milk there is no sufficient substitute in a young child's diet; a peasant here and there tries to keep a goat for the supply of milk, but this is only possible in the near neighbourhood of a common; and the condensed milk to be bought at the shops is costly and not always palatable. On these accounts among others it is of importance that small parcels of land should in each district be attainable; there will generally be one or more of the more striving and fortunate peasantry in a position to farm a few acres with advantage to those around, and with

sufficient chance of success to prompt him to the enterprise.

There are several months during which the evenings cannot be spent in garden or allotment culture; and for older peasants who take but small pleasure in reading the time after supper must be often tedious. Many labourers I have known to while it away by shoe-mending, an employment which I fancy is not hard to learn, and, besides giving the peasant occupation, is a great saving where the little feet are many; for children seem to delight in kicking out their boots and soaking them in the slush and snow on the way between home and school. The bill for keeping the family dry-shod will be a serious one if every small repair must be done at the shop, and the father who can put on a neat patch or a serviceable sole cannot spend his winter evenings to better purpose.

Opportunities for bye-work are constantly presenting themselves and will be seized by the industrious peasant. Much is done, and more might be done, by way of repair and adornment to the home. I have sometimes been shown a pretty screen which the husband has put together and all the family have helped to cover in the long evenings; and I have before now met with a piece of furniture

which an exceptionally skilful peasant has at odd times through the winter made for his wife's convenience. But in many cottages there is much less ambitious work wanting to be done, though for substantial repairs the landlord must of course be looked to. White-washing, papering, and painting are not, perhaps, except at the beginning of a tenancy, to be expected of him ; cottage chimneys are, many of them, loath to do their office, and love to keep the smoke circling about before they suffer it to ascend : so walls and ceiling grow darker and darker, and the photo-portraits above the mantel gather blackness. Here is full scope for indoor occupation ; and it is well rewarded, for a little lime and a few pieces of cheap wall-paper make a wonderful difference in the aspect of a room.

By such employments as these the married peasant will be enabled to resist the temptation to pass his evenings habitually from home. With single men it is far otherwise. Not only is their pleasure in each other's company more keen, but the comfort of indoor life is in their case very much abridged ; there is little room about the hearth for grown-up sons, and lodgers are of course less welcome there. When supper is done they have small choice but to turn out into the village street.

Where shall they go? and how shall they use up the energy and spirits which remain to youth after the day's work?

In no direction than in this have greater efforts been made by philanthropists, lay and clerical. Night-schools, reading-rooms, *cafés*, institutes—all manner of resources have been provided for the young peasantry, to improve their minds, to amuse and refresh them, to keep them out of mischief. I have said something already about attempts to continue the education which was begun at the parish school. With regard to their amusement we have, I fear, been hitherto even less successful than with regard to their instruction. A reading-room, which with much acceptance by the village I set on foot, throve mightily for a year, through the second year fell off a little, and thenceforth gradually decayed, until at the third year's end I put it out of its misery. As we were at no loss for funds, a daily paper was taken as well as the county paper and some illustrated periodicals. The first interested but a very few, many read the local news, and every one looked at the pictures, but these after a glance were thrown aside by men who had no interest in the scenes and people which they represented; draughts were at first played

by a couple now and then, bagatelle was a good deal patronized, dominoes were to the end a favourite game. The room was thoroughly warm and light, and under the superintendence of a trustworthy person was well ordered. But the institution somehow lacked vitality, there was not enough "go" in it; while all approved, very few after a while cared to frequent it, and those few were of the class that could provide for themselves at home the resources which they felt to need.

Why do such schemes die out thus prematurely? I do not suppose the fate of my reading-room to have been singular.

It certainly is not for want of personal exertion on the part of their promoters; nor, except rarely, from their injudicious management; nor from dislike of society on the part of those whom we wish to assemble. I am inclined to set it down to the depravity of human nature, to the recalcitrance of young manhood.

There are doubtless in all ranks a certain number of the rising generation who look up to their elders and superiors for direction; but the average youth well on in his teens is bent upon doing what he likes; whether what he likes is good or evil depends partly upon his natural inclination, partly

upon the influences amidst which he lives. To such influences he is still open, but what he abhors is to be taken care of in the matter of spending time; hobbledehoy though he is, he believes himself to be a man, and he claims therefore to be out of leading strings. The consequence of this persuasion among young peasants is a distaste for places of resort after hours to which the parson or other gentleman invites them; and though by no means blind to their need of instruction, and thankful to receive it, they will not frequent for diversion a place which is obviously carried on with a view to their improvement. They will probably be induced by the novelty of the thing to give it a short trial, and then their attendance will decline. The room will, so long as it is open, continue to be patronized by a few of the steadiest young men, but these would spend their evenings as profitably elsewhere. At all events it is not for them that the expense and trouble are incurred. The majority want a place to sit in where each one can do what he lists, short of inconvenience to others, and can, short of intemperance, refresh himself as he chooses—a place, above all, where words may be freely spoken with no thought of their effect upon any but those to whom

they are addressed. Such a "house of call" is not perhaps what we desire for them, but it exists everywhere, the spontaneous outcome of a demand by the peasantry for such a meeting place as shall content them: and for the young peasant's patronage no house, however comfortable or even luxurious, can long compete with this—the public-house. It is an institution which in one form or other will survive all measures taken for its suppression, grandmotherly or otherwise—an institution to be improved, to be made harmless, and by degrees even beneficial, but not to be abolished.

That many public-houses are disorderly, and some very mischievous, arises for the most part from the character of their customers; the publican's character will, of course, have a certain influence, but he will hardly carry on business for the sake of reforming his patrons, and they will in the end get a man of their own level or thereabouts to serve them. If the landlord sets the example of sobriety and decent behaviour, and sternly refuses the custom of any that are quarrelsome or intemperate, he does as much as can be expected of him. To strengthen the hands of respectable publicans, the firmness of magistrates in revoking the licence of an ill-conducted

house will do much ; but for material improvement of public-houses we must look to the customers themselves, and to the influences for good which can be brought to bear on the young peasantry.

Nor do I think such youths are specially disinclined to wholesome ways, or set against the counsel of those whom they like and trust ; but they are amusingly jealous of manhood's privilege to hold the conduct of life in their own hands : they object to being managed for ; and our efforts to do them good will succeed in proportion as we keep this in mind. They will eagerly avail themselves of opportunities offered for their improvement, in any direction which they take to be useful to them or which jumps with their humour. I know of four classes at this moment which, under the guidance of ladies, are doing well. In one parish some young fellows are learning to hammer out brass in *repoussé* work, and in two other parishes a class of them are busy about wood-carving ; in yet another they learn drawing : there is no rudeness or attempt at horseplay in either ; all are engrossed in what they are being taught. Only the other evening one of these pupils, sighing as he put his coat on, said, "If I had but a little more

time I could finish it." A class for shoe-mending, if it were conducted by a person at once skilful and pleasant-mannered, would, I believe, be a still greater success by way of interesting young men, and would certainly be more useful. Dressmaking would doubtless be as popular with the big girls; but these are most of them, in service before they have arrived at young womanhood, and it is difficult to get them together at night without exposing them to some temptation on the road.

Such means of interesting and employing young people belong, of course, to the winter season. In summer their spare time is more easily got through. Cricket is very popular among them; and in the cricket-field, because one class can mix so readily with another there, we have grand opportunity for good influence upon the rougher youths. I forgot, by the by, when I wrote "we," to exclude myself and others who cannot acquit ourselves at the game with credit: for few things sink us lower in the opinion of the peasantry than an unsuccessful attempt at anything in which they at all excel. The best that such as I can do about the wickets is to pay our subscription and to look on with what sympathy

we may. But young clergymen who can habitually make a good score, and have come to take warm interest in the peasantry of their own age, may do valuable work among them in the cricket field, where all ranks are equal for the moment. The best player is honoured most, and the play of rustics is not so good but that a second-rate performer may deal with both ball and bails in a fashion that shall win him reverence; for their hero-worship, if none other, is devout. Once they have set their hero on his pedestal, they will fall down before him; what he does and says it becomes their pride to imitate at humble distance: they are, in spite of themselves, affected by his view of things; they adopt what he encourages, and what he frowns upon ceases to be in vogue with them. Such influence for good is perhaps even more readily exerted by a layman, because in his coming among his poor neighbours there is less suspicion of ulterior motive; but regular practice with the village eleven demands considerable sacrifice in his case, and unless it is regular, small good will come of his attendance.

Other ways of raising the tone of life among the young peasantry, according to the circum-

stances and habits of their neighbourhood, will occur to those who care for them. But the point I would urge is that openings may, without much difficulty, be found for easy, unrestrained intercourse between the ruder and the cultured inhabitants of a parish. The details of an art, however humble, afford almost inexhaustible matter for conversation; all learn to understand each other; and when mutual confidence is established an influence of the better upon the worse is at once set up, influence none the less powerful for being both exerted and submitted to unconsciously in great measure. It is by such action of one character upon another that lasting good may be done to those who would kick against the well-meant but prickly discipline of rules and exhortation.

Of the peasant's occasional amusements I am in no position to speak. Judging by the shows, and shooting galleries, and merry-go-rounds, which at fair time sojourn in our village for a night, they seem to be no more refined than they used to be. But with regard to them the same remark may be made which applies to the ordinary language and behaviour of working people, viz., that all is not vicious that is coarse, and that,

while more or less coarseness is to be found among them all, vice is rife among a minority, and is condemned by the public opinion which they all acknowledge. Whoever has a real acquaintance with our peasantry will draw a strong line between what is bad belonging to them and what is only in bad taste; and his efforts will be directed to put down the first with a strong hand and very tenderly to correct the last.

VIII.

THE PEASANT IN CHURCH.

My fellows of the clergy will perhaps agree with me that English peasants, as a class, are religious after their fashion, but not as labouring people are in the country where the word "peasant" is vernacular; they have no notion of objective worship, though, by the rude pictures in distemper which used to cover our church walls, and are still to be traced on many of them, it is plain that the forefathers of the hamlet must have found in things sensible and material an aid to their souls' emotion. All such religion however was washed off the face of rural England by the Puritan wave which swept over the land, and, as it receded, left behind in the labourer's soul little more than those vague aspirations heavenward which Primitive Methodism represents in extreme

form. Not that working people are Methodists as a rule, but their religious tone is of this character; the inward spiritual grace which they covet, most of them, so ardently, has in their idea no connection with an outward visible sign. But this notwithstanding, the Church and her services have for various reasons strong hold upon them still, and will, I believe, gain ground in their affection as they become more intelligent and instructed.

In so much as I am trying to write about country church-going I must confine myself to the question as it affects parishes like my own, parishes, I mean, in which the circumstances of the church have from time immemorial been bound up with those of the manor. Of those agricultural villages the houses of which are owned by a numerous proprietary, I can say nothing, for my long experience has been but a narrow one, and supplies no facts to justify my troubling you with remarks upon the past and present condition of these as regards church attendance.

