

FIELD WALTER

STONES OF THE
TEMPLE; OR, LESSONS
FROM THE FABRIC AND
FURNITURE OF THE
CHURCH

Walter Field
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Lessons from the Fabric and
Furniture of the Church

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PREFACE

The following chapters are an attempt to explain in very simple language the history and use of those parts of the Church's fabric with which most persons are familiar.

They are not written with a view to assist the student of Ecclesiastical Art and Architecture – for which purpose the works of many learned writers are available – but simply to inform those who, from having paid little attention to such pursuits, or from early prejudice, may have misconceived the origin and design of much that is beautiful and instructive in God's House.

The spiritual and the material fabric are placed side by side, and the several offices and ceremonies of the Church as they are specially connected with the different parts of the building are briefly noticed.

Some of the subjects referred to may appear trifling and

unimportant; those, however, among them which seem to be the most trivial have in some parishes given rise to long and serious disputations.

The unpretending narrative, which serves to embody the several subjects treated of, has the single merit of being composed of little incidents taken from real life.

The first sixteen chapters were printed some years since in the *Church Builder*.

The writer is greatly indebted to the Committee of the Incorporated Church Building Society for the use of most of the woodcuts which illustrate the volume.

W. F.

Godmersham Vicarage,

Michaelmas, 1871.

CHAPTER I

THE LICH-GATE

**"These words which I command thee;
thou shalt write them on thy gates."**

Deut. vi. 6, 9

"Who says the Widow's heart must break,
The Childless Mother sink? —
A kinder, truer Voice I hear,
Which even beside that mournful bier
Whence Parent's eyes would hopeless shrink,

"Bids weep no more – O heart bereft,
How strange, to thee, that sound!
A Widow o'er her only Son,
Feeling more bitterly alone
For friends that press officious round.

"Yet is the Voice of comfort heard,
For Christ hath touch'd the bier —

The bearers wait with wondering eye,
The swelling bosom dares not sigh,
But all is still, 'twixt hope and fear.

"Even such an awful soothing calm
We sometimes see alight
On Christian mourners, while they wait
In silence, by some Churchyard gate,
Their summons to the holy rite."

Christian Year.

"Any port in a storm, Mr. Ambrose," said old Matthew Hutchison, as with tired feet, and scant breath, he hastened to share the shelter which Mr. Ambrose, the Vicar of the Parish, had found under the ancient and time-worn Lich-gate of St. Catherine's Churchyard. For a few big drops of rain that fell pattering on the leaves around, had warned them both to seek protection from a coming shower. "Ah, yes, my old friend," the Vicar replied, "and here we are pretty near the port to which we must all come, when the storm of life itself is past."

"I've known this place, – man and boy, – Mr. Ambrose, for near eighty years; and on yonder bit of a hill, under that broken thorn, I sit for hours every day watching my sheep; but my eye often wanders across here, and then the thought takes me just as you've said it, sir. Ah! it can't be long before Old Matthew will need some younger limbs than these to bring him through the churchyard gate; – that's what the old walls always seem to

say to me; – but God's will be done." And as the old Shepherd reverently lifted his broad hat, his few white hairs, stirred by the rising gale, seemed to confirm the truth of his words.

"Well, Matthew, I am glad you have learnt, what many are slow to learn, that there are 'Sermons in stones,' as well as in books. Every stone in God's House, and in God's Acre – as our Churchyards used to be called, – may teach us some useful lesson, if we will but stop to read it."

"Please, sir, I should like to know why they call the gate at the new churchyard over the hill, a *lich-gate*; – these new names puzzle a poor man like me¹."

"The name is better known in some parts of the country than it is here; but it is no new name, I assure you, for in the time of the Saxons, more than thirteen hundred years ago, it was in common use; but I will tell you all about this, and some other matters connected with the place where we now stand."

"I shall take it very kind if you will, sir, for you know we poor people don't know much about these things."

"Very often quite as much as many who are richer, Matthew, – but here comes our young squire, anxious like ourselves to keep a dry coat on his back; so I shall now be telling my story to rich and poor together, and I hope make it plain to both." After a few words of friendly greeting between Mr. Acres and himself, the three sat down on the stone seats of the Lich-Gate, and he

¹ In some parts of Devonshire and Cornwall, Lich-Gates are called "Trim-Trams." The origin of this word is not easy to determine; it is probably only a nickname.

at once proceeded to answer the old Shepherd's question. "The word *Lich*²," he said, "means a *Corpse*, and so *Lich-Gate* means a Corpse-gate, or gate through which the dead body is borne; and that path up which you came just now, Matthew, used formerly to be called the *Lich-path*³, because all the funerals came along that way. In some parts of Scotland is still kept up the custom of *Lyke-wake* (*Lich-wake*), or watching beside the dead body before its burial⁴. The pale sickly-looking moss, which lives best where all else is dead or dying, we call *lichen*. Then you know the *Lich-owl* is so called because some people are silly enough to think that its screech foretells death. And I must just say something about this word *lich* in the name of a certain city; it is *Lichfield*. Now *lich-field* plainly means the field of the dead: and where that city now stands is said to have been the burial-place of many Christian Martyrs, who were slain there about the year 290. You will remember, Mr. Acres, that the Arms of the City exhibit this field of the dead, on which lie three slaughtered men, each having on his head, as is supposed, a martyr's crown. Now, Matthew, I

² Anglo-Saxon, *lic*, – a dead body. In Germany the word *leiche* has doubtless the same original; it is still used to signify a corpse or funeral. The German *leichengang* has precisely the same meaning as our *Lich-Gate*.

³ It is stated in *Britton's Antiquities* that there was formerly a Lych-Gate in a lane called Lych-lane in Gloucester, where the body of Edward II. rested on its way to burial in the Cathedral.

⁴ A Lyke-wake dirge: —"This ae nighte, this ae nighte, Every nighte and alle; Fire and sleete, and candle lighte, And Christe receive theye saule." (Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.")

think I have fully replied to your question; but I should like to say something more about the use and the history of these Lich-Gates."

"Will you kindly tell us," said Mr. Acres, "how it is that there are so few remaining, and that of these there are probably very few indeed so much as four centuries old⁵."

"I think the reason is, that at first they were almost entirely made of wood, and therefore were subject to early decay – certainly they must at one time have been far more general than at present. The rubrical direction at the beginning of the Burial Office in our Prayer Book seems to imply some such provision at the churchyard entrance. It is there said 'the Priest and Clerks' are to 'meet the Corpse *at the entrance of the Churchyard.*' But in this old Prayer Book of mine, printed in the year 1549, you see the Priest is directed to meet the corpse at the 'Church-stile,' or Lich-Gate. Now as in olden times the corpse was always borne to its burial by the friends or neighbours of the deceased, and they had often far to travel, their time of reaching the Churchyard must have been very uncertain, and this uncertainty no doubt frequently caused delay when they had arrived, therefore it was desirable both to have a place of shelter on a rainy day, and of rest when the way was long. Hence I suppose it is, that the older Lich-Gates are to be found, for the most part, in widespread parishes and mountainous districts; they are most common in the

⁵ On the Lich-Gate at Bray, Berks, is the date 1448; but there are very few examples so early.

Counties of Devon and Cornwall, and in Wales⁶. But even where the necessity of the case no longer exists, the Lich-Gate, adorned, as it ever should be, with some holy text or pious precept, is most appropriate as an ornament, and expressive as a symbol. Its presence should always be associated in our minds with thoughts of death, and life beyond it. It should remind us that though we must ere long 'go to the gates of the grave,' yet that it is 'through the grave and gate of death' that we must 'pass to our joyful resurrection.' It is here the Comforter of Bethany so often speaks, through the voice of His Church, to His sorrowing brethren in the world: – 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live⁷.'

"Ah! sir," said the shepherd, "many's the poor heart-bowed mourner that's been comforted here with those words! They always remind me of Jesus saying to the widow of Nain, 'Weep not,' when he stopped the bier on which was her only son, and the bearers, and all the mourners, at the gate of the city."

"Yes! and all this makes us look on the old Lich-Gate as no

⁶ The following are among the most interesting of the ancient Lich-Gates still remaining: – Beckenham, Lincolnshire; Berry-Harbor, Devonshire; Birstal, York; Bromsgrove, Worcestershire; Burnside, Westmoreland; Compton, Berkshire; Garsington, Oxon; Tawstock, Devonshire; West Wickham, Kent; and Worth, Sussex. The construction of the gate at Burnside is very curious, and Tawstock Lich-Gate possesses peculiar features of interest, which are noticed in the next Chapter. One of the finest Lich-Gates was at Arundel, in Surrey, but it has been removed, and is now the Church Porch.

⁷ St. John xi. 25. The first words of the Burial Office, said by the Priest at the entrance to the Churchyard.

gloomy object, but rather as a 'Beautiful Gate of the Temple' which is eternal, – a glorious arch of hope and triumph, hung all round with trophies of Christian victory. But I see the rain is over, and the sun is shining! so good-bye, Mr. Acres, we two shepherds must not stay longer from our respective flocks: – old Matthew's is spread over the mountains, mine is folded in the village below." The old shepherd soon took his accustomed seat under the weather-beaten thorn, the Vicar was soon deep in the troubles of a poor parishioner, and the young Squire went to the village by another way.

CHAPTER II

LICH-STONES

**"Man goeth to his long home, and
the mourners go about the streets."**

Eccles. xii. 5

"Say, was it to my spirit's gain or loss,
One bright and balmy morning, as I went
From Liege's lovely environs to Ghent,
If hard by the wayside I found a cross,
That made me breathe a prayer upon the spot —
While Nature of herself, as if to trace
The emblem's use, had trail'd around its base
The blue significant Forget-me-not?
Methought, the claims of Charity to urge
More forcibly, along with Faith and Hope,
The pious choice had pitch'd upon the verge
Of a delicious slope,
Giving the eye much variegated scope; —
'Look round,' it whisper'd, 'on that prospect rare,

Those vales so verdant, and those hills so blue;
Enjoy the sunny world, so fresh and fair,
But' – (how the simple legend pierced me thro'!)
'Priez pour les Malheureux.'"

T. Hood.

"Good morning, Mr. Acres, and a happy Easter-Tide to you. This is indeed a bright Easter sun to shine on our beautiful Lich-Gate at its re-opening. I little thought on what good errand you were bent when last we parted at this spot. Hardly however had I reached my door when William Hardy came with great glee to tell me you had engaged his services for the work. May God reward you, sir, for the honour you have shown for His Church."

"And an old man's blessing be upon you, sir, if you will let Old Matthew say so; for the Church-gate is dearer to me than my own, seeing it has closed upon my beloved partner, and the dear child God gave us, and my own poor wicket shuts on no one else but me now."

"Thank you heartily, honest Matthew, and you too, sir," replied the squire, giving to each the hand of friendship; "I am rejoiced that what has been done pleases you so well. The restored Gate is in every respect like the original one, even to the simple little cross on the top of it. I have added nothing but the sentence from our Burial Office, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,' which you see over the arch, and which I hope will bring comfort to some, and hope to all who read it. But the work would never have been done by me, Mr. Vicar, had you

not so interested Matthew and myself in these Lich-Gates when last we met. And so, as you see, your good words have not been altogether lost, I hope you will kindly to-day continue the subject of our last conversation."

"Most gladly will I do so; and as I have already spoken of the general purpose and utility of these Lich-Gates, I will now say a little about their construction and arrangement.

"Their most common form, as you know, is a simple shed composed of a roof with two gable ends, covered either with tiles or thatch, and supported on strong timbers well braced together. But they are frequently built of stone, and in the manner of their construction they greatly vary. At Burnsall there is a curious arrangement for opening and closing the gate. The stone pier on the north side has a well-hole, in which the weight that closes the gate works up and down. An upright swivel post or 'heart-tree,' (as the people there call it,) stands in the centre, and through this pass the three rails of the gate; an iron bent lever is fixed to the top of this post, which is connected by a chain and guide-pulley to the weight, so that when any one passes through, both ends of the gate open in opposite directions. The Gate at Rostherne churchyard, in Cheshire, is on a similar plan. At Berry-harbour is a Lich-Gate in the form of a cross. At only one place, I believe, – Troutbeck, in Westmoreland, – are there to be found three stone Lich-Gates in one churchyard. Some of these gates have chambers over them, as at Bray⁸, in

⁸ A very interesting paper on Lich-Gates, in the "Clerical Journal," affords much

Berkshire, and Barking⁹, in Essex. At Tawstock there is a small room on either side of the gate, having seats on three sides and a table in the centre. It seems that in this, as in some other cases, provision is made either for the distribution of alms, or for the rest and refreshment of funeral attendants. It was once a common custom at funerals in some parts, especially in Scotland¹⁰, to hold a feast at the Church-gate and these feasts sometimes led to great excesses: happily they are now discontinued, but the custom may help to point out the purpose for which these Lich-Gate rooms were sometimes erected. In Cornwall it is not customary to bear the corpse on the shoulders, but to carry the coffin, under-handed, by white cloths passed beneath and through the handles¹¹ and this partly explains the peculiar arrangement for resting the corpse at the entrance to the churchyard, common, even now, in that county, and which is called the *Lich-Stone*. The Lich-Stone is often found without any building attached to it, and frequently without even a gate. The Stone is either oblong with the ends of equal width, or it is the shape of the ancient coffins, narrower

information on this subject. Over the gate at Bray are "two chambers, connected with an ancient charitable bequest."

⁹ This chamber was formerly called the Chapel of the Holy Rood.

¹⁰ The custom of distributing "cakes and ale" at the churchyard on the occasion of funerals in Scotland, has been but very recently given up. Dean Ramsey, in his interesting "anecdotes," has informed us that at the burial of the Chief of a clan, many thousands would sometimes assemble, and not unfrequently the funeral would end in a disgraceful riot.

¹¹ In Cornwall the now common practice of placing a wreath of white flowers on the coffin is a very ancient and still prevailing usage.

at one end than the other, but without any bend at the shoulder. It is placed in the centre, having stone seats on either side, on which the bearers rest whilst the coffin remains on the Lich-Stone. When there is no gate, the churchyard is protected from the intrusion of cattle by this simple contrivance: – long pieces of moor-stone, or granite, are laid across, with a space of about three inches between each, and being rounded on the top any animal has the greatest difficulty in walking over them, indeed a quadruped seldom attempts to cross them.

"Lich-Stones are, – though very rarely, – to be found at a distance from the churchyard; in this case, doubtless, they are intended as rests for the coffin on its way to burial.

"At Lustleigh, in Devonshire, is an octagonal Lich-Stone called Bishop's Stone, having engraved upon it the arms of Bishop Cotton¹². It seems not unlikely that the several beautiful crosses erected by King Edward I. at the different stages where the corpse of his queen, Eleanor¹³, rested on its way from Herdeby in Lincolnshire to Westminster, were built over the Lich-Stone on which her coffin was placed. And now, my kind listeners, I think I have told you all I know about Lich-Stones."

"These simple memorials of Church architecture are very touching," replied Mr. Acres, as he rose to depart; "and the Lich-

¹² Consecrated Bishop of Exeter A.D. 1598.

¹³ These crosses were erected at the following places: – Lincoln, Northampton, Dunstable, St. Alban's, Waltham, Stratford, Cheapside, Blackfriars, and Charing; those at Waltham and Northampton alone remain. The statue of King Charles now stands where the Charing ("Chère Reine") Cross formerly stood.

Stone deserves a record before modern habits and improvements sweep them away. They have a direct meaning, and surely might be more generally adopted in connexion with the Lich-Gate, now gradually re-appearing in many of our rural parishes, as the fitting entrance to the churchyard."

CHAPTER III

GRAVE-STONES

"When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones."

1 Kings xiii. 31

"I've seen
The labourer returning from his toil,
Here stay his steps, and call the children round,
And slowly spell the rudely sculptured rhymes,
And in his rustic manner, moralize.
We mark'd with what a silent awe he'd spoken,
With head uncover'd, his respectful manner,
And all the honours which he paid the grave."

H. Kirke White.

"I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's acre! It is just;

It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

"Into its furrows shall we all be cast,
In the sure faith that we shall rise again
At the great harvest, when the archangel's blast
Shall winnow, like a fan, the chaff and grain.

"With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;
This is the field and acre of our God:
This is the place where human harvests grow."

Longfellow.

"And so, Matthew, the old sexton's little daughter is to be buried to-day. What a calm peaceful day it is for her funeral! The day itself seems to have put on the same quiet happy smile that Lizzie Daniels always carried about with her, before she had that painful lingering sickness, which she bore with a meekness and patience I hardly ever saw equalled. And then it is Easter Day too, the very day one would choose for the burial of a good Christian child. All our services to-day will tell us that this little maid, and all those who lie around us here so still beneath their green mounds, are not dead but sleeping, and as our Saviour rose from the grave on Easter Day, so will they all awake and rise up again when God shall call them. I see the little grave is dug under the old yew-tree, near to that of your own dear ones. Lizzie was

a great favourite of yours, was she not, Matthew?"

"Ah, she was the brightest little star in my sky, I can tell you, sir; and I shall miss her sadly. She brought me my dinner, every day for near two years, up to the old thorn there, and then she would sit down on the grass before me, and read from her Prayer Book some of the Psalms for the day; and when she had done, and I had kissed and thanked her, she used to go trotting home again, with, I believe, the brightest little face and the lightest little heart in England. Well, sir, it's sorry work, you know, for a man to dig the grave for his own child, and so I asked John Daniels to let me dig Lizzie's grave: but it has been indeed hard work for me, for I think I've shed more tears in that grave than I ever shed out of it. But the grave is all ready now, and little Lizzie will soon be there; and then, sir, I should like to put up a stone, for I shall often come here to think about the dear child. Poor little Lizzie! she seemed like a sort of good angel to me, – children do seem like that sometimes, don't they, sir? Perhaps, Mr. Ambrose, you would be so good as to tell Robert Atkinson what sort of stone you would like him to put up."

"Certainly I will; and I think nothing would be so suitable as a simple little stone cross, with Lizzie's name on the base of it. And as she is to be buried on Easter Day, I should like to add the words, 'In Christ shall all be made alive.'"

"Thank you, sir; that will do very nicely. I'm only thinking, may be, that wicked boy of Mr. Dole's, at the shop, will come some night and break the cross, as he did the one Mr. Hunter put

up over his little boy. But I think that was more the sin of the father than of the son, for I'm told the old gentleman's very angry with you, sir, 'cause he couldn't put what he call's a 'handsome monument' over his father's grave; and he says, too, he's going to law about it."

"Ah, he'll be wiser not to do that, Matthew. The churchyard is the parson's freehold, and he has the power to prevent the erection of any stone there of which he disapproves; and I, for one, don't mean to give up this power. 'Tis true that every one of my parishioners has a right to be buried in this churchyard, nor could I refuse this if I would; but then, if I am to protect this right of my parishioners, as it is my duty to do, and to preserve my churchyard from disfigurement and desecration, I must take care that the ground is not occupied by such great ugly monuments as Mr. Dole wishes to build¹⁴. Why I hear he bought that large urn¹⁵ which was taken down from Mr. Acres'

¹⁴ In a churchyard in Oxfordshire, a large altar-tomb, surrounded by iron railings, occupying a space of ground in which at least thirty persons might be buried, covers the grave of an infant of three months. The erection of these masses of stone without restraint would make our churchyards only the burial-places of the rich, and would soon entirely exclude the poor from a place in them; whereas the poor have an equal claim with the rich to be buried there, and when buried, the same title to respect and protection.

¹⁵ The urns which are placed upon so many tombs in our cemeteries and churchyards, unless they have reference to the heathen custom of burning the dead, and placing the ashes in funeral urns, can have no meaning at all. We moreover not unfrequently see a gilded flame issuing from these urns, and here of course the reference is most clearly marked. The Christian custom of burying the dead, which we practise in imitation of the entombment of Christ, dates from the earliest history of man; and as well from

park gates, to put on the top of the tomb. And then I suppose he would like to have the sides covered with skulls and crossbones, and shovels and mattocks, and fat crying cherubs, besides the usual heathen devices, such as inverted torches and spent hour-glasses; all which fitly enough mark an infidel's burial-place, but not a Christian's. For you see, my friend, that *none of these things represent any Christian truth*; the best are but emblems of mortality; some are the symbols of oblivion and despair, and others but mimic a heathen custom long gone by. The stones of the churchyard ought themselves to tell the sanctity of the place, and that it is a Christian's rest¹⁶. The letters we carve on them will hardly be read by our children's children. The lines on that stone there tell no more than is true of all the Epitaphs around us:

the Old as the New Testament we learn that it has ever been followed by those who professed to obey the Divine will. The first grave of which we have any account was the grave of Sarah, Abraham's wife (Gen. xxiii. 19), and the first grave-stone was that over the burial-place of Rachel, Jacob's wife (Gen. xlix. 31).

¹⁶ There are comparatively but few churchyard grave-stones more than 250 years old, and probably there are very few of an earlier date but have engraved upon them the sign of the Cross. There are two very ancient grave-stones of this character, having also heads carved upon them, in the churchyard of Silchester. It is likely that the old churchyard crosses were often mortuary memorials. Probably there is hardly an old churchyard but has, at some time, been adorned with its churchyard cross; in most cases, some remains of this most appropriate and beautiful ornament still exist, and doubtless is often older than the churchyard as a place of Christian burial. In many places this cross has been lately restored to its proper place, near to the Lich-Gate. "Let a handsome churchyard cross be erected in every churchyard." – Institutions of the Bishop of Winchester, A.D. 1229.

'The record some fond hand hath traced,
To mark thy burial spot,
The lichen will have soon effaced,
To write thy doom – Forgot.'

But even then, if the symbol of our redemption is there, 'the very stones will cry out,' and though time-worn and moss-grown, will declare that it is a *Christian's* burial-place. If, then, as Christian men and women 'we sorrow not as others without hope,' let us not cover our monuments with every symbol of despair, or with heathen devices, but as we are not ashamed of the doctrine, so neither let us be ashamed of the symbol of the cross of Christ. Besides, if we wish to preserve our graves from desecration, this form of stone is the most likely to do so; for in spite of outrages like young Dole's, which have been sometimes committed, we continually find that such memorials have been respected and preserved when others have been removed and employed for common uses. Why, Matthew, I've seen hundreds of grave-stones converted into fire-hearths, door-steps, pavements, and such like, but I never saw a monument on which was graven the Christian symbol so desecrated; and I believe such a thing has hardly ever been seen by any one."

"Well, Mr. Ambrose, I should like there to be no doubt about little Lizzie's being a Christian's grave. I was thinking, too, to have a neat iron railing round the stone, sir."

"I would advise you not to have it, Matthew; for the grave will be prettier without it. Besides, it gives an idea of separateness,

which one does not like in a place where all distinctions are done away with; and, moreover, the iron would soon rust, and then the railing would become very untidy."

"Yes, to be sure it would; I was forgetting that I shan't be here to keep it nicely painted: – but see, sir, here come the children from the village with their Easter flowers. I dare say little Mary Acres will give me some for Lizzie's grave."

"Ah, I like that good old custom of placing flowers and wreaths on Christian graves at Easter, and other special seasons¹⁷. It is the simple way in which these little ones both show their respect for departed friends, and express their belief in the resurrection of the dead. I would say of it, as Wordsworth wrote of the Funeral Chant: —

'Many precious rites
And customs of our rural ancestry
Are gone, or stealing from us; this, I hope,
Will last for ever.'

But you remember the time, Matthew, when there were very different scenes from this, at Easter, in St. Catherine's

¹⁷ The interesting custom of placing natural flowers and wreaths upon graves, is in every respect preferable to that which we see practised in Continental burial-grounds, where the graves are often covered with immortelles, vases of gaudy artificial flowers, images, &c. We have seen as many as fifty wreaths of artificial flowers and tinselled paper, in every stage of decomposition, over one grave in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, in Paris. In Wales it is a more general practice than in England, to adorn the graves with fresh flowers on Easter Day.

churchyard. If I mistake not, you will recollect when the Easter fair used to be kept here."

"That I do, sir, too well. There was always a Sunday fight in the churchyard, and the people used to come from Walesborough and for miles round to see it. It's just forty years ago to-day poor Bill Thirlsby was killed in a fight, as it might be, just where I'm now standing¹⁸. But, thank God, that day's gone by."

"And, I trust, never to come back again. But have you heard, Matthew, that some great enemies of the Church are trying to spoil the peace and sacredness of our churchyards in another way? They want to bring in all kinds of preachers to perform all sorts of funeral services in them; and if they gain their ends, our long-hallowed churchyards, where as yet there has only been heard the solemn beautiful Burial Service of our own Church, may be desecrated by the clamour of ignorant fanaticism, the continual janglings of religious discord, or perhaps, the open blasphemy of godless men."

"What! then I suppose we should have first a service from Master Scoff, the bill-sticker and Mormon preacher, and next from Master Scole, the Baptist preacher, then from Father La Trappe, the Roman Catholic minister, and then, perhaps, sir, it might be your turn. Why, sir, 'twould be almost like going back to the Easter fair."

"Well, my friend, in one respect it would be worse; for it would be discord all the year round. But I trust God will frustrate these

¹⁸ This story is true of a parish in Monmouthshire.

wicked designs of our Church's foes. Long, long may it be ere the sanctity of our churchyards is thus invaded."

"Amen, say I to that, sir, with all my heart."

"And, thanks be to God, Matthew, that Amen of yours is now re-echoing loudly throughout the length and breadth of England."

CHAPTER IV

GRAVE-STONES

"And he said, What title is that that I see? and the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God."

2 Kings xiii. 17

"I never can see a Churchyard old,
With its mossy stones and mounds,
And green trees weeping the unforgot
That rest in its hallow'd bounds;
I never can see the old churchyard,
But I breathe to God a prayer,
That, sleep as I may in this fever'd life,
I may rest, when I slumber, there.

"Our Mother the Church hath never a child
To honour before the rest,
But she singeth the same for mighty kings,
And the veriest babe on her breast;

And the bishop goes down to his narrow bed
As the ploughman's child is laid,
And alike she blesseth the dark brow'd serf,
And the chief in his robe array'd.

"And ever the bells in the green churchyard
Are tolling to tell you this: —
Go pray in the church, while pray ye can,
That so ye may sleep in bliss."

Christian Ballads.

"It is an awful thing to stand
With either world on either hand,
Upon the intermediate ground
Which doth the sense and spirit bound.
Woe worth the man who doth not fear
When spirits of the dead are near."

The Baptistery.

A golden haze in the eastern sky told that the sun which had set in all his glory an hour before was now giving a bright Easter Day to Christians in other lands. The evening service was ended, and a joyful peal had just rung out from the tower of St. Catherine's, — for such was the custom there on all the great festivals of the Church, — the low hum of voices which lately rose from a group of villagers gathered near the churchyard gate was hushed; there was a pause of perfect stillness; and then the old tenor began its

deep, solemn tolling for the burial of a little child. The Vicar and his friend Mr. Acres, who had been walking slowly to and fro on the churchyard path, stopped suddenly on hearing the first single beat of the burial knell, and at the same instant they saw, far down the village lane, the flickering light of the two torches borne by those who headed the little procession of Lizzie's funeral. They, too, seemed to have caught the spell, and stood mutely contemplating the scene before them. At length Mr. Acres broke silence by saying, "I know of but few Parishes where, like our own, the funerals of the poor take place by torch-light; it is, to say the least, a very picturesque custom."

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Ambrose, "I believe, however, the poor in this place first adopted it from no such sentiment, but simply as being more convenient both to themselves and to their employers. Their employers often cannot spare them earlier in the day, and they themselves can but ill afford to lose a day's wages. But these evening funerals have other advantages. They enable many more of the friends of the departed to show this last tribute of respect to their memory than could otherwise do so; and were this practice more general, we should have fewer of those melancholy funerals where the hired bearers are the sole attendants. Then, if properly conducted, they save the poor much expense at a time when they are little able to afford it. I find that their poor neighbours will, at evening, give their services as bearers, free of cost, which they cannot afford to do earlier in the day. The family of the deceased, too, are freed from

the necessity of taxing their scanty means in order to supply a day's hospitality to their visitors, who now do not assemble till after their day's labour, and immediately after the funeral retire to their own homes, and to rest. I am sorry to say, however, this was not always so. When I first came to the Parish, the evening was too often followed by a night of dissipation. But since I have induced the people to do away with hired bearers, and enter into an engagement to do this service one for another, free of charge, and simply as a *Christian duty*, those evils have never recurred. I once preached a sermon to them from the text, 'Devout men carried Stephen to his burial' (Acts viii. 2), in which I endeavoured to show them that none but men of good and honest report should be selected for this solemn office; and I am thankful to say, from that time all has been decent and orderly. When it is the funeral of one of our own school-children, the coffin is always carried by some of the school-teachers; I need hardly say this is simply an act of Christian charity. Moreover, this custom greatly diminishes the number of our Sunday burials, which are otherwise almost a necessity among the poor¹⁹. The Sunday, as a great Christian Festival, is not appropriate for a public ceremony of so mournful a character as that of the burial of the dead; there is, too, this additional objection to Sunday burials: that they create *Sunday labour*. But,

¹⁹ It is comparatively seldom that any other than the funerals of the *poor* take place on Sunday, and the reason commonly assigned is – that it is the only day on which their friends can attend. In one, at least, of the large metropolitan cemeteries, exclusively used as a burial-place for the *rich*, no funerals *ever* take place on a Sunday.

considering the subject generally, I confess a preference for these evening funerals. To me they seem less gloomy, though more solemn, than those which take place in the broad light of day. When the house has been closed, and the chamber of death darkened for several days (to omit which simple acts would be like an insult to the departed), it seems both consonant with this custom which we have universally adopted, and following the course of our natural feelings, to avoid – in performing the last solemn rite – the full blaze of midday light. There is something in the noiseless going away of daylight suggestive of the still departure of human life; and in the gathering shades of evening, in harmony with one's thoughts of the grave as the place of the *sleeping*, and not of the *dead*. The hour itself invites serious thought. When a little boy, I once attended a midnight funeral; and the event left an impression on my mind which I believe will never be altogether effaced. I would not, however, recommend midnight funerals, except on very special occasions; and I must freely admit that under many circumstances evening funerals would not be practicable."

"I see," said Mr. Acres, "that the system here adopted obviates many evils which exist in the prevailing mode of Christian burial, but it hardly meets the case of large towns, especially when the burial must take place in a distant cemetery. Don't you think we want reform there, even more, perhaps, than in these rural parishes?"

"Yes, certainly, my friend, I do; and I regret to say I see,

moreover, many difficulties that beset our efforts to accomplish it. Still something should be done. We all agree, it is much to be deplored that, owing to the necessity for extramural burial, the connexion between the parishioner and his parish church is, with very rare exceptions, entirely severed in the last office which the Clergy and his friends can render him, and the solemn Service of the Burial of the Dead is said in a strange place, by a stranger's voice. Now this we can at least partly remedy. I would always have the bodies of the departed brought to the parish church previous to their removal to the cemetery; and the funeral knell should be tolled, as formerly, to invite their friends and neighbours to be present, and take part in so much of the service as need not be said at the grave. It would then be no longer true, as now it is, that in many of our churches this touching and beautiful Service has never been said, and by many of the parishioners has never been heard. Then let the bearers be men of good and sober character. How revolting to one's sense of decency is the spectacle, so common in London, of hired attendants, wearing funeral robes and hat-bands²⁰, drinking at gin-palaces, whilst the hearse and mourning coaches are drawn up outside! Then I would have the furniture of the funeral less suggestive of *sorrow without hope*; and specially I would have the coffin less gloomy, – I might in many cases say, less *hideous*: let it be of plain wood, or, if

²⁰ Let us hope that the time is near when this objectionable and unsightly appendage will be banished from our funeral processions. The late Mr. Charles Dickens, in his will, forbade the wearing of hat-bands at his funeral.

covered, let its covering be of less gloomy character, and without the trashy and unmeaning ornaments with which undertakers are used to bestud it. As regards our cemeteries, I suppose in most of them the Burial Service is said in all its integrity, but in some it is sadly mutilated. 'No fittings, sir, and a third-class grave,' said the attendant of a large cemetery the other day to a friend of mine, who had gone there to bury a poor parishioner; which in simple English was this: — 'The man was too poor to have any other than a *common grave*, so you must not read all the Service; and his friends are too poor to give a hat-band, so you must not wear a hood and stole.' My friend did not of course comply with the intimation."

"Well, Mr. Vicar, I hope we may see the improvements you have suggested carried out, and then such an abuse as that will not recur. Much indeed has already been done in this direction, and for this we must be thankful."

"Yes, and side by side with that, I rejoice to see an increasing improvement in the character of our tombstones and epitaphs."

"Ah, sir, there was need enough, I am sure, for that. How shocking are many of the inscriptions we find on even modern tombstones! To 'lie like an epitaph' has long been a proverb, and I fear a just one. What a host of false witnesses we have even here around us in this burial-ground! There lies John Wilk, who was — I suppose — as free from care and sickness to his dying hour as any man that ever lived; yet his grave-stone tells the old story: —

**'Afflictions sore long time I
bore, Physicians was in vain.'**

And beyond his stands the stone of that old scold Margery Torbeck, who, you know, sir, was the terror of the whole village; and of her we are told: —

**'A tender wife, a mother dear, A
faithful friend, lies buried here.'**

I often think, Mr. Ambrose, when walking through a churchyard, if people were only half as good when living, as when dead they are said to have been, what a happy world this would be; so full of 'the best of husbands,' 'the most devoted of wives,' 'the most dutiful of sons,' and 'the most amiable of daughters.' One is often reminded of the little child's inquiry — 'Mamma, where are all the *wicked* people buried?' But did you ever notice that vain and foolish inscription under the north wall to the 'perpetual' memory of 'Isaac Donman, Esq.'? Poor man! I wonder whether his friends thought the 'Esq.' would *perpetuate* his memory. I wish it could be obliterated."

"I have told John Daniels to plant some ivy at the base of the stone, and I hope the words will be hidden by it before the summer is over. I find this the most convenient mode of

concealing objectionable epitaphs. But is it not an instance of strange perversity, that where all earthly distinctions are swept away, and men of all degrees are brought to one common level, people will delight to inscribe these boastful and exaggerated praises of the departed, and so often claim for them virtues which in reality they never possessed? What can be more out of place here than pride? As regards the frail body on which is often bestowed so much vain eulogy, what truer words are there than these? —

'How loved, how valued once, avails thee not;
To whom related, or by whom begot:
A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art, 'tis all the proud shall be.'

These kind of epitaphs, too, are so very unfair to the deceased. We who knew old Mrs. Ainstie, who lies under that grand tombstone, knew her to be a good, kind neighbour; but posterity will not believe that, when posterity reads in her epitaph that 'she was a spotless woman.' It is better to say too little than too much; since our Bibles tell us that, even *when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants*. There are other foolish epitaphs which are the result of ignorance, not of pride. For instance, poor old Mrs. Beck, whose son is buried in yonder corner (it is too dark now to see the stone), sent me these lines for her son's grave-stone: —

'Here lies John Beck, aged 19 years,

Father and mother, wipe away your tears.'

