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slaves and, it may be, her children; but, at any rate, all who were comprised in her family. Twice in the brief account of the planting of Christianity at Philippi—in the case of Lydia and in that of that other convert, who "was baptized, he and all his straightway," and "who rejoiced, believing in God with all his house,"[1]—are we taught the lesson, that to "provide for his own, and specially his own household,"[2] is, in things spiritual no less than in things temporal, the first duty of a Christian; that out of His own institution of the family Almighty God is pleased to build up His great "family in heaven and earth"—the Church.

T. T. PEROWNE.

ART. IV.—A CURATE'S FIRST YEAR.

THE position of a man who faces the unknown, conscious that, whatever may be its difficulties, he has been almost wholly unprepared by experience to cope with them, is never a very enviable one. The freshman, into whatsoever career of life, must always, at first, have an anxious time of it. Many can perhaps recall such a moment as that which recurs to the writer of this article, when he was left a shivering schoolboy at the gateway of the great quadrangle of one of our big public schools, and watched the swiftly receding postchaise which bore off his parents to the dear old home. Then did he first know what was meant by loneliness. With what tremulous agitation, with what a tumult of anticipation, did he turn to await the advent of the incoming horde of boys, and brace himself to meet their starings and their questionings! Such a memory, though travelling over a quarter of a century, still has power to make one shudder.

But of all the awkward days through which he has passed, none surely were awkwarder than that in which, as a newly-ordained deacon, he first put on his long-tailed coat, and, having adjusted his soft felt hat, prepared to start upon his first round of parochial work.

Why is the curate thus launched, an untried bark, upon an unknown sea? How comes it that no practical training for their special work is expected from what we may, almost without fear of challenge, term the most cultivated and not the least efficient class of clergy in the world? That they *are* cultivated—and we would include in this term the possession of an accurate knowledge of the requirements of their profession—and that they are efficient as a class is certainly not the

[1] Vers. 33, 34. [2] 1 Tim. v. 8.

result of any technical training which they have, as a class, received. The ordinary life of an undergraduate at either Oxford or Cambridge is about as good a preparation for a cure of souls as it would be for the practice of medicine. But we have more respect for our bodies than to entrust them to the care of a young B.A. who has just won the right to wear his fur-trimmed hood. A rigid course of Latin and Greek, tempered with Euclid and Algebra, may be an excellent corrective to looseness of thought, and prove of valuable assistance in the formation of a lucid and classical style, but it does not supply a much more trustworthy guide to him who is called to undertake the work of spiritual husbandry than to the man who intends to devote his life to the cultivation of a colonial farm.

Of course the future pastor *may* prepare himself for his life-work while at the University. There are classes, districts, lay-readerships for such as are willing to be so employed. But then he *need not* do so. And, in fact, we may confidently aver that, in the majority of cases, he does not do so. The result of this want of special training for his duties is that even that worst type of the theological-hall student whose attainments poor Archdeacon Edwards so wittily described as "a solid block of ignorance on which was glued a thin veneering of biennial lore"—but who has, at least, acquired some practical knowledge of the poor, and learned something from the lips of the Professor of Pastoral Theology—has a distinct initial advantage over the young graduate who, whether he has taken high honours or not, has hitherto had more to do with boats than with Bible-classes, and whose acquaintance with his social inferiors has been limited to his intercourse with the professional cricketer, the gamekeeper, the stableman, and the scout.

The new curate is of course well-meaning, but he is most often wholly inexperienced. It is quite wonderful how soon he will adapt himself to his surroundings, and how he will often outstrip the mere "seminary-boy" who started with so many technical advantages. But it is none the less noticeable that he often shows lamentable signs of his want of early training throughout the whole of his career. His first year is pretty sure to be a series of blunders; and, if no candid friend is at hand to point these out, they are like to be perpetuated to the end of the chapter. This is the more likely if he should chance to become a favourite through any personal attractions of his. Above all, most likely if the power of his sincerity and earnestness should convince the simple people among whom he labours that he is a prophet indeed. He will then find it hard to resist the seductions of their faith in him; and to remember that he is, after all, only a learner. He will, perhaps, go on

through life with much self-satisfaction perpetuating his mistakes, for which he will have no longer the excuse of youth, and unconsciously reaping the fruit of them. Nay, it is possible that years of partial failure and disappointment will not disabuse him of the illusion that his circumstances are to blame, and not *himself*, and his mistaken estimate of his people and their wants.