The parishes with which I will ask you for the moment to be concerned have from the first been paternal and despotic in their institutions both secular and spiritual. Among spiritual institutions

church-going has been, till of late, jealously looked after and kept up. From the time when a priest was given precedence as a Thane, and a well-to-do churl attained the like patent of gentility by building a church with a bell tower, *i.e.* from the seventh century to the end of the eighteenth, church-going in the country was a thing pretty well of course; however else the lay and ecclesiastical jurisdictions might clash, they seldom failed to be of one mind about sending people to church.

Nor (though I here speak under correction) does this pleasant state of things seem to have been interfered with in Commonwealth times so much as one might at first suppose, for the Puritan movement in England seems to have been, in its early years at all events, rather a schism within the Church's pale than a separation from her; and the Puritan ministers who displaced the Church priesthood would be even more urgent with the people than they had been to attend church.

Even when spiritual religion was at its lowest, in the century before John Wesley's revival, the old custom of going to church lost none of its vitality in such parishes as mine. Sir Roger de Coverley might nap on the sabbath day, but he napped in church, and his Worship was religiously

particular to wake at odd times and to look round severely on his retainers, lest any should have absented themselves, or have presumed to share his privilege of day-dreaming in the parish church. The parson might, or might not, on week days help the squire to hunt his hounds, but the squire, as a thing of course, whipped in for the parson on Sundays. The tradition of our oldest people seems to be that every one who would stand well with the local authority was to be found in his place at church. Separatists were frowned upon, and in some cases, even within this century, downright persecuted; their attempt to invade the parochial paradise was promptly and sometimes cruelly put down. In one case at least, to my knowledge through hearsay, the Persian method, as described by Herodotus (vi. 31), was adopted with such success as would have stirred a Satrap out of his composure: the conservative and insulted rustics, either with a rope or by joining of hands, swept the village from top to bottom, hunting the intruders off the face of it. Of late, churchgoing has to some extent lost its character as a mark of respectability among the labouring people; but no doubt there are at this day many parishes in which favouring circumstances still keep alive

among them the impression that to attend church is the right thing, specially because it is, like honesty, the best policy. I recently visited a parish of the woodbine and honeysuckle type, and came away convinced that things are comfortable indeed for the shepherd under such circumstances, and for the sheep too for that matter, if they only will not mind the feel of a crook about their legs. An air of sensuous calm, which just a hint of asceticism not unpleasantly toned down, seemed everywhere to reign: a polished order ruled throughout. The parson's guests were by a notice asked to shut the door, but the request was preferred in no phrase less graceful than pentameter; *Matins* in the quiet little church, at which cheerful but unsmiling children mustered, served for grace to our ample breakfast. And as I walked to the dame's school (an efficient one by the by) my senses were gently played upon by the birds' song and the smell of new hay; while my excellent friend, prophet, priest, and king of that happy land, in gentle speech displaced from my mind the idea of recalcitrant parishioners, assuring me that he knew nothing of such changes as some of us less favoured ones bewail; and I have scarcely yet

awakened from my morning's dream of the royal county glorified, wherein through its length and breadth there lived under gabled roofs a happy hat-touching peasantry who

> "Loved their occupations,
> Blessed the squire and his relations,
> Lived upon their daily rations,
> And always kept their proper stations."

I have been tempted to advert to a past state of things with some appearance of disrespect; because, wholesome as it was for the people in some ways, convenient as it was undoubtedly to our predecessors, it rested too much upon motives unworthy of Him whom it professed to serve.

But if the story of church-going in years gone by provokes half-earnest criticism, the attitude of our peasant contemporaries with regard to it gives deep concern to good Churchmen, demands their anxious consideration, and claims their best efforts to bring about a change.

I need not describe the aspect of a country church in this year of grace. There are, as I have said, parishes in which the old traditions survive; there are besides no doubt one or two in most neighbourhoods where the rare ability and zeal of the clergyman attract a crowd of hearers, and, one

trusts, of worshippers; but in an ordinary close parish—which as to spiritual things is left to itself by the lay power, and in which an average parson gives himself and his time honestly without reserve—in an ordinary parish church, while the upper and middle classes are fairly represented, the working people, especially the males among them, are to be found only few and far between.

By our principal parishioners, the resident gentry, the obligation to attend their parish church is still acknowledged and discharged with commendable regularity, not merely of custom but in most cases I believe for conscience' sake, and so far as my experience goes, the middle class, the farmers and tradesmen, unless they are confirmed Dissenters, attend well; infidel notions have hardly laid hold of them yet. There is much robust religion on the spear-side, and on the spindle-side an increasing appreciation of frequent well ordered services; the class is as a whole satisfactory, and I believe more inclined Churchward than it was when I first knew it forty years ago. Such families have much advanced in taste; the bald chapel service no longer contents them; moreover their ideas and scale of living have grown to bear some comparison with those of

gentle people, they are consequently more open to social influence with regard to church going as well as in other matters. But among the labouring class we have to deplore a grievous falling off in church attendance, and it is worth while to look the reasons of it in the face.

I. To begin with, this class is not, like the farmers, affected by social considerations ; working people are too far below the gentry to catch from them the infection of church going, while the spirit of the time has taken off them the old pressure from above, and makes the attempt to re-impose it well nigh impossible. We shall perhaps agree in condemning such an attempt as most unwise even were there hope of its success: I am inclined to give it a harder epithet ; but one cannot deny that at the present time the Church in close parishes suffers a good deal from the reaction which followed upon the withdrawal of this pressure—a reaction which is still in force. The whole labouring class with regard to its superiors is now in a like state of transition to that in which the youths of the class have always been with regard to their pastors and masters. The men exult in their freedom, are nervously anxious to assert themselves and quick to resent interference ; they pass the church with

the same half-ashamed half-rebellious feeling with which they used to pass the school, and they keep out of the parson's way as they once fought shy of their old teacher.

This feeling and consequent behaviour would I dare say wear off in time, were it not kept alive and encouraged by other circumstances, among the chief of which is

II. A change in the relation of working men to their employers with regard to moral obligation and responsibility. This change has come about nowhere without friction, with painful collision in many cases; charges of ingratitude on one hand and of extortion on the other have been freely made, and much soreness has been the consequence. That influence therefore which was generally exercised for good, and which specially told in favour of church going, is now in abeyance, to say the least of it: the labourers are not even at the trouble to excuse themselves, and the farmer has almost ceased to care whether or not the sharers of his week's toil come to worship with him on Sunday.

As the pressure of the landowner has been taken off, and the employer's wishes have no longer weight, so that influence which the parson, apart

from his spiritual character, used to exert, is much diminished. The great increase of comfort arising from higher wages and improved cottages, together with the better management which education has begun to teach, has placed a large number of the peasantry above the need of those good offices which it was our pleasure to do them and which attached them to our persons. True there are loafers and feckless women in every parish whose ragged destitution appeals to us as shamelessly as ever; there are everywhere sick people and chronic invalids too who look for, and with present gratitude accept, all we can give them; but any obligation arising out of this help is in general scarcely acknowledged in the one case, and in the other is soon forgotten; there are also a few partially incapable through weak health, who find only casual employment, and have to be assisted from time to time, they are among the most deserving and thankful of our charge; but upon the whole the peasantry are almost independent of us, and behave accordingly.

III. So this class for the most part takes its own course with regard to church going; they come or stay away as they choose. Why is it that the bulk of them stay away?

i. Because the Church service is not to their taste. I do not think they ever quite liked it, I mean those of them who could form an inclination upon the matter. Of course the young rustics, who were addicted to church going because they could under the circumstances most easily put their legs up and think of nothing, would accord the privilege of their presence to the most elaborate ritual as to the simplest with a sublime impartiality; but the rest of the industrial congregation, huddled together in the gallery and under it, could have enjoyed themselves but imperfectly in body mind or spirit; they paid scant attention to the prayers, and could have understood but very little of the sermon, if we may judge of it by the erudite and sesquipedalian samples that have come down to us. The one thing they really liked was the psalm-singing; this interested them as being the performance of their friends, and at this they were able oftentimes to assist. Some one may recall the sonorous vigour with which the congregation would come to the rescue of a quavering quartet, as it closed with—

"Take your pil-
Take your pil-
Take your pil-
grim home."

Whoever has listened to the song which a genuine peasant sings at a harvest supper or at his club, will recognise the lingering slow movement, the emphasised cadence, and the long-drawn repeated burden which marked the psalmody of fifty years ago ; contrast this with the brisk air and crisp utterance of some of our hymns, and we shall be at no loss to account for the indifference with which the working people listen to them. Then again the manner of reading the service and the style of preaching were in the first years of my ministry as little to their taste, and are now in some places not more acceptable to them. I remember how as a young man I was ambitious of raising by degrees the conduct of our doings in church to an ideal which I had adopted in deference to the leaders of the party to which I conceived myself to belong, from the simple form of common prayer and praise to the full-blown dignity of a function ; to say the service as a machine might with the least inflection of voice possible ; to discourage such chants as are called florid ; to read my scrap of theology with about as much expression as a clerk of arraigns might ; for it was the fashion among advanced clerics of that time to speak slightingly of the sermon as an accident, a scarcely necessary

accident, of ministration. I was not, as I trust, unmindful of God's presence the while; I know I thought a good deal of what I was doing; but the one thing I thought least about was interesting the hearers. I have spoken of myself because such a description might otherwise sound like a libel upon the High Church party of my young days, and I have made the worst of it perhaps: but, be that as it may, things have in this respect much changed of late: we some of us run into the opposite extreme; but the cold stiff manner still sticks to an iron-grey clergyman here and there, and chills the sympathy of his congregation.

ii. Another reason for the absence of our peasantry from church is the advance of education; I do not mean the knowledge of special subjects which is crammed into the children, and by a merciful providence soon comes out at the pores with the sweat of their brow; but the facility of reading, and of understanding what they read, which distinguishes this generation of working men from their clod-forefathers. Some of the most regular attendants at church among the poor of my parish are, and always have been, elderly people who are "no scholars" as they confess themselves; these listen most attentively, and, in spite of their

disadvantage, probably carry away more of what is said than their better learned juniors. But it is a rare thing now to find a man, or rarer to find a woman, under forty who cannot read ; and as most of them can read with ease and understanding, they can get at home that for which their class used to come to church—a knowledge of the Bible ; for indeed our peasantry, if not specially trained in church principles, are not a worshipping race. There has doubtless grown up around the town clergy, and in some country parishes, a number both of the middle and higher classes who join devoutly and intelligently in most solemn spiritual services whether severe or ornate; but nearly all country people of the labouring and even of the farmer class come to church not so much to exercise their souls in prayer and praise as to "get good," as they say, from the reading and exposition of God's Holy Word. Speaking of a clergyman they will allege always that he *preaches* at such a church, meaning that he has cure of souls in that parish; and when habitual absentees would say a civil thing they declare their intention of "coming to *hear* us" some day. Now that people with this idea should generally prefer reading good words at their leisure by the fireside to walking a distance in

all weathers to hear the like in a cold church is not extraordinary, and I believe is very frequently the case.

iii. I will say nothing about the spread of scepticism as a cause of diminished church attendance on the country side: it is one cause doubtless, but neither strongly nor widely prevalent as yet; it lays hold of a man here and there among the most knowing, and of several among the most conceited of our people; it may help to increase the general indifference to public worship; but it is perhaps the least active of the causes which keep away the peasantry from their parish church.

iv. It is easier to account for the falling off of church attendance in the country than to point out a remedy, there are however one or two suggestions which occur to me.

