

attempted a solo, the bishop, (who interfered most rarely with the executive of the cathedral; and, indeed, it was not his province to do so) had spoken himself to Mr. Pye on the conclusion of the service, and said that the boy ought not to be put to sing alone again.

Mr. Pye bent his head forward to catch a glimpse at the choristers, five of whom sat on his side the choir, the *decani*; five on the opposite, or *cantori* side. So far as one could see, the boy, Stephen Bywater, who ought to have taken the anthem, was not in his place. There appeared to be four of them; but the senior boy with his clean, starched-out surplice, partially hid those below him. Mr. Pye wondered where his eyes could have been, not to have noticed the boy's absence, when they had been gathered round the entrance, waiting for the judges.

Had Mr. Pye's attention not been fully engrossed with his book, as the service had gone on, he might have seen the boy opposite to him, for there sat Bywater, before the bench of king's scholars, and right in front of Mr. Pye. Mr. Pye's glance fell upon him now, and he could scarcely believe it: he rubbed his eyes, and looked, and rubbed again. Bywater there! and without his surplice! braving, as it were, the head-master! What could he possibly mean by this act of defiant insubordination? 'Why was he not in his place in the school? Why was he mixing with the congregation? But Mr. Pye could as yet obtain no solution to the mystery.

The anthem came to an end; the dean had bent his brow at the solo, but it did no good; and, the prayers over, the sheriff's chaplain ascended to the pulpit to preach the sermon. He selected his text from St. John's Gospel: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' In the course of his sermon he pointed out that the unhappy prisoners in the gaol, awaiting the summons to answer before an earthly tribunal for the evil deeds which they had committed, had been led into their present miserable condition by the seductions of the flesh. They had fallen into sin, he went on, by the indulgence of their passions; they had placed no restraint upon their animal appetites and guilty pleasures; they had sunk gradually into crime, and had now to meet the penalty of the law. But did no blame, he asked, attach to those who had remained indifferent to their downward course; who had never stretched forth a friendly hand to rescue them from destruction; who had made no effort to teach and guide in the ways of truth and righteousness these outcasts of society? Were we, he demanded, at liberty to evade our responsibility by asking in the words of earth's first criminal, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' No; it was at once our duty and privilege to engage in the noble work of man's reformation—to raise the fallen

—to seek out the lost, and to restore the outcast; and this, he argued, could only be accomplished by a widely-disseminated knowledge of God's truth, by patient, self-denying labour in God's work, and by a devout dependence on God's Holy Spirit.

At the conclusion of the service the head-master proceeded to the vestry, where the minor canons, choristers, and lay clerks kept their surplices. Not the dean and chapter; they robed in the chapter-house: and the king's scholars put on their surplices in the schoolroom. The choristers followed Mr. Pye to the vestry, Bywater entering with them. The boys grouped themselves together: they were expecting—to use their own expression—a row.

'Bywater, what is the meaning of this conduct?' was the master's stern demand.

'I had got no surplice, sir,' was Bywater's answer—a saucy-looking boy with a red face, who had a propensity for getting into 'rows,' and consequently, punishment.

'No surplice!' repeated Mr. Pye—for the like excuse had never been offered by a college boy before. 'What do you mean?'

'We were ordered to wear clean surplices this afternoon. I brought mine to college this morning; I left it here in the vestry, and took the dirty one home. Well, sir, when I came to put it on this afternoon, it was gone.'

'How could it have gone? Nonsense, sir! who would touch your surplice?'

'But I could not find it, sir,' repeated Bywater. 'The choristers know I could not; and they left me hunting for it when they went into the hall to receive the judges. I could not go into my stall, sir, and sing the anthem without my surplice.'

'Hurst had no business to sing it,' was the vexed rejoinder of the master. 'You know your voice is gone, Hurst. You should have gone up to the organist, told him the case, and had another anthem put up.'

'But, sir, I was expecting Bywater in every minute. I thought he'd be sure to find his surplice somewhere,' was Hurst's defence. 'And when he did not come, and it got too late to do anything, I judged it better to take the anthem myself than to give it to a junior, who would be safe to have made a mull of it. Better for the judges and other strangers to hear a faded voice in Helstonleigh Cathedral, than to hear bad singing.'

The master did not speak. So far, Hurst's argument had reason.

'And—I beg your pardon for what I am about to say, sir,' Hurst went on, 'but I hope you will allow me to assure you beforehand, that neither I, nor my juniors under me, have had a hand in this affair. Bywater has just told me that the surplice is found, and how; and blame is sure to be cast to us; but I declare that not one of us has been in the mischief.'