

ART. IV.—THE OLD CHURCHWARDEN:  
MR. CHRISTOPHER HEY.

OFTEN when wandering on the seashore beneath the overhanging cliffs, and listening to the surf of the sea, as it splashes and dashes and rises and falls among the rocks at our feet, we have picked up some stray old bones, loosened by the long and patient action of the waves from their ancient resting-place in the dark cliffside, and having carried them home, after perhaps considerable toil, we have failed to make anything of them; and not quite liking to throw them away after all the trouble, we have pushed them into some dark cupboard, there to abide till some geological friend shall drop in one winter evening, when we shall produce them and listen with deepening interest while he takes the dry and musty remnants of a former creation, and, rebuilding them in imagination and by the light of experience, shall tell us what sort of animals they belonged to, and their habits and peculiarities.

Now, when looking into my old Town Book, I have very much the feelings of a geologist when he begins speculating on some strange monster of a remote age, and by carefully considering a few bones attempts to reconstruct the whole skeleton in his mind's eye. I see before me some notices, not very voluminous or very connected, about some faithful old parishioner, who evidently served his generation by the grace of God truly and well, and I like to bring together the scattered items of intelligence, and picture to myself the good, honest, hearty, genial farmer, or the quiet, demure, timid spinster—the Dorcas of the village—or the bustling, sharp-tongued, yet kind-hearted mistress of the farmhouse, whose voice made the serving-maids tremble, yet who was the very soul of pity and tenderness to the weary wayfarer, the orphan, and the widow. I can see enough from the scanty entries in the parish books just to afford me pleasant groundwork for day-dreams on the subject, and there is nothing like looking at the past to inspire faith for the future. God's faithfulness and love and patience, as shown in moulding and disciplining the lives of the past, makes us humbly and prayerfully commit our lives to Him that we may through His all-sufficient grace fill our niche as honestly and well as they did theirs.

Now, if there is one person more than another amongst those old-time friends of mine who has won my respectful admiration and affectionate regard, it is the old churchwarden, Mr. Christopher Hey.

Let us pause at that word "churchwarden." How infinitely much does the Church and nation of England owe to her

churchwardens! When we consider the care and time and thought that they, without any remuneration whatever, have ungrudgingly spent on the temporal interests committed to their charge, we are amazed at the devotion which for hundreds of years has been expended on the public welfare. Few men have a more difficult or thankless office to fulfil, for while considering conflicting interests, and striving to best conserve the revenues and rights of the Church, they are always liable to be misunderstood and misjudged. The clergyman is generally fitted neither by education nor position to manage the letting of lands, repairs of barns, sheds, gates, and hedges; the sale of old timber, the repairs of the church, the grazing and general tidiness of the churchyard, and the distribution of parish charities and doles—although he may like to be consulted (and very rightly so) in all these things, yet as a wise man he leaves them confidently for all practical purposes in the hands of those whom a long experience and local esteem have pointed out as the fit and proper persons to manage them.

I should think, however, that my old friend Mr. Christopher Hey would take first prize for long and devoted service in parochial matters. He appears as churchwarden first in 1607, and after filling all kinds of public offices he disappears from view, and goes to his great reward in 1682, so that for seventy-five years he was a well-known and evidently most highly-respected parish friend, which fact further means that he must have lived to be nearly, if not quite, a centenarian; so that honest and hearty attention to the public weal, as well as a busy private life, evidently did not wear out his energies nor shorten his days. Herein we have another proof that *work* never kills any man; it is *worry*. Probably Mr. Hey was an even-tempered man who never worried, off whose shoulders vexations and anxieties slipped like water off a duck's back. Happy man! would there were more like him! Moses managed all Israel so "that his eye was not dimmed, nor his natural force abated," because of his trust in God; perhaps it was the same quiet confidence that gave Mr. Hey his long and useful life.

Mr. Christopher Hey was a tradesman in the town—a mercer, and I am certain he was as shrewd and nice a man in his private affairs as in his public capacity. When he first entered on public life in 1607, he must have been a very young man, perhaps a comparatively new-comer to the town, whom his neighbours had speedily recognised as "a man of parts," and who was not unwilling to come forward into the arena of parish conflicts, so as to get himself known and make his influence felt. But his experience in this line was not

satisfactory, we imagine; perhaps he was too young to command respect, or maybe the occupations of home and business became too absorbing to admit of spending time on outside interests—any way, we hear no more of him as a parish officer for several years.

But we have omitted one item of interest. In 1603 he was the "Towne Armer," and kept in his custody the various pieces of armour and the ancient weapons that were thought necessary for the parish constable or constables in the execution of their duties—*then* much more real and urgent than now—but in that year he handed them over to the care of others, as, I opine, he was rising in the world, and thought himself rather above such a menial position; it was certainly through no want of public confidence, or he would not have been elected churchwarden four years later.

But, however this may be, Mr. Hey teaches all energetic young men a very useful and needful lesson, in not aspiring after public celebrity till he had acquired a sure and substantial basis for himself in private life. This lesson is specially needed in the present day, when, with our multiplicity of councils, boards, committees, etc., young men with plenty of "push" are tempted to neglect their businesses and their homes, for the purpose of prematurely making "a name" in political or parish matters. Mr. Hey made his home, secured his prosperity, and then devoted himself most self-denyingly and ably to the service and welfare of his fellow-townsmen. But as the years roll on, Christopher Hey gradually slips more and more into public notice and public usefulness. In 1612 he is one of the four parishioners annually appointed "to serve the Sheriff's turn," which was, in fact, to act as jurors if called upon (or else it means to be parish constable, only the notices are rather confused on this subject). But the notices of his activity and devotion to the general good become more constant as time passes on. Instead of age making him desire to seek seclusion and well-earned repose, it only apparently stirred him up to livelier exhibitions of public spirit. From 1640 and onwards until 1681 he fills the responsible office of churchwarden over and over again, but not for long periods together; he gave other men a chance of learning how to serve Church and State, yet we never find many years without his familiar name appearing as "chosen and appointed" to fill this important post. But when he is not churchwarden he is not idle. One of those men who *must* be busy, and *will* be useful, he always fills some other post of public responsibility. We find him as "questman"—that is, sidesman, or assistant to the churchwarden—an office that for a long space of time dropped into

abeyance, but which was of such great utility that it has now been very generally revived.

He becomes "overseer of the highways" and "overseer of the poor" many times, in both of which positions his long experience of country ways and country people must have been of immense value, while his practical knowledge of rural needs would give weight to his suggestions.

There can be no higher testimonial to a man's worth than to find him continuously for nearly three-quarters of a century being appointed by his fellow-townsmen to fill every important parochial position of trust there was. It speaks volumes for the man himself, as witnessing to his unblemished character. With old and new friends alike the man was esteemed; his equal could not be found; he kept the confidence of the old generation and won the confidence of the new. It says much also for the times in which he lived; when people found a good public servant they valued him, and "were not given to change" (Prov. xxiv. 21). These lessons must not be overlooked in the present day. We are apt to forget public merit, and become only too willing to discard real and experienced leaders for "new men" with flaring manifestoes and Utopian schemes for bringing in "a golden age."

But the churchwarden of those days, as now, was the parochial "chancellor of the exchequer"; he had to look after the letting of parish lands, the distribution of parish charities, and the general well-being of parish property. Through his hands passed all the parish revenues, and he had to fulfil the difficult task of being just both to the vestry and the tenants.

Over and over again does the name of Christopher Hey appear amidst the curious financial arrangements chronicled in the old Town Book. He it is who receives the rents, sometimes evidently paid very tardily and unwillingly; who decides and records the conditions of the letting, what the tenant was to do and not to do, whether he might cut faggots or not, whether he should trim the hedges, etc.—these things our old friend carefully arranged.

When the dole of bread fell due, and the poor anxiously awaited the *then* deeply-valued gift, it was good Mr. Hey had the task—often a thankless one, I doubt not—of distributing to the needy.

In 1643, when he was overseer (not churchwarden that year), a still valued charity became the property of the town. "There is given by Mr. Turner, late deceased, 4 acres of land to the town of Watton for the use of the poor, and Mr. George Lamb is to pay 26 shillings a year, 13 shillings every half year for the term of 21 years, and after the term be ended it

is at the disposal of the Churchwardens for the use of the poor as aforesaid, to be dealt out in bread, 6 pence every week to the poorest sort of people, given in the year 1643." This charity is even now a blessing to the parish, though it is at present united by a scheme with other charities and no longer takes the form of bread, which under our present conditions of life is not the courted gift it was in those days.

How many years did old Hey's honest hands deal out the gracious and acceptable gift! How well he must have known the circumstances of all the applicants, the worthy and unworthy! No use trying to take him in, who for so many years had had every knowledge of each person's "ups and downs," good and evil deeds. Honest poverty would feel happy in his presence, while profligacy and vice would slink away, hopeless and ashamed. In addition to this, we constantly find small sums of money left in his hands, for him to have "the use of it"—*why* does not certainly appear, but, from the connection of events, I think it was a mild species of parish speculation, and the townsfolk knew by experience that no one could or would turn the money to such good account as shrewd old Hey.

What form these speculations took we can but dimly imagine. Perhaps it was the purchase and sale of "stock" or "crops"; any way, they evidently resulted to the general satisfaction, or the experiment would not have been so often repeated. We should scarcely expect churchwardens to do this now!

I verily believe, if the venerable Christopher had been called to as active a part in the control of national finances as of parochial, he would have made himself a great name; he would have been immortalized in more important documents than those I have the charge of, and would have started, perhaps, wondrous schemes of political economy and fiscal reform.

Many were the cares that occupied his attention. One begins to realize, in perusing these old pages, how much of a churchwarden's time and thought was engaged on matters that now are wisely delegated to various administrative bodies. The apprenticing of pauper and orphan children was then a parish matter demanding the anxious solicitude of the churchwardens. Mr. Hey would not fail here, we are certain, both in seeking out the suitable master and safely counselling the youthful apprentice. But, as if these things were not enough for his abundant energy, in 1655 I find him having "the middle bell" retuned, making careful note both of the weight of metal when delivered to the founder and the cost of the proceeding, which latter was rather more than the parish

could that year bear, for the accounts closed with a sum of £1 3s. 7d. due to him.

And yet, with all these multifarious good deeds recorded to his perpetual credit, we have not at present reached the most notable evidence of his public spirit.

When the shades of life's evening began to gather around him, Christopher Hey seems to have wished to leave behind, both a substantial memorial of his own deep interest in the little township, and also a seasonable reminder to his neighbours of the fleeting nature of time. We therefore find this interesting and pathetic entry under date April 12, 1680 (when the good old man must have been a good bit over ninety):

“Memorandum the day and year above said: it was agreed by the Minister and Churchwardens and the rest of the inhabitants of the town of Watton, that Mr. Christopher Hey having delivered in an account of £70 19s. 6d., disbursed in building a Clock House, and setting up of a Clock and Bell, and which was upon the accounts, £40 was allowed out of the Collection towards the said building, and that being deducted, there appeared due to the said Mr. Hey £30 19s. 6d., which sum of money he shall have paid him in manner and form following, that is to say, Six Pounds yearly to be paid him upon a Churchwardens' rate, and so yearly, six pounds for five years next ensuing the date hereof, which of the first six pounds is to be paid now before the Churchwardens for the former year, 1679, go off; and it is further agreed that the Inhabitants of Watton shall pay for the ground on which the house stands, and that the said Mr. Christopher Hey do give sufficient assurance of the ground, upon such a rent paid to the Minister and Churchwardens of the parish of Watton for ever.

“HENRY TOOLEY, VICAR OF WATTON”

(with about twenty other signatories).

“And it is agreed the Rent of the Town lands be paid him yearly till the debt is discharged.”

And here ever since has the old clock-tower stood, and tells the hours with unfailing regularity, a lasting witness to the grand old churchwarden. The old market cross is gone, the parish stocks have disappeared, the parish weights and scales, which he doubtless often handled, have been melted down or gone into other hands; but the clock-tower stands still, teaching all the solemn lesson so “to number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom.”

For very many years the old Watton Town Book was lost,

and only recovered by a gentleman of antiquarian tastes living in a neighbouring parish, who accidentally came across it in an old Norwich shop. He had its tattered leaves mended and a strong new cover put on. But within this cover is pasted a small discoloured fragment of paper of decided interest to us, with these words, "Christopher Hey gave this cover of this Booke, the 29th of M<sup>ch</sup>, 1656." So we see that the faithful old parish friend and servant had cared even for the cover of the Town Book ; it seems to me he doted over the interests of the place like a fond father over a dearly-loved child.

And now the valuable life had nearly run its course ; he had lost his wife (Mary Hey) in December, 1673, but his son's name (Thomas) appears written with his own in the parish annals, showing that the son was following in the father's steps, and also that they were kindred spirits in public affairs. We can guess how the son loved to cheer and comfort the declining years of his revered father, and how the townsfolk watched with sad and affectionate interest the growing infirmities of the veteran churchwarden. We think we can see the old man leaning on his son's arm going to look at the new clock-tower, and hear him recount the changes that had taken place since his young days.

Not for many months, however, did the tones of the new parish clock delight the ears of the aged Christopher. On July 5, 1682, the parishioners gathered round the last resting-place of him who has been the most tried and trusty friend our little town has ever known. The venerable patriarch was dead, and every heart must have felt that in him they had lost a wise and loving friend. Very peculiarly suitable must have sounded the glorious words of promise: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours ;" and very earnestly may have ascended the prayer from many hearts: "Grant us grace so to follow him in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys that Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee." The Apostolic command had certainly been no dead letter with him: "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

For such quiet, self-denying, holy lives the world and the Church are all the richer. What countless instances of patient industry and self-denying public service could many old village registers bear witness to! Let us be thankful there have been such men, let us endeavour to follow prayerfully and humbly their good examples, to see in them something of "the great Example," and let us try to imitate them, even as they did Christ.

The daily round, the common task,  
 Will furnish all we need to ask,  
 Room to deny ourselves, a road  
 To bring us daily nearer God.

And of such noble lives we can truly say :

“Such souls  
 Vanish like lightning, but they leave behind  
 A voice that, in the distance far away,  
 Wakens the slumbering ages.”

W. B. RUSSELL-CALEY.

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#### ART. V.—DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES.

CHURCH history is always interesting, especially that of primitive times. The third century was a time of transition, and there are six or seven points on which it is worth while to collect together the evidence of competent scholars and historians. First, I may be permitted to reproduce statements from the illustrious Bishop Lightfoot. They are on two points: 1. *The Development of Episcopal Prerogatives.* 2. *The Growth of the Idea of the Sacrifice in the Communion.* Throughout this paper I shall use the language of others rather than my own, as I do not wish to be involved in controversy, or to make inferences, but merely to exhibit historical facts.

##### 1. *The Development of Episcopal Prerogatives.*

On this point Bishop Lightfoot writes as follows: <sup>1</sup> “If with Ignatius the bishop is the centre of Christian unity, if with Irenæus he is the depository of apostolical tradition, with Cyprian he is the *absolute vicegerent of Christ* in things spiritual. In mere strength of language, indeed, it would be difficult to surpass Ignatius, who lived about a century and a half earlier. With the single exception of the sacerdotal view of the ministry which had grown up meanwhile, Cyprian puts forward no assumption which this father had not advanced either literally or substantially long before. This one exception, however, is all-important, for it raised the sanctions of the episcopate to a higher level, and put new force into old titles of respect. Theoretically, therefore, it may be said that Cyprian took his stand on the combination of the ecclesiastical authority as asserted by Ignatius, with the sacerdotal claims which had been developed in the century just past. But the real influence which he exercised in the elevation of the

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Philippians, “Christian Ministry.”