(i.) Personal influence will, as I apprehend, lie at the bottom of any successful measure for bringing labourers to church. The habit of attendance there will not be kept alive amongst them without some urging and sustaining force; this used to be supplied abundantly from above by their "betters" (to express a well nigh obsolete idea in its dead language): now such a force must issue from their own body; the principle of cohesion which a

paternal supervision preserved must be furnished by the tie of brotherhood; individuals who have been awakened to a sense of Church duties must be banded together for the performance of them, and by this means a common zeal and interest may be generated.

The fact of membership through Holy Baptism ought, we know, to suffice for this purpose, but we find by experience that it does not; on the other hand the Church is too broad and generous to acknowledge a body of Christians standing out in her midst and setting up for an outward visible communion of saints within her pale, and this makes one diffident of any machinery which should call into prominence such a select company. Nevertheless association in some form is wanted to give steadfastness and point to Church feeling. The mixture of classes of which in a small parish such an association must be composed presents a practical difficulty in maintaining it, while another difficulty will be found in that bondage to the average opinion of their own class to which our peasantry are subject.

But apart from organization, the influence of fellow worshippers, whether clerics or laymen, must have effect upon individuals; such influence will

be more wholesomely and successfully exerted within the church than outside, by devout example rather than by admonition; if the parson is so evidently praying with his whole soul as to be unconscious of small distractions such as children fidgeting or the entrance of late comers; if each habitual attendant shows himself absorbed in the holy purpose for which he is supposed to be present, some casual members of the congregation will, one hopes, be impressed with the deep significance of divine worship, and induced perhaps to attend regularly. The declaiming against such as will not come to church, in the ears of a congregation assembled there, seems hardly appropriate, and frequent cottage lecturing upon non-attendance has, in my case at all events, failed of much effect.

(ii.) Next to the influence of Church people upon each other and of the parson upon them all, the most practical way of drawing Christians churchward must be to provide in our services such features as to the peasantry are most attractive. Certainly the opposite way of dealing with them has met with very qualified success. I have in mind at this moment the work of a clergyman, both zealous and able, which has partially failed, on account, as seems to me, of his not perceiving the

importance of this. He was some years ago given charge of a large country parish in which many circumstances had brought about a vehement widespread Dissent; my friend at once presented to the little body of Church people a high ritual, with such accessories of music and decoration as he could arrange. The mission room was crowded Sunday after Sunday for months, and then, to the surprise and grief of the parson and of those who sympathised with his work, the attendance gradually thinned, until it was scarcely more numerous at last than it had been in the parish church during the years of stagnation which preceded his coming. Now I believe the ritual was rather attractive than otherwise to these semi-Dissenters, and the marked reverence struck them forcibly. Parson and choir processed and re-cessed with much apparent approval; numbers who had left the Church were constant and devout in their attendance, they seemed to welcome with delight Church ordinances which had been either denied them or with seeming negligence administered. Why did the thing to such extent collapse? Because, as I venture to think, the two features of Church service which the peasant sets most store by—the preaching and the singing—were not to his mind,

he gave them fair trial, and deliberately went back to Ebenezer when he saw no prospect of getting at St. Dunstan's what his soul lusted after. Craving for excitement he had sat under a cold *douche* of "formalism" as he had learned to call it, and his voice had been cramped within Gregorian compass when he had longed to send it gliding or rushing, as on a vocal switchback, up and down the gamut. Ritual I believe the peasant likes, if it is simply explained and not dictated to him. A labouring man with his children has been seen in the forefront of that mission room, kneeling, all of them side by side, not, like *The Child Samuel* of Sir Joshua Reynolds, sitting on their hams, but positively kneeling upright upon their knees, as praying Christians should, and that with no desk in front of them.

The chief difficulty with regard both to preaching and singing arises in most country parishes from the mixed character of the congregation; there is the taste of the few educated people to be consulted as well as the need of the many unlearned. Some clergymen have the gift of simple yet thoughtful eloquence which can at once interest and edify both these, but we are not all of us so able; such as I am must be content to provide homely

instruction and exhortation for the mass of hearers, hoping by our earnestness to gain the ear of the cultured few, and on occasion to arouse their interest. It is the labouring class to whom sermons are a necessity, and to their edification will the honest parson direct his best endeavours in a country church. As their feelings are as quick to answer an appeal as their intellect is slow to follow an argument, the effect of a sermon upon their spiritual sense will be in proportion to its fervour rather than to its logic.

Upon the subject of congregational singing there has been lately much both of wisdom and of unwisdom written, but I have read little that helps to solve the question as it affects a small village church. As to working people there is no doubt that they are fond of music at divine service, and are ill-satisfied if they cannot themselves take part in its performance; at the same time the result of their efforts will be but discord painful to every one, unless they are led by fellow-worshippers who have musical knowledge as well as a correct ear. A choir then there must be, but of such sort as will assist and not supplant the congregation, and the style of music should be chosen with a view to please these rather than the choir. Now and then

an anthem or a service may be sung in which the people cannot join, and to this they will gladly listen out of respect to their more skilful friends in the chancel, but the music as a whole must, if it is to attract the peasantry, be of a kind which they can sing themselves.

IX.

THE PEASANT SICK.

I SUPPOSE that sickness is the circumstance of life which beyond all others brings the classes on a level: the rich man and the pauper alike feel pain. It is said that culture makes men physically more sensitive, but this is quite open to question; and, if such be the fact, it may perhaps be attributable to the accidents of illness rather than to the patient's more delicate fibre. The incessant small services, and the anxious solicitude of those around him, tend very much to concentrate upon himself the attention of a rich sufferer, while a poor sick man must be in some degree taken out of himself by the obtrusive struggle for livelihood which he sees going on as steadily as ever, the necessities of his own case notwithstanding. The contrast of his position with that

which would be ours in a like sickness has much to do with our compassion: such of us as have felt severe pain, and the terrible prostration which results from its long continuance, cannot but sympathize deeply with the like suffering of one who has few of the alleviations which we enjoyed. We are however relieved to know that the sick peasant has often alleviations of his own which are no less grateful to him than were ours. Though by no means the one centre of interest to the household that we were, he gets far more attention than he has been used to. The picture of a respectable peasant on the sick list is not so utterly sad. He usually sits in the front parlour, carefully arrayed in his Sunday clothes; the big Bible, unburdened of the ornaments which have so long lain upon it, stands dusted beside him; his little daughter brings her picture-books to amuse him; the wife, her arms all a-froth with soap-suds, snatches a minute now and then to see how he is getting on; the parson, the doctor, and the good ladies help to beguile the long hours of his seclusion, and the effort to do his part creditably before them occupies him at intervals: compelled inaction is an agreeable change from daily work. Much that we think necessary to

the comfort of a sick-room would only worry him. The children's chatter, and the shrill accents of their mother in reproof of them, are no annoyance; creaking shoes and slamming doors have small effect upon his nerves. One luxury he has, and also one privation, which I have omitted: even there, amid shiniest upholstery, under the beady eyes of his mother-in-law looking down upon him severely from above the mantelpiece, he is privileged to wear his hat, but, on the other hand, no pipe will the Missis suffer to contaminate her state apartment. So fares the sick peasant at his best: he enjoys, by reason of illness, a sort of protracted Sabbath. But if presently he takes to his bed, there is little rest for him: pain and want of sleep try him worse than ever labour tried him; the confinement, which many of us bear easily enough, is to him a weary burden; the local paper is soon spelled through, and the Bible, conscientiously pored over, claims an effort of mind which he finds exhausting. There needs all the parson's tact and freshness to make even his visit welcome, while the presence of those who come to sit with their poor neighbour suggests groanings which, but for his sense of their kind intention, he would utter.

The too usual case of a sick labourer has many more discomforts: dirt and disorder, bad cooking and irregular tendance, often delay his cure, and increase the suffering even of a man who in health took bad management equably enough. Ventilation, in the first place, is but little understood, and therefore is unvalued in cottage life. Where necessary heat is hard to get, there is sore temptation to keep shut within the four walls whatever warmth has been secured; so crevices are stuffed with rag or paper, and the bedroom fireplace, if there is one, is jealously boarded up. Then with regard to cleanliness: the peasant's simple luxuries do not include a tub. I am far from saying that our habit of constant ablution is altogether adapted to the well-being of a day labourer in health; but in sickness, when his skin is no longer kept active by exertion, the accretion upon it of dust is a distinct mischief; and our own experience of illness tells us how quickly the inert body attracts to itself all foreign matter that is hovering round—"matter in the wrong place," as Lord Palmerston euphemistically called "dirt." Again, though the peasantry are inclined to believe in physic if it is only violent and nasty enough, and swallow quantities at the small chemist's hands, they view

with some suspicion the recipes of a regular practitioner, and frequently set at naught his orders. Specially is this last the case with regard to infection. Sometimes indeed such a panic will seize the neighbours of a house in which there is supposed to be "something catching," that none of them will be persuaded for love or money to approach it; but they will generally huddle about a fever-stricken patient, and will suffer their children to play freely with one who is just recovering from scarlatina: of systematic isolation they have no idea, and look upon it as unneighbourly. For these, among other reasons, a skilled nurse is of the utmost use in acute sickness; she brings with her that self-control and that gentle firmness which are so wanting to the labouring class. But the trained nurse is not always welcomed, partly because the very presence of those virtues is distasteful, and partly because her requirements, for want of space and appliances, are hard to satisfy. The nurse for very poor people should perhaps be of coarser mould than those who are employed about the rich; she should be willing to put her hand to anything: to get the husband's dinner on occasion, or to dress the children. The separate room, the exercise and repose at stated times,

things which by the professional nurse are justly insisted on, glaringly and disagreeably contrast with the habits of those among whom she is suddenly thrown. From a "real lady," if she will come to them, they will bear a great deal, but for ordinary attendance on their sick they prefer some one more like themselves; and if such a person is at once skilled and sensible, as many of this kind are, I am inclined to think she best answers the needs of a poor family in time of sickness.

After all, his cottage is not the place for a sick man, unless indeed he is sick unto present death, or has an ailment which admits of no real benefit: then it is cruel to take him away from home and kindred to sigh out his life among strangers. But if there is a fair hope of cure, his unwillingness to move should by all proper means be overcome: when the effort has been made and he grows familiar with his fresh surroundings, the sick peasant will be thankful that he was persuaded to come into

THE HOSPITAL.

It is to the hospital that I wish to devote the rest of this chapter. And I hope my readers will

forgive my inability to tell my experience of the peasant sick in hospital without mention of other patients, and of some matters which do not directly concern him.

Those who so well know the charm of complete rest after wearing, continuous toil, can hardly conceive perhaps the longing for a spell of real work which comes at times over the parson whose cure is so small that with him professional life between Sundays is featureless half-holiday for evermore. It was however such a longing that drove me to a certain hospital immediately upon reading an advertisement of the chaplain there for a clergyman to do some weeks' duty in his stead. Notwithstanding a rebuff to the effect that "Gentlemen, sir, who generally apply for such employment are not so old as you appear to be," before I got back to the club for luncheon I stood committed to a short experience which I shall always look back upon with pleasure.

