THE WAY OF ALL FLESH
by
Samuel Butler

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

-ROM. viii. 28

PREFACE

Samuel Butleter began to write "The Way of All Flesh" about the year 1872, and was engaged upon it intermittently until 1884. It is therefore, to a great extent, contemporaneous with "Life and Habit," and may be taken as a practical illustration of the theory of heredity embodied in that book. He did not work at it after 1884, but for various reasons he postponed its publication. He was occupied in other ways, and he professed himself dissatisfied with it as a whole, and always intended to rewrite or at any rate to revise it. His death in 1902 prevented him from doing this, and on his death-bed he gave me clearly to understand that he wished it to be published in its present form. I found

that the MS. of the fourth and fifth chapters had disappeared, but by consulting and comparing various notes and sketches, which remained among his papers, I have been able to supply the missing chapters in a form which I believe does not differ materially from that which he finally adopted. With regard to the chronology of the events recorded, the reader will do well to bear in mind that the main body of the novel is supposed to have been written in the year 1867, and the last chapter added as a postscript in 1882.

R. A. STREATFEILD.

CHAPTER I

When I was a small boy at the beginning of the century I remember an old man who wore knee-breeches and worsted stockings, and who used to hobble about the street of our village with the help of a stick. He must have been getting on for eighty in the year 1807, earlier than which date I suppose I can hardly remember him, for I was born in 1802. A few white locks hung about his ears, his shoulders were bent and his knees feeble, but he was still hale, and was much respected in our little world of Paleham. His name was Pontifex.

His wife was said to be his master; I have been

told she brought him a little money, but it cannot have been much. She was a tall, square-shouldered person (I have heard my father call her a Gothic woman) who had insisted on being married to Mr Pontifex when he was young and too good-natured to say nay to any woman who wooed him. The pair had lived not unhappily together, for Mr Pontifex's temper was easy and he soon learned to bow before his wife's more stormy moods.

Mr Pontifex was a carpenter by trade; he was also at one time parish clerk; when I remember him, however, he had so far risen in life as to be no longer compelled to work with his own hands. In his earlier days he had taught himself to draw. I do not say he drew well, but it was surprising he should draw as well as he did. My father, who took the living of Paleham about the year 1797, became possessed of a good many of old Mr Pontifex's drawings, which were always of local subjects, and so unaffectedly painstaking that they might have passed for the work of some good early master. I remember them as hanging up framed and glazed in the study at the Rectory, and tinted, as all else in the room was tinted, with the green reflected from the fringe of ivy leaves that grew around the windows. I wonder how they will actually cease and come to an end as drawings, and into what new phases of being they will then enter.

Not content with being an artist, Mr Pontifex

must needs also be a musician. He built the organ in the church with his own hands, and made a smaller one which he kept in his own house. He could play as much as he could draw, not very well according to professional standards, but much better than could have been expected. I myself showed a taste for music at an early age, and old Mr Pontifex on finding it out, as he soon did, became partial to me in consequence.

It may be thought that with so many irons in the fire he could hardly be a very thriving man, but this was not the case. His father had been a day labourer, and he had himself begun life with no other capital than his good sense and good constitution; now, however, there was a goodly show of timber about his yard, and a look of solid comfort over his whole establishment. Towards the close of the eighteenth century and not long before my father came to Paleham, he had taken a farm of about ninety acres, thus making a considerable rise in life. Along with the farm there went an old-fashioned but comfortable house with a charming garden and an orchard. The carpenter's business was now carried on in one of the outhouses that had once been part of some conventual buildings, the remains of which could be seen in what was called the Abbey Close. The house itself, embosomed in honeysuckles and creeping roses, was an ornament to the whole village, nor were its internal arrangements less exemplary than its outside was ornamental. Report said that Mrs Pontifex starched

the sheets for her best bed, and I can well believe it.

How well do I remember her parlour half filled with the organ which her husband had built, and scented with a withered apple or two from the *pyrus japonica* that grew outside the house; the picture of the prize ox over the chimney-piece, which Mr Pontifex himself had painted; the transparency of the man coming to show light to a coach upon a snowy night, also by Mr Pontifex; the little old man and little old woman who told the weather; the china shepherd and shepherdess; the jars of feathery flowering grasses with a peacock's feather or two among them to set them off, and the china bowls full of dead rose leaves dried with bay salt. All has long since vanished and become a memory, faded but still fragrant to myself.

Nay, but her kitchen-and the glimpses into a cavernous cellar beyond it, wherefrom came gleams from the pale surfaces of milk cans, or it may be of the arms and face of a milkmaid skimming the cream; or again her storeroom, where among other treasures she kept the famous lipsalve which was one of her especial glories, and of which she would present a shape yearly to those whom she delighted to honour. She wrote out the recipe for this and gave it to my mother a year or two before she died, but we could never make it as she did. When we were children she used sometimes to send her respects to my mother, and ask leave for us to come and take tea with her. Right well she used to ply

us. As for her temper, we never met such a delightful old lady in our lives; whatever Mr Pontifex may have had to put up with, we had no cause for complaint, and then Mr Pontifex would play to us upon the organ, and we would stand round him open-mouthed and think him the most wonderfully clever man that ever was born, except of course our papa.

Mrs Pontifex had no sense of humour, at least I can call to mind no signs of this, but her husband had plenty of fun in him, though few would have guessed it from his appearance. I remember my father once sent me down to his workship to get some glue, and I happened to come when old Pontifex was in the act of scolding his boy. He had got the lad-a pudding-headed fellow-by the ear and was saying, "What? Lost again-smothered o' wit." (I believe it was the boy who was himself supposed to be a wandering soul, and who was thus addressed as lost.) "Now, look here, my lad," he continued, "some boys are born stupid, and thou art one of them; some achieve stupidity-that's thee again, Jim-thou wast both born stupid and hast greatly increased thy birthright-and some" (and here came a climax during which the boy's head and ear were swayed from side to side) "have stupidity thrust upon them, which, if it please the Lord, shall not be thy case, my lad, for I will thrust stupidity from thee, though I have to box thine ears in doing so," but I did not see that the old man really did box Jim's ears, or do more

than pretend to frighten him, for the two understood one another perfectly well. Another time I remember hearing him call the village rat-catcher by saying, "Come hither, thou three-days-and-three-nights, thou," alluding, as I afterwards learned, to the rat-catcher's periods of intoxication; but I will tell no more of such trifles. My father's face would always brighten when old Pontifex's name was mentioned. "I tell you, Edward," he would say to me, "old Pontifex was not only an able man, but he was one of the very ablest men that ever I knew."

This was more than I as a young man was prepared to stand. "My dear father," I answered, "what did he do? He could draw a little, but could he to save his life have got a picture into the Royal Academy exhibition? He built two organs and could play the Minuet in *Samson* on one and the March in *Scipio* on the other; he was a good carpenter and a bit of a wag; he was a good old fellow enough, but why make him out so much abler than he was?"

"My boy," returned my father, "you must not judge by the work, but by the work in connection with the surroundings. Could Giotto or Filippo Lippi, think you, have got a picture into the Exhibition? Would a single one of those frescoes we went to see when we were at Padua have the remotest chance of being hung, if it were sent in for exhibition now? Why, the Academy people would be so outraged that they would

not even write to poor Giotto to tell him to come and take his fresco away. Phew!" continued he, waxing warm, "if old Pontifex had had Cromwell's chances he would have done all that Cromwell did, and have done it better; if he had had Giotto's chances he would have done all that Giotto did, and done it no worse; as it was, he was a village carpenter, and I will undertake to say he never scamped a job in the whole course of his life."

"But," said I, "we cannot judge people with so many 'ifs.' If old Pontifex had lived in Giotto's time he might have been another Giotto, but he did not live in Giotto's time."

"I tell you, Edward," said my father with some severity, "we must judge men not so much by what they do, as by what they make us feel that they have it in them to do. If a man has done enough either in painting, music or the affairs of life, to make me feel that I might trust him in an emergency he has done enough. It is not by what a man has actually put upon his canvas, nor yet by the acts which he has set down, so to speak, upon the canvas of his life that I will judge him, but by what he makes me feel that he felt and aimed at. If he has made me feel that he felt those things to be loveable which I hold loveable myself I ask no more; his grammar may have been imperfect, but still I have understood him; he and I are *en rapport* ; and I say again, Edward, that old Pontifex was not only an able man, but one of the very ablest men I ever

knew."

Against this there was no more to be said, and my sisters eyed me to silence. Somehow or other my sisters always did eye me to silence when I differed from my father.

"Talk of his successful son," snorted my father, whom I had fairly roused. "He is not fit to black his father's boots. He has his thousands of pounds a year, while his father had perhaps three thousand shillings a year towards the end of his life. He *is* a successful man; but his father, hobbling about Paleham Street in his grey worsted stockings, broad brimmed hat and brown swallow-tailed coat was worth a hundred of George Pontifexes, for all his carriages and horses and the airs he gives himself."

"But yet," he added, "George Pontifex is no fool either." And this brings us to the second generation of the Pontifex family with whom we need concern ourselves.

CHAPTER II

Old Mr Pontifex had married in the year 1750, but for fifteen years his wife bore no children. At the end of that time Mrs Pontifex astonished the whole village by showing unmistakable signs of a disposition to present her husband with an heir or heiress. Hers had long ago been considered a hopeless case, and when on

consulting the doctor concerning the meaning of certain symptoms she was informed of their significance, she became very angry and abused the doctor roundly for talking nonsense. She refused to put so much as a piece of thread into a needle in anticipation of her confinement and would have been absolutely unprepared, if her neighbours had not been better judges of her condition than she was, and got things ready without telling her anything about it. Perhaps she feared Nemesis, though assuredly she knew not who or what Nemesis was; perhaps she feared the doctor had made a mistake and she should be laughed at; from whatever cause, however, her refusal to recognise the obvious arose, she certainly refused to recognise it, until one snowy night in January the doctor was sent for with all urgent speed across the rough country roads. When he arrived he found two patients, not one, in need of his assistance, for a boy had been born who was in due time christened George, in honour of his then reigning majesty.

To the best of my belief George Pontifex got the greater part of his nature from this obstinate old lady, his mother-a mother who though she loved no one else in the world except her husband (and him only after a fashion) was most tenderly attached to the unexpected child of her old age; nevertheless she showed it little.

The boy grew up into a sturdy bright-eyed little fellow, with plenty of intelligence, and perhaps a trifle

too great readiness at book learning. Being kindly treated at home, he was as fond of his father and mother as it was in his nature to be of anyone, but he was fond of no one else. He had a good healthy sense of *meum* , and as little of *tuum* as he could help. Brought up much in the open air in one of the best situated and healthiest villages in England, his little limbs had fair play, and in those days children's brains were not overtasked as they now are; perhaps it was for this very reason that the boy showed an avidity to learn. At seven or eight years old he could read, write and sum better than any other boy of his age in the village. My father was not yet rector of Paleham, and did not remember George Pontifex's childhood, but I have heard neighbours tell him that the boy was looked upon as unusually quick and forward. His father and mother were naturally proud of their offspring, and his mother was determined that he should one day become one of the kings and councillors of the earth.

It is one thing however to resolve that one's son shall win some of life's larger prizes, and another to square matters with fortune in this respect. George Pontifex might have been brought up as a carpenter and succeeded in no other way than as succeeding his father as one of the minor magnates of Paleham, and yet have been a more truly successful man than he actually was-for I take it there is not much more solid success in this world than what fell to the lot of old Mr and Mrs

Pontifex; it happened, however, that about the year 1780, when George was a boy of fifteen, a sister of Mrs Pontifex's, who had married a Mr Fairlie, came to pay a few days' visit at Paleham. Mr Fairlie was a publisher, chiefly of religious works, and had an establishment in Paternoster Row; he had risen in life, and his wife had risen with him. No very close relations had been maintained between the sisters for some years, and I forget exactly how it came about that Mr and Mrs Fairlie were guests in the quiet but exceedingly comfortable house of their sister and brother-in-law; but for some reason or other the visit was paid, and little George soon succeeded in making his way into his uncle and aunt's good graces. A quick, intelligent boy with a good address, a sound constitution, and coming of respectable parents, has a potential value which a practised business man who has need of many subordinates is little likely to overlook. Before his visit was over Mr Fairlie proposed to the lad's father and mother that he should put him into his own business, at the same time promising that if the boy did well he should not want some one to bring him forward. Mrs Pontifex had her son's interest too much at heart to refuse such an offer, so the matter was soon arranged, and about a fortnight after the Fairlies had left, George was sent up by coach to London, where he was met by his uncle and aunt, with whom it was arranged that he should live.

