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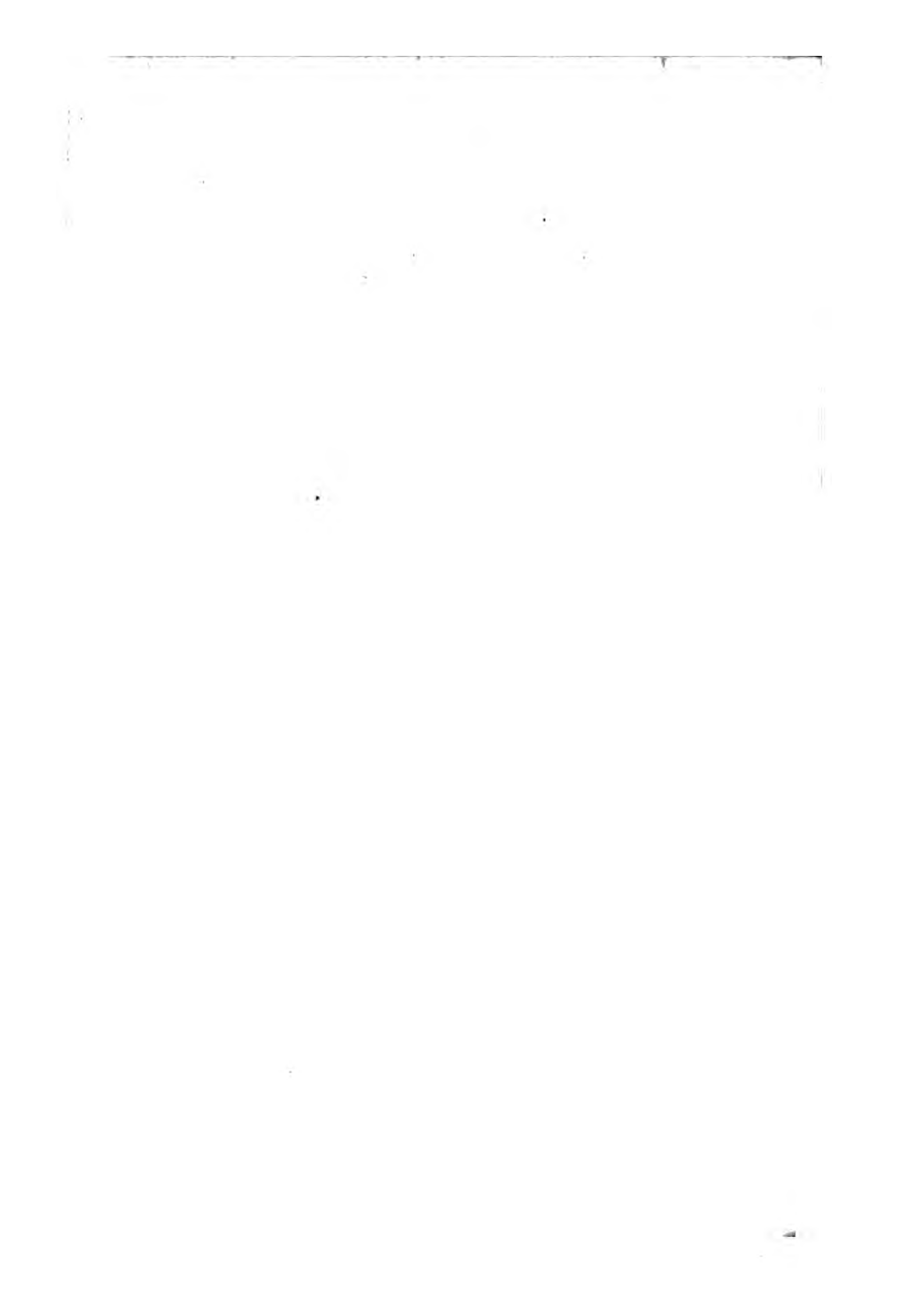
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RICHARD NELSON.



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RICHARD NELSON:

BEING

CONVERSATIONS ON

I. THE APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

II. THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

III. BAPTISM.

IV. LENGTH OF CHURCH SERVICES.



LONDON:

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NOTE.

THE Third of the following Parts, which appeared originally in *The Tracts for the Times*, is from the pen of the Author of 'The Christian Year,' the others from that of his brother.

They are reprinted, by permission, in the hope that some thoughtful Churchmen may not be sorry to be reminded of a few of the arguments by which the value of the Apostolical Succession, of the Athanasian Creed, of Holy Baptism, and the danger of ill-considered alteration of the Prayer Book, were urged at a time when the great crisis which has now come upon us seemed to be looming in the distance.

BISLEY,

Easter Eve, 1870.

RICHARD NELSON.

I.

'It is evident unto all men *diligently* reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.'

Pref. to the Ordination Service.

IN the course of this last summer of 1833, I had the pleasure of a visit from an old and valued friend, one of the most respectable merchants in the city of Bristol, (and this, in my opinion, is no small praise.)

We were discussing one day the subject of National Schools, their merits and demerits. He was pleading strenuously for them; and to confirm his arguments, 'I will mention,' said he, 'a circumstance which happened to me when I was in this part of the world about eleven or twelve years ago. I was travelling on a coach somewhere between Sheffield and Leeds, when we took up a lad of fourteen or fifteen years of age; a rough country-looking boy, but well-mannered, and of an intelligent countenance.'

I found, upon conversation with him, that he belonged to a National School in the neighbourhood, which he was, he said, on the point of leaving. This gave me occasion to ask him various questions, which he answered with so much readiness and vivacity, yet without any self-conceit in his manner, that when the coach stopped (I think it was at Barnsley) for a short time, I took him with me into a bookseller's shop, and desired him to select some book which I might give him as a testimony of my approbation. After looking at a few which the bookseller recommended, he fixed on "A Selection from Bishop Wilson's Works," whose name, he said, he had often heard. He begged me to write his name in it, which I did, and we parted with mutual expressions of good-will; and I will be bold to prophesy that that boy (or young man as he must now be, if he is still alive) is giving by his conduct stronger testimony in favour of the National School System than a thousand of your speculating philosophers can bring against it.'

'Well,' said I, 'you are apt to be sanguine in your views; but as I must confess they are very often right, so I will hope you may not have been deceived in this instance.'

It so happened, that two or three days after this conversation we were taking a walk together, and discussing various topics, such as the present state of things might well suggest, when we met a young man, a neighbour of mine, a mason, who

detained us two or three minutes, while he asked my directions about some work he was doing for me.

After he was out of hearing,—‘That,’ said I, ‘is one of the most respectable young men I know. Soon after I came here, more than four years ago, he married a young woman of a disposition similar to his own; and they live in that cottage that you see there, to the right of that row of beeches.’

‘I see it, I believe,’ said he, hardly looking the way I pointed, and not altogether seeming pleased at having our conversation thus interrupted.

‘He has two or three little children; and I believe sometimes it goes hard with them, as in the winter work is short hereabouts, and he does not like beating about far from home. I sometimes tell him he ought to look farther; but he is so fond of his home, his wife, and children, that I verily think he would rather live on potatoes seven days in the week with them, than have meat and beer by himself. And besides, I know he does not relish the companions he must work with at the town. However, on the whole, they do tolerably well, as they have a garden of a fair size, and he never spends an unnecessary penny.’

‘I am glad to hear it,’ said he; ‘but we were talking about the value of an apostolical succession in the ministry, were we not? and of the great ignorance and neglect now prevailing on the subject.’

‘We were,’ said I; ‘but to tell you the truth,

though I have bestowed considerable attention on the subject, and examined the various opinions which have been put forth on it, yet I have scarcely learned so much hereon from the works of learned theologians, as I have from repeated conversations with that very young man we just now met.'

'You surprise me,' said he.

'You may be surprised, but it is however true; and (if you have no objection) I will tell you how it was.'

'By all means,' he answered.

'When I first came to the parish, I looked about for some person to take charge of the Sunday School, as the master was old, and so deaf as to be unequal to the work. I was recommended to apply to Richard Nelson, (that is the man's name)—'

Here my friend interrupted me, saying, 'Richard Nelson? why, now I remember, that was the very name of the boy I travelled with.'

'Indeed!' said I, 'then doubtless it is the same person: for his age will agree with your account very well, and I know he was bred at — National School.'

'Well,' said he, 'I am quite delighted to find myself a true prophet in this instance.'

'Perhaps,' said I, 'you will be still more pleased, when you have heard all I have to tell you: you will find that your little present was by no means thrown away.'

'Go on,' said he, 'I am all attention.'

‘I was telling you, I believe, that I requested Nelson to become master of the Sunday School. After some little hesitation, he declined my offer, under the plea that he could not give constant and regular attendance; though he was willing to attend occasionally, and render what assistance he could. So it was arranged that the old master should still remain; and I afterwards discovered that an unwillingness to deprive him of the little emolument, was Nelson’s real reason for declining my offer. As the Sunday School is nearly three-quarters of a mile from my house, in a direction beyond Nelson’s, along the Beech Walk, as we call it, it frequently happened that we joined in company as we went to and fro. We generally talked over such subjects as had reference to the School, or to the state of religion in general; and amongst other topics, that on which you and I are conversing—the authority of Christian ministers. I remember it was on the following occasion that the subject was started between us. I thought that I had observed one Sunday, that he was making the boys of his class, (our School professes to be on the Bell System,) that he was, I say, making his boys read the nineteenth and some other of the Thirty-nine Articles relating to the ministerial office: and that afterwards he was explaining and illustrating them, after his usual manner, by referring them to suitable parts of Scripture. On our walk homewards, I inquired if I was right in my conjecture. He said, Yes:

and that, in the present state of things, he could not help thinking it quite a duty to direct the minds of young persons to such subjects. And on this and many subsequent occasions, he set forth his opinions on the matter, which I will state to you, as far as I can remember, in his own words.'

'My good mother,' he said, 'not long before her death, which happened about half a year before I came to live here, said to me very earnestly one day, as I was sitting by her bed-side—"My dear Richard, observe my words: never dare to trifle with GOD ALMIGHTY." By this I understood her to mean, that in all religious actions we ought to be very *awful*, and to seek nothing but what is right and true. And I knew that she had always disapproved of people's saying, as they commonly do, "that it little matters what a man's religion is, if he is but sincere;" and "that one opinion, or one place of worship, is as good as another." To say, or think, or act so, she used to call "Trifling with GOD's truth:" and do you not think, Sir, (addressing himself to me,) that she was right?'

'Indeed I do,' said I.

'And,' he said, 'I was much confirmed in these opinions by constantly reading a very wise, and, as I may say to you, precious book, which a gentleman gave me some years ago, whom I met by chance, when I was going to see my father in the infirmary. It is called "A Selection from

Bishop Wilson's Works," and there are many places in it which shew what his opinions were on this subject; and I suppose, Sir, there can be no doubt that Bishop Wilson was a man of extraordinary judgment and piety.'

'He has ever been considered so,' I answered.

'I could not think much of any one's judgment, or piety either, who should say otherwise,' he replied; 'and what Bishop Wilson says is this, or to this effect:—That "to reject the government of Bishops, is to reject an ordinance of GOD." *

'That "our salvation depends, under GOD, upon the ministry of those whom JESUS CHRIST and the HOLY GHOST have appointed to reconcile men to GOD." †

'That "the personal failings of ministers do not make void their commission." ‡

'That "if the Unity of the Church is once made a light matter, and he who is the centre of Unity, and in CHRIST'S stead, shall come to be despised, and his authority set at nought, then will error and infidelity get ground; JESUS CHRIST and His Gospel will be despised, and the kingdom of Satan set up again here as well as in other nations." § With many other expressions like these.

'And yet, Sir,' he continued, 'the gentleman who lives over there, (pointing to a great house in sight four or five miles off down the valley,) who is said to be a person of much learning, and

* Sac. Priv.

† Serm. 38.

‡ Ibid.

§ Charge, 1721.

who does a great deal of good, he does not take the matter in the same light. For he told a man of ——, whom I was working with, that if a person preached what was right and good, that was the best sign of his being ordained a minister, without the ceremony of laying on a Bishop's hands upon his head. And the man that told me, very much admired the opinion, in regard (he said) of its being so very *liberal*, or some such word. Though I confess I could not exactly see what there was so much to admire. Because, if the opinion were true, it was good; and if it were false, it was bad—equally as much (to my thinking) whether it were called liberal or bigoted.'

'Doubtless you were right,' said I.

'And,' he proceeded, 'it seemed to me (and I told the man so) like going round and round in a wheel, to say, If he is GOD'S minister, he preaches what is good; and if he preaches what is good, he is GOD'S minister. For still the question will be, What *is* right and good? And some would say one thing and some another; and some would say there is nothing right nor good at all in itself, but only as seems most expedient to every person for the time being. So for my own satisfaction, and hoping for GOD'S blessing on my endeavour, I resolved to search the matter out for myself as well as I could. My plan was this. First, to see what was said on the subject in the Church Prayer Book, and then to compare this with the Scriptures; and if, after all, I could not satisfy

myself, I should have taken the liberty of consulting you, Sir, if I had been here, or Mr. —, who was the minister at —, where I came from.'

'Yours was a good plan,' I said; 'but I suppose you had forgotten that the chief part of the Church Services which relate to these subjects, is not contained in the Prayer Books which we commonly use.'

'I was aware of that,' he answered; 'but my wife's father had been clerk of — parish, and it so happened that the churchwarden had given him a large Prayer Book, in which all the Ordination Services were quite perfect, though the book was ancient, and in some parts very ragged. This book my wife brought with her when we came here; and indeed she values it very highly on account of her poor father having used it for so many years. Thus you see, Sir, with the Bible and Prayer Book, and (as I hoped) GOD'S blessing on my labours, I was not, as you may say, unfurnished for the work.'

'Indeed, Richard, you were not,' I replied.

'Well then,' he proceeded, 'I first observed that the Church is very particular in not allowing any administration of the Sacraments, or any *public* service of ALMIGHTY GOD, to take place, except when there is one of her ministers to guide and take the lead in the solemnity. Thus not only in the administration of Baptism, and of the LORD'S Supper, but in the daily Morning and Evening Prayers, in the Public Catechizing of Children,

in the Solemnization of Marriage, in the Visitation of the Sick, and in the Burial of the Dead:—in all these cases the Christian congregation is never supposed complete, nor the service perfect, unless there be also present a minister authorized to lead the devotions of the people. And yet I also observed that neither minister nor people, not even with the leave of the Bishop himself, had power or authority given them to alter or vary from the rules set down in the Prayer Book. And often have I thought how well it would be if ministers and people too would be more careful to keep to the rules.’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘it is too true; we are all to blame.’

‘But,’ he proceeded, taking a small Prayer Book out of his pocket, ‘the question I had next to ask was—Who are meant by these ministers so often referred to in the Church Service. To this question I found a general answer in the Twenty-third, Twenty-sixth, and Thirty-sixth Articles; where the judgment of the Church is thus plainly given:—

1st. ‘That “it is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same.”

2ndly. ‘That “those *are* lawfully called and sent, who are chosen and called to the work by men who have public authority given them in

the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the LORD'S vineyard."

3rdly. 'That "though sometimes evil men may have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments; yet, forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in CHRIST'S, and do minister by His commission and authority, we may use their ministry" with full hope of GOD'S blessing.

4thly. 'That "whosoever are consecrated and ordained according to the Rites there prescribed, are rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordained."

'But here, Sir, I will take occasion to ask you whether it would not have been better, instead of calling the second order of Ministers Priests, to have used the word which is frequently found in the New Testament applied to them—"Elders," or "Presbyters."'

'Why,' I said, 'I have no doubt the wise and good men who framed the Prayer Book had a good reason for retaining the title of Priests. But in truth it is one of the very words you mentioned, only somewhat shortened by our forefathers in their pronunciation of it—Presbyter was made Prester, and that by degrees became Prest, or Priest.'

'That,' said he, 'is very remarkable, and proves that we ought to inquire before we find fault. But to go on with what I was saying: I next proceeded to read over, and I assure you, Sir, I

did it with great care, the three Services in our Great Prayer Book—namely, for Consecration of Bishops, Ordaining of Priests, and Making of Deacons. And I must confess to you that I could not but greatly admire them; and at the same time feel much astonishment at two considerations which they brought to my mind.'

'What were they, Richard?' I inquired.

'The one was,' he said, 'to think that after such a solemn dedication to the Ministry, there should be such a thing as a careless or a wicked clergyman. And yet, Sir, is it not also astonishing that after such a solemn dedication of ourselves as we all make to GOD in Baptism, there should be such a thing as a careless or a wicked Christian?'

'So it is,' I said; 'when we judge others we condemn ourselves. But what was the other ground of your surprise?'

'Why, it was this; that there should be any doubt what the opinion of the Church is respecting the Christian Ministry. Comparing the Ordination Service with the Liturgy and Articles, it seems to me quite clear, that in the judgment of the Church, none can show themselves duly authorized Ministers of CHRIST, who do not belong to one or other of the three orders, of Bishops, Priests, or Deacons.

'But, said I to myself, other Churches have erred, why may not this then be the misfortune of the Church of England also? and this very opinion may be one of her errors. You see then,

Sir, the next thing I had to do was to consult the Scriptures on the subject, and (if it be not too bold in such a one as I to say so) to try the Prayer Book by the Bible.'

'Your method was the best possible,' I said. 'But, if you please, do not use the expression, the Church *of* England, but the Church *in* England.'

'Why indeed, Sir,' said he, 'in the present state of things perhaps it would be more proper. But to proceed with my inquiry. I first observed, that in the History of the Jews, as contained in the Old Testament, as well as in that of Christians, in the New, the ALMIGHTY seems almost or quite always to have communicated His Will to mankind through some chosen Minister—some one, whether it were angel or man, who could give suitable evidence of the authority by which he spoke or acted. But there seemed to me to be this great difference between Jews and Christians, in this as in other cases: that in the Jews' religion, all the rules and regulations were set down so plainly and distinctly, that no one could mistake their meaning; for instance, in the Levitical laws concerning the priesthood; of what family and tribe the Priests and High Priest should be, what their respective duties, and what their dress, &c. Whereas, in the Christian religion, the rules and regulations, however important, and even necessary, are yet not so exactly set down. And I remember hearing a very good

and wise clergyman say, in a sermon at — Church, that this is probably what St. James means, when he calls the Gospel ‘a Law of Liberty;’ namely, that its rules and directions are *not* so plainly set down, *on purpose* that Christians might have freer space (I remember that was his expression) and opportunity to exercise their Faith and Love for their Redeemer. And I have sometimes thought myself, that what St. Paul says about the difference between walking by faith and by sight, seems to suit the different cases of Jews and Christians. *They* walked by sight, *we* must walk by faith; and faith, in this world, we are told, can see but as through a glass darkly.’

‘It seems so,’ I said.

He proceeded.

‘With this view I went on to examine the New Testament, expecting to find therein some *general* instruction respecting the institution and authority of Ministers in the Christian Church. But I did not expect that these rules should be as particular and distinct as those on the same subject in the Old Testament, any more than I should expect to find a command to Christians to observe the LORD’S Day set down as distinctly as the command to observe the Sabbath was set down for the Jews. And yet, Sir, I suppose all will agree, that no one who wilfully neglects the LORD’S Day can be a true Christian?’

‘There are strange opinions now afloat,’ said I;

‘and if many despise the LORD’S Ministers, it is no wonder if many also despise the LORD’S Day.

‘Indeed, Sir,’ said he, ‘it is not to be wondered at. But to go on with my statement. On carefully perusing the New Testament History, I remarked that our LORD did not grant ministerial authority to His disciples in general, but first to twelve, and then to seventy; that of those twelve, one was among the wickedest of mankind, and that our LORD knew (St. John vi. 64; xiii. 18.) his character when he appointed him; that possibly some of those seventy also might be unworthy persons; that our LORD, just before His departure, gave what may be called a fresh commission to His Apostles, which they should act upon after His ascension; that after that event, the twelve Apostles were the leading persons in the Christian Church, having under them two orders or degrees, *viz.* Bishops (sometimes called Elders) and Deacons; that this threefold division of Ministers in the Church lasted as far as the New Testament History reaches, the Apostles having set men over different Churches with Apostolical authority, to preside during their absence, and to succeed them after their decease. This sufficiently appears from places in St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy and Titus.’

‘Do you remember any of the passages?’ I asked him.

‘I cannot,’ he said, ‘call to mind chapter and verse; but I have with me a little paper of

memorandums which I use at the school, and which, if it be not too much trouble, I will thank you to look at.'

The paper was as follows; for I thought it well to copy what he had written into my pocket memorandum-book:—

It appears that Timothy had authority at Ephesus to check false or unedifying Teachers, 1 Tim. i. 3, 4;—to select persons proper to be ordained Bishops, iii. 1-7;—and also Deacons, iii. 8-13.

That he should have particular regard to the Elders who rule well. v. 17.

That he should be cautious of receiving accusations against Elders. v. 19.

That if any [Elders] were convicted, it was *his* duty to reprimand them publicly. v. 20.

That in his decisions he should be strictly impartial. v. 21.

That he should be very cautious on whom he laid his hands. v. 22.

That Timothy was in a station, which even the rich and great might respect. vi. 17.

That Timothy had been ordained by St. Paul himself, once, if not twice. 2 Tim. i. 6.

That at his ordination or consecration there was something remarkable in the *Sermon*. 1 Tim. iv. 14; i. 18.

That he was to commit what he had heard from St. Paul to faithful men, who should be able to pass it on to others. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

That Titus had authority to set in order what was wanting in the Cretan Church; and to ordain Bishops in every city. Tit. i. 5.

That he was to be cautious whom he selected for this office. i. 6-9.

That he should rebuke false teachers sharply. i. 13.

That if Titus *himself* was a pattern of good works and a teacher of truth, *the whole Church* would gain credit. ii. 7, 8.

That he should rebuke with all authority. ii. 15.

That he should suffer no man to despise him. ii. 15.

That after one or two admonitions he should reject heretical persons. iii. 10.

‘Now, Sir, it seems to me evident, from these and other similar passages, that there were certainly in the Church, *as far as the Testament History reaches*, three different ranks or orders of Ministers, one above the other.’

‘It is plainly so,’ I said.

‘But,’ said he, ‘there was one point which rather perplexed me, and I was some time before I could make out such an explanation of it as was satisfactory to myself.’

‘What was that?’ I asked.

‘Why,’ said he, ‘it was this. I considered that any person to whom the Apostles granted apostolical authority, (Timothy, for instance,) was from that time higher than a Presbyter or Bishop, and yet could not properly be called an Apostle. What then could he be called? I at last remembered a place in Bishop Wilson’s little book, which led me to reflect, that surely as there were Angels (whether it might mean guardians, or heavenly messengers, or missionary Bishops, as we might say) of the seven Churches in Asia—so Timothy might have been called the Angel of the Ephesian Church; and Titus, of the Church of Crete; and the same in other cases. And

it came into my thoughts, that perhaps, after St. John's decease, whether out of humility, or because (the Churches being settled) the ministers need no longer be missionaries, the title of Apostles or Angels was laid aside, and that of Bishops limited to the highest of the three orders.

'Thus I seemed to myself everywhere to have traced the threefold order, down from the beginning of the Gospel; the authority and distinction peculiar to each being preserved, a difference in name only taking place.

'Thus at first they were—Apostles, Elders, Deacons.

'After the decease of some of the Apostles, or at least, while St. John was yet living—Angels, Bishops, Deacons.

'At some period after St. John's decease—Bishops, Priests, Deacons.'

'I do not see how what you have said can be contradicted,' I replied.

'But,' he proceeded, 'there is one thing I must, Sir, confess to you, and it is this—that I have often said to myself, what a comfort it would be if it had pleased GOD to preserve to us some few writings of the good men who lived close after the Apostles, that so we might have known their opinion on matters of this kind; and we might have known, too, by what names *they* distinguished the different orders of Ministers one from another. For surely what they would think most proper in such cases, must be safest

of all rules for us to follow; unless (which is a thing not to be supposed) *their* rules should be contrary to those of the Apostles as set down in Scripture. So, Sir, I have often thought, if any such writings could be found, what a precious treasure they would be!

‘What,’ said I, ‘Richard, did you never hear of those who are called the Apostolic Fathers—Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius?’

‘I believe I have heard of them,’ he answered; ‘but I observed that you, Sir, and other clergymen, scarcely ever notice them in your sermons; and the man I mentioned just now told me that Mr. Cartwright, who is the minister of the Independent chapel at the town, and who is reckoned to be a very learned man and an admired preacher,—that he should say, in a sermon, that the works of the Fathers were very imperfect, and their opinion not much to be trusted to.’

‘But,’ said I, ‘Richard, if a person whose word you could take, were to show you an old book written by persons who had seen our SAVIOUR—who had heard St. John and St. Paul preach, and had been well acquainted with them—should you not value such a book, and wish to know whether there was anything in it which could throw light on the history of those early times of the Church, and especially with reference to the subjects you and I have been conversing on?’

‘Indeed, Sir, I should,’ he said; ‘but if what Mr. Cartwright said is true, it is too much to expect that any such treasure should be found by us.’

‘No, Richard,’ I said, ‘it is not too much. The kind Providence of GOD has permitted some of the writings of those good men to be preserved to this day. And there is no more doubt that they *are* their genuine writings, than that Bishop Ken wrote the Evening Hymn, or Bishop Wilson that little book you like so much.’

‘If this is indeed as you say,’ he replied, ‘we have great reason to be thankful for such a proof of GOD’S care for His Church. But I beg you, Sir, to tell me whether there is anything in these writings you speak of, which confirms what I have been venturing to state to you as my opinion gathered from Scripture, concerning the threefold distinction of Christian Ministers.’

‘Next Sunday,’ said I, ‘you shall see and judge for yourself.’

As we came home from Church in the afternoon of the following Sunday, he reminded me of my promise; and I gave him a written paper, containing a few extracts which I had translated from the works of the Apostolical Fathers, telling him that I might possibly have made a mistake here and there in the rendering, but that he

might depend on such being the general force and meaning of the passages.

The extracts I gave him were the following:—

‘Clement, with other my fellow labourers.’—*Phil.* iv. 3.