As I begin to write, the social aspect of my life in hospital comes uppermost, tempting me to dwell on it. Not often has a middle-aged and truly rural cleric the chance of sharpening his wits that fell to me when first I carved for the resident staff. Those eminent practitioners

(as they mean to be some day) made rapid diagnosis of my case, and, though with professional courtesy they strove to hide from the patient what they thought, the treatment which they pursued, at once drastic and stimulant, revealed pretty clearly their opinion; and those glances, which flashed here and there across the table, telegraphed on all sides the word "duffer." My worst symptoms however disappeared in a day or two—at least I suppose so, for my medicine was quickly changed; and nothing could be more agreeable than the gently tonic after-treatment, or the heartiness with which the doctors hailed my convalescence. But I must say no more of them, for this paper is to be about their patients.

(i.) On entering a ward the first thing that struck me was the family likeness between, not the beds only, but their occupants. I soon discovered that one more or less articulate biped mammal is much like another when social differences are effaced by compulsory ablution or veiled by the hospital counterpane; and this is, to begin with, a distinct advantage to the chaplain over us country clergymen. He is not checked in his advances by neglect of invitation to take a seat, nor by that more disconcerting way some cottagers have of

enthroning their pope upon a Windsor chair, and then standing stiff and silent to be interrogated ; his class prejudice is neither shocked nor flattered, for men cannot uncover bare heads, nor can prostrate women curtsey to his reverence. Again, much common-place, which is a necessity with us, is in his case "taken as said," and he is free to speak at once of that which lies next his heart.

We shall all feel this to be an enviable advantage; but there is on the chaplain's side an apparent drawback. His work, one thinks, must be interfered with, if his attention is not distracted, by the publicity which surrounds him. I had considerable dread of this beforehand—I shrank from ministration which should be exposed for all the ward to watch and criticize—but I was soon reassured. I should have remembered that old residents in neighbouring cottages often keep ceremonious distance, and that these were bed-neighbours for the first time ; that each patient's own cares and ailments were wholly engrossing him, and that the strange surroundings made every one even more self-involved than he would have been otherwise. I found that these circumstances compassed about each patient as with an atmosphere of isolation ; and, though people who had

long lain side by side were for the most part friendly enough, each studiously ignored his neighbour at my approach, and ignored *me* until the turn came for my visit to him personally at his bed-side.

(ii.) That bed-side is a pleasanter one than we country parsons have generally to sit by; all is not only clean, but well ordered. The "sick teapot," as it is called, half-full of good milk or other drink, and the Japanese fan beside it, invite you to share with them the long wooden stool; or, if you sit upon the bed itself there is no fear of hurting maimed limbs, for a wire frame keeps everything at a distance that could injure them. If the patient cares to raise himself for better convenience of hearing he can do it easily by the cord with its handle which hangs down from the ceiling; if he is asthmatic, instead of drowning your voice by spasms of cough, he soothes his air passages with the vapour which from a sort of kettle upon his knees he inhales complacently. There is seldom anything to shock your senses; it will sometimes come across you that all the polish, and cleanliness and airiness of a hospital must cost the weakest patients annoyance if not downright suffering; that morning hours, which should bring sleep after the weary night-watch, have all rest scrubbed and swept

and fumigated out of them; but it quickly occurs to you that the general good must not be sacrificed to the susceptibilities of a few. Then again, you have the sick person to yourself; no terrible infant brandishes a big knife till the poor sufferer breaks in upon your exhortation with "Drat that child! I'm certain sure he'll do for hisself some day." No hard-featured relation postpones the reading by a long loud whisper of her private opinion to the effect that, "Hisn's a 'opeless case, as I tells him. I've knowed it times and times." Nothing of such hindrance; there the poor thing lies, in grievous pain perhaps, possibly with a heart brimful of care, but, so far as concerns externals, completely at your service. Here are great advantages which the chaplain may well be thankful for and diligently turn to profit; but his *locum tenens* must be a monster of missionary zeal who would abuse such opportunity by harsh questionings or long-drawn discourse.

(iii.) And indeed there is danger lest these favouring externals blind one to the misery which they cover. I was passing a patient who had but lately been brought in, and seeing her lying quietly on her back with half-shut eyes, I approached and began to speak to her. She looked up all at once,

and sharply said, "If you brought me a book to read it would be far better." This I did, of course, and left her without further speech; but several times I ministered to that woman afterwards, and always was received with welcome, though in the first severity of pain my mere presence had been more than she could bear.

(iv.) That terrible pain, which however is not generally continuous, needs to be dealt with tenderly, but the apprehension of it perhaps calls for even gentler treatment. I heard one morning from a cancer patient that her opposite neighbour, afflicted with the same malady, was to undergo an operation that afternoon; I went directly to this woman, who was up and dressed; and meaning to use the service in the *visitatio infirmorum* proper to her case, I proposed to pray with her. She with much diffidence excused herself on the plea that such ministration might unnerve her for what was coming; I thought, as we all should probably, that religious exercise should have effect just contrary to what she feared. However I did not press the thing, but stood by the window with her; and then, though looking out on the busy street, I believe she prayed, and it may be to better purpose than if I had forced upon her the ordeal of formal service.

The operation proved, for the time at least, successful, and when the ether fumes had passed away, she joined me in thanksgiving with a quiet fervour which persuaded me that her prayer at the window had been real.

(v.) But neither pain, nor the apprehension of it, appeared to weigh so heavily on the patients' spirits as did home cares, anxious thought for business at a standstill, for husband and children left without tendance. With one here and there this "taking thought" was entirely for self; as with a single man, whose fear was, lest in his absence the horse and cart which his savings had got together should be damaged by the hirers of them. Nor did such care of this world seem beneath the parson's sympathy; he gave willing ear till all had been told out, and room was made in the man's soul for spiritual cares to enter. . . . . But the common anxiety concerned the household's welfare. That was no selfish care which drove one sick woman out of the bright, quiet ward, to a miserable home where a husband and son were always railing at each other. She hoped by her presence to allay the strife; and, though nurse said it was a thousand pities, the parson would say no word to stay that denial of

her sick self, for he felt that by such cross-bearing she might approach her Lord.

(vi.) There were, on the other hand, many whom circumstances left quite free to entertain such thoughts as it was my privilege to suggest to them. A footman had been sent up by a good master all the way from Devonshire, and his place was kept for him. A governess had received a visit from the clergyman in whose house she had been living, and spoke of returning there as a daughter might speak of going home. The least accessible, perhaps, were those who had no belongings or none whom they cared for. It is the rule to place upon the card above a patient's bed the name and address of some relation who might be written to in case of need. One person had insisted upon being set down as having *no* relations, "for," said he, in excuse to me, "nobody wants a man who is past helping himself." He had, as I gathered, begotten children, who, if they had not openly rebelled against their father, had estranged themselves from him, and his heart was hardened therefore. He listened with respect to what I had to say, and spoke vaguely about trust in God, but his tone made me fear that he had lost *all* trust.

(vii.) As to intelligence and education, of course all degrees are to be met with among such a mixed multitude of sick, from the once wealthy gentlewoman who discussed, while she deplored, the scepticism of her male friends, to the old omnibus conductor of forty-two years standing on the footboard, who could but say over and over again, that "he prayed to Almighty God, but as for going to church, there was never no Sunday for he." The great proportion of patients were Londoners, or servants who had lived a good deal in town; many of the men were soldiers out of their time; nearly all were, on one account or other, more conversable than village-people of the same rank. Some were reticent about their past life, some eager to tell the whole, or what they meant me to take for the whole; but almost every one spoke freely of the circumstance that brought them to the hospital. Nor was it hard in most cases to find occasion from a word dropped unawares to point some lesson of the Christian life. Most folks, in their first talk with the clergyman, just as with the doctor, let their special weakness, or proclivity, leak out; and at my necessarily short interviews with fresh patients I found it better to take the advantage

that was thus offered me than to deliver for their benefit a studied allocution.

(viii.) I am not without hope that, if such work comes again in my way, I may be more systematic in ministration. A certain number of patients make a long stay in hospital, not a few return time after time; so that the resident chaplain can work the wards to some extent as we work our parishes: he can pursue a course of instruction, bringing individuals out of carelessness and unbelief, step by step, to full penitence, and a ripe faith. That was out of the question for me; I could not visit every one even once, and for those of my acquaintance who were not in immediate danger, I could do no more than bring them each morning, a short message in the Lord's name —a text, and the thought which it embodied— wherewith to occupy their minds, if they would, through the long hours. This, which I could take to a good many before their dinner-time, seemed generally to interest and comfort them.

(ix.) But what it is impossible to do for individual patients may in some measure be done for each ward. The chaplain had told me that he was in the habit of holding very short services. I arranged accordingly to visit four wards each

evening for this purpose. At such a service, which lasted about thirteen minutes, I spoke upon some verses of Holy Scripture, after reading them aloud; I then read a hymn more or less to the purpose, and concluded with two or three collects. This could not well be done in the day-time, when the doctors and the dressers were about; but between seven and eight o'clock I found the nurses ready, the wards quiet, and the patients pleased to listen. Thirteen minutes' service would seem more hurried than "hunting mass," yet longer speech might scarcely be borne with by the one or two listeners who were in grievous pain. Sometimes, on entering a male ward, I fancied the attitude or the expression of a man here and there was not quite friendly to my purpose, but the tone of their "good-night," and the thanks which came cheerfully from some beds as I passed out, made me glad that I had persisted.

(x.) I have a notion that the victims of chronic ailment must be exercising to the chaplain, as they certainly are to us in the country. Rheumatics and asthmatics send their contingent regularly to the medical wards. One woman had been there twelve times, and it was twenty years ago

that she first patronized the institution. Such long acquaintance with hospital proprieties veneers these people with a polite religionism, which however grateful and edifying to the stranger, must, I think, try the chaplain's sympathy a good deal. He finds it hard, as we do, to minister regularly to their spiritual needs without further deadening their spiritual sense. I should be inclined to visit them more seldom than patients of short standing, and to exhibit a treatment more severe than palliative, seeing that I lived among them, for the wakening of their conscience rather than for their better enjoyment of small health.

(xi.) But ailments that are acute as well as chronic at once demand and repay our liveliest sympathy and very tender ministration. I was told by the nurse in charge of the cancer beds how patient and thankful the poor people were through all their pain, and I found myself that the same person, who at night would hardly recognize my presence, in the interval of ease which next morning brought would eagerly accept what I had to offer, and would with bright face do God service of prayer and praise.

(xii.) There is a class of patients who deserve quite opposite handling; in my short duty I did

not to my knowledge come across them, but I am assured that they are by no means rare. These are professional invalids who spend most of their time between hospital and convalescent home. It is, I believe, by no means easy for even the doctors to detect such imposture without risk of doing honest patients an injustice, but a short regimen of "fever diet," which is, being interpreted, the bread and water of affliction, will often work wonders for the cure of assumed illness.