It is not, however, my object in writing this article to suggest any remedy for this state of things, though more than one might occur to my own mind. Nor will I stop to exalt the advantages to be derived from spending the time which intervenes between the degree and ordination at one of the recognised theological colleges; nor even to urge upon clergymen of large influence and undeniable attainments that they should follow the example set by Dean Vaughan and the present Bishop of Durham, and devote a portion of their time (never more profitably occupied) to the training of young men for a short period previous to their appointment to the ministry. I will leave that to other pens, and content myself with giving, by his permission, a short sketch of some incidents which occurred during the first year of a country curate of my acquaintance. It is possible that the recital may be interesting to some. It is certain that the experiences of that first year were so many eye-openers to the curate himself.

It matters not, then, in what year; but the curate aforenamed found himself, a few days after his ordination, the occupant of a charming little pair of rooms, whose windows overlooked a wide stretch of southland country. It was Saturday afternoon, and he had only arrived at the neighbouring market-town that same morning, and had thence proceeded with his portmanteau in a dogcart from the inn, leaving directions that his boxes of books should be sent after him. He was rather nervous, and did not think that he would show himself upon the village green that day, but devote himself to the preparation of his sermon to be delivered the following morning.

He had, of course, already made the acquaintance of the vicar during a previous visit, and learned something of the whereabouts of the various buildings, as church, schools, etc., at which his presence would be required, but as yet did not know much either of the place or the people. On Sunday morning, then, he stood with sermon-case in pocket, and surplice, hood, and stole in a neat cloth bag, upon the strip of front lawn, and felt that he was at last embarked indeed upon this great enterprise of his new profession.

Below him, in the valley, and about half a mile distant, the gray spire of the parish church overtopped some clustering

trees. The sound of the bells came quite clearly to him upon the gentle air. The morning sun caught the weather-cock aslant and sent flashes from its gilded plumage into the curate's eyes. Was it the balmy brightness of that summer-day, or was it the thought of the stream of inquisitive church-goers which occupied the high-road that lay so plainly between him and the churchyard-gate, and whose black coats and red shawls he could see moving steadily down the hill? Something tempted the curate to give that dusty high-road a wide berth, and to choose in preference a grassy by-path just across the park railings, which evidently led in the same direction. There was plenty of time—he had almost a half-hour to spare—and so he vaulted over the stile and stepped out briskly upon the soft sward, beneath the grateful shadow of fan-leaved horse-chestnuts and lime-trees with their musical hum of many insect-wings. He congratulated himself upon his choice of routes. These murmuring sounds and the sweet scents of grass and flowers composed his mind. They were to him as the choir and the incense of God's great natural Temple. He felt in harmony with all worship. He thought, "If I were called upon to speak just now—at once, without any interval—I could almost dare to preach extempore!"

Soon he arrived at the bottom of the valley, and began to look around for some side-path which might lead him to the church which he now plainly saw upon his left. Alas! there was none. The park railings rather swerved to the right. The farther he went the farther he seemed from the gray spire whose bells still rang out their peal of invitation. There was a hop-garden between himself and the churchyard; no one was looking; he could easily scale the high fence and make his way across. No sooner said than done; and soon he was threading his way through the long avenues beneath the trailing hop-bines. There was no time to be lost. The bells had ceased, and one alone was tolling as if to call in stragglers. The curate reached the boundary of the yard; but he found, to his utter dismay, that a thick hedge of quickset, some six feet in height and fossed with a deep ditch, lay between him and his goal; nor was there the appearance of a gate anywhere! He hastily turned to the right, and followed the hedge round towards the road. Still no break in its *chevaux de frise*. And now the single bell ceased to toll. The curate snatched out his watch, and saw to his dismay that it was already half-past ten; the hour of service had arrived. What would the vicar say? What would the congregation think? That abominable hedge still curved round to the right, and the curate's back was now turned upon the church; but he ran desperately on, for he had caught sight of a distant gate. This

led him into the high-road. A few minutes more and he was striding through the deserted churchyard towards the corner of the chancel where he knew the vestry-door was to be found.