This was George's great start in life. He now wore more fashionable clothes than he had yet been accustomed to, and any little rusticity of gait or pronunciation which he had brought from Paleham, was so quickly and completely lost that it was ere long impossible to detect that he had not been born and bred among people of what is commonly called education. The boy paid great attention to his work, and more than justified the favourable opinion which Mr Fairlie had formed concerning him. Sometimes Mr Fairlie would send him down to Paleham for a few days' holiday, and ere long his parents perceived that he had acquired an air and manner of talking different from any that he had taken with him from Paleham. They were proud of him, and soon fell into their proper places, resigning all appearance of a parental control, for which indeed there was no kind of necessity. In return, George was always kindly to them, and to the end of his life retained a more affectionate feeling towards his father and mother than I imagine him ever to have felt again for man, woman, or child.

George's visits to Paleham were never long, for the distance from London was under fifty miles and there was a direct coach, so that the journey was easy; there was not time, therefore, for the novelty to wear off either on the part of the young man or of his parents. George liked the fresh country air and green fields after the darkness to which he had been so long

accustomed in Paternoster Row, which then, as now, was a narrow gloomy lane rather than a street. Independently of the pleasure of seeing the familiar faces of the farmers and villagers, he liked also being seen and being congratulated on growing up such a fine-looking and fortunate young fellow, for he was not the youth to hide his light under a bushel. His uncle had had him taught Latin and Greek of an evening; he had taken kindly to these languages and had rapidly and easily mastered what many boys take years in acquiring. I suppose his knowledge gave him a self-confidence which made itself felt whether he intended it or not; at any rate, he soon began to pose as a judge of literature, and from this to being a judge of art, architecture, music and everything else, the path was easy. Like his father, he knew the value of money, but he was at once more ostentatious and less liberal than his father; while yet a boy he was a thorough little man of the world, and did well rather upon principles which he had tested by personal experiment, and recognised as principles, than from those profounder convictions which in his father were so instinctive that he could give no account concerning them.

His father, as I have said, wondered at him and let him alone. His son had fairly distanced him, and in an inarticulate way the father knew it perfectly well. After a few years he took to wearing his best clothes whenever his son came to stay with him, nor would he

discard them for his ordinary ones till the young man had returned to London. I believe old Mr Pontifex, along with his pride and affection, felt also a certain fear of his son, as though of something which he could not thoroughly understand, and whose ways, notwithstanding outward agreement, were nevertheless not as his ways. Mrs Pontifex felt nothing of this; to her George was pure and absolute perfection, and she saw, or thought she saw, with pleasure, that he resembled her and her family in feature as well as in disposition rather than her husband and his.

When George was about twenty-five years old his uncle took him into partnership on very liberal terms. He had little cause to regret this step. The young man infused fresh vigour into a concern that was already vigorous, and by the time he was thirty found himself in the receipt of not less than £1500 a year as his share of the profits. Two years later he married a lady about seven years younger than himself, who brought him a handsome dowry. She died in 1805, when her youngest child Alethea was born, and her husband did not marry again.

CHAPTER III

In the early years of the century five little children and a couple of nurses began to make periodical visits to Paleham. It is needless to say they

were a rising generation of Pontifexes, towards whom the old couple, their grandparents, were as tenderly deferential as they would have been to the children of the Lord Lieutenant of the County. Their names were Eliza, Maria, John, Theobald (who like myself was born in 1802), and Alethea. Mr Pontifex always put the prefix "master" or "miss" before the names of his grandchildren, except in the case of Alethea, who was his favourite. To have resisted his grandchildren would have been as impossible for him as to have resisted his wife; even old Mrs Pontifex yielded before her son's children, and gave them all manner of licence which she would never have allowed even to my sisters and myself, who stood next in her regard. Two regulations only they must attend to; they must wipe their shoes well on coming into the house, and they must not overfeed Mr Pontifex's organ with wind, nor take the pipes out.

By us at the Rectory there was no time so much looked forward to as the annual visit of the little Pontifexes to Paleham. We came in for some of the prevailing licence; we went to tea with Mrs Pontifex to meet her grandchildren, and then our young friends were asked to the Rectory to have tea with us, and we had what we considered great times. I fell desperately in love with Alethea, indeed we all fell in love with each other, plurality and exchange whether of wives or husbands being openly and unblushingly advocated in

the very presence of our nurses. We were very merry, but it is so long ago that I have forgotten nearly everything save that we *were* very merry. Almost the only thing that remains with me as a permanent impression was the fact that Theobald one day beat his nurse and teased her, and when she said she should go away cried out, "You shan't go away-I'll keep you on purpose to torment you."

One winter's morning, however, in the year 1811, we heard the church bell tolling while we were dressing in the back nursery and were told it was for old Mrs Pontifex. Our man-servant John told us and added with grim levity that they were ringing the bell to come and take her away. She had had a fit of paralysis which had carried her off quite suddenly. It was very shocking, the more so because our nurse assured us that if God chose we might all have fits of paralysis ourselves that very day and be taken straight off to the Day of Judgement. The Day of Judgement indeed, according to the opinion of those who were most likely to know, would not under any circumstances be delayed more than a few years longer, and then the whole world would be burned, and we ourselves be consigned to an eternity of torture, unless we mended our ways more than we at present seemed at all likely to do. All this was so alarming that we fell to screaming and made such a hullabaloo that the nurse was obliged for her own peace to reassure us. Then we wept, but more composedly, as

we remembered that there would be no more tea and cakes for us now at old Mrs Pontifex's.

On the day of the funeral, however, we had a great excitement; old Mr Pontifex sent round a penny loaf to every inhabitant of the village according to a custom still not uncommon at the beginning of the century; the loaf was called a dole. We had never heard of this custom before, besides, though we had often heard of penny loaves, we had never before seen one; moreover, they were presents to us as inhabitants of the village, and we were treated as grown up people, for our father and mother and the servants had each one loaf sent them, but only one. We had never yet suspected that we were inhabitants at all; finally, the little loaves were new, and we were passionately fond of new bread, which we were seldom or never allowed to have, as it was supposed not to be good for us. Our affection, therefore, for our old friend had to stand against the combined attacks of archæological interest, the rights of citizenship and property, the pleasantness to the eye and goodness for food of the little loaves themselves, and the sense of importance which was given us by our having been intimate with someone who had actually died. It seemed upon further inquiry that there was little reason to anticipate an early death for anyone of ourselves, and this being so, we rather liked the idea of someone else's being put away into the churchyard; we passed, therefore, in a short time from

extreme depression to a no less extreme exultation; a new heaven and a new earth had been revealed to us in our perception of the possibility of benefiting by the death of our friends, and I fear that for some time we took an interest in the health of everyone in the village whose position rendered a repetition of the dole in the least likely.

Those were the days in which all great things seemed far off, and we were astonished to find that Napoleon Buonaparte was an actually living person. We had thought such a great man could only have lived a very long time ago, and here he was after all almost as it were at our own doors. This lent colour to the view that the Day of Judgement might indeed be nearer than we had thought, but nurse said that was all right now, and she knew. In those days the snow lay longer and drifted deeper in the lanes than it does now, and the milk was sometimes brought in frozen in winter, and we were taken down into the back kitchen to see it. I suppose there are rectories up and down the country now where the milk comes in frozen sometimes in winter, and the children go down to wonder at it, but I never see any frozen milk in London, so I suppose the winters are warmer than they used to be.

About one year after his wife's death Mr Pontifex also was gathered to his fathers. My father saw him the day before he died. The old man had a theory about sunsets, and had had two steps built up against a wall in

the kitchen garden on which he used to stand and watch the sun go down whenever it was clear. My father came on him in the afternoon, just as the sun was setting, and saw him with his arms resting on the top of the wall looking towards the sun over a field through which there was a path on which my father was. My father heard him say "Good-bye, sun; good-bye, sun," as the sun sank, and saw by his tone and manner that he was feeling very feeble. Before the next sunset he was gone.

There was no dole. Some of his grandchildren were brought to the funeral and we remonstrated with them, but did not take much by doing so. John Pontifex, who was a year older than I was, sneered at penny loaves, and intimated that if I wanted one it must be because my papa and mamma could not afford to buy me one, whereon I believe we did something like fighting, and I rather think John Pontifex got the worst of it, but it may have been the other way. I remember my sister's nurse, for I was just outgrowing nurses myself, reported the matter to higher quarters, and we were all of us put to some ignominy, but we had been thoroughly awakened from our dream, and it was long enough before we could hear the words "penny loaf" mentioned without our ears tingling with shame. If there had been a dozen doles afterwards we should not have deigned to touch one of them.

George Pontifex put up a monument to his parents, a plain slab in Paleham church, inscribed with

the following epitaph:-

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
JOHN PONTIFEX
WHO WAS BORN AUGUST 16TH,
1727, AND DIED FEBRUARY 8, 1812,
IN HIS 85TH YEAR,
AND OF
RUTH PONTIFEX, HIS WIFE,
WHO WAS BORN OCTOBER 13, 1727, AND
DIED JANUARY 10, 1811,
IN HER 84TH YEAR.
THEY WERE UNOSTENTATIOUS BUT
EXEMPLARY
IN THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR
RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND SOCIAL DUTIES.
THIS MONUMENT WAS PLACED
BY THEIR ONLY SON.

CHAPTER IV

In a year or two more came Waterloo and the European peace. Then Mr George Pontifex went abroad more than once. I remember seeing at Battersby in after years the diary which he kept on the first of these occasions. It is a characteristic document. I felt as I read it that the author before starting had made up his mind

to admire only what he thought it would be creditable in him to admire, to look at nature and art only through the spectacles that had been handed down to him by generation after generation of prigs and impostors. The first glimpse of Mont Blanc threw Mr Pontifex into a conventional ecstasy. "My feelings I cannot express. I gasped, yet hardly dared to breathe, as I viewed for the first time the monarch of the mountains. I seemed to fancy the genius seated on his stupendous throne far above his aspiring brethren and in his solitary might defying the universe. I was so overcome by my feelings that I was almost bereft of my faculties, and would not for worlds have spoken after my first exclamation till I found some relief in a gush of tears. With pain I tore myself from contemplating for the first time 'at distance dimly seen' (though I felt as if I had sent my soul and eyes after it), this sublime spectacle." After a nearer view of the Alps from above Geneva he walked nine out of the twelve miles of the descent: "My mind and heart were too full to sit still, and I found some relief by exhausting my feelings through exercise." In the course of time he reached Chamonix and went on a Sunday to the Montanvert to see the Mer de Glace. There he wrote the following verses for the visitors' book, which he considered, so he says, "suitable to the day and scene":-

Lord, while these

wonders of thy hand I see,
My soul in holy
reverence bends to thee.
These awful solitudes,
this dread repose,
Yon pyramid sublime
of spotless snows,
These spiry pinnacles,
those smiling plains,
This sea where one
eternal winter reigns,
These are thy works,
and while on them I gaze
I hear a silent tongue
that speaks thy praise.

Some poets always begin to get groggy about the knees after running for seven or eight lines. Mr Pontifex's last couplet gave him a lot of trouble, and nearly every word has been erased and rewritten once at least. In the visitors' book at the Montanvert, however, he must have been obliged to commit himself definitely to one reading or another. Taking the verses all round, I should say that Mr Pontifex was right in considering them suitable to the day; I don't like being too hard even on the Mer de Glace, so will give no opinion as to whether they are suitable to the scene also.

Mr Pontifex went on to the Great St Bernard and there he wrote some more verses, this time I am afraid in Latin. He also took good care to be properly impressed by the Hospice and its situation. "The whole of this most extraordinary journey seemed like a dream, its conclusion especially, in gentlemanly society, with every comfort and accommodation amidst the rudest rocks and in the region of perpetual snow. The thought that I was sleeping in a convent and occupied the bed of no less a person than Napoleon, that I was in the highest inhabited spot in the old world and in a place celebrated in every part of it, kept me awake some time." As a contrast to this, I may quote here an extract from a letter written to me last year by his grandson Ernest, of whom the reader will hear more presently. The passage runs: "I went up to the Great St Bernard and saw the dogs." In due course Mr Pontifex found his way into Italy, where the pictures and other works of art-those, at least, which were fashionable at that time-threw him into genteel paroxysms of admiration. Of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence he writes: "I have spent three hours this morning in the gallery and I have made up my mind that if of all the treasures I have seen in Italy I were to choose one room it would be the Tribune of this gallery. It contains the Venus de' Medici, the Explorator, the Pancratist, the Dancing Faun and a fine Apollo. These more than outweigh the Laocoon and the Belvedere Apollo at Rome. It

contains, besides, the St John of Raphael and many other *chefs-d'oeuvre* of the greatest masters in the world." It is interesting to compare Mr Pontifex's effusions with the rhapsodies of critics in our own times. Not long ago a much esteemed writer informed the world that he felt "disposed to cry out with delight" before a figure by Michael Angelo. I wonder whether he would feel disposed to cry out before a real Michael Angelo, if the critics had decided that it was not genuine, or before a reputed Michael Angelo which was really by someone else. But I suppose that a prig with more money than brains was much the same sixty or seventy years ago as he is now.