(xiii.) The chapel service in a hospital has not, so far as I have seen it, distinct feature or special interest. All was reverent and well-ordered; the choir did their part much as do the like white-robed cherubs of the country side. If I could have taken the excellent secretary for my good squire, the nurses for his household, and the few patients for village people, I might have fancied myself at home. The number of patients who can attend public worship must always be comparatively small, for they are dismissed, or drafted to the convalescent home, so soon as it can be done with safety.

(xiv.) After the public Celebration I administered to individuals clinically, to the males and to the females on alternate Sundays; of course the latter

were more numerous, as they are everywhere, yet one man was not ashamed to communicate alone in presence of his ward-mates, and these, I am bound to say, were very silent and interested assistants at the office.

(xv.) I have said nothing yet of that which would seem to be the special duty of a priest in hospital, I mean the visitation of sick people *in extremis;* and indeed I scarce know what to say. We are all but too conscious of the difficulties that beset ministration to the dying; that it was anxiously looked for, and most thankfully received, I found to be the rule in cases where pain and prostration left the patient master of himself. But how often was it the contrary case? Not only in the accident ward, but everywhere in hospital the fatal cases must for the most part have violent and rapid issue. The patient is too often but half conscious, his friends hover round him overwhelmed; it seems no fitting time for exhortation or converse. There is one thing, however, always possible, and that the best thing—we can pray; perhaps we do not have recourse to this so soon or so constantly as we should. I have experienced afresh how invaluable prayer is, in the first place and above all, of course, to invoke extreme unction of the Holy Spirit upon

the dying, but also to turn heavenward such thought as God has, in mercy, left him.

(xvi.) So soon as a patient is in imminent danger his friends have notice of it, with leave to visit him at all hours, and a paper, called a "general order," is placed in the chaplain's box at the hall door to call his special attention to the case. This was most useful to me, though, I dare say, the chaplain himself seldom needs such reminder. The permission to friends is a great boon, and is taken full advantage of. I remember both parents watching day and night beside a son; they had been there by turns for weeks, rubbing him to ease the sharp pain of some heart affection. There they remained till the last, always cheerful, always pleased with what was done for their boy; and, when all was over, the man took leave with respectful message of thanks to the chaplain, who, before my time of stay, had given them such comfort.

(xvii.) The dazed grief upon a widow's face, as she waits in the hall for a certificate of death, or for the goods of her lost husband to be given up to her, is perhaps the saddest of hospital sights. I mind me of one such mourner who, while life remained to her husband, had been urgent in his

behalf for my ministration; the man had been conscious to the end, and had to all seeming died repentant for what, I fear, had been an ill-spent life; yet such assurance as I was able to give could not set her mind at rest for him. I had turned to leave her, when I was aware of a step behind me. Spite of all misgiving, there must have come over her the vague hope which some call heresy, but which the profoundest Protestant cannot always put away—the hope that probation may not quite end with this short life—for she caught at my hand and whispered, "Pray for him—do!"

Much more and of greater interest might be written about the hospital by those who habitually minister there. To the good effect of a well-ordered hospital on both the souls and bodies of sick peasants most country parsons could bear witness, and among other benefits especially to the useful acquaintance with good nursing, which in a long sojourn within its walls some female patients pick up.

But the convalescent home is perhaps as great a boon as the hospital to our peasantry. There is a wide gulf between the comforts of a sick ward and the rough fare and lodging to be had in a poor cottage; between the leisurely existence in hospital

and the laborious life which field work demands there is a gulf still wider. Both these are pleasantly and healthfully bridged over by a stay in the convalescent home. There exercise is encouraged and perhaps enforced, while attendance both on his own wants and on the daily needs of the institution is expected from an inmate. Thus a gradual return to ordinary life is provided for him, and he goes back by and by to his work with health restored and confirmed strength to a degree which in many cases would have been impossible, if upon discharge from the hospital he had gone straight to his own home.

Again these convalescent homes are often personally superintended by the benefactor or his wife, who pays frequent visits to the patients, and becomes more or less intimately acquainted with them. This circumstance gives a complexion to the institution which is really homelike. The best features of the patient's character are brought out, features which the old routine when he returns to it does not easily efface. When the peasant again becomes a parishioner there can be no help given to better purpose than by providing him for a time such diet and physical comforts as he enjoyed in time of sickness; warmth and good food are quite

as much needed when he is convalescent, if he goes into constant work they are even more necessary. It is sometimes difficult to make sure that the whole of what is given is consumed by that member of the family for whom it was intended, but it is to be borne in mind that wife and children throughout his illness have generally had a hard time; and if we can satisfy ourselves that his wants have been adequately supplied, we need not be greatly distressed at the thought that the "over and above" has fallen to them.

X.

THE PEASANT POVERTY-STRICKEN.

AMONG poverty-stricken peasants I will begin with the worst—the peasant mendicant—to whose existence, however disagreeable to look upon, we may not shut our eyes. We could not do so if we would, for he is too obtrusive to be ignored. Yet, if we believe political economists and social reformers, the mendicant has no right to have being among us; or should, at all events, be like the golden eagle, the rare specimen of a race which is becoming rapidly extinct. But for all the talk upon platforms about what should be, the peasant mendicant persists in remaining a fact, and a troublesome fact, in our midst. As a country parson I have nothing to do with the professional mendicant of towns. I meet him now and again upon the high road, and if I am not in a hurry I

listen to his tale—it is generally apocryphal on the face of it; but he has sometimes a look that tells unmistakably of present hunger, and, with that defiance of principle which only moral cowards are equal to, I give him what pence I have about me. Beyond this I wash my hands of him; he is the affair of the board which guards the poor's rate; there is the casual ward for such as he.

The mendicant with whom I have to do is a greater trouble, not so aggressive, but even more puzzling; for I know him so well, his misfortune no less then his fault, and on both accounts the treatment of him is a puzzle. Like the rest of human kind, he has an individuality; but there is a difficulty antecedent to the particulars of his case—the country mendicant is a fixture among us. Outsiders may smile at this view of him. "Why not send him to the workhouse at once?" they ask. There are several reasons why we do not. To mention but one in this place; the chances are he will refuse to go, and we must pause before we force him, even if we can, for not many such are wholly destitute; and so long as he has or can get the means of existence he cannot, nor should he be, chargeable to the union. However small and precarious may be his livelihood, he survives

somehow. One such person pays me periodically a visit from a parish some miles away; each time he comes he promises to come no more; but he turns up in due course notwithstanding. That he is not absolutely disabled is shown by his moving thus from place to place; but he is probably so far inefficient as to be left hopelessly behind in the competition for employment. To assist him to continue such a way of life is not wise or indeed really kind; it were better both for the neighbourhood and for himself that want should drive him, however unwilling, to the workhouse, where he would have, at all events, what health and decency demand, and would be put to such work as it is in his power to do.

Troublesome as is this "well-remembered beggar" to those whom he honours with his occasional presence, to the parson of his parish he must be far more embarrassing. Alms money may be sternly withheld, but his peasant neighbours will not let him starve or even want for pence now and then to spend at "The Three-tined Stag," to say nothing of the "drinks" which, if he is companionable, they will offer him there. So he is not to be got rid of. And there is no useful purpose that he can be made to serve; through the habit of loafing around,

continuous labour, however light, has become unbearable to him. One may set him to weed the drive, but the interval between each effort will hour by hour be prolonged, and the second day will see the end of his exertions. Many parishes are afflicted with at least one such incorrigible. I have nothing to say in his excuse.

I have in mind another case as hopeless, but a much sadder one. An able-bodied labourer was in early manhood stricken with blindness ; it came on by degrees and fitfully, so that, long after it was impossible for him to get field work by reason of his affliction, there were neighbours ready to persuade the gentlefolks that he was not so blind as he seemed. In enforced idleness he would wander about the lanes groping his way, and soon it came to pass that if a rabbit was wired or a pheasant missed the crime was laid at his door. When the sick pay from his club dwindled to a half-crown, he and his family would have been destitute but for the labour of his wife ; she did her part so far as work went ; but meanwhile the home was neglected, the children left to themselves. She was not one of those gifted women who can be bread-winners by day and by night good housewives ; moreover both she and her husband had

been coarse, common people to begin with, and amid such adversity everything was let slide but the bare maintenance for which they struggled. So that what moral sense they had at first was lost to them while yet the children were young; these had therefore no training but their bad example, for the three R's, and even what by euphemism is called "the religious hour," at school, could not compete with this far influence. The family is not literally mendicant, because they do not supplicate for alms; but their need is evident, and the parson is scarcely to be blamed if he gives them a share of the relief at his disposal, conscious as he may be of their ill-desert.

A case like this, with which circumstances have so much to do, is hard to deal with. Not less difficult is another case which must have fallen within the experience of many. It is the case of a peasant of weak constitution which has developed some chronic ailment, rendering him unequal to heavy regular work, but not so severe as to lay him by. On a different social level he would be of much interest to his friends; with their entire approval he would gracefully recline beside the tennis lawn in summer and spend his winters in the south of France; but as things are,

like my blind acquaintance, this poor man is open to the suspicion of shamming. Any sympathy which he excites in those above him provokes his jealous equals to set his doings and misdoings in the worst light; he will be tolerably active to-day, and to-morrow will be scarce able to lift his head; but farm-work will not stand still for him, and he will of necessity be superseded by a stronger man. Upon threshing days, when all hands are welcome, he will get a job; and at harvest time, if he happens to be fairly well, he will earn a pound or two; but long weeks of compelled inaction must intervene, the habit of loafing will grow upon him, and he will become, if not dishonest, at least disreputable, taking the lowest place in peasant life. That even a sensitive person should under these circumstances become callous at last is to be expected; by his dependent position, always on the verge of destitution, which only the charity of rich neighbours staves off, he is tempted in the intervals of comparative health to simulate a weakness which is at most times very real; all self-respect dies out of him; he assumes an obsequious manner which he believes will be acceptable to his benefactors, To propitiate the parson he will go the length of attendance at week-day church. But it is not in

every one to become so completely pachydermatous. I have known one instance of such an incapable coming to a shocking end. When his power to earn had nearly failed, when he saw wife and children without food, and soon to be without shelter, stung by the neighbours' indifference and by the cold looks, as they seemed to him, of those whose charity he was tiring out, that man fled away suddenly, none knew whither; we searched for him everywhere for many days, till at last when hope of finding him was almost gone, a tree in the forest told that the struggle with circumstances was cut short, and that my parishioner had taken into his own guilty hands the issue which he should have left to the wise providence of God.