I persuaded her instead to have this sentence from the Creed: – 'I believe in the communion of Saints.' When I explained to her the meaning of the words, she was grateful that I had suggested them.

The two things specially to be avoided in these memorials are flattery and falsehood; and, moreover, we should always remember that neither grave-stone nor epitaph can benefit the *dead*, but that both may benefit the *living*. Therefore a short sentence from the Bible or Prayer Book, expressive of hope beyond the grave, is always appropriate; such as: – 'I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come;' or words which either may represent the dying prayer of the deceased, or express a suitable petition for ourselves when thus reminded of our own approaching departure, such as: 'Jesus, mercy,' or 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' or 'In the hour of death, good Lord, deliver us.' How much better is some simple sentence like these than a fulsome epitaph! But the funeral is nearly at the gate; so I must hasten to meet it."

"And I will say good evening," said Mr. Acres, "as I may not see you after the service; and I thank you for drawing my attention to a subject on which I had before thought too little."

Mr. Ambrose met the funeral at the lich-gate. First came the two torch-bearers, then the coffin, borne by six school-teachers; then John and Mary Daniels, followed by their two surviving

children; then came old Matthew, and after him several of little Lizzie's old friends and neighbours. Each attendant carried a small sprig of evergreen²¹, or some spring flowers, and, as the coffin was being lowered, placed them on it. Many tears of sadness fell down into that narrow grave, but none told deeper love than those of the old Shepherd, who lingered sorrowfully behind to close in the grave of his little friend.

²¹ "In several parts of the north of England, when a funeral takes place, a basin full of sprigs of boxwood is placed at the door of the house from which the coffin is taken up, and each person who attends the funeral ordinarily takes a sprig of the boxwood and throws it into the grave of the deceased." — *Wordsworth (Notes, Excursion, p. 87)*.

CHAPTER V

THE PORCH

**"Keep thy foot when thou
goest to the house of God."**

Eccles. v. 1

"When once thy foot enters the church, be bare.
God is more there than thou: for thou art there
Only by His permission. Then beware
And make thyself all reverence and fear.
Kneeling ne'er spoilt silk stockings: quit thy state,
All equal are within the Church's gate.

"Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part:
Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither.
Christ purged His temple; so must thou thy heart.
All worldly thoughts are but thieves met together
To cozen thee. Look to thy actions well;
For churches either are our heaven or hell."

George Herbert.

"One place there is – beneath the burial sod,
Where all mankind are equalized by death:
Another place there is – the Fane of God,
Where all are equal who draw living breath."

Thomas Hood.

Mr. Ambrose only remained in the churchyard a few moments after little Lizzie's funeral, just to say some kind words to the bereaved parents and the attendant mourners, and then hastened to comply with the urgent request of a messenger, that he would without delay accompany him to the house of a parishioner living in a distant part of the Parish.

It was more than an hour ere the Vicar began to retrace his steps. His nearest way to the village lay through the churchyard, along the path he had lately traversed in earnest conversation with Mr. Acres. He paused a moment at the gate, to listen for the sound of Matthew's spade; but the old man had completed his task, and all was still. He then entered, and turned aside to look at the quiet little grave. A grassy mound now marked the spot, and it was evident that no little care had been bestowed to make it so neat and tidy.

Mr. Ambrose was slowly walking on, musing on the patient sufferings of his little friend, now gone to her rest, when just as he approached the beautiful old porch of the church his train

of thought was suddenly disturbed by hearing what seemed to him the low, deep sobbing of excessive grief. The night was not so dark but that he could see distinctly within the porch, and he anxiously endeavoured to discover whether the sound had proceeded from any one who had taken shelter there for the night; but the place was evidently tenant less. "It must have been only the hum of a passing breeze, which my fancy has converted into a human voice," thought he, "for assuredly no such restless sobs as those ever escape from the deep sleepers around me here." And so the idea was soon banished and forgotten. But as he stood there, his gaze became, almost unconsciously, fixed upon the old church porch. The dim light resting upon it threw the rich carvings of its graceful arches, and deep-groined roof, with its massive bosses of sculptured stone, into all sorts of fantastic forms, and a strange mystery seemed to hang about the solemn pile, which completely riveted his attention to it, and led him into the following reverie: – "Ah, thou art indeed a 'beautiful gate of the temple'! Well and piously did our ancestors in bestowing so much wealth and labour to make thy walls so fair and lovely. And well ever have they done in crowding these noble porches with the sacred emblems of our holy faith. Rightly have they deemed that the very highest efforts of human art could not be misapplied in adorning the threshold of God's House, so that, ere men entered therein, their minds might be attuned to the solemnity of the place²². All praise, too, to those honest

²² Great care was taken by the medieval architects to make the porches of their

craftsmen who cemented these old stones so well together that they have stood the storms of centuries, and still remain the unlettered though faithful memorials of ages long gone by. Ah, how many scenes my imagination calls up as I look on this old porch! Hundreds of years ago most of the sacred offices of our Church were there in part performed. Now, I think I see the gay bridal party standing in that dusky portal²³; there comes the Priest to join the hands of the young and happy pair; he pronounces over them the Church's blessing; and the bridegroom endows with her bridal portion her whom he has sworn to love till one shall die. A thousand brides and bridegrooms, full of bright hopes of happy years, have been married in that porch. Centuries ago they grew old and died, and were buried in this churchyard, but the old porch still remains in all its beauty and all its strength. There, kneeling upon that well-worn pavement, I see the mother pour forth her thankfulness to God for her deliverance from sickness, and for the babe she bears²⁴. And now, still beneath that porch,

churches as beautiful as possible. During some periods, especially the Norman, they seem to have bestowed more labour upon them than upon any other portion of the building. Both externally and internally they were richly decorated, and often abounded in emblematic tracery.

²³ "The custom formerly was for the couple, who were to enter upon this holy state, to be placed at the *church door*, where the priest was used to join their hands, and perform the greater part of the matrimonial office. It was here the husband endowed his wife with the dowry before contracted for." —*Wheatley*. In a few church porches there are, or have been, galleries, which seem to have been intended to accommodate a choir for these and other festive occasions.

²⁴ "The porch of the church was anciently used for the performance of

she gives her tender infant into the arms of God's priest, that he may present it to Him in holy Baptism. In yon dark corner I seem to see standing the notorious breaker of God's commands; his head is bent down with shame, and he is clothed in the robe of penance²⁵. Now the scene is changed: the old walls resound with the voices of noisy disputants – it is a parish meeting²⁶, and passions long since hushed find there a clamorous expression; but there stands the stately form of the peace-maker, and the noisy tongue of the village orator is heard no more. Yes, rise up, Sir Knight, who, with thy hands close clasped as if in ceaseless prayer, hast lain upon that stony couch for five long centuries, and let thy manly step be heard beneath that aged roof once more; for, though a warrior, thou wast a good and peace-loving man, and a devout worshipper in this temple, or, I trust, thy burial-place would never have been in this old porch²⁷."

several religious ceremonies appertaining to Baptism, Matrimony, and the solemn commemoration of Christ's Passion in Holy Week," &c. —*Brandon's Gothic Architecture*. The Office for the Churching of Women also used to be said at the church porch.

²⁵ As our Communion Service declares, persons who stood convicted of notorious sins were formerly put to open penance. The punishment frequently inflicted was – that they should stand at the church door, clothed in a white sheet, and holding a candle in each hand, during the assembling and departure of the congregation on a Sunday morning. The old parish clerk of Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, remembers, when a boy, seeing a Jew perform this penance in Walton church.

²⁶ "Formerly persons used to assemble in the church porch for civil purposes." —*Brandon*.

²⁷ "At a very early period, persons of rank or of eminent piety were allowed to be buried in the porch. Subsequently, interments were permitted within the church, but

The eyes of the Vicar were fixed upon the recumbent effigy of an old knight lying beneath its stone canopy on the western side of the porch (of which, however, only a dim outline was visible), when the same sound that had before startled him was repeated, followed by what seemed the deep utterance of earnest prayer, but so far off as to be but faintly heard. He stood in motionless attention for a short time, and then the voice ceased. He then saw a flickering light on one of the farthest windows of the chancel; slowly it passed from window to window, till it reached that nearest to the spot where he was standing. Then there was a narrow line of light in the centre of the doorway; gradually it widened, and there stood before him the venerable form of the old shepherd.

by the Canons of King Edgar it was ordered that this privilege should be granted to none but good and religious men." —*Parker's Glossary*.

CHAPTER VI

THE PORCH

**"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
and into His courts with praise."**

Ps. c. 4

"Why should we grudge the hour and house of prayer
To Christ's own blind and lame,
Who come to meet Him there?
Better, be sure, His altar-flame
Should glow in one dim wavering spark,
Than quite lie down, and leave His Temple drear and dark.

"What if the world our two or three despise
They in His name are here,
To whom in suppliant guise
Of old the blind and lame drew near,
Beside His royal courts they wait,
And ask His healing Hand: we dare not close the gate."

Lyra Innocentium.

"The Vicar's first impulse, on recovering from his surprise at so unexpectedly meeting with the old Shepherd in such a place, at such an hour, was, if possible, to escape unnoticed, and to leave the churchyard without suffering him to know what he had heard and seen; but at that instant the light fell full upon him, and concealment was impossible.

"You'll be surprised, Mr. Ambrose," said the old man, "at finding me in the church at this late time. But it has, I assure you, been a great comfort for me to be here."

"My good friend," replied the Vicar, "I know you have been making good use of God's House, and I only wish there were more disposed to do the like. I rejoice to hear you have found consolation, for to-day has been one of heavy sorrow to you, and you needed that *peace which the world cannot give*. How often it is that *we cannot understand these trials until we go into the House of the Lord*, and then God makes it all plain to us."

"I've learnt that to-night, sir, as I never learnt it before. When I had put the last bit of turf on the little grave, and knew that all my work was over, there was such a desolate, lonely-like feeling came over me, that I thought my old heart must break; and then, all of a sudden, it got into my head that I would come into the church. But it was more dull and lonesome there than ever. It was so awful and quiet, I became quite fearful and cowed, quite like a child, you know, sir. When I stood still, I hardly dared look round

for fear I should see *something* in the darkness under the old grey arches, and when I moved, the very noise of my footsteps, which seemed to sound in every corner, frightened me. However, I took courage, and went on. Then I opened this Prayer Book, and the first words I saw were these in the Baptismal Service: – '*Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*' So I knelt down at the altar rails and prayed, as I think I never prayed before, that I might in my old age become as good as the little maid I had just buried, and be as fit to die as I really believe she was. Then I said those prayers you see marked in the book, sir (she put the marks), and at last I came to those beautiful words in the Communion Service (there is a cross put to them, and I felt sure she meant me particularly to notice them): – '*We bless and praise Thy holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear.*' I stood up, and said that over and over again; and as I did so, somehow all my fear and lonesomeness went away, and I was quite happy. It was *this* that made me so happy: I felt sure, sir, quite sure, that my poor dear wife and our child and little Lizzie were close to me. I could not see nor hear them, but for all that I was somehow quite certain that they were there rejoicing with me, and praising God for all the good people He had taken to Himself. Oh! I shall never forget this night, sir; the thought of it will always make me happy. You will never see me again so cast down as I have been lately."

"Well, Matthew, you cannot at least be wrong in allowing what you have felt and believed to fix more firmly in your faith the

Church's glorious doctrine of the *communion of saints*."

For some time each stood following out in his own mind the train of thought which these words suggested. Matthew was the first to break silence, by begging the Vicar kindly to go with him into the room above where they were standing, as he wished there to ask a favour of him.

Matthew returned into the church to find the key of the chamber, and Mr. Ambrose at once recognized the volume which he had left on the stone seat of the porch, as that from which Lizzie was used to read when she sat beside the old Shepherd on the neighbouring hill. He took it up, and, opening it at the Burial Office, he found there a little curl of lovely fair hair marking the place. The page was still wet – it was the dew of evening, gentle tears of love and sorrow shed by one whose night was calmly and peacefully coming on.

The old man soon returned with the key, and, bearing the lantern, led the way up a narrow, winding stone staircase, formed in the masonry of a large buttress, to the little chamber. As soon as they had reached it, he said, "Before I beg my favour, Mr. Ambrose, I should much like you to tell me something about this old room. Ever since I was a boy it has been a sort of lumber-room, but I suppose it was not built for that?"

"Well, Matthew, there is not much here to throw light upon the history of this particular chamber; but I will tell you what I can about such places generally. The room is most commonly, but

not correctly, called the *parvise*²⁸. The word *parvise*, or *paradise*, properly only applies to an open court adjoining a church, and surrounded by cloisters; but in olden times a room in a private house was sometimes called a *paradise*²⁹, and hence, I suppose, the name came to be used for the porch-room of the church. It was also called the *priest's chamber*³⁰; and such, I think, was the room in which we now are. You see it is provided with a nice little fire-place³¹, and it is a comfortable little place to live in. Sometimes it was called the *treasury*³², or record-room,

²⁸ The parvise is to be found over church porches in all parts of England. It is more common in early English than in Norman architecture, and very frequently to be found in churches of the Decorated and Perpendicular periods. Probably the largest parvise in England is at Bishop's-Cleeve, near Cheltenham. There are interesting specimens at Bridport, Bishop's Auckland, Ampthill, Finedon, Cirencester, Grantham, Martley, Fotheringay, Sherborne, St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, Stanwick, Outwell, and St. Peter's-in-the-East, Oxford. In a few instances there are two parvises, one over the north and one over the south porch, as at Wellingborough. In some cases, as at Martley, Worcestershire, the upper moulding of the original Norman doorway has been concealed by the parvise of later architecture.

²⁹ "The name was formerly given to a favourite apartment, as at Leckingfield, Yorkshire. 'A little studying chamber, caullid paradise.' (Leland's Itinerary.)" —*Glossary of Architecture*.

³⁰ The room may have been the residence of one or more of the ordinary priests of the church, or perhaps only a *study* for them (see previous note), or it may have been occupied by an anchorite or hermit, or by a chantry priest. Rooms for these several purposes are also not unfrequently to be found over the vestry, as at Cropredy, near Banbury, and at Staindrop, Durham.

³¹ Fire-places are of frequent occurrence in these chambers; many of them are coeval with the porch, but others appear to have been erected at a later date.

³² At Hawkhurst, Kent, the porch-chamber is called *the treasury*. At St. Mary

because the parish records and church books were kept in it; or the *library*³³, from its being appropriated for the reception of a church or parochial library. There are many of these chambers furnished with valuable libraries which have been bequeathed from time to time for this purpose. It is also evident, from the remains of an altar and furniture connected with it, that not infrequently it was built for a *chapel*³⁴. Occasionally it has been used as the *parish school*³⁵; and I have heard that in some of the eastern counties poor people have occasionally, in cases of extreme distress, claimed sanctuary or refuge, both in the porch and parvise, and lived there undisturbed for some weeks together. But latterly, in many places, the parish clerk or sexton

Redcliffe, Bristol, the room over the grand north porch, in which are the remains of the chests in which Chatterton professed to find the manuscripts attributed to Rowley, was at one time known as the *treasury house*.

³³ "The chamber over the porch was generally used for the keeping of books and records belonging to the church. Such an appendage was added to many churches in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and some of these old libraries still remain with their books fastened to shelves or desks by small chains." —*Brandon's Gothic Architecture*. Over the porch at Finedon (of which we give an engraving) is a parvise in which is contained a valuable library of about 1000 volumes, placed there by Sir John English Dolben, Bart., A.D. 1788. At St. Peter's-in-the-East, Oxford, and many other places, are similar libraries.

³⁴ These were probably small chantries. It is comparatively seldom that any vestige of the altar remains; but the credence and piscina – certain proofs of the previous existence of the altar – are very commonly found.

³⁵ "The custom of teaching children in the porch is of very early origin; it is distinctly mentioned by Matthew Paris in the time of Henry III." —*Glossary of Architecture*. After the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., in which reigns all chantries were suppressed, the children were promoted from the porch to the parvise.

has been located in the parvise, that he may watch the churchyard and protect the church³⁶; and I am inclined to think this is a much more sensible thing to do, than to give up the room to the owls and bats, as is very often the case now, but even that is better than to use it as it has sometimes been used – as a common prison³⁷."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir, for it makes the way for me to ask my favour. John Daniels wants to give up the place of sexton; and as I am getting too old now to walk far, and to take care of the sheep as I used to do, I'm going to make so bold as to ask you to let me be sexton in his stead, and to live in this little room, if you please, sir. I could then keep the key of the church, and it would be always at hand when wanted: I should be near to ring the bell for morning and evening prayer; I could watch the churchyard, and see that no one breaks the cross on Lizzie's grave – I shall be able to see it from this window. And then, sir, if you will have this little window opened again into the church³⁸, why

³⁶ "Above the groining of the porch is a parvise, accessible by a turret-stair, having two Norman window-openings, unglazed, and a straight-gabled niche between them on the outside. In former days this chamber was constantly inhabited by one of the sextons, who acted as a watchman, but since the restoration of the church it has been disused." —*Harston's Handbook of Sherborne Abbey*. In the church accounts of St. Peter's-in-the-East, Oxford, A.D. 1488, there is a charge for a "key to clerk's chamber." This no doubt referred to the parvise.

³⁷ As, a few years ago, at Headcorn in Kent.

³⁸ There was frequently, but not always, a window or opening from the room into the church; and it would seem that it was so placed to enable the occupant of the room to keep a watchful eye over the interior of the church, and not for any devotional exercise connected with the altar, as we never find this window directed obliquely to wards

I can keep guard over the church too; and that's rather necessary just now, for several churches about us have been robbed lately. Besides all this, the room is much more warm and comfortable than mine in the village, and I shall enjoy the quiet of it so much."

"Most glad, Matthew, shall I be to see the office of sexton in such good hands. You will not yourself be equal to all the work, but you will always be able to find a younger hand when you need one. And then, with regard to your living here, it's just the thing I should like, for, apart from other reasons, it would enable me to have the church doors always open to those who would resort thither for prayer or meditation. It is a sad thing for people to be deprived of such religious retirement. I almost wish that the church porch could be made without a church door altogether, as it used to be³⁹, and then the church would be always open. But, my friend, have you considered how gloomy, and lonely, and unprotected this place will be?"

"You mus'n't say *gloomy*, if you please, sir; I trust and believe my gloomy days are past; and lonely I shall not be: you remember my poor daughter's little boy that was taken out to Australia by his father (ah! his name almost *does* make me gloomy – but, God forgive him!) – he is coming home next week to live with me. He is now seven years old; I hear he is a quiet, old-fashioned boy. He will be a nice companion for me, and I hope you will

the altar, as is commonly the case with windows opening from the vestry, or chamber above the vestry, into the church.

³⁹ Many porches seem originally not to have had doors, but marks exist which indicate that barriers to keep out cattle were used.

let him help in the church; but we can speak of that again. Then for protection, sir, you must let my fond old dog be with me at nights; the faithful fellow would die of grief were we altogether parted. Come, sir, it's an old man's wish, I hope you'll grant it." This last sentence was said as they were returning down the little winding staircase back to the porch.

"It shall be as you wish; next week the room shall be ready for you. And as I have granted all the requests you have made, you must grant me one in return. You must let me furnish the room for you. No, I shall not listen to any objections; this time *I* must have *my* way. Good night."

CHAPTER VII

THE PAVEMENT

"The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Exod. iii. 5

"Mark you the floor? that square and speckled stone,
Which looks so firm and strong,

Is Patience;

"And the other black and grave, wherein each one
Is checker'd all along,

Humility;

"The gentle rising, which on either hand
Leads to the quire above,

Is Confidence;

"But the sweet cement, which in one sure band
Ties the whole frame, is *Love*

And Charity."

George Herbert.

"Why, my dear Constance," said Mr. Acres, as one morning he found the eldest of his three children sitting gloomy and solitary at the breakfast-room window, "you look as though all the cares of the nation were pressing upon you! Come, tell me a few of them; unless," added he, laughingly, "my little queen thinks there is danger to the State in communicating matters of such weighty import."

"Oh, don't make fun of me, dear Papa! I have only one trouble just now, and you will think that a very little one; but you know you often say little troubles seem great to little people."

"Then we must have the bright little face back again at once, if, after all, it is only one small care that troubles it," said he, kissing her affectionately. "But now, my darling, let me know all about it."

"Well, Papa, I think it's too bad of Mary to go up to the church again to-day to help Ernest to take more rubbing's of those dull, stupid old brasses. I don't care any thing about them, and I think it's nonsense spending so much time over them as they do. I wish Mr. Ambrose would not let them go into the church any more, and then Mary would not leave me alone like this."

"That's not a very kind wish, Constance, as they both seem so much interested in their work; but I dare say this is the last day

they will give to it. Suppose we go this afternoon to look after them: we can then ask Ernest to bring home all the copies he has taken, and when Mr. Ambrose comes in by-and-by, perhaps he will tell us something about them; and who knows but your unconsciously offending enemies may turn out to be neither dull nor stupid, after all?"

The proposal was gladly accepted, and at four o'clock they were enjoying their pleasant walk up to St. Catherine's Church.

As they entered the church Mr. Acres heard, to his surprise, the clear ring of Mary's happy laugh. She was standing in the south aisle, beside the paper on which she had been vainly attempting to copy a monumental brass. Seeing her father approach with a serious and somewhat reproving countenance, she at once guessed the cause, and anticipated the reprimand he was about to utter. "You must not be angry with me, Papa," she said, in a very subdued tone, "for indeed I could not help laughing, though I know it is very wrong to laugh in church; but, you know, I had just finished my rubbing of the brass here, and thought I had done it so well, when all of a sudden the paper slipped, and the consequence was that my poor knight had two faces instead of one; and he looked so queer that I could not help laughing at him very much."

"No doubt, my dear child," said her father, "there was something in your misfortune to provoke a laugh, but I think you must have forgotten for a moment the sacredness of this place, when you gave vent to the merry shout I heard just now. You

should always remember that in God's house you are standing on *holy ground*, and though it may be permissible for us to go there for the purpose of copying those works of art, which in their richest beauty are rightly dedicated to God and His service, and these curious monuments which you and Ernest have been tracing, yet we should ever bear with us a deep sense of the sanctity of the building as the 'place where His honour dwelleth,' and avoid whatever may give occasion to levity; or should the feeling force itself upon us, we ought, by a strong effort, to resist it."

Although the words were spoken in a kind and gentle voice, many tears had already fallen upon Mary's spoilt tracing, so her father said no more on the subject; but, taking her hand, led her quietly away to a chapel at the north-east corner of the church, round which was placed a beautifully carved open screen. It was the burial-place of the family that formerly tenanted the Hall, and there were many brass figures and inscriptions laid in the floor to their memory. Here, attentively watched by old Matthew the sexton, Ernest was busily engaged tracing the figure of a knight in armour, represented as standing under a handsome canopy. He had already completed his copy of the canopy, and of the inscription round the stone, and was now engaged at the figure. Two sheets of paper were spread over the stone, and he had guarded against Mary's accident by placing on the paper several large kneeling hassocks, which were used by the old people. He was himself half reclining on a long cushion laid on the

pavement, and having before marked out with his finger on the paper the outlines of the brass underneath it, was now rubbing away vigorously with his heel-ball⁴⁰, and at every stroke a little bit more of the knight came out upon the paper, till, like a large black drawing, the complete figure appeared before them. They had all watched Ernest's labours with the greatest interest, and, this being the last, they assisted in rolling up the papers, that they might be taken home for more careful examination in the evening.

"I wish Master Ernest could take a picture of good old Sir John, as we call him, Mr. Acres," said Matthew; "I mean him as lies in the chancel, right in front of the altar; but he's cut out in the flat stone, and not in the metal, so I suppose Master Ernest can't do it. I remember the time, sir, when people as were sick and diseased used to come for miles round to lie upon that stone, and they believed it made them much better⁴¹; and if they believed it, I dare say it did, sir. And 't isn't but a very few years back when it would have been thought very unlucky indeed if a corpse had not rested over good Sir John all night before its burial. We still place the coffins just in the same place at the funerals, but of course nobody any longer believes that good Sir John can do good or ill to those inside them."

⁴⁰ It is composed of lamp-black, bees'-wax, and tallow, and is commonly used by shoemakers to give a black polish to the heels of boots.

⁴¹ These superstitions existed a few years since in connexion with an old incised slab in the chancel of Christ Church, Caerleon.

"I must bring some stronger paper than that I use for the brasses, to copy the stone figure, Matthew," said Ernest; "so that must be done another day."

All said good-bye to the old sexton, and as he wended his way up the narrow stone stairs to his little chamber, Mr. Acres and his family returned to Oakfield Hall.

The dining-room was soon decorated with the trophies of Ernest's four days' labour, and other rubbing's which he had before taken; and when Mr. Ambrose arrived he was met by several eager petitioners, praying him to give some explanation of the strange-looking black and white figures that hung upon the walls.

"It would take me a whole day to tell you all that might be said about them," said he; "but I shall be very glad to give you a short description of each, and I will follow the course which Ernest has evidently intended me to adopt, for I see he has arranged all the bishops and priests together, and the knights, the civilians, and the ladies, each class by itself. But first I must tell you something of the general history of these brass memorials. There are an immense number of them in this country – it is supposed about 4000 – and they are chiefly to be found in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent; but indeed there are comparatively few old churches in England in which you cannot find upon the pavement some traces of these interesting memorials. Though, however, so many remain, probably not less than 20,000 have been either stolen or lost. You will see on the pavement at St. Catherine's,

marks of the force which has been used in tearing many from the stones in which they had been firmly fixed."

"But who could have been so fearless and wicked as to take them away?" exclaimed Constance, who already had begun to feel a real interest in the subject.

"Alas! Constance, that question is easily answered. There was indeed a time, long ago, when people would not have *dared* to commit these acts of sacrilege. You know among the ancient Romans there was a belief that the manes or spirits of the departed protected their tombs, and so persons were afraid to rob them; but people since then have been deterred by no such fear, indeed by no fear at all. Within the period between 1536 and 1540 somewhere about 900 religious houses were destroyed, and their chapels were dismantled and robbed of their tombs, on which were a great number of brasses. And this spirit of sacrilege extended beyond the monasteries, for at this time, and afterwards, very many of our parish churches were also despoiled of their monumental brasses; indeed the evil spread so much that Queen Elizabeth issued a special proclamation for putting a stop to it. The greatest destruction of brasses, however, took place a hundred years after this, when thousands were removed from the cathedrals and churches to satisfy the rapacity or the fanaticism of the Puritan Dissenters, who were then in power⁴².

⁴² "In the year 1657, the adherents of a Preacher of the name of Cam obtained the grant of the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church, Hull, from the council of state under the Protectorate, and whilst the mob without were burning the surplice and the Prayer Book, those within were tearing the brasses from the grave-stones." —*History*

In later times, I am sorry to say, large numbers have been sold by churchwardens, for the just value of the metal, and many have been removed during the restoration of churches and have not been restored; of course, those whose special duty it was to protect them have been greatly to blame for this. Then not a few have become loose, and been lost through mere carelessness. Some of the most beautiful brasses in our church I discovered a few years since under a heap of rubbish in the wood-house of Daniels, the former sexton⁴³. So you see it is no wonder we find so many of those curiously-indented slabs in the pavement of our churches, which mark the places where brasses have formerly been.

A few of these memorials are to be found in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. Some also exist in France, Germany, Russia,

of Kingston-upon-Hull. s. d."1644, April 8th, paid to Master Dowson, that came with the troopers to our church, about the taking down of images and brasses off stones "1644, paid, that day, to others, for taking up the brasses of grave-stones before the Officer Dowson came – *Churchwarden's accounts; Walberswich, Suffolk.* "This William Dowing (Dowson), it appears, kept a journal of his ecclesiastical exploits. With reference to the Church of St. Edward's, Cambridge, he says, —"1643, Jan. 1, Edward's Parish, we digged up the steps, and broke down 40 pictures, and took off ten superstitious inscriptions."Mr. Cole, in his MSS., observes, —"From this last entry we may clearly see to whom we are obliged for the dismantling of almost all the grave-stones that had brasses on them, both in town and country; a sacrilegious, sanctified rascal, that was afraid, or too proud, to call it *St. Edward's Church*, but not ashamed to rob the dead of their honours, and the church of its ornaments. – W. C." —*Burn's Parish Registers.*

⁴³ The very interesting brasses in Chartham Church, Kent, were found a few years since as here described, by the present rector, and replaced by him on the chancel pavement.

Prussia, Poland, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. In these countries, however, they have never been numerous.

But now I must say a few words about their origin. The oldest memorials of the dead to be found in our churches are the stone coffin-lids, with plain or floriated crosses carved upon them. The stone coffins were buried just below the level of the pavement, so their lids were even with the floor of the church. Afterwards, similar crosses were graven on slabs of stone above the coffin; then the faces of the deceased were represented; and at length whole figures, and many other devices, were carved on the stone, and around the stone was sometimes an inscription consisting of letters of *brass* separately inlaid. Then the figures and inscriptions were either altogether made of brass, or were partly graven in stone and partly in brass; specimens of both, I see, Ernest has provided for us. The earliest of these incised slabs are probably of the ninth century, but the faces of the deceased were not carved on them till about 1050. The earliest brass of which we have any account is that of Simon de Beauchamp, 1208; and the most ancient brass figure now remaining is that of Sir John Daubernoun, 1277.

"The form of the brass has evidently been often suggested by the stone and marble effigies we see on altar-tombs. For we find that not only the costume and position of the figures are closely copied, but also the canopies above them, the cushions or helmets on which their heads rest, and the lions, dogs, or other animals on which the feet are placed. I have something more to say on

the subject generally, before I come to speak particularly about Ernest's copies; so after the general interval of ten minutes I will resume the subject.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PAVEMENT

"They bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."

2 Chron. vii. 3

"This is the abode where God doth dwell,
This is the gate of Heaven,
The shrine of the Invisible,
The Priest, the Victim given.

"O holy seat, O holy fane,
Where dwells the Omnipotent!
Whom the broad world cannot contain,
Nor Heaven's high firmament.

"Here, where the unearthly Guest descends
To hearts of Innocence,

And sacred love her wing extends
Of holiest influence;

"Let no unhallow'd thought be here,
Within that sacred door;
Let nought polluted dare draw near,
Nor tread the awful floor;
Or, lo! the Avenger is at hand,
And at the door doth stand."

The Child's Christian Year.

As soon as the short pause was over, all ears were open to learn something more on a subject which had been hitherto entirely without interest to most of the Vicar's little audience.

"We find sometimes upon the pavement of our churches," said Mr. Ambrose, "memorials just like those I have spoken to you about, except that they are made of *iron* or *lead* instead of brass, but they are comparatively very rare, and, except in the metal of which they are composed, differ nothing from the *brasses*."

"Sepulchral brasses must have been a great ornament to our churches before they were despoiled of their beauty by the hand of Time, and the still less sparing hand of man. The vivid colours of the enamel with which they were inlaid, and the silvery brightness of the yet untarnished lead which was employed to represent the ermine and other parts of official costume, must have added greatly to the splendour of these monuments. At first they were no doubt very costly, for there appear to have

been but few places where they were made in this country, and, in addition to the cost of the brasses themselves, the expense of their carriage in those times must have been considerable. A great many of these monuments, however, are of foreign manufacture, and were chiefly imported from Flanders. It is easy to distinguish between the English and the Flemish brasses, for whereas the former are composed of separate pieces of metal laid in different parts of the stone, and giving the distinct outline of the figure, canopy, inscription, &c., the latter are composed of several plates of brass placed closely together and engraved all over with figures, canopies, and other designs. The later English brasses are, however, very similar to the Flemish. You see that little copy of a brass about three feet long by one foot deep which Ernest has somehow obtained from the church at Walton-on-Thames? Now that is a square piece of metal just like those they made in Flanders, but it was evidently engraved in England. It is dated 1587, and is in memory of John Selwyn, keeper of Queen Elizabeth's park at Oatlands, near Walton. It represents, as you see, a stag hunt, and is said to refer to this incident: – "The old keeper, in the heat of the chase, suddenly leaped from his horse upon the back of the stag (both running at that time with their utmost speed), and not only kept his seat gracefully, in spite of every effort of the affrighted beast, but, drawing his sword, with it guided him to wards the Queen, and coming near her presence, plunged it in his throat, so that the animal fell dead at her feet⁴⁴."

⁴⁴ "Manual of Monumental Brasses," vol. i. p. 34.

"But, my friend," said Mr. Acres, "it seems to me that the record of such an event, even if it ever happened – which I must take the liberty to doubt – is quite as objectionable as any of those epitaphs in our churchyard which you once so strongly and justly condemned."

"I quite agree with you. But this was made at a time when sepulchral monuments were frequently of a very debased character. At this period the brasses underwent a great change. They began to rise from their humble position on the pavement, and the figures were occasionally made without their devotional posture, which up to this date had been almost universal. They were then placed on the church walls, on tablets, or on the top and at the back of altar-tombs, and this led the way for the erection of a large number of monuments in stone of similar design, but more cumbrous and inconvenient. Inferior workmen also were evidently employed at this time to engrave the brasses, and they became more and more debased, till they reached the lowest point of all, a hundred years ago, and soon after their manufacture altogether ceased. It was near the time when this brass was put up to the old park-keeper, that that ugly monument in memory of Sir John York, with its four heathen obelisks, and its four disconsolate Cupids, was put up in our chancel, covering so much of the floor as to deprive at least twenty persons of their right to a place in God's House. About this time, too, that uncomfortable looking effigy of Lady Lancaster was put upon its massive altar-tomb. To judge from the position

of her Ladyship, and hundreds of other similar monuments, represented as reclining and resting the face upon the hand, we might imagine that a large proportion of the population in those days died of the toothache. However, the attitude of prayer was that most commonly adopted, as well in stone as brass effigies, till long after this period.

"If any thing more than the figure, canopy, inscription, and shield is represented on a brass, it is commonly a sacred symbol, a trade mark, or some badge of rank or profession. To this there are but a few exceptions, besides the brass of John Selwyn. At Lynn, in Norfolk, on one brass is a hunting scene, on another a harvest-home, such as it was in the year 1349, and on another a peacock feast, the date of which is 1364. Founders of churches frequently hold in their hands the model of a church. The emblem of undying love we find in the heart, either alone or held by both hands of the effigy. A long epitaph was often avoided by the simple representation of a chalice, a sword, an ink-horn, a wool-sack, a barrel, shears, or some such trade or professional emblem. Some – comparatively few – of the inscriptions on brasses are, however, profusely long, and sometimes, but very rarely, ridiculous.

In very early times the epitaphs were always written in Latin or Norman French; and if that practice had continued, it would not much matter to persons generally even if they were absurd, as few could read them: but about the year 1400 they began to be written in English, and then of course these foolish inscriptions

must have been distracting to the thoughts of those who attended the church. But it very often happened that persons had their brasses put down some time before their decease, as is evident from the circumstance that in many cases the dates have never been filled in. This custom would much tend to prevent foolish and flattering inscriptions.