Look at Mendelssohn again about this same Tribune on which Mr Pontifex felt so safe in staking his reputation as a man of taste and culture. He feels no less safe and writes, "I then went to the Tribune. This room is so delightfully small you can traverse it in fifteen paces, yet it contains a world of art. I again sought out my favourite arm chair which stands under the statue of the 'Slave whetting his knife' (L'Arrotino), and taking possession of it I enjoyed myself for a couple of hours; for here at one glance I had the 'Madonna del Cardellino,' Pope Julius II., a female portrait by Raphael, and above it a lovely Holy Family by Perugino; and so close to me that I could have touched it with my hand the Venus de' Medici; beyond, that of Titian… The space between is occupied

by other pictures of Raphael's, a portrait by Titian, a Domenichino, etc., etc., all these within the circumference of a small semi-circle no larger than one of your own rooms. This is a spot where a man feels his own insignificance and may well learn to be humble." The Tribune is a slippery place for people like Mendelssohn to study humility in. They generally take two steps away from it for one they take towards it. I wonder how many chalks Mendelssohn gave himself for having sat two hours on that chair. I wonder how often he looked at his watch to see if his two hours were up. I wonder how often he told himself that he was quite as big a gun, if the truth were known, as any of the men whose works he saw before him, how often he wondered whether any of the visitors were recognizing him and admiring him for sitting such a long time in the same chair, and how often he was vexed at seeing them pass him by and take no notice of him. But perhaps if the truth were known his two hours was not quite two hours.

Returning to Mr Pontifex, whether he liked what he believed to be the masterpieces of Greek and Italian art or no he brought back some copies by Italian artists, which I have no doubt he satisfied himself would bear the strictest examination with the originals. Two of these copies fell to Theobald's share on the division of his father's furniture, and I have often seen them at Battersby on my visits to Theobald and his wife. The

one was a Madonna by Sassoferrato with a blue hood over her head which threw it half into shadow. The other was a Magdalen by Carlo Dolci with a very fine head of hair and a marble vase in her hands. When I was a young man I used to think these pictures were beautiful, but with each successive visit to Battersby I got to dislike them more and more and to see "George Pontifex" written all over both of them. In the end I ventured after a tentative fashion to blow on them a little, but Theobald and his wife were up in arms at once. They did not like their father and father-in-law, but there could be no question about his power and general ability, nor about his having been a man of consummate taste both in literature and art-indeed the diary he kept during his foreign tour was enough to prove this. With one more short extract I will leave this diary and proceed with my story. During his stay in Florence Mr Pontifex wrote: "I have just seen the Grand Duke and his family pass by in two carriages and six, but little more notice is taken of them than if I, who am utterly unknown here, were to pass by." I don't think that he half believed in his being utterly unknown in Florence or anywhere else!

CHAPTER V

Fortune, we are told, is a blind and fickle foster-mother, who showers her gifts at random upon

her nurslings. But we do her a grave injustice if we believe such an accusation. Trace a man's career from his cradle to his grave and mark how Fortune has treated him. You will find that when he is once dead she can for the most part be vindicated from the charge of any but very superficial fickleness. Her blindness is the merest fable; she can espy her favourites long before they are born. We are as days and have had our parents for our yesterdays, but through all the fair weather of a clear parental sky the eye of Fortune can discern the coming storm, and she laughs as she places her favourites it may be in a London alley or those whom she is resolved to ruin in kings' palaces. Seldom does she relent towards those whom she has suckled unkindly and seldom does she completely fail a favoured nursling.

Was George Pontifex one of Fortune's favoured nurslings or not? On the whole I should say that he was not, for he did not consider himself so; he was too religious to consider Fortune a deity at all; he took whatever she gave and never thanked her, being firmly convinced that whatever he got to his own advantage was of his own getting. And so it was, after Fortune had made him able to get it.

"Nos te, nos facimus, Fortuna, deam," exclaimed the poet. "It is we who make thee, Fortune, a goddess"; and so it is, after Fortune has made us able to make her. The poet says nothing as to the making of the "nos."

Perhaps some men are independent of antecedents and surroundings and have an initial force within themselves which is in no way due to causation; but this is supposed to be a difficult question and it may be as well to avoid it. Let it suffice that George Pontifex did not consider himself fortunate, and he who does not consider himself fortunate is unfortunate.

True, he was rich, universally respected and of an excellent natural constitution. If he had eaten and drunk less he would never have known a day's indisposition. Perhaps his main strength lay in the fact that though his capacity was a little above the average, it was not too much so. It is on this rock that so many clever people split. The successful man will see just so much more than his neighbours as they will be able to see too when it is shown them, but not enough to puzzle them. It is far safer to know too little than too much. People will condemn the one, though they will resent being called upon to exert themselves to follow the other.

The best example of Mr Pontifex's good sense in matters connected with his business which I can think of at this moment is the revolution which he effected in the style of advertising works published by the firm. When he first became a partner one of the firm's advertisements ran thus:-

"Books proper to be given away at this Season.- "The Pious Country

> Parishioner, being directions how a Christian may manage every day in the course of his whole life with safety and success; how to spend the Sabbath Day; what books of the Holy Scripture ought to be read first; the whole method of education; collects for the most important virtues that adorn the soul; a discourse on the Lord's Supper; rules to set the soul right in sickness; so that in this treatise are contained all the rules requisite for salvation. The 8th edition with additions. Price 10d. *** An allowance will be made to those who give them away."

Before he had been many years a partner the advertisement stood as follows:-

> "The Pious Country Parishioner. A complete manual of Christian Devotion. Price 10d. A reduction will be made to purchasers for gratuitous distribution."

What a stride is made in the foregoing towards the modern standard, and what intelligence is involved in the perception of the unseemliness of the old style, when others did not perceive it!

Where then was the weak place in George

Pontifex's armour? I suppose in the fact that he had risen too rapidly. It would almost seem as if a transmitted education of some generations is necessary for the due enjoyment of great wealth. Adversity, if a man is set down to it by degrees, is more supportable with equanimity by most people than any great prosperity arrived at in a single lifetime. Nevertheless a certain kind of good fortune generally attends self-made men to the last. It is their children of the first, or first and second, generation who are in greater danger, for the race can no more repeat its most successful performances suddenly and without its ebbings and flowings of success than the individual can do so, and the more brilliant the success in any one generation, the greater as a general rule the subsequent exhaustion until time has been allowed for recovery. Hence it oftens happens that the grandson of a successful man will be more successful than the son-the spirit that actuated the grandfather having lain fallow in the son and being refreshed by repose so as to be ready for fresh exertion in the grandson. A very successful man, moreover, has something of the hybrid in him; he is a new animal, arising from the coming together of many unfamiliar elements and it is well known that the reproduction of abnormal growths, whether animal or vegetable, is irregular and not to be depended upon, even when they are not absolutely sterile.

And certainly Mr Pontifex's success was

exceedingly rapid. Only a few years after he had become a partner his uncle and aunt both died within a few months of one another. It was then found that they had made him their heir. He was thus not only sole partner in the business but found himself with a fortune of some £30,000 into the bargain, and this was a large sum in those days. Money came pouring in upon him, and the faster it came the fonder he became of it, though, as he frequently said, he valued it not for its own sake, but only as a means of providing for his dear children.

Yet when a man is very fond of his money it is not easy for him at all times to be very fond of his children also. The two are like God and Mammon. Lord Macaulay has a passage in which he contrasts the pleasures which a man may derive from books with the inconveniences to which he may be put by his acquaintances. "Plato," he says, "is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet." I dare say I might differ from Lord Macaulay in my estimate of some of the writers he has named, but there can be no disputing his main proposition, namely, that we need have no more trouble from any of them than we have a mind to, whereas our friends are not always so easily disposed of. George Pontifex felt this as regards his

children and his money. His money was never naughty; his money never made noise or litter, and did not spill things on the tablecloth at meal times, or leave the door open when it went out. His dividends did not quarrel among themselves, nor was he under any uneasiness lest his mortgages should become extravagant on reaching manhood and run him up debts which sooner or later he should have to pay. There were tendencies in John which made him very uneasy, and Theobald, his second son, was idle and at times far from truthful. His children might, perhaps, have answered, had they known what was in their father's mind, that he did not knock his money about as he not infrequently knocked his children. He never dealt hastily or pettishly with his money, and that was perhaps why he and it got on so well together.

It must be remembered that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the relations between parents and children were still far from satisfactory. The violent type of father, as described by Fielding, Richardson, Smollett and Sheridan, is now hardly more likely to find a place in literature than the original advertisement of Messrs. Fairlie amp; Pontifex's "Pious Country Parishioner," but the type was much too persistent not to have been drawn from nature closely. The parents in Miss Austen's novels are less like savage wild beasts than those of her predecessors, but she evidently looks upon them with suspicion, and an uneasy feeling that *le*

père de famille est capable de tout makes itself sufficiently apparent throughout the greater part of her writings. In the Elizabethan time the relations between parents and children seem on the whole to have been more kindly. The fathers and the sons are for the most part friends in Shakespeare, nor does the evil appear to have reached its full abomination till a long course of Puritanism had familiarised men's minds with Jewish ideals as those which we should endeavour to reproduce in our everyday life. What precedents did not Abraham, Jephthah and Jonadab the son of Rechab offer? How easy was it to quote and follow them in an age when few reasonable men or women doubted that every syllable of the Old Testament was taken down *verbatim* from the mouth of God. Moreover, Puritanism restricted natural pleasures; it substituted the Jeremiad for the Pæan, and it forgot that the poor abuses of all times want countenance.

Mr Pontifex may have been a little sterner with his children than some of his neighbours, but not much. He thrashed his boys two or three times a week and some weeks a good deal oftener, but in those days fathers were always thrashing their boys. It is easy to have juster views when everyone else has them, but fortunately or unfortunately results have nothing whatever to do with the moral guilt or blamelessness of him who brings them about; they depend solely upon the thing done, whatever it may happen to be. The

moral guilt or blamelessness in like manner has nothing to do with the result; it turns upon the question whether a sufficient number of reasonable people placed as the actor was placed would have done as the actor has done. At that time it was universally admitted that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, and St Paul had placed disobedience to parents in very ugly company. If his children did anything which Mr Pontifex disliked they were clearly disobedient to their father. In this case there was obviously only one course for a sensible man to take. It consisted in checking the first signs of self-will while his children were too young to offer serious resistance. If their wills were "well broken" in childhood, to use an expression then much in vogue, they would acquire habits of obedience which they would not venture to break through till they were over twenty-one years old. Then they might please themselves; he should know how to protect himself; till then he and his money were more at their mercy than he liked.

How little do we know our thoughts-our reflex actions indeed, yes; but our reflex reflections! Man, forsooth, prides himself on his consciousness! We boast that we differ from the winds and waves and falling stones and plants, which grow they know not why, and from the wandering creatures which go up and down after their prey, as we are pleased to say without the help of reason. We know so well what we are doing

ourselves and why we do it, do we not? I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays, that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mould our lives and the lives of those who spring from us.

CHAPTER VI

Mr Pontifex was not the man to trouble himself much about his motives. People were not so introspective then as we are now; they lived more according to a rule of thumb. Dr Arnold had not yet sown that crop of earnest thinkers which we are now harvesting, and men did not see why they should not have their own way if no evil consequences to themselves seemed likely to follow upon their doing so. Then as now, however, they sometimes let themselves in for more evil consequences than they had bargained for.

Like other rich men at the beginning of this century he ate and drank a good deal more than was enough to keep him in health. Even his excellent constitution was not proof against a prolonged course of overfeeding and what we should now consider overdrinking. His liver would not unfrequently get out of order, and he would come down to breakfast looking yellow about the eyes. Then the young people knew that they had better look out. It is not as a general rule

the eating of sour grapes that causes the children's teeth to be set on edge. Well-to-do parents seldom eat many sour grapes; the danger to the children lies in the parents eating too many sweet ones.

I grant that at first sight it seems very unjust, that the parents should have the fun and the children be punished for it, but young people should remember that for many years they were part and parcel of their parents and therefore had a good deal of the fun in the person of their parents. If they have forgotten the fun now, that is no more than people do who have a headache after having been tipsy overnight. The man with a headache does not pretend to be a different person from the man who got drunk, and claim that it is his self of the preceding night and not his self of this morning who should be punished; no more should offspring complain of the headache which it has earned when in the person of its parents, for the continuation of identity, though not so immediately apparent, is just as real in one case as in the other. What is really hard is when the parents have the fun after the children have been born, and the children are punished for this.