I will mention yet another of these poverty-stricken peasants. He has but little except his extreme poverty in common with those whom I have instanced: if he were not by his neighbours regarded with such liking I should call him the pariah of the hamlet. An old bachelor, without kin who will acknowledge him, without home, without visible means of living, he passed until lately a bearable and not altogether useless life. Many faults he has, notably a persistent relish for what he fondly believes to be malt and hops; he has also

his virtues, a loyalty to whomsoever he will condescend to work for, an instinctive honesty, a great love for children; so he has been the tiller of the peasant's garden, the caretaker of his cottage, the nurse of his little ones. Among the neighbours he spends his time; by the hearth in winter; when the sun shines, basking in the genial warmth with the children at play about him; doing through the year each humble office; full of old saws, not wise perhaps all of them, but none without the salt of a shrewd humour; thus the days of advancing age went by. But soon as evening closed he would flee the haunts of man; a cart shed with a sack upon the straw served him for bed and bed clothes; these served him so well that one snowy night, on which some one had persuaded him to accept a bed, he rose after the first broken sleep and crept back to his wonted lair, for he could not, he thought, breathe without the free air of heaven. This however must have been mere fancy, because when sickness came at last he rested with marvellous content in hospital. I visited him there, and found him pleased as ever with his lot; he said no word about drink, nor do I think that amid the strange comforts which surrounded him he at all hankered for it—one thing alone he missed, his "baccy." To outward appear-

ance he was a changed man ; nurse and probationer had subjected him to half an hour's vigorous manipulation ; my old friend was *washed.* To call such a man my friend will I fear lose me the good word of some whom I respect ; yet, strip my ordinary friends of their environment, subject them to his diet, put the same temptations in their way, and I will take to my inmost heart him or her who can with a clear conscience cast at him the first stone. His vice is drink; but is not a fine lady here and there prescribed more alcohol at luncheon than has of late been within his reach the whole day through ? He has an independence of character rare indeed among the very poor ; a virtue for which he can claim however but small credit; it springs I fear from no higher motive than an utter disregard for what we call comfort, and from the consequent small number of his wants.

I have told these little narratives because they may remind one or other of my readers of exceptional cases within their own experience ; the commoner cases however, those I mean of the hopelessly infirm and the aged poor, are hardly less difficult to treat at once charitably and justly.

Among the misfortunes of peasantry there is none greater or more deserving of our help than

that of early widowhood, if the husband has left several children behind him. The expense of an illness and of burial have left the widow for the time destitute if not in debt. With an infant in her arms and other children about her too young to help themselves, she cannot go to field work or to charing; she could not keep a roof over their heads were it not for a small allowance which the relieving officer brings her weekly. Even this is in some unions denied her, and she has no choice but to become an inmate of the workhouse. The abuse of outdoor relief has been so great and so injurious that Guardians should be praised rather than blamed for confining it within the narrowest limits; but the case of a young widow and her children seems to be indeed exceptional: to break up her home; to lose touch with the more respectable of her equals, and with those above her who have hitherto been friendly; to be in unavoidable close contact with the worst of her sex; to be severed from her children who must henceforth be tended by strange hands; to lose the spirit of independence and self-respect which has hitherto carried her with modest open face among her neighbours: these are some consequences which must result from sojourn in a workhouse, sojourn

but too likely to be permanent, or varied by short intervals of less regular life. Charity will do all it can to save her from such a fate by finding work which it is in her power to do; by alms which if given with due care cannot be better spent; and above all by the sympathy of gentle womanhood to enable her to tide over the season of trouble, and to start her afresh in that reputable peasant life which was so sadly broken off.

The faults of our peasantry are numerous as are their misfortunes, and have at least as much to do with their poor condition. First among these stand habits of unthrift. The nominal head of a cottage household has generally but small share in its management; this falls for the most part to the wife, and she is apt to be jealous of interference. The man's part is to earn; it is hers to spend. After returning him a fraction of the week's wages by way of pocket-money, she apportions the rest to the family's need at her discretion. That she is sometimes indiscreet will surprise no one who considers her bringing up. I know cases of marvellous forethought and arrangement, and with these present to my mind I have gone hot and cold in a fever of indignation as I listened to the sweeping strictures of some philanthropists; but in calmer

moments one cannot shut one's eyes to the genera truth of their charge against cottage management. If the wife has been in respectable service she will have learnt orderliness and good manners; but Miss Benson's sensible article on "Domestic Service"[1] takes it, I think, too much for granted that these virtues will remain to her. The way of life in a cottage and in a mansion, or even a parsonage, is on so different a scale that she does not easily import into her new home the refined habits she has acquired. That such habits are often but skin deep is patent from the dishevelled appearance of many a trim servant on holiday in her father's house. If she comes of an untidy stock she will too frequently revert to her old ways, however clean and neat a handmaid she may have been. Nor is it always easy to do at home what she did in "her" kitchen, as she used to call it. She may have been a capital cook, but without the plenty of ingredients, and all appliances at hand to which she has been accustomed, she is at a great loss, and ends by setting before her lord no better fare than frizzled bacon or a red herring; while the teapot stands stewing hour by hour on the hob, where should gently simmer the *pot au feu*. One lesson

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1890.

which she learned at the big house she is in small danger of forgetting, and that is extravagance of adornment. Not that she would be conspicuous for finery—gay, flaunting apparel is in no better favour with a good servant of this time than with her mistress—but she has always loved to be "a little decent," as she says: meaning thereby a style of dress at least as costly as that of the best-appointed among her fellow servants; and their standard is for their income absurdly high. She has brought away for *trousseau* abundance of such dress, which with care lasts her well through the early years of married life. If she is a sensible woman—and there are very many such—she replenishes her wardrobe on a humbler level. But the idea of respectability which she brought out of the servants' hall transfers itself from her own person to the persons of her children. She lavishes on their bedizenment all she can in any way spare; the first baby is gorgeous in swansdown over cunning needlework; and when all thought of comeliness for herself has died out, it is her great triumph to walk to the old church beside a daughter draped in raiment even more expensive than that which she used to wear. But the delight in fine clothes is more rampant and more aggressive among a lower

class. The small tradesman's little maid-of-all-work is a sight to behold on Sunday; and when in due or undue time she blossoms into a matron, the domestic exchequer is taxed heavily to indulge her rather questionable taste. The cheap production of dress materials counterfeiting an exploded fashion has much to answer for in the matter of peasant poverty; whole families, who we know have but just bread enough to eat, appear on high days in the garb of a spurious gentility. Much is said about drunkenness as the bane of labouring people, and with good reason: the man spends in beer what might be better spent in wholesome food. But through the country side—at least in the district with which I am familiar—this habit in its worst form is confined to a few among the many, while the passion for dress is well nigh universal. The bread-winner may or may not have his pint of beer, but feathers and flowers and such like bedizenments the lower class of young peasant women *will* have, and their admirers, even their husbands, love to see them thus arrayed. If anywhere there is need of total abstinence it is here. Peasant respectability must change its standard; and the change has already come in good measure among the better sort. Until a good balance at

the savings bank is with the masses held in more respect than outward show, there is no other prospect for the ageing labourer than dependence upon charity or the poor's rate.

But the utmost thrift will not do everything. Extreme poverty in some cases, and risk of pauperism for the old age of most working people, seem things inevitable until a substantial rise in agricultural wages comes to pass; and such a rise is not within measurable distance, for this among other reasons, that at present prices the land will not support the owner, the farmer, and the labourer, as it did support them in the palmy days of husbandry. Each class will have to reduce its scale of living, and the lower, the working class, among the rest. These will be the last to accept the situation. Some responsibility for their backwardness to face changed circumstances must lie at the door of the Education Department, or rather of the enthusiasts by whom its policy has till very lately been inspired. "My Lords" have aroused in the peasantry a sense of comfort and refinement which their present circumstances cannot satisfy. What will come of efforts towards co-operative production, such as Lord Wantage has set on foot, remains yet to be seen; they seem

to be in the right direction, and all honour is due to those who make them at great cost of personal exertion. But for the present the labouring man's future is not hopeful. Here and there one, by dint of great energy and good fortune, will achieve an independence, but what with the chance of bad health, of bad seasons, and the grievous want of capital, he is heavily handicapped. For the mass of peasantry such advancement is out of the question; in this generation, and in the next probably, the poor will be always with us. Much may be done by Friendly Societies to lighten the hardships of sickness, but even their help will supply only two-thirds of the peasant's income at a time when expenses are at their highest; and if his ailment becomes chronic, the sick pay either fails altogether or falls too low to buy him and his family more than bread. The deposit branch of some such societies, and the insurance which may be effected at the post-office, are valuable means of saving; but adverse circumstances, as well as the improvidence which a precarious income encourages in some dispositions, must prevent many from availing themselves of these. So there will be, throughout our time at all events, certain people in each parish to be supported. Their

natural supporters are of course the children for whom they have sacrificed so much; and I believe a great deal is done for them by daughters in service, and something by the sons. Both sons and daughters do more than we, for obvious reasons, are informed of. It is hardly to be expected that the peasantry should lay their affairs open to the criticism of the world any more than we are ourselves inclined to publish our private income; but when people apply for alms they should not complain if their resources are looked into; and we do well to make such inquiry, for our help will be given to the best purpose if it is bestowed in proportion to that which their relations, if they have any, contribute. Relief either within or outside the workhouse is the last to which they will resort; and for the sake of themselves and of society the friends of poor people, who have any claim upon their neighbours' respect should do the utmost to keep them off the poor's rate.

I have mentioned Friendly Societies as playing a very useful part in the well-being of our peasantry. To such as are interested in them I will venture to give two hints out of my experience. First, they will do well to ascertain with regard to a society

which they recommend that its *tables* as well as its rules are certified by a government actuary to be sound ; this is a caution the more necessary because a familiar signature at the bottom of the rules has misled many of us, a signature which in that place guarantees no more than that the rules are within the law. As the real test of a sick club's condition is the balance between the premiums and the payments, if we would save our peasantry from disappointment in the hour of need we must satisfy ourselves by the authority of an accredited expert that the premiums payable by each member are adequate to the calls which are likely to be made upon them. One other thing I would call attention to : the soundest friendly societies do not always hold out the inducements most likely to attract the average young peasant, and upon a continuous enrolment of such new members the prosperity of a sick club depends. They delight in flags and emblems and festivity ; good fellowship was the prominent feature of such clubs at their beginning, and the peasantry set great store by it; while our idea of insurance as a mere business matter they do not readily entertain. It is therefore a wholesome use of honorary members' subscriptions to provide innocent diversion ; much diversion, by no means

innocent, some clubs which they most affect are only too forward to supply; and for the sake of this many a man pays monthly through long years to discover in his great necessity that the "box" is broken, and there is no pay forthcoming.

Since writing these chapters I by chance came across the first volume of Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round*, January, 1869, and lighted on "The English Peasant." Dean Gaisford is reported to have once said of St. Paul, "I partly agree with him"; and as Dickens, great man though he was, was less than apostolic, my agreement with him may without irreverence be even less complete. His acquaintance with our peasantry can hardly have been as thorough as with their equals of the metropolis; his description of them has a "towny" savour. I am unwilling to think that, even in those days, the English peasant was "so snubbed, buffeted, and preached, and lectured at, as to have become hopeless of bettering himself morally or physically," not that particular peasant, at all events, whom he alludes to as conversing with him about the National Debt. Of the peasant at this time I am sure the words

convey no true impression; he is by no means hopeless now. The chief grievance of his lot seems, in the eyes of Dickens, to have been that there was not full scope for the indulgence of his ambition to rise in the social scale. About the prevalence of this ambition I have my doubts; I have little doubt of its inexpediency. A skilled field-hand would not gain much by dropping the bill or mattock to stick a pen behind his ear; such a man can earn fifteen shillings weekly on the average, while his cottage, with a good garden, costs him but two shillings at most; his children are very well taught for a nominal fee, and both he and his family are duly looked after and helped in sickness or trouble of any kind. A lower clerk, on the other hand, has a small salary and a big rent; he has every potato or cabbage to buy, a genteel appearance to keep up; and to educate his children he had, until quite lately, to pay dear for an indifferent article: if we add to this the confinement and delicate health, perhaps the necessity for change of air, which residence in London or any great town entails, the balance upon the whole will appear to be not greatly in his favour. An exceptionally clever lad will, of course, do much better; but there

has always been opportunity for such a one to emerge from the labouring class, opportunity which those of his superiors in whose neighbourhood he lives are ever anxious and generally able to procure him. Then again, to take higher ground, will the peasant "better himself morally" by the change? What temptations beset the clerk in a great city to amusement beyond his means, and to relieve his poverty by questionable transactions! The music-hall is a worse snare than the public-house; it is healthier for a man's soul that he should among the seed-beds try to forecast the weather, than that he should speculate upon the chances of settling day as he pores over "the money market." And how deep is his fall, if he *does* fall! To tamper with ledgers is a crime even more heinous than to wire a rabbit, and that, as the peasant knows, is saying a great deal.