He tried the vestry-door. It was locked! What should he do? return home, or brave the criticism of the whole congregation by boldly entering through the western door, and passing to the vestry along the entire length of the church? He felt that there was no alternative; he was to be the morning preacher; he must effect an entrance somehow. So, screwing up his courage, he entered behind the people, and, bag in hand, made his way up the building. How long that journey seemed, and with what a clatter did his heels reverberate upon the pitiless surface of the encaustic tiles! At last he was sheltered within the friendly walls of the vestry, from which he could not make up his mind to reappear until the time arrived for the delivery of the sermon. Ah me! what a dreadful commencement to his sacred duties! How different from that which he had so often planned for himself! It was a great relief to him when, at the conclusion of the service, the kindly vicar not only accepted his explanation with a smile, but congratulated him warmly upon what he was pleased to call a creditable first sermon. All this the curate told me with some shamefacedness; he assured me, however, that the lesson was not thrown away upon him. It taught him, among other things, to arrange his time so that he might always have *at least* a clear quarter of an hour in the vestry before the service, during which he might compose his mind, and prepare himself for the part which he was to take in the worship of the church.

The rector of a large parish, which included the best quarter of a Midland town, once mentioned to me the difficulty which he had experienced in getting the poor folk to attend the parish church. There was room enough and to spare. The free sittings were numerous and well-placed; the service was bright and hearty; but still the labourers and their wives did not come. An ardent advocate of the free and open church system would no doubt have offered an easy solution to the problem. He would have urged: Throw open your church from end to end; let there be no difference made between capitalist and labourer; let all sit where they can and will, and you may yet hope to see your church filled with poor as well as rich. My friend's previous experience, however, did not quite tally with this expectation. He had seen free and open churches deserted by, or thinly attended by, the poor, who would, nevertheless, come readily enough to the same services when conducted in a neighbouring schoolroom. He

arrived at the conclusion that free and open seats had practically very little to do with the matter. That it was rather a sort of proud humility on the part of the poor themselves which made them quite as unwilling to mingle with their richer neighbours in the public assembly as to sit by themselves in a part of the church marked out as it were for the occupation of an inferior caste. His own church was central and easily accessible, and there was, as we have said, room enough and to spare in it for all, but he proceeded to act upon his conviction, and built a mission chapel within a stone's-throw of the other. The result was what he had anticipated. Every Sunday night the people from the lanes and alleys filled that chapel to join in the very same services which had failed to attract them to the neighbouring walls of the grand old parish church.

This was quite borne out by the experience of our curate in his country sphere. While the free sittings which filled either aisle of the graceful church were sparsely occupied by broadcloth coats, smock-frocks, and linsey-woolsey dresses, a schoolroom service which was held in the evening upon the common was very popular. The rough benches were crowded; the sturdy labouring folk lifted up their voices in the responses till the occupant of the reading-desk must have been a dull-souled ministrant indeed who did not feel that his own heart was lifted up by the sound of their devotion. While as to the singing, they almost drowned the treble voices of the choirboys, and made the open rafters ring again.

It was here that the curate first learned to preach extempore. If, as a distinguished orator has said, a manuscript is like a block of ice between a speaker and his audience—the curate soon felt that—when the audience is a rustic one, the sermon-paper is a very iceberg for chillness and opacity. For polish and ornament, whether in building or sermon, the working man and his wife care next to nothing; for light and warmth in both they care much. If a church is not good to hear and see in, they will perceive no beauty in it, though it be a gem of mediæval art or the masterpiece of a Pugin or Gilbert Scott. They will then infinitely prefer the four bare walls of the little Bethel where they can at least see to read their Bibles and hear distinctly what the preacher has to say. It is the same with a sermon. "Mesopotamia" may be a word of sufficient comfort for a certain class of decent bodies, but the labouring man has no faith in it. The only kind of preaching which has any attraction for him is that which he can understand. The sermon which can influence him must be *clear*, it must throw light into his murky mind ; it must be *simple*, for he cannot readily take in more than one idea at the

same time; but, above all, it must be *direct*—it must come all hot from the heart of the preacher if it is to excite any warmth at all in his own labour-dulled heart. Hence the too frequent triumph of the ranter in the barn-like Rehoboth over the studied rhetoric which flows from the fluted pulpit of the parish church.