"I have noticed that there is in nearly all brasses a solemn or serious expression in the countenance suitable to their presence in God's House. They were frequently *portraits* of the persons commemorated⁴⁵. This was no doubt the case in later brasses, and I think in the earlier also. Latterly the faces were sometimes coloured, no doubt to represent the originals more exactly. It seldom happens that the age of the person is otherwise than pretty faithfully portrayed.

"I must next tell you something of the dresses of the clergy, the soldiers, and the civilians, as we see them engraved upon the pavements of our churches."

⁴⁵ "If any one will lay the portrait of Lord Bristol (in Mr. Gage Rokewode's *Thingoe Hundred*) by the side of the sepulchral brass of the Abbess of Elstow (from whom he is collaterally descended) figured in Fisher's *Bedfordshire Antiquities*, he cannot but be struck by the strong likeness between the two faces. This is valuable evidence on the disputed point whether portraits were attempted in sepulchral brasses." —*Notes and Queries*.

CHAPTER IX

THE PAVEMENT

"It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it."

John xi. 38

"On the floor beneath
Sepulchral stones appear'd, with emblems graven
And footworn epitaphs, and some with small
And shining effigies of brass inlaid."

Wordsworth's Excursion.

"The warrior from his armed tent,
The seaman from the tide —
Far as the Sabbath chimes are sent,
In Christian nations wide, —
Thousands and tens of thousands bring
Their sorrows to His shrine,
And taste the never-failing spring
Of Jesus' love Divine.

"If at the earthly chime, the tread
Of million million feet
Approach whene'er the Gospel's read
In God's own temple-seat;
How blest the sight, from death's dark sleep
To see God's saints arise,
And countless hosts of angels keep
The Sabbath of the skies!"

Lyra Sacra.

"That costumes are pretty accurately represented on brasses," continued Mr. Ambrose, "we are sure, from the fact that many different artists have made the dresses of each particular period so much alike; and this circumstance adds much interest and importance to these monuments. I will now describe some of these dresses, and you must try to find out, as I go on, the several parts of the dress I am describing on Ernest's rubbing's which hang upon the wall. But I shall only be able to say a little about each. First there come the persons holding sacred office in the Church. The priests are usually, you see, dressed in the robes worn at Holy Communion, and they commonly hold the chalice and wafer in their hands. The robe which is most conspicuous is the *chasuble*. It is usually richly embroidered in gold and silk. This robe is one of the ornaments of the minister referred to in the rubric at the commencement of the Prayer Book. At the top of it you see the *amice*. This too is worked in various colours and

patterns. The academic *hood*, some suppose, now represents this part of the priest's dress. You must remember we are looking at the dresses worn five hundred years ago, and which had been in use long before that time, and we cannot be surprised if some of them, as now worn, are a little changed in shape and appearance. The narrow band which hangs from the shoulders nearly to the feet, embroidered at the ends, is called the *stole*. This, you know, is still worn by us just as it was then. It is one of the most ancient vestments of the Church, and is intended to represent the *yoke of Christ*. The small embroidered strip hanging on the left arm is the *maniple*. It is used for cleaning the sacred vessels. Beneath the chasuble is the *albe*, a white robe which – changed somewhat in form – we still wear. It is derived from the linen ephod of the Jews. Sometimes on brasses, as on that beautiful one to the memory of Henry Sever⁴⁶, the *cope* is represented. This is a very rich and costly robe, and is still always worn at the coronations of our Kings and Queens; it is also ordered to be worn on other occasions. Then the bishops wore, you see, other robes besides those I have mentioned: – the *mitre*, like the albe, handed down from the time of the Jews to our own period; the *tunic*, a close-fitting linen vestment; the *dalmatic*, so called because it was once the regal dress of Dalmatia; the gloves, often jewelled. They hold the *crozier*, or *cross staff*, or else the *crooked*, or *pastoral staff*, in their hand. As bishops and priests were then, as now, very often buried in their ecclesiastical vestments, the brass probably

⁴⁶ See page 77.

in such cases represented, as near as could be, the robed body of the person beneath. The earliest brasses of ecclesiastics are at Oulton, Suffolk, and Merton College, Oxford. The date of both is about 1310.

"We must next come to the monumental brasses of *knights* and warriors; and that curious brass to Sir Peter Legh, which is taken from Winwick Church, will do well for a connecting link between the clergy and the warriors. He is, you see, in armour, but over the upper part of it is a chasuble, on the front of which is his shield of arms. And this tells his history. He was formerly a soldier, but at the decease of his wife he relinquished his former occupation, and became a priest of the Church. You see before you soldiers in all kinds of armour, and you can easily trace the gradual change from the *chain mail* to the *plated armour*, till you find the former almost entirely abandoned, and the latter adopted, in the early part of the fifteenth century. Now I should soon tire you if I were to describe all the curious sorts of armour these soldiers wear, so I must just take one of them, and that will go far to wards explaining others. There hangs Sir Roger de Trumpington⁴⁷, of Trumpington, Cambridgeshire; his date is 1289. You see he is cross-legged, and so you would put him down for a Knight Templar, and a warrior in the Holy Land. And so he was; but nevertheless you must remember all cross-legged figures are not necessarily Knights Templar. He rests his head

⁴⁷ See page 85. [The engravings of sepulchral brasses and of stained glass windows are kindly supplied by the Editor of the *Penny Post*.]

upon a *bascinet* (A), or helmet. His head and neck are protected by chain mail (B), to which is attached his *hauberk* (D), or shirt of mail. On his shoulders are placed *ailettes* (C), or little wings, and these are ornamented with the same arms as those borne on his shield. They were worn both for defence and ornament, as soldiers' epaulettes are now. The defence for the knees (G) was made of leather, and sometimes much ornamented. At a later time it was made of plated metal. The legs and feet are covered with chain mail, called the *chausse* (F), and he wears *goads*, or 'pryck spurs,' on his heels (H). Over the hauberk he has a *surcoat* (E) probably of wool or linen. Here you see it is quite plain; but it is frequently decorated with heraldic devices; and such devices on the surcoat or armour are often the only clue left to the name and history of the wearer.

"On the brasses of *civilians* we find nothing like the present ungraceful and unsightly mode of dress; indeed we can scarcely imagine any thing more ridiculous than the representation of the modern fashionable dress on a monumental brass. But on these memorials, you see, the robes are, with rare exceptions, flowing and graceful. In the sixteenth century there was but slight difference between the male and female attire of persons in private life. Of course the dresses of professional men have always been characteristic. Civilians were, with hardly an exception, always represented on brasses *bare-headed*. Happily for the good people in those times they did not know the hideous and inconvenient *hat* which continues to torture those who live

in towns, but from which we in the country have presumed to free ourselves.

"The dresses *actually worn* by the deceased are probably sometimes represented on the brasses of *ladies*. You have before you every variety of costume, from the simple robe of the time of Edward II. and III., down to the extravagant dresses of Elizabeth's reign. On the early brasses the *wimple* under the chin marked the rank of the wearer. Till about the year 1550 ladies are not infrequently represented with heraldic devices covering their kirtles and mantles; but I should think such ornamentation was never really worn by them. The different fashions of wearing the hair here represented are most fantastic. St. Paul tells us that 'if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her;' but these English matrons too often forgot that *simplicity* which gives to this beauty of nature its chief charm. See, here is the *butterfly head-dress*, of the fifteenth century, extending two feet at the back of the head; and there is the *horn head-dress*, spreading a foot on either side of the head. The fashions among women then appear to have been as grotesque as they have been in our own day.

"*Children* on these tombs are represented either behind or beneath their parents; sometimes they wear the *tabard*, a short coat, with heraldic figures upon it – as on this brass to John Ansty; you see there are twelve sons below the father, and four daughters below the mother – sometimes they wear a dress which marks their occupation; and in a few instances the name of each child is placed below it. *Skeletons* and emaciated

figures, sometimes in shrouds, were represented on brasses after the fifteenth century. *Crosses*, with or without figures of the deceased, are very frequently to be met with, and their form is often exceedingly elegant⁴⁸. You will not fail to notice the *canopies* of many of these brasses; the beauty of some of these designs it would be impossible to surpass. But I fear you must be tired of my long lecture, so I must hasten to bring it to a close. These memorials I like better than any others for churches; for, first, they are by far the most *durable* of all; then they are the most *convenient*, for they take up little space, and are a great ornament to the *pavement of the church*; moreover they teach their own *moral*, they occupy a *lowly* place in God's House, and are all on one *common level*. I am, therefore, very glad to see them introduced again into many of our cathedrals and parish churches. And, my dear Constance, I must end with a word to you. I fancy by this time you have learnt that *monumental brasses* are not dull and stupid. To the student of antiquity, history, genealogy, heraldry, and architecture, these *pavement monuments* are, I assure you, of the greatest interest and value. They help to fix dates to ancient documents, to illustrate various periods of ecclesiastical architecture, and throw much light on the manners and customs of other times. They are, too, a constant protest against that excess in 'wearing of gold and putting on of apparel,' against which St. Paul wrote, and which is one of the great sins of our day; for though we find elaborate and costly

⁴⁸ See page 67.

robes represented on the brasses of the great and the wealthy, you always see the figures of the humbler classes clothed in neat and simple attire. If people would only follow the good advice of old Polonius to his son,

'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy⁴⁹,'

there would be less sin, and less want, and less misery in the world."

⁴⁹ *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 3.

CHAPTER X

THE PAVEMENT

"Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours."

Isa. liv. 11

"How all things glow with life and thought,
Where'er our faithful fathers trod!
The very ground with speech is fraught,
The air is eloquent of God.
In vain would doubt or mockery hide
The buried echoes of the past;
A voice of strength – a voice of pride —
Here dwells amid the stones and blast!

"Still points the tower, and pleads the bell,
The solemn arches breathe in stone,
Window and wall have lips to tell
The mighty faith of days unknown; —
Yea! flood, and breeze, and battle shock
Shall beat upon this Church in vain,

She stands a daughter of the rock —
The changeless God's eternal fane!"

R. S. Hawker.

Mr. Acres and his family attended Morning Prayer at St. Catherine's the day following the Vicar's lecture; and after service they examined with greater interest than ever they had done before the floor of the church – indeed Mr. Acres confessed that till that morning he had never had the curiosity to walk up either of the aisles of the church with the view of finding any object of interest on the pavement. In the course of their search they now discovered a large flat stone, hitherto unknown even to the Vicar; the stone, when cleansed from the dust which had accumulated upon it (for it was placed in a remote corner of the church), was very white; it was engraved with the figure of a priest, and the incised lines were filled with a black resinous substance, so that it almost looked like a large engraving on paper, or still more like one of the copies of brasses which Ernest had exhibited the night before⁵⁰. But what most attracted their attention was the curious old *pavement tiles*, of various patterns, which they found in different parts of the floor of the church. Their admiration of these ancient works of art was soon so deeply engaged, and their desire to know more about them so excited, that Ernest was speedily despatched to the vestry to request the

⁵⁰ Monumental slabs of this description are most common on the pavement of churches in the midland counties.

Vicar to come and satisfy their inquiries.

"I rejoice to see you, Mr. Vicar," said the Squire, as Mr. Ambrose approached; "pray come and save me from any further confessions of ignorance: the children have been persecuting me with a hundred questions about these ancient tiles, and I really am not able to answer one of them. We must again be dependent upon your kindness for some information on the subject."

"Then, if you please, we will walk and talk, as I must go this morning to see old Wood, at the Warren Lodge; the poor man is very ill."

"Oh, we shall enjoy that," exclaimed Constance, "and do, Mr. Ambrose, give us a nice lecture like you did last night."

"Well, my dear, if it is to be a real lecture, we will suppose this gravel path to be my platform, and your father and yourselves to be my highly respectable and most intelligent audience; and so, making my bow to the company, I will begin. – There is considerable uncertainty as to the origin of these tiles. Most people suppose that the old Roman tessellated pavement suggested the idea of representing figures on tiles. But we may imagine them to be merely the result of successive improvements. First, there was the rude tile or brick; then, in very early times, the makers impressed their own particular marks upon them; and from this simple practice we can easily imagine the gradual introduction of the elaborate patterns you were looking at in the church."

"If you please, Mr. Ambrose," said Constance, "will you tell

us what was the Roman tessellated pavement?"

"It was composed of a number of square pieces of hard-burnt clay, like dice, of different colours; these were arranged to form a pattern, and then firmly fixed in very strong cement. They were exceedingly durable, and often of most elegant design. When found in the ruins of Roman villas, which they frequently are, they generally appear almost as fresh as when they were put down. Tessellated or mosaic pavements are to be found in a few old churches; the most beautiful now existing in England, are in Westminster Abbey, and in Canterbury Cathedral, near the tomb of Thomas à Becket."

"But don't you think it probable," inquired Mr. Acres, "if these tiles date pretty nearly back to the time when the mosaic pavement was used, that the pavement suggested the tiles? there seems to be some similarity of pattern, and I noticed that in one part of the church there are *plain* tiles of different colours arranged so as to form a pattern⁵¹, which seems, on a larger scale, a close imitation of the mosaic pavement."

"It may be so; and this view seems confirmed by the circumstance that in some foreign churches the tiles are mixed in the same pavement with mosaic work. It certainly seems a natural transition from the one to the other.

Encaustic tiles exist in abundance and great beauty in Normandy; and though, as I have said, we cannot fix a precise date to their introduction, it seems not improbable that we are

⁵¹ This is the case in Ely Cathedral.

indebted to that country for the first idea of using them in the pavement of our churches, since in some instances they appear to be coeval with the erection of the Norman churches in which they are found. Some have upon them the *semi-circular headed arch*, which is characteristic of Norman times; and as no doubt the later tiles frequently indicate by their patterns the period of ecclesiastical architecture to which they may be referred, most likely these may be equally relied upon as marking the Norman period. In Ireland, tiles of this date are more common than in this country. Their *general* use, however, has prevailed among us from about A.D. 1250 to A.D. 1550, and the finest and most interesting specimens we have remaining are at Gloucester and Malvern.

There are several different kinds of ornamental pavement of which specimens remain. In the ruins of Fountains Abbey are specimens having the pattern pierced through the entire tile, and afterwards filled in with clay of another colour. At Canterbury there are circles of stone pavement with patterns cut in relief, the spaces being filled in with dark cement. In the early stages of the art the pattern of the tiles was sometimes left in relief, the tile being of one colour only, but the uneven surface was found to be very inconvenient for walking upon. Encaustic tiles – so called because the patterns are *burnt into* them – are by far the most common sort of tile pavement in our English churches, especially in the southern and western counties."

"I suppose, Mr. Ambrose," said Constance, "that the tiles in

our church are of that sort?"

"Yes, all of them, both the new and old, except the few of a different kind which Mr. Acres spoke of just now."

"And will you be so kind as to tell us how they contrived to make those pretty patterns on them?"

"Oh, yes; it was a very simple process: very much in the same way as Bridget makes those pretty pats of butter we admire so much; quite the same, if Bridget would only fill in the spaces between the patterns with butter of another colour. They first made the tile of clay, and then impressed it with a wooden stamp; then it was dried or burnt, then some thin clay or cement of another colour (usually white) was poured into the pattern, then it was glazed over and burnt, the glazing material making the white a rich yellow, and deepening the colour of the tile. The pattern is sometimes perfect in a single tile, sometimes four, eight, or a large number are required to perfect the design. Several ancient kilns for their manufacture have been discovered⁵². Some of these manufactories, it is evident, were very popular; for we find that the same kiln sometimes supplied a great number of churches. Most of our old churches have at some time been paved with these encaustic tiles; but in all cases they have in great measure been destroyed or removed when other beauties of God's house have been defaced, but often too where the hand of man has spared, the hand of Time has obliterated.

⁵² At Bawsey, Lynn; Droitwich; Great Malvern; and recently near Smithfield, London, when excavating for the subterranean railway.

"We find every variety of pattern upon these tiles. At Malvern and elsewhere are many letters on single tiles: sometimes they are alphabetically arranged, sometimes they read backwards, and sometimes to a centre. Frequently the tiles have upon them texts of Scripture or other inscriptions, such as 'The time is short,' 'Wait for the knell.' At Malvern is a very remarkable tile; it contains the following curious direction to executors, and was probably intended to be placed over a tomb: —

'Thenke. mon. þi. liffe
maj. not. cū. endure .
þat. þow. dost. þi. self
Of. þat. þow. art. sure .
but. þat. þow. kepist
un. to. þi. sectur. care .
and. eū. hit. auaile. þe
hit. is. but. aventure⁵³.'

Sacred emblems are very common on encaustic tiles, and especially symbols of the Passion; within a single shield is sometimes to be found the cross, crown of thorns, the nails, hammer, scourge, spear, ladder, dice, vessel for vinegar, sponge on a rod of hyssop, and rarely, a sort of bill, perhaps representing an instrument used in removing the Body from the cross. The cross alone, floriated, is frequently composed of many tiles; but it enters too into the great majority of those geometrical and

⁵³ Thus translated in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1833: —

floriated patterns which form so large a portion of the encaustic pavements of most churches. Armorial bearings and mottoes of benefactors, founders, and others are frequently met with. At Great Bedwyn, and in the ruins of Chertsey Abbey, have been found knights in armour and other most interesting figures, throwing considerable light on the history of the armour and costumes of the period. At Westminster are figures of a king, queen, and abbot, which are supposed to represent King Henry III., his Queen, and the Abbot of Westminster. Then I have often seen the cock, the emblem of vigilance; the fox, the emblem of subtlety; the pelican, of piety."

"Why," quietly inquired Ernest, "is the pelican an emblem of piety?"

"There is an old legend which tells us that the young of a pelican were once saved from death by starvation by the parent bird tearing open her breast and feeding them with her own blood. This has from very early times been considered a very beautiful emblem of that Sacrifice which has been offered by Jesus Christ to save us from eternal death. Other emblems are – the circle, of eternity; the *fleur de lis*, of the Blessed Virgin; the triangle, of the Trinity; the fish, of the Second Person of the Trinity."

"Now do tell me what that means, please, Mr. Ambrose," said Constance; "I cannot see why the fish should be so sacred an emblem."

"As you don't understand Greek, my dear, it is not a matter of

surprise that you have not understood this oft-recurring emblem. You must know that the Greek word for fish is ἰχθύς [ichthys], and the letters in this word form the first letters of each word of a Greek sentence, of which this is the English translation: – 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour;' hence the employment of this sacred symbol. Other devices are stags, hounds, antelopes, and other animals; swans, and other birds; emblems of trades, &c. Some appear ludicrous to us, though no doubt many of them were originally intended to teach some useful lesson. At Little Marlow is a fool's head, or cock's comb; at Godmersham, on several tiles is a bending old man, with a staff in his hand, and on his head a fool's cap, representing age and folly. It would seem, however, that some of these grotesque figures were manufactured for no very useful purpose, as is evidenced by the penance once inflicted on a monk of Normandy for making tiles of this description⁵⁴. Encaustic tiles have sometimes been used for memorials of the departed⁵⁵. In the ruins of Evesham Abbey, *under* a stone coffin, was found a pavement of tiles, on which were initials and a cross. *Above* a stone coffin, in the ruins

⁵⁴ "Anno 1210. Let the Abbot of Beaubec (in Normandy), who has for a long time allowed his monk to construct, for persons who do not belong to the order, pavements, which exhibit levity and curiosity, be in slight penance for three days, the last of them on bread and water; and let the monk be recalled before the feast of All Saints, and never again be lent, excepting to persons of our order, with whom let him not presume to construct pavements which do not extend the dignity of the order." – Martini's *Thesaurus Anecdotorum*. – Extracted from Oldham's "Irish Pavement Tiles."

⁵⁵ Specially in Normandy, where they are occasionally found under trefoil canopies, resembling our sepulchral brasses.

of Kirkstall Abbey, was found, in 1713, a pavement of similar tiles; in Gloucester Cathedral is a tile to the memory of John Hertford; and at Monmouth one to Thomas Coke and Alice his wife. These works of art are not only to be admired as the most suitable decorations for the floors of God's house; they are also interesting as specimens of art at various periods; frequently they throw light on the history of churches and religious foundations, and occasionally also of private families. I rejoice to see them again claiming the attention of modern artists and manufacturers, and finding a place once more in the churches, which on all sides are happily being restored to their former beauty and appropriateness. – But here we are at Wood's cottage."

CHAPTER XI

THE WALLS

"Peace be within thy walls."

Ps. cxxii. 7

"Now view the walls: the church is compass'd round,
As much for safety, as for ornament:
'Tis an enclosure, and no common ground;
'Tis God's freehold, and but our tenement.
Tenants at will, and yet in tail, we be:
Our children have the same right to't as we.

"Remember there must be no gaps left ope,
Where God hath fenced, for fear of false illusions.
God will have all or none: allows no scope
For sin's encroachments, or men's own intrusions.
Close binding locks His Laws together fast:
He that plucks out the first, pulls down the last."

George Herbert.

The Warren Lodge was one of those pretty little cottages which are often to be found nestling in bright, peaceful corners, about the parks and estates of such wealthy squires as Mr. Acres; men whose kindness of heart and whose refinement of taste induce them to combine the picturesque with the comfortable, in the houses they provide for their tenants and retainers. It was built very near to the Warren Gate of the park, and old Wood had been placed here because, being a spot little frequented, it was a quiet resting-place for him in his old age. Opposite the cottage was a lovely glen, where yew-trees and laurels, mingling with oaks and beeches, hung in many beautiful and fantastic forms over a greensward which all the year round never lost its verdure or its softness. Seldom did old Master Wood and his wife wander farther from their cottage than the end of this quiet glen; but that was their daily walk, and Mr. Acres had put up two rustic seats for them to rest upon, so that the old couple might accomplish their daily journey without any great fatigue. But the old man was now too weak for this.

"I think you and the children had better go in, and leave me outside," said Mr. Acres, "as possibly poor Wood may feel more at his ease if I am not present."

So Mr. Ambrose and the three children entered the cottage. It was, as always, the picture of neatness and cleanliness; there were a few well-tended geraniums in the windows, and some nice pictures on the walls – not the gaudy, vulgar prints which are so commonly found in the cottages of the poor, but really good

and well-coloured engravings of sacred subjects – a supply of which Mr. Ambrose always kept on sale at a very low price⁵⁶. There was enough of neat furniture in the rooms; and on a nice bed, with snow-white drapery, lay the poor old man. After a short conversation Mr. Ambrose read the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and then, when he had given a short explanation of the chapter, all knelt down whilst he said some collects from the Office of the Visitation of the Sick, and a prayer applicable to the special circumstances of these humble cottagers.

The prayers ended, the old man rose up in his bed, and said, "Ah, sir, I have often thought of that chapter you read just now, when I was able to go to our dear old church. Just opposite my seat, you know, was the picture on the wall of the man giving a poor thirsting creature a cup of water, and of another giving a loaf of bread to somebody that looked very hungry. When Mr. Greekhurst was at our church, years ago, you know, sir, he used to preach very learned sermons, and we poor people couldn't understand much about them, but there was my text and sermon too, straight before me, and I always remembered the picture if I didn't remember the sermon. I really think that looking on the old picture made me somehow more kindly disposed to some of my

⁵⁶ Some excellent coloured engravings for cottage walls, of a large size, have been published by Messrs. Remington, under the direction of the Rev. J. W. Burgon, of Oriol College, Oxford. Others, both large and small, suitable for this purpose, are published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and also by several other publishers.

neighbours. I suppose it has been there a great many years, sir?"

"Yes, my friend; I should think about five hundred years."

"So long as that! Well then, I hope it has taught a good lesson to many before me."

"No doubt it has; and though it is now almost worn away from the wall, you will be glad to know that we have the same subject in the new painted window close by, so the old sermon will not be lost."

"'Tis strange, sir, how well one remembers pictures of this sort, and how they make one think about things which, but for them, we certainly might not care to inquire much about. Now when I was a young man I never thought a great deal of that beautiful chapter where St. Paul says so much about charity. I had often heard the chapter read, and sometimes read it myself, but still it never came to my mind how necessary a thing charity was for us to have, till one day I went to Sunday-morning service at an old church near our home. I got to the church some time before service, so I walked about the churchyard, and looked round the church, and there were pictures all round the outside of the walls of the church⁵⁷, explaining that chapter. There was one man bringing all his riches, and every thing he had, to give to the poor, and there was another poor man being burnt to death, and so on; and then at the last it said that, without love to God

⁵⁷ These wall paintings exist (or did till recently) on the outside of a church at High Wycombe. They are curious, and very grotesque; no doubt, however, in their day they have served a good and useful purpose.

and man, all this was good for nothing. Now, sir, I don't recollect a single word of hundreds of sermons I have heard, but I shall never forget those pictures."

"Very likely, for most of us remember better what we *see* than what we *hear*, and it is a great mistake not to teach people through the *eye* as well as the ear. But we must say good-bye, as Mr. Acres is waiting for us in the park. God bless you, and, if it is His will, I hope you may yet be strong enough to enjoy many of your old walks."

On their return home they followed a path which led them again through the churchyard of St. Catherine's, and were soon joined by the Squire, whose patience had been somewhat exhausted by the long stay of the little party at old Wood's cottage.

CHAPTER XII

THE WALLS

**"Thou shalt call thy walls
salvation, and thy gates praise."**

Isa. lx. 18

"Behold in heaven yon glorious bow,
Which spans the gleaming world below!
The hues distinct in order glow,
Yet each in each doth melt unseen,
That none can mark the bound between:
Lo, such is Faith's mysterious scroll,
A multiform harmonious whole,
Together gather'd for our aid,
And in the darken'd heights display'd:
The Church shall ne'er that emblem want
Of her eternal covenant."

The Cathedral.

Mr. Dole, the proprietor of the village emporium, where all

sorts of inferior wares were to be had at the highest obtainable prices, was one of those persons who seem sent into the world for the special purpose of preventing others from being too happy in it. There are persons, no doubt, who go through life always frowning upon their fellow-creatures, ever throwing a dark shadow along the path before them; people who persistently turn their backs upon the sunny side of human life; who seem to think it wicked to take a bright and cheerful view of any thing or any body on all God's earth; whose whole countenances would be utterly revolutionized by the faintest approach to an honest, friendly smile. Such persons, we must believe, are often very sincere, and are endeavouring to do good in their own way; nor must we say that they always fail in their endeavour; nevertheless they are not the sort of persons we care to have as our frequent companions. It is true, there is enough about the lives of most of us to make us often sorrowful; but no less true is it, that the man who, leading a Christian life and doing God's work in the world, preserves "a conscience void of offence to wards God and to wards men" will take care that his outward demeanour does not make his religion unlovely and repulsive in the sight of others. Mr. Dole being of the class we have described, it was no wonder that the village lads had honoured his name with an affix, and that he was generally known among them as old Doleful; nor shall we be surprised that his appearance in the churchyard just as Mr. Acres and the Vicar entered it was not welcomed by them with any excessive pleasure.

"Good evening, Mr. Dole," said both gentlemen, as they approached him. But there was no responsive "Good evening" from Mr. Dole. Now it is always a bad sign when a man will not return such a simple salutation as that: I never knew but one who made me no answer when I wished him "Good evening;" I was at once impressed with the idea that there was little good in him, and my impression was correct, for in a few moments after the fellow had put a light to the thatched house of a poor neighbour who had offended him, and very soon the poor man's house and goods were crackling in a mass of flame. But, it must be confessed, Mr. Dole withheld his salutation from no such motive as influenced this man. There was something far too pleasant and cheerful about a kindly "Good evening" to harmonize in any way with the tone of Mr. Dole's voice or manner; but beyond this, he never said "Good morning" or "Good evening" to any one *on principle*. The fact is, Mr. Dole belonged to a portion of the sect of Anabaptists called "Calvinist Baptists," and the extreme Calvinistic feature of his Creed had become with him quite a monomania. The idea of *predestination* haunted him every where and in every thing; it ran through his whole life of thought, word, and action; with it he justified all his own shortcomings, and it made him insensible to the right motives and doings of others. He had become so accustomed to look on the dark side of men and things, that he had gained for himself a settled character of gloominess and suspicion, and had quite lost sight of the Apostolic precept – "Be courteous." Thus he did

not believe that these two gentlemen meant what they said, and *really wished* him to have a "Good evening;" and, as regarded himself, he would have considered the words as a flying in the face of Providence, a direful offence against the phantom idol of inevitable Predestination which he had set up in his own heart. To him it seemed only a mockery to use those words of common courtesy, when – as he said to himself – it was already ordained whether these persons should have a good or a bad evening, and no words of his could affect or alter their destiny. And so he simply said, "How do you do, gentlemen?" But it was spoken in a deep, sepulchral voice, as though he reserved to himself a mental protest against even this small conformity to the world's civility.

"People are talking about the painting you have been doing in the church, Mr. Ambrose, and I have just come up to look at it; not that I like that sort of thing, and I don't think the parish money should be spent in that way."

"You need not be at all anxious on that score, Mr. Dole, as my friend here has defrayed the whole cost of the work; but let us go into the church together."

Now the line of thought which this man had so long adopted, and the *one idea* he had cherished, had so dulled his heart and mind to all sense of the beautiful that he could never appreciate, like other people, what was pure and lovely, either in nature or in art. No wonder then that he failed to admire the beautiful decoration with which the Squire had adorned St. Catherine's Church.

First of all, Mr. Ambrose pointed out to him some old wall-paintings of great interest, which had been recently discovered. From these Mr. Acres had had the successive coats of whitewash carefully removed, and, though they were several centuries old, the colours were but little faded. Among the most curious were a series of paintings which quite covered the north wall of the chancel.

"You will see, Mr. Dole, that these all represent events in the life of our Blessed Lord. Here is the beginning of the series; it is the Tree of Jesse, showing the descent of our Lord in the line of David, – next is the Nativity, – next the Adoration of the Magi, – then, the Massacre of the Holy Innocents, – then, the Presentation in the temple; and there, on the upper part of the wall, are – the Betrayal, our Lord before Pilate, being Mocked, being Scourged, bearing His Cross, His Crucifixion, and there, below the Crucifixion, His descent from the Cross, and His Entombment⁵⁸. These, you see, Mr. Dole, are not only valuable as showing one way in which our Church five hundred years ago set before the eyes and minds of the people the human life of our Lord; but they are still well suited for the sacred place they adorn, inasmuch as they still serve to remind the worshipper in this House of Prayer of the great truths they represent. I must, however, confess that we brought to light some paintings

⁵⁸ These mural paintings still remain, as here described, on the north wall of the chancel of Chalgrove Church, Oxon. There are also on the east and south walls of the chancel of the same church, many other paintings possessing great interest.

on the walls of a different character; some of these were very grotesque, others were from some cause or other objectionable. These were copied, as possessing antiquarian interest, and were then obliterated. It was long before we could bring our minds to destroy these curious relics of old days⁵⁹, and had they occupied less conspicuous places in the church, I think we should have been tempted to preserve them, but the House of God has a higher use than to be a mere preserver of curiosities, and to this higher use its decorations and all within it should contribute."

Mr. Ambrose then explained the new wall-decorations which had been painted by Mr. Acres. These consisted of groups illustrating sacred subjects, texts of Holy Scripture mixed with foliage and tracery; and, by clever introduction of foliage and holy texts among the old work, he had made the old and the new to harmonize very well. The colours were well arranged, and all

⁵⁹ A very interesting mural painting, of which the above is a copy, has been lately discovered in a recess in the north wall of the nave of Bedfont Church. The colour is exceedingly rich and well preserved. The painting measures 4 ft. 6 in. by 4 ft., and is supposed to be of the thirteenth century. It represents the Last Judgment. Our Lord is sitting on His Throne, showing the five wounds. On the right hand is an angel showing the Cross, on the left an angel with a spear. Four nails are represented near the head of our Lord. In the lower part of the painting are two angels holding trumpets, and below them three persons rising out of the tomb. It is probable that the interior of almost every old church in the country has at some time been decorated with wall-paintings – very many of them have been brought to light in recent works of church restoration. The favourite subjects were representations of Heaven and Hell, and of the Day of Judgment. In many cathedrals and some parish churches the *Dance of Death* was painted on the walls. This was one of the most popular religious plays about four centuries ago.

was done with a due reference to the architectural features of the church. Before this time the only attempt at ornament for the walls of the church consisted of some square boards, put up about fifty years ago, on which were painted some ill-selected sentences, whilst beneath each sentence was painted a human head of inhuman ugliness.

Not one word had as yet been spoken to the Vicar by his seemingly attentive listener. At length he said, in his usual dismal tone, "I don't see any use in it, sir. To my mind, our little Rehoboth down in the village is more like the simplicity of the Gospel. Besides, I call all this a breaking of the second commandment."

"I leave you to judge whether the mean little meeting-house you call Rehoboth, or this beautiful church, is most in accordance with the only patterns we have in God's Word of houses dedicated to His worship, or most fitting as types of the Heavenly Temple whose magnificence is described in such glowing language by St. John; but as regards these paintings, the pictures and toys you sell in your shop are just as much a breaking of the second commandment; for these are no more made to worship than are those."

"But nobody will kneel down before my toys and pictures; if they kneel at all, however, in your church, they must kneel before these pictures. I call them idolatrous images, and I say they are worshipped."

"And, by the same mode of reasoning, I say, Mr. Dole, that the

people at your meeting-house break the second commandment; for they fall down to whitewash, and worship it."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Why, only this: that turn whichever way they will to worship, they must turn to one of your four whitewashed walls. But let us be quite fair to each other. The truth is, you don't worship whitewash, nor do we worship images; but whilst we think it most in accordance with reason and religion to decorate our walls with sacred subjects, such as are likely to suggest solemn and holy thoughts, and to make our churches as beautiful as possible, you, on the contrary, seem to regard it as a religious duty to make your meeting-houses as ugly as possible. And now I must say good-bye, Mr. Dole."

"Sir, I should like to meet you here again some day."

"I only wish we could at least meet here every Sunday. Good-bye."

"I almost think," said Mr. Acres, as they left the church, "the outside of our church walls are as interesting as their interior. The north wall is evidently the earliest part of the church. It contains some Roman bricks, placed herring-bone fashion, among the old Norman rubble. This, doubtless, was erected immediately after the destruction of the little Saxon church with its wooden walls⁶⁰ which once stood on this very site; then come the Early English walls of the chancel, then the very interesting specimens of brick-

⁶⁰ No doubt the earliest church walls were made of wood. Greenstead Church, in Essex, affords a most interesting example of these old wooden walls.

work of the sixteenth century in the tower and western walls. But you have given Mr. Dole and us all such a long and useful lecture on the *inside* of the walls, that we must not stop to say any more about their outside."

"I must just say this, my friend, respecting the outside walls, that I can forgive a builder for any fault more easily than for want of *reality* in the exterior of a church. For the sake of decoration and neatness it may be desirable that the internal walls should be covered with cement or plaster, but there is no excuse for so covering the church externally. If mean materials are used, let the mean materials appear; but it is unpardonable to use the mean and spread over it a false pretence of the costly. Brick walls are often very beautiful, and not inferior to flint or stone; but if they are of brick, let the brick be seen, and let it not pretend to be *stone*."

CHAPTER XIII

THE WINDOWS

"I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

Isa. liv. 12

" ... Sometimes thoughts proud and wild
Have risen, till I saw the sunbeams steal
Through painted glass at evensong, and weave
Their threefold tints upon the marble near,
Faith, Prayer, and Love, the spirit of a child!"

Faber.

Mr. Acres and his family had now learnt, from their many conversations with the Vicar on the subject, to take a deep interest in church architecture, and were ever seeking and finding some new beauties either in the solid building or the ornaments of their own ancient church, which now they looked upon with quite a new feeling of pride and admiration. When, therefore, Mr.

Ambrose was a visitor at the Hall, he was not unfrequently called upon to deliver a short drawing-room lecture on some portion of the church or its furniture. "Now, Mr. Ambrose," said the Squire, on one of these occasions, "as we are only a family party this evening, will you kindly give us some more information on our favourite topic of conversation lately? I see the same request is on the lips of all these little people, but they are not so impudent, I suppose, as I am. You will, I hope, find us more profitable pupils than Mr. Dole, to whom you specially addressed your lecture in the church the other day."

"I am not so sure of that; for what I said to him, if it did no more, at least set him *thinking*; and that is a great point, you know. You see, those kind of people, as a rule, never read and never hear any thing really worth reading or hearing about matters of this sort. They are simply taught to believe that all outward form and ceremony in the Services, and all outward *meaning* and *beauty* in the fabric of the church, are idolatrous and superstitious, and they care to inquire no further than that. Their prejudice is fostered by ignorance, and to lead them to *inquire* is the first step to wards inducing conviction. Then, how very little our own people generally know about these things, and how seldom comparatively they are prepared with a ready answer with which to meet the objections of persons who are even more ignorant than themselves! This surely ought not to be. If we place beautiful and costly ornaments and furniture in our churches, the poorest person in the parish should be taught the meaning of

them; and if the Stones of the Temple have each a lesson to teach, the poorest person in the parish ought to know what they say. But I am wandering from my point: our last subject was the *walls* of the church; what shall we talk about to-day, Constance?"

"Oh, I think the *windows* should come next, Mr. Ambrose, but there are so many different kinds of windows, that, of course, you cannot tell us all that might be said about them."

"No, indeed, my dear; I can only tell you a very small part of their history, but still enough, perhaps, to increase the interest you already feel on the subject. First, then, I shall say something about the *stone-work* of the windows; and what I say about windows applies very much also to the *doors* of a church, only the doors are generally much more richly ornamented. Now there are some very simple rules by which we may commonly know from the windows pretty nearly at what period that particular part of the church was built. You cannot, of course, always tell from any thing still existing at what time the church was *first* built, because often no part whatever of the first church is remaining. The font, from its sheltered position, is the most frequently preserved relic of the original church; sometimes one doorway alone remains, and sometimes but a single window to mark the earliest date of the church.

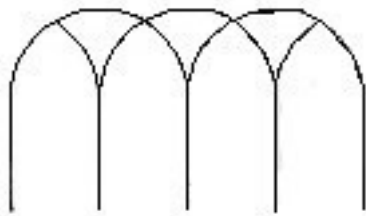
"As I must not puzzle your brains with the hard words employed by persons learned in church building, I do not profess to give you the nice distinctions by which they arrive almost at exact dates. Ours must be a very rapid glance at the

whole subject. The two great distinct characters, then, in church windows, as also in other parts of the building, are the *semi-circular arch* and the *pointed arch*. The former is to be found in churches erected before the year 1150, and the latter since that year; but of course there are exceptions. The earliest round-headed windows (that the few buildings in which they are found were originally intended as Christian temples, I do not of course affirm) are the *Roman*, and these are easily known, for they are nearly always partly composed of red bricks⁶¹. Then come the *Saxon*; these are built of stone, but are quite plain, and generally as rude and rough as the Roman. You know the Romans held possession of our country from the year 50 before Christ till A.D. 450; and then the Saxons held the country till A.D. 1066; but it is impossible accurately to fix the dates of most of the churches they built. Next follow the *Norman*; these are more ornamental, and not so roughly executed; and after the Norman Conquest, when many clever builders and masons came over from Normandy, they were often most beautifully decorated. The figures of persons and animals, indeed, that are sometimes to be found (but more especially above the doorways) at this time seem very quaint and curious to us now, and often quite unintelligible, but no doubt they once all had an useful meaning and were specimens of the highest art of the time; very many of

⁶¹ Roman bricks are generally easy to be distinguished from others by their colour and shape. They were not all made in moulds of the same size, as we now make bricks, and on this account we find them to vary much in size and form.

them are Scripture subjects. Sometimes triangular windows are to be met with of the Saxon and Norman periods, but very rarely. As I said before, some of their stone carvings appear to us to be very quaint and grotesque, and so too the arrangement of their windows was sometimes fanciful; they seem to have attempted occasionally⁶², to represent⁶³ the features of the face, the doorway representing the mouth, and the windows the eyes and nose.

"The reason why the windows were in some instances so small, we may imagine was because they were sometimes not glazed, and it was desirable that, to keep out the wind and rain and the winter's cold, they should be only just large enough to admit the necessary light. I have lately seen an old Norman window which had been long bricked up, in which there had evidently never been any glass⁶³. We need not be surprised at this, for even so lately as in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it was no uncommon thing for the windows in private houses to have no glass in them.



⁶² As at Crowmarsh, Oxfordshire, of which an engraving is given.

⁶³ At Godmersham, Kent.

"Now we come to the pointed-headed arches. From about A.D. 1150 to A.D. 1200, which is called the *Transition* period the two styles were a good deal mixed. People have different opinions as to the origin of these pointed arches. A learned friend of mine has an idea of his own about it, which he calls *the finger theory*. He supposes that all church arches and tracery may be derived from different positions in which the fingers may be placed when the hands are clasped as in prayer, and that from these, first the round, and then the pointed arch was suggested as a fit design to be adopted for a House of Prayer. It is at least an ingenious and a pleasing conception. Some have imagined that the meeting of branches in a grove of trees first gave the idea of the pointed arch. Often, as I have looked down the avenue by old Wood's cottage, has the opening at the opposite end reminded me of the eastern window of some splendid cathedral, whilst the long intervening rows of trees, with their branches uniting overhead, has suggested to my mind the pillars and groined roof of the building. Our old heathen forefathers knew well the grand effect of these magnificent temples of nature's building, when they selected them as the places best adapted for their awful sacrifices, and the worship of their 'Unknown God⁶⁴.' But

⁶⁴ It is certain that many of the splendid yew-trees in our old churchyards are far older than the churches themselves. And it is more than probable that in many instances they mark the places where heathen rites were once celebrated. It was natural for our Christian forefathers to select these spots as places of worship, since, being held sacred by the heathen people around them, they would be regarded by them with

it seems most probable that one style of architecture naturally introduced another, and that the pointed followed naturally from the semi-circular arch. When the builders saw what a beautiful arch was produced by a number of their old semi-circular arches intersecting each other, they gradually introduced the newly-discovered pointed arch, and at length, finding that it admitted of such a far greater variety of beautiful tracery in the window, they abandoned the old style altogether.

"The first pure style of pointed windows is called the *Early English*⁶⁵, which prevailed from about A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1300. It is often very simple, the plain lancet-shaped window being the most common; it frequently has the same ornaments as the Norman, but its peculiar ornament is a flower, almost round, called the *ball-flower*. This was followed, up to about A.D. 1400, by a more graceful flowing style, called the *Decorated* or *Florid*, and it is chiefly to be distinguished by the waving flame-like character of the stone-work in the upper part of the window. Then next we have quite a different style, which is called the *Perpendicular*, so named from its upright or perpendicular lines, some of which run up uninterruptedly from the bottom to the top of the window. This style is peculiar to England, and windows of this character are very rarely to be found elsewhere. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the arch of the window

reverence and respect, and thus the cross which they reared, and the dead which they buried beneath the wide-spreading branches of these old trees would be preserved from desecration.

⁶⁵ These styles are now frequently called *first*, *second*, and *third pointed*.

gradually becomes depressed, first sinking to the *Tudor* arch, and then losing its pointed character altogether and becoming quite flat; and this introduced what, from its comparative want of beauty, is called the *Debased* style. The windows of this period were usually square-headed, and possessed, like the other parts of the building, little ornament. It prevailed till the middle of the seventeenth century, and may be considered the second childhood of Church Architecture; and it was certainly far inferior to the first. Succeeding to this period came all those hideous semi-classical erections, most of which, I believe, were built in the reign of Queen Anne, though some were before and some after; and those still more unsightly parodies on Gothic architecture which were erected at the close of the last and commencement of the present century. In our own day we have far *advanced* by a complete *retrogression*, and churches are mostly copies of one or other of the styles I have mentioned. If, however, our present age may boast of a church architecture of its own, it will undoubtedly be that of those most beautiful *brick* churches which have been but lately erected, such as All Saints' and St. Alban's, London, and St. James', Oxford."

"You have not told us any thing about the *round* windows, Mr. Ambrose," said Constance; "you know we have a very pretty one in our church."

"Yes, I ought to have told you that these circular windows are to be found in all styles of architecture, usually at the west end of the church. They are called rose windows and marigold

windows, from their supposed likeness to those flowers; and St. Catherine's windows, from their resemblance to the wheel on which she suffered martyrdom. It is likely that this window was placed in our church because it is dedicated to St. Catherine."

"That leads me to ask," said Mr. Acres, "what *symbolism* there may be in the windows of a church; for in your sermon last Sunday you said that there was a lesson to be learnt from all the speechless stones of the sanctuary."

"Yes; and every window in the church should remind us of certain Christian truths. The *light* which they admit should make us think of Him who is the 'Light of the world,' 'a Light to lighten the Gentiles,' 'the Day-spring from on high,' 'the Sun of Righteousness,' 'that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The window with its double compartments reminds us of the two natures of Christ; the triple window, and the many triple forms in it, of the Trinity⁶⁶. But it is of course most chiefly in its storied panes that the church window becomes our teacher."

"Certainly; I see that: and, by-the-by, as I am as ignorant as my children about the history of stained glass, please tell us

⁶⁶ "The glass windows in a church are Holy Scriptures, which expel the wind and the rain, that is, all things hurtful, but transmit the light of the True Sun, that is, God, into the hearts of the faithful. These are wider within than without, because the mystical sense is the more ample, and precedeth the literal meaning. Also, by the windows the senses of the body are signified: which ought to be shut to the vanities of this world, and open to receive with all freedom spiritual gifts. By the lattice-work of the windows, we understand the Prophets or other obscure teachers of the Church Militant: in which windows there are often two shafts, signifying the two precepts of charity, or because the Apostles were sent out to preach two and two." —*Durandus on Symbolism*.

something about that before we part."

"I will, gladly. As far as we know, stained glass was never used before about the year 850; but when it once came into general use, it would appear that no church was considered complete unless every window was furnished with it. At first, it probably consisted of rude imitations of old mosaic patterns⁶⁷. Then figures were introduced, which depended for their general effect upon broad black lines either produced by lead or colour. The old stained glass may always be known by the deep richness of its colours, especially of the blue and ruby. Probably Canterbury Cathedral possesses the earliest and best specimens remaining, the date of some of which is about A.D. 1120⁶⁸. In the glass of this time you find small medallions containing several figures, the surrounding parts being filled with tracery. Next come small single figures, or groups of figures, with or without canopies, with border tracery and foliage; sometimes there are the shields of founders and benefactors. About A.D. 1350 larger figures of saints were painted, each occupying a whole compartment of the window, with larger and more elaborate canopies. Now,

⁶⁷ Stained glass is said to have been first used in churches in the twelfth century. Windows were at first filled with thin slices of talc or alabaster, or sometimes vellum. As the monks spent much time in illuminating their vellum MSS., it has been thought likely that they also painted on the vellum used in the windows of their monasteries, and that afterwards, on the introduction of glass, their vellum illuminations suggested their glass painting.

⁶⁸ At Brabourne, Kent, is a Norman window filled with stained glass of the period, which is still quite perfect.

too, windows began to be *mortuary*, and contained figures of deceased persons, with their shields and banners. In the following century single subjects often extended over several compartments, or even the whole of the window. Sentences in old English letters were frequently painted, issuing from the mouths of figures (just as we find them on monumental brasses of the same date), and also in various other parts of the window. One colour only, commonly yellow, with black lines to mark the features and dresses, was now, and also before this time, frequently used.

"At this period glass painters fell into a great error by studying more to paint pictures, correct in all the lesser and unimportant parts of the drawing, than to produce a pleasing and solemn distant effect; they often lost the effect of a grand accessory to the beauty and harmony of a Gothic temple, in order to gain that of a piece of painted calico. From about A.D. 1600 this art gradually declined, and, with some exceptions, the glass painting and architecture of our churches fell together, the inferior artist of the former being often employed in depicting the debased style of the latter. Immense quantities of stained glass were destroyed by the sacrilegious hands of the Puritans in the seventeenth century⁶⁹, and of course much, from its brittle

⁶⁹ "One who calls himself John Dowsing, and, by virtue of a pretended commission, goes about ye country like a Bedlam, breaking glasse windows, having battered and beaten downe all our painted glasse, not only in our Chappels, but (contrary to order) in our Publique Schools, Colledge Halls, Libraries, and Chambers." – Berwick's *Querela Cantabrigiensis*.

nature, has otherwise perished; enough, however, remains to show how splendidly our churches were formerly decorated with it, and to afford invaluable aid to those who are now engaged in promoting the happy revival of this noble art.

"There is just one other point to which I must briefly allude – the value of stained glass windows as *historical records*. There can be no objection to windows in some parts of the church (specially those placed over the arches of the nave which are called *clerestory* windows) being thus employed, though the presence of these subjects in some parts would be most objectionable. There are some most interesting windows of this character still remaining. I have only time to notice some of those in Great Malvern Church. I have brought you some drawings of these windows; they represent some events in the life of St. Werstan, who was martyred in a small chapel near to the spot where these windows are. This glass preserves the only ancient record we have of this saint. In the first pane you see there is a representation of Werstan himself; the hills at the back, with the flowers and ferns upon them, probably represent the Malvern hills; and the painting above, the plot of ground on which his church was built. The key has reference either to the material fabric or the spiritual efficacy of its sacred services, and the four corner-stones, held by four angels, each with three fingers raised in the attitude of blessing in the name of the Trinity, are doubtless intended to indicate the favour of Heaven on his pious work. In the next pane the figure and

hills are repeated, and above is a representation of the different ceremonies attending the consecration of the completed church. In the third pane you see the hills, with their flowers and ferns, covering the whole background; in the lower part, the now regular services of St. Werstan's little church appear to be represented by three choristers; and standing near them are two persons who are probably their instructors. The upper part represents the martyrdom of the saint in his own chapel. The stained glass in Great Malvern Church contains other historical records, but we have not time to notice them."

CHAPTER XIV A LOOSE STONE IN THE BUILDING A DIGRESSION

"Let the priests repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found."

2 Kings xii. 5

"Men, who have ceased to reverence, soon defy
Their forefathers; lo! sects are form'd, and split
With morbid restlessness; – the ecstatic fit
Spreads wide; though special mysteries multiply,
The saints must govern, is their common cry;
And so they labour, deeming Holy Writ
Disgraced by aught that seems content to sit
Beneath the roof of settled modesty."

Wordsworth.

Since the last conversation which we recorded between the

Vicar and Mr. Dole, the character of the latter had become much softened. On various occasions they had been brought into each other's company, and the consequence was that each had begun to think more favourably of the other, and to find some unsuspected good qualities which promised well to establish between them that cordial good feeling and mutual respect which ought always to exist between a Pastor and each member of his flock.

The following close of a long conversation might explain the loss of esteem and influence which many a parish priest, besides the Vicar of St. Catherine's, has had to deplore: —

"Well, Mr. Ambrose, had we known each other more, we should have understood each other better; my lips, at least, would have been saved the guilt of many hard words; perhaps, too, sir, you would have thought of me a little more charitably."

"There may be truth in that, Mr. Dole," said the Vicar; "but then you must own that you have always shown such sternness and severity to wards me as to forbid any friendly approach on my part. I have, indeed, put it down, in a great measure, to that harsh judgment of the conduct and opinions of others which I considered your form of dissent tended to foster — but this has not relieved me of my difficulty."

"I suppose I must confess that those who hold very strictly to the doctrines in which I have been brought up, have generally a severe and sour bearing to wards others who do not believe as they do, and, indeed, very often to wards members of their

own body also. Then, you see, sir, at their prayer meetings, and their Sabbath services, they get much more excited and animated than people do at church, and so, perhaps, it's natural for them to be a little more subdued and less lively when they are out of 'meeting.'"

"Yes, that's natural; and no doubt what you say accounts for some differences in the opinions we form of each other's characters. At 'meeting' I am aware persons are commonly wrought up, by exciting appeals, loud words, and wild gestures, to a state of *high pressure*, of which we at church know little; and so they consider the calm, dignified solemnity of our services as cold and lifeless. Out of 'meeting' a reaction takes place, and they become comparatively depressed and undemonstrative, and we consider them morose and ill-tempered; *we* have no such reaction to undergo, and to us the world seems brighter than to them, and so they think us frivolous and worldly. But for my part, Mr. Dole, I can't possibly see what is the use of a man's speaking ten times louder than is necessary in order to make himself heard, just that he may produce a fever-heat in the pulses of his congregation. If continued for any length of time, it leads to something very like temporary madness; if not, it is likely to subside into a dull, sullen apathy. Moreover, I have yet to learn that it is wrong, provided we do not abuse them, to enjoy the good things God gives us, with a *cheerful countenance*—aye, and with a merry heart, too.

"On that point I have for some time been inclining to your opinion, sir; though, I fear, you will think I have not given much

outward proof of it. But, nevertheless, you have in this matter as yet partly mistaken me – indeed we have partly mistaken each other. Perhaps my religion may, in some degree, account for my seeming gloominess and indifference; but these have arisen quite as much from home sorrows and disappointments, and the coldness and cruelty I have experienced from others. I will not, however, trouble you with these matters now, more than to say, that if you could have overlooked the ungracious words I may sometimes have said to and of you, and have looked in upon me, and for my evil have returned good, by speaking some kind and friendly words to me, you would have done much to brighten a life that has known but little sunshine; for I have longed more than I can tell you for a friend to whom I could fearlessly tell the sorrows of my heart. I know I have been to blame, for I always used to think you too *proud* to take much interest in my cares and troubles; may be, sir – I am sure you will forgive my plain speaking – may be we have been both a little to blame.

"Now, Mr. Ambrose," continued his parishioner, in a far more cheerful voice than was usual with him, "you know that since your friendly conversation with me that day in the church, I have followed the advice you then gave me, and have never failed to be one of your congregation at least once on the Sunday. I trust I have profited by what you have taught me: will you not be offended if I for a moment turn the tables, and preach a few words to you? I don't mean to *you* yourself personally, sir, but I mean to you as one of the ministers of the Church."

"I am sure you will not say any thing that will give me just cause for offence, my friend, and so I promise not to be offended."

"Well then, sir, you know I have always lived amongst Dissenters, so I know pretty well who and what they are. You will agree with me, that there are many excellent people among them, and there are some learned people among them; but generally they have but little learning. Very often their attention has been almost solely directed to *a single point of doctrine* which itself forms the ground of their dissent from the Church – just as with me; though I do not think the Church is quite right on some other matters, yet I should not separate from it could I be persuaded that the Church was right about *Baptism*. That has always been *my one* great stumbling-block. But I think, sir, speaking with all respect for yourself, that there is *one great cause* in the Church ministers themselves which has kept the Dissenters from coming back to the Church. I know that this has more to do with the *past* than the *present*; I know too that it could not of itself justify any one in separating from the Church. But, sir, look at the class of people Dissenters are of, in this country; their whole strength lies in the middle and the small-trade class. There are among them comparatively very few rich and educated, very few poor. You will say the love of the power and position which those people obtain for themselves in the meeting-house, but which they could not possess, in the same way, in the Church, naturally draws them to the Dissenters. That is no doubt partly true; giving them

also credit – as I am sure you do, sir – for higher motives. But I see another reason; and that is, the wide difference between the Church ministers and the people."

"I see what you mean," said the Vicar: "the difference in their social position. I admit that the social position of the dissenting preacher is more on a level with that class of which, as you say, Dissenters are chiefly composed than is that of the Clergy. But then, Mr. Dole, the Church does not only retain its hold on the upper and the educated classes, but also on the poor (of course I speak generally; for there are, alas! a large number of these which are beyond the reach of any religious ministrations whatever)."

"Ah, yes, sir, that's the very point. I think in times past the Church ministers have stood too much on their social and worldly dignity: they have made too much of the *man*, and too little of the *office*. It's different now almost every where. But you see, sir, this just separated them from the tradespeople, but it didn't separate them from the poor. They didn't feel their pride wounded when they took the horny hand of the labourer; but it was a greater trial of humility to shake hands with the tradesman over the counter, and to go and sit down in the parlour behind the shop, in the same friendly way in which they visited the poor cottagers. Then, you know, sir, there were many other ways in which this class was neglected: *we* think it was lest too great attention should lead to too great familiarity. The wealth and education of a tradesman perhaps sometimes made his social position border too closely on that of the Church minister, and perhaps the minister felt it his

duty carefully to guard the narrow barrier; but, oh, dear me, sir, what is all that compared with the work God has given him to do! I don't think that one who has the salvation of his people at heart will stop to consider whether a friendly, faithful pastoral visit may or may not result in a more familiar nod from his parishioners for the future. Do you know, sir, I think this is one of the loose stones in your spiritual House."

"I agree with much that you have said, as regards *past years*: but you must not put all down to *pride*; you must make more allowances for men's peculiar habits, and circumstances, and manners. Only just now you excused a kindred fault in yourself on the ground of private cares and anxieties. However, our views on this matter are not far apart. I consider, with you, that a clergyman's *office* overrides all social distinctions; and that he should be equally at home at the squire's mansion, the tradesman's parlour, and the meanest cottage in his parish; none should be too high for his familiarity, none too low for his friendship: as Chaucer says, 'the beggar is his brother.' His *social* position is certainly as nothing compared with his *official*, and should always be made subservient to it. I cannot understand how any clergyman, who rightly estimates the high dignity of his sacred office as a priest, can take a different view from this. However – God be praised! – times are altered in this respect: the Clergy have thrown away almost every where that reserve which no doubt lost to the Church many of the class which the Dissenters have gained. And we see now the good results; for in

thousands of parishes the sons and daughters of these very people are working hand-in-hand with their Pastor, and are among the most zealous and faithful children of the Church, bringing again within the walls of her Temples multitudes of those who have been fellow-wanderers with themselves, and so helping to repair, one by one, the many breaches which have, alas! been made in the House of the Lord."

CHAPTER XV

THE FONT

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Luke xviii. 16

"There is a Font within whose burnish'd face
The o'erarching pile itself reflected sleeps,
Columns, arch, roof, and all the hallow'd place,
Beauteously mirror'd in its marble deeps;
And holy Church within her vigil keeps:
Thus round our Font on storied walls arise
Scenes that encompass Sion's holy steeps,
Rivers of God and sweet societies,
The mountain of our rest, and Kingdom of the skies."

The Baptistry.

A few weeks after the interview mentioned in the last chapter, the Vicar preached three sermons from the same text, St. John

iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The first sermon was on the *necessity of Baptism*; the second, on *its benefits*; and the third, on *its mode of administration*, specially in the case of infants. Mr. Ambrose could not help noticing that Mr. Dole was on each occasion deeply affected, for he saw tears on his face, which evidently manifested deep emotion within. He was, therefore, hardly surprised, when, after his third sermon, a knock at the vestry-door announced a visit from his parishioner.

"I have listened very attentively to your last three sermons, Mr. Ambrose," said he, "and the subjects of them have also, as you know, for a long time past been seriously and prayerfully considered by me; I am now come to ask you to receive me into the Church by Baptism."

"Have you never yet been baptized, my friend?" inquired the Vicar, taking his hand in a kind and friendly way.

"No, I have not; when I was an infant, my parents objected to my being baptized, and since I became a man, I must confess with shame, that I have never had the *courage* to go through the service at our *meeting*. That service, you know, sir, is such as to deter far more courageous men – and specially women – than I am, and I have always, too, had my doubts about its propriety."

"I am not surprised at that. I once, when a boy, attended a baptism at one of your *meetings*, and I shall never forget it; for a more unseemly spectacle I never witnessed. There were several young men and women immersed by the preacher, in a large tank

of water, in the middle of the meeting-house. Each was clothed in a flannel garment fitting almost closely to the body, and the appearance of the first of them was the signal for a general rush to the best places for seeing; men and boys climbed noisily over the pews, and some took their places on the backs of the seats, so as to get a good view; and the whole scene was most disorderly and irreverent.

"I have explained to you that our own Church also admits of baptism by *immersion*⁷⁰, but it does not *require* it, nor even recommend it. Nevertheless occasionally persons desire it; and there are a few churches, chiefly in Wales, where a large tank of water, as well as a smaller font, is provided for such special cases. But this mode of baptizing is not encouraged by the Church, for these among other reasons: – It is *not necessary*– for 1, the word *Baptism*, in the original, does not necessarily mean entire immersion; 2, in the absence of proof to the contrary, we may fairly conclude, from the peculiar circumstances⁷¹ of the cases, that many of whose baptism we read in the New Testament were not so immersed; 3, the Church from the earliest period has not considered immersion as necessary to the validity of Baptism. It is also *inconvenient*– for 1, in some cases it would be most difficult to obtain sufficient water for the purpose; 2, in many

⁷⁰ The rubric in the Service for the Public Baptism of Infants directs the priest, *if the godfathers and godmothers shall certify that the child may well endure it, to dip it in the water.* In the first Prayer Book of Edward VI. the priest is directed to "*dyppe it in the water thryce.*"

⁷¹ Acts xvi. 15, 33. 1 Cor. i. 16.

cases there would be much risk and danger attending its practice; 3, in all cases there would be difficulty in securing that solemnity, propriety, and order so desirable in the administration of this holy sacrament. But the Baptism of adults, even according to the Church's ordinary rules, is no small test of courage, as well as sincerity. You are aware, no doubt, that your own Baptism and reception into the Church must be *in the face of the congregation*. The law of the Church is very plain on this point; it distinctly forbids Baptism to be administered *privately*, either at home or in the Church, 'unless upon a great and reasonable cause;' and it is much to be regretted that this rule has ever been departed from."

"Yes, sir, I have well considered that point."

The Vicar remained long that afternoon in the vestry in serious conversation and earnest prayer with his parishioner. He again went over the subject of the last three sermons; showing, 1st, how the text could refer to nothing else than holy Baptism, and that, if it did refer to it, then no doubt, where it can be had, Baptism must be necessary for us, in order that we may "enter into the kingdom of God;" 2ndly, that the *promise* is as sure as the *warning*; and, 3rdly, that the terms of the text are *unexceptional*, that they refer to *all mankind* without any exception whatever, men, women, and children. In speaking of these different subjects, of course he had to meet the various objections which Dissenters are used to adduce; but on all these points it was not very difficult to satisfy the mind of one who had already freed himself from the trammels of prejudice, and was earnestly seeking for the *truth*.

On the following Sunday afternoon therefore, after the second lesson, Mr. Dole presented himself, with his chosen witnesses, at the Font of St. Catherine's. The service was a very solemn one, and all the congregation evidently took the greatest interest in it. Mr. Dole made the responses in a firm manly voice, its very tone seemed to say, "This is the result of my deep and honest conviction; I have been wrong, and I am not ashamed to say so before all those who are here present, from whom I have so long been separated, but who are henceforth my brethren in Christ." And then for the first time, he quietly and calmly took his place on a bench at the west end of the building – a sincere member of the Christian Church.

It was natural that the Squire and Vicar should have some conversation after service on an event of so much importance in the village as was this. They both foretold, and rightly, the downfall of the little village "Bethel" as soon as its chief supporter had left it.

Its former attendants came back to the Church one by one, till at length the owner of the building, finding no prospect of receiving his rent, closed the "Meeting," and appropriated it to another purpose.

The Vicar and Squire were standing near the Font, and the conversation took its rise from the object before them.

"How often, Mr. Vicar, we find these old Norman Fonts preserved, when there is hardly another bit of masonry remaining in the church of the same date."

"Yes; and it is remarkable it should be so, considering the exposed part of the church in which they are placed, and the perishable stone of which they are not unfrequently composed; besides which, the carvings upon them are often of so mysterious and grotesque a character as naturally to excite the wrath of the Puritan fanatics who so relentlessly destroyed the beauty of our Houses of God, and 'brake down all the carved work thereof with axes and hammers.'

"It is very interesting to watch the progress of architectural changes as delineated on Fonts. Each period of ecclesiastical architecture, as well in its general features as in its details, is abundantly illustrated by the carvings and mouldings to be found on Fonts. The early Fonts were with few exceptions made of stone. Marble was seldom used till in comparatively recent times. Some of the early Fonts had a solid leaden bowl, placed on a stone base⁷²; I have never seen but one ancient wooden Font⁷³; that was placed on a stone base of the Norman period, but was itself no doubt much later. The sculpture on very ancient Fonts, as well as other church carving of the time, sometimes borrowed its symbolism from the heathen mythology which preceded it⁷⁴."

⁷² As at Dorchester and Warborough in Oxfordshire, and Brookland in Kent; each of these have very elaborate mouldings upon them.

⁷³ At Llanvair Discoed, Monmouthshire.

⁷⁴ The Font at West Rounton, of which we have given an engraving, is one of many examples of this. The *Centaur*, the arrow from whose bow is just about to pierce the monster, probably represents the Deity conquering Satan, or perhaps the continual conflict of the baptized Christian against sin and Satan. The other figure may represent

Constance Acres, who had been hitherto a quiet listener, here asked Mr. Ambrose why the Font was always placed near the door of the church.

"It's a natural inquiry, my dear, for one of your age," said the Vicar, "but the reason is evident. Its position there, at the entrance of the material fabric, fitly represents *Baptism* as the outward form of admission into the Christian Church. The Font, too, thus placed, should ever remind us, as we enter the church, of the vows and promises made in our name when first we were brought in our helpless infancy to be presented to God, and to be made members of Christ through the grace of our second birth. If people would only accustom themselves to associate such thoughts with the baptismal Font, then just a glance at it as they come into the church would be enough to solemnize their minds, and help to fit them for the sacred services in which they are about to take a part. It was once the custom, Constance, to place what were called *stoups*, at the entrances to our churches, and there are still remains of them at the doors of many old churches. These were small basins, made of stone, for the purpose of holding water, which – like the water in the Font – was consecrated by the priest. When persons came into

the Divine and human natures united in our Lord. This exceedingly curious Font was discovered during the recent restoration of the little Norman Church of West Rounton, Yorkshire. It was found under the pulpit, of which it formed the base, having been turned over so that the bowl rested on the floor, and so carefully plastered that there was no external indication of its original form. It has now been restored to its former position near the south-west door of the church.

the church, they dipped a finger in the basin, and crossed their forehead with the water, just as the priest now crosses the brow of the person who has been baptized. The *forehead*, you know, is always regarded as the seat of *shame* or *courage*⁷⁵; and so the person, when baptized, is signed with 'the sign of the *Cross*, in token that hereafter he shall *not be ashamed* to confess the faith of *Christ crucified*.' The old custom of frequent crossing with holy water has now for a long time been discontinued by us, the practice was regarded by many as superstitious, nor does there appear to be authority for it in the Primitive Church. The same motive which prompted the use of the *stoup*, however, still induces some persons to use the sign of the Cross on entering a church: I do not myself do so; not that I see any harm in the practice in itself, as it is intended to remind persons of the Sacred Presence to which they are about to enter, and to drive away worldly thoughts by this memento of the crucifixion of their Lord; but I think it is better, in my own case, as some would be offended by it, to try to accomplish this right object by other means."

"People's minds have very much changed in late years respecting the use of the Cross," said Mr. Acres. "A few years ago not only was the sign of the Cross in baptism considered superstitious, but it was considered even wrong to use it in church architecture, or as an ornament within the church, or as a part of a memorial in the churchyard; there are few now, I suppose,

⁷⁵ Ezek. iii. 7, 8; ix. 4. Rev. vii. 3; ix. 4; xiii. 16; xiv. 1, 9; xxii. 4.

who regard such use of the sacred symbol as superstitious. I was in a bookseller's shop the other day when a 'Baptist' preacher came in to purchase a Prayer Book to present to a friend; the bookseller said to him, 'Of course that will not suit you, sir, as it has a Cross upon it.' 'I like the book very much,' was his reply, 'and as for the Cross, why the Puritans may object to that if they like, I don't.' But I am of opinion that people are going a little in the opposite extreme, and, at least as a personal *ornament*, the Cross is become too common."

"Why *do* you fall into the popular error, my good friend," said the Vicar, reprovngly, "of calling these Anabaptist preachers, *Baptists*? Surely they ought to be called any thing rather than *Baptists*, for they make more light of Baptism than any other people who can properly be said to believe in Baptism at all. Do let us call things by their proper names; – why, to call them *Baptists*, is almost as bad as to call Roman Catholics, *Catholics*, and so to ignore our own claim to be members of the Christian Church, because we allow them a name which would imply that *they* are the *only* Church in the world. I need not tell you that the word ANAbaptist⁷⁶ exactly expresses what they are, namely, they who *baptize a second time* those who have already been baptized in infancy. The term 'Baptist' is far more applicable to Church people than to them."

"I see, I deserve your rebuke: mine is a mistake too often made. By-the-bye, Mr. Vicar, I was very pleased to hear your

⁷⁶ βαπτίζω [baptizô], to baptize, ἀνά [ana], again.

reply to Mr. Dole, when he inquired what was the *fee* to be paid for his baptism. I heard you tell him that the sacraments of the Church were always *free*."

"Yes, certainly I did; and I confess I cannot understand how any one can dare, in these days, to demand a fee for Baptism, the claim is as *illegal* as it is *unchristian*, and I believe goes far to make the poor take a low view of this holy rite. I wish, too, I could make the poor understand that *Baptism* has nothing to do with *Registration*; many of the most ignorant of them really regard them as the same thing. Some of them, too, will persist in thinking that to be *privately baptized*, is to be '*half baptized*.' Of course *they must be altogether baptized, or not baptized at all*; but they do not readily see that the *baptism* is complete, though the *reception into the Church* is not perfected till the service is concluded in the face of the congregation."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PULPIT

"He commanded us to preach unto the people."