"Once a peasant always a peasant" is the dictum of our great humorist. But why, for the mass of peasants, should it not be so? I cannot but think that, both for their own good and for the good of society, their wisdom is to raise their caste rather than to rise out of it; to become better workmen and so to better

their market price; by growth of self-respect to gain the respect of those above them; and if they are ambitious, to win place among the so-called "respectable" classes by energy and thrift.

XI.

A SCHOOL TEACHER'S WORRIES.

THIS subject was suggested to me by finding on my table one morning a very long letter purporting to come from a schoolmaster. He told therein of the manifold worries by which he was beset: worries in school, worries out of school, worries at home, and worries in himself. These last must have been, I think, the worst of all with him, for the whole letter was written in that uncomfortable vein which is the natural outcome of an abnormal liver. I confess to having been a little bored before I came to the end of his jeremiad, but the hope of making it useful induced me to glance again at it; and, upon second reading, this effusion certainly appeared to contain some truths—truths which had from time to time exercised myself. I determined therefore to take

some passages of it by way of text, which, with a running commentary that I would attempt, should do duty for this chapter.

These are his opening sentences—

"REVEREND SIR,—It is with confusion of face (to borrow the words of holy David)—it is with confusion of face that I yield to a yearning for sympathy which will not be suppressed, and I unbosom myself of the many annoyances which hamper the performance of my duties as an instructor of youth. Bear with me, sir, while I tell of

"'Sleepless nights and anguish-ridden days,
Pangs that my sensibility uprouse
To curse my being and my thirst for praise.'"

Our friend must be very young or he would not write so grandiosely, and would besides have got over the Kirk White distemper. But he does not go on like this, thank Goodness; hereafter we shall find his thirst, though figurative still, is more severe in the direction of the Government grant than of "the bubble reputation." And his next reminiscence of the poets is rather cynical than sentimental, for he proceeds:

"I am sometimes a little ashamed to be such

a victim of my surroundings. I call to mind what the great Tennyson sings, how that—

"'Man is man and master of his fate.'

And indeed there is no denying the first of these propositions; but as to the second I beg to differ. To be master of his fate man mustn't be a *school*-master, for, as far I can see, all things and people master him—'hence these tears'; the phrase, sir, is that of one Terence, a playwright of some reputation in his day."

I will stop here half a minute to protest against this pessimism. The good man cannot have attended teachers' meetings or he would have been brought to think, as we do, that the position of a teacher is a fine position in these days, and that he can make himself very sensibly felt for good in school and out of school if he will but meet the world manfully, and not be so sorry for himself. But let us hear his grievances, for some of them are real enough, and all are painfully real to him.

"To begin with, there are the children," he says. Of course there are. I wonder what he would make of a school without them! He goes on: "And what I have to complain of about the

children in the first place is, their listless unconcern. The upper standards do not, I grieve to say, take the vital interest that might be expected of them in the analysis of sentences, for instance, or in the motions of the heavenly bodies, or even in the lectures upon domestic economy which I have got up with so much pains from the latest and most approved text-books. I was deeply hurt only yesterday by a remark of the biggest girl in Standard VI., with reference to the method of making pancakes. After reading my instruction off the black-board in a shrill monotone, bungling, by the by, over the fractional proportions in a way that called for my severe animadversion, she addressed the girl next her in her natural voice, ''Tain't how mother do it,'—a remark which I consider wholly irrelevant as well as ungrammatical. It is not for her mother, though she was under a man-cook once, nor for *any one's* mother, but for the Right Honourable the Lords of the Privy Council on Education to say how pancakes shall be made by Standard VI. They lay down the law for 'grafting,' and 'Swiss-darning,' and how to 'herring-bone a patch.' That they can cook pancakes, then, goes without saying, and their way Standard VI. must learn, or H.M.

Inspector will know the reason why! Then for the younger ones what can be more inspiriting than the evolutions which my Lords enjoin, and in which I faithfully exercise my pupils? When I say 'Hands up!' should not each child vie with the other in the alacrity with which he responds to the pleasing call? But they loll about or play with each other's hair; and at my rebuke they put their dirty little knuckles in their eyes, and spoil the appearance of the whole thing.

"And the carelessness of the lower standards is a trial. Young people who have lived eight or nine years in the world should surely take more heed than to confound the possessive pronoun 'their' with the like-sounding adverb of place; but if I have to correct this once in a dictation lesson, I have to do it five times! Nor are the older ones less provoking in this matter of carelessness. To see on inspection day a great cross all over the sum of a boy to whom I looked to do me credit, and to find, not that he had worked it wrong, but that he had failed to take it down right, is not that disturbing to the bland exterior of a nervous man?

"Then the mischievous disposition of some boys is beyond belief of any one who has not proved it. Not that the worst of them are always in

mischief, but unerring instinct informs them of my being a little upset, as does happen sometimes, and then they are up to their tricks. 'Please, teacher, Bill's a-pinching of me!' This statement generally comes from the aggressor, and it is promptly met by 'Oh! you story! didn't you pull a queer face to make me laugh?' And on inquiry of the bystanders, I am told with uncalled-for cheerfulness, 'Please, sir, Dolph's been making faces ever so long.' I cause Adolphus to stand out behind me, but the smothered tittering of the class suggests that even in disgrace that offensive boy does not wholly give up his facial contortions.

"And the lies they tell, with or without provocation, what a worry these are! How is a man to give righteous judgment between two young litigants when one denies flatly what the other as persistently asserts? But this is not so bad as the tale which some child will make up out of pure love of fiction, a tale so circumstantially told, and with such an air of candour that every one but the other children believes it, and I am set fretting and fuming for a day or two. From time to time small articles are lost or some poor child's dinner has disappeared, and this worries me terribly; one does not know whom to suspect

or whom to trust, for, in the few cases where the thief has been discovered, it has not been the child of worst reputation, nor generally the child on whom my suspicions had fallen, that was found guilty.

"But to a man of my susceptibilities perhaps bad temper is the most wearing of children's faults. Like petty thieving, it can be charged but upon a few; these few however make my life a burden to me. Not that violent outbursts of rage are possible with such discipline as I maintain; but the two or three downright ill-tempered ones never relax their clutch upon my feelings, and seem to use me as a whetstone for their inventiveness, ever discovering new ways of badgering me without exposure of themselves to punishment, with sulky looks and veiled impertinence, as it were spearing me from behind the bush of such careful behaviour as prevents my getting at them. Once or twice I have suffered real injury from such as these on the battle-field—I mean the Inspection. Where very nature should teach all to make common cause in discomfiture of the common foe, they have turned against me, their commanding officer. The inspector had it all his own way; ask what questions he would, they refused

to return his fire, not an answer could be got from them. I need hardly add that my Lords scored considerably by his visit."

So ends this poor gentleman's moan about the children ; and I think our experience will go along with some of it. School children are a worry, there's no doubt of it ; not altogether though by their fault. Take their listlessness and want of interest for example; nearly all we have to teach them requires mental effort to learn, and mental effort young unripe brains cannot and will not (happily for them) keep up for a length of time ; children will use their memory with greater willingness than their reason, and their senses more willingly still ; but all continuous work is against the grain with them, and they will get out of it if they can, watching their chance for ever so short a return to that desultory exercise of their powers which we call "play." A good deal both of carelessness and of mischief may be traced to the same cause, their too natural tendency to shirk the grind of thinking. I do not say that such tendency is to be winked at in school hours, much less that we should encourage it ; with the children of the peasantry this which should be life's holiday, is the only time available in which to equip them

for its toil and struggle. Besides, if we did not make them work they would not earn the grant, and some ardent educationists take that to be what the poor children live for!

But I am not inclined to underrate the worry which an able, conscientious teacher suffers at the hands of the children; I am but saying a word for the little things. That word is not so easy to be found in excuse of untruthfulness or of dishonesty. My contemporaries will perhaps have, as I think I have, traced much of these vices to hereditary taint. Example at home is by every one acknowledged to be in great measure answerable for them; but, all this notwithstanding, they are of course to be put down unflinchingly wherever they show themselves. The case of bad temper may, I think, he dealt with more indulgently. Young children who show ill-temper, but in whom it can hardly have become an evil habit, may be looked upon as unhappy rather than vicious; and, I believe, they will with gratitude requite the teacher who works patiently and lovingly for their cure. In the higher standards the treatment of sulky or obstinate children is more difficult; discipline must, at all cost to the individual, be maintained; and this obligation makes it often impossible to

deal with him as gently as one would like ; but the condition of obedience being once satisfied, no kind thoughtfulness or delicacy of tenderness can be overmuch in our intercourse with such children. They are themselves generally of delicate fibre, keenly alive to any difference in our manner towards them, and even to the expression of face with which we regard them ; and they suffer so much from the evil spirit while it is in possession, that on their good days they look back thankfully to the gentle firmness with which we controlled it in them. When we have won the confidence of an ill-tempered child we have generally gained his allegiance also ; and though he will still at times be a worry to us as well as to himself, we shall place more dependence on him than upon many a one whom no chiding can ruffle, and he will perhaps be nearer our hearts.

My melancholy friend did not however write to be commented upon at this length. I will get back to his text—he has done with the children ; now he comes to those who are responsible for bringing them into the world, and for keeping them here for his special perturbation, as he seems to think. He says—

"Is there not a subtle charm about the word

'Mother?' It is full of sweet memories and hallowed associations, but you have only to make it plural to call up before me a whole stud of nightmares.

"Mothers keep children from school to mind the baby, or to take things home from the wash, or to carry father's dinner, or to go to shop—for the most part during the month before Inspection.

"Mothers send impertinent messages about lost neckties and dinner-bags; and when they find them in the pigsty or on a gooseberry-bush—as of course they do—they hold their tongues, that I may continue to hunt for those valuables.

"Mothers come tearing down of a morning, some to say they'll have the law of me if I dare to lay a finger on their child again; some to beg that I will please to chastise young Hopeful, for the reason that 'father, he leathered 'un when a got wom, but, lor blesh yer, he's that hardened he don't care a mossel.'