After the curate had sent one man into a comfortable sleep with his polished periods, he made a resolution that he would not repeat the error, if, at least, he could help it. He determined that he would begin at once and speak as God might enable him, leaving his paper at home. At least, he did not again send anyone to sleep. He had the satisfaction of noting that the eyes which formerly, when open, travelled vacantly from floor to rafter, were now fixed expectantly upon his own face; and when, as sometimes, he could even engross the attention of the fidgety choir-boys, he felt that he had achieved a triumph indeed. Of course this entailed some extra preparation on his part, until he obtained, by practice, the free use of his tongue. Indeed, on one wet night while crossing the common, his mind being more occupied with the heads of his sermon than his whereabouts, he fell down a gravel-pit, and was saved from anything worse than a mud-bath chiefly by his stout umbrella acting as a kind of parachute!

The field-labourer is difficult to move. He has little time to read, and is not much given to thought. He rises while it is yet dark, and as a rule goes to bed with the sun. It is not enough to prepare an intellectual or spiritual feast for him and then to bid him come; he must be sought after and even fetched. The curate was happy in the leadership of a methodical vicar who committed to his charge a certain district of the large and scattered parish, and urged upon him at once to map out that district into sub-districts, and to work them systematically. Having some little skill in drawing, he invested in many yards of white blind-holland, and painted thereon diagrams illustrating scenes from the "Pilgrim's Progress." He called in the assistance of the village carpenter, who soon rigged up a wooden frame in which the pictures might revolve like a continuous drop-scene when turned by a handle. Some green baize curtains and a few screened paraffine lamps by way of footlights completed the little show; and, armed with this, the curate managed to draw quite a crowd of both sexes and all ages during the long winter evenings to listen with unflagging interest to the ever-fresh story of the Pilgrimage.

He soon learned, however, that if he wished to reach the people he must go to them into their own homes, and that,

too, at the time which suited themselves. It was particularly difficult to get at the men. When they left the fields, and had had their tea, if they did not adjourn to the public-house they generally turned-in at once for the night. On one occasion, when he was making a special effort to see the mankind of the village, to invite them personally to some mission-services, he knocked at the door of a cottage which stood in a hollow by itself within its own plot of vegetable garden. This was in early summer, and the evenings were long and light. The sun was set, but the sky was still flooded with bright rays, and the warm red brick of the old cottage glowed against a dark background of undergrowth and a few Scotch firs. All was very still; but for a certain rustling and twittering under the eaves, as of birds not yet settled in their roost, not a sound was to be heard. The curate knocked—there was no reply. He knocked again—still no answer. He tried the door: it was fastened, and the window-blinds were all pulled down. One more knock. At last he heard something: a rustle, and then a voice, muffled as if from beneath bed-clothes, "*Who be you?*" It was not yet eight o'clock, but that man, his wife and children, were all in bed and asleep!

Notwithstanding these early hours, the curate found it possible to coax these poor toilers out during the long winter evenings by selecting a central cottage in each sub-district, and holding a bright little service or cottage-lecture in the kitchen of it. He found that they required a good deal of constant prodding—and little wonder, after the long fatigue of the day's physical toil!—but by always visiting the district from house to house, if possible the same afternoon, and by knocking up a few of the lazier spirits on his way thither in the evening, he generally succeeded in filling the cottage kitchens with as many as they could hold. The music was rather a difficulty. When they stood up to sing, the heads of the people came very near to the rafters of the low ceiling, and left little room for the expansion of sound. Moreover, the labourer of the Southern counties is not musical. The hymns are not easy to "raise" when he forms the bulk of the congregation. The curate almost broke his heart and his voice over the hymns at these cottage-services, until he discovered a youth who possessed a gift for the concertina. After that all went smoothly, except that the tunes were thenceforth strictly limited in number. Indeed, for a long time all the hymns had to be accommodated to either "Rock of Ages" or "Sun of my soul," which were the only tunes that the poor concertinist dared to play with any confidence.

These meetings were not without their phases of pathetic humour, but they were, in the main, full of solemn purpose.