Acts x. 42

"The pulpit, therefore (and I name it, fill'd
With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that Holy thing),
I say the pulpit (in sober awe
Of its legitimate peculiar powers)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support and ornament of virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels are, the Gospel whispers peace."

Cowper.

"I suppose we must not expect you to conform to all our usages at first, Mr. Dole," said Mr. Acres, as they walked out of the churchyard one Sunday, after the Afternoon Service; "but no doubt you will soon see the fitness of our several forms and ceremonies, and then you will do as we do. Of course these things are – compared with others – of no great importance; but still it is better, even in small matters, to avoid differences in our mode of worship."

"Yes, that is so, sir; but you must give me time, and I shall be glad if you will tell me what you have specially noticed in my manner different from others? I don't wish to seem particular."

"Well, to be candid then, Mr. Dole, it seems strange to us to see a man when he comes into church *stand up* and say his prayers in his *hat*, instead of reverently *kneeling down*."

"I never thought of that before, but I dare say it does; but then you know, sir, that is our way at the *meeting*. I see, however, that it is much more proper in God's house to obey the precept of His Holy Word, and 'fall low on our knees before His footstool.'"

"Then for the same reason you will, I am sure, see that, instead of *sitting* during the other prayers, as I notice you do, it is proper to *kneel* at those times too. You will find that all in our church, from the oldest to the youngest, except poor Old Reynolds and Tom Barham (who are too infirm to kneel), do so. Then again, when the *Creed* is said, I see you do sometimes stand up, but not

always; and I notice you don't turn to the *East*, as all the rest of the congregation do."

"No, I confess I don't do that. I like the idea of repeating our Confession of Faith whenever we meet at church: I suppose the want of this practice is one reason why the different leading sects of Dissenters are constantly being broken up into fresh divisions. Yes, there is certainly something very supporting to a Christian in so declaring with the Church every where, his belief in the great doctrines of their common Faith; but the fact is, I have some scruples about turning to the East at that time. Even old Mrs. Tubbs, who, you know, is a Church-woman, says she thinks it is superstitious."

"All I can say, then, is, that Mrs. Tubbs doesn't know the meaning of the word she uses; and in this she is like a great many more people who think themselves very wise about these matters. Now, my good friend, when you next come to church, stand up with the rest, and turn to the East as the others do, and first say to yourself some such words as these: – 'We all *stand*, to signify that we are *not ashamed* of our Belief, and that, if need be, we will manfully defend it. We all *turn in one direction*, to signify that we all hold *one and the same faith*. We all turn to the *East*, because there in the east of our churches every thing reminds us of the presence of Him in whom we profess our belief; because there, in remembrance of Him, we celebrate the highest and most sacred mysteries of our Faith; and because the East specially reminds us of the holy life, the Divine teaching,

the miracles, the suffering, the death of our Blessed Lord – "the *Sun of Righteousness*," "the *Day-spring* from on high" —*in the East*⁷⁷.' Do this, Mr. Dole, and you will never again be disposed to regard this custom as superstitious. Why, some people even think it is superstitious to bend the head reverently at the name of Jesus, when it is mentioned in the Creeds and the other parts of the Service."

"I don't think so, though once I did. Since I have considered more about it, it has seemed to me that some outward show of reverence at the mention of the Sacred Name is quite Scriptural⁷⁸. But as I am yet only a learner about these outward forms, will you kindly tell me, sir, whether there is any rule of the Church about this custom?"

"The Vicar will be able to answer that better than I can."

"I could not help overhearing our friend's question," said Mr. Ambrose, "as I was close behind you, and I will answer it at once. The rule of our Church is very plain on this point; it is this: 'All manner of persons present shall reverently kneel upon their knees, when the general Confession, Litany, and other prayers are read; and shall stand up at the saying of the Belief, according to the rules in that behalf prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer; and likewise, when in time of Divine Service the Lord

⁷⁷ "God planted a garden eastward;" man went westward when he left it; he turns eastward to remind him of his return. Almost every church in England is built *east and west*, with the altar at the east.

⁷⁸ Phil. ii. 10.

Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it hath been accustomed: testifying, by these outward ceremonies and gestures, their inward humility, Christian resolution, and due acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour of the world⁷⁹."

"Thank you, Mr. Ambrose, nothing could be plainer, or more reasonable than that direction; but, you see, I have for so many years *sat under* Mr. Scole, who never taught us any thing of this sort, that you will forgive me if I seem a little more ignorant than those who have been all the time *sitting under* you."

"What do you mean by 'sitting under,' my friend?" said the Vicar, very innocently.

"I mean *hearing you preach*," was Mr. Dole's reply. "It's a curious expression, now I come to think about it."

"It certainly is so, and the meaning of it is not very clear. But in our Church we don't talk about *sitting under*, or *hearing* this or that preacher. We simply say we attend this or that church, as the case may be. And the reason is, that – although very important in its proper place – we consider preaching of little moment (and the preacher of far less), when compared with the other objects of Christian worship, —*Prayer* and *Praise*. We look upon God's House as pre-eminently 'a House of Prayer.'"

"Well, I do think we used to make too much of the sermon at the meeting; and I remember all our conversation afterwards

⁷⁹ Canon XVIII. 1603.

was about the sermon or the preacher. One Sunday we had a young gent. from London, Mr. Sweetly, to preach, and our people never ceased to talk about him. I believe, however, none of them recollected a word he said; but they could remember well enough 'his lovely voice,' and 'how nice he looked in his beautiful black silk gown' (you know, sir, our people always preach in black gowns), 'and those charming lavender gloves! and then the sweetest embroidered white lawn pocket-handkerchief imaginable!' It had just been presented to him, he told me, by a young lady – Miss Angelina Gushing – who sat under him at his London meeting-house. I never was a preacher-worshipper myself, sir."

"Save me from the man with the *lavender gloves and the white embroidered pocket-handkerchief*, I say," said Mr. Acres. "If there is one thing in nature I shrink from more than another, it is a *fop*, and a *fop* in the pulpit is beyond endurance."

"A most offensive person, indeed," said the Vicar, "and one that brings great discredit upon the ministry; but it can be no matter of surprise that men sometimes a little over-estimate themselves in some of our fashionable towns, where the people (specially the ladies) flock to *hear* 'dear' Mr. Somebody, and so abundantly supply him with those articles of personal furniture which are usually the reward of a popular preacher. It is not so very long ago that in our own church every thing was made to give way to the sermon. You remember, Mr. Acres, when many of the people in St. Catherine's used to sit and sleep through

the prayers⁸⁰, and just wake up for the sermon. Then the pulpit was every thing, and little else could be seen by the people; the galleries were built so that the people might sit and see the preacher, and the pews were likewise built up only with a view to sitting comfortable during the sermon. It is all different now, I am thankful to say, and the pulpit takes once more its old and appropriate position. But we must take care not to esteem too lightly the office of the preacher, in our contempt for one who preaches merely to *please the people*. To 'preach the Word' is one of the solemn duties laid upon us at our ordination; and woe be to us if we neglect to do so earnestly and faithfully!"

⁸⁰ "Many monuments are covered with seates, or pews, made high and easie for parishioners to sit or sleepe in, a fashion of no long continuance, and worthy of reformation." – Weaver's *Funeral Monuments*. Temp. James I.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PULPIT

"Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs."

Eccles. xii. 9

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray."

Goldsmith's Country Parson.

"Resort to sermons, but to prayers most:

Praying's the end of preaching."

George Herbert.

"It's curious to note," continued the Vicar, "how the Pulpit and the Gallery have kept company in rising higher and higher. At first the pulpit was placed at a moderate height above the congregation, and then the church improvers (?) were usually contented with erecting a small low gallery at the west end of the church⁸¹. It is true, that was bad enough; for in order to construct it, it was nearly always thought necessary to fill in the tower arch and to hide the western window – often the most beautiful features in the church; and then the organ was taken up into this gallery, and the singers followed it; and nothing, you know, could be more inconvenient than that those who help to *lead* the services of the Church should be *behind* those they profess to lead. But when people had once tasted the luxury of sitting in a church gallery, the demand for it rapidly increased, and my Lady Pride, who had very comfortable crimson-cushioned seats in her box at the theatre, could not be content without an equally comfortable and elegant *box* in the gallery at her church, where she could see all the people quite as well as in her box at the theatre, and had such a good view of the pulpit and its occupant, that, with a good opera-glass, she could even read the manuscript from which the clergyman was preaching. As the

⁸¹ It is likely that the idea of a gallery at the west end of the nave, was first suggested by the gallery of the Rood Screen at the eastern end.

taste spread, of course galleries multiplied, and not only extended in a lateral direction over all available parts of the church, but sometimes mounted up one above another (as witness many of our London churches) till they almost touched the very roof. Indeed, to build a new gallery was one of the most popular things a local magnate could do; and even Members of Parliament, who desired to make sure of their next election, could hardly adopt better means for recommending themselves to their constituents than by disfiguring their church with one of these hideous structures, and recording the same on some conspicuous part of the church⁸². But worse still; these galleries were sometimes even still more nearly connected with the political parties of the day. I know one church⁸³— and that is not the only instance — in which are galleries, having complete opera-boxes, furnished with luxurious chairs, stoves, &c., and every box is a two-pound freehold, and the boxes are, from time to time, advertised for sale, with the inviting recommendation that each one *gives a vote for the county*. One great piece of presumptuous vanity connected with these galleries, is the numberless instances in which the names of churchwardens, that otherwise would have been unknown to fame, have been emblazoned upon them."

"You remember, no doubt," said Mr. Acres, "the inscription, in large gilt letters, that covered the front of our old gallery — 'This gallery was erected A.D. 1716, Thomas Grubb and

⁸² At H... church, Kent, for instance.

⁸³ Chertsey, Surrey.

Matthew Stokes, Churchwardens; enlarged, and newly painted and ornamented, A.D. 1760, Peter Jenks and Samuel Styles, Churchwardens.' I believe I have read that inscription thousands of times, and those names used even to haunt me in my dreams. Had those churchwardens been four of the greatest saints in the calendar, it would have been gross impiety to emblazon their names so conspicuously as thus to force them upon one's notice during the whole service. If, however, tradition does not speak falsely of them, those men were by no means too correct either in their private life or in their parish accounts. But let them be never so good, people who go to church for Christian worship, don't wish to have the names and exploits of these worthy or unworthy men staring them in the face every moment they are there. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Vicar, I interrupted you when you were speaking of the pulpit."

"Well, you know, when the gallery had reached the ceiling, it could go no higher; but then its upper tenants could no longer see the preacher. So the pulpit rose too, and, to enable all to see it, sometimes took its place just in front of the altar, so as completely to hide that from most of the congregation; nay, I have seen it even over the altar itself⁸⁴. Then the prayer-desk came climbing up after the pulpit; and then the clerk's desk came creeping up below them, till that, too, became one of the most conspicuous and important objects of the church. Thus the three together grew into that clumsy, unsightly mass which has been

⁸⁴ One of the churches in Edinburgh, for instance.

not inaptly called the *Three Decker!*"

"Ah, I shall never forget poor old Mowforth's perplexity," said Mr. Acres, "when he looked about for his peculiar box in our restored church. First he looked doubtingly at your prayer-desk; then he examined the lectern from which you read the lessons; then he looked with some faint hope at the pulpit; at last he came to me, and said, 'Please, sir, which of these is to be my place?' and his look of dismay was indescribable when I told him that, as you intended that henceforth the choir should lead the responses, he would be absorbed in the congregation, and would in future be able to take his place with the rest of his family. But the man is a sensible fellow, and he confessed to me the other day that he considers the new arrangement a great improvement, and wonders that the people could have so long endured the duet service in which only the voices of the parson and himself could be heard. But we have again wandered a little from our subject. Let us go back to the pulpit; it must have a history of its own, like every other part of the church. Will you kindly enlighten me and our friend here on the subject? for it must be one of much interest to us both."

"Well – to begin at the beginning – I suppose we must look for the origin of our pulpits in the 'brazen scaffold' which Solomon set 'in the midst of the Temple'⁸⁵, and the 'pulpit of wood'⁸⁶ from which Ezra read the Book of the Law.

⁸⁵ 2 Chron. vi. 13.

⁸⁶ Nehem. viii. 4.

"There are in this country many very beautiful examples of ancient pulpits; these are, with but very few exceptions, constructed of *stone*, and very generally of the same date as the church itself. Sometimes they were erected outside the church⁸⁷, but usually in the place where we are still accustomed to see them. Sometimes stone pulpits were quite separate buildings, erected in some much frequented place, usually near a cathedral or other church⁸⁸. 'In the ancient rites of Durham there is mention of a "fine *iron* pulpit, with iron rails to support the monks in going up, of whom one did preach every holiday and Sunday at one o'clock in the afternoon." This was situated in the Galilee, or western division of the church, which was open to the public even when the entrance to the rest of the church was interdicted⁸⁹.' Although the most beautiful pulpits, both ancient and modern, are of stone – many of them being richly carved and inlaid with costly marbles – yet the greater number of the more modern pulpits are made of wood⁹⁰. By an injunction of Queen Elizabeth

⁸⁷ As at Magdalene College, Oxford. "Formerly, when the annual sermon was preached on the feast of the nativity of St. John the Baptist, from the stone pulpit before the chapel of Magdalene College, Oxford, the whole area before it was covered with rushes and grass, to represent, it is said, the wilderness: and doubtless also for the accommodation of the hearers; the seats being set for the University authorities." —*History of Poes.*

⁸⁸ Such an one formerly existed near the cathedral of Exeter.

⁸⁹ Parker's "Glossary of Architecture," part i. p. 171. At the west end of Boxley Church, Kent, is a Galilee. There are very few – if any – other churches in which the ancient *Galilee* is to be found.

⁹⁰ Many of the wooden pulpits have dates upon them. The earliest of these is A.D.

in 1559, pulpits were ordered to be erected in all churches⁹¹, and by a canon of 1663 it was ordered that pulpits should be placed in all the churches of the country not already provided with them. The pulpits then erected were in almost every case made of wood, and their pattern has since then been generally, though by no means universally, followed.

"A curious appendage to the pulpit sometimes found is the horologium, or hour-glass. Whether this was placed there for the information of the congregation as to the progress of the hour, or to teach them its own solemn moral, or as a guide to the preacher respecting the length of his discourse⁹², I cannot say. Another adjunct to the pulpit is the sounding-board, or, as it should rather be called, the *lid* or *cover* of the pulpit; and a

1590, on a pulpit at Ruthin, Denbighshire.

⁹¹ "The Churchwardens, at the common charge of the Parishioners in every parish, shall provide a comely and honest pulpit, to be set in a convenient place within the Churche, and to be there seemly kept, for the preaching of God's worde." —*Injunctions given by the Queen's Majestie*, 1559.

⁹² It seems most probable that the last of these was the real object. In some old discourses the following phrase is met with: — "Let us now take another *glass*," meaning another period of time to be measured by the hour-glass: and the preacher reversed the glass at this point. Ancient hour-glasses remain in the church of St. Alban's, Wood Street, City; and at Cowden, Kent. The iron frames of hour-glasses still remain in the churches of Stoke Dabernoun, Surrey; Odell, Bedfordshire; St. John's, Bristol; Cliff, Kent; and Erdingthorpe, Norfolk, and doubtless others are to be found elsewhere. The Queen has lately presented an hour-glass of the measure of eighteen minutes for the pulpit of the chapel royal in the Savoy, to replace the old one, which was destroyed in the recent fire.

thing more useless, and usually more ugly, one cannot conceive⁹³. It certainly always seems to me rather to impede the sound of my voice than to assist it; and then it has, to say the least, a most uncomfortable appearance; and though I never heard of the accident really happening, yet it always appears to me to be on the point of falling and crushing the poor preacher below it. It is not, however, difficult to trace the origin of these covers to the pulpit; they were really necessary where the pulpits were *separate buildings*— as at St. Paul's Cross — in order to protect the preacher when the weather was inclement. At St. Paul's Cross, and at the Cross Pulpit at Norwich, and probably elsewhere, not only the preacher, but also the audience, were provided with such a shelter⁹⁴."

"Will you kindly tell us," said Mr. Dole, "why you discarded the large handsome velvet cushion that was once on your pulpit, and have, instead, adopted the embroidered piece of velvet which now hangs in front of the pulpit?"

"Well, as a matter of taste, I think you will agree with me that the present beautiful frontal, with its richly-embroidered cross, is an improvement upon the old cushion. But I discarded the old big *pillow*— for such, indeed, it was — not only because it

⁹³ Some few of these sounding-boards are, however, very handsome. At Newcastle there is, or lately was, a sounding-board which was a representation of the spire of the church.

⁹⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 1. p. 364. Preaching-Crosses are also at Hereford, near the Friary of the Dominican (or Preaching) Friars; and in the churchyards of Iron Acton, Gloucestershire, and Rampisham, Dorsetshire.

was unsightly, but also because it was useless, for my head is not so much more tender than that of other persons, that I, any more than they, should require a pillow to rest it on during my private devotions; and as I am not accustomed to perform the part of a mountebank in the pulpit, or, as some say, to use much *action* when preaching, I need no such protection in order to preserve my limbs safe and sound. But, besides this, there is a manifest objection to these huge cushions; undoubtedly they tend to impede the sound of the preacher's voice⁹⁵; so I was very glad to get rid of your handsome cushion, and adopt our more convenient and more beautiful pulpit frontal."

"I often think," said Mr. Acres, "if the old pulpits could speak, what a strange account they would give of the various preachers that have occupied them. Take our own old stone pulpit, for instance. In early times, of course, there were only sermons at long intervals, perhaps often dependent upon the occasional visits of some old preaching friar. At length there came the quaint old Homilies of the Church; then there came an interruption to all true religion and order, and the old pulpit poured forth the mad ravings of the fanatical Puritans who got possession of it. Now and then came a noisy soldier to hold forth, and there was – as our old registers show – the *Reverend* Ebenezer Bradshaw, the Presbyterian, who left his snuff and tobacco shop to enlighten our poor benighted people; next came the *Reverend* Obadiah Brent, late of the 'Green Dragon,' the Independent preacher; and

⁹⁵ See a curious letter on this subject in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 1. p. 527.

then the *Reverend* Jabez Zanchy, the baker of Starchcombe, the Anabaptist preacher⁹⁶; then there was a century of long learned essays freely interspersed with Greek and Latin, so that, if the prayers were said in a language 'understanded of the people,' the sermon certainly was not. Following upon this came what we may call the *muscular* style of preaching – usually extempore – requiring the pillows of which you have been speaking to save the knuckles of the preacher from entire demolition. Thank God, amid these many changes, there have always been some good men to be found in our pulpits; but, for my part, I like the quiet, sober, persuasive style, which – saving your presence, Mr. Vicar – I am thankful to say, characterizes the sermons at St. Catherine's. I think sermons cannot be too *practical*; and, whilst they should be addressed both to the heart and the intellect, they should most of all be designed to touch the *heart*."

⁹⁶ See Walker's "Sufferings of the Clergy," p. 310.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NAVE

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons."

S. James ii. 1

"At length a generation more refined
Improved the simple plan...
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuff'd,
Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought,
And woven close, or needlework sublime."

Cowper.

"Ah, Mr. Beeland, I'm so glad to see you!" said the Vicar, as, on leaving the church, he met his neighbour the newly-appointed Vicar of Droneworth. "I have been much grieved to hear of the sad opposition you have had to encounter in restoring your fine old church; but this was sure to be the case in a parish like

yours, which has been so long neglected; indeed it must be so, more or less, in every parish, so long as there are people who honour themselves much more than they honour God; and such, I suppose, there will be till the end of the world. You may be sure, my friend, the woe of universal commendation⁹⁷ never yet fell upon any *church restorer*."

"Never, certainly. But what makes our position often so difficult and so painful is the fact that, whilst we are fully sensible of the rectitude of our own course, we cannot help, to some extent, sympathizing in the feelings of those who blame us. For instance, in almost every case of church restoration it is necessary to disturb a large number of human bones, and yet we can but sympathize in that feeling of respect for the departed, which sometimes expresses itself in the most strenuous opposition to any work involving this painful necessity. Then, you see, there is the rooting up of long-cherished associations. We have a case in point close at hand. There's the grand old church of Rainsborough will be left in its miserable condition so long as the present Vicar lives, and for no other reason than this: – ten years since he lost a favourite daughter, and she had always been accustomed to sit in one particular corner of their large pew." Now the Vicar fears (and no doubt justly) that should the church be altered, the old pew with its fond associations would be swept away – and so the church will never be improved as long as he

⁹⁷ S. Luke vi. 26.

lives⁹⁸. We must respect the old man's tender love for the spot sacred to the memory of his dear child, yet we plainly see it is all wrong that for the sake of the private feelings (however praiseworthy) of any one person, God's house should remain in a state of neglect, and the poor should be uncared for therein. This, however, is an oft-told tale. But most of all, we have to contend against *wounded pride* in its most cherished strong-hold – alas! – the Church of God; and the enemy is all the more fierce because it is prostrate.

"My two great opponents, Sir John Adamley and Mr. Parvener, are to meet me this evening, and I am come to ask you and Mr. Acres to walk back with me to Droneworth, so that I may have the benefit of your support. You see these two gentlemen had pews in the nave of our church, lined, cushioned, and carpeted in dazzling crimson; each pew was as large as a good-sized room, and the two occupied nearly half the nave. Mr. Parvener was generally at church once on a Sunday, and then he sat not only in luxurious ease, but also in solitary dignity. Sir John never came to church, as there was some old feud respecting the right owner of his pew; but the door was always locked, and a canvas cover was stretched over the top. These precautions, however, failed to keep out an occasional intruder, and at last

⁹⁸ The Vicar of the church here referred to has lately deceased, and his successor has commenced the much needed improvements. The Vicar's good daughter, who was quite a *sister of mercy* in the parish, is not likely to be forgotten, though the old pew has gone. A beautiful window of stained glass has been erected to her memory by the parishioners.

the door was securely *nailed up*⁹⁹. The worst of it was, that all this time there was not a seat in the church which a poor man could occupy with any chance of either seeing or hearing the ministering Priest. Now people talk about *proper* distinctions in church between the high and the low, and we sometimes hear much about old ancestral pews. Believe me, it's all nonsense, my dear sir; the distinction is *solely between riches and poverty*. If a man has plenty of money, he may (or rather, till lately he might) secure the biggest pew in England; and if he has not money, though he be entitled to quarter the royal arms on his escutcheon, he will get no pew at all. Mr. Parvener is an exact instance of this. But a few years since he was working for half-a-crown a day. No sooner did he become wealthy than he obtained a large pew at our church, whilst its former owner, whose fall had been as complete and rapid as was the rise of his successor, was driven to a remote corner of the church allotted to degraded poverty."

The walk to Droneworth was soon accomplished, but the Rector with his two friends only reached the Parsonage a few moments before the arrival of the two aggrieved parishioners. It was evident from the first greeting that they had come in no friendly spirit. But few words passed before Sir John came direct to the object of the interview.

"The purpose of our visit," said Sir John, "you are aware, is to

⁹⁹ This phase of the pew system is not over coloured. A few years since, a pew in the nave of Old Swinford Church was so nailed up; but other instances of this might be mentioned.

protest against the removal of our pews at church, and to declare our determination to have them replaced if it is possible."

"But, gentlemen, you are aware that we have provided good accommodation for you in the restored church," replied the Vicar.

"Good accommodation, sir!" exclaimed Sir John. "Why, you have given us nothing but low wooden benches to sit upon; and, to add to the insult, sir, there is not the semblance of a *door*; so that our devotions may at any time be interrupted by the presence of an inferior. Why, sir, the very labourers, who earn their half-crown a day, have seats in the church just as good as ours!"

The last sentence made poor Mr. Parvener writhe a little; and that indeed was its real intention, for the two neighbours had, in truth, little love for each other. The words, however, accomplished another and a better purpose; they broke up at once any thing like united action on the part of the opposition.

"Let me ask you, gentlemen, a very simple question," said the Vicar. "*Why should not* the labourer have as good a place in God's house as yourselves?"

"You might as well ask," said the Baronet, "why they should not have as good houses as we have."

"The cases are in no way similar. You live in better houses than the poor, simply because your worldly means enable you to do so; but I have yet to be taught that in the Church wealth is to be exalted and poverty degraded. No, Sir John, be sure this distinction is out of place *there*. We go to church to *worship* and

to learn, and if favour is shown to any class, no doubt it should be to the ignorant and the poor; but this is a matter on which we are not left to our own judgment. There are not many instructions in our Bibles as to the manner of arranging our churches, but here the direction is plain and unmistakable."

"Indeed, sir! I had no idea that any thing about church seats was to be found in the Bible."

"Oh, but indeed there is. The passage to which I refer is in St. James' Epistle; and it is this: *'My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts¹⁰⁰?'"*

"If those words are in the Bible, I must confess the Bible is against me; but I had no idea that they were there."

"I assure you they are the exact words of Holy Scripture."

"It's clear enough to me," interposed Mr. Parvener, "that the labourer ought to have as good a place at church as the lord. I don't think the church is the place to show off aristocratic pride. Why, for that matter, there's many a man that doesn't know who was his grandfather doing more for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures than your grandest aristocrats." This was

¹⁰⁰ James ii. 1-4.

intended as a counter-thrust, and it created a wider breach in the enemy's camp. "But," continued he, "I don't see why, if all have good places in the church, we should not make our own seats as comfortable as we can."

"Ah, but there comes in just what St. James tells us we ought to keep out: the distinction between *riches and poverty*, distinctions which among our fellow-men have their advantages, but not before God in His house. Just hear what St. James says again: 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? But ye have despised the poor¹⁰¹.' I was much struck with a sermon I heard the other day on this subject. The preacher said, 'If our Lord Jesus Christ were to enter some of our churches just as He went to the temple at Jerusalem, do you think He would take His seat in the luxuriously furnished pew of the rich, or in the open bench of the poor¹⁰²?' Now, let me ask you too, Mr. Parvener (for this is, after all, the sum and substance of the matter), do you think that He 'who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor¹⁰³,' and whose life was a perfect pattern of *humility*, would sanction the distinctions which either pride of station, or pride of riches, would create in the House of Prayer?"

¹⁰¹ James ii. 5, 6.

¹⁰² Sermon by the Rev. E. Stuart, preached at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Munster Square, London.

¹⁰³ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

"Well, sir, I must say that's a solemn question, and it sets one a-thinking more than I have thought before about this."

"But, Mr. Beeland," said Sir John, interrupting, for he saw the ground of his arguments was slipping from under him, "you will acknowledge that these open benches in church are a *novelty*, and you often talk to us about keeping to the *old paths*. Now, here you are teaching us to strike out a new way altogether. I wish I knew something more than I do about the history of these pews."

"I anticipated some such remark from you, and knowing that my friend Mr. Ambrose is more learned than I am in all these subjects, I induced him to join us this evening, and if he will kindly give us the benefit of his information, he will, I am sure, convince you that *pews, and not benches, are the modern innovation.*"

"If you can have patience to listen to me," said the Vicar of St. Catherine's, "I will gladly give you the history of pews, as far I know it."

CHAPTER XIX

THE NAVE

**>"Take these things hence; make not My
Father's house a house of merchandise."**

John ii. 16

"Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,
But large and massy; for duration built;
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld
By naked rafters intricately cross'd,
Like leafless underboughs, 'mid some thick grove,
All wither'd by the depth of shade above,
... The floor
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged
In seemly rows."

Wordsworth.

"In order to trace the history of pews¹⁰⁴ to their first source, I must, as Mr. Beeland has hinted, go back to a time when pews, as we now see them, had never been thought of. It is pretty certain that the first seats in churches were stone benches placed round the north, south, and west walls, portions of which are still remaining in many old churches¹⁰⁵. In some ancient churches in Ireland the stone bench has also been found adjoining the *eastern* wall, the altar being placed a little distance before it. In those early times people were far less self-indulgent than at present in God's House, and the usual custom was to stand or kneel during the whole service. The first wooden seats were small stools, each intended to seat one person, and placed in the nave as suited the convenience of each occupier. Then came plain benches, and next, benches with backs to them. The priest's *reading-pew* was probably the origin of all pews. They seem to have been unknown in any form till the end of the thirteenth century, but the earliest record we have of a pew is 1602¹⁰⁶. Next to the 'reading-pew' came the 'bride's pew'¹⁰⁷, the 'churching-pew,'

¹⁰⁴ Much information on this subject can be obtained from "The History of Pews: a Paper read before the Cambridge Camden Society, November 22, 1841."

¹⁰⁵ Stone seats were often placed round the bases of the columns of the nave; examples are at St. Margaret-at-Cliffe, and Challock, in Kent.

¹⁰⁶ *British Critic*; see *History of Pews*.

¹⁰⁷ "'1612, 27 May. – Ye Ch. Wardens meeting together for seeeking for workmen to mak a fitt seete in a convennentplace for brydgrumes, bryds, andsike wyves to sit in ijs. – *Extract from Parochial Books of Chester-le-Street, Durham.*" It is plain that at this period the privilege of a separate pew was confined to persons of the first rank; the rest sat promiscuously on forms in the body of the church, and the privilege is

and the 'churchwarden's pew.' In the nave of Little Berningham Church, Norfolk, is a pew erected by a shepherd; a skeleton carved in wood is fixed at the south-west corner of it, and these lines are carved on the pew: —

'For couples join'd in wedlock; and my friend
That stranger is: this seat I did intend,
But at the coste and charge of Stephen Crosbee.
All you that do this place pass by,
As you are now, even so was I —
Remember death, for you must dye,
And as I am, soe shall you be.

'Anno Domini, 1640¹⁰⁸.'

The general adoption of pews began with Puritanism, and with its increase they too grew in width and stature. First of all, people were satisfied with the uniform arrangement and space of the old oak benches, only erecting on the top of them an ugly and useless panelling of deal. This was bad enough, but worse soon followed; and, to make the seats more luxurious, first one bench was taken away, and the *two benches* made *one pew*; then two were removed, then three, till at last it required the removal of *six benches*, which formerly would accommodate thirty persons, to make *one pew* to accommodate two or three. Now, either men

here extended only to sick wives and brides, who sat to hear the preacher deliver 'The Bride's Bush,' or 'The Wedding Garment beautified.'" – Surtees' *Hist. of Durham*.

¹⁰⁸ Blomfield's *Norfolk*, vi. 317.

are giants in these days and were pigmies in those days, or else the pride and luxury of man claim a prominence now in God's House, which was quite unknown then. I will ask either of you, gentlemen, to decide which is the true explanation."

"I fear it must be against ourselves," said Mr. Parvener.

"I fear so, indeed¹⁰⁹. But now let me explain to you more fully what are the real evils of this wretched pew system. And first, as to the *private pew*— for, besides sharing in the evils of *all* the rest, *it* has some peculiarly its own. Of these, the *pride* it fosters, and the '*respect of persons*,' so severely condemned by St. James, are the worst. My dear sir, I assure you it has often made my blood boil to see some poor old man with his venerable bare head exposed to the cold draught of a neglected part of the church, whilst a young, pampered son of fortune has been cushioned up under the stately canopy of his own pew¹¹⁰. Oh, sir, I'm sure you must agree with me that this is altogether against the spirit of Christianity! I'm no leveller *out of church*; the social distinctions

¹⁰⁹ "Several congregations find themselves already very much straitened; and if the mode increases, I wish it may not drive many ordinary women into meetings and conventicles. Should our sex at the same time take it into their heads to wear trunk breeches, a man and his wife would fill a whole pew." —*Satire on Female Costume. Spectator*, No. 127. "At church in silks and satins new, And hoop of monstrous size; She never slumber'd in her pew But when she shut her eyes." —Goldsmith.

¹¹⁰ "He found him mounted in his pew, With books and money placed for shew." *The Lawyer's Pew, Butler's Hudibras*. "A bedstead of the antique mode, Compact of timber many a load, Such as our ancestors did use, Was metamorphosed into pews; Which still their ancient nature keep By lodging folks disposed to sleep." *Swift's Baucis and Philemon*.

must be there kept up; but *in God's House* these should have no place at all. Then, surely, the *luxury* of many of these private pews is altogether inconsistent with the object of our meeting in the House of Prayer. It is – as it shows the progress of luxury, and its concomitant, effeminacy – a curious circumstance, that when the custom of having pews in our churches began to spread, they were, by our hardy ancestors, considered as *too great indulgences*, and as temptations to repose. Their curtains and bed-furniture, their *cushions* and *sleep*, have, by a long association of ideas, become intimately connected. The Puritans thought *pews* the devil's *baby*, or *booby hutches*¹¹¹. I have heard that in America they go even beyond us in the luxury of pews, and that in Boston some of them are actually lined with *velvet*¹¹². I believe that both there and here the private pew system has done very much, not only to force the poor from the Church, but to drive many of all classes over to dissent."

"I can't see how that can be," said the Baronet.

Why, "naturally enough, sir, for they find all this the very opposite to what the Church professes to be and to teach. They see the rich exalted, and the poor debased; they find a house of pride, instead of a house of prayer.

"The *exclusiveness* of this system is one of the most curious as well as absurd features in its history. True, the change in our social habits has created a change for the better here; but much of

¹¹¹ *European Magazine*, 1813.

¹¹² *History of Pews*, p. 77.

the old temper survives. You would hardly believe, perhaps, that years ago it was not only considered an impropriety for the squire and the dame to sit in the same pew with any of their inferior fellow-worshippers, but the presence of their own children¹¹³ was even considered an indecent intrusion. This was, indeed, ridiculous; but, in truth, the whole system would be monstrously grotesque, were it not so very wicked.

"There is a curious inscription on an old seat in a church at Whalley, which seems to throw some light on the early history of private pews; it is this: – 'My man Shuttleworth, of Hacking, made this form, and here will I sit when I come, and my Cousin Nowell may make one behind me if he please, and my sonne Sherburne shall make one on the other side, and Mr. Catterall another behind him; and for the residue, the use shall be first come first speed, and that will make the proud wives of Whalley rise betimes to come to church¹¹⁴.'

"The first seat thus appropriated was, no doubt, a rude wooden bench; but certain it is, that no sooner were even these claimed as private property than *quarrelling* began¹¹⁵; and the quarrel has,

¹¹³ "1617. Barnham *contra* Hayward Puellam. – Presentatur – for that she being but a young maid sat in ye pew with her mother, to ye great offence of many reverent women: howbeit that after I Peter Lewis the Vicar had in the church privately admonished her to sit at her mother's pew-door, she obeyed; but now she sits with her mother again." —*God's Acre*, by Mrs. Stone.

¹¹⁴ Whittaker's *Whalley*, p. 228.

¹¹⁵ "We have also heard that the parishioners of divers places do oftentimes wrangle about their seats in church, two or more claiming the same seat, whence arises great

alas! been kept up to our own day. The right to these *faculty pews*, as they are called, is, however, in most cases very questionable, and often leads to costly law processes¹¹⁶. Many sensible men and earnest Churchmen are giving up their supposed right to them, and are contented to take their place in church like *ordinary mortals*. I sincerely trust, gentlemen, this may be your case.

"Now, let me notice a few of the evils which are common to *all pews*. They tend to destroy the *unity* and *uniformity* of common worship, which forms so grand a feature in our church system. 'They are very inconvenient to *kneel* down in, necessarily oblige some to sit with their backs to the speaker, and when they rise up, present a scene of confusion, as if they were running their heads against one another¹¹⁷. As God's House is a House of Praise and Prayer, so before all things the arrangement there should have

scandal to the Church, and the divine officers are sore set and hindered; wherefore we decree that none shall henceforth call any seat in the church his own, save noblemen and patrons: but he who shall first enter shall take his place where he will." – Quivil, Bishop of Exeter, A.D. 1287.

¹¹⁶ In the vestry of the church of East Moulsey is suspended a map of considerable size, showing the land that has been left to the parish for the sustentation of the church. The land ought to produce 120*l.* but some years since the parishioners engaged in a law-suit respecting a pew in the church, and lost the suit, and the income from the charity land was year by year absorbed in the payment of the debt then incurred. One evidence brought forward to prove the faculty was the following inscription, which is still (or was till lately) *over the altar*, painted at the foot of a *daub*, having the Ten Commandments surrounded by drapery, &c.:—"In lieu of the Commandments formerly written on the wall (when by consent of the parish he made his pew) these tables were placed here by – Mr. Benson, MDCCXII."

¹¹⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, A.D. 1780, p. 364.

reference to the proper *posture*¹¹⁸ of praise and prayer. Then see how these pews shelter and encourage *levity* in God's House. As long ago as the year 1662, a bishop of Norwich wrote this satire upon pews: 'There wants nothing but beds to hear the Word of God on. We have casements, locks and keys, and cushions – I had almost said bolsters and pillows – and for those we love the church. I will not guess what is done within them: who sits, stands, or lies asleep at prayers, communion, &c.; but this, I dare say, *they are either to hide some vice or to proclaim one*¹¹⁹.' I will only mention one more objection to pews: they harbour dust and dirt¹²⁰, and otherwise disfigure the beauty of our churches."

"Well, Mr. Ambrose, I must confess myself brought to the same opinion as yourself," said Sir John, "and the reformation of the evil may commence at Droneworth to-morrow without any obstacle whatever from me."

"Nor yet from me," rejoined Mr. Parvener: "I certainly never heard the case fairly stated before, and now I have, I own I'm convinced."

"Heartily glad, I'm sure, my friend here must be to part with the old *half empty packing-cases*, and to see proper benches in their place. And as you have been kind enough to listen to me

¹¹⁸ We are so used to speak of the *seats* in church, that we commonly forget the more proper appellation of *kneeling*. This, however, was not always so. An old metal plate formerly on a pew in a church in the diocese of Oxford, has this inscription: — "No 83. Vicar and Churchwardens, two kneelings. Trustees of Poor House three kneelings."

¹¹⁹ See *History of Puses*, p. 37.

¹²⁰ St. Margaret's Accounts. Dublin Review, xiii

so far, I will just say a few more words to explain the two desks which the Vicar has placed in the nave of your church, and of which I heard you had disapproved. One is the *Litany-desk*, or *faldstool*¹²¹, – as it is called in the Coronation Service. The Litany is a very solemn, penitential service, and from very early times it has been said from the appropriate place where the Vicar has placed the Litany-desk in your church – namely, just at the entrance to the chancel. Its position there has reference to that Litany of God's own appointing, of which we read in the Book of Joel¹²², where, in a general assembly, the priests were to weep *between the porch and the altar*, and to say, '*Spare Thy people, O Lord.*' In allusion to this, our Litany – retaining also the same words of supplication – is enjoined, by the royal injunctions¹²³, still in force, 'to be said or sung in the midst of the church, at a low desk before the chancel-door¹²⁴.' The other desk is called the *lectern*, or *lettern*, and sometimes the *eagle-desk*; and, as you are aware, is the desk from which the lessons are read. They were first made of wood, and often richly carved; afterwards they were commonly made of brass or copper. They were first used about the end of the thirteenth century, and although most of our country churches have been despoiled of them, yet they have

¹²¹ So called, as some suppose, because it could be *folded* and removed when necessary.

¹²² Joel ii. 17.

¹²³ Injunctions of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth.

¹²⁴ See *Wheatly on the Common Prayer*, p. 161.

never ceased to be used in our cathedrals, as well as many other churches¹²⁵. The desk is often supported by a pelican feeding its young with its own blood, the emblem of our Saviour's love; more frequently it is supported by an eagle, the symbolic representation of the Evangelist St. John. It is true that both the faldstool and the lectern have long been unknown at Droneworth, yet I feel sure you will not, on second thoughts, consider the restoration of such convenient and appropriate furniture as objectionable."

The two late dissentients agreed that as they had overcome the greater difficulty, they should withdraw all opposition in the matter; and, it being now late, the party broke up, each one feeling glad that a good thing had been done on a good day.

¹²⁵ "The earliest examples remaining are of wood, many of them beautifully carved, as at Bury and Ramsay, Huntingdonshire; Swancombe, Debtling, and Lenham, Kent; Newport, Essex; Hawstead, Suffolk." – Parker's *Glossary*. There are beautiful examples of brass lecterns at Magdalene and Merton Colleges, Oxford, in most of our cathedrals, and many parish churches.

CHAPTER XX

THE AISLES

"Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God."

Ps. cxxxv. 1, 2

"Three solemn parts together twine
In harmony's mysterious line
Three solemn aisles approach the shrine,
Yet all are one."

Keble.

Mr. Beeland accompanied his two friends some distance on their way home.

"I remember noticing," said Mr. Acres, "that the pews of your two parishioners very much blocked up the *centre aisle* of the church; their removal will much widen the aisle, which will be a great improvement."

"Forgive me for correcting you," said Mr. Ambrose, "there can be no such thing as a *centre aisle*. You are speaking of the centre *alley* or *passage*. The word *aisle*¹²⁶ can only refer to the wing of a building, and it always denotes that portion of a church which runs laterally north or south of the nave or chancel. I see, Mr. Beeland, you have some work to do in that aisle of yours before your church will be in good order."

"Yes, that is my greatest remaining difficulty. I have observed that those of the congregation who occupy that aisle are far less attentive and devotional than the rest; and the reasons are obvious. They are cut off from the main portion of the church, not only by the high backs of the existing pews, and by the hat and cloak rails which run from pillar to pillar, but also by needless masses of modern masonry. Moreover, they can see nothing of that part of the church which is sacred to the most solemn offices of our worship. Then, again, what the people *do see* is enough to divert all devotional thought and feeling from any but the *most* seriously and religiously disposed."

"You mean the hideous heathen monument which occupies the east end of the aisle. If I remember rightly, it is a sort of monstrous Roman altar, with four huge bull's heads at each corner."

"Yes; it is in the centre of a mortuary chapel, once belonging

¹²⁶ Derived from the French *aile*, a wing. It is no uncommon thing to hear persons who ought to know better talk about *side* aisles, as if there were any other than side aisles.

to a family named Bullock, and their frightful crest, in gigantic proportions, is the one object on which the eyes of at least a third of our congregation must rest, if they open their eyes at all. I can hardly conceive any thing more calculated to deaden the fervour of Christian worship than an object like this placed before the gaze of the worshipper. Much as I object to the bare walls of Dissenting meeting-houses, and the many-altared aisles of Roman Catholic churches, I believe neither are so distracting to the minds of the congregation generally as are the mortuary chapels, with their uncouth *adornments*, which occupy so large a space in the aisles of many of our own churches. Unfortunately, this chapel now belongs to a young man who has recently seceded to the Church of Rome, and he will neither allow me to appropriate for the use of the parishioners any of the space we so much need, nor will he consent to have the unsightly monument removed to a less conspicuous place."

"The bitter hostility to wards the Church of their baptism, and the utter absence of Christian sympathy in good works of this nature, which characterize so many of those who have fallen away from our Communion, is indeed most deplorable. But even if your unreasonable and narrow-hearted parishioner will oppose all improvement in that part of the aisle which – stolen from God and His people – he claims as his own private property, there is much you can do, when you set about your work of restoration, to make that part of the church less isolated than at present. At least, you can remove much of the useless wood and masonry

which now separate the aisle from the nave."

"I propose also to re-open the ancient hagioscope in the south wall of the chancel, by which means the people in the aisle will once more gain a view of the altar, and be enabled to see and hear the priest when officiating there."

"Will you kindly tell me, Mr. Beeland," said Mr. Acres, "what are *hagioscopes*¹²⁷? I never remember having heard the word before."

"You probably have heard them called by their more common name of *squints*. They are openings in the north or south walls of the chancel, or perhaps more commonly in the walls supporting the chancel arch, and are intended to give a view of the altar to those who are worshipping in the aisles. They are to be found in most old churches, but they have commonly, as in our case, been bricked up. It is manifestly very desirable that in all cases they should be restored, not only on account of their architectural beauty, but also for their practical utility in the services of the Church."

The party then separated, and the Vicar of Droneworth took back to his parish a lighter heart than he had known for many a day.

¹²⁷ Derived from the Greek, ἅγιος [hagios], holy, and σκοπέω [skopeô], to view. There are very good specimens at St. Clement's, Sandwich, and at St. Mary's, Gloucester. The latter has three compartments.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRANSEPTS

"Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."

Ps. xcvi. 6

"Pace we the ground! our footsteps tread
A cross – the builder's holiest form —
That awful couch where once was shed
The blood with man's forgiveness warm,
And here, just where His mighty breast
Throbb'd the last agony away,
They bade the voice of worship rest,
And white-robed Levites pause and pray."

Hawker.

"Much of the objection which you have expressed to the prevailing arrangement of the aisles," said Mr. Acres, continuing the conversation with his Vicar, "seems to me to apply also to that of the transepts – I believe that is the proper name for those portions of a church which extend in a *transverse* direction north

and south?"

"Yes," replied the Vicar; "and the remedies for the evil are in both cases nearly the same. Great inconvenience often arises from the exclusive character of the *parclose*. I would have the solid part of this made lower, and the upper part more light and open."

"Pardon me, my friend, but I am ignorant as to what you mean by the word *parclose*."

"I refer now to the screen which encloses the chancel on the north and south sides; but I believe the word may apply to any screen in the church. By means of these screens, however, the persons in the transepts are needlessly excluded from a view of the altar."

"Yes; but the change in them which you suggest would not fully meet the difficulty, even if a squint or hagnoscope should also be provided."

"I see that," said the Vicar; "and for that reason I would, as a rule, only have those portions of the transepts nearest the chancel fitted with permanent seats. On special occasions chairs could be placed in the back parts; or, perhaps, the whole of the transepts might be given up to the children of the parochial schools, the elder children, who could best understand the nature of the services, being placed in the front."

"A very proper arrangement, indeed, I should think, for all of them would be able at least to *hear*, and they would be conveniently placed for assisting in the musical parts of the

service. It has often struck me as the refinement of cruelty to place these children in the remote damp corners of country churches, where too often they are to be found; or, worse still, in the topmost galleries of city churches, where the air they breathe is heated and impure. In both cases there is a manifest unconcern as well for the temporal as for the spiritual welfare of these little ones of Christ's flock."

"To whatever use, however, they may be applied, or even if they are entirely unappropriated, so far as regards affording accommodation for the congregation, I would, by all means, wherever practicable, retain the transeptal arrangement of our churches, not only as being the most ornamental form of structure, but as preserving in the entire building the distinct form of the *Cross*; and as symbolizing in the gathering together of each congregation of Christ's Church – which is *His Body*, that Body itself. Thus the nave represents the body, the transepts the outstretched arms, and the chancel – being the most excellent part of the church – the head¹²⁸ of our Lord. Some perhaps might think it fanciful, but to me there is something very solemn and beautiful in the idea, not only of the church's whole fabric assuming these symbolic forms, but also of the united prayers and praises of the congregation making, as it were, in their very sound *the sign of the Cross*."

¹²⁸ In some few churches – as at Rottingdean, Sussex – the chancel, by the deviation of its north or south wall from the line of the nave, represent the inclined head of our Lord upon the cross.

"I think so too. And to my mind it has always seemed that the grand symbolism which looks through, as it were, the *whole* fabric of the church, and the *whole* congregation therein assembled, was formerly much marred in our churches, when there were *many* altars, dedicated to *many* saints, instead of the *one* altar, which we now only retain, dedicated to the *one Head* of the Christian Church."

"Yes; and your remark, of course, applies specially to the *transepts* about which we were speaking, since even in our country churches every transept had its separate altar, the *piscina* attached to which is still to be found in almost every old church."

"I suppose," said Mr. Acres, "that beautiful Gothic niche in our south transept which you recently restored is a *piscina*?"

"Yes, it is. The *piscina* was always placed on the south side of the altar, and it was used chiefly as the receptacle for the water used in cleansing the sacred vessels, or for that used by the priest in washing his hands¹²⁹. It is to be found in our earliest Norman churches, and evidently dates from the time of their erection. There is often a *shelf* placed over the basin of the *piscina*, which was used as a *credence*¹³⁰."

"We heard much about the credence-table some time since," interrupted the Squire, "when there was a suit in law about this

¹²⁹ The German word for *piscina* is Wasserhalter, *water-holder*.

¹³⁰ Derived from the Italian *credenzare*, to test by tasting beforehand; which refers to an ancient custom for the governor of a feast to taste the wines before presenting them to his guests. The application of the word to this piece of Church furniture is supposed to have its origin in an attempt once made to mix poison with the eucharistic elements.

and some other matters; but I confess I am still ignorant as to the purpose of the credence-table."

"It is usually a small table, or, when forming part of the piscina, a shelf, on which the elements intended for use at the Eucharist are placed before their consecration. Just before the prayer for the *church militant* in the Communion Service there is this direction: 'The priest shall *then* place upon the table (i.e. the altar) so much bread and wine as he shall think sufficient.' Now, you see, it would be very inconvenient, and a sad interruption of that part of the service, to bring these from a distant part of the church. The ancient custom, therefore, of placing the elements on the credence-table at the commencement of the service is most convenient for the proper observance of this rubric. And so, although the credence has only been preserved as an interesting relic, or ornament in other parts of the church, in the chancel it has been preserved or restored¹³¹, as being still a most useful and important part of the furniture of the church."

Having now arrived at the vicarage-gate, the two friends bade each other good-night.

¹³¹ The rubric at the commencement of the Prayer Book concerning "the Ornaments of the Church, and of the ministers thereof," still directs a credence-table to be placed in every church.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHANCEL SCREEN

**"The vail shall divide unto you between
the holy place and the most holy."**

Exod. xxvi. 33

"I love the Church, – the holy Church,
The Saviour's spotless bride:
And, oh, I love her palaces
Through all the land so wide!
The cross-topp'd spire amid the trees,
The holy bell of prayer;
The music of our mother's voice,
Our mother's home is there.

"I love the Church, – the holy Church,
That o'er our life presides;
The birth, the bridal, and the grave,
And many an hour besides!
Be mine, through life, to live in her,

And when the Lord shall call,
To die in her – the spouse of Christ,
The mother of us all."

Christian Ballads.

Perhaps, gentle reader (all readers are supposed to be "gentle," – they *ought* to be), if you live in a retired village, you will find that in the course of many years, your village annals present little or nothing worthy of record, as matter of general interest or importance; you will, therefore, understand how that the past six years at the little village of St. Catherine's have been so uneventful as to be noticed only by a blank in our narrative. But now, on this twenty-sixth day of June, in the year 1866, an event of no common interest in a country parish is about to take place.

Since their first meeting, four years ago, at the vicarage of Droneworth, a close intimacy had grown up between the families of Mr. Acres and his neighbour Sir John Adamley; the upright integrity and manly candour which marked both their characters soon begat a deep mutual respect, which, in course of time, ripened into a warm friendship, now about to be sealed in the marriage of the Baronet's eldest son Egbert with Mr. Acres' eldest daughter Constance.

The place is all astir betimes. Early in the morning a merry peal is sounding from the old church tower, and many hands are busy in decorating with flowers and evergreens arches placed at intervals between the church and the Hall. It is by no order of the Squire or his steward that these arches – erected at no slight

cost of money and labour – are put up; they are the spontaneous expression of the interest which the villagers themselves take in the day's rejoicing. There are William Hardy, Robert Atkinson, Mr. Dole, even old Matthew and his grandson, and indeed half the village, as busy as bees in and out of the church, vying with each other in their endeavour to make every thing look bright and joyful. Every one has put on something gay and cheerful, purchased specially for the occasion; there is the light of honest gladness on every face; and now that the children with their baskets of fresh flowers stand ranged on either side of the pathway that leads from the main road to the lich-gate, the scene is one of the most picturesque that can be imagined...

"Does Mr. Ambrose particularly wish that the first part of the service should take place near the *chancel screen*?" inquires Sir John.

"Yes," answers the Squire; "it is always the custom here, and I think you will afterwards acknowledge that this arrangement is very fitting and appropriate; and, indeed, adds not a little to the impressiveness of the ceremony."

"I can quite imagine that; but what authority has the Vicar for the practice?"

"Oh, that is very plain. If you just look at your Prayer Book, you will see this rubric at the commencement of the Marriage Service: 'At the time appointed for the solemnization of matrimony, the persons to be married shall come into the *body of the church* with their friends and neighbours, and *there*

standing, the priest shall say' – then follows the address to the congregation assembled, and the rest of the service, till the priest pronounces the first blessing; and after that, the priests and clerks, 'going to the Lord's Table,' are directed to say or sing one of the Psalms, and it is evidently intended that the newly-married persons should accompany them, for when the Psalm is ended they are mentioned as 'kneeling before the Lord's Table.' This procession to the altar of course loses much of its meaning and impressiveness when there is no celebration of Holy Communion. But, then, this ought not to be omitted, except in very extreme cases."

"I quite see now that Mr. Ambrose is following the rule of the Church. I certainly never read the directions in the Service before. I suppose, however, there is no particular part of the body of the church named?"

"No; I believe it is only ancient custom which decides upon the chancel screen; it is, too, the most convenient part of the church for this purpose." ...

Why is it that all those young eyes are so bright with love, as from each ready hand falls the gay flowers at the feet of the happy pair? Why is each knee bent during *every* prayer in that solemn service? And, now, when the hands of Mr. Ambrose rest on the heads of Constance and her husband, as he pronounces over them the last blessing of the Church, why does the deep *Amen* sound from *every* lip? Why is there that breathless silence as those happy ones kneel before the altar to bind themselves yet

more closely together, and to God, in Holy Communion? And now, as they come forth from God's House, how is it that there is no faltering voice in all that assembly as the glad shout of Christian joy rings up through the air to heaven? I'll tell you. It is because the priest and the Squire have ever recognized their joint duties in that parish; because Constance has been a sister of charity and mercy among the poor; because they have striven with all their might to do the work God gave them to do; and now they have their reward in the hearty affection and respect of all their neighbours.

There were but two exceptions to this general manifestation of good feeling among the villagers, and they were the last evil growth of the old Anabaptist schism in the parish. At the same time that Egbert and Constance were breathing their mutual vows beneath the old chancel screen of St Catherine's, William Strike and Sally Sowerby were being "married" by Mr. Gallio at the new register-office at Townend...

"There is something very touching," said the Squire to Mr. Ambrose, as they walked back together to the Hall, "in that old custom preserved in our village of hanging a white glove on the chancel screen¹³². That was the very glove my dear Mary wore when she promised to be the wife of Edward Markland, and poor Edward himself placed it there. I saw Constance's eyes fill with

¹³² In Flamborough Church, Yorkshire, a few years since, a white glove was hanging over the centre arch of the very beautiful chancel screen, – perhaps is hanging there still. Sometimes a bridal wreath was hung up with the glove.

tears to-day as she ventured to give one look at the sad memento."

"The custom is fast dying out, and only survives in a few rural parishes. Indeed, the very screens themselves have, you know, in most churches been swept away¹³³. The finer carving is often to be found worked up into pews, and the large timbers have been used in building galleries. Where these screens were made of stone¹³⁴, they have generally been preserved unharmed. In some cases, alas! people have not been contented with demolishing the screen, but have actually in their place built a gallery¹³⁵ for a family pew, extending all across the front of the chancel, but I am thankful to say such instances are very rare."

"Will you kindly tell me the origin of the chancel screen?"

"It was formerly called the rood screen, or rood gallery, and where the rood has been restored, it is still properly so called. The Gospel used to be read from this gallery, and sometimes the psalms were sung there by the priests and choristers. The custom of reading the Gospel from this position was evidently intended to express a special respect for this portion of God's

¹³³ When the rood screens were pulled down by the Puritans and the chancels were alienated from their proper use, it became necessary, in order to protect the immediate precinct of the altar from general intrusion, to erect around it some barrier; hence the origin of altar-rails, which were first ordered to be put up by Archbishop Laud. There are a few instances of ancient screens of considerable height immediately surrounding the altar.

¹³⁴ As in Bottisham Church, Cambridge; Westwell, Kent; and most of our cathedrals.

¹³⁵ Such galleries existed in the parish churches of Whitby, Yorkshire, and of Sandon, Staffordshire, a few years ago, but these have probably been since removed.

Word; and so, for the same reason, now the Gospel is read from the *north* side of the chancel, whilst the Epistle is read from the south. The *rood*¹³⁶, which consisted of a crucifix with the figure of the Blessed Virgin on one side, and of St. John on the other, was placed at the top of the screen. Over this, and between the chancel arch and the roof, the wall was painted, the subject usually being the Doom, or representation of the Last Judgment. To replace this, it would seem that, at the Reformation, the Commandments were ordered to be painted at the east end of the church."

"You think, then," said the Squire, "that the order in the canons does not refer to the east end of the *chancel*?"

"It is a disputed point, but *I* think not. Had the chancel been intended, I think it would have been so stated. Besides, it was ordered that they should be so placed that the 'people could best see and read the same,' and certainly they could not do the latter if they were painted at the east end of the chancel. Indeed, I regard that as the least convenient and appropriate place in the whole church for them. If we have them any where, the east end of the nave or aisles is the best place for them; but, really, the need to have them at all is now passed away, as those who can read, can read the Commandments in their Bibles and Prayer Books; and for those who cannot, it is useless

¹³⁶ Rood is analogous to our common word *rod*. It is a Saxon word, and means a cross.

placing them on the walls of the church¹³⁷. However, it is far better to have the Commandments over the chancel arch than the *royal arms*. It is wonderful how silly people become when they have a superstitious dread of superstition. For instance, I know a church where the congregation were offended by an old painting in the church, the subject of which was at least calculated to inspire solemn thoughts, yet could be contented that the most conspicuous object in the church should be a hideous representation of the royal arms, with this sentence below it in large characters: 'Mrs. Jemima Diggs, widow, gave this painting of the Queen's arms, A.D. 1710¹³⁸.' I should like to know what there is in that to remind us that we are in the House of God?"

¹³⁷ It is a question whether the order in the canons for placing the Commandments in churches was intended to be other than temporary. At the time few comparatively had Bibles or Prayer Books, so there was then a reason for the order, which no longer exists. One of many churches in which the Commandments were painted at an early date over the chancel arch, is Fordwich, Kent; the date is 1688. At Dimchurch, in Kent, there is an old painting of the Commandments over the chancel arch, and a modern one over the altar.

¹³⁸ As at C... Church, Kent.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHANCEL

"In this place is One greater than the temple."

S. Matt. xii. 6

"Our life lies eastward: every day
Some little of that mystic way
By trembling feet is trod:
In thoughtful fast, and quiet feast,
Our thoughts go travelling to the East
To our incarnate God.
Fresh from the Font, our childhood's prime,
To life's most oriental time, —

"Still doth it eastward turn in prayer,
And rear its saving altar there:
Still doth it eastward turn in creed,
While faith in awe each gracious deed
Of her dear Saviour's love doth plead;
Still doth it turn at every line

To the fair East – in sweet mute sign
That through our weary strife and pain,
We crave our Eden back again."

Faber.

"I hope you and my friend Mr. Beeland here are now working harmoniously together at Droneworth," said Mr. Ambrose to Sir John Adamley, as with Mr. Acres and the Vicar of Droneworth they were enjoying a pleasant afternoon stroll in the gardens of the Hall.

"Well, I think we must say yes and no to that, for though we have never had any difference of opinion respecting the restoration of our church since the evening when I first had the pleasure of meeting you – and, indeed, I am proud, and we are all proud, of our renovated and beautiful church – yet there is one point on which we cannot quite agree. You see I am Lay Rector, and though I have long ago given up my old selfish idea about pews, and only claim the space in the church which I really want to occupy, yet I do consider that, as the chancel belongs to me, I have a right to a place *there* for my family and servants, as well as for myself. But, unfortunately, Mr. Beeland thinks otherwise."

"The chancel is furnished with handsome oak stalls for the choristers, I believe; as every chancel ought to be. You propose, if I understand you, to remove the choristers, and to occupy the stalls for yourselves and servants?"

"I think I have a right to do so."

"The right is very doubtful. The position of a lay rector is

altogether an anomalous one; but the duty and the privilege connected with it are, to my mind, definite and plain enough. The duty is to keep out the wind and water from the chancel, the privilege is to receive the great tithes of the parish. Now, of course, this privilege and duty were originally never intended to be associated with other than a spiritual office. The tithes were for the support of the parish priest, and in return for them, there was laid upon him not only the spiritual supervision of the parish, but also the duty of keeping the *shell* of that portion of the church which was occupied by him and the assisting clerks sound and entire. Now, of course, the rector, being a priest, had a right to his proper place in the chancel; and I by no means deny that the lay rector succeeds to the same right; but my belief is that the right (if any) extends *no farther than himself*. He represents the clerical rector, who certainly could only claim a right to a seat for *himself*, and it is my opinion the layman can claim no more. But, my dear sir, this is surely a case where higher considerations than mere legal rights should have influence. Even if you have the right, ought you not to waive it? For you cannot doubt that the chancel was never built to supply seats for the Squire's family, but for the priest and those whose office it is specially to assist him in *leading* the prayers and praises of the congregation. No church is properly ordered where the chancel stalls are not occupied by the choir; and you can only rightly occupy a place there as one of them. So I venture to advise you to follow the example of our friend Mr. Acres, and next Sunday put on a surplice, and take

your place as a member of the choir, for you have a good bass voice, which would be of great assistance there."

"So you really think my claims as a lay rector should come down to this?"

"Nay, I think they should come *up* to this, for your highest, as well as most fitting office as a lay rector, is to assist in his duties the Vicar of your parish."

"Well, I will think about that. You have studied these matters much more deeply than I have, and you always have the best of the argument. But I have something more to say. I should like to have your opinion as to the proper arrangement and furniture of the whole of the chancel¹³⁹, for ours has not yet been completed, and I have undertaken to finish it."

"I will gladly give you my opinion on the subject. Of course, the altar should be the central and principal object in the church. For this reason, the east of the chancel should be the highest part, but for evident reasons the whole of the chancel should be higher than the nave¹⁴⁰. There should be a marked difference between the chancel – or choir, and the sanctuary – or space

¹³⁹ "*Cancellæ* are lattice-work, by which the chancels being formerly parted from the body of the church they took their names from thence. Hence, too, the Court of *Chancery* and the Lord *Chancellor* borrowed their names, that court being enclosed with open-work of that kind. And so to *cancel* a writing is to cross it out with the pen, which naturally makes something like the figure of a lattice." – Pegge's *Anonymiana*.

¹⁴⁰ Some of our chancels, however, were originally made considerably *lower* than the nave. When the church has been built on a slope it has sometimes followed the fall of the ground from west to east.

immediately surrounding the altar; a difference which had its type in the 'Holy Place' and the 'Holy of Holies' of the Jewish temple. The *lectern*— or desk, from which the lessons are read, and the *faldstool*— or Litany desk, may be either just without or within the chancel screen. The *sedilia*¹⁴¹— a stone recess for the seats of the officiating clergy, with the *piscina*¹⁴²— should be on the south side, and the *credence*¹⁴³ *table* may be on the north or south side of the altar. The *reredos*¹⁴⁴, at the east end of the chancel, should be the most costly and elaborate part of the church, as it is connected with the most dignified portion of the building. Its most prominent feature should be the symbol of our salvation, and whatever adornment is employed, it should have distinct reference to the 'sacrifice of the death of Christ.' *Empty niches* should here and every where be carefully avoided; for they have little beauty and no meaning. Without their tenants, they are ridiculous forms of ornamentation, for the corbel — or bracket, has no meaning unless it is intended to support a figure, nor its canopy, unless intended to shelter and protect one. I have seen

¹⁴¹ So called from the Latin word *sedes*, a seat. This position, on the south side of the altar, is in all respects the most convenient for the clergy when not officiating. To sit *facing* the people is a most painful position for the priest, as the eyes of all the congregation naturally rest upon him; it has, too, the *appearance* of irreverence.

¹⁴² [See p. 223.](#)

¹⁴³ [See p. 223.](#)

¹⁴⁴ This word is tautological, derived from our common word *rere*, back, and the French *dos*, back, from its position at the back of the altar. Many of these altar-screens have in recent years been restored at immense cost, as at Ely Cathedral.

slabs containing epitaphs and the armorial bearings of private persons, as well as the royal shield, substituted for a proper reredos, but this is a sad profanation¹⁴⁵. There is one thing worse; and that is engraving armorial bearings on the sacred vessels. The *prayer desk*¹⁴⁶ should form part of the choir stalls, and look in the same direction; this desk should not face the congregation, as the priest does not preach the prayers *to* the congregation, but says the prayers *with* them. When the Absolution is said, the case is different, and the propriety of the change of posture and position is evident. This is directly addressed *to* the congregation, and to be 'pronounced by the priest *standing*.' So in the Communion Office the Priest is directed to *stand up, and, turning himself to the people, pronounce the Absolution.*"

"I quite acknowledge the justness of what you say on these points, and shall gladly avail myself of your further counsel; specially I shall be grateful for your advice respecting the

¹⁴⁵ In Braburn Church, Kent, an altar-tomb, with armorial bearings around and above it, occupies the very place of the altar itself. In the church of Prendergast, South Wales, large marble slabs with elaborate epitaphs occupy the *entire* east end of the chancel. The most prominent of these – immediately over the altar – records that the departed "had learned by heart the whole Book of Psalms, and all the Collects of the Book of Common Prayer, with twenty-four chapters of the Old and New Testaments, before she was thirteen years old, and several more after" However praiseworthy and marvellous these accomplishments, this is surely no fitting place for proclaiming them!

¹⁴⁶ It is probable that the prayers and the sermon were formerly read from the same lectern. The first authoritative document of which we have record in which mention is made of the *prayer desk*, is the Visitation Articles of the Bishop of Norwich (Parker), in A. D. 1569. In the parish accounts of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, is an item in 1577 for "colouring the Curate's desk." But prayer desks were used at a much earlier time.

construction of the *altar*, and providing its proper furniture: but I have now already trespassed so long on your time, that I must only ask you to explain one thing more, and that is the meaning of the two little hollow square places in the north wall of our chancel."

"They formerly were closets, and had doors, no doubt, of carved oak. They are commonly called *almeries*, and are to be found in all old churches, their use in the chancel being to hold the sacred vessels used at the altar; even where they can no longer be utilized, they ought to be preserved as objects of interest¹⁴⁷."

¹⁴⁷ So called from the Latin word *almarium*, a closet or locker. The almetry had many uses, and is to be found in all parts of the church, but chiefly in the chancel. Sometimes it was used to hold the priest's vestments; and in conventual churches, to hold the gold and silver vessels belonging to the monastery.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ALTAR

"We have an altar."

Heb. xiii. 10

"Whene'er I seek the holy altar's rail,
And kneel to take the grace there offer'd me,
It is no time to task my reason frail,
To try Christ's words, and search how they may be.
Enough, I eat His flesh, and drink His blood;
More is not told – to ask it is not good.

"I will not say with these, that bread and wine
Have vanish'd at the consecration prayer;
Far less, with those, deny that aught Divine,
And of immortal seed, is hidden there.
Hence, disputants! The din which ye admire
Keeps but ill measure with the church's choir."

It was late in the evening before the other guests had left the Hall, and our four friends sat down together in the library, without fear of interruption, to continue the conversation of the afternoon.

"I should like you to tell me, Mr. Ambrose," said Sir John, "whether you consider that the word *altar* is properly applied to a table made of wood."

"Oh, most certainly it is. The term is equally applicable, whether the altar be made of wood or stone. No doubt stone was the material first used¹⁴⁸, yet at so early a period as the building of the tabernacle, we read that God commanded Moses to make an altar of *wood*¹⁴⁹. In the earliest days of the Christian Church the altars were, probably without exception, made of wood; but afterwards it became the practice to erect them of stone, and from the sixth¹⁵⁰ to the sixteenth century this rule was all but universal."

"How is the change to be accounted for?"

"During the persecutions of the early Christians under the heathen Emperors of Rome, they resorted, as you are aware, to the subterranean catacombs there, as the only places where they could, in comparative safety, hold their religious services.

¹⁴⁸ Gen. viii. 20; xii 7; xxxv. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Exod. xxvii. 1.

¹⁵⁰ The Council of Epaone in France (A.D. 509) ordered that none but *altars of stone* should be *consecrated with chrism*. The custom of consecrating the altar with chrism is supposed to symbolize the anointing of our Lord's Body for the burial. – See *The Stone Altar*, by Rev. J. Blackburn, p. 46.

Here the stone altar-tombs of those who had suffered martyrdom offered the most convenient and fitting altars for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In after times, when the Church was prosperous and at peace, the remembrance of these altar-tombs not only suggested the material for the Christian altar, but also the custom of erecting it over the relics of saints and martyrs. This custom of building the altar over the bones of martyrs (which is still continued in the Roman Church, but which has for many years ceased to be the practice in our own), is, moreover, supposed to have reference to that mysterious vision in the Revelation of St. John, which you will remember he thus describes: 'When the Lamb had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held'¹⁵¹.'

"The use of stone instead of wood was, no doubt, adopted also for other reasons than the one I have stated. Stone altars were less liable to desecration; they possess, too, a symbolism of their own, representing both the *incarnation* and *entombment* of our Blessed Lord¹⁵². The scriptural symbol of a Rock¹⁵³, as representing our Lord, might appear to be more evidently connected with the stone than the wooden altar, but this symbol must always be associated with the idea of altar, of whatever material it is made. The wooden altar, on the other hand, may

¹⁵¹ Rev. vi. 9-11.

¹⁵² "A type both of the womb and of the tomb." —*The Stone Altar*, p. 41.

¹⁵³ 1 Cor. x. 4.

seem to refer more directly to the *institution* of the *Lord's Supper*; and the altar candlesticks have, of course, a peculiar and very manifest appropriateness when the altar is so considered."

"But surely, my friend, the word *table* seems to be here exactly applicable."

"Yes, so it is; but you must not try to separate things which are inseparable. Every altar is a table, though every table is not an altar. Both terms are correct, but the one must not be supposed to exclude the other; and it would be strange indeed if, having a *priest* and an *oblation*¹⁵⁴, the church should be without an *altar*. The top slab of the altar is the table¹⁵⁵, whether it is made of wood or stone. Where this slab is of stone, it has from early times been considered to represent the stone rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre of our Lord. In the Greek Church the *seal* that was set on the stone¹⁵⁶ is represented by the consecrated wafer; in the Roman Church this seal is represented by the small square stone let into the centre of the altar table¹⁵⁷. In the primitive Church there was but one altar in each church, but afterwards it became a custom to erect many others, dedicated to as many

¹⁵⁴ See "Prayer for the Church Militant."

¹⁵⁵ Queen Elizabeth's *Advertisements*, A.D. 1564, require "that the Parish provide a decent TABLE, *standing on a frame*, for the Communion Table." Hence it appears that by the word *table* at the era of the English Reformation, the *slab* only was meant. — Parker's *Glossary*.

¹⁵⁶ Matt xxvii. 66.

¹⁵⁷ "The seal of the altar — that is, the little stone by which the sepulchre or cavity in which the relics be deposited, is closed or sealed." — *Durandus*, p. 128.

saints and martyrs. This was the custom in our own Church – just as it is still in the Roman Church – before Queen Elizabeth ordered all altars to be removed in every church, except the *high altar*, which is the only one we now retain; and, for my part, I certainly wish for no other. But at the same time *all stone altars* were ordered to be removed, and then altars of wood were once more placed in almost every church. I am sorry to say the old stone altars were broken up and desecrated. Some few, however, of them escaped¹⁵⁸, and many more have since that time been erected. There are probably hundreds of stone altars to be found in our cathedrals, college chapels, and parish churches, and I don't suppose (though some seem to do so) that people attach more superstitious meaning to them than to the most modern oaken Communion table. But, as I said before, to my mind it is indifferent whether the altar be of wood or stone."

"I should like your opinion about the proper furniture for the altar."

"First, with regard to its *covering*: the canon directs that the altar shall be covered with 'a carpet of silk, or other decent stuff' on ordinary occasions, and with 'a fair linen cloth' at the time of the celebration of Holy Communion. This order allows considerable liberty as to colour and pattern; but it appears to imply that it should be as rich as the circumstances of each

¹⁵⁸ As at St. Mary's Hospital, Ripon. These ancient stone altars may always be known by the *five crosses* on the table, emblematic of the five wounds of Jesus. Not infrequently, alas! this slab is to be found as part of the church flooring. The altar table of Norwich Cathedral is (or was lately) to be seen in the floor of the nave.

case will allow¹⁵⁹. Where cloths of more than one colour are used, these five – in accordance with very ancient practice – are commonly employed as specially adapted to the different seasons of the Christian year: *white*, at Christmas and certain other festivals, as emblematical of purity; *red*, as representing the blood of martyrs, and at Pentecost, as emblematic of the fiery tongues; *green*, for general use, as the prevailing colour of nature, and a sort of middle colour between the rest in use; *violet* and *black* as colours of mourning."

"But, surely, this variety is *unnecessary*?"

"Most assuredly. Nevertheless, where they can conveniently be had, they are *appropriate*, and teach their own lesson. It was not *necessary* to put a cloth of black on the altar at Droneworth when your father died two years since; and I am doubtful whether Mr. Beeland was quite right in doing so. But surely if you thought it was right for him to do this at the funeral of a mere mortal man, you cannot say that it is wrong to use a black altar-cloth on *Good Friday*; and, of course, the same argument applies to all the rest. With regard to the custom in some places of covering half the church with black for a month, because some rich man has died in the parish – I say plainly that I regard that as next to impiety and profanation."

"I see the justness of your words. What do you say to *cushions*

¹⁵⁹ "Have you a Communion Table with a handsome carpet or covering of silk stuff, or such like?" — *Visitation Articles*, Bishop Bridges, 1634. "Have you a carpet of silk, satin, damask, or some more than ordinary stuff to cover the Table with at all times?" — *Visitation Articles*, Bishop Montague, 1639.

on the altar?"

"Say! *they ought never to be there*. I can imagine nothing more out of place. I have often wondered for what purpose they could originally have been put there. They are certainly not required, nor yet convenient as a rest for the Altar Service Book. It is too shocking to suppose they were intended to enable the priest to rest his arms and head softly on God's altar! I have sometimes fancied I see their origin in an old custom observed in the Roman Church of placing the two lambs, whose wool was used for making the palls¹⁶⁰ with which the Bishop of Rome invests his archbishops with their archiepiscopal authority, on *two richly embroidered cushions, one of which was placed on the north, the other on the south side of the altar*; but I know not. A *desk* of brass or oak is convenient to support the office-book, and *two candles* are ordered to be placed on the altar."

"But, my dear sir, I am told that is a very *Romish* custom."

"Well, Sir John, and so it is a very *Romish* custom to say the Lord's Prayer, and it is a very *Hindoo* custom for a wife to love her husband with a special devotion; but we shall not, for either reason, be disposed to blame either custom. The thing with us, like every thing else, is either right or wrong *in itself*, independent of the use of any other Church. But it so happens that this is the very reverse to a *Romish* custom, for these two candles were ordered to be placed on the altar in direct opposition to the

¹⁶⁰ The pall is an archiepiscopal vestment, forming at the back a figure like the letter Y, as seen on the armorial bearings of our archbishops.

custom of the Roman Catholic Church¹⁶¹. Nothing can be more expressive, and utterly unobjectionable, than the symbolism of these *two* candles (of course, it is not *necessary* that they should be *lighted* in order to preserve their emblematic meaning), and I should be very sorry to see this simple symbolism broken into by the introduction of more than two lights upon the altar¹⁶². I have not by any means mentioned all that is required for the service of the altar; I have only spoken of its ordinary furniture. That which is specially required for the Eucharistic services is, doubtless, already provided in your church."

"Before we say good-night," said Mr. Acres, "let me ask you one question indirectly connected with this subject. I notice that many of my neighbours receive the consecrated bread *on the palm of the hand*, some holding both hands in the form of a cross.

¹⁶¹ "All Deans, Archdeacons, Parsons, Vicars, and other Ecclesiastical persons shall suffer from henceforth no torches nor candles, tapers, or images of wax to be set before any image or picture. But only two lights upon the high altar (the only altar now retained in our Church) before the Sacrament, which, for the signification that Christ is the true Light of the World, they shall suffer to remain still." —*Injunctions of King Edward VI.* "And here it is to be noted, that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained and be in use, as were in this Church of England by the authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of *King Edward the Sixth.*" —*Rubric before morning Prayer.*

¹⁶² Durandus, who wrote about A.D. 1290, says, "At the horns of the altar *two* candlesticks are placed to signify the joy of Jews and Gentiles at the Nativity of Christ." "In the Sassetti Chapel at Florence is a beautiful fresco painting, by Ghirlandaio (A.D. 1485), representing the death of St. Francis. The painting, which has been copied by the Arundel Society, has all the character of a really historical work, and is particularly interesting as representing an altar with the *two* candlesticks upon it.

I suppose this is in accordance with your instruction: I should like to know the reason for it. Where there are high altar-rails – which I much object to, and which, of course, are altogether unnecessary when the chancel screen is properly arranged, as with us – this custom would be very inconvenient."

"The short rail, north and south, for the use of the aged and infirm, is certainly all that is required. As regards the manner of receiving the sacred element, to which you refer, I certainly have recommended it, and for these reasons: it is much more convenient both for the priest and the communicant; it avoids all danger of any portion of the bread falling on the floor; and it is most in accordance with the rubric, which directs that the minister shall deliver the communion *into* the hands of the recipients."

"Thank you. I consider your reasons as amply sufficient, and I see no possible objection to the custom."

CHAPTER XXV

THE ORGAN-CHAMBER

**"Samuel ministered before the Lord,
being a child, girded with a linen ephod."**

1 Sam. ii. 18

"But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars, massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes."

Il Penseroso.

"And so, Harry, my boy, you have really made up your mind to be a chorister?" said Mr. Ambrose to old Matthew's grandson, one Sunday morning.

"Yes, if you please, sir," was his reply. "Grandfather says he should like me to be one."

"And you wish it yourself, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You are a well-conducted boy, and God has given you a good musical voice, so we shall be very pleased to have you amongst us. But you must never forget that there is not only a high honour, but also a very solemn responsibility connected with the office of a chorister. Always remember, then, that you are in a very especial way *God's servant*, that His eye is upon you, and that He will expect you to do your duty in the *very best way you possibly can*. You must *sing and give praise with the best member that you have*¹⁶³— that is, you must devote to God's praise and glory the very best service you can render. You are a little boy to talk to about setting a good example to a congregation, composed for the most part of persons so much older than yourself, but yet that is one of your chief duties. When you are in the choir, the eyes of all the congregation are upon you, and they should not only *hear* you singing as well as you can, and so be led themselves to join heartily in the musical parts of the service, but also *at all other times* they should *see* you reverent and devout in your conduct; and be sure, my boy, this good and serious behaviour

¹⁶³ Ps. cviii, 1.

of yours will have its influence upon others, though perhaps they may be hardly conscious of it. Now there is enough in this to make you very serious, but yet the thought that God permits you in your young years thus to help in promoting His glory, and to be such a blessing to your fellow-creatures, should make you very happy and very thankful to Him." ...

Before the commencement of the Morning Prayers little Harry was solemnly admitted a member of the choir. The ceremony was a very simple, but yet a very solemn one. On this occasion the usual order of entering the church was reversed. Mr. Ambrose came first, then the eight senior members of the choir, then the seven boy choristers, and last came Harry. All wore their surplices except Harry, and he carried his new little surplice on his arm. During the procession solemn music was played on the organ. As soon as it ceased, all knelt down to say their private prayers, Harry kneeling on a cushion prepared for him at the entrance to the chancel. It was the custom at St. Catherine's for all the congregation to stand up when the priest and choir entered; which custom, besides being a mark of respect for His presence to whom they were about to dedicate their worship and service, had this advantage – that it induced all to say their private prayers at the same time, and thus avoided much confusion; it tended also to prepare the mind *at once* to enter into the spirit of the *public* service.

After a short pause, Mr. Ambrose read a portion of the third chapter of the first book of Samuel. He then addressed Harry in

these words: —

"Henry, before I proceed to admit you a member of the choir of this church, you must promise, before God and this congregation, that in the solemn office on which you are about to enter, you will always strive above all things to promote His glory. Do you so promise?"

Little Harry, in a timid, trembling voice, answered, "I do so promise."

The Vicar and choir then sang, alternately, the following sentences: —

Priest.— "Our help is in the name of the Lord;"

Choir.— "Who made heaven and earth."

P.— "O Lord, bless and keep this Thy servant;"

C.— "Who putteth his trust in Thee."

P.— "Accept his service in this Thy House;"

C.— "And make the voice of Thy praise to be glorious."

P.— "Lord, hear our prayer;"

C.— "And let our crying come unto Thee."

Mr. Ambrose then read these verses: —

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place — also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: — it came even to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one,

to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God¹⁶⁴."

The choir then sang, "Glory be to Thee, O God," during which time the senior choir boy led little Harry into the middle of the choir, where he knelt down on a cushion prepared for him.

Mr. Ambrose then said this prayer: "O most merciful Father, before whom 'Samuel ministered, being a child, girded with a linen ephod,' give, we pray Thee, to this Thy youthful servant such gifts as shall enable him to sing Thy praise, and promote Thy glory in this Thy Temple, and grace to worship Thee acceptably in the beauty of holiness, and to adorn the doctrine of Christ his Saviour in all things. Amen."

Harry then stood up, and as Mr. Ambrose placed on him his little surplice, he said, —

"Henry, I robe you in this surplice in token that you are now set apart to be a chorister, and, together with those around you, to assist in the high and glorious work of leading the praises of God in this church: let the whiteness of this robe always remind you of that purity which should mark the service you here offer up to God. I pray you never, either here or elsewhere, to disgrace

¹⁶⁴ 2 Chron. v. 11-14.

this robe of your solemn office. What you sing with your lips believe in your heart, and what you believe in your heart fulfil in your life; and may God so bless and protect you, that when this life is ended, you may join that angel choir who in robes of white sing before the Throne, 'Glory to God and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' Amen."

The new chorister then took his place in the choir, whilst the organ almost thundered the following chorus, in which all joined:

"O Great and Mighty God, with angels and archangels we laud and magnify Thy glorious name. Amen."

The usual morning service then proceeded. Many eyes were fixed on the earnest, thoughtful little face that appeared for the first time in the choir; and with not a little pardonable pride did old Matthew watch the hearty efforts of his grandson to fulfil the promise he had just made.

It had long been a custom for the Vicar and Mr. Mendles, the organist, to partake of a late meal at the Hall when their Sunday duties were ended; and on this Sunday evening the Squire accompanied them home from church.

"Our little friend," said he, "will be quite an acquisition to the choir; he has a very sweet voice."

"Yes, he has," replied the Vicar; "and what is of no less importance, he is sure to conduct himself well. But, for that matter, I have no reason to complain of any one of our choir; for, thanks to Mr. Mendles, and to their own sense of propriety, I

don't believe there is a better conducted choir in any parish than ours."

"That is very much owing to your allowing no men to be there who are not communicants."

"That's a good rule, no doubt, and accounts, perhaps, more than any thing for their reverent behaviour. You well know, Mr. Mendles, there was little reverence enough once."

"The great difficulty," said Mr. Mendles, "is to persuade the choir that they should sing to God, *with* the congregation, not *to* the congregation. I strive both to learn myself, and to teach them, that our singing should be *worship*, not the mere exhibition of *talent*, and that we ought to rejoice when the congregation *join in*, not when they only *listen to* our hymns and chants. I believe we have now learnt the lesson, and are the happier for it."

"And we all feel the benefit of that lesson too," said the Vicar, "for whereas formerly nothing but flashy tunes which enabled them to show off their own talent would please the choir, we have now, thank God, a solemn and devotional character in the music of our liturgical services, and a joyful gladness in the music of our hymns – equally far removed from levity and from mournfulness – which, with our praises and our prayers, seem to float up our very souls to heaven."

"I think we must attribute the success of our musical services in some measure to the new position of the organ, must we not, Mr. Mendles?" said the Squire.

"Most certainly. There can be no doubt that the most

convenient position for the organ-chamber is either on the north or south side of the chancel; or, if the organ is divided, on both sides. It is a misfortune that, as organs were but little known when most of our old churches were erected¹⁶⁵, we find no fitting place provided for them in the original structure. There is, however, no excuse for our modern architects who are guilty of such an omission; and it is a matter of surprise to me that they do not make the organ-chamber a feature of more prominence and greater beauty, both externally and internally, than they are accustomed to do."

"True," said the Squire; "specially as in our days the organ is regarded as all but a necessity in every church. Certainly, there is no musical instrument so suitable for congregational worship, for whilst it represents all kinds of music, it exactly realizes the description given in the account of the dedication of the temple which Mr. Ambrose read this morning, and brings together the cymbals and the psalteries and the harps, and the trumpeters and the singers '*as one*.'

"It is a curious fact – is it not, sir? – that whereas the presence of organs in our churches used to be the source of great offence to Dissenters in this country, and has recently been the subject of much dispute among Presbyterian Dissenters, yet you can now

¹⁶⁵ Organs appear to have been used at a very early period, and some have thought that allusions to them are to be found in the Psalms of David; but till the commencement of the last century they were probably used in very few country churches. In cathedrals the organ was sometimes placed in the clerestory; its position over the choir screen is in every respect most objectionable.

hardly find a Dissenting meeting-house of any size but can boast of its organ, and often a very good one too. Let us hope, Mr. Vicar, that ere long they, may become reconciled also to other things in our Church which now they may regard with the same horror with which they once looked upon the church organ."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE VESTRY

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

1 Cor. xiv. 40

"Avoid profaneness! Come not here.
Nothing but holy, pure, and clear,
Or that which groaneth to be so,
May at his peril farther go."

George Herbert.

To the close friendship which existed between the Squire and the Vicar, constantly cemented by such meetings as we have just described, was owing, in a considerable degree, the general harmony and goodwill which made St. Catherine's one of the most peaceful villages in England. When, many years ago, Mr. Ambrose first became Vicar there, he felt it his duty to make many changes in a parish which had been long neglected, and in a church which was almost a ruin. His labours were

then regarded with much suspicion and disfavour; but he had now been long enough resident in the parish to live down all that hostile feeling. Nevertheless, it was not all peace at St. Catherine's. From time to time there would be an importation of cross-grained malcontents, who usually succeeded in stirring up some parochial strife.

Such had for some time past been the laudable occupation of William Strike and his too faithful companion, whom, by kind permission of Mr. Gallio, the registrar, he was allowed to call his wife. He had never promised to love her, and she had never promised to obey him, and on these little points each scrupulously maintained a right to act in perfect independence of the other: nevertheless, they heartily united in a common effort to instil into the minds of their neighbours a feeling of hostility towards the church; and some discord in the parish was the natural consequence. An opportunity offered on the morning of Easter Monday for Strike to find a full vent for all his spleen.

It is a sad, sad thought, that at this season of the Christian year, when all should be peace, the bitterness of party strife should break up the harmony of so many parishes. But so it is; and so it was at St. Catherine's; and this one man was at the bottom of all the mischief.

"I am sorry to see you are going to the vestry this morning, William," said Mr. Dole, as they met in the village street.

"I've as much right there as you have, I suppose," he replied; "you're going to support the Vicar, and I'm going to oppose him

thick and thin."

"Peace is better than war, William."

"Well, *you* used to be on our side once, and I should like to know what's made you turn round?"

"It would take too long to answer that question fully, William. It will be enough if I tell you that where I thought I knew most, I found myself all wrong; and the more I thought and inquired, the more convinced I was that there could be only one true Church committed by Christ to His Apostles and their successors, and that to separate from that, and cause division and schism, must be a sin. After long and prayerful consideration, and many conversations with Mr. Ambrose on the subject, I was convinced that the sect to which I belonged – and you do still – was not the one true Church; and so I left it."

"Well, I don't mean to leave it; and I don't mean that the parson shall have it all his own way in this parish."

Mr. Dole had in vain tried to bring his companion to a better mind when they reached the vestry¹⁶⁶. It was a small chamber on the opposite side of the chancel to the organ¹⁶⁷,

¹⁶⁶ *Vestry*, so called because it is the place where the vestments of the priests and their assistants are kept. It is also called the *sacristy*, because the *sacred* vessels and other furniture for use at the altar are kept there. The keeper of the vestry is properly called the *sacristan*. This word has now degenerated to *sexton*.

¹⁶⁷ Some of the subterranean and other small chambers in churches, supposed to be chantries or mortuary chapels, have probably been used as vestries. The following is extracted from Neal and Webb's edition of *Durandus*: – "On eache side of this chancelle peradventure (for so fitteth it beste) should stand a turret; as it were for two ears, and in these the belles to be hanged, to calle the people to service, by daie and

and there was a sombreness about it that harmonized with the solemn use for which it was intended. On the eastern side were two small windows filled with stained glass, and over them, in large letters, was the sentence, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints sing with joyfulness." Between these two windows stood an oaken table, on which was a small desk or lectern; and on this, written in beautifully illuminated characters, were the prayers used by Mr. Ambrose and the choir before and after the Church services. Before the table was a small embroidered kneeling cushion for the priest at these times. The parish chest¹⁶⁸, and two ancient chairs, all of oak and richly carved, completed the furniture of the vestry; whilst on its walls were hung the surplices of the choir and the vestments of the priest¹⁶⁹.

The meeting was called together for the double purpose of electing churchwardens and making a church-rate, and it was

by night. Undre one of these turrets is there commonly a vaulte, whose doore openeth into the quiere, and in this are laid up the hallowed vesselles, and ornamentes, and other utensils of the church. We call it a vestrie." —*Fardle of Facions*. Printed 1555.

¹⁶⁸ Early examples of these chests for containing the parish records may be found in most old churches. Frequently they are of very rude design, and the box is formed of a single block of wood strongly bound with iron hoops. Sometimes, however, they are richly carved, as in the churches of Clymping, Sussex; Luton, Bedfordshire; and Faversham, Kent. The proper place for the parish chest is the vestry, but it is not unfrequently to be found in some other part of the church. We often meet with several large chests of common deal in various parts of the church containing useless papers and other rubbish. The sooner these are swept away the better.

¹⁶⁹ See pages 85 and 86 for a description of some of these vestments.

soon evident to the Vicar that Strike and his friends had come determined on a stormy meeting. But few angry words, however, had been spoken, when Mr. Ambrose rose and said, "My friends, I had hoped that this meeting would have been conducted in that spirit of Christian charity and peacefulness which has been our custom; but as I find this is not to be the case, I will not allow any part of God's House to be desecrated by the exhibition of party animosity and angry strife¹⁷⁰. This vestry is known to those of you who are associated with me in conducting our religious services, as the place of holy meditation and solemn prayer; nor are its associations less sacred to those among you who have come here, with unquiet consciences or troubled minds, to seek my counsel and advice. All around us here, my friends, reminds us of the service of a God of love; so if the Demon of Discord must come into our little parish, let this place, at least, not be the scene of his unhallowed presence."

It was then proposed to adjourn the meeting to the house of Mr. Walton; and he, having both a good heart under his waistcoat, and a large room in his house, readily agreed to the proposal. He was, moreover, one of the churchwardens, and, though the village blacksmith, was a man in good circumstances, and exercised considerable influence for good in the parish.

Nothing can be less profitable than to read the "foolish talking" which commonly characterizes a discordant vestry

¹⁷⁰ It is *always lawful*, and almost always desirable, to hold "vestry" meetings in some hall or room in the parish, and *not in the church vestry*.

meeting; we will, therefore, pass that over. The churchwardens were re-elected, and the church-rate was carried. The Vicar then endeavoured to pour oil upon the troubled waters by delivering a kind and friendly address, which he ended in these words: "Mr. Strike tells you that he will always oppose the Church so long as it is in any way supported by the State. But let me remind him that the Church did not receive from the State the possessions with which she is endowed for the maintenance of true religion in this land. Those were, for the most part, given to our Church by pious men and women, many hundreds of years ago; and the State, in securing these to us, is only acting with common honesty, and doing no more for the Church than it does for every other society – indeed, for every person – in the country. But Mr. Strike tells you, too, he will not give a penny for keeping up the fabric of the Church, because he is a Dissenter. Now, my friends, to take the *very lowest* view of the Church, and regarding her temples only as places in which a high standard of *morality* is set up, it is surely for the advantage of the *State*, and for the *community*, that they should be maintained; and, therefore, *all* should help to maintain them. 'Yes,' you say, 'but we teach morality, too, in our little Salem Chapel at Droneworth: why should not our meeting-house be supported as much as your Church?' My answer is, that your Salem Chapel may any day share the fate of the Little Bethel Meeting-House that used to be in our parish. Besides, on your own principles, you cannot accept State aid to keep it up. Of course I have myself higher reasons for considering it the

duty of the State to secure the proper reparation of the fabric of our churches; but I have only taken the lowest ground; I think, however, that even that is firm enough to bear the weight of the whole argument. But now, my friends, let us part in peace, and let all angry feeling die away."

"The church-rates will soon be done away with altogether, depend upon it, sir," shouted Mr. Strike, in a tone which was an evident protestation against that spirit of peace which Mr. Ambrose was so anxious should pervade his parish.

"It may be so," said the Vicar; "and if so, I believe and pray that God will overrule even that for the benefit of His Church."

And so the St. Catherine's vestry ended.

"I am heartily glad," said Mr. Acres to the Vicar, "that we did not have all that row in the church to-day. Sorry as I am to make Mr. Walton's house the scene of such discord, yet I am sure he would far rather have it here than in the church vestry."

"Any where's better than the church," said Mr. Walton, "for such quarrels as these."

"By the bye," said Mr. Acres, as they both rose to depart, "do you remember the time when the churchwardens used to retire to the vestry before the conclusion of the service to count up the alms? We could, you know, hear the jingling of the money during all the later prayers of the service, and a most indecent interruption it was. How far more seemly is your custom of reverently presenting the alms at the altar, where it remains till the close of the service. And I am so grateful to you for

abandoning that objectionable and most ridiculous custom of holding the *plates* at the church door. The custom seemed so completely to do away with the idea of almsgiving as an *act of worship*. How many a wickedly grotesque scene has occurred at the door of our own church, plainly showing that many who contributed their alms simply gave them to Mr. Walton or Mr. Acres, and least of all thought of giving them *to God*. Nay, so anxious was dear old Lady Angelina Hilltower and her daughter to confer upon *us* equal honour, and to avoid any just cause of jealousy between us, that they used to create quite a pantomime at the door whenever there was a collection, by crossing over to put half-a-crown in each plate, making at the same time a profound obeisance to each of us."

"Yes," said Mr. Acres, "I certainly am glad all that's done away with; but I'm more glad that at last we have been able to get rid altogether of the plates for collecting the offertory, and to substitute *Bags*. There has been some opposition, as you are aware; some pleaded long custom as a reason for retaining the plates, and some, who were rather proud of their stereotyped shilling, did not wish their benevolence to be hidden. In fact all those who *did their alms before men, to be seen of them*, were of course hostile to the change."

"I know," said the Squire, "that some were at first offended, but none knew why. I never heard the faintest approach to a reasonable objection to this plainly scriptural manner of *secret* almsgiving; nor did I ever hear an argument of any weight

in favour of the plate system, except that it sometimes forces money from unwilling contributors, and that argument is too contemptible to notice.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PILLARS

"The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

1 Tim. iii. 15

"See, the Church her head once more hath lifted;
Seemly order dwells within her gate;
God-sent art adorns her holy precincts,
And no more she lieth desolate.

"What is it that she is saying, brothers?
All the subtle skill of graver's hand,
All the heavenward shafts, and bended arches,
Utter speech to those that understand.

"You can hear them telling some things loudly,
Telling of ungrudging love and care;
But I catch an inner voice that pleadeth
Soft and sweet, like music in the air.

"And it saith, – from every wreathèd column,
Every leafy carving, breathing low, —
'Take our message, O ye *living* temples,
Fold it in your breasts, before ye go.

"Purge the shrine of your own souls within you
From all stain of pride and sloth and sin,
Grace it with all saintly decoration:
Then your God shall come and dwell within."

W. W. H.

It was the day before the Festival of the Ascension, and Ascension Day being not only one of the greatest festivals of the Christian year, but being, moreover, the day on which the people of St. Catherine's were used to commemorate with great rejoicing the restoration of their now beautiful temple, old Matthew and the Vicar were busily engaged assisting those of the parishioners, old and young, who had the time to spare and were sufficiently skilful, in decorating the church with flowers and evergreens.

"I remember, sir, when I was a boy, we used to call those twelve pillars that the ladies are putting the flowers on, the *twelve Apostles*," said old Matthew.

"It's a common number in large churches," replied the Vicar, "and the name for them which you remember is not an unusual one. I remember one church where there are eleven pillars, and

the old sexton told me they stood for eleven of the Apostles, and that there would have been twelve, but Judas was omitted. The pillars of the church, as the chief supports of the fabric, are said to represent the Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs¹⁷¹. As I have often told you, there is hardly a part of the church without its special meaning: 'even the smallest details should have a meaning, or serve a purpose¹⁷²,' and whatever has a meaning serves a purpose, and whatever serves a purpose, has a meaning, and a very important one too. The four main walls of the building have a similar meaning to the pillars. They are supposed to represent the four Evangelists¹⁷³. The stones of which they are composed represent Christians – the living stones of the spiritual building¹⁷⁴; the cement which joins them together is charity, 'the bond of perfectness¹⁷⁵' which binds together the members of the Christian Church. The door¹⁷⁶ represents the means of entrance to the invisible kingdom; the windows remind us of that sacred presence which keeps out the storm of angry and sinful life, and admits the light of Christ and His Word. You see, Matthew, the old church builders were themselves *Churchmen*; sometimes even bishops were famous architects, like Gundulph, Bishop of

¹⁷¹ Eph. ii. 20.

¹⁷² Pugin's *True Principles of Architecture*.

¹⁷³ *Durandus*.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Col. iii. 14.

¹⁷⁶ John x. 9.

Rochester, and William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester; and then they made themselves felt in all their works – I mean, they gave a religious character and meaning to all parts of the structure they reared. And so there were always a hundred preachers in the Church, though not a tongue uttered a single word."

"I understand what you mean, sir – the stones were the preachers."

"Just so, Matthew; and then the churches were always open, and people used to go and meditate and pray there at all hours; for in church they found themselves surrounded by so much that reminded them of Heaven and God's presence, and sacred things, and so little to remind them of the world and of sin, that they could think and pray there better than any where else. But in after times the old churches became neglected and dilapidated, and the new churches were so mean and cold and bare, that there was every thing to chill and nothing to warm devotion, and so people gave up the good old custom of going to hear the stones preach, and to say their daily prayers to God in His sanctuary. But the time is coming back again, I am thankful to say, and church builders are again good Churchmen, and regard the building of churches as a sacred art and a religious work; and the people are less contented to be ignorant about these things; and the churches are no longer closed from Sunday night to the next Sunday morning, as they used to be."

"I haven't read my Bible right, Mr. Ambrose, if it isn't a very wicked thing to allow God's House to go to decay. In our old

church people seemed to have forgotten all about the '*beauty of holiness*,' both in their manner of worship and in the house where they worshipped. They had their own houses 'ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion,' and this house was 'laid waste¹⁷⁷.' I have been told how grand Queen Victoria's Palace is, and how beautiful the Parliament House is, and I have often thought that surely, sir, the house of the great King of kings, and the great Ruler of all our rulers should be grand and beautiful too. But our churchwardens not only didn't try to make the old church beautiful, sir, but hid as much as possible of whatever beauty they found."

"Too true, my friend," said the Vicar: "these old pillars had become so coated over with whitewash that their rich carved work could hardly be seen at all. Whitewash was the cheapest thing they could use to hide the green damp and the plaster patches, and for that reason I suppose they used it."

The work of decoration went on rapidly; the many busy hands soon effected a wonderful change in the appearance of the church, which gave it a very festive character. The choicest flowers were placed at the back of the altar, others were used in various ecclesiastical designs, or woven into wreaths of evergreens. The texts of Holy Scripture painted above the arches from pillar to pillar were neatly framed in borders of evergreens, and wreaths of the same were already twined around many of

¹⁷⁷ Jer. xxii. 18.

the columns¹⁷⁸.

The capitals of all the pillars were carved in imitation of the many wild flowers and ferns which grew in the neighbourhood¹⁷⁹. Although these had been carved not less than five hundred years ago, the same wild flowers were still to be found in the parish; and every year on Ascension Day it was the custom at St. Catherine's to decorate each of these pillars with the same natural flowers that had been imitated in stone. It was a pretty custom, for as the natural leaves and flowers faded or were removed, their more enduring likenesses were disclosed, and remained throughout the year the faithful representatives of their bright and gay originals.

"Well, my dear," said the Vicar, addressing Ellen Walton, his churchwarden's little daughter, "you have really shown great taste in arranging those ferns; they look beautiful indeed."

"I deserve but little credit, sir, for any taste of my own," she replied, "for I have but copied the stone carving as near as I could."

"Yes, but you *do* deserve great credit, as every body does who copies exactly that which is worth copying. The workman who so cleverly imitated in stone these beautiful works of God, in

¹⁷⁸ Most persons know – at least from engravings – the famous "Apprentice Column" in Roslin Chapel. That was perhaps the first church pillar that ever was wreathed with flowers, and those stone flowers are as fresh and beautiful now as when they were carved five hundred years ago.

¹⁷⁹ This old custom of copying in stone or marble the surrounding objects of nature has been imitated on the capitals of pillars in the church of St. Mary, Devon, which has recently been so beautifully restored in memory of the late Bishop of Exeter.

order to adorn God's House throughout the year with memorials of His goodness in making our summer fields so lovely, deserved much praise; and now, though yours is a lighter task, that you have given life, as it were, to his work, by your nice arrangement of leaf to leaf, and flower to flower, I must give you some praise too. But I see you are anxious to ask me a question."

"Yes, sir. I was talking to Sally Strike this morning about the decorations, and she says they are all nonsense and unmeaning; she says, too, it's very wicked to put flowers about the church, for it's nothing but a heathen and idolatrous custom. Of course, I don't much notice what she says about it, but I don't very well know what to answer her, and I was going to ask you, sir, to be kind enough to tell me."

"Sally Strike doesn't often say any thing very wise, my dear, and this is no exception to the rule. You had better answer her out of her own mouth. Ask her, when she gathered all the flowers her own garden could produce to decorate the little 'Rehoboth' – as they call that meeting-house on Wanderer's Heath – when they held their last 'love feast,' and had tea and cake in their chapel, did she put the flowers there to make the place look gloomy, or to make it look festive and gay? Or, why did she do the same thing a little while ago, when they gave a children's treat in their meeting-house? Was it because it was a time of sadness or of rejoicing? No doubt, she will tell you it was the latter. Well, we decorate our churches for a similar reason. We regard all the Christian festivals as seasons for great gladness and rejoicing, and whilst at other

times we are obliged, for the most part, to content ourselves with such ornamentation of God's House as our own poor imitations of the forms and colours of Nature can supply, on these high days we press into the service of the temple the lovely originals of all those forms and colours, fresh and pure as when they first left the hand of their Divine Maker.

"'Tis true that the heathen used flowers in decorating their temples and altars, and also their victims prepared for sacrifice¹⁸⁰. But they used them just as Sally Strike uses them at her meeting-house, for the *sole* purpose of *decoration*. Now, though we use flowers to give a festive appearance to our churches, our use of them has, too, always a meaning beyond that: how they remind us of the *love of God* in arraying this earth with so much beauty for our enjoyment; how they remind us of the pure and lovely delights of the Paradise that is lost; and of our future resurrection¹⁸¹ to a Paradise of yet greater beauty. And it is from our Bibles that we learn to give, too, an *emblematic* meaning to particular flowers, so that, whether carved by man, or moulded by the hand of Nature, each one teaches its own useful lesson. There we find the lily mentioned as the emblem of God's providence; the rose as the type of youthful beauty; the cedar, of manly strength. Nay, my dear Ellen, we may even find in Holy Scripture itself our authority for decorating our churches with these pure and unsinning works of God. You remember, no

¹⁸⁰ Acts xiv. 13. Virgil, *Aeneid*, i. 417; ii. 249.

¹⁸¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42.

doubt, the verse to which I allude: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee: the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary¹⁸²."

"Thank you, sir, I quite understand your explanation. But Sally Strike said she didn't object to the way the church used to be decorated thirty years ago, when plain twigs of evergreen were put at the corners of the pews, and some large branches fixed here and there on the walls; but she does not like the triangles and circles and crosses, and the other designs we now use."

"And yet nothing could be more silly than the dislike, though I fear it is one in which many – for mere want of thought – share. Surely, the twigs themselves must be at least as harmless when bound together as when used singly; and certainly it is better that they should be formed into beautiful and religiously *suggestive* designs, than scattered unmeaningly about the church. The cross, often repeated, reminds us, you know, of the one grand pervading truth of our religion; the circle, of eternity; the triangle, of the Holy Trinity. We almost even forget the beauty of the design itself in the beauty of its symbol.

¹⁸² Isa. lx. 13.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ROOF

**"Thou shalt overlay it with
pure gold, the roof thereof."**

Exod. xxx. 3

"Give all thou canst; high heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely calculated less or more:
So deem'd the man who fashion'd for the sense
These lofty pillars, – spread that branching roof,
Self-poised, and scoped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Ling'ring and wand'ring on, as loth to die,
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality."

Wordsworth.

"I'm glad to see you both among the helpers to-day," said the Vicar, as he shook hands with William Hardy and Richard Atkinson, "though I know this must cost you at least the value

of a day's work."

The village carpenter and mason were always accustomed on these occasions to give their services gratuitously.

"Very glad indeed to come and do the best we can, sir," replied William Hardy, "though we couldn't quite agree about it at home, my wife and me, till we'd talked it over a bit."

Now Hardy's wife, though not generally unamiable, was like many other wives in this respect; namely, she had acquired a habit of always questioning the wisdom or sincerity of her husband's actions, which she could now no more shake off than she could her own identity.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said the Vicar; "but how was it?"

"Well, you see, sir, my wife says to me, 'William, you might turn your time to better account than going up to the church with Richard Atkinson to-day. You'd be able to earn five shillings, and that would just pay for the new ribbon for my bonnet, which indeed I do want very much.' 'I really believe you do, my dear,' says I, 'and so I must just alter my plans a little. I thought I wanted a new Sunday hat very much indeed, and I was just going to buy one at Master Dole's the other day, when thinks I to myself – no, I mustn't buy it, because I shall lose a day's earnings at church next week, so I'll give the new hat to the church, and have one for myself six months hence. But that's no reason why you should lose your ribbons, so I'll over-work for a few days, and earn the ribbons that way.' You see, Mr. Ambrose, I was thinking of that text, 'God forbid that I should offer to the Lord my God of that

which doth cost me nothing.' Well, sir, them words softened her a good deal; but then she says to me, 'William, what's the *use* of all them ornaments at the church? I really do call it waste of time and money.' 'My dear,' says I, 'there's something better than *use*, I mean as you and I talk of use, there is such a thing as doing things out of love and reverence for God, and for nothing else, and that's what I should like to do if I can. There wasn't no more *use* in the precious ointment which the good woman poured on our Saviour's head, than in these ornaments we put up in His church. And you know who it was that called that a *waste*, and you know who it was too that praised her for what she did¹⁸³.' 'I think you're right,' says she; and so I came away."

"And so you were, my friend. But it's hard to persuade people that there is such a thing as *a worship of adoration*, prompted simply by a sense of love, gratitude, veneration, entirely apart from all idea of benefit, advantage, or use to ourselves in *any way*. As you rightly say, however, *there is*. – But I see the children have finished the frames for the clerestory¹⁸⁴ windows, so you had better put them up."

"You mean the windows just under the roof, sir?"

"Yes; it is not safe for them to climb so high."

"I suppose you won't attempt to carry your decorations higher

¹⁸³ Mark xiv. 4.

¹⁸⁴ This word, formerly spelt *clear story*, plainly expresses its own meaning – a clear or separate story or flight of windows. They are placed between the roof and the nave arches of a church.

than that, Mr. Vicar?" said the Squire, as he approached to see how the work was going on.

"No, that must satisfy us. Indeed, this roof is so rich in colour and carving that we could hardly make it look more festive than it does."

"It is, indeed, a grand old roof; but I rather prefer the high-pitched roof of the chancel to this flatter one of the nave, though certainly nothing can be more beautiful than its carving. The figures of angels on the corbels¹⁸⁵ supporting the principal timbers are exceedingly well done. What do you imagine to be the dates of these two roofs?"

"I should say that that in the chancel was built about A.D. 1350, and this in the nave about A.D. 1500. These flatter roofs of our perpendicular period do not any of them date much farther back than A.D. 1500¹⁸⁶."

¹⁸⁵ The word corbel, French *corbeille*, means literally a large flat basket. It is curious to note how the word obtains its present use in architecture. After the destruction of the city of Caryæ in Arcadia by the Greeks, Praxiteles, and other Athenian artists, employed female figures, instead of columns, in architecture, to commemorate the disgrace of the Caryatides, or women of Caryæ (see Dr. Smith's Dict. of Greek and Roman Antiquities, *Caryatis*). These figures were always represented with corbels or baskets on their heads. The basket, being thus placed between the head of the figure and the roof, was that which *immediately* supported the roof. Hence those projecting pieces of stone or wood which support the roofs of our churches, as well as other buildings, have received the name of corbels. *Caryatides* may be seen on the north and south sides of New St. Pancras Church, London – a church which externally possesses all the appearances of a heathen temple, and few of a Christian church.

¹⁸⁶ Although the carved roofs of this period cannot compare in point of elegance and beauty with those of an earlier date, yet, for the abundance of rich and elaborate

"I quite agree with you in preferring the older high-pitch for our timber roofs. By-the-bye, it is a curious conception that this particular kind of roof has a likeness to the inverted keel of the ark¹⁸⁷—itself an emblem of the Christian Church. But I prefer to regard it, as I do the windows, and doors, and arches of *pointed* architecture, as an emblem of the *incompleteness* of our worship here. As I look up through the intricate multitude of timbers, and my gaze becomes lost amid the dark top beams of the roof, my thoughts are insensibly led higher still¹⁸⁸. There is something in these lofty open roofs that always seems to invite one's thoughts *above them*—so different from the flat ceilings of most dissenting meeting-houses, and some of our churches built a hundred years ago. To me these flat ceilings are very depressing."

"Yes; and not a little irritating too, when you consider what splendid timber roofs in old churches, they often conceal. Ugly, however, and objectionable as they are, they have the one merit of being *unpretending*; and give me any thing rather than a *sham*—a lath-and-plaster roof with papier-maché or stucco bosses, and all sorts of painting and shading in perspective, in imitation of wood

detail in wood-carving (oak and walnut), no period equalled this. The bench-ends, screens, rood-screens, tombs of wood at this time were exquisitely beautiful. The roofs, however, were too flat, and externally they were concealed altogether by parapets.

¹⁸⁷ In some chancels the idea of the keel of a ship is fully carried out, the walls widening as they ascend.

¹⁸⁸ The flat roofs well suited the heathen worship of ancient Greece and Rome, where the object of worship was shut up within the walls of the temple itself. It is far different with us, who worship a Deity who, though specially present there, is "not *confined* to temples made with hands."

or stone, making the poor roof guilty of a perpetual *lie*. I do own that tries my temper immensely!"

"There can be no doubt, too, that the high-pitch better suits our variable climate than any other. I fear, however, that many of those which were built but a few years since are not very enduring. Young, or badly-seasoned wood, thin, poor timbers, which cannot last long, have too often been put into the roof. Sometimes this has been the dishonest act of the builder; but we have been too much in the habit of building for *ourselves only*— not like our forefathers, who put up those big masses of timber over our heads. They built for themselves and for *posterity too*.

"They dreamt not of a perishable home,
Who thus could build¹⁸⁹."

"Ah, yes! and that is, of course, especially true of those who erected the noble *stone* roofs of our cathedrals, and many parish churches too. Nothing, of course, can equal the stone roof with its beautiful carvings and mouldings, richly gilt and coloured. Nothing like stone for colour! How very beautiful is the deep blue, with its golden stars, over the altar in our own cathedral! They look well in our own church, but the colours are richer there, not so much faded. That representation of Heaven's canopy mantling over the most holy part of our church always seems to me so very appropriate and suggestive."

¹⁸⁹ Wordsworth.

"It is a matter of surprise to me," said the Squire, "that more care has not generally been taken to beautify the *external* part of our church roofs. What relief is given to the long line of a nave roof by a good patterned row of ridge tiles, or by some ornamental ironwork on the ridge! The gable cross considerably relieves the chancel roof. And where the roof is of stone, why don't we have richly-carved *external*, as well as internal, stonework? That, to my mind, is the perfection of a stone roof¹⁹⁰."

At this point, the attention of both was directed to little Harry, old Matthew's grandson, who, with a fixed expression of deep thoughtfulness, was looking up to wards the roof of the church.

"Why so very serious just now, my dear boy? What may your thoughts be about, Harry?" said the Vicar.

"Please, sir, I was wondering what they used to do with the roof-gallery, where we've been putting the evergreens?"

"What does he mean by the roof-gallery?" said Mr. Acres.

"Oh, he means the triforium¹⁹¹."

"I must confess that is still more unintelligible to me. Please explain it to me, as well as to Harry, for we are evidently equally ignorant about it."

"The triforium is the gallery you see just above the arches of the nave – between them and the clerestory. It is not commonly found in parish churches, but I believe all cathedrals have it. It generally extends nearly all round the building. There are

¹⁹⁰ See the *Builder*, Jan. 29, 1865, "The Roof and the Spire."

¹⁹¹ So called from the *triple form* of the arches it most commonly has.

different opinions as to its original purpose. Some suppose that it was reserved for the use of women. On the Continent, it has been set apart for young men, or for strangers. It is the opinion of some that it was merely built for affording ready access to the various parts of the roof. As an architectural feature, it is very effective, and occupies a space which would otherwise be a blank wall. In this country, however, we know that it was often used for a similar purpose to that for which we have now been using it – the ornamentation of the church on special festivals, when banners and tapestry and other ornaments were suspended from the several arches¹⁹²."

"I have often, like little Harry, looked up at those arches and wondered what they were built for; and, not knowing, I came to the conclusion that the passage must have been used for religious processions."

"It is not at all improbable that occasionally they were so used. And I can hardly imagine any thing more solemn than a torch-light procession of chanting choristers threading their way round the sacred building, the sound of their voices undulating in solemn cadence as they would pass the arches of the triforium, and then dying away amid the groined or timber roof above them."

¹⁹² See Parker's *Glossary*, "Triforium;" and Hook's *Church Dictionary*.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TOWER

"The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent."

1 Chron. xxii. 5

"Lift it gently to the steeple,
Let our bell be set on high;
There fulfil its daily mission,
Midway 'twixt the earth and sky.

"As the birds sing early matins
To the God of nature's praise,
This its nobler daily music
To the God of grace shall raise.

"And when evening shadows soften
Chancel-cross, and tower, and aisle,
It shall blend its vesper summons
With the day's departing smile.

"Year by year the steeple-music
O'er the tended graves shall pour
Where the dust of saints is garner'd,
Till the Master comes once more."

J. M. Neale.

When the Vicar and the Squire met on their way to church the following day, the conversation of the previous evening was thus resumed: —

"You will, I am sure, agree with me," said Mr. Ambrose, "in regarding the church spire as ever teaching *outside* the building the same lesson that the open timber roof, as you so truly said yesterday, is teaching *inside*. It is always pointing the thoughts of thoughtful men up above the earthly temple."

"Quite so; and, as is the case with many other great teachers, the earthly fabric has, I believe, in both these cases, a very humble origin; for as the grandest cathedral roof is but a development of the simple *tent* which formed the early habitation of the once rude inhabitants of this and other countries, so has its lofty and elegant spire gradually raised itself from the low and unpretending roof which covered in the towers of our earliest parish churches.

"I am inclined myself to think that, as a matter of taste and beauty, no church tower is complete without a spire in some

form¹⁹³, and it is a question whether, in every case, the tower was not at first built with a view to such an ornament. The termination with a flat or only embattled cornice does not harmonize well with pointed architecture; the spiral form seems to me the only appropriate termination; and, as you say, the symbolic teaching of this part of the building depends upon it. And yet, though it may almost seem a contradiction to what I have said, the spire always needs some object for the eye to rest upon at its summit. The time-honoured *weather-cock* which every body knows to be the emblem of *watchfulness*, seems by far the most convenient and suitable, though I am aware that other forms – such as a dragon, and a boat – are fixed to the summits of some spires."

"We do not generally succeed well," said Mr. Ambrose, "in our imitations of the Norman style of architecture. Its extreme massiveness, on which so much of its beauty depends, renders it very costly; and if this is abandoned, as it often is, for the sake of saving expense, and only the details of the style are copied, whilst the walls are thin and unsubstantial, the building has always a mean and cardboard appearance. But where the style is faithfully carried out, it is a matter of surprise to me that the *round* tower is not more often adopted. It harmonizes so well with the semi-circular arches and the apsidal termination of the chancel. We

¹⁹³ It is probable that all Norman towers originally had low-pointed roofs covered with tiles (as at Sompting, Essex); tower roofs of this period with gable-ends are also sometimes to be found.

have, you know, many splendid examples of such towers¹⁹⁴. It is true, indeed, that the architects may in some cases have adopted this form, in places where there was difficulty in obtaining the stone required for the corners of a square tower, as being the most convenient for a building composed of flint only; but that they did not always choose this form as a mere matter of convenience, and not for its own peculiar beauty, is evident from the fact that in the construction of some round towers not only flint, but also stone, is largely employed. The objection to these towers, founded on the supposition that they are not adapted for the use of bells, may, I think, be easily met by a little constructional arrangement of the interior of the belfry."

"The erection of towers *detached* from the church has not, I am glad to say, gained much favour in this country¹⁹⁵. They certainly lose much of their beauty when separated from the main building. The custom, however, greatly prevails in Italy. The appropriation of a portion of the tower as a priest's chamber is, I believe, far more common with us than it is abroad¹⁹⁶."

At this moment the bells of St. Catherine's commenced a

¹⁹⁴ Chiefly in Norfolk and Suffolk. Of these the round towers of Little Saxham and Brixham are perhaps the most interesting.

¹⁹⁵ There are several instances, however, in England of bell-towers standing detached from the church, as the beautiful tower at Evesham, Worcestershire, and the curious belfry at Brookland in Kent.

¹⁹⁶ Evidences of these priests' chambers exist throughout England: there are instances at Challock, Sheldwich, and Brook in Kent. In the last mentioned are the remains of an altar, with a portion of the original rude painting above it still remaining.

cheerful peal.

"After all," said the Vicar, "*that sound* indicates the real purpose of the tower."

"True enough," answered Mr. Acres; "no doubt our towers were built to hold the *bells*¹⁹⁷; and so, if the tower is good and sound, and the bells are there, we must not complain if the spire is wanting."

"Yes; but I wish the bells were under better control than they commonly are."

"Ah, so indeed do I. There's no part of the church so much desecrated as the tower. Now, I grieve for this; for to my mind there's no music so delightful as that of the church bells, provided there is nothing in the occasion of their being rung which grates upon one's feelings. I often think of the story of a savage people who had never seen a church bell before, when for the first time they heard it ringing, they believed that it was *talking* to them¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁷ Bells are said to have been introduced into the Christian Church by Paulinus; Bishop of Nola, at the end of the fourth century. The first peal of bells in England was put up in Croyland Abbey, about A. D. 870.

¹⁹⁸ "When they heard the bell of the chapel of Isabella sounding through the forests as it rung for mass, and beheld the Spaniards hastening to wards the chapel, they imagined that it *talked*." – Irving's *Life of Columbus*, ch. iv. The office of the church bell in summoning the people to prayer and holy worship was regarded in olden times with such respect that the bell was very solemnly set apart by a special religious service for this sacred use. In the churchwarden's accounts of St. Lawrence, Reading, is the following curious entry: — "1449. It payed for halowing of the bell named Harry, vjs. viijd., and over that, Sir William Symys, Richard Cleck, and Maistres Smyth, being Godfaders and Godmoder at the consecraycyon of the same bell, and beryng all oth' costs to the suffrygan."

There is certainly no music that *speaks* to us like that of the church bells. What call is there more eloquent than the chimes 'going for church'? What voice more reproachful than theirs to one who disobeys their summons? What sound so solemn as the deep-toned knell? What so happy as the marriage peal? Ah, my dear friend, you and I know full well what joys and sorrows, what hopes and fears, the dear old church bells can tell of. How the old memories of half-forgotten home-scenes come back to us when we listen to their merry Christmas ringing! Nothing like them to fill the arm-chairs that have so long stood empty, to tenant the old places with the once familiar forms which have long gone from us! Nothing like them to bring back the dear old voices and the dear old faces; nothing like them to put back the old furniture in its old places again; nothing like them to revive the bright and happy hours that are past! Then, somehow, the bells always seem to adapt their voices to each particular season. What joyful hope there was in their music at Easter! a still gladder song they sing to-day. They seem to me to have their own peculiar utterance for Sunday and for saints' day, for fast and for festival. What a joyful song of thanksgiving they sang at our harvest festival last year! I shall never forget what the bells said to me on that day.

"You must forgive me, my dear Vicar, for intruding this long rhapsody into our conversation, my fondness for the music of church bells is so intense, that I fear you will consider the expression of my admiration to be quite childish. I don't mean to say they always make me feel cheerful and happy. Oh, no, they

don't do that; but most commonly they induce a sort of pleasant melancholy – harmless, and even good in moderation, but morbid in excess. These simple lines exactly express what I often feel when the bells are ringing: —

"When twilight steals along the ground,
And all the bells are ringing round,
One, two, three, four, and five;
I at my study window sit,
And, wrapt in many a musing fit,
To bliss am all alive.

"But though impressions calm and sweet
Thrill round my heart a holy heat,
And I am inly glad,
A tear-drop stands in either eye,
And yet, I cannot tell thee why,
I'm pleased, and yet I'm sad ¹⁹⁹."

"I know the feeling well," said Mr. Ambrose; "we love the *silent eloquence* of each feature of the church's fabric as we love the vivid expression of each feature of a dear friend, and we love – as we love his familiar voice – the well-known *uttered language* of the old church tower."

"Yes; and not more discordant would be the merry voice of a friend, with a heart bowed down with sorrow, than seems to me

¹⁹⁹ Kirke White.

a merry peal of the church bells, with the penitential seasons of the Christian year. I greatly admire your custom of only ringing three bells during Lent and Advent, and tolling a single bell on Good Friday. The contrast to the usual joyful chimes cannot fail to strike every one."

"I am most thankful that in our parish we have a set of bellringers who really feel a proper interest in the work, and regard theirs as a *religious* office. I have only allowed men of well-known steady habits and good moral character to be among them. From the time I came here, as you know, I have been their president, and have always attended their annual dinners. Then their *rules*²⁰⁰ are good. No drinking is allowed in the belfry, no one is allowed to wear his hat there, and no loud and boisterous language is permitted: any one using offensive words or swearing

²⁰⁰ In the last century it was a favourite custom with village bellringers to set forth their rules in verse. They were generally painted on a board and fixed in the belfry. In all cases the rhyme appears to be the production of native talent. The rules are themselves unexceptionable. The following are examples: —In the belfry, Charlwood, —"Ye men of action, strength, and skill,Observe these rules which I do will:First, — Let none presume to swear,Nor e'er profane the house of Prayer.Next, — He that doth a bell o'erthrowA groat shall forfeit where'er he go;And if he do refuse to pay,Be scorn'd, and simply go his way,Like one who will for ever wrangleAs touching of a rope to jangle."In the belfry, Bredgar, —"My friendly ringers, I do declareYou must pay one penny each oath you do swear.To turn a bell overIt is the same fare;To ring with your hats on you must not dare."MDCCLI."In the belfry, All Saints', Hastings, —"This is a belfry that is freeFor all those that civil be;And if you please to chime or ring,It is a very pleasant thing.There is no music play'd or sungLike unto bells when they're well rung;Then ring your bells well if you can;Silence is best for every man.But if you ring in spur or hatSixpence you pay, be sure of that;And if a bell you overthrowPray pay a groat before you go."1756."

is at once expelled. In fact, I think we do all that can be done to teach the ringers that they are engaged in a religious duty, in a part of *God's house*. I am fully sensible that much of our success is due to your influence among them, and I very much wish that more Church laymen in your position would follow your example, and take part in the *actual ringing* of the church bells²⁰¹. On one occasion, long ago, I had some difficulty with our ringers. You remember old Sir Perrygal Biber? a greater profligate or drunkard perhaps never lived. He had wit enough, however, to secure his election for the county, and money enough to reward those who voted for him. I am sorry to say that in many parishes the church bells, which had once been solemnly dedicated to God's service, were impressed to do honour to that man, whose immorality was patent to the whole county. Our ringers naturally thought that what was not wrong elsewhere would not be wrong here, and so begged permission to follow the example of their neighbours. However, they were good fellows, and open to reason. I explained to them first that our church bells had nothing whatever to do with mere secular matters, such as the election of a member of Parliament; and then I showed them that their neighbours were specially wrong in this instance, because they were employing what was intended for God's service in doing honour to an impious man. I believe they were all of them,

²⁰¹ In the preface to the Prayer Book the curate is directed to "cause a bell to be tolled" for morning and evening prayer; but Durandus says that this ringing of the bell was itself once part of the minister's own duty.

at heart, glad to get out of it; and, in fact, would never have thought of ringing at all had not William Strike put it into their heads. Since then they have not caused me a moment's trouble.

"The church bells have, alas! often been sadly ill-used; sometimes broken up and employed for secular purposes²⁰², sometimes sold to pay the cost of repairing the building: but this, to my mind, is not half so bad as their desecration when rung on improper occasions."

"No doubt, Mr. Vicar, you have often read with interest the very quaint legends which are to be found on many church bells. I very much like the terse Latin sentences, and the oft-repeated '*Jesu, miserere mei,*' we meet with on the oldest of them. Not a few, too, of the more modern bells have simple pious inscriptions²⁰³. But there are some, both ancient and modern, that have foolish or otherwise objectionable sentences upon them²⁰⁴.

²⁰² At Cairnwent, in Wales, the parish clerk "used often to knock a bit or two from one of the bells when any one wanted a bit of metal." In a neighbouring church two bells were taken down and sold to pay for the *ceiling of the roof*. Many church bells in England have, alas! met with as sad a fate. The same parsimony which has sacrificed the bells has, in many cases, not spared the belfry. It seems hardly credible – but it is true – that some years ago, at St. Bride's, Monmouthshire, there being no ladder in the village long enough to reach the top of the tower, *the tower was lowered to meet the length of the ladder*.

²⁰³ The following are a few examples taken from village church bells in Wales. At Nevern, —"I to the church the living call, And to the grav do summon al. – 1763." At Llandyssil, —"Come at my call, Serve God, all. – 1777." "Fear God, honour the king. – 1777." At Llangattock, —"Be peaceful and good neighbours."

²⁰⁴ Such as: – on six bells at Northfield Church, —1st. "We now are six, tho' once but five," 2nd. "But against our casting some did strive;" 3rd. "But when a day for meeting

In some cases they are merely laudatory of the donor; in others of the founder, or of the churchwardens of the parish. I should think, however, that there is scarcely a peal of bells in the country, except, perhaps, a few very recently cast, but possesses some both interesting and instructive inscriptions. Of course, many volumes would be filled with them, could they be all collected. I once copied one of these legends which much pleased me, but I cannot now call to mind where I found it. Let me repeat it to you.

'Men's death I tell by doleful knell,
Lightning and thunder I break asunder,
On Sabbath all to church I call,
The sleepy head I raise from bed,
The winds so fierce I do disperse,
Men's cruel rage I do assuage.'

"It was a curious conceit, which I suppose every body once accepted, that the ringing of the church bells cleared the air of all evil and discordant spirits, and caused the storm and the tempest to cease. But the Church had another and a better reason for ordering the bells to be rung at such times; and that was, 'that the faithful might be admonished to be urgent in prayer for the

they did fix,"4th. "There appear'd but nine against twenty-six:"5th. "Thomas Kettle and William Jervis did contrive"6th. "To make us six that were but five."At Tamworth, —"Be it known to all that doth me see,That Newcombe, of Leicester, made mee. — 1607."At Nevern, —'Thomas RudallCast us all. — 1763.'

instant danger²⁰⁵.' I like the idea of the Church bell inviting to *private prayer* as well as public worship, but we have almost lost it. The *passing bell* used to ask the private prayers of the faithful in behalf of the spirit passing from earth. This was truly a Christian custom; nevertheless, I see difficulties in the way of its general revival."

"*You* have not, however, lost sight, my dear friend, of the invitation to *private* devotion as associated with church bells; for it is in this light I regard the ringing of the little sancte bell just before the consecration of the elements at the celebration of Holy Communion. I was very glad when you restored the old bell to its little turret over the chancel arch; and I know that when it is rung, many who cannot come to church bend their knees and join heartily with us in our prayers and adoration."

"Yes, that is a good old practice of the early Church, and I am very glad to know that its revival has been a blessing and a comfort to many by awakening solemn thought and earnest prayer."

²⁰⁵ Durandus, "Of Bells."

CHAPTER XXX

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

**"Ye also, as lively stones, are
built up a spiritual house."**

1 Pet. ii. 5

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er, —
I'm nearer home to-day
Than I have been before;

"Nearer my Father's House,
Where the many mansions be,
Nearer the great white Throne,
Nearer the jasper sea;

"Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down,

Nearer leaving the Cross,
Nearer gaining the Crown."

Carey

"I must just go up for a minute to see poor Matthew. I hear he is not quite so well," said the Vicar, as he parted from his companion, and entered the little door that led up to the old sexton's chamber.

"My dear friend," said the Vicar, taking the old man's trembling hand, "I see you are still very weak; but I trust you are not suffering much?"

"Weak, very, sir; but, thank God, no pain. I feel, however, that the end can't be very far off. You must look out for another sexton, sir, for old Matthew's work is nearly over."

"*His* will be done," said the Vicar; and the old man breathed a solemn "Amen," which seemed spoken for no earthly ears.

"I've been thinking," at length said Matthew, "that it's ten years since you and I, sir, and Mr. Acres, met at the old lych gate in that terrible storm. I remember I said then that it wouldn't be long before some younger ones would have to carry me through the gate, but God has spared me these ten years more, and now I shall need none to bear me through the gate; for here I am – thanks to your kindness, sir – already within the gate, and even within the House of God itself."

"Yes; and so when God calls you to Himself, He will but take you from one temple to another – from the courts of His House

here, to live for ever in His heavenly mansions. "Those that be planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God²⁰⁶."

"If you please, sir, I should like to be buried beside little Lizzie Daniels. 'Tis long ago now since I made that little grave, and I fear the flower-bed is a good deal overgrown with grass, for I have been too poorly to look after it as I used to; but I think you'll know it, sir. She helped in her own quiet, simple way to teach an old man the way to Heaven; and I have never forgotten her lessons. How often she used to talk about this day – Ascension Day! She once said to me, sir, that you had told her we ought to remember this day throughout the year, and to try and lead an *Ascension* life, and let our thoughts and desires dwell as much as possible where our Saviour has gone before. I have tried to do so – God forgive me, for I have often failed!"

He then drew the Vicar nearer to him, and whispered in his ear, "Be good to dear little Harry, sir, when I'm gone. He loves me so, I fear 'twill break his heart."

The "parson's bell," as it was called, was now ringing, so the Vicar, having promised that his wishes should be fully carried out, was compelled to hasten into the church. He first laid his hand on the noble brow of the good old man, and pronounced the blessing of Heaven upon him, and then bade him farewell, adding, "I hope, my dear friend, we may be permitted to meet again in this earthly house of God; but if not, my heart-deep

²⁰⁶ Ps. xcii. 13.

hope and prayer is, that we may meet in His house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens²⁰⁷."

The little window that looked into the church from the sexton's chamber was opened, and none listened more earnestly to the festive service, and to the Vicar's sermon, on that Ascension Day than did old Matthew Hutchinson.

Although it was a common practice with the Vicar on festivals not to preach from any particular passage of Holy Scripture, but simply to make the festival itself the subject of his discourse, yet on this occasion he selected these words as his text: "The patterns of things in the heavens²⁰⁸." He showed how that all this world of ours, in which so much that is beautiful and lovely has survived the fall, is full of patterns, or symbols, or types of things in that Heaven to which Christ has ascended; how that the whole Bible abounds with the most vivid symbolism and the most graphic imagery representative of the glories of that Heavenly kingdom; and then, looking round the beautiful church, now so richly adorned with its festive decorations, he explained how the earthly building, in its several parts, possessed a thousand patterns of those heavenly things which make up the spiritual fabric of the Church of Christ. "When we regard the material fabric of the Christian Church," he said, "as a type of the spiritual house, ever rising higher and higher in honour of its Divine Founder, of which the saints on earth and the saints in

²⁰⁷ 2 Cor. v. 1.

²⁰⁸ Heb. ix. 23.

Heaven are the living stones, we are arraying the noblest work of man with its grandest and most exalted dignity. 'Ye are built upon the *foundations* of the Apostles and Prophets,' writes St. Paul to the Church of Ephesus, 'Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *corner stone*; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy *temple* in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit²⁰⁹.' Here, in the symbol of the *foundation stones* of the material structure, we have represented to us, as it were, at one view, all those heavenly graces and blessings which from the day of Pentecost down to this time have flowed to God's people through the visible ministry and appointed ordinances of the Christian Church. Then, under the figure of the *corner stone*— the key stone of the edifice — we have gathered up all those old prophecies and types which pointed on forward, through the sufferings and death of the Saviour, up to the time when, having established His Church in the world, He should be Himself the heavenly life of its living members. Long had it been 'contained in the Scriptures: Behold, I lay in Zion a chief *corner stone*, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded²¹⁰,' and in the fulness of time 'the stone which the builders refused became the *head stone of the corner*²¹¹.'

"And next see, my friends, how the figure is carried out by

²⁰⁹ Eph. ii. 20-22.

²¹⁰ Isa. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

²¹¹ Ps. cxviii. 22. Matt. xxi. 42.

the two Apostles, St. Paul and St. Peter, so as to embrace all the faithful members of Christ's Church. They are represented by St. Paul as 'the whole *building fitly framed together*²¹²,' and by St. Peter, as the living stones which compose this living temple – 'Ye also as *lively stones* are built up a *spiritual house*²¹³.' And this figure of a living temple is thus constantly employed by the sacred writers: 'Know ye not that your bodies are the *Temple of God*?' writes St. Paul to the Corinthian Church; and, again, 'Ye are the *Temple of the living God*²¹⁴.' St. Jude is following out the same idea when he exhorts Christians to *build up themselves in their most holy faith*."

The Vicar ended his sermon with an earnest, practical application of the subject. "Let me entreat you, my dear friends, often to suffer the solemn thoughts which this sacred symbol suggests to dwell on your minds: '*The temple of the Lord* is holy, which temple *ye are*.' Holy Prophets and Holy Apostles, and confessors, and martyrs, are the foundation of the sacred building; the Holy Jesus is the corner stone, in whom ye – the living stones – must be *fitly framed together*. Mark, my friends, there must be *no schism, no division, no rent or fissure*, that ye may be a spiritual house perfect in all its parts, and pure in all its adornments. Oh, then, cherish that heavenly life within you, which alone can keep the building compact and firm! Be fruitful

²¹² Eph. ii. 21.

²¹³ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

²¹⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

in good works. Remember faith without works is not living, but *dead*²¹⁵. 'Put on charity, which is the *bond of perfectness*²¹⁶,' and will be the best evidence to God and man, and to your own souls, that you possess a living faith; that you are, indeed, *living stones in a living temple*. Be sure the cement that must unite the living stones of the spiritual house is brotherly love and fervent charity. Without these, the house will be divided against itself; its walls will be 'daubed with untempered mortar'²¹⁷, and, instead of living stones, there will be but the dead, outlying blocks of a ruined house. 'Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it'²¹⁸.

"Be it yours, then, 'by patient continuance in *well doing*, to seek for glory and immortality'²¹⁹ in that 'house eternal in the heavens, whose Builder and Maker is God.' Learn to see in the whole earth, and air, and sky – with their countless beauties and wondrous harmonies – reflections of the glories of Heaven, and promises of the coming bliss of eternity. Learn to read lessons of wisdom and religion from the many instructive patterns, and symbols, and emblems in nature, and in art, with which you are ever surrounded. Thus go on, day by day, advancing nearer to your mansion in Heaven. Thus, in these earthly temples of

²¹⁵ S. James ii. 17.

²¹⁶ Col. iii. 14.

²¹⁷ Ezek. xiii. 10.

²¹⁸ Ps. cxxvii. 1.

²¹⁹ Rom. ii. 7.

Jehovah, be ever purifying your hearts, and attuning your voices to share in that glorious song of the Lamb when the sweet music of angels' harps shall vibrate on this regenerate earth, when her ten thousand choirs shall join with theirs in joyful harmony – and melt their united praises in one never-ending rapture, singing, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;' 'Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever²²⁰.'"

In the prayer for the Church militant, which followed the sermon, the Vicar paused longer than usual when he prayed God to *succour and comfort those who were in sickness*. All knew that he was inviting a special prayer for the old man whom all the village loved; and had they been offered for the proudest potentate, the most learned philosopher, or even the greatest philanthropist that ever lived, the prayers that went up to Heaven amid that solemn silence for him "for whom the prayers of the Church were desired," could not have been more fervid and sincere. When Mr. Ambrose proceeded with the prayer, a slight stir in the porch chamber was heard by those near at hand, but it was little noticed.

At the conclusion of the service Mr. Acres met the Vicar in the vestry.

"I should like," said he, "to go with you to see our poor old friend once more."

²²⁰ Rev. iv. 8; v. 13.

"It will probably be the last time," replied the Vicar, "for he was evidently sinking when I saw him before service. I told little Harry to go up to him as soon as we had sung the last hymn."

Both went up together. The Vicar was not mistaken. Calm and peaceful, without a line of care or pain, there lay the placid face, and the eyes were closed in the last, long sleep. One hand lay motionless upon the bed, grasped by his little grandson, who was kneeling beside him, still robed in the snow-white surplice with which he had recently left the choir.

"Poor little fellow!" said the Vicar; "I will keep my promise to the old man. He shall not be left without a friend, though his best is gone."

But Mr. Acres saw that the little hands were white as the aged hand they clasped.

"He's with a better Friend now, my dear Vicar," said he, "than this earth can give him. We shall hear his sweet voice no more in our choir here; he has gone to join the choir of angels in a nobler temple than ours."

Old Matthew's words were true; the loving little heart was broken. The old oak had fallen, and crushed the tender sapling as it fell²²¹. On the morning of Trinity Sunday, there stood under

²²¹ In the parish registry of Dymock, in Gloucestershire, is the following entry: – "Buried: John Murrel, aged 89 years. Thomas Bannister, aged 13 years." To which is appended the following note: "John Murrel and Thomas Bannister died nearly at the same moment, though the latter was in apparent good health. He had always attended upon Murrel, who was much given to prayer, and being by his bed at the time, Murrel, in his last struggle, extended his hand to him, when both instantly expired."

the old yew-tree of St. Catherine's churchyard, three little stone crosses side-by-side, where but one had been before.

THE END