"Mothers let the pence get behind for weeks, and then with some cock and bull story persuade the manager they can't pay; and 'Please sir, overlook it this time, and our Jane shall come reg'lar.'

"Mothers set tales going about my pupil

teacher, which make the poor girl ill when her bosom friend repeats them to her.

"Mothers—but there is nothing mothers don't do, except look after their children and back me up."

Thus far the schoolmaster.

Now I think he is a little hard upon these daughters of Eve—don't you? or he has had an unhappy experience. Mothers are, many of them, very inconsiderate, and some short-tempered; and here and there one does not mind sending her children several Monday mornings without the pence. But I shall, I think, carry teachers with me, when I say that upon the whole parents respect an able teacher, and get fond of a kind one. They will put themselves to considerable inconvenience to please one for whom they entertain such feelings. They do not indeed make friends with him at short notice. Even in a village the teacher must live a good while, he has a good deal to live down, he must work in face of some discouragement, but the respect and the love come at last. It is the parson's privilege to see it come, perhaps sooner and fuller than the master himself can. At this cottage and at that, the parson is talked to in a way that makes him proud of his friend. And about this keeping

children from school: it does certainly interfere very much with their progress; it is often done without real cause, but mothers have sometimes reason on their side. One or other among our lady-friends may have occasional experience of a washing day. Let her ask herself honestly whether the hebdomadal recurrence of that festival would make it pleasanter; and how far the charge of a baby in arms, and of another that can just crawl, would affect her due performance of its weekly rites. I believe that lady, zealous as she may be in the cause of education, might, under the circumstances, be tempted "to keep the girl at home." Then again in winter time it is most disheartening to see the seats, a third of them perhaps, empty day after day; but the coughing, and the odour of evaporation from damp woollen stuff, take away something from our satisfaction at the presence of those who have braved the weather, as well as plead in excuse of the absentees. The worry is to discriminate between those who could come if they would, and those whom ill health or necessity keeps away. And all excuses are the less readily accepted by reason of our experience, which tells us that the children just round about are by no means so regular as those who have far to walk.

With regard to the worry about children's pence —it may be almost desperately increased by good-natured laxity, as by a firm consistent attitude it may be minimized. There will be in most schools a small proportion of children who bring their money irregularly; and of these a very few on whose parents the payment seems to be a severe tax. These last, when their inability has been proved by investigation, may be properly the subjects of almsgiving; and a teacher of some standing in the parish will, without much difficulty, either by personal application or through the clergyman, get at those who are willing to give their charity this direction. The Board of Guardians may be applied to in the last resort to meet such cases. Excepting these, which are, I think, quite exceptional, the teacher will make short work with defaulters, if he would not have his life embittered every Monday morning. Under the present conditions of school-keeping, which suppose the children bound to come and the parents bound to pay—at the same time that the penalty is inadequate to compel attendance, and there is no effective process for recovering fees—under present conditions, I suppose, a parent may give a lot of trouble who is at once obstinate and well informed; but such a parent is as yet happily

a black swan upon our waters. And by help of the powers who sit in Whitehall, managers and teachers may together tackle even him. The pence worry comes, not from such as he, but from the invertebrate mothers, who are always behind, ever promising, and ever breaking their promise, to pay. Against these it is good on all accounts to set one's face as a flint; to bring such pressure to bear as shall not only cause them to pay up arrears, but may gradually make them punctual by encouraging in them a growth of moral backbone of which nature has given them but the rudimentary organ.

My friend next details various in-school worries, one of which only I will notice; it has to do with the *reading*. He complains that by the code "reading with intelligence" is required in all the standards, "but how," says he, "can little children be made to do this? It is a sore struggle with them to read at all. Moreover their satisfaction at having mastered a word impels them to rush on to the next with no shadow of pause, if it is an easy one; if it is hard, they come to a full stop, sense or no sense: they take breath, not at the bidding of a semicolon, but at nature's bidding, so soon as, after gasps of articulation, they feel pumped. Again, as to 'increased fluency and expression in successive years,'

which the code also requires, this comes by nature to sharp children, and, if their voices are pleasant, they read agreeably ; but the more you hammer at the dull ones the more woodenly they read. You may make them emphatic with a vengeance, or, if you like, evenly fluent as the click of a sewing machine, but there can be but poor expression in words which mean so little to those who utter them."

He adds : "I unluckily told my wife I was writing to you about my troubles, and she at once claimed to put in a word about hers. She has to do only with the needlework ; but, whatever may be my private opinion of her complaints, I shall have no peace if I leave them out. She says the teaching infants under the rules is such a worry, the danger to each other's eyes in knitting-pin drill ; the difficulty of needle drill owing to the stickiness of little fingers which no washing will get rid of. Much more of this kind she was dictating, when the arrival of a great package of work from the big house, with peremptory instructions for its immediate completion, gave her remarks a new departure. These owed their pungency to tone and manner, of which I can give you no idea, even if I dared. The drift of them seemed to be that the

parcel would have been more welcome after the Inspection than just before ; that much of the work she would have to do herself, for there were not big girls as there used to be ; that no thread and no tape had been sent, and how was she to charge them to the school account, she should like to know !"

My correspondent here inserts a N.B. to the effect that I needn't take more notice than I like of all this ; that his little woman was on the rampage just then, but would be better by and by.

He evidently thinks more of his own worries than of hers, being a male ; so he passes on to fall foul of various useful institutions which demand his voluntary assistance, such as school treats, penny readings, and village concerts. With his observations on these I will not trouble you.

But, apart from exaggeration, these out-of-school duties do add considerably to the toil and even to the worry of a village master's life. Much of the arrangement will drift on to his shoulders, and, if things are to go well, a good deal of personal exertion will have to be made—lamps to be trimmed, desks and forms to be moved, perhaps a heavy stove turned out or a heavier piano brought in, and the room decorated into the bargain. There are generally willing hands to help, but their owners

have to be shown how to use them, and must besides be kept in good humour. When night comes, the teacher has probably to take part in the performance. It is no use being tired ; all the world expects him to be comic, or pathetic, or vocal, or perhaps even scientific, for its edification and pastime.

This for the winter.

The *al fresco* festivities in summer too are not without their small irritations. The teacher's great anxiety on such an occasion is, of course, that the children shall have a happy time; but there are others to be thought of, the subordinates of his staff, who on such an occasion are not always taken due notice of by "the quality," or are inclined to stand just a little upon their dignity ; the visitors whose rushings to and fro, aimless as the galloping of *aides-de-camp* on a field day, have to be smiled upon with forbearance ; and the subscribers, who are interested in this and that child, must be told full particulars about his or her virtues and advancement. Then it is not every volunteer that can keep kettles boiling over faggots in a stiff breeze ; and the master has to leave the cricket, which without him will, he fears, collapse, to stand before the fire, roasting in front and shivering behind, his inner consciousness a prey

to numerous cares—now hoping that Lady Bountiful is pleased, now wondering why Farmer Jones does not send the milk.

There is something however to be set against this worry: it is all love's labour, and it is never lost, but thoroughly appreciated by every one. The children may seem to engross attention at the tea-drinking, and the audience at the entertainment; but, when all is done, and the success of the thing comes to be talked over at the court, in the parlours, in the cottages, and above all at the parsonage, abundance of thankful words are said about the trouble which the schoolmaster has taken for the amusement of old and young.

My correspondent goes on to discourse a little of managers. To them he is merciful, not to say complimentary, but I will not quote what he says about them; for, while I am sure it would be endorsed by the majority of us, the modesty of those gentlemen to whom it applies might be disconcerted. Even I, who am no more a manager, cannot read his praises without a blush and a twinge of conscience. He could not however have had me in his mind, for, whatever else I was in my managing days, meek and well-meaning and the rest, I know very well that I was a worry.

I do not speak of myself in relation to the weightier matters of school management. These had to be arranged, at whatever cost of worry to all concerned. But let me confess to one of my manager sins, which outsiders in their innocence might call venial. Looking back to the days when time-tables were not drawn upon lines so hard and fast, I recall a certain afternoon on which, as I passed the school, a fit of educational zeal attacked me. Yes! I would take the first class in Scripture there and then! I found teacher and children before a black-board in the agonies of vulgar fractions. They were hot and stupid; he was hot and bent upon making them take in his figures. Things were just coming right, when I burst in: the chalk was laid aside, the Bibles handed round. The teacher was irreproachably polite—but perhaps after school he told his wife that I was a worry.

I don't think anything further in my friend's communication is worth mention; besides that, this very irregular chapter grows beyond regulation length.

There are, though, two worries of which I would like to say something, not because I have anything of consequence to suggest in their mitiga-

tion, but because I do so heartily feel for those whom they afflict.

The first is the financial worry. Philosophers and other superior people tell us we should be above this; and so we might if we had, as they are supposed to have, no ambition, no sense of comfort or of enjoyment; and, so long as a man has only himself to provide for, he need not be so very superior a person to live free of these cares. But the pinch comes when the delicacy of one's wife has to be cared for, and the family has to keep its head up to due social mark, and children have to be put out in the world; then it is that a man wakes in the small hours, and thinks and thinks, nor dozes off till just upon getting-up time.

The last worry I shall mention is indifferent health. I am not concerned now to speak of organic disease, or sudden acute illness. Worry is not the word for such a visitation, which keeps a man out of school, and brings the work and the reward of his life to a standstill. I allude to the chronic *malaise* which we call being "below par," or "under the weather," or "out of sorts"—a condition of health in which no pleasure is thoroughly enjoyed, no work readily undertaken,

or carried through without painful effort. This is the worry that emphasizes all other worries. Children seem more fractious, mothers more aggravating, managers even trying—if they ever are trying—supernumerary duties more burdensome, the purse shorter, to the man whose fibre is relaxed and his nerve unstrung. He sees things as it were through smoked glass; all is clear indeed, perhaps too clear, but all so sad-coloured. Other worries may vex his life out pretty well, but this goes far to spoil his usefulness: his teaching is mechanical, his rebuke petulant, his punishment severe if not arbitrary or misplaced. And the scholars reflect his mood; all their interest flags, and they reserve their vigour for fidgeting and mischief.

I will, with your indulgence, make bold to say a practical word about each of these worries, and then have done.

With regard to Money Troubles.

The only possible cure for them in all ranks is that which we can hardly bring ourselves to apply. It is to lower our whole scale of living so soon as they appear in the distance, to keep one servant if we cannot easily afford two, and if one taxes our

means to keep none ; to believe in the respectability of third-class tickets and of old clothes ; to snub Mrs. Grundy, and so make her civil.

As to Weak Health.

Much of it with both pastors and masters has to do with worry, by way of cause as well as of consequence. Only get rid of this, and all else can be borne, if not easily, at least with a good heart. Now it goes a long way towards the maintenance of a sane mind to keep one's body sane. And for school work this twin sanity is to be striven after before all things earthly ; an even balance of our powers, nothing too much, specially not too much brain action. A schoolmaster had better be a gardener, or a cricketer, or a fisherman, or a butterfly-catcher—anything rather than a sedentary student. It is neither scholarship, nor research, nor skill of reasoning that brings him success, but a cheerful, vigorous manhood. Before this the small worries of life will lift themselves and vanish, like mist before the morning sun.

THE END.

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