

to me to be full of spite and vindictiveness against England, and to be quite uncalled for in a Church Review, not having apparently any bearing on Church matters, or if at all, in a manner contrary to the article.

Many of us hoped and thought that such feelings were dying out, or dead; that a kindly feeling was taking the place of past irritation, and that the Church would be the chief agent in bringing about a cordial feeling of fraternity; and here is a leading Church publication dashing that hope far back again, leaving sad cause to fear that the inimicition is ineradicable. It is the most anti-British and pro-Russian article I have read anywhere for a long while, and if the editor wishes to increase the circulation of a review, having many points of merit, among British subjects, he must give us some assurance that such articles shall not appear; indeed, I think an apology is due for allowing this one. It is a petulant and impotent display of spite and envy; yet, cannot he help giving a most graphic description of the power he hates, calling it a "five-footed Empire," meaning of course that she has a foot (and a firm one too) on every quarter of the world.

If Egypt is to be Christianized—and she must be, if prophecy is to be fulfilled—no power is so able or likely to accomplish it as England. The writer also alludes to England as a huge octopus; well, I hope the tentacle she has thrown over Egypt will never let go. It seems singularly indiscreet for such a magazine to hope to win the support of subjects of THE QUEEN—if there is such a wish—by wounding their *amour propre*. I have returned the Review, and withhold my subscription.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP HARDING.

Apsley, Jan. 15th, 1888.

Family Reading.

PARISH CLERKS, THEIR SAYINGS AND DOINGS.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BURNET, M.A.

There are certain types of men, which, as time rolls on and fashions change, gradually disappear. They have filled their place—perhaps an important one—in the world or in the Church; but their office becomes a sinecure, and is at length abolished. Such were the intelligent, hardy, good-tempered sons of the whip that drove the stage-coaches in the days of our fathers. Such, too, were the watchmen, vulgarly known as "Charlies," who made the stillness of the night vocal by proclaiming the hours, and so gave timely warning of their approach to burglars and street-marauders. Railways have banished the one, and our well-disciplined police the other, so that they survive only in history or the boyish memories of the elderly. So it will be ere long with our parish clerks. Their days are certainly numbered. Their office still remains; but its most prominent duties are seldom required, at least in the towns. Once they were very important personages. Many of them were worthy, excellent, useful men in their day and generation, as doubtless are many of those who still represent the class. It is no fault of their own, but the force of circumstances, which hastens their extinction. A few specimens, gathered partly from personal recollections and partly from other sources, may be worth preserving before they are forgotten.

But it may be well to premise a word about the origin of the name and the office. There seems no doubt that the title "Clerk" was at first equivalent to "clergyman," and that both were derived through the Latin "clerus," or "clericus," from the Greek word signifying "lot." According to Bingham, in his "Antiquities of the Church" (Book I. 5), the latter was the distinctive title of those who were set apart for the ministry and service of the Church. This he proves from the writings of the early Fathers, who give three reasons for the name. Jerome accounts for it either because the clergy were the lot or portion of the Lord, or because the Lord is the lot of their inheritance; while others think some regard was had to the ancient custom of choosing persons for sacred offices by lot. We need not here attempt to discuss this knotty question, though we cannot but think the second the most scriptural and consistent view. In any case this is the patristic history of the name. At first confined to three Superior Orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, it was from the third century extended to the many inferior orders, which then came into existence. In this way by an easy and natural transition it came to be used before the Reformation of those who assisted the priest at the altar and received a share of the offerings, while at the same time it was the general designation of all admitted to Holy Orders. So it is that to the present day it continues to be the legal description of clergymen who have not taken

any University degree. But at first sight it seems strange that the same title should now in ordinary language belong to all who handle the pen of the writer, from the clerk of assizes down to the purly mechanical writers in merchants' offices, &c. To account for this we must go back to the middle ages, when the clergy had almost a monopoly of secular learning, and many of them knew more of law than of the Gospel. The Judges and even the Lord Chancellors were usually chosen from their number, and the lower offices in the law courts were filled from the inferior ranks of the clergy. Lawyer thus became synonymous with clergymen, and in process of time all engaged in the humblest duties of the legal profession came to be designated as "Clerks." The descent from this to all scribes would not be difficult. Thus also, to come to the point in question, the title having passed from the clergy to the laity would easily continue to belong to the layman, whose principal duties in post-Reformation times were to make the responses after the minister, to read the lessons, and lead the singing. According to Canon 91, the parish clerk must be twenty years of age at least, and known to the incumbent "to be of honest conversation, and sufficient for his reading and writing, and also singing, if it may be." His appointment rests with the incumbent, or, during his suspension or a vacancy, with the licensed curate. By custom, in some places, the choice lies with the parishioners in vestry. Once appointed, he may hold the office for life, unless he be convicted of any wilful neglect or misbehaviour in his office (see Dale's "Clergyman's Legal Handbook," p. 88).

Very tenaciously do these humble servants of the Church cling to their post of duty, not always for the sake of its emoluments, which are often very small, but oftener from sheer force of habit and love for the work. Church restoration has done much in supplanting them by the choir; and yet even where the three-decker has long been swept away by the architect's magic wand, the clerk still lingers in some more or less prominent nook, and perhaps vainly strives to be heard above the choir and congregation. However, the palmy days of clerkdom are certainly gone by; and it is only by consulting the memories or the records of forty years at least we can form an idea of what a genuine English parish clerk once was. There would appear to have been many varieties of the species; clerks illiterate and clerks literate; clerks political and clerks nonpolitical; clerks jocose, and (we hope not a few) clerks devout. A few examples of each class may interest our readers.

To begin with the illiterate, for they were once the most numerous, some of their mistakes in reading look as if they might have been derived from a common tradition, as they were not peculiar to any special localities or individuals. Who has not heard of the "Great Leviathan" being transformed into "that Great Lieutenant," or "that great leather thing?" of "the owl in the desert" of the Psalmist becoming "a lion" not "an alien to his mother's children;" of the three Jewish martyrs in the Benedicite rejoicing in the names of Ananias, Azarias and Mizzle; while the angels in the Te Deum were designated "Cheberim and Sepherim." Such renderings were once common in all parts of the country; nor are they altogether exploded. Even the intelligent clerk of a modern town cemetery has often, in the writer's hearing, read with marked emphasis, in the Burial Psalm, "re-bu-kies." How endless the changes rung by different clerks on their oft-repeated "Amen." Marvellously did it vary from the "Im-men," quickly uttered with tightly-closed lips by a dry, matter-of-fact plethoric functionary, to the deep-toned "Au-an-men," echoing through the vaulted roof and long drawn aisles, from the solemn-looking, intensely self-important occupant of another desk.

But these eccentricities were by no means confined to the manner of their reading. Strange interruptions were often occasioned by their freaks to the solemnity of simple village worship. A droll example of this is found in the Annals of Sussex Clerks. On a wet Sunday, the clergyman, a pluralist, had walked across the downs to take the afternoon service in his second church. The congregation was thinned by the weather, and, having been thoroughly drenched, he thought it prudent to omit the sermon; so he desired the clerk to announce the fact after the prayers. The guileless swain, unaccustomed to polish his sentences, or to clothe his meaning in any but the plainest garb, exclaimed, "Ye bee to goo now." The worshippers did not stir, until with more startling emphasis he added, "I tell ye, ye bee to goo. Parson ain't a goin' to praich to-day. He's been and got wet to the skin." This lucid explanation was at once taken in and accepted; so the little flock immediately dispersed unfed. The notice given by another clerk must have been even less agreeable to his pastor's feelings, for it seemed to imply small respect for the Lord's-day or care for his parish. "There'll be no service," he said, "next Sunday, as the rector is goin' out grouse-shooting." Of course the rector had inadvertently revealed the cause of his approaching absence. One more story, highly amusing to all except the parson concerned, we give on the authority of the writer of

two interesting papers on "Clerks," published in "All the Year Round" for 1880. An aged rector had sent his false teeth to the dentist for repair, who promised to return them by Saturday. He posted them on that day, but there was no delivery in the village on Sunday, and the post town was nine miles off. So Sunday morning came, and the all-important enclosure had not arrived. With toothless gums the unfortunate clergyman mumbled through the prayers as best he could; but failing to be heard, he instructed the clerk to notify to the people that there would be no sermon that morning, nor any afternoon service. Accordingly, from his retreat in the vestry, to his great mortification, he heard the clerk harangue the assembly as follows: "This is to give notice as there won't be no sermon nor no more service this morning; so you'd better all go whum. And there won't be no service this afternoon, as the rector ain't got his artful teeth back from the dentist!" The story might be used to point a moral as to either the danger or the advantage of false teeth; but, like others of the same kind, it forcibly illustrates the folly of allowing illiterate clerks to be the mouthpiece of the clergyman.

SAVING AND SPENDING.

It was not easy. When she began to think over all she owed, she remembered many little sums in the books of confiding tradespeople which all had to be paid some day.

"Now, then, what shall I best save in? Not in bread—we must have what we want of that—and Jem must have his meat and Percy his milk the same as ever, I suppose; but not a bit of clothes will I buy either for the child or myself till I am out of debt. It does make me feel small to have the people come four or five times after their bits of money; and by and by I'll see if I can't somehow manage to pay as I go on. If Mary does, why shouldn't I?"

One morning in the early summer Jem got up and went to his work, looking dull and out of spirits, and without touching his breakfast. "I feel as full of aches and pains as a fine lady," he said to his wife. "I wonder what's up with me?" Something seemed to dray his limbs back as he trudged wearily along the road, and soon a faintness seized him which forced him to sit down on a heap of stones.

Here one of his mates found him, and seeing that Jem was quite unfit for any work that day, he took him at once straight home again. How Jane's heart failed as she saw her husband supported up the flagged pathway. For one moment she thought he had been again persuaded to go to the "Coach and Horses," but the next minute she saw it was illness and not drunkenness which shook that strong frame. She was by his side in a moment, and helped to carry him into the kitchen, where the fire was burning brightly.

"It's only a bit of a chill he's taken this raw morning," said Jem's mate cheerfully, as he moved the big arm-chair in front of the fire and placed him in it.

"Thank you kindly," said Jane, assuming a cheerfulness she did not feel, for something in her husband's face frightened her, it seemed so dark and still. "I daresay he'll soon be all right again. Let me open the door for you; it has an awkward hitch," she said, following the man out of the room; and then in a different tone she added in a whisper, "Do, as you go by, just ask the doctor to step in; my Jem looks terrible bad."

"I'll ask him, sure enough," he answered; "but don't you fret; it's just a chill, and no more."

Jane said nothing, but returned slowly to the kitchen, and rubbed her husband's hands to try to restore warmth to them. But though the summer sun shone brightly, and the day was far from the "raw one" that Jem's mate had declared it to be, it might have been mid-winter with the poor man; his teeth chattering so that it seemed as if they must be shaken out of his head. How long it seemed until the doctor

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