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CHAPTER. IV.

"Homekeeping youths have ever homely wits."

"ONCE away from England and the new crotchets," repeated the Vicar, "Alan will come round again."

"Do you think men *can* grow out of prigdom?" asked Lord Alwyne plaintively.

"Define me a prig," returned the Vicar.

"Definition requires thought. It is hardly worth the exertion."

Lord Alwyne sat up, and nerved himself for an effort.

"Yet you recognise a prig when he speaks, just as you know a cad when you see him, and before he speaks. Not only does the prig approach every subject from the point of view peculiar to prigdom: but all prigs speaks in the same tone. Do you remember the Oxford prig when we were undergraduates? He had advanced views, if I remember right, about episcopal authority. He was offensively and ostentatiously earnest too. But he was mild—our prig was mild—compared to the modern creatures, among

whom my unhappy son has thrown away his youth. Let us define a prig as a man who overdoes everything. He becomes a prig because he is not equal to his assumed position. He is not, for instance, equal to the duties of a critic, and falls back upon unquestioned maxims, which rule his opinions. And the universal maxim among prigs is that no one has a right to be heard outside their own body. "I wonder," he went on with a sigh, "I really wonder what unfortunate Oxford has done to be so plagued with prigs. You go to Cambridge, and you find them not—at least, I am told they are rare. At Oxford there are two or three gathered together in every Common Room."

"It is the effect of too much cultivation on a weak brain," said the Vicar, "and wears off as men get older. Affectations never last in theology, literature, or art. These young men have nothing new to say, and yet desire greatly to seem to have something new. So they invent a sort of jargon, and call it the only language for the expression of the 'higher thought!'"

"Yes," said Lord Alwyne, "everything