‘Ignatius and the holy Polycarp, the Bishop of the Smyrmæans, had formerly been disciples of the holy Apostle John.’—*Martyrdom of S. Ignatius.*

‘The Apostles, preaching throughout countries and cities, used to appoint their first-fruits, after they had proved them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons of those who should hereafter believe.’—*S. Clement to the Cor.*

‘The Apostles knew that there will be dispute about the name of Bishoprick, or Episcopacy, wherefore they appointed the aforementioned, and gave them authority beforehand, in order that if themselves should fall asleep, other approved men might succeed to their ministerial office.’—*The same.*

‘All of you follow the Bishop as JESUS CHRIST followed the FATHER; and the Presbytery as the Apostles; and reverence the Deacons as GOD’S ordinance. Let no man do any of those things which pertain to the Church without the Bishop. He that honoureth the Bishop, is honoured of GOD; he that doeth anything without the privity of the Bishop, doeth service to the Devil.’—*S. Ignat. to the Smyrm.*

‘Have regard to the Bishop, that GOD also may regard you. My soul for theirs who are subject to the Bishops, Elders, and Deacons; and may it be my lot to have a portion with them in GOD.’—*S. Ignat. to Polycarp.*

‘The Bishops who were appointed in the farthest regions are according to the will of JESUS CHRIST; whence it becometh you to go along with the will of the Bishop.’—*S. Ignat. to the Ephesians.*

‘That ye may obey the Bishop and the Presbytery, having your mind without distraction, breaking one bread.’—*The same.*

‘Some indeed talk of the Bishop, yet do everything without him; but such persons do not appear to me conscientious, on account of their congregations not being assembled strictly according to the commandment.’—*S. Ignat. to the Magnes.*

‘I exhort you to be zealous to do all things in divine concord: the Bishop presiding in the place of GOD, and the Presbyters in the place of the council of Apostles, and the Deacons (in whom I most delight) intrusted with the service of JESUS CHRIST.’—*The same.*

‘For as many as are GOD’s and JESUS CHRIST’s, these are with the Bishop.’—*S. Ignat. to the Philadelph.*

‘Be ye earnest to keep one Eucharist, for the flesh of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is one, and there is one cup in the unity of His blood, one altar, as one Bishop, together with the Presbytery and Deacons, my fellow-servants.’—*The same.*

‘Hold to the Bishop, and to the Presbytery and Deacons. Without the Bishop do nothing.’—*The same.*

‘When you are subject to the Bishop as to JESUS CHRIST, ye appear to me as living not according to man’s rule, but according to JESUS CHRIST.’—*S. Ignat. to the Trall.*

‘He that without the Bishop, and Presbytery, and Deacon, doeth aught, that person is not pure in his conscience.’—*The same.*

‘Polycarp, and the Presbyters who are with him, to the Church of GOD sojourning at Philippi.’—*S. Polyc. to the Philipp.*

‘Being subject to the Presbyters and Deacons, as to GOD and CHRIST.’—*The same.*

Two or three weeks afterwards, as we were walking homewards after Evening Service, he gave me back the paper, with expressions of great satisfaction and thankfulness; and added, that he blessed GOD for having led him to make the inquiry; and that he was sure if many religiously-disposed persons, who now think little of such matters, would turn their minds to them without partiality, they would fear to separate from a Church like ours, which, whatever may be its imperfections, is substantially pure in its doctrine, and in the Apostolical Succession of its Ministry.

‘Sir,’ said he, ‘I am a poor hard-working man, as you know; but the interests of my soul, and of those dear to me, are of as great importance in the sight of Almighty GOD, and ought to be to me also, as if my lot had been cast in a higher station. It is to me, therefore, no matter of indifference (as many have told me it should be) what is the truth on these great subjects; but I am more and more sure that it is a Christian duty first to inquire into them, and, when we have found the truth, to act up to it humbly but resolutely.

‘The times are bad, I confess; but yet, young though I am, I do not expect, as the world now goes, to see them much better.

‘What our LORD said about iniquity abounding, and love growing cold, seems to be but too suitable to our present state. I have often thought it and said it, though I have seldom met with anyone

who would agree with me in the opinion. The Church *of* England I can plainly see, more plainly perhaps than a person in a higher station, is in a manner gone. The Church *in* England, GOD be thanked, however afflicted, remains, and ever will, I trust, whether the world smiles or frowns upon her.

‘I have therefore determined, Sir, by GOD’S grace, to look to myself, my wife, and children; and not to trust the world to do us any good, either in time or in eternity.

‘And if by following THE TRUTH now, we shall all be together hereafter in the Society of Prophets, Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs, you know then, Sir, we shall have nothing more to wish for, nothing more to fear—every doubt will be satisfied, every difficulty removed. And I assure you, Sir, it is the very comfort of my life to spend a portion of every Sunday in looking forward to that happy time.’

‘God bless you, Richard!’ said I, as we parted at his garden gate. And when I came home, I could not but fall on my knees, and thank GOD for having given me such a parishioner.

II.

‘ Athanasius’s Creed ought *thoroughly* to be received and believed; for [it] may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.’—*Article* viii.

I LOOK back with much pleasure to the visit I had from my friend Mr. Woodnot, the Bristol merchant I before spoke of.

He stayed with me some days, and we had many agreeable rambles and discussions together, which were to me peculiarly interesting, from the wide experience he had had of men and things, and of places too, as he had been often abroad, in Switzerland, in Turkey, and on different parts of the American Continent, where he had spent some years.

Two or three days after our meeting with Richard Nelson, as stated before, we took our walk (it being a pleasant evening towards the end of August) along the side of a little stream, which we traced for a mile or two down the valley, returning by a kind of natural terrace, which terminated in my favourite beech-walk. The sun was low when we got here; and we stood still (it was not far from Nelson’s garden hedge) to admire its rich glow

on the opposite side of the valley. I was pointing out to my friend a bold and almost mountainous outline of hills rising in the distance, far to the west in Lancashire—Pendle Hill, as I fancied—and other lofty tracts in the neighbourhood of Clitheroe; and we were speculating on the distance they might be from us.

‘Sir,’ said a voice, which startled me, from my not observing that anyone was near, ‘Pendle Hill must be full fifty miles off; what you see is most likely some of the high ground beyond Halifax.’

‘Why, Richard,’ said I, ‘what are you doing down there?’ for I could scarcely see more than his head. ‘You seem to be making a strong entrenchment round your castle.’

‘I dare say, Sir,’ he answered, ‘you may wonder what I am about; but at this time of year, when the springs are low, I generally spend an hour, when I have leisure in an evening, in repairing the garden-mound, that it may be fit to stand against the assaults of what I call my two winter enemies.’

‘What can they be?’ I asked; ‘I did not know that you had any enemies.’

‘Yes, Sir, I have,’ he replied; ‘at least my garden has two—land-floods, and Scotch ponies. Almost every winter, once, if not twice, there is a violent land-flood from the high ground behind the house; and if this ditch were not kept clear, to take the water off immediately, the garden would not recover the damage all the next year.’

To be sure, this kind of flood does not commonly last many hours; but that is long enough, you know, Sir, to spoil the labour of weeks and months.'

'That I can understand,' I answered; 'but how you can be in any alarm about Highland ponies, I cannot imagine!'

'Why,' said he, 'you know, Sir, that there is a fair at the town every year, early in the spring, where a great many of these ponies are bought and sold; and for many years past, Mr. Saveall, the owner of this field, has let it for one day and night to the horse-dealer, (a well-known man out of Lincolnshire,) to turn those ponies into, as well as other horses he may have purchased at the fair. The first year I was here, I was not aware of this custom, and had taken no precaution against it; so these little mountaineers got in at a weak place in the hedge during the night, and trod the garden, as one may say, to a mummy. So, to protect myself for the future against such mischievous visitors, I put this fence along, which I was now repairing. And if you will please to look at it, I think you, Sir, will allow that it was not badly contrived, though I say it, who should not say it.'

All along the whole length of the garden, (which might be perhaps nearly one hundred yards,) on that side which was next the foot-path, he had fixed very neatly, about half way up the slope of the ditch on the opposite side, a double

indented line of sharp strong stakes, pointing upwards, presenting a sort of *chevaux de frise*; an impenetrable barrier, which no pony, Highland or Lowland, could possibly get through or over.

We said something in commendation of his skill and precaution: on which he observed, 'I am glad, Sir, you approve of what I have done; for it has cost me a good deal of labour. And my neighbour, Farmer Yawn, who has been standing by me for the last three quarters of an hour, and went away just as you came up,—he says I am taking a great deal of trouble, and very likely for nothing; how can I be sure there will be a land-flood, or that the man will turn in the ponies? and besides, (says he,) neither land-flood nor ponies would stay twelve hours. But I know better, Sir, than to take Mr. Yawn's advice; for if my bit of garden should be ruined for a twelvemonth, it would be no comfort afterwards to think that perhaps it might not have happened, or that the mischief was quickly done, or that with timely caution it might have been prevented.'

After a few more words we wished him a good evening, and walked on for some little way in silence, which my companion put an end to by saying, 'It must be confessed that our friend Nelson is a sensible man; and not the less so, (added he, with a smile,) because I am sure he will agree with me in opinion.'

For in the course of our walk we had been

discussing rather earnestly the subject of the Athanasian Creed; the question between us not being as to the doctrines contained in it, but as to the expediency of retaining it in the Liturgy, supposing any changes should take place in that also, as in everything else. Not that there was any real difference of opinion between us on that point either; but wishing to know his views on the subject, I had been urging the various objections, such of them at least as are most plausible, and had been gratified with observing how little weight he attached to them; and my satisfaction was the greater, because, from his education and profession, as a layman and a merchant, he could not be accused of what have been scornfully designated as 'academical and clerical prejudices.'

In the course of our conversation, he had expressed himself most earnestly in favour of the Athanasian Creed; alleging, for this his opinion, various reasons, and among others the following: 'that he regarded this Creed in the light of a fence or bulwark set up to protect the Truth against all innovations and encroachments; and that to take it away, particularly in times when popular opinion, or rather feeling, was against it, would be almost high-treason against GOD; (that was his word) would be, so far as in us lies, wilfully to expose the Truth to be trodden down by its enemies.'

'Now,' said he, 'whilst you were talking to our

friend Nelson, it struck me that his care about his garden very aptly expresses our duty in respect of this very subject. For why is this Creed so obnoxious? simply because it is so strongly and sharply worded; because it leaves no opening for a semi-Socinian or a five-quarter Latitudinarian to creep in at; because it presents an insurmountable obstacle to every intruder who would trample under foot the LORD'S vineyard.

'And even if the aspect of things were more favourable, even if there were no sign of danger at hand, I should much rather advise that, like Nelson, we should look forward to probable or possible inroads, than venture to neglect, much less to remove, our fences.

'But,' he continued, 'in the present condition of what is by courtesy (or one might almost say, facetiously) called the Christian world, it were in my judgment little less than madness to yield so strong a position—one too, which, if once lost, can never be recovered.'

And then he referred to what he had before been insisting on—the great mistake made by the American Church in rejecting the Athanasian Creed from her Liturgy; and how, from personal observation during his residence first at New York, and afterwards at Charleston, he was sure the time would come when its loss would be felt and acknowledged by the true sons of that Church. 'And I wish,' added he, as we concluded our walk and our discussion together, 'you would endeavour

to ascertain what are the sentiments of our friend Nelson on this subject, for I have no doubt he has turned it over in his mind; and his opinion must certainly be of value, because, happily for himself, he has not been, I suppose, in the way of hearing the profane absurdities that are daily written and spoken against this inestimable Creed.'

'Yes,' said I, 'whatever his opinions are, I doubt not they will be found candid, and free from unreasonable prejudice; and I will take an early opportunity of ascertaining them.'

Soon after this my friend left me, and I promised to communicate to him the result of my inquiries. The Sunday following, it being a serene autumnal morning, according to the description of the Divine Poet—'most calm, most bright,'—I proceeded earlier than usual towards the school.

When I came up to Richard's cottage, he was standing at the gate, with his infant child in his arms, looking as if he could envy no man; as if Sunday were to him what it should be to us all—'the couch of time, care's balm and bay.'

'You are rather earlier, Sir, than usual,' he said.

'Yes,' I answered; 'the morning is so lovely, so Sunday-like, I could not endure to stay any longer within doors.'

After some few observations had passed between us—in which he expressed, with an unaffected solemnity of manner peculiar to himself, his sense

of the value of each returning LORD'S day, calling it (and I think he used, though unconsciously, Izaak Walton's very words) 'a step towards a blessed eternity'—I asked him if he would have any objection to take two or three turns with me in the beech-walk, as it still wanted a considerable time to school.

He answered that he would gladly accompany me, especially as it might be better for the child to be taken under the shade of the trees.

'Richard,' said I, 'my friend Mr. Woodnot—and I may call him your friend too—was much amused with your plan for keeping off the enemies of your garden. He commended it highly, and thinks you therein set a good example to all true Churchmen, and especially to us of the Clergy.'

'In what respect, Sir?' he asked.

'Why,' I replied, 'in keeping your fences strong and sharp, and contrived in the best possible way to serve the purpose *of* fences—namely, to preserve one's property from injury. For we understood you to say, that, were it not for a little observation and foresight, however well all might be for three hundred and sixty-four days in the year, in one twenty-four hours all might be laid waste, either by the torrent from the high ground above you, or by the cattle from your neighbour's field.'

'Indeed, Sir,' he answered, 'that is no more than the truth. But I confess I do not exactly see how in acting thus I have set any particularly

good example. No person of common sense could do otherwise.'

'As to that,' I replied, 'perhaps what some witty man said of common honesty, he might too have said of common sense, that it is a very *uncommon* thing. But be that as it may, it certainly would appear to me to be no mark of sense nor of honesty either, if we Christians who are 'put in trust' (as St. Paul speaks) 'with the Gospel,' were to draw back from our strong advanced positions, in the vain hope that the Enemy would be content with this success and encroach no further.'

'May I ask, Sir,' he said, 'what is it you refer to?'

'Why, Richard,' I replied, 'of course you have heard that a great many people think the Church Prayer Book ought to be altered; and that first and foremost the Athanasian Creed ought to be put out of it.'

'Sir,' said he, 'I have heard more than one person make this observation, but I never took much account of it till about a year or eighteen months ago, when a brother-in-law of mine, who is fond of poring over the newspapers, told me he had been reading extracts from the works of a famous preacher, one Dr. Hoadley, which I am sorry to say he was inclined to admire. For in these extracts there were objections made to other parts of the Church Service, and particularly to the Athanasian Creed, which (the Dr. said)

was a great blot in the Prayer Book, and that he wished we were well rid of it, with other such disrespectful expressions. Now, Sir, it seemed to me such a thing, for a Clergyman who had signed the Articles and the Prayer Book, and had his maintenance from the Church, and had taken an oath before GOD and man to teach the truth to his flock, *according to the Prayer Book*; that a Church Minister should take upon him to omit so remarkable a portion of the Church Service; nay more, should speak so slightingly of what he had solemnly assented to, and was even sworn to; this seemed to me to be astonishing, and, I must confess to you, even shocking. And, Sir, I thought of what my mother had said to me in her last illness, about the danger of trifling with GOD ALMIGHTY. I thought too, if there should be many such Clergymen as this Dr. Hoadley, what confusion and perplexity they would throw people's minds into, driving some perhaps into downright infidelity. And then I went on to reflect, what if *my* poor children should hereafter fall into the way of some such false teachers, and learn to deny the LORD that bought them, and to despise the SPIRIT of Grace.

'This thought I could not endure; so I resolved, that with GOD's gracious help, I would search the matter out for myself; for surely, Sir, it is a matter in which not the Clergy only, but we all are deeply interested.'

'You say right,' I replied; 'the knowledge of

GOD'S truth must be the greatest earthly treasure to us all. It unquestionably concerns the Laity full as much as it does the Clergy, to ascertain the Truth and to keep it; also to hand it on pure and uncorrupted to their children after them.'

He proceeded: 'My plan was this; first to endeavour to make out what was the intention of the Church in appointing this and the other two Creeds to be occasionally used; and then to try this Athanasian Creed by Scripture rules; and if I could not reconcile it to them, why then certainly, however unwillingly, I should have joined in opinion with those who wish to have it left out of the Prayer Book.'

'A very good plan,' said I; 'but you must recollect that the enemies of this Creed would ask, what possible reason you could have for being *unwilling* to part with it, especially when you know that great numbers of people have so vehement a dislike to it.'

'Sir,' said he, 'I have long made up my mind, that on questions of this kind relating to GOD and Eternity, people's likings and dislikings are not much in the scale either way. But I think, Sir, I can offer one or two good excuses for my being unwilling to have this Creed laid aside. In the first place, it would give me pain to have any great alterations made in such a book as the Prayer Book, which I have been used to from my infancy, which as a child I was always taught to reverence, and which (I am not ashamed to

say) I do reverence from my heart more and more the older I grow. In the next place, I am sure all must allow that some parts of the Athanasian Creed are very noble and beautiful to hear, especially when they are well read or repeated. And again, even a child may see that if this Creed be put away, great encouragement will be given, not only to professed infidels, but also to many wild thoughtless persons, who would fain believe that Religion, like everything else, needs to be radically reformed.'

'But, Richard,' I said, 'you are not, I suppose, so vain as to imagine that our Church Reformers will be willing to keep the Prayer Book just as it is, merely because you and I and a few more admire some of the clauses in this Creed.'

'Sir,' said he, 'you may be sure I never imagined such a thing. I was not presuming to give an opinion, whether or not the Prayer Book is likely to be improved by any alterations which may be made in it. I was only excusing myself for being loth to part with the Athanasian Creed.'

'But,' said I, 'will you now tell me what conclusion you came to in your enquiry into the intention of the Church in appointing this and the other two Creeds to be used?'

'I remembered,' he said, 'that I had heard you, Sir, or some one whose opinion I could take on these subjects, make an observation, that the three Creeds were not written all at the same

time, but at three different periods. That the Apostles' Creed was made first, either in the time of the Apostles, or very soon after. That the Nicene Creed came next, after an interval of two hundred years or more. And that then again, after another considerable space, I think I understood more than a century, followed the Creed of St. Athanasius, as it is called.

'So it came into my thoughts that the Church seemed to act like a tender mother very anxious for her children, from the very first; but growing still more and more anxious as they grow older, are more exposed to dangers, and yet less and less willing to yield themselves to her control.

'Thus it may seem, that in the most ancient, the Apostles' Creed, a plain simple rule of faith is given.

'In the next, the Nicene Creed, *the same rule is laid down*, but more at length, and in a tone of anxiety and caution as if the enemy were at hand.

'But in the last, the Athanasian Creed, where still *the very same rule of faith is laid down*, the alarm is loudly sounded, there is throughout an expression of urgent warning, as needful for persons in the very midst of foes, some open, and more secret foes, who would rob GOD of His honour, and man of the everlasting inheritance purchased for him by his Saviour's Blood.'

'Indeed,' said I, 'it is fearful to think to what lengths the pride of human reason will draw

charitable, even by some who think themselves, and desire to be thought by others, very serious Christians.'

'Sir,' said he, 'to any *Christian* who was disposed to think so ill of it, I should like just to mention a conversation I had some time last year with a man of our parish, Edmund Plush, the man that has set up the new beer-house. You know, Sir, I dare say, that he was once a gentleman's servant.'

'I have heard so,' I answered; 'but as I see some of the boys coming, it is time for me to leave you, and make the best of my way to the school.'

'And I,' said he, 'will take the child back, and be after you in a quarter of an hour; but in the evening I shall hope, Sir, to have some further conversation with you.'

'I hope so too,' I answered. But, as it happened, I was called to go after the Evening Service to visit a sick person in a distant part of the parish; and a week or two passed away before we again met. He then happened to come to my house one evening to settle an account; I desired he might come to me into my study; and when we had concluded our business, I told him I wished he would stay half an hour, that we might finish the conversation which we had broken off so abruptly before.

He said, if I were disengaged he would be glad to stay; and not without some difficulty I prevailed on him to sit down.

‘Richard,’ said I, ‘if you recollect, you were going to tell me of a conversation you had with Edmund Plush.’

‘Yes, Sir,’ he replied; ‘I had two or three days work, pointing his garden wall; (for Edmund is very curious about his fruit, especially about some favourite Orleans plums :) and one day, as he was standing by me, and running on with his talk about alterations and reforms, he said, among other observations not very moderate, that the Church Prayer Book wanted to be altered and reformed as much as anything.’

‘To this I replied, that “alteration was one thing, and reform was another; and that if the Prayer Book was altered, it did not follow that it would be reformed.”

‘He then went on to say, that while he was footman at Squire Martingal’s, over in Cheshire, one day, when he was waiting at table, and there were four or five gentlemen at dinner, they were talking about the Prayer Book, and whether it was not now time for it to be altered.

‘And the Squire gave it as his opinion that there was one word in particular which he wished very much to see put entirely out of the Book; and that was, the word “damnation.” Such words as that, he said, ought not to be in a book which gentlefolks were expected to sit and hear.

‘Edmund went on to say, that there was a gentleman at the table, who observed, that it would be better to alter the word to “condemnation;” of

which the company very much approved, though, (as Plush himself remarked,) it was not easy to see what was gained by the alteration.

‘Now, Sir, it does seem to me, that Squire Martingal and his friends forgot, when they made such short work with the Prayer Book, that there was the Bible still in their way, quite as much needing to be corrected and amended.

‘And I told Edmund so; and I also told him, that if I were in his place, I should not like to go about repeating private conversations which he might have overheard at his master’s table; especially when they were so little calculated to be of use.

‘However, Edmund must do as he pleases; but for myself, Sir, I do assure you, that after giving the subject the best consideration in my power, the objections which people make against the Athanasian Creed, are, to my thinking, not at all more substantial than Squire Martingal’s against the Prayer Book and Bible. Indeed, Sir, it is my opinion, that there is nothing in that Creed either unscriptural or uncharitable, but quite the very contrary; that it is essentially, (as I once heard you call the Communion Service,) “in its matter, Christian Truth; and in its manner, Christian Love.” And, Sir, if you will not be weary of me, I will try to show you how I came to this conclusion.’

‘Richard,’ said I, ‘you need not fear that you will tire me.’

‘Well, Sir,’ he proceeded, ‘it seemed to me plain from the Scriptures, (what no one indeed will deny or question,) that the Great ALMIGHTY GOD should be the object of all our Love and Adoration.

‘From the same Scriptures it also appeared, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour and Hope, is entitled to all our Love and Adoration.

‘And again, from the same Scriptures, it appears that the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, the only Sanctifier, Guide, and Guardian of His Church, is entitled to all our Love and Adoration.’

‘Certainly,’ I replied; ‘no one, who believes the Scriptures, can doubt this.’

‘And is not this,’ he said, ‘the very doctrine of the *first* part of the Creed; “that the Father is GOD, the Son is GOD, and the Holy Ghost is GOD; and yet they are not three GODS, but one GOD”? In like manner, if any man inquire for the very foundation of Christian hope and consolation, surely it is the doctrine that GOD our SAVIOUR took on Him our frail and mortal nature; that He was “perfect man,” as well as “perfect GOD.” Without this doctrine, the *peculiar* hopes and consolations of the Gospel fade away and disappear. Now this is the great truth pressed on our thoughts in the *second* part of the Athanasian Creed, where we are taught boldly to maintain that “the right faith is, that we BELIEVE AND CONFESS,—not believe only, but believe and

confess,—that our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, is GOD AND MAN.” ’

‘Yes,’ I answered; ‘it is difficult to imagine how any one who acknowledges the truth of the Scriptures, can deny and question this. But you must, I am sure, be aware, that many people object, that this doctrine is not simply stated, and so left to every one’s own conscience to approve, but that attempts are made to draw out distinctions and explanations, which are not in the Scripture, and which no one can understand; and then, after all, people are made to say, that whoever does not believe all this has no chance of salvation.’

‘Sir,’ he replied, ‘there is a verse in the Psalms, which seems to give an answer to such objectors; “If I should say like them, I should condemn the generation of GOD’s children.” No one will dare deny that those who framed this Creed, and those who put it into our Prayer Book, were good and holy men, sincerely anxious for the honour of ALMIGHTY GOD, and for the salvation of men’s souls. It was surely not *their* fault that these distinctions and explanations, (if they are to be so called,) became necessary, but the fault of rash or loose-minded people, who attempted to corrupt the hearts of the simple with their *false* distinctions and *false* explanations.

‘Against such, the Church, as a good parent should, warns her sons in the strongest terms;

and if stronger terms could have been found, no doubt she would have used them.

‘And it seems to me, that it is not at all the intention of the Church, in this Creed or anywhere else, to endeavour to explain what is above human comprehension; but only to warn us that quibbles and pretended distinctions have been made of old, and will be again, against the essential doctrines of the Gospel; and that, come in whatever shape they may, they are to be opposed at once with a sharp and strong denial; to be at once, and as the Article says, “thoroughly” rejected.

‘And the absolute need of some such strong impenetrable fence appears from what I have heard, that there have been Church people, and even Clergymen, who denied these doctrines, and (as might be expected,) scorned this Creed. How they could reconcile their conduct to their consciences, it is not for me to say; but it is plain that if the fence were taken away and weakened, the danger to the fold would be much increased.’

‘I fully agree with you,’ was my reply; ‘but you know those who dislike this Creed assert, that the “Fence,” as you call it, is much sharper and stronger than it need be; and that it would be better to have no “Monitory Clauses” at all, than any expressed in such strong, and, as they call them, violent terms.’

‘Sir,’ he answered, ‘you know that in different

places in the New Testament we are taught that adultery, fornication, drunkenness, and other such crimes, are entirely unsuitable to the Christian Profession, and that persons who are guilty of them do in practice renounce the Gospel.

‘Now supposing it should be thought well by the Governors of the Church to set forth a solemn warning to profligates thus worded:—

‘ “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he avoid the crimes of adultery, whoredom, drunkenness, and blasphemy; which crimes, unless everyone do carefully abstain from, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly;”

‘And if then were to follow some solemn admonitions, setting forth, (according to the sense, though not in the very words of Scripture,) the necessity of self-denial, mortification, and constant communion with ALMIGHTY GOD in prayer and at His holy Table, so that the affections may be kept set on high and heavenly things; and all concluding thus:—

‘ “This is the rule of Christian Purity, which except a man observe faithfully he cannot be saved;”

‘Do not you, Sir, think such warnings would be quite agreeable to Scripture and to Christian Charity?’

‘Indeed I think so,’ I replied.

‘And yet,’ he proceeded, ‘supposing such an admonition as this were to be made by authority, and ordered to be printed in all the Prayer

Books, and to be read twelve times a year in every Church in England, do you not think there would be a great outcry against it; and that many people, when it was going to be read, would shut their books, or perhaps go out of the Church?’

‘It is too probable,’ I replied, ‘considering how little account is now made of crimes of this kind, even by many who are thought religious people. Indeed I have understood from a person I can rely upon, otherwise I could not have credited it, that one of the objections which Mr. Cartwright himself brought against the Prayer Book was, that in the Litany, fornication is termed “a deadly sin.”’

‘It is strange, indeed, Sir,’ said he, ‘and sad to think that anyone who believes the Scriptures could offer such an objection. But it confirms an opinion I was going to express to you. For if a good kind of man, as Mr. Cartwright is said to be, objects to the Litany on such grounds, how much more is it to be expected that such an admonition as that which I have spoken of would be frequently scorned and hooted at.

‘And then,’ continued he, ‘supposing such an admonition as this had been made and used in the Church for hundreds of years, and it were now to be left out in the reformed Prayer Book, would not such a measure give great satisfaction and encouragement to all the loose dissolute people throughout the country?’

‘That cannot be doubted,’ I answered. ‘But

there is one objection, (absurd enough, to be sure,) which people offer against the Athanasian Creed, which you have not noticed, perhaps because you have never heard of it.

‘The objection I mean is, that this Creed leaves no allowance for unavoidable ignorance, or bad education; nor any chance even for persons of weak doubting minds, no not for idiots, or children, to escape from its heavy censures.

‘It is obviously an absurd objection, yet it is what people do urge, and people too who make pretension to reason and religion.’

‘Sir,’ said he, ‘I can never suppose that any really conscientious person, whose mind was free from prejudice, could offer such an objection.

‘It must be quite plain to all candid minds, that as in the Scripture itself, so in the Church Prayer Book, we are always instructed to believe that our merciful GOD makes allowance for our weakness and blindness in matters of knowledge and faith, as well as in other things. As in the Scriptures, so in the Church Prayer Book, we are always taught, that occasional doubt and perplexity are no proof of want of Faith; that he truly believes who *acts* (if I may so say) *upon trust*; who like Abraham, the father of the faithful, “obeys and goes on” obeying, “not knowing whither he goes;” knowing only that if he follow GOD’s guidance, he must be right.

‘It is too always taught, as in the Scriptures, so in the Prayer Book, that upon true repentance,

sincere faith in the Blood and Mediation of the One Redeemer, and entire submission to the guidance of the One Sanctifier, it is, I say, *always* taught, that the door of mercy is open even to the most inveterate sinners, whatever the nature of their sins might have been; unless indeed the sin against the HOLY GHOST be considered an exception; to guard Christians against which, may be supposed one great and surely charitable purpose of this Creed.

‘How then,’ he proceeded, ‘can the Church with any show of reason be called “uncharitable,” which, with this evangelical doctrine implied *in all her Services*, uses occasionally the strongest language of warning, (or even of threatening,) against fatal sins and errors, if by any means she may preserve the souls committed to her charge steadfast in the faith, “the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints”?’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘*once for all*, never to be changed or frittered away in base compliance with the ever-varying customs and fancies of worldly and self-conceited men.’

‘And, Sir,’ he proceeded, ‘I put it to myself in this way. What a fearful thing it would be for a person on his death-bed to deny the SON OF GOD, the only Redeemer, and the SPIRIT OF GOD, the only Comforter! Now the Church Prayer Book considers us all as it were on our death-beds, or at least but a little way from them. The Services for the Visitation of the Sick, and the

Burial of the Dead, come very close after Baptism and the Catechism. As we should wish to *die*, so the Church would have us *live*. If it be an awful thought to pass into *Eternity* in wilful ignorance or negligence of the essential truths of the Gospel; is it not also an awful thought that people should spend this their probationary *time* in such ignorance or negligence? And again, I would ask, can the Church be called "uncharitable," which earnestly and incessantly, and in the plainest, strongest words that the English language can supply, warns her members of their danger in this respect?'

'Certainly, Richard,' I replied, 'what you say is most worthy to be thought on by all persons who find fault with this Creed. But I wish you to recollect, that many of them take what they call "high ground" in their argument. They confidently assert that it is "bigoted," "unscriptural," "unchristian," and other such hard names, to pretend that "modes of faith" (that is their term) are of any great importance, or indeed of any importance at all; that if a man's life is in the right, his faith can't be wrong; that *of course* adultery and those kind of things are forbidden in the Testament, but that there are few passages or (as some of them say) none at all, which can be brought forward in support of the opinions put forth in the Athanasian Creed; much less (they assert) can any passages be

found, denouncing so heavy a woe against those who reject these opinions.'

'Sir,' he replied, with more than even his usual energy, 'I will be bold to say, that there are as many passages in the New Testament, distinctly proving and supporting the great doctrines put forth in the Athanasian Creed, as there are passages expressly forbidding adultery, and other such crimes. But supposing it were otherwise, it really does not appear to me that the case would be different. *Gambling* is not *in words* forbidden (so far as I can recollect) in any part or passage of the Old or New Testament; yet no one doubts,—I mean, no serious thinking person,—that it is one of the most fatal habits a person can get into; not because it is expressly forbidden in any part or passage, but because it is against the whole Gospel; *utterly inconsistent with a Christian's practice.*

'Now, Sir, it really does appear to me, that to deny the great doctrines contained in this noble Creed, is not merely to go against express passages of Scripture; passages, I mean, wherein our LORD JESUS, and the Blessed SPIRIT, are spoken of as GOD; but more than this, it is against the whole Gospel, *utterly inconsistent with a Christian's faith.*'

'Well, Richard,' I said, 'the considerations you have suggested are certainly such as should lead all Christians to pause before they encourage in themselves or others any dislike of

this ancient, and as you justly call it, this noble Creed.'

'Sir,' he replied, 'in my poor judgment it is indeed a noble, a magnificent Confession.

'But still, noble and magnificent as it is, if it, or any part of it, were against Scripture, or against Christian Charity, I, for one, should not be easy till it were put out of the Prayer Book.

'How happy then am I to think that it breathes the very spirit of pure Christian Charity; of Love more than parental; of Love like His, Sir, who *so* "often would have gathered His children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, BUT THEY WOULD NOT!"'

'Yes, Richard,' I said; 'and often as this tender yearning anxiety for men's souls is displayed in the conduct and words of our adored Master, I have frequently thought it nowhere more strikingly appears, than in that pathetic chapter of warnings to which you refer, the twenty-third of St. Matthew; a chapter truly of "monitory clauses."'

'Sir,' he answered, 'it might almost be expected of those who rashly accuse the Church of uncharitableness for retaining the Athanasian Creed, that they should also wish to have that chapter left out of the Calendar; as indeed I have heard that they do wish many of the Psalms to be omitted on some such ground.

‘But it is now time for me to wish you good evening; hoping, Sir, that I have not taken too great a liberty in thus speaking out my opinions, or wearied you by staying too long.’

‘Richard,’ said I, ‘once for all, believe me it is one of the chief comforts and encouragements I have, to be with you at Church and at School, and to talk with you on these great subjects.’

III.

‘Ye hear in the Gospel the express words of our Saviour Christ, that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. *Whereby ye may perceive the great necessity of this Sacrament, where it may be had.*’—*Office of Baptism for those of Riper Years.*

DURING the summer, after the conversation last related, in which, as the reader may remember, we had been speaking of the Athanasian Creed, I was called away to a distance from home by the unexpected illness of a near relation, which became serious, and lasted so long as to keep me absent for two or three Sundays. The time of year was about Midsummer, and it so happened that one of the Sundays was the eighth after Trinity. Thinking over the first morning Lesson of the day, as I sat watching by my kinsman’s bed-side, I was forcibly struck by the awful way in which it appears to impress upon men the duty of separating themselves, in some way or other, from unbelievers. ‘Eat no bread, nor drink water, neither turn again by the way that thou camest:’

that is, 'however tired, hungry, and thirsty you may be, and however kind and pressing they may be, have nothing at all to say to them: do not even return the same road, but make yourself as strange among them as ever you can.' Long and deeply, with my Bible in my hand, did I muse upon this history, and the more I thought, the more I was convinced, putting everything together, that such as I have said is its true moral and meaning. I must own, however, that the train of thought was not altogether agreeable to me. I could not disengage myself from an unpleasant, though not a very distinct, conviction that this material part of piety, separation from the enemies of God, had not been sufficiently pressed on my people, in my course of parochial instruction. The thought came across my mind, 'What if any of them now should go astray for want of due warning on that point, and should come to a bad end?' And I secretly determined with myself, in the silence of the sick-room, that I would endeavour for the future to supply this great deficiency, and that until Church discipline can be restored again, (which the Prayer Book teaches us to wish and pray for,) I would try to prevail on those who were most likely to be prevailed on to act upon the principles of it, and establish something like it in their own houses: using a kind of holy reserve towards those who will not hear the Church. These thoughts occupied me that night during most of my waking hours; my patient happily

sleeping soundly, and my anxiety about him of course growing less: and when towards morning I was relieved on my post as nurse, the same thoughts still haunted me in my dreams. At last I settled into a sound slumber, and, as was not unnatural, overslept myself. I was awakened on the Monday morning, an hour after the usual time, by my friend's servant bringing a letter into my room, which I saw by the post-mark came from my own parish, but I could not at all recollect the hand-writing. I opened it eagerly, not knowing what to expect, and read as follows:

‘Honoured and dear Sir,

‘I make bold to trouble you with a few lines, as I find on calling at the Parsonage that Mr. Mason is not yet well enough for you to leave him: which a little troubled me, for I wanted to ask your kind advice on a matter of some consequence, and I could do it much more comfortably by word of mouth. As it is, I must try and state my case to you by letter, hoping that I shall be able to make it plain, and knowing that you will excuse other defects, which will be many. The thing, Sir, is this: you have seen something of my nephew, young Philip Carey, the bricklayer, of Amdale. For I remember, when he had some work in our parish, he went to you to buy a Bible, and you had some talk with him, and named him to me afterwards, seeming rather pleased with him; and indeed he is a steady good-tempered lad, though I say it that should not say it. Well, Sir, that Bible was intended for a present, he would not tell me then to whom, but I afterwards found that he had given it to a young woman named Vane,

who was in service, where he last worked: and in short, there was a talk among the people, which I as a kinsman was one of the last to hear, that they were very soon going to be married. I was not very much surprised at this: but I own to you, Sir, I was more vexed than some of our people can well account for. Not that I have anything to say against the young woman's conduct; indeed, I believe she has always borne a good character, and is, as the world goes, very respectable: but I knew very well that her father had been for many years unsettled in his thoughts on religion—more, as I believed, of a Baptist than anything else: and I thought to myself, if Letitia (for that is her name) is not very different from her father, how can the Church's blessing go along with such an union? and without the Church's blessing, how can they expect to be happy? So I made it my business to see my nephew, and asked him quietly if no scruple of this sort had ever come into his mind; and a good deal passed between us, which I need not at present tire you with. However, the upshot was, we parted good friends, but both of the same mind as when we met. And on the Sunday I walked over to Amdale, and called on my sister Lucy, Philip's mother (his father died last year), and we had a long discourse, in which she seemed to think me strange and bigoted: but yet I hoped that what I had said would keep them from going on quite inconsiderately. So much the more was I disappointed at receiving a note from my sister this morning, begging me to order my matters so as to be at Amdale church at 10 o'clock next Saturday, they having fixed on that day for the wedding, and wishing me to give the young woman away. I can see, they quite reckon upon it, and I fear they will be very much affronted should I refuse. I conclude they hardly thought me quite in earnest in what I said to them. But though it will be a great grief to me to have them look unpleasant at me, (for next to my own family, I have always delighted in my sister's,) I seem to have made up my mind, unless you, Sir,

should think differently, not to have anything to do with this marriage; and I cannot help thinking they will one day thank me for it. I shall not now intrude on you with my reasons; but one line just to say yes or no would greatly oblige,

Honoured and dear Sir,

Your obliged and humble servant,

RICHARD NELSON.

When I had read this letter, though I was grieved to think that my friend Richard, who had always lived such a quiet life, and with whom I had sometimes talked of the great happiness we both enjoyed—a rare happiness in these times—of belonging, each of us, to a family undivided in religious opinions: though, I say, I was grieved to think of Richard's being thus disturbed, yet I was on the whole more pleased for the thing to have befallen him than if it had happened to any other man in the parish, for reasons which the reader will easily guess. I wrote to him as he desired, not a long letter, but such as to shew him that I heartily approved of his principles, and trusted to his discretion for applying them in the most effectual way. While I stayed with my relation, I heard no more of the matter; but I thought of it day and night, and wondered how it would turn out.

The middle of the next week, my relation having nearly recovered, I returned home; and the first thing I did was to contrive a little job of walling, that I might have an excuse for sending to Richard

Nelson. I saw at once, when he came into the room, that he had been going through a good deal; he looked anxious, though very calm and cheerful. The following conversation, or something very like it, passed between us, after I had given my orders about the work:—

‘And how goes on this wedding, Richard?’

‘Pretty much as I expected, Sir: we have had a good deal to say to each other about it, I, and my sister, and Mr. Vane; but though I spoke very plainly to them, they would not believe I was in earnest, till the very day before that intended for the marriage. And when they saw that I meant what I said, they were forced to put off the marriage, till a friend of theirs can be written to, and come, with whom it seems they had made an old engagement, that he should be the father at their wedding, if anyone was, out of their two families. In the meantime, I am sorry to say, they look rather black on me; and not only they, but a many of the neighbours too. But luckily I had made up my mind to that beforehand.’

‘They must look black upon *me*, too, then. For I should have done just the same, according to what I understand of the case. But I suppose you told them on what ground you went?’

‘I did, Sir, as well as I could, in my plain way. I saw them all at different times, Mr. Vane, and my sister, and the two young people, and told them all the same thing; *viz.* that I look on

marriage as a sacred thing; that the Church never meant her sacred things to be made common; that such would be the case, were a person in Letitia's state (for do you know, Sir, she is not yet even baptized,) to be admitted to Christian marriage; that the neglect of this rule is every day doing great mischief; and that, being as I am Philip's Godfather, as well as his nearest relation, I was bound especially to do what I could to hinder him from the sin and the peril.

'And it was curious to me, Sir, in the midst of my vexation, to observe in what a different way the different persons I had to deal with received what I had to say. Each had his own objection, one to one part of my notions, and another to another. Mr. Vane thought it very strange that marriage should be made so purely a matter of Religion; my sister, I am sorry to say, was inclined to think very slightly of the difference between us and Baptists; Philip was quite sure, that let him be once married, he should soon bring his wife to the same way of thinking as himself, (for to do him justice, he has no thought of leaving the Church;) and as for the young woman, she said but little, but what she said affected me more than all the rest; for she really seemed to think me unkind and cruel, in exposing and discrediting her, and making her out (so she said) to be no Christian.'

'I do not much wonder,' said I, 'at the young people; but I own I am a little surprised that

Mr. Vane should utter a thought which appears to me so very shocking, as that marriage need not be sanctified by Religion at all.'

'Why, Sir,' replied Richard Nelson, 'he has been of late much out and about, talking with all sorts of people; and then he meddles with politics and elections, all rather in a wild way, and it brings him into strange company, and sets him on reading strange books. So he has picked up this notion among others, which I understand the French are very full of, as well as our Frenchified newspapers. But I should not have thought of arguing with him about it, it seems so absurd and shocking of itself, if I had not been afraid of his doing my nephew some harm by it; for Philip was in the room with us, of course listening eagerly to what passed. But I do not know' (interrupting himself) 'why I am troubling you, Sir, with this conversation.'

'By all means go on, I beg of you. I am a little inquisitive to know what he could have to say for such a notion.'

'His fancy was, as far as I could make it out, that the peace and order of the country is everything. And if, said he, people can go on well, and be faithful and happy in marriage without any public religious service, why should it be urged on them by the law?'

'To which I suppose you answered, that there is another world as well as this; and it does not follow that things will turn out well in that,

because to our short and dim sight they seem to go on in peace and order here.'

'To be sure, Sir, that is very plain; but I do not think I went so deep. I took him straight to Scripture; for in that way I thought Philip would attend to me most. I put it to him in this way: if marriage is a different thing to a Christian from what it would be to any one else; if it is not only one of the greatest earthly blessings, but also a special and holy token, appointed by God to signify unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church; then, to enter on it without prayer, or in any other but a religious way, must be almost as affronting to the Almighty, as if one profaned the Sacrament of His Son's Body and Blood. And again, since we are plainly told, that Christian men ought never to expect any blessings from God, except as members of His Son's body, (that is, I take it, as parts of His Church,) how can one help fearing to forfeit the whole of the blessing intended in matrimony, if one scornfully refuse it as offered by the Church? And I take it, that every man *does* reject it in God's sight, who, disliking it in his heart, submits to it merely because it is the law of the land. Thus I went on, not expecting to make any impression on Mr. Vane; indeed, I saw too clearly that he was sneering in his heart all the time, but he did not like to say much, for fear of turning Philip against him; who, as I rejoiced to perceive, entered very much

into this part of my talk. And as we walked away to my sister's, he expressed to me some wonder that so pious a man as Mr. Vane should ever have approved of the notion of marrying by Justices of the Peace. "But I assure you, Uncle," said he, "that we none of us agree with him. My mother and Letitia would both of them be miserable if they thought the Church's blessing would be wanting on our union. And although I must acknowledge that I could wish some parts of the Service omitted, yet it must be owned, on the whole, to be extremely beautiful; and I, for my part," he went on to say, "never expect to see the day when *I* shall take any dislike to the Church, for that or any other reason."

Here I interrupted Richard in his recital. 'I do wish,' I said, 'that people who are so much wiser and more delicate than the Prayer Book, would look a little into their Bibles too. And when they have well reformed both, we shall see how purely the world will go on, the warnings of God being silenced, and the mistake corrected, which the Church has made, in speaking out plainly about fashionable and shameful sins.'

My friend Richard smiled at my vehemence, and said, 'To be sure, Sir, it is tolerably plain, (what I have often thought of the warnings of the Athanasian Creed also,) that the very repugnance which many men feel towards repeating them, is rather a proof of their usefulness and necessity,

supposing the substance of them to be true. For it is plain, that people who shudder so much at repeating them after the Church, would never have courage to deliver the like warnings for themselves, And the same kind of remark may be made on the passages you now allude to in the Office for Matrimony. And thus people might be left to perish unwarned, through false delicacy, or false good-nature. I must say, that if I was a Clergyman, and felt, as I suppose I should feel, that such warnings ought to be given, I should feel most deeply obliged to the Prayer Book for putting words into my mouth, and commanding me to speak them. I would much rather have it so, than be left to form words of my own. I should feel it less painful to myself, and probably less annoying to others. And now that we are upon this subject, permit me, Sir, just to ask you, do you not think it would do much good, and correct what may perhaps be justly called the *vulgar* objections to the Marriage Service, if men would try to enter a little more into the spirit of the household stories and family scenes in the Old Testament? The Book of Ruth especially—can anyone read it reverentially, and not learn a great deal of the difference between True and False Delicacy? You will feel my meaning, Sir, at once.'

'Indeed,' said I, 'I do; and although I am not aware that I ever before heard it said in so many words, yet I should imagine it must have been

silently experienced by every right-minded reader. And if it should turn out, that the spirit of that Book is exactly the same with the spirit of our Marriage Service, who would desire a more complete vindication of it? But pray let us go back to your story, which I beg pardon for having interrupted. You were on the way to your sister, Mrs. Carey's; and I think you told me, that you found it very hard to make her so much as understand your objection to the marriage, or how anyone could possibly imagine Baptists, as such, to be aliens to the Church.'

'Yes! she was quite positive at first, that I must have some view of my own, some worldly purpose, in "setting my head" against the match. As long as she had this fancy, she would not even listen to my arguments: and as it was, I believe she did but half hear them. I did not indeed trouble her with many: for I thought that two or three plain texts, with the interpretation confirmed by a little unquestionable history, might and ought to be sufficient.'

'Let me just guess, what line you probably took with her. I suppose you first pointed out to her, that our Saviour's promises are made to individuals, not simply as believing and repenting, but as joining themselves, by faith and repentance, to the Church which He was founding through His Apostles. For instance, you might perhaps put her in mind, that our Saviour in His prayer before His sufferings, in *chap. xvii.* of St. John,

plainly, had an eye to the command He purposed to give them, when He was going to be taken out of their sight: which command we read in the last three verses of St. Matthew. The prayer was 'not for the Apostles alone, but for all who should believe on Him THROUGH THEIR WORD: that they all might be one.' For whom was this prayer offered? Not for all who anyhow should believe in CHRIST, but 'for them who should believe on Him through the word of the Apostles:' *i. e.* for the very same persons described in the other text: 'Go ye and teach (or, as it is in the margin, make Disciples, or Christians, of) all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST.' Those whom He had before prayed for, He here in effect orders to be taught or made Disciples, by persons having Apostolical authority. But these very same Disciples are to be one and all baptized. For our Lord's words are quite express: 'Make Christians of them by baptizing them;' so that if we are to go by these words, it is quite plain that persons unbaptized cannot properly be called Christians: and if we compare the same words with the other text, it seems very doubtful whether such persons are included in the meaning of our SAVIOUR'S gracious intercession: which is surely a point to be deeply considered. Do you quite understand me, Richard?

'Yes, Sir, I believe I do. Those are some of the places in Scripture, which I turned to and

begged my sister Lucy to consider. But of course, Sir, I could not reason on them so exactly as you have now done. There was another place too, which I begged her to think a good deal of, which must needs, I think, sound very awful to those who are inclined to make light of Baptism: I mean what was said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born OF WATER and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD." It seems to me, Sir, that in speaking those words, our Saviour, who knew what He would do, must have borne in mind His purpose of causing water to be what it is made in the Sacrament of Baptism, the outward and visible sign of our new birth, and admission into His Church. I put the substance of the two places side by side in this way.

St. John iii. 5.

If you would enter into the Kingdom of GOD, you must be born of water and of the Spirit.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

If you would be a Disciple, or Christian, you must be baptized by Apostolical authority in the name of the Holy Trinity.

What made me stronger in this opinion, was observing the like argument in our Divine Master's language, when speaking of the other Holy Sacrament. As thus: for I wrote the four places down, to make my meaning plain to the very eye.

St. John vi. 53.

If you would have life in you, you must eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood.

St. Matt. xxvi. 28.

If you would eat Christ's body and drink His blood, you must take and eat the bread, and drink of the cup, blessed by those who have authority to bless it, in remembrance of Him.

'I hope, Sir, you will not think that I am using the Bible too freely: but I must own, to me it is very convincing, when I see one part of our SAVIOUR'S discourses thus pointing as it were to another, and both so thoroughly agreeing with the known customs of the early Church, as I have always understood these do.

'For it is now some few years, Sir, since I began to think on this subject, and what few doubts I had, were very much settled by a book which you kindly spared me from your Lending Library. I think it was called "A Conference of two men on the subject of Infant Baptism." And it shewed to my thinking most clearly, the opinion of the Church on that subject, in times when they must have known what the very Apostles used to do.

'These things, in my plain way, I tried to point out to my sister; and I was in hopes to have convinced her, that wilfully to remain unbaptized is a more grievous sin than the

generality of Dissenters (ay, and a great many Churchmen) imagine. I thought when our LORD so distinctly affirmed that one MUST be born of water and the Spirit, before one could even 'enter into GOD'S kingdom,' it was not too much to ask of a Christian man, that he should not marry such a person, considering what the Holy Spirit has said by St. Paul to all Christians, that if they marry, they must marry 'in the Lord;' that is to say, must select such persons as make part of the body of Christ, considering too what strict charges were given to the Israelites of old time, not to make marriages with the heathen and unbelievers. I thought to myself, and I put it strongly to my sister, How can I, with these convictions, with the Scriptures lying open before me, and as I think distinctly forbidding such things, how can I be helper to such a union? how can I come to GOD'S altar, and present my relation there to Him, and beg His blessing on an act which in my conscience I believe to be sinful, and most provoking to Him? In short, I told them it was out of the question; and if they would put themselves in my place for a moment, they would see that it must be so.'

'I should like to know what the young man thought, as he stood by and heard all this.'

'Oh, Sir, I could see that he was very uneasy; he made two or three endeavours to break in upon us with some remarks of his own: but I was steady in not permitting him till I had stated

my own view, so as to give it a fair chance. When I had finished, and was going away, leaving my sister, as it seemed to me, more puzzled than convinced by what had been said, Philip came close up to me, and said, in the tone of a man more or less vexed, "You mistake me quite, Uncle, if you think I have any notion of leaving the Church, because I am proposing to marry one who is not yet a Churchwoman. I like the Church as well as ever. I was born and bred in it, and hope to die in it; nay, and by this very engagement of mine, I expect to do good service to the Church. For I shall be very much disappointed indeed, if Letitia be not very soon prevailed on to be baptized, and conform, after she becomes my wife."

'I told him, if such was indeed her mind, the matter might in no long time be settled to the satisfaction of us all. He had only to wait till that happy change, which he so confidently looked for, had taken place, and I would most gladly attend him as he desired. At this he looked a little disconcerted, and it was plain enough that he had been mistaking what he only wished, for what was likely to happen. So I just asked him one question, whether he thought himself wiser and steadier than Solomon? He very likely, (said I,) when he permitted himself first to form an attachment to a heathen, expected to bring her over to the faith and worship of the one true GOD; but it ended

in his becoming himself an idolater. Indeed, GOD's warnings to His ancient people, not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, everywhere go upon the notion, that the corrupting side in such unions will be commonly too strong for that which was originally right. How can it be otherwise, while human nature is corrupt, and when the aid of Divine Grace is forfeited by men's presumptuously running themselves into a state of continual temptation? And I added, what I have more than once heard from those who have read modern history, that the same kind of result is there also visible enough, attending on the like profane marriages among those who call themselves Christians. I ventured to mention one example, which had occurred to myself, in such little reading as I have had time for in that line—the example of one whom I deeply honour and reverence—you will guess that I mean King Charles the Martyr. I do not know whether I am right, but it has always seemed to me, that the one great error of his Majesty's life was his being 'unequally yoked' with a person of another creed,—a person with whom I suppose he could not well pray, although, as we happen to know for certain, he prayed constantly for her conversion. His own faith, to be sure, was unstained; but we know what evil ensued to his family and kingdom; and perhaps many of his own calamities might be traced to the same cause. Now if that just and good

king cannot be excused for such a marriage, what can be said for an ordinary Christian, should he run into the like danger? What is "tempting GOD," if this be not? Thus I ran on; but Philip evidently paid little attention to me. He seemed to be making up his mind that I was prejudiced, and that it was no use his listening at all. So I went away for the present, hoping before long to have an opportunity of speaking to him when he was more willing to hear.'

'I thought,' said I, 'that you told me just now of your having conversed with the young woman herself; did I mistake you? or was that at another time?'

'That was just as I was going away: I passed by accident through the room where she was, and we had a very few words together. It was plain at once, by her manner, that she considered me personally unkind in what I had been saying of her to my sister. I begged her to bear with me, considering that I was so much older, and that I could have nothing at heart but my nephew's good; and I put her in mind of two or three things which had passed, such as I thought would be most apt to pacify and soothe her when she remembered them; and then I begged her seriously to consider, not at present whether I was right or no in my opinion of the necessity of Baptism, but, supposing I thought myself right, how could I act otherwise than I was doing? Which, I asked, is the truer charity? to let

people go on unbaptized and unsanctified, for fear of paining them;—to treat them as if they were quite safe, when, if you will believe our SAVIOUR, you must believe they have not yet even entered into the Church and Kingdom of GOD—or to shew them that you feel in earnest for their danger; to remind them what sentence the Church would pass on them, should they die in their present condition? She would not, in that case, allow them Christian burial. Why? Evidently, because she thinks them not members of CHRIST'S body; not entitled by covenant to those promises, the rehearsing of which over the grave are in her mind a part of Christian burial. I believe and obey the Church; and if it was the nearest and dearest relation I have, I should count it kindness, not cruelty, to treat him as she would have him treated; to “have compassion on him, making a difference,” and so try to bring him, with an humble and penitent heart, to our SAVIOUR'S Baptism in good time.

‘This was the tone of what I said to her; but I had hardly time for so much as this; however, as she is naturally good tempered and candid, she seemed to take it pretty well.’

‘I should like to know,’ said I, ‘whether she has ever expressed any wish for Baptism. A person who thinks of it, but is as yet irresolute, may be regarded, I should think, in a different light from one who distinctly slights and disparages it; more like one of the beginners in Christianity,

who were called in old time Catechumens. Whereas, those who indulge in scorn, and make themselves easy in such a condition, shew the very temper of the worst heretics. Have you any notion to which of these two classes the young woman you are speaking of rather belongs?’

‘I should not suppose she had ever thought much of the matter, until of late, that the question has been started by this proposed wedding. What thoughts she has, I should fear, are rather of the scornful kind. She has been used to hear people say, under breath, perhaps, but not the less emphatically for that, something like what Naaman the Syrian said, “May I not wash elsewhere and be clean?” with plenty of hints about superstition and Popery, and other words of the like sound.’

‘It is too likely; one has heard of late of too much of that kind among the Baptists, and among others who agree with them in slighting the ancient Church. And worse consequences even than the contempt of Baptism follow, I fear, too often. Persons become generally irreverent towards religion altogether. A proud common sense, as it calls itself, usurps the place of that humility which befits a creature and a sinner in judging of his duties towards GOD. Nothing is cordially believed which is not theoretically understood: nothing carefully and reverently practised, of which the *use* is not perceived. And thus the religion of our time is in danger of

dwindling down to a wretched kind of political decency: and where, of all parties, is the change going on most rapidly? Among those who left the Apostolical Church because "*it was not spiritual enough*" for them!

'And yet, Sir, is there anything so strange in that? Our blessed LORD joined the two together,—the high, mysterious, and spiritual, doctrine of the Trinity, with the no less mysterious communication of grace by water Baptism. They who begin by being so bold as to despise the water, which He commanded to be used, it is very natural, as far as I see, that they should end by despising the word which He commanded to be spoken,—the sacred Name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST.'

'It is indeed but too natural, like all the other steps which men make down the broad way which leads to perdition. But it is some kind of satisfaction to me to find that quiet thoughtful laymen see the danger, as well as we who are of the clergy. And I suppose we shall be pretty well agreed upon the remedy, namely, to do what little we can towards reviving among men the knowledge and love of the ancient Church.'

'Ah, Sir, if that might be! But a Christian must not despond about the Church, nor the meanest Christian of being made useful, in his place, towards the highest ends. I will not therefore indulge in forebodings; but will rather try again what I can do with the opportunity

which Providence *has* put in my way. I certainly will do nothing to countenance this marriage; and if I cannot prevent it, at least some part of what I say may rise up in some of their minds some day, and may help them to truer and better thoughts. But you must help me, Sir, with your advice, and (may I be so bold?) with your prayers.'

'It is my bounden duty, Richard,' said I, as I shook him by the hand at parting. 'And take this Scripture home for your comfort; that if a man humbly "cast his bread upon the waters,"—if he trust his Maker with it in earnest, he shall "find it after many days."'

IV.

‘What a weariness is it!’—MAL. i. 13.

‘Oh, they be blessed that may dwell
 Within Thy house always :
 For they all times Thy facts do tell,
 And ever give Thee praise.

Yea, happy sure likewise are they
 Whose stay and strength Thou art,
 Who to Thy house do mind the way,
 And seek it in their heart.’

PSALM lxxxiv. 5, 6.

AMONG all the boys of our Sunday-school, none have given me so much trouble as Absalom Plush, and two of farmer Yawn’s sons. They are almost always behind their time : at school they are very inattentive, and at Church their conduct has been repeatedly so disgraceful that it even attracted the attention of one of the Churchwardens, who gave them a severe reprimand, and threatened to send for a constable ; since which, they have conducted themselves rather more decently. Perhaps my readers may be inclined to ask why I

suffer them to remain in the school, their behaviour having been so bad. My answer must be, that as they are but little boys, (for Absalom is the eldest, and he is not more than eleven if so much,) I still hope they may improve; and if I were to put them out of the school, I fear I should lose all chance of gaining any influence over them. However, I have made up my mind that if they behave in this sort of way again, they shall go.

There is, too, another consideration which has rather disposed me to be sorry for these boys in the midst of my displeasure, namely, that if they had been well instructed, and a good example had been set them at home, they would, perhaps, have behaved differently at school and in Church. For young Plush does not want for sense, though he is so unruly; and as to the little Yawns, they are not naturally of bad dispositions, but so determinedly indolent and unwilling to make any exertion for their own improvement, that it is a great trial of one's patience to endeavour to teach them. I am, however, sorry to say, the examples they have before them at home are not such as to encourage them to turn to good account the instruction they may receive at Church or at the school. This I was fully aware of from the first, and accordingly, as it is my usual custom when the children behave ill at school to take the first opportunity of mentioning it to the parents and friends, with the hope of throwing in a word which may be for *their*

good too, I determined that I would do so in these instances.

An occasion soon offered itself of speaking to farmer Yawn, whose house is very near to mine. But before I state what passed between us, I should say that I had, that same morning, talked the matter over with my friend Richard Nelson, in whose class Absalom was, as well as the elder of the two Yawns.

‘Sir,’ replied Richard, in answer to my question respecting the conduct of these boys, ‘as to Lawrence Yawn, I cannot say that he applies much to his book, or, as I think, ever means to do so. Indeed, I have heard that he should say he likes to be at the bottom of the class, because then he has a chance of leaning against the wall, or of resting on the corner of my chair. But Absalom Plush is much more untractable, and inclined to be impudent too. To give you an instance, Sir, what happened only last Sunday. He came in very late, as he frequently does, and when I spoke to him about it he only laughed, and said he could not come sooner, and under breath, as I thought, he *should not*, and he seemed to me occasionally to be humming to himself some kind of song.’

‘A song!’ said I; ‘what, in school? that is something new, indeed.’

‘However,’ proceeded Nelson, ‘according to your advice to us in such cases, I took no notice at the time: but in the evening, as he happened

to come along the path by our garden, I said to him, "Absalom, I do wish you would pay a little more attention at school, I really fancied to-day you were singing something of a song." "Well," said he, "suppose I was— what then? 'twas only a bit of a tune that a man was singing in at father's, one night last week; and father said, that altering the words a little, it would just suit us boys of the Sunday-school. There is no harm (he continued) in the words; I will tell you what they were." But they seemed to me, Sir, to be part of a very mischievous ballad, signifying that instead of Churches and Prayer Books, people had better sit in public-houses and study newspapers; that Church-going is time-wasting, and so forth. So it is plain that the boy is encouraged at home in his bad ways; and, as you ask me the question, Sir, I fear it is not much better with the two Yawns; for I dare say you must have observed that there are six or seven people, who always come late into Church, rain or shine, morning or evening, and amongst them Master Yawn comes in as regularly as possible just about the end of the first Lesson.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I have observed it, and have long wished for an opportunity of inquiring into the cause of such a practice.'

After some other observations we parted; and it happened, as I before observed, that on the same day my neighbour Yawn came to our house to borrow a milking bucket, which I very readily

lent him, though not with my servant's good will, as such articles seldom returned from the farmer's in exactly as good a condition as they went.

Seeing him, then, go out of the yard with the bucket in his hand, I met him at the garden gate, and said to him at once, 'I do wish, Mr. Yawn, you would speak to Lawrence and the little boy, for by their irregularity and extreme idleness, they vex me very much, and do harm to the other boys in the school.'

'Sir,' he replied, making a low bow, 'I am very sorry indeed to come troubling again so soon for a bucket, but our people are so careless—'

'Oh, never mind about the bucket,' I said, 'only please let it be thoroughly cleaned; but I want you to tell me what will be the best way of treating that idle fellow, Lawrence, and his little brother.'

'Sir,' he answered, 'I am very sorry indeed they should have done anything to offend you; but you may depend on it they shall always for the future come to school in good time, and mind what is said to them; otherwise, their mother or I will *give them the stick*, as sure as every Sunday morning comes round.'

'Mr. Yawn,' I replied, 'I should be very sorry to have Sunday made the day for such unpleasing performances in your house or in any other. I do not at all wish any boys to come to the school against their will, especially if their friends only send them to please me.'

‘O Sir,’ he said, ‘I am sure it is not at all against *our* will—though certainly ’tis a longish while for the children to stay, from nine to half-past twelve, or more; and I don’t altogether wonder that the boys are tired. But they shall come for the future, and stay too, tired or not tired, for I should be very sorry we should do anything to offend you, Sir.’

‘You have told me so now three times, Mr. Yawn,’ I answered, ‘so of course I ought to believe it. But at all events, I hope *I* shall not offend *you*, if I take this opportunity to ask you why you and Edward Gape, and two or three others, make a rule of treating our Church Service in such a careless, and I must say scornful, way?’

‘*Me* treat the Church with scorn!’ he replied: ‘why, Sir, what can you be thinking of? Why I scarcely ever miss a Sunday. ’Twould be a good thing for you clergymen if everybody else was as regular.’

‘As to that,’ I replied, ‘it makes no sort of difference to us whether people come or stay away, except so far as that we ought to be thankful when they do right, and grieved when they neglect their duty. In this respect, Mr. Yawn, *we* are the really ‘independent’ ministers. But what I allude to is your strange unaccountable custom of coming into Church so late. I have been here now nearly six years, and in all that time, though by your own account you have

come to Church regularly once every Sunday, yet I doubt if ever you have been within the walls till after I had begun reading the Lessons.'

'Yes, Sir, I have,' he said: 'you are mistaken there.'

'Come now,' I said, 'if I have been here five years and a half, I have been here two hundred and eighty-six Sundays; and I think I may venture to say, that during all that time you have not been in Church time enough to hear *all* the first Lesson more than twenty times.'

'Perhaps not,' he said; 'twenty is a good many.'

'Well,' I replied, 'I will venture to say not more than *ten* times.'

'I am not sure of that,' he answered.

'But I am sure of it,' I said—'sure that you have not been in by the time I mention, even *five* Sundays.'

'I can remember at least *three* times,' he answered—'once when I mistook the clock, and once when old Thomas Pout brought his new bassoon, and on the Fast-day I was in at the Psalms, I am confident. But I don't wish to make an argument about the matter; I will tell you, Sir, plainly, that I have a great deal to do on a Sunday morning, more than you think of, and that instead of finding fault with me for being so late, you should thank me for coming at all. Think, Sir, how many don't come at all; and there am I

in the pew as regular, pretty near, as old Job the clerk, only half an hour later.'

'Yes,' I said, 'you are very regular in your irregularity. But, Mr. Yawn, let me ask you this one question,—Do you come to Church to do any good to ALMIGHTY GOD, or to me, or to yourself? Is it any profit to the ALMIGHTY that you serve Him, if such an imperfect attendance as yours can be called service; or to me is it any profit or advantage in the way of worldly interest? You know full well, my friend, that yours is the danger, yours will be the loss, if you persist in thus dishonouring the holy jealous GOD.'

To this his only reply was, that he had been used to do it for a good way in forty years, and it was not to be expected he should alter now; and with this observation he walked slowly away with the bucket over his arm. But thinking, I suppose, that he had not been quite civil to me, he turned round with the intention, as I hoped, of making some sort of promise of amendment; but my hope was groundless, for he came back and said, in rather a low voice, 'I hope, Sir, nothing I have said will prevent you taking your butter of us as usual; and as to the boys, I promise you they shall be well punished every Sunday morning; and then, Sir, if they do behave ill, you know it will not be my fault, or my wife's.'

I made no answer; but as I walked back to the house, I was led sadly to reflect on the tendency

of a worldly and selfish spirit to deaden not merely all serious sense of religion, but even the natural affection of a parent for his children.

Some few evenings afterwards, as I was returning homewards from a distant part of the parish, Nelson overtook me, when I told him of the conversation I had with my neighbour Yawn, adding that I had little hope his boys would ever come to any good, especially as their father seemed determined to keep to his bad habit merely because it *was* his habit, without giving any sort of reason or excuse for it.

‘O Sir,’ replied Nelson, ‘he fancies he has a very fair reason, only he did not like to mention it to *you*. He thinks, or at least pretends to think, (for I do not imagine he puts his *mind* much to anything,) that the Church Service altogether is too long and tedious. And he and some others have of late been much encouraged in this their notion by a travelling man, (whether he comes from Hull or Preston I am not sure,) who quarters at Plush’s occasionally, sometimes for a fortnight at a time, and is so kind as to offer to enlighten us in this dark corner of the world.’

‘I have heard of him,’ I said; ‘it seems then he dabbles in religion as well as in politics.’

‘Yes, Sir,’ replied Richard, ‘that he certainly does, for I had the whole account of him from a man who was working with me the week before last; you know him, Sir, I dare say—William Burnet?’

‘Oh yes, I know him,’ I said, ‘very well; anything like the prospect of a change in religion or politics William dearly loves, without troubling himself much to inquire whether or not it is likely to be a change for the better in either case. But what did the wise man from Hull say about the Church Service?’

‘Why,’ answered Nelson, ‘as I never was in company with the man myself, perhaps it will be the best way for me to tell you, Sir, if you like to hear it, what passed between Burnet and me on the subject. And indeed it is not Burnet only, but a good many others are of the same way of thinking, more than used to be formerly.’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘their number increases, I fear, very rapidly; and if so, all who love Truth and the Prayer Book ought to be on their guard. But now, will you please to tell me how you answered Burnet’s arguments?’

‘Sir,’ he replied, ‘I will tell you as near as I can remember what passed between us on this subject, though I do not promise to be able to repeat his exact words; and certainly nothing I said is worthy to be called an answer to arguments.’

‘Make no apologies,’ I said, ‘but proceed.’

Well then, Sir, said Nelson, thus it was,—Burnet was constantly commending this friend of his, who was then lodging at Plush’s, and wishing me to come along, if it were but one evening, that

I might judge for myself how *beautiful* he could talk and expound on any subject a person might choose to mention—politics, trade, agriculture, learning, religion, and what not.

But I said to him, ‘No, Will, I have something else to do of an evening than to sit in a beer-shop listening to your friend Tiptop, (for that is the man’s name.) But I dare say you can give me some account of his wise sayings. What was he upon last night?’

‘Last night, (said Will, after some little consideration,) last night he was lecturing about the Church Prayer Book, a subject that he has often spoken very well upon in my hearing, but never better than he did yesterday evening.’

‘What was his argument?’ I asked.

‘Judge by this,’ said Will, taking a printed paper out of his pocket, ‘it is one of Mr. Tiptop’s *perspectuses*, as he calls them.’

(I have this paper with me, said Nelson to me; and with your leave, Sir, I will read some of the heads.) ‘*The Church Service, lengthy, tedious, and prolix—in this respect lamentably prejudicious to the spread of vital religion—vast numbers of highly-talented individuals unable to devote their time and attention to these procrastinated forms—consequently compelled to neglect religion altogether—surprising effects, if the Service was abbreviated at least one half—the churches immediately sure to be filled with crowds of devout worshippers—this with facility accomplished by merely shortening the*

Lessons three-fifths, omitting all superstitious forms, such as the Absolution, Creeds, &c.—the Lord's Prayer repeated usque ad nauseum.' (At this expression, Will said all the company expressed their approbation very vehemently, some even clapping their hands; but he did not like to ask what it meant, for fear of appearing ignorant :) and so Mr. Tiptop finished with saying that in his opinion about a couple of pleasing hymns, a dozen verses out of the Testament, three or four prayers, and a sermon in quantity and quality according to the taste of the audience; this would be enough for *him* in all conscience, and he supposed for others too, and need not altogether take up more than thirty-five or forty minutes at the outside, allowing fifteen or twenty for the sermon.

'But Will,' said I, 'do you really and seriously imagine it would be well if such alterations as these were made in the Church Service?'

'To be sure I do,' he answered; 'and so do many other people, who understand these things better than I or you do. Indeed, Mr. Tiptop told us that some gentlemen had actually taken the matter up, and that it would be brought before the Parliament very speedily, and such alterations would be made as would suit the spirit of the age; above all, that the Service *must* be shortened, otherwise the Church would be entirely deserted, and the Establishment upset.'

'God forbid,' I said, 'that the Church should

be governed by the spirit of the times. I trust she is governed by a very different SPIRIT. I trust she may be willing to *be* (as you threaten) utterly deserted, rather than herself desert the station allotted to her by the Chief Shepherd. And as to the Establishment being in danger, it may be perhaps true; yet I am sure nothing more dangerous can befall it, than for our governors to hearken to the counsels of such orators as Tiptop, though encouraged by all the Plushes in England, each with a company of puffers and smokers about him.'

'But, Dick,' said he to me, 'what is the use of a Church, my friend, if people are tired of it, and won't go to it?'

To this I answered, 'You might as well ask, what is the use of our SAVIOUR'S precepts, if people are tired of them and won't obey them? You will not, I suppose, say that the holy rules of the Gospel ought to be publicly set aside, merely because they are so generally neglected?'

'No,' he replied, 'of course I do not mean that.'

'Well then,' said I, 'neither should you affirm that it is the duty of the Church to withdraw or alter her rules, merely because people are weary of complying with them.'

'That may be true,' he answered; 'but you must remember that the Church herself did not mean that the Service should be so long. What we have all at once, was formerly divided into

two or three parts, as I have understood. Why should it not be so again?’

‘What you say is, I believe, no more than the truth,’ I replied. ‘I have been lately reading a little book upon the subject, and from that I understood that there were first the early morning prayers; then, perhaps, after two or three hours, the Litany; and then again, after a short interval, the Communion Service, including a sermon of considerable length, (an hour possibly,) and afterwards the administration of the Sacrament. But this last service alone would be much beyond Mr. Tiptop’s limit of forty minutes; and in this way “the spirit of the age” would be more opposed even than it is now.’

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I never thought of having the Sacrament administered every Sunday.’

‘Then,’ replied I, ‘you forgot one of the principal intentions of the Church in having the Services so divided. If the Bishops and clergy thought well, I do not deny that it would in many respects be edifying if this ancient custom *in all its parts* could be revived; but yet I will tell you plainly that I do not think it would have the effect you seem to imagine, of bringing more people to church, for, to my knowledge, it was tried by a clergyman in a parish near Sheffield, and to his great surprise, many of his parishioners stayed in consequence quite away from the church. Some said they should not think of going to hear half a service; others, who had a

mile or two to come to church, said they were scarcely allowed to rest themselves, but that as soon as they got in it was time to go back. So the clergyman thought it best to return to the old, or rather I should say the modern, custom again, of uniting the Services.'

'And yet,' said Burnet, 'the American Church has shortened the Lessons very much, Mr. Tiptop told us.'

'It may be so,' I answered; 'but it does not follow that it is a wise measure, nevertheless, though far be it from me to say that it is otherwise. Still, of the two, the daughter should take pattern from the mother, rather than the mother from the daughter. And for myself, I must say that I have often been glad that the Lessons are of considerable length, for two reasons especially.'

'What are they?' he asked.

'The one is,' I replied, 'that in very short readings it is not so easy to discover the general meaning and argument; and the other, that if I have from any cause been inattentive in one part, I have not been so throughout. So also with respect to the Lord's Prayer, I have often and often been glad to have had a second and a third opportunity of joining in it with increased attention. Therefore, Will, I for one shall never give my vote to have the Service shortened in either of these ways; and as to Mr. Tiptop's fine *perspectus*, or what he calls it, I don't think it worth a rush.'

To this Burnet answered, 'That it was plainly of no use to reason with me, as he saw I was determined to keep to the old ways.'

'That I am,' said I, 'and think I have pretty good authority for it—authority somewhat more to be depended on than Mr. Tiptop's opinion.'

'But,' continued Will, 'I do still persist in affirming that great numbers of people *are* weary of the length of the Service, and that it would be but common kindness to see what can be done to relieve their grievance. And since nothing can be more easy than just to omit a few prayers and other old-fashioned forms, and shorten the Lessons, it would be a shame not to try it; and when it is done, everybody will be pleased, and the Church establishment will be greatly strengthened.'

'Well,' said I, 'whatever effect such a measure might have on the *Establishment*, I am confident it would deeply injure the *Church*. And as to what you say about relieving a grievance, I wish you to consider this argument, which I met with in a book of sermons that was lent to me a few weeks ago:—"If people were weary merely of the *length* of the Service, they would be at least attentive at the *beginning*, and their weariness would come on by degrees; but we know it is not so. Of the two, they are often more tired in the early part of the Service than in the later." I do not remember the exact words, but such is the meaning.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that is because they care more

about the sermon than they do about the Prayers and Lessons.'

'Very well,' I replied, 'you have supplied me with a strong argument against your own views. For by whose opinion do you think the Church ought to be chiefly guided, that of the few (if they *be* few) who delight in the Prayers and Lessons, or that of the many (if they *be* many) who are weary of them even from the beginning?'

'Why,' he replied, 'I thought it was now almost universally agreed that—What most people think, is True—What most people determine, is Just—What most people like, is Good. Mr. Tiptop called these "Three Grand Parliament Principles," and we all admired them.'

'But, Will,' I said, 'suppose it should happen that "What most people like" might be to get rid of the restraints of religion altogether, I reckon you would not consider this a safe and good principle to be guided by; and yet you may be sure that this, and nothing less than this, lies at the root of all these pretended Church reforms. And as to the principal contriver of these deceits, the Great Reformer himself, I do not choose to mention his name to you, but I think you will find him spoken of, and his character awfully set forth, in the eighth chapter of St. John, and, if I recollect right, the 44th verse.'

'But really now, Will,' I continued, 'will you be kind enough to tell me what are people hindered from by the length of the Service? how

comes it men's time is so much more precious now than it was formerly? and if the Service were made shorter, how would they be better employed than in hearing GOD's holy Word, and praying for His blessing on themselves and their friends?

'I say, Will, what do Farmer Yawn, and Ned Gape, and the rest of you do, who walk always so late into church? are you spending your time any better than as if you came into GOD's House before the bell ceases?'

'As to that,' said he, laughing, 'we generally sit on the wall, at least when the weather is dry, and look at Ned's pigs, or talk over the news, or anything, just to pass the time. But the farmer's rule is, to begin shaving just as the bells chime, and then he comes in at the first Lesson as exact as clock-work, and we after him.'

'Then,' said I, 'why should you and he trouble about having the Service shortened, for I suppose, whatever were its length or shortness, you would always come in twenty minutes after it had begun?'

'That would be as we should please,' he said. 'However, I see plainly I shall never be able to reason you out of your bigoted old-fashioned notions. I only wish I could bring you and Mr. Tiptop together. I think he would soon settle you and your arguments too: he would quickly turn the laugh against you, I can assure you, Master Nelson.'

To this I answered, 'That I had no reason to be afraid of Tiptop, his arguments, or his jests, but that I never would willingly go or stay in the company of persons who could make light of serious matters;' and I told Burnet that I was sure, sooner or later, he would allow that I was right in this resolution.

'This, Sir, was the substance of my conversation with Will; and if you should be disengaged next Sunday evening, and disposed to see me, I should be glad to have a few more words with you on the same subject.'

To this I readily agreed, so we parted at his garden-gate; and as I heard his door shut, I could not but say to myself, If happiness is to be found on earth it is in that cottage, and what is the precious secret whereby it has been attained? No secret at all, (I answered myself,) but simply the practice of 'pure and undefiled religion,' 'patient continuance in well doing,' with 'glory, honour, and immortality' in view.

When he came to me in my study on the Sunday evening, according to appointment, he said that he really was anxious to know whether there was any truth in the report which Tiptop and others had so confidently spread about, that some alteration of the Prayer Book was intended, especially (as they said) for the purpose of making the Service more 'short and compact, and suitable to the taste of the times.'

I answered, 'That of course it was out of my power to say what our governors in Church or State might wish; but that I feared that in religion, as in other matters, there was some reason to apprehend too great regard might be paid to popular fancies, even by those who are as far as possible from approving of them.'

'Sir,' he replied very earnestly, 'I hope and trust the Church Services will never be shortened one sentence, line, or word. Grown people, Sir, are but children in religion: if once you begin to yield to their indolence and dislike of trouble, you sanction the bad feeling, and it will go on increasing till it has eaten out the very heart of piety.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'I fully agree with you. And to say the truth, it is my firm opinion that if any alteration is necessary, it is the other way—that the Service should be longer instead of shorter. I mean, for instance, that the 'Prayer for Christ's Church Militant' should be regularly used as appointed, after the morning sermon, when there is no Communion; at least where it can be done without any great inconvenience, which possibly in some churches may not be the case. It is to my mind one of the most perfect of uninspired compositions, and it is greatly to be wished that it might be made familiar to every ear and every heart.'

'Sir,' said he, 'I have often thought so. Still at the best our weakness is great: "the corruptible

body," as the wise man says, "presses down the soul;" and I suppose it is the case with all of us occasionally, and even when we would most earnestly deplore and strive against it, that our thoughts are apt to wander and our devotions to be cold. Whenever, therefore, I have found myself disposed to be weary of GOD'S house and Service, or have heard others complaining of the tediousness of the Prayers and Lessons, I have said to myself—If David, the Prince of Penitents, were here now, would he speak or think thus? he who desired to abide in GOD'S tabernacle for ever—who envied (as it were) the sparrows and the swallows their continual abode under the sacred roof—who, when shut out, or far away, longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the LORD, as a hart thirsting for the water-brooks! If holy Daniel, that greatest of statesmen, that real "man of business,"—if he were among us now—he, who in a far distant land, and prime minister to the greatest of earthly kings, would yet let no day pass in which he would not thrice find or make leisure to offer solemn prayers to the GOD of his fathers, his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, where lay the temple of his GOD in ruins; that as he could not be there in person, he would be so in heart and mind, would *he* say that our Church Service is too long? If St. Paul, that most heroic, and (if there were such a word) that most *unselfish* of men,—if he were now among us, would he be

weary of our Lessons, Prayers, and Creeds,—he, whose conversation and home was in Heaven—who desired to depart and to be with CHRIST, and who calls on all true Christians to “*hold fast the form of sound words,*” in Christian faith and love! Or the beloved John, the last and greatest of prophets,—weary, not of his LORD’S service, but of being kept so long from His Presence—would he, and all the other holy men of every age, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and saints, whether of the Patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian Churches, would they complain of our Services being TOO LONG?

‘Oh no, Sir, that is not to be imagined. So neither ought we to complain, heirs with them of the same promises, and looking to meet them hereafter in our one great eternal Home.’

‘Richard,’ I replied, ‘you say true. As it is dangerous for an individual to take for his guidance any but a perfect pattern of Christian conduct, so is it dangerous for the Church to follow any but a perfect model of Christian worship, so far as perfection can be obtained. Her rules should be framed not according to what people *are*, but to what they *ought to be*: otherwise you must plainly see that a door will be at once opened for numberless errors as well in doctrine as in practice.’

‘Yes, Sir, I see it,’ he replied. ‘And therefore it seems to me, that when on such subjects popular opinion runs vehemently in a wrong

direction, (or if not wrong, at least questionable,) that then it is not the best time, but the very worst possible, for yielding to its fancies. So that even if it should be, at any time, necessary or expedient (which I cannot think it ever will be) to shorten the Church Services, yet then is the very worst of all times to set about it, when there is the greatest demand for it.'

'You are quite right,' I said, 'beyond all doubt. But I think it would be a great support to the good cause—that is, to the cause of GOD, and truth, the Church, and the Prayer Book—and also a great encouragement to such among us of the clergy as desire to stand in the old paths, if in every parish *a few* serious thinking persons would consider of drawing up and signing a solemn address to their respective Bishops, plainly saying that they utterly disapprove of all plans whatever for shortening the Church Service, unless some urgent cause should arise stronger than they have ever yet heard; and that as Churchmen they never can or will consent to any such plans of miscalled Church reform. For you know, Richard, *laymen* are quite as much part of THE CHURCH as the *clergy*; and it is your right and duty to stand up in its defence as much as it is ours.'

'Sir,' he replied, 'you may be sure I would gladly sign such a declaration as this you propose, and I think I know four or five more who would sign it also with all their hearts.'

‘That will be sufficient,’ I said, ‘for our parish ; for no doubt the Bishops will estimate the value of such addresses, not by the quantity, but by the quality of those who sign them—not by the number of names, but by the worth of those who bear them, their honesty, piety, and truth.’

So we agreed that an address of this kind should be prepared, and kept ready to be presented to the Bishop whenever circumstances should seem to require.

Not, of course, that we were so vain as to expect that *our* exertions could be of much avail ; but still, as Richard said, ‘We cannot stand by and see the noble old Prayer Book pulled to pieces, just to humour a mob of Tiptops, Gapes, and Yawns.’