As the firelight flickered upon the roof, casting deep shadows, and now and again throwing into strong relief the faces of the old, furrowed and grooved with many a line and wrinkle, or the weather-beaten cheeks and sun-bleached hair of the children whom the young mother had brought with her, and the speaker saw that all were turned wistfully and expectantly toward the corner where his table was lighted up by two tall candles provided by the thoughtful owner of the room, he felt that here indeed were the poor, tired sheep whom the Lord had commissioned him to feed; and that some of these were led through those wayside meetings into the green pastures by the side of the waters of comfort, letters written during nearly fourteen years—written with stiff hands, and ill-spelled—still continue (so he tells me) to assure him.

The curate informs me that the most difficult congregation with which he had to deal was that at the workhouse. The vicar and he shared between them the duties of chaplain. Every alternate week, therefore, he devoted three afternoons to the wards of the infirmary, and held a service in the dining-hall. The workhouse—or the union, as it was euphemistically called—stood a little apart from the high-road. A massive brick building of Elizabethan form; too large for a private house, too naked-looking for a mansion, there was about it an unmistakable something of parochialism which suggested grey fustian and water-gruel. I hear that the curate once had the audacity to introduce within its walls a friend of his, a doctor, who was possessed with an enthusiasm for sanitary reforms, and that a flaming letter appeared in the local newspaper the next morning exposing sundry flagrant cases of neglect to supply the inmates with some of the elementary necessaries of health. The outraged Board of Guardians hastened to protect its right of skinning the teeth of the poor unchallenged, by issuing a decree that henceforth no visitors should be admitted under any pretence without a special letter of permit from the Board. Thus was the curate admonished.

But to return to the weekly service in the hall. The chaplain would put on a voluminous surplice, made apparently to suit any height and breadth of figure, and which hung, unstarched and seldom washed, in damp folds from his shoulders. Thus attired he would walk through the whitewashed passages, with their faint odour of carbolic acid, till he reached the hall, where the trestle-tables had been pushed aside, and benches set to right and left for the paupers of either sex. When he for the first time mounted the rickety pulpit of worm-eaten deal, and looked over the high cushion of faded red baize, with its ancient Prayer Book bethumbed, as it seemed, by generations of chaplains, his heart sank within him. How

could he hope to gain the ear of such an audience? On the left sat the men. Old men in loose suits of grey fustian, bowed together and listless, with a look of hopeless apathy upon their worn, grey faces. Deaf men; men half idiotic, who stared straight before them with a vacant smile. Sturdy tramps, who were wintering within the workhouse walls till the first balmy days of spring should enable them to dispense with its hospitality; lads, also in the pauper's grey, who looked as though they were getting no good from the companionship in which they found themselves. On the right were the women. Aged beldames, shrivelled and mummy-like, leaning upon staffs. Bold-faced hussies, who grimaced whenever they thought that the chaplain or the superintendent looked the other way. Mere children, whose faces were fast assuming that terrible, unmistakable stamp of the ward of the parish. Here the curate instinctively felt that the sermon case was out of place. He must watch his audience and adapt himself to its passing moods, or give up all hope of speaking to the purpose at all. A little experience soon taught him that the best way to gain and hold the attention of young and old was to tell some simple story as graphically as might be, and draw out of it some single plain thread which could lead his hearers to the Cross of Christ in much the same manner as he would address his own Sunday-school. And when he perceived that the little children were open-eyed and riveted, and that the deaf old folk were straining their ears to hear what was to follow, he was content.

Apropos of the workhouse, the chaplain had some strange stories to tell of his adventures in the wards, for which we cannot here find room, but the following is not without its own humour. He was about to enter the female ward, wherein lay a dying woman, when the sound of a strange tumult reached his ear. When he opened the door he saw that about a dozen women had congregated about the poor sufferer's bed, and were quarrelling violently about some vexed question. Apparently they had differed as to the mode of administering some physic; but by that time they had quite forgotten the patient, and were shaking their fists with much heartiness in each other's faces, while the shrill uproar was quite deafening. When the chaplain entered there was a sudden cessation, and a hasty rush for a side door. He, indignant at their cruel thoughtlessness, strode rapidly forward to intercept their flight, but was only successful in preventing the escape of one. To this convicted culprit, however, he proceeded to give a piece of his mind. He reprimanded her with much severity, and expatiated at considerable length upon the wickedness of thus outraging with such barbarity the bed of a dying sister. The woman stood

curtsying, but made no reply; until the chaplain, having well-nigh emptied his vials of wrath to the dregs upon her head, asked her with some austerity what excuse she had to make for her conduct. At this crisis the appointed nurse, who had crept back into the ward, ventured to step forward, and said, "Please, your reverence, the woman is perfectly deaf, and can't hear not one word that you say." It was too much; the chaplain laughed. And after that there was nothing to be done but to forgive the repentant nurse, with an admonition to behave better in future.

During this, his first curacy, our young friend was fortunate, or unfortunate, according as you may regard the matter, in not seeing much of that great battle between Church and Dissent which is so bitterly waged in some parishes. Dissent did not flourish in the village on the hill. There was, indeed, a somewhat pretentious chapel which had been built by a personal opponent of a former vicar, and which was planted upon an eminence exactly opposite the parsonage-gates—in order, said the munificent founder, that he might see it whenever he came out. And see it, indeed, both he and his successors did. Even the present vicar, whose eyes were dim, and who always wore spectacles fitted with the darkest obtainable smoked glass, could scarcely avoid doing that. But the sight was not calculated to raise in their breasts exactly the emotion which the builder had anticipated. That chapel never could be filled. Its very aspect was that of decent decay. An unoccupied house is, in builder's slang, termed a carcase. Well termed; for what a body is without a spirit, that is a house without an occupant. This chapel always wore a carcase-like appearance. Its windows reminded one of blind eyes—they had that nameless suggestion of never being looked through. It was hard to restrain the boys from throwing stones through them. The very flint stones of the walls and the tiles of the high-pitched roof had gathered greenness, as though there were no internal warmth of life to drive the damp away.

The denomination to which the chapel belonged had often tried to galvanize it into life, but hitherto without success. Some popular preacher would fill it for the night, just for the time during which he preached. But the following Sunday the local preacher scarcely collected enough people to raise a tune. The curate related to me, not without a quiet smile, the circumstances of one of these revivals. During the previous week handbills were circulated throughout the length and breadth of the parish announcing a special course of sermons by the celebrated Dr. ——, from London. The titles of the sermons were evidently intended to be provocative of curiosity, and had been studied with a view to their "drawing" power. The most

singular and attractive upon the list was described as "The Portrait of an Ass taken from an Old Album." The curate was rather curious to know what sort of a gospel sermon could be prepared from such a text, and next day questioned one of his men, whom he suspected of having been present. "Who was the ass ?" said the curate. "Well sir," replied the man, pushing up one side of his felt hat and doubtfully scratching his head, "I dunnot azactly know. But the sermon were only about the man who had not on a wedding-garment—it were."

However, in spite of a band of singing men and women who paraded the village street and endeavoured to collect a crowd, this mission fared no better than those which had gone before, and the tide of worshippers turned as usual toward the schoolroom on the common—now replaced by a district chapel—where they found what satisfied them in the simply conducted services of their own Church.

This first year of his ministry was, so the curate assures me, in spite of his many mistakes, a very happy one. It reassured him upon one point about which he had been somewhat doubtful. He was not at all certain that he would like house-to-house visitation, or that, disliking it, he would ever be a successful visitant. He had visited the poor once or twice only while a layman, and, alas! thoroughly disliked it. He confided this difficulty to a certain deacon, who was about to take priests' orders, and received from him but scant encouragement. "Ah!" said his friend, "you dislike visiting do you? You will dislike it ten times more when you have had a year of it!"

This prediction, however, was not verified. As he began to understand the poor and to sympathize with their wants, he not only went among them with tenderer feelings, which soon developed into love, but he found the greatest interest in trying to get to the bottom of their special doubts and difficulties, and in following out the by-paths of their dimly-lighted minds. His vicar quoted to him the saying that a house-going parson makes a church-going people, and that therefore he *must* visit. But he soon found that he loved to visit. Not to mention the delight of knowing by actual demonstration that he brought peace to troubled homes, there was the unfailing interest of studying character.

He soon learned to know many of the folk. There was the old gardener, who still wore his ancient faded red waistcoat and knee-breeches, a staunch ultra-Calvinist, who did not believe in preaching salvation to the multitude, and whose characteristic watchword was, "God watereth where He pleaseth."

There was the small landlord of a row of tiny cottages who

did not think that he was called to pray while the parson prayed for him. When the curate gently remonstrated with this upholder of the priesthood, and assured him that unless he prayed for himself he could do little for him, he naïvely replied, "Well, then, whatever is the good of you, sir?"

There was the labourer with the stiff neck, whose head was permanently turned somewhat to one side, and who had thus twisted his vertebræ by tumbling down his cottage-stairs one dark winter's morning, but who, when urged by the curate to prevent a repetition of the catastrophe by nailing up a piece of rope as a sort of baluster, preferred to risk all chances rather than take the unusual step of doing anything that he had not been paid for doing.

There was the wizened little old man who lived in a thatched cottage apart from his neighbours, the fortunate possessor of an annuity of a pound a week, and who assured the curate with much virtuous self-gratulation that he never gave nothing to nobody—he weren't so foolish, he weren't—and he never asked nothing from nobody, he didn't; he was just content to get his little bit of meat every day, and he wondered why everybody else couldn't do the same!

But space would fail me were I to attempt to describe all that the curate—who, indeed, seemed inclined to grow garrulous on this subject—told me about the folk and their ways. We must conclude with the following story, which goes to show that he was determined to make the people's acquaintance, whether they were willing or no.

A large part of the parish was composed of wide stretches of moorland, covered with furze and bracken, and dotted here and there with huts, erected singly or in small clusters by men who had originally settled there as squatters. Some of these eked out a scanty livelihood by growing a few cabbages, onions, lettuce, and such-like vegetables, and hawking them in a neighbouring town. The curate was desirous of conveying a message to one of these hawkers, and had accordingly made his way across the moor in the direction in which he had been told that the shanty might be found. By-and-by he saw the object of his search, a rough-looking, wild-haired man, standing up in his donkey-cart and looking steadily in his direction. As the curate continued to advance, the man turned and, giving his donkey the rein, trotted off in the opposite direction. The curate had come far, and was not disposed to let his man escape, so he shouted to him to stop. The only reply was a sounding whack on the back of the donkey, and the trot became a canter. As it was quite evident that the man had seen and heard him, the curate was determined that he should not evade him in this manner, and so at once gave chase.

The man, looking over his shoulder and seeing that his pursuer was gaining upon him, rained blows upon the donkey, and the canter became a gallop. However, the curate was not to be denied, and soon overhauled his chase. To the man's evident terror he sped past the cart, seized the donkey's head, and brought it up short. "What do you want?" he gasped in husky tones. "You," panted his triumphant pursuer. "Who are you?" said the man. "Who do you think I am?" in turn asked the other. "*Ain't you the tax-collector?*" inquired the man. "No, I am not," said the curate. "Who then?" said the hawker, evidently much relieved. He was told, and a smile broke across his weather-hardened features. His donkey and cart were safe for that time.

The end of the curate's cogitations, as the result of his first year's work, seems to have been that the composition of a sermon even for a rustic audience was no easy task, nor one to be lightly treated. He determined to devote as much of his time as he could spare from other duties to the compilation of what should be useful to all sorts and conditions of men. Nor did he deem the time wasted if many of his evenings were spent in this study alone, how to speak so as to be understanded of the people. "What do you do with yourself during the long nights?" once asked a fair friend of an intellectual turn of mind. "Write," said he, rather sententiously. "Oh! for the magazines, I suppose?" "N—no," replied the "curate, not for the magazines."

E. C. DAWSON.

Correspondence.

SHILOH.

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—Permit me, of your courtesy, to make a brief reply to Mr. Hobson's criticisms.

He begins by stating that the question as to the interpretation of the "Shiloh" passage is not only philological, but is, "and perhaps mainly, a question of *external* evidence," MSS. versions, ancient comments on the text, and the like; and then he adds: "As proof of the uncertainty of the philological ground, Dr. Perowne, in your last, says of one of Dr. Driver's two proffered readings ('he that is his') that he 'should doubt whether such a rendering were *grammatically* possible,' and as interpretation, he says it is 'extremely obscure.'" There is here surely the most extraordinary confusion between philology, grammar, and interpretation. Philology, I had always supposed, was the science which dealt with