On these, his black days, he would take very gloomy views of things and say to himself that in spite of all his goodness to them his children did not love him. But who can love any man whose liver is out of order? How base, he would exclaim to himself, was such ingratitude! How especially hard upon himself,

who had been such a model son, and always honoured and obeyed his parents though they had not spent one hundredth part of the money upon him which he had lavished upon his own children. "It is always the same story," he would say to himself, "the more young people have the more they want, and the less thanks one gets; I have made a great mistake; I have been far too lenient with my children; never mind, I have done my duty by them, and more; if they fail in theirs to me it is a matter between God and them. I, at any rate, am guiltless. Why, I might have married again and become the father of a second and perhaps more affectionate family, etc., etc." He pitied himself for the expensive education which he was giving his children; he did not see that the education cost the children far more than it cost him, inasmuch as it cost them the power of earning their living easily rather than helped them towards it, and ensured their being at the mercy of their father for years after they had come to an age when they should be independent. A public school education cuts off a boy's retreat; he can no longer become a labourer or a mechanic, and these are the only people whose tenure of independence is not precarious-with the exception of course of those who are born inheritors of money or who are placed young in some safe and deep groove. Mr Pontifex saw nothing of this; all he saw was that he was spending much more money upon his children than the law would have compelled him to do, and what

more could you have? Might he not have apprenticed both his sons to greengrocers? Might he not even yet do so to-morrow morning if he were so minded? The possibility of this course being adopted was a favourite topic with him when he was out of temper; true, he never did apprentice either of his sons to greengrocers, but his boys comparing notes together had sometimes come to the conclusion that they wished he would.

At other times when not quite well he would have them in for the fun of shaking his will at them. He would in his imagination cut them all out one after another and leave his money to found almshouses, till at last he was obliged to put them back, so that he might have the pleasure of cutting them out again the next time he was in a passion.

Of course if young people allow their conduct to be in any way influenced by regard to the wills of living persons they are doing very wrong and must expect to be sufferers in the end, nevertheless the powers of will-dangling and will-shaking are so liable to abuse and are continually made so great an engine of torture that I would pass a law, if I could, to incapacitate any man from making a will for three months from the date of each offence in either of the above respects and let the bench of magistrates or judge, before whom he has been convicted, dispose of his property as they shall think right and reasonable if he dies during the time that his will-making power is

suspended.

Mr Pontifex would have the boys into the dining-room. “My dear John, my dear Theobald,” he would say, “look at me. I began life with nothing but the clothes with which my father and mother sent me up to London. My father gave me ten shillings and my mother five for pocket money and I thought them munificent. I never asked my father for a shilling in the whole course of my life, nor took aught from him beyond the small sum he used to allow me monthly till I was in receipt of a salary. I made my own way and I shall expect my sons to do the same. Pray don’t take it into your heads that I am going to wear my life out making money that my sons may spend it for me. If you want money you must make it for yourselves as I did, for I give you my word I will not leave a penny to either of you unless you show that you deserve it. Young people seem nowadays to expect all kinds of luxuries and indulgences which were never heard of when I was a boy. Why, my father was a common carpenter, and here you are both of you at public schools, costing me ever so many hundreds a year, while I at your age was plodding away behind a desk in my Uncle Fairlie’s counting house. What should I not have done if I had had one half of your advantages? You should become dukes or found new empires in undiscovered countries, and even then I doubt whether you would have done proportionately so much as I have

done. No, no, I shall see you through school and college and then, if you please, you will make your own way in the world."

In this manner he would work himself up into such a state of virtuous indignation that he would sometimes thrash the boys then and there upon some pretext invented at the moment.

And yet, as children went, the young Pontifexes were fortunate; there would be ten families of young people worse off for one better; they ate and drank good wholesome food, slept in comfortable beds, had the best doctors to attend them when they were ill and the best education that could be had for money. The want of fresh air does not seem much to affect the happiness of children in a London alley: the greater part of them sing and play as though they were on a moor in Scotland. So the absence of a genial mental atmosphere is not commonly recognised by children who have never known it. Young people have a marvellous faculty of either dying or adapting themselves to circumstances. Even if they are unhappy-very unhappy-it is astonishing how easily they can be prevented from finding it out, or at any rate from attributing it to any other cause than their own sinfulness.

To parents who wish to lead a quiet life I would say: Tell your children that they are very naughty-much naughtier than most children. Point to the young people

of some acquaintances as models of perfection and impress your own children with a deep sense of their own inferiority. You carry so many more guns than they do that they cannot fight you. This is called moral influence, and it will enable you to bounce them as much as you please. They think you know and they will not have yet caught you lying often enough to suspect that you are not the unworldly and scrupulously truthful person which you represent yourself to be; nor yet will they know how great a coward you are, nor how soon you will run away, if they fight you with persistency and judgement. You keep the dice and throw them both for your children and yourself. Load them then, for you can easily manage to stop your children from examining them. Tell them how singularly indulgent you are; insist on the incalculable benefit you conferred upon them, firstly in bringing them into the world at all, but more particularly in bringing them into it as your own children rather than anyone else's. Say that you have their highest interests at stake whenever you are out of temper and wish to make yourself unpleasant by way of balm to your soul. Harp much upon these highest interests. Feed them spiritually upon such brimstone and treacle as the late Bishop of Winchester's Sunday stories. You hold all the trump cards, or if you do not you can filch them; if you play them with anything like judgement you will find yourselves heads of happy, united, God-fearing

families, even as did my old friend Mr Pontifex. True, your children will probably find out all about it some day, but not until too late to be of much service to them or inconvenience to yourself.

Some satirists have complained of life inasmuch as all the pleasures belong to the fore part of it and we must see them dwindle till we are left, it may be, with the miseries of a decrepit old age.

To me it seems that youth is like spring, an overpraised season-delightful if it happen to be a favoured one, but in practice very rarely favoured and more remarkable, as a general rule, for biting east winds than genial breezes. Autumn is the mellower season, and what we lose in flowers we more than gain in fruits. Fontenelle at the age of ninety, being asked what was the happiest time of his life, said he did not know that he had ever been much happier than he then was, but that perhaps his best years had been those when he was between fifty-five and seventy-five, and Dr Johnson placed the pleasures of old age far higher than those of youth. True, in old age we live under the shadow of Death, which, like a sword of Damocles, may descend at any moment, but we have so long found life to be an affair of being rather frightened than hurt that we have become like the people who live under Vesuvius, and chance it without much misgiving.

CHAPTER VII

A few words may suffice for the greater number of the young people to whom I have been alluding in the foregoing chapter. Eliza and Maria, the two elder girls, were neither exactly pretty nor exactly plain, and were in all respects model young ladies, but Alethea was exceedingly pretty and of a lively, affectionate disposition, which was in sharp contrast with those of her brothers and sisters. There was a trace of her grandfather, not only in her face, but in her love of fun, of which her father had none, though not without a certain boisterous and rather coarse quasi-humour which passed for wit with many.

John grew up to be a good-looking, gentlemanly fellow, with features a trifle too regular and finely chiselled. He dressed himself so nicely, had such good address, and stuck so steadily to his books that he became a favourite with his masters; he had, however, an instinct for diplomacy, and was less popular with the boys. His father, in spite of the lectures he would at times read him, was in a way proud of him as he grew older; he saw in him, moreover, one who would probably develop into a good man of business, and in whose hands the prospects of his house would not be likely to decline. John knew how to humour his father, and was at a comparatively early age admitted to as much of his confidence as it was in his nature to bestow on anyone.

His brother Theobald was no match for him, knew it, and accepted his fate. He was not so good-looking as his brother, nor was his address so good; as a child he had been violently passionate; now, however, he was reserved and shy, and, I should say, indolent in mind and body. He was less tidy than John, less well able to assert himself, and less skilful in humouring the caprices of his father. I do not think he could have loved anyone heartily, but there was no one in his family circle who did not repress, rather than invite his affection, with the exception of his sister Alethea, and she was too quick and lively for his somewhat morose temper. He was always the scapegoat, and I have sometimes thought he had two fathers to contend against-his father and his brother John; a third and fourth also might almost be added in his sisters Eliza and Maria. Perhaps if he had felt his bondage very acutely he would not have put up with it, but he was constitutionally timid, and the strong hand of his father knitted him into the closest outward harmony with his brother and sisters.

The boys were of use to their father in one respect. I mean that he played them off against each other. He kept them but poorly supplied with pocket money, and to Theobald would urge that the claims of his elder brother were naturally paramount, while he insisted to John upon the fact that he had a numerous family, and would affirm solemnly that his expenses

were so heavy that at his death there would be very little to divide. He did not care whether they compared notes or no, provided they did not do so in his presence. Theobald did not complain even behind his father's back. I knew him as intimately as anyone was likely to know him as a child, at school, and again at Cambridge, but he very rarely mentioned his father's name even while his father was alive, and never once in my hearing afterwards. At school he was not actively disliked as his brother was, but he was too dull and deficient in animal spirits to be popular.

Before he was well out of his frocks it was settled that he was to be a clergyman. It was seemly that Mr Pontifex, the well-known publisher of religious books, should devote at least one of his sons to the Church; this might tend to bring business, or at any rate to keep it in the firm; besides, Mr Pontifex had more or less interest with bishops and Church dignitaries and might hope that some preferment would be offered to his son through his influence. The boy's future destiny was kept well before his eyes from his earliest childhood and was treated as a matter which he had already virtually settled by his acquiescence. Nevertheless a certain show of freedom was allowed him. Mr Pontifex would say it was only right to give a boy his option, and was much too equitable to grudge his son whatever benefit he could derive from this. He had the greatest horror, he would exclaim, of driving any young man

into a profession which he did not like. Far be it from him to put pressure upon a son of his as regards any profession and much less when so sacred a calling as the ministry was concerned. He would talk in this way when there were visitors in the house and when his son was in the room. He spoke so wisely and so well that his listening guests considered him a paragon of right-mindedness. He spoke, too, with such emphasis and his rosy gills and bald head looked so benevolent that it was difficult not to be carried away by his discourse. I believe two or three heads of families in the neighbourhood gave their sons absolute liberty of choice in the matter of their professions-and am not sure that they had not afterwards considerable cause to regret having done so. The visitors, seeing Theobald look shy and wholly unmoved by the exhibition of so much consideration for his wishes, would remark to themselves that the boy seemed hardly likely to be equal to his father and would set him down as an unenthusiastic youth, who ought to have more life in him and be more sensible of his advantages than he appeared to be.

No one believed in the righteousness of the whole transaction more firmly than the boy himself; a sense of being ill at ease kept him silent, but it was too profound and too much without break for him to become fully alive to it, and come to an understanding with himself. He feared the dark scowl which would come over his

father's face upon the slightest opposition. His father's violent threats, or coarse sneers, would not have been taken *au sérieux* by a stronger boy, but Theobald was not a strong boy, and rightly or wrongly, gave his father credit for being quite ready to carry his threats into execution. Opposition had never got him anything he wanted yet, nor indeed had yielding, for the matter of that, unless he happened to want exactly what his father wanted for him. If he had ever entertained thoughts of resistance, he had none now, and the power to oppose was so completely lost for want of exercise that hardly did the wish remain; there was nothing left save dull acquiescence as of an ass crouched between two burdens. He may have had an ill-defined sense of ideals that were not his actuals; he might occasionally dream of himself as a soldier or a sailor far away in foreign lands, or even as a farmer's boy upon the wolds, but there was not enough in him for there to be any chance of his turning his dreams into realities, and he drifted on with his stream, which was a slow, and, I am afraid, a muddy one.

I think the Church Catechism has a good deal to do with the unhappy relations which commonly even now exist between parents and children. That work was written too exclusively from the parental point of view; the person who composed it did not get a few children to come in and help him; he was clearly not young himself, nor should I say it was the work of one who

liked children-in spite of the words “my good child” which, if I remember rightly, are once put into the mouth of the catechist and, after all, carry a harsh sound with them. The general impression it leaves upon the mind of the young is that their wickedness at birth was but very imperfectly wiped out at baptism, and that the mere fact of being young at all has something with it that savours more or less distinctly of the nature of sin.

If a new edition of the work is ever required I should like to introduce a few words insisting on the duty of seeking all reasonable pleasure and avoiding all pain that can be honourably avoided. I should like to see children taught that they should not say they like things which they do not like, merely because certain other people say they like them, and how foolish it is to say they believe this or that when they understand nothing about it. If it be urged that these additions would make the Catechism too long I would curtail the remarks upon our duty towards our neighbour and upon the sacraments. In the place of the paragraph beginning “I desire my Lord God our Heavenly Father” I would-but perhaps I had better return to Theobald, and leave the recasting of the Catechism to abler hands.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr Pontifex had set his heart on his son’s becoming a fellow of a college before he became a

clergyman. This would provide for him at once and would ensure his getting a living if none of his father's ecclesiastical friends gave him one. The boy had done just well enough at school to render this possible, so he was sent to one of the smaller colleges at Cambridge and was at once set to read with the best private tutors that could be found. A system of examination had been adopted a year or so before Theobald took his degree which had improved his chances of a fellowship, for whatever ability he had was classical rather than mathematical, and this system gave more encouragement to classical studies than had been given hitherto.

Theobald had the sense to see that he had a chance of independence if he worked hard, and he liked the notion of becoming a fellow. He therefore applied himself, and in the end took a degree which made his getting a fellowship in all probability a mere question of time. For a while Mr Pontifex senior was really pleased, and told his son he would present him with the works of any standard writer whom he might select. The young man chose the works of Bacon, and Bacon accordingly made his appearance in ten nicely bound volumes. A little inspection, however, showed that the copy was a second hand one.

Now that he had taken his degree the next thing to look forward to was ordination-about which Theobald had thought little hitherto beyond acquiescing

in it as something that would come as a matter of course some day. Now, however, it had actually come and was asserting itself as a thing which should be only a few months off, and this rather frightened him inasmuch as there would be no way out of it when he was once in it. He did not like the near view of ordination as well as the distant one, and even made some feeble efforts to escape, as may be perceived by the following correspondence which his son Ernest found among his father's papers written on gilt-edged paper, in faded ink and tied neatly round with a piece of tape, but without any note or comment. I have altered nothing. The letters are as follows:-

> "My dear Father,-I do not like opening up a question which has been considered settled, but as the time approaches I begin to be very doubtful how far I am fitted to be a clergyman. Not, I am thankful to say, that I have the faintest doubts about the Church of England, and I could subscribe cordially to every one of the thirty-nine articles which do indeed appear to me to be the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, and Paley, too, leaves no loop-hole for an opponent; but I am sure I should be running counter to your wishes if I were to conceal from you that I do not feel the

inward call to be a minister of the gospel that I shall have to say I have felt when the Bishop ordains me. I try to get this feeling, I pray for it earnestly, and sometimes half think that I have got it, but in a little time it wears off, and though I have no absolute repugnance to being a clergyman and trust that if I am one I shall endeavour to live to the Glory of God and to advance His interests upon earth, yet I feel that something more than this is wanted before I am fully justified in going into the Church. I am aware that I have been a great expense to you in spite of my scholarships, but you have ever taught me that I should obey my conscience, and my conscience tells me I should do wrong if I became a clergyman. God may yet give me the spirit for which I assure you I have been and am continually praying, but He may not, and in that case would it not be better for me to try and look out for something else? I know that neither you nor John wish me to go into your business, nor do I understand anything about money matters, but is there nothing else that I can do? I do not like to ask you to maintain me while I go in for medicine or the bar; but when I get

my fellowship, which should not be long first, I will endeavour to cost you nothing further, and I might make a little money by writing or taking pupils. I trust you will not think this letter improper; nothing is further from my wish than to cause you any uneasiness. I hope you will make allowance for my present feelings which, indeed, spring from nothing but from that respect for my conscience which no one has so often instilled into me as yourself. Pray let me have a few lines shortly. I hope your cold is better. With love to Eliza and Maria, I am, your affectionate son,

"THEOBALD PONTIFEX."

"Dear Theobald,-I can enter into your feelings and have no wish to quarrel with your expression of them. It is quite right and natural that you should feel as you do except as regards one passage, the impropriety of which you will yourself doubtless feel upon reflection, and to which I will not further allude than to say that it has wounded me. You should not have said 'in spite of my scholarships.' It was only proper that if

you could do anything to assist me in bearing the heavy burden of your education, the money should be, as it was, made over to myself. Every line in your letter convinces me that you are under the influence of a morbid sensitiveness which is one of the devil's favourite devices for luring people to their destruction. I have, as you say, been at great expense with your education. Nothing has been spared by me to give you the advantages, which, as an English gentleman, I was anxious to afford my son, but I am not prepared to see that expense thrown away and to have to begin again from the beginning, merely because you have taken some foolish scruples into your head, which you should resist as no less unjust to yourself than to me. "Don't give way to that restless desire for change which is the bane of so many persons of both sexes at the present day. "Of course you needn't be ordained: nobody will compel you; you are perfectly free; you are twenty-three years of age, and should know your own mind; but why not have known it sooner, instead of never so much as breathing a hint of opposition until I have had all the expense of

sending you to the University, which I should never have done unless I had believed you to have made up your mind about taking orders? I have letters from you in which you express the most perfect willingness to be ordained, and your brother and sisters will bear me out in saying that no pressure of any sort has been put upon you. You mistake your own mind, and are suffering from a nervous timidity which may be very natural but may not the less be pregnant with serious consequences to yourself. I am not at all well, and the anxiety occasioned by your letter is naturally preying upon me. May God guide you to a better judgement.

-Your affectionate father,
G. PONTIFEX."

On the receipt of this letter Theobald plucked up his spirits. "My father," he said to himself, "tells me I need not be ordained if I do not like. I do not like, and therefore I will not be ordained. But what was the meaning of the words 'pregnant with serious consequences to yourself'? Did there lurk a threat under these words-though it was impossible to lay hold of it or of them? Were they not intended to produce all the effect of a threat without being actually threatening?"

Theobald knew his father well enough to be little likely to misapprehend his meaning, but having ventured so far on the path of opposition, and being really anxious to get out of being ordained if he could, he determined to venture farther. He accordingly wrote the following:

> "My dear father,-You tell me-and I heartily thank you-that no one will compel me to be ordained. I knew you would not press ordination upon me if my conscience was seriously opposed to it; I have therefore resolved on giving up the idea, and believe that if you will continue to allow me what you do at present, until I get my fellowship, which should not be long, I will then cease putting you to further expense. I will make up my mind as soon as possible what profession I will adopt, and will let you know at once.
>
> ***-Your affectionate son, THEOBALD PONTIFEX."***

The remaining letter, written by return of post, must now be given. It has the merit of brevity.

> "Dear Theobald,-I have received yours. I am at a loss to conceive its

> motive, but am very clear as to its effect. You shall not receive a single sixpence from me till you come to your senses. Should you persist in your folly and wickedness, I am happy to remember that I have yet other children whose conduct I can depend upon to be a source of credit and happiness to me.
>
> ***-Your affectionate but troubled father, G. PONTIFEX."***

I do not know the immediate sequel to the foregoing correspondence, but it all came perfectly right in the end. Either Theobald's heart failed him, or he interpreted the outward shove which his father gave him, as the inward call for which I have no doubt he prayed with great earnestness-for he was a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer. And so am I under certain circumstances. Tennyson has said that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of, but he has wisely refrained from saying whether they are good things or bad things. It might perhaps be as well if the world were to dream of, or even become wide awake to, some of the things that are being wrought by prayer. But the question is avowedly difficult. In the end Theobald got his fellowship by a stroke of luck very soon after taking his degree, and was ordained in the autumn of the same year, 1825.

CHAPTER IX

Mr Allaby was rector of Crampsford, a village a few miles from Cambridge. He, too, had taken a good degree, had got a fellowship, and in the course of time had accepted a college living of about £400 a year and a house. His private income did not exceed £200 a year. On resigning his fellowship he married a woman a good deal younger than himself who bore him eleven children, nine of whom-two sons and seven daughters-were living. The two eldest daughters had married fairly well, but at the time of which I am now writing there were still five unmarried, of ages varying between thirty and twenty-two-and the sons were neither of them yet off their father's hands. It was plain that if anything were to happen to Mr Allaby the family would be left poorly off, and this made both Mr and Mrs Allaby as unhappy as it ought to have made them.

Reader, did you ever have an income at best none too large, which died with you all except £200 a year? Did you ever at the same time have two sons who must be started in life somehow, and five daughters still unmarried for whom you would only be too thankful to find husbands-if you knew how to find them? If morality is that which, on the whole, brings a man peace in his declining years-if, that is to say, it is not an utter swindle, can you under these circumstances flatter yourself that you have led a moral life?

And this, even though your wife has been so good a woman that you have not grown tired of her, and has not fallen into such ill-health as lowers your own health in sympathy; and though your family has grown up vigorous, amiable, and blessed with common sense. I know many old men and women who are reputed moral, but who are living with partners whom they have long ceased to love, or who have ugly disagreeable maiden daughters for whom they have never been able to find husbands-daughters whom they loathe and by whom they are loathed in secret, or sons whose folly or extravagance is a perpetual wear and worry to them. Is it moral for a man to have brought such things upon himself? Someone should do for morals what that old Pecksniff Bacon has obtained the credit of having done for science.

But to return to Mr and Mrs Allaby. Mrs Allaby talked about having married two of her daughters as though it had been the easiest thing in the world. She talked in this way because she heard other mothers do so, but in her heart of hearts she did not know how she had done it, nor indeed, if it had been her doing at all. First there had been a young man in connection with whom she had tried to practise certain manoeuvres which she had rehearsed in imagination over and over again, but which she found impossible to apply in practice. Then there had been weeks of a *wurra wurra* of hopes and fears and little stratagems which as often

as not proved injudicious, and then somehow or other in the end, there lay the young man bound and with an arrow through his heart at her daughter's feet. It seemed to her to be all a fluke which she could have little or no hope of repeating. She had indeed repeated it once, and might perhaps with good luck repeat it yet once again-but five times over! It was awful: why she would rather have three confinements than go through the wear and tear of marrying a single daughter.

Nevertheless it had got to be done, and poor Mrs Allaby never looked at a young man without an eye to his being a future son-in-law. Papas and mammas sometimes ask young men whether their intentions are honourable towards their daughters. I think young men might occasionally ask papas and mammas whether their intentions are honourable before they accept invitations to houses where there are still unmarried daughters.

"I can't afford a curate, my dear," said Mr Allaby to his wife when the pair were discussing what was next to be done. "It will be better to get some young man to come and help me for a time upon a Sunday. A guinea a Sunday will do this, and we can chop and change till we get someone who suits." So it was settled that Mr Allaby's health was not so strong as it had been, and that he stood in need of help in the performance of his Sunday duty.

Mrs Allaby had a great friend-a certain Mrs

Cowey, wife of the celebrated Professor Cowey. She was what was called a truly spiritually minded woman, a trifle portly, with an incipient beard, and an extensive connection among undergraduates, more especially among those who were inclined to take part in the great evangelical movement which was then at its height. She gave evening parties once a fortnight at which prayer was part of the entertainment. She was not only spiritually minded, but, as enthusiastic Mrs Allaby used to exclaim, she was a thorough woman of the world at the same time and had such a fund of strong masculine good sense. She too had daughters, but, as she used to say to Mrs Allaby, she had been less fortunate than Mrs Allaby herself, for one by one they had married and left her so that her old age would have been desolate indeed if her Professor had not been spared to her.

Mrs Cowey, of course, knew the run of all the bachelor clergy in the University, and was the very person to assist Mrs Allaby in finding an eligible assistant for her husband, so this last named lady drove over one morning in the November of 1825, by arrangement, to take an early dinner with Mrs Cowey and spend the afternoon. After dinner the two ladies retired together, and the business of the day began. How they fenced, how they saw through one another, with what loyalty they pretended not to see through one another, with what gentle dalliance they prolonged the conversation discussing the spiritual fitness of this or

that deacon, and the other pros and cons connected with him after his spiritual fitness had been disposed of, all this must be left to the imagination of the reader. Mrs Cowey had been so accustomed to scheming on her own account that she would scheme for anyone rather than not scheme at all. Many mothers turned to her in their hour of need and, provided they were spiritually minded, Mrs Cowey never failed to do her best for them; if the marriage of a young Bachelor of Arts was not made in Heaven, it was probably made, or at any rate attempted, in Mrs Cowey's drawing-room. On the present occasion all the deacons of the University in whom there lurked any spark of promise were exhaustively discussed, and the upshot was that our friend Theobald was declared by Mrs Cowey to be about the best thing she could do that afternoon.

"I don't know that he's a particularly fascinating young man, my dear," said Mrs Cowey, "and he's only a second son, but then he's got his fellowship, and even the second son of such a man as Mr Pontifex the publisher should have something very comfortable."

"Why yes, my dear," rejoined Mrs Allaby complacently, "that's what one rather feels."

CHAPTER X

The interview, like all other good things had to come to an end; the days were short, and Mrs Allaby

had a six miles' drive to Crampsford. When she was muffled up and had taken her seat, Mr Allaby's *factotum* , James, could perceive no change in her appearance, and little knew what a series of delightful visions he was driving home along with his mistress.

Professor Cowey had published works through Theobald's father, and Theobald had on this account been taken in tow by Mrs Cowey from the beginning of his University career. She had had her eye upon him for some time past, and almost as much felt it her duty to get him off her list of young men for whom wives had to be provided, as poor Mrs Allaby did to try and get a husband for one of her daughters. She now wrote and asked him to come and see her, in terms that awakened his curiosity. When he came she broached the subject of Mr Allaby's failing health, and after the smoothing away of such difficulties as were only Mrs Cowey's due, considering the interest she had taken, it was allowed to come to pass that Theobald should go to Crampsford for six successive Sundays and take the half of Mr Allaby's duty at half a guinea a Sunday, for Mrs Cowey cut down the usual stipend mercilessly, and Theobald was not strong enough to resist.

Ignorant of the plots which were being prepared for his peace of mind and with no idea beyond that of earning his three guineas, and perhaps of astonishing the inhabitants of Crampsford by his academic learning, Theobald walked over to the Rectory one Sunday

morning early in December-a few weeks only after he had been ordained. He had taken a great deal of pains with his sermon, which was on the subject of geology-then coming to the fore as a theological bugbear. He showed that so far as geology was worth anything at all-and he was too liberal entirely to pooh-pooh it-it confirmed the absolutely historical character of the Mosaic account of the Creation as given in Genesis. Any phenomena which at first sight appeared to make against this view were only partial phenomena and broke down upon investigation. Nothing could be in more excellent taste, and when Theobald adjourned to the rectory, where he was to dine between the services, Mr Allaby complimented him warmly upon his début, while the ladies of the family could hardly find words with which to express their admiration.

Theobald knew nothing about women. The only women he had been thrown in contact with were his sisters, two of whom were always correcting him, and a few school friends whom these had got their father to ask to Elmhurst. These young ladies had either been so shy that they and Theobald had never amalgamated, or they had been supposed to be clever and had said smart things to him. He did not say smart things himself and did not want other people to say them. Besides, they talked about music-and he hated music-or pictures-and he hated pictures-or books-and except the classics he

hated books. And then sometimes he was wanted to dance with them, and he did not know how to dance, and did not want to know.

At Mrs Cowey's parties again he had seen some young ladies and had been introduced to them. He had tried to make himself agreeable, but was always left with the impression that he had not been successful. The young ladies of Mrs Cowey's set were by no means the most attractive that might have been found in the University, and Theobald may be excused for not losing his heart to the greater number of them, while if for a minute or two he was thrown in with one of the prettier and more agreeable girls he was almost immediately cut out by someone less bashful than himself, and sneaked off, feeling as far as the fair sex was concerned, like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda.

What a really nice girl might have done with him I cannot tell, but fate had thrown none such in his way except his youngest sister Alethea, whom he might perhaps have liked if she had not been his sister. The result of his experience was that women had never done him any good and he was not accustomed to associate them with any pleasure; if there was a part of Hamlet in connection with them it had been so completely cut out in the edition of the play in which he was required to act that he had come to disbelieve in its existence. As for kissing, he had never kissed a woman in his life

except his sister-and my own sisters when we were all small children together. Over and above these kisses, he had until quite lately been required to imprint a solemn flabby kiss night and morning upon his father's cheek, and this, to the best of my belief, was the extent of Theobald's knowledge in the matter of kissing, at the time of which I am now writing. The result of the foregoing was that he had come to dislike women, as mysterious beings whose ways were not as his ways, nor their thoughts as his thoughts.

With these antecedents Theobald naturally felt rather bashful on finding himself the admired of five strange young ladies. I remember when I was a boy myself I was once asked to take tea at a girls' school where one of my sisters was boarding. I was then about twelve years old. Everything went off well during tea-time, for the Lady Principal of the establishment was present. But there came a time when she went away and I was left alone with the girls. The moment the mistress's back was turned the head girl, who was about my own age, came up, pointed her finger at me, made a face and said solemnly, "A na-a-sty bo-o-y!" All the girls followed her in rotation making the same gesture and the same reproach upon my being a boy. It gave me a great scare. I believe I cried, and I know it was a long time before I could again face a girl without a strong desire to run away.

Theobald felt at first much as I had myself done

at the girls' school, but the Miss Allabys did not tell him he was a nasty bo-o-oy. Their papa and mamma were so cordial and they themselves lifted him so deftly over conversational stiles that before dinner was over Theobald thought the family to be a really very charming one, and felt as though he were being appreciated in a way to which he had not hitherto been accustomed.

With dinner his shyness wore off. He was by no means plain, his academic prestige was very fair. There was nothing about him to lay hold of as unconventional or ridiculous; the impression he created upon the young ladies was quite as favourable as that which they had created upon himself; for they knew not much more about men than he about women.

As soon as he was gone, the harmony of the establishment was broken by a storm which arose upon the question which of them it should be who should become Mrs Pontifex. "My dears," said their father, when he saw that they did not seem likely to settle the matter among themselves, "Wait till to-morrow, and then play at cards for him." Having said which he retired to his study, where he took a nightly glass of whisky and a pipe of tobacco.

CHAPTER XI

The next morning saw Theobald in his rooms

coaching a pupil, and the Miss Allabys in the eldest Miss Allaby's bedroom playing at cards with Theobald for the stakes.

The winner was Christina, the second unmarried daughter, then just twenty-seven years old and therefore four years older than Theobald. The younger sisters complained that it was throwing a husband away to let Christina try and catch him, for she was so much older that she had no chance; but Christina showed fight in a way not usual with her, for she was by nature yielding and good tempered. Her mother thought it better to back her up, so the two dangerous ones were packed off then and there on visits to friends some way off, and those alone allowed to remain at home whose loyalty could be depended upon. The brothers did not even suspect what was going on and believed their father's getting assistance was because he really wanted it.

The sisters who remained at home kept their words and gave Christina all the help they could, for over and above their sense of fair play they reflected that the sooner Theobald was landed, the sooner another deacon might be sent for who might be won by themselves. So quickly was all managed that the two unreliable sisters were actually out of the house before Theobald's next visit-which was on the Sunday following his first.

This time Theobald felt quite at home in the house of his new friends-for so Mrs Allaby insisted that

he should call them. She took, she said, such a motherly interest in young men, especially in clergymen. Theobald believed every word she said, as he had believed his father and all his elders from his youth up. Christina sat next him at dinner and played her cards no less judiciously than she had played them in her sister's bedroom. She smiled (and her smile was one of her strong points) whenever he spoke to her; she went through all her little artlessnesses and set forth all her little wares in what she believed to be their most taking aspect. Who can blame her? Theobald was not the ideal she had dreamed of when reading Byron upstairs with her sisters, but he was an actual within the bounds of possibility, and after all not a bad actual as actuals went. What else could she do? Run away? She dared not. Marry beneath her and be considered a disgrace to her family? She dared not. Remain at home and become an old maid and be laughed at? Not if she could help it. She did the only thing that could reasonably be expected. She was drowning; Theobald might be only a straw, but she could catch at him and catch at him she accordingly did.

If the course of true love never runs smooth, the course of true match-making sometimes does so. The only ground for complaint in the present case was that it was rather slow. Theobald fell into the part assigned to him more easily than Mrs Cowey and Mrs Allaby had dared to hope. He was softened by Christina's

winning manners: he admired the high moral tone of everything she said; her sweetness towards her sisters and her father and mother, her readiness to undertake any small burden which no one else seemed willing to undertake, her sprightly manners, all were fascinating to one who, though unused to woman's society, was still a human being. He was flattered by her unobtrusive but obviously sincere admiration for himself; she seemed to see him in a more favourable light, and to understand him better than anyone outside of this charming family had ever done. Instead of snubbing him as his father, brother and sisters did, she drew him out, listened attentively to all he chose to say, and evidently wanted him to say still more. He told a college friend that he knew he was in love now; he really was, for he liked Miss Allaby's society much better than that of his sisters.

Over and above the recommendations already enumerated, she had another in the possession of what was supposed to be a very beautiful contralto voice. Her voice was certainly contralto, for she could not reach higher than D in the treble; its only defect was that it did not go correspondingly low in the bass: in those days, however, a contralto voice was understood to include even a soprano if the soprano could not reach soprano notes, and it was not necessary that it should have the quality which we now assign to contralto. What her voice wanted in range and power was made

up in the feeling with which she sang. She had transposed “Angels ever bright and fair” into a lower key, so as to make it suit her voice, thus proving, as her mamma said, that she had a thorough knowledge of the laws of harmony; not only did she do this, but at every pause added an embellishment of arpeggios from one end to the other of the keyboard, on a principle which her governess had taught her; she thus added life and interest to an air which everyone-so she said-must feel to be rather heavy in the form in which Handel left it. As for her governess, she indeed had been a rarely accomplished musician: she was a pupil of the famous Dr Clarke of Cambridge, and used to play the overture to *Atalanta* , arranged by Mazzinghi. Nevertheless, it was some time before Theobald could bring his courage to the sticking point of actually proposing. He made it quite clear that he believed himself to be much smitten, but month after month went by, during which there was still so much hope in Theobald that Mr Allaby dared not discover that he was able to do his duty for himself, and was getting impatient at the number of half-guineas he was disbursing-and yet there was no proposal. Christina’s mother assured him that she was the best daughter in the whole world, and would be a priceless treasure to the man who married her. Theobald echoed Mrs Allaby’s sentiments with warmth, but still, though he visited the Rectory two or three times a week, besides coming over on Sundays-he did not propose.

“She is heart-whole yet, dear Mr Pontifex,” said Mrs Allaby, one day, “at least I believe she is. It is not for want of admirers-oh! no-she has had her full share of these, but she is too, too difficult to please. I think, however, she would fall before a *great and good* man.” And she looked hard at Theobald, who blushed; but the days went by and still he did not propose.

Another time Theobald actually took Mrs Cowey into his confidence, and the reader may guess what account of Christina he got from her. Mrs Cowey tried the jealousy manoeuvre and hinted at a possible rival. Theobald was, or pretended to be, very much alarmed; a little rudimentary pang of jealousy shot across his bosom and he began to believe with pride that he was not only in love, but desperately in love or he would never feel so jealous. Nevertheless, day after day still went by and he did not propose.

The Allabys behaved with great judgement. They humoured him till his retreat was practically cut off, though he still flattered himself that it was open. One day about six months after Theobald had become an almost daily visitor at the Rectory the conversation happened to turn upon long engagements. “I don’t like long engagements, Mr Allaby, do you?” said Theobald imprudently. “No,” said Mr Allaby in a pointed tone, “nor long courtships,” and he gave Theobald a look which he could not pretend to misunderstand. He went back to Cambridge as fast as he could go, and in dread

of the conversation with Mr Allaby which he felt to be impending, composed the following letter which he despatched that same afternoon by a private messenger to Crampsford. The letter was as follows:-

> "Dearest Miss Christina,-I do not know whether you have guessed the feelings that I have long entertained for you-feelings which I have concealed as much as I could through fear of drawing you into an engagement which, if you enter into it, must be prolonged for a considerable time, but, however this may be, it is out of my power to conceal them longer; I love you, ardently, devotedly, and send these few lines asking you to be my wife, because I dare not trust my tongue to give adequate expression to the magnitude of my affection for you. "I cannot pretend to offer you a heart which has never known either love or disappointment. I have loved already, and my heart was years in recovering from the grief I felt at seeing her become another's. That, however, is over, and having seen yourself I rejoice over a disappointment which I thought at one time would have been fatal to me. It has left me a less ardent lover than I should perhaps otherwise have been, but it has

> increased tenfold my power of appreciating your many charms and my desire that you should become my wife. Please let me have a few lines of answer by the bearer to let me know whether or not my suit is accepted. If you accept me I will at once come and talk the matter over with Mr and Mrs Allaby, whom I shall hope one day to be allowed to call father and mother. "I ought to warn you that in the event of your consenting to be my wife it may be years before our union can be consummated, for I cannot marry till a college living is offered me. If, therefore, you see fit to reject me, I shall be grieved rather than surprised.
>
> ***-Ever most devotedly yours,***
> ***"THEOBALD PONTIFEX."***

And this was all that his public school and University education had been able to do for Theobald! Nevertheless for his own part he thought his letter rather a good one, and congratulated himself in particular upon his cleverness in inventing the story of a previous attachment, behind which he intended to shelter himself if Christina should complain of any lack of fervour in his behaviour to her.

I need not give Christina's answer, which of course was to accept. Much as Theobald feared old Mr

Allaby I do not think he would have wrought up his courage to the point of actually proposing but for the fact of the engagement being necessarily a long one, during which a dozen things might turn up to break it off. However much he may have disapproved of long engagements for other people, I doubt whether he had any particular objection to them in his own case. A pair of lovers are like sunset and sunrise: there are such things every day but we very seldom see them. Theobald posed as the most ardent lover imaginable, but, to use the vulgarism for the moment in fashion, it was all "side." Christina was in love, as indeed she had been twenty times already. But then Christina was impressionable and could not even hear the name "Missolonghi" mentioned without bursting into tears. When Theobald accidentally left his sermon case behind him one Sunday, she slept with it in her bosom and was forlorn when she had as it were to disgorge it on the following Sunday; but I do not think Theobald ever took so much as an old toothbrush of Christina's to bed with him. Why, I knew a young man once who got hold of his mistress's skates and slept with them for a fortnight and cried when he had to give them up.

CHAPTER XII

Theobald's engagement was all very well as far as it went, but there was an old gentleman with a bald

head and rosy cheeks in a counting-house in Paternoster Row who must sooner or later be told of what his son had in view, and Theobald's heart fluttered when he asked himself what view this old gentleman was likely to take of the situation. The murder, however, had to come out, and Theobald and his intended, perhaps imprudently, resolved on making a clean breast of it at once. He wrote what he and Christina, who helped him to draft the letter, thought to be everything that was filial, and expressed himself as anxious to be married with the least possible delay. He could not help saying this, as Christina was at his shoulder, and he knew it was safe, for his father might be trusted not to help him. He wound up by asking his father to use any influence that might be at his command to help him to get a living, inasmuch as it might be years before a college living fell vacant, and he saw no other chance of being able to marry, for neither he nor his intended had any money except Theobald's fellowship, which would, of course, lapse on his taking a wife.

Any step of Theobald's was sure to be objectionable in his father's eyes, but that at three-and-twenty he should want to marry a penniless girl who was four years older than himself, afforded a golden opportunity which the old gentleman-for so I may now call him, as he was at least sixty-embraced with characteristic eagerness.

"The ineffable folly," he wrote, on receiving his son's letter, "of your fancied passion for Miss Allaby fills me with the gravest apprehensions. Making every allowance for a lover's blindness, I still have no doubt that the lady herself is a well-conducted and amiable young person, who would not disgrace our family, but were she ten times more desirable as a daughter-in-law than I can allow myself to hope, your joint poverty is an insuperable objection to your marriage. I have four other children besides yourself, and my expenses do not permit me to save money. This year they have been especially heavy, indeed I have had to purchase two not inconsiderable pieces of land which happened to come into the market and were necessary to complete a property which I have long wanted to round off in this way. I gave you an education regardless of expense, which has put you in possession of a comfortable income, at an age when many young men are dependent. I have thus started you fairly in life, and may claim that you should cease to be a drag upon me further. Long engagements are proverbially unsatisfactory, and in the present case

> the prospect seems interminable. What interest, pray, do you suppose I have that I could get a living for you? Can I go up and down the country begging people to provide for my son because he has taken it into his head to want to get married without sufficient means? "I do not wish to write unkindly, nothing can be farther from my real feelings towards you, but there is often more kindness in plain speaking than in any amount of soft words which can end in no substantial performance. Of course, I bear in mind that you are of age, and can therefore please yourself, but if you choose to claim the strict letter of the law, and act without consideration for your father's feelings, you must not be surprised if you one day find that I have claimed a like liberty for myself.
>
> ***-Believe me, your affectionate father, G. PONTIFEX."***

I found this letter along with those already given and a few more which I need not give, but throughout which the same tone prevails, and in all of which there is the more or less obvious shake of the will near the end of the letter. Remembering Theobald's general dumbness concerning his father for the many years I

knew him after his father's death, there was an eloquence in the preservation of the letters and in their endorsement "Letters from my father," which seemed to have with it some faint odour of health and nature.

Theobald did not show his father's letter to Christina, nor, indeed, I believe to anyone. He was by nature secretive, and had been repressed too much and too early to be capable of railing or blowing off steam where his father was concerned. His sense of wrong was still inarticulate, felt as a dull dead weight ever present day by day, and if he woke at night-time still continually present, but he hardly knew what it was. I was about the closest friend he had, and I saw but little of him, for I could not get on with him for long together. He said I had no reverence; whereas I thought that I had plenty of reverence for what deserved to be revered, but that the gods which he deemed golden were in reality made of baser metal. He never, as I have said, complained of his father to me, and his only other friends were, like himself, staid and prim, of evangelical tendencies, and deeply imbued with a sense of the sinfulness of any act of insubordination to parents-good young men, in fact-and one cannot blow off steam to a good young man.

When Christina was informed by her lover of his father's opposition, and of the time which must probably elapse before they could be married, she offered-with how much sincerity I know not-to set him

free from his engagement; but Theobald declined to be released-"not at least," as he said, "at present." Christina and Mrs Allaby knew they could manage him, and on this not very satisfactory footing the engagement was continued.

His engagement and his refusal to be released at once raised Theobald in his own good opinion. Dull as he was, he had no small share of quiet self-approbation. He admired himself for his University distinction, for the purity of his life (I said of him once that if he had only a better temper he would be as innocent as a new-laid egg) and for his unimpeachable integrity in money matters. He did not despair of advancement in the Church when he had once got a living, and of course it was within the bounds of possibility that he might one day become a Bishop, and Christina said she felt convinced that this would ultimately be the case.

As was natural for the daughter and intended wife of a clergyman, Christina's thoughts ran much upon religion, and she was resolved that even though an exalted position in this world were denied to her and Theobald, their virtues should be fully appreciated in the next. Her religious opinions coincided absolutely with Theobald's own, and many a conversation did she have with him about the glory of God, and the completeness with which they would devote themselves to it, as soon as Theobald had got his living and they were married. So certain was she of the great results

which would then ensue that she wondered at times at the blindness shown by Providence towards its own truest interests in not killing off the rectors who stood between Theobald and his living a little faster.

In those days people believed with a simple downrightness which I do not observe among educated men and women now. It had never so much as crossed Theobald's mind to doubt the literal accuracy of any syllable in the Bible. He had never seen any book in which this was disputed, nor met with anyone who doubted it. True, there was just a little scare about geology, but there was nothing in it. If it was said that God made the world in six days, why He did make it in six days, neither in more nor less; if it was said that He put Adam to sleep, took out one of his ribs and made a woman of it, why it was so as a matter of course. He, Adam, went to sleep as it might be himself, Theobald Pontifex, in a garden, as it might be the garden at Crampsford Rectory during the summer months when it was so pretty, only that it was larger, and had some tame wild animals in it. Then God came up to him, as it might be Mr Allaby or his father, dexterously took out one of his ribs without waking him, and miraculously healed the wound so that no trace of the operation remained. Finally, God had taken the rib perhaps into the greenhouse, and had turned it into just such another young woman as Christina. That was how it was done; there was neither difficulty nor shadow of difficulty

about the matter. Could not God do anything He liked, and had He not in His own inspired Book told us that He had done this?

This was the average attitude of fairly educated young men and women towards the Mosaic cosmogony fifty, forty, or even twenty years ago. The combating of infidelity, therefore, offered little scope for enterprising young clergymen, nor had the Church awakened to the activity which she has since displayed among the poor in our large towns. These were then left almost without an effort at resistance or co-operation to the labours of those who had succeeded Wesley. Missionary work indeed in heathen countries was being carried on with some energy, but Theobald did not feel any call to be a missionary. Christina suggested this to him more than once, and assured him of the unspeakable happiness it would be to her to be the wife of a missionary, and to share his dangers; she and Theobald might even be martyred; of course they would be martyred simultaneously, and martyrdom many years hence as regarded from the arbour in the Rectory garden was not painful, it would ensure them a glorious future in the next world, and at any rate posthumous renown in this-even if they were not miraculously restored to life again-and such things had happened ere now in the case of martyrs. Theobald, however, had not been kindled by Christina's enthusiasm, so she fell back upon the Church of Rome-an enemy more dangerous, if possible,

than paganism itself. A combat with Romanism might even yet win for her and Theobald the crown of martyrdom. True, the Church of Rome was tolerably quiet just then, but it was the calm before the storm, of this she was assured, with a conviction deeper than she could have attained by any argument founded upon mere reason.

"We, dearest Theobald," she exclaimed, "will be ever faithful. We will stand firm and support one another even in the hour of death itself. God in his mercy may spare us from being burnt alive. He may or may not do so. Oh Lord" (and she turned her eyes prayerfully to Heaven), "spare my Theobald, or grant that he may be beheaded."

"My dearest," said Theobald gravely, "do not let us agitate ourselves unduly. If the hour of trial comes we shall be best prepared to meet it by having led a quiet unobtrusive life of self-denial and devotion to God's glory. Such a life let us pray God that it may please Him to enable us to pray that we may lead."

"Dearest Theobald," exclaimed Christina, drying the tears that had gathered in her eyes, "you are always, always right. Let us be self-denying, pure, upright, truthful in word and deed." She clasped her hands and looked up to Heaven as she spoke.

"Dearest," rejoined her lover, "we have ever hitherto endeavoured to be all of these things; we have not been worldly people; let us watch and pray that we

may so continue to the end."

The moon had risen and the arbour was getting damp, so they adjourned further aspirations for a more convenient season. At other times Christina pictured herself and Theobald as braving the scorn of almost every human being in the achievement of some mighty task which should redound to the honour of her Redeemer. She could face anything for this. But always towards the end of her vision there came a little coronation scene high up in the golden regions of the Heavens, and a diadem was set upon her head by the Son of Man Himself, amid a host of angels and archangels who looked on with envy and admiration-and here even Theobald himself was out of it. If there could be such a thing as the Mammon of Righteousness Christina would have assuredly made friends with it. Her papa and mamma were very estimable people and would in the course of time receive Heavenly Mansions in which they would be exceedingly comfortable; so doubtless would her sisters; so perhaps, even might her brothers; but for herself she felt that a higher destiny was preparing, which it was her duty never to lose sight of. The first step towards it would be her marriage with Theobald. In spite, however, of these flights of religious romanticism, Christina was a good-tempered kindly-natured girl enough, who, if she had married a sensible layman-we will say a hotel-keeper-would have

developed into a good landlady and been deservedly popular with her guests.

Such was Theobald's engaged life. Many a little present passed between the pair, and many a small surprise did they prepare pleasantly for one another. They never quarrelled, and neither of them ever flirted with anyone else. Mrs Allaby and his future sisters-in-law idolised Theobald in spite of its being impossible to get another deacon to come and be played for as long as Theobald was able to help Mr Allaby, which now of course he did free gratis and for nothing; two of the sisters, however, did manage to find husbands before Christina was actually married, and on each occasion Theobald played the part of decoy elephant. In the end only two out of the seven daughters remained single.

After three or four years, old Mr Pontifex became accustomed to his son's engagement and looked upon it as among the things which had now a prescriptive right to toleration. In the spring of 1831, more than five years after Theobald had first walked over to Crampsford, one of the best livings in the gift of the College unexpectedly fell vacant, and was for various reasons declined by the two fellows senior to Theobald, who might each have been expected to take it. The living was then offered to and of course accepted by Theobald, being in value not less than £500 a year with a suitable house and garden. Old Mr Pontifex then

came down more handsomely than was expected and settled £10,000 on his son and daughter-in-law for life with remainder to such of their issue as they might appoint. In the month of July, 1831 Theobald and Christina became man and wife.

CHAPTER XIII

A due number of old shoes had been thrown at the carriage in which the happy pair departed from the Rectory, and it had turned the corner at the bottom of the village. It could then be seen for two or three hundred yards creeping past a fir coppice, and after this was lost to view.

"John," said Mr Allaby to his man-servant, "shut the gate;" and he went indoors with a sigh of relief which seemed to say: "I have done it, and I am alive." This was the reaction after a burst of enthusiastic merriment during which the old gentleman had run twenty yards after the carriage to fling a slipper at it-which he had duly flung.

But what were the feelings of Theobald and Christina when the village was passed and they were rolling quietly by the fir plantation? It is at this point that even the stoutest heart must fail, unless it beat in the breast of one who is over head and ears in love. If a young man is in a small boat on a choppy sea, along with his affianced bride and both are sea-sick, and if the

sick swain can forget his own anguish in the happiness of holding the fair one's head when she is at her worst-then he is in love, and his heart will be in no danger of failing him as he passes his fir plantation. Other people, and unfortunately by far the greater number of those who get married must be classed among the "other people," will inevitably go through a quarter or half an hour of greater or less badness as the case may be. Taking numbers into account, I should think more mental suffering had been undergone in the streets leading from St George's, Hanover Square, than in the condemned cells of Newgate. There is no time at which what the Italians call *la figlia della Morte* lays her cold hand upon a man more awfully than during the first half hour that he is alone with a woman whom he has married but never genuinely loved.

Death's daughter did not spare Theobald. He had behaved very well hitherto. When Christina had offered to let him go, he had stuck to his post with a magnanimity on which he had plumed himself ever since. From that time forward he had said to himself: "I, at any rate, am the very soul of honour; I am not," etc., etc. True, at the moment of magnanimity the actual cash payment, so to speak, was still distant; when his father gave formal consent to his marriage things began to look more serious; when the college living had fallen vacant and been accepted they looked more serious still; but when Christina actually named the day, then

Theobald's heart fainted within him.

The engagement had gone on so long that he had got into a groove, and the prospect of change was disconcerting. Christina and he had got on, he thought to himself, very nicely for a great number of years; why-why-why should they not continue to go on as they were doing now for the rest of their lives? But there was no more chance of escape for him than for the sheep which is being driven to the butcher's back premises, and like the sheep he felt that there was nothing to be gained by resistance, so he made none. He behaved, in fact, with decency, and was declared on all hands to be one of the happiest men imaginable.

Now, however, to change the metaphor, the drop had actually fallen, and the poor wretch was hanging in mid air along with the creature of his affections. This creature was now thirty-three years old, and looked it: she had been weeping, and her eyes and nose were reddish; if "I have done it and I am alive," was written on Mr Allaby's face after he had thrown the shoe, "I have done it, and I do not see how I can possibly live much longer" was upon the face of Theobald as he was being driven along by the fir Plantation. This, however, was not apparent at the Rectory. All that could be seen there was the bobbing up and down of the postilion's head, which just over-topped the hedge by the roadside as he rose in his stirrups, and the black and yellow body of the carriage.

For some time the pair said nothing: what they must have felt during their first half hour, the reader must guess, for it is beyond my power to tell him; at the end of that time, however, Theobald had rummaged up a conclusion from some odd corner of his soul to the effect that now he and Christina were married the sooner they fell into their future mutual relations the better. If people who are in a difficulty will only do the first little reasonable thing which they can clearly recognise as reasonable, they will always find the next step more easy both to see and take. What, then, thought Theobald, was here at this moment the first and most obvious matter to be considered, and what would be an equitable view of his and Christina's relative positions in respect to it? Clearly their first dinner was their first joint entry into the duties and pleasures of married life. No less clearly it was Christina's duty to order it, and his own to eat it and pay for it.

The arguments leading to this conclusion, and the conclusion itself, flashed upon Theobald about three and a half miles after he had left Crampsford on the road to Newmarket. He had breakfasted early, but his usual appetite had failed him. They had left the vicarage at noon without staying for the wedding breakfast. Theobald liked an early dinner; it dawned upon him that he was beginning to be hungry; from this to the conclusion stated in the preceding paragraph the steps had been easy. After a few minutes' further

reflection he broached the matter to his bride, and thus the ice was broken.

Mrs Theobald was not prepared for so sudden an assumption of importance. Her nerves, never of the strongest, had been strung to their highest tension by the event of the morning. She wanted to escape observation; she was conscious of looking a little older than she quite liked to look as a bride who had been married that morning; she feared the landlady, the chamber-maid, the waiter-everybody and everything; her heart beat so fast that she could hardly speak, much less go through the ordeal of ordering dinner in a strange hotel with a strange landlady. She begged and prayed to be let off. If Theobald would only order dinner this once, she would order it any day and every day in future.

But the inexorable Theobald was not to be put off with such absurd excuses. He was master now. Had not Christina less than two hours ago promised solemnly to honour and obey him, and was she turning restive over such a trifle as this? The loving smile departed from his face, and was succeeded by a scowl which that old Turk, his father, might have envied. “Stuff and nonsense, my dearest Christina,” he exclaimed mildly, and stamped his foot upon the floor of the carriage. “It is a wife’s duty to order her husband’s dinner; you are my wife, and I shall expect you to order mine.” For Theobald was nothing if he was not logical.

The bride began to cry, and said he was unkind; whereon he said nothing, but revolved unutterable things in his heart. Was this, then, the end of his six years of unflagging devotion? Was it for this that when Christina had offered to let him off, he had stuck to his engagement? Was this the outcome of her talks about duty and spiritual mindedness-that now upon the very day of her marriage she should fail to see that the first step in obedience to God lay in obedience to himself? He would drive back to Crampsford; he would complain to Mr and Mrs Allaby; he didn't mean to have married Christina; he hadn't married her; it was all a hideous dream; he would-But a voice kept ringing in his ears which said: "YOU CAN'T, CAN'T, CAN'T."

"CAN'T I?" screamed the unhappy creature to himself.

"No," said the remorseless voice, "YOU CAN'T. YOU ARE A MARRIED MAN."

He rolled back in his corner of the carriage and for the first time felt how iniquitous were the marriage laws of England. But he would buy Milton's prose works and read his pamphlet on divorce. He might perhaps be able to get them at Newmarket.

So the bride sat crying in one corner of the carriage; and the bridegroom sulked in the other, and he feared her as only a bridegroom can fear.

Presently, however, a feeble voice was heard from the bride's corner saying:

"Dearest Theobald-dearest Theobald, forgive me; I have been very, very wrong. Please do not be angry with me. I will order the-the-" but the word "dinner" was checked by rising sobs.

When Theobald heard these words a load began to be lifted from his heart, but he only looked towards her, and that not too pleasantly.

"Please tell me," continued the voice, "what you think you would like, and I will tell the landlady when we get to Newmar-" but another burst of sobs checked the completion of the word.

The load on Theobald's heart grew lighter and lighter. Was it possible that she might not be going to henpeck him after all? Besides, had she not diverted his attention from herself to his approaching dinner?

He swallowed down more of his apprehensions and said, but still gloomily, "I think we might have a roast fowl with bread sauce, new potatoes and green peas, and then we will see if they could let us have a cherry tart and some cream."

After a few minutes more he drew her towards him, kissed away her tears, and assured her that he knew she would be a good wife to him.

"Dearest Theobald," she exclaimed in answer, "you are an angel."

Theobald believed her, and in ten minutes more the happy couple alighted at the inn at Newmarket.

Bravely did Christina go through her arduous

task. Eagerly did she beseech the landlady, in secret, not to keep her Theobald waiting longer than was absolutely necessary.

"If you have any soup ready, you know, Mrs Barber, it might save ten minutes, for we might have it while the fowl was browning."

See how necessity had nerved her! But in truth she had a splitting headache, and would have given anything to have been alone.

The dinner was a success. A pint of sherry had warmed Theobald's heart, and he began to hope that, after all, matters might still go well with him. He had conquered in the first battle, and this gives great prestige. How easy it had been too! Why had he never treated his sisters in this way? He would do so next time he saw them; he might in time be able to stand up to his brother John, or even his father. Thus do we build castles in air when flushed with wine and conquest.

The end of the honeymoon saw Mrs Theobald the most devotedly obsequious wife in all England. According to the old saying, Theobald had killed the cat at the beginning. It had been a very little cat, a mere kitten in fact, or he might have been afraid to face it, but such as it had been he had challenged it to mortal combat, and had held up its dripping head defiantly before his wife's face. The rest had been easy.

Strange that one whom I have described hitherto as so timid and easily put upon should prove such a

Tartar all of a sudden on the day of his marriage. Perhaps I have passed over his years of courtship too rapidly. During these he had become a tutor of his college, and had at last been Junior Dean. I never yet knew a man whose sense of his own importance did not become adequately developed after he had held a resident fellowship for five or six years. True-immediately on arriving within a ten mile radius of his father's house, an enchantment fell upon him, so that his knees waxed weak, his greatness departed, and he again felt himself like an overgrown baby under a perpetual cloud; but then he was not often at Elmhurst, and as soon as he left it the spell was taken off again; once more he became the fellow and tutor of his college, the Junior Dean, the betrothed of Christina, the idol of the Allaby womankind. From all which it may be gathered that if Christina had been a Barbary hen, and had ruffled her feathers in any show of resistance Theobald would not have ventured to swagger with her, but she was not a Barbary hen, she was only a common hen, and that too with rather a smaller share of personal bravery than hens generally have.

CHAPTER XIV

Battersby-On-The-Hill was the name of the village of which Theobald was now Rector. It contained 400 or 500 inhabitants, scattered over a

rather large area, and consisting entirely of farmers and agricultural labourers. The Rectory was commodious, and placed on the brow of a hill which gave it a delightful prospect. There was a fair sprinkling of neighbours within visiting range, but with one or two exceptions they were the clergymen and clergymen's families of the surrounding villages.

By these the Pontifexes were welcomed as great acquisitions to the neighbourhood. Mr Pontifex, they said was so clever; he had been senior classic and senior wrangler; a perfect genius in fact, and yet with so much sound practical common sense as well. As son of such a distinguished man as the great Mr Pontifex the publisher he would come into a large property by-and-by. Was there not an elder brother? Yes, but there would be so much that Theobald would probably get something very considerable. Of course they would give dinner parties. And Mrs Pontifex, what a charming woman she was; she was certainly not exactly pretty perhaps, but then she had such a sweet smile and her manner was so bright and winning. She was so devoted too to her husband and her husband to her; they really did come up to one's ideas of what lovers used to be in days of old; it was rare to meet with such a pair in these degenerate times; it was quite beautiful, etc., etc. Such were the comments of the neighbours on the new arrivals.

As for Theobald's own parishioners, the farmers

were civil and the labourers and their wives obsequious. There was a little dissent, the legacy of a careless predecessor, but as Mrs Theobald said proudly, “I think Theobald may be trusted to deal with *that* .” The church was then an interesting specimen of late Norman, with some early English additions. It was what in these days would be called in a very bad state of repair, but forty or fifty years ago few churches were in good repair. If there is one feature more characteristic of the present generation than another it is that it has been a great restorer of churches.

Horace preached church restoration in his ode:-

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
Romane, donec templa refeceris
Aedesque labentes deorum et
Foeda nigro simulacra fumo.

Nothing went right with Rome for long together after the Augustan age, but whether it was because she did restore the temples or because she did not restore them I know not. They certainly went all wrong after Constantine’s time and yet Rome is still a city of some importance.

I may say here that before Theobald had been many years at Battersby he found scope for useful work in the rebuilding of Battersby church, which he carried out at considerable cost, towards which he subscribed liberally himself. He was his own architect, and this saved expense; but architecture was not very well understood about the year 1834, when Theobald commenced operations, and the result is not as satisfactory as it would have been if he had waited a few years longer.

Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself, and the more he tries to conceal himself the more clearly will his character appear in spite of him. I may very likely be condemning myself, all the time that I am writing this book, for I know that whether I like it or no I am portraying myself more surely than I am portraying any of the characters whom I set before the reader. I am sorry that it is so, but I cannot help it-after which sop to Nemesis I will say that Battersby church in its amended form has always struck me as a better portrait of Theobald than any sculptor or painter short of a great master would be able to produce.

I remember staying with Theobald some six or seven months after he was married, and while the old church was still standing. I went to church, and felt as Naaman must have felt on certain occasions when he

had to accompany his master on his return after having been cured of his leprosy. I have carried away a more vivid recollection of this and of the people, than of Theobald's sermon. Even now I can see the men in blue smock frocks reaching to their heels, and more than one old woman in a scarlet cloak; the row of stolid, dull, vacant plough-boys, ungainly in build, uncomely in face, lifeless, apathetic, a race a good deal more like the pre-revolution French peasant as described by Carlyle than is pleasant to reflect upon-a race now supplanted by a smarter, comelier and more hopeful generation, which has discovered that it too has a right to as much happiness as it can get, and with clearer ideas about the best means of getting it.

They shamble in one after another, with steaming breath, for it is winter, and loud clattering of hob-nailed boots; they beat the snow from off them as they enter, and through the opened door I catch a momentary glimpse of a dreary leaden sky and snow-clad tombstones. Somehow or other I find the strain which Handel has wedded to the words "There the ploughman near at hand," has got into my head and there is no getting it out again. How marvellously old Handel understood these people!

They bob to Theobald as they passed the reading desk ("The people hereabouts are truly respectful," whispered Christina to me, "they know their betters."), and take their seats in a long row against the wall. The

choir clamber up into the gallery with their instruments-a violoncello, a clarinet and a trombone. I see them and soon I hear them, for there is a hymn before the service, a wild strain, a remnant, if I mistake not, of some pre-Reformation litany. I have heard what I believe was its remote musical progenitor in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo at Venice not five years since; and again I have heard it far away in mid-Atlantic upon a grey sea-Sabbath in June, when neither winds nor waves are stirring, so that the emigrants gather on deck, and their plaintive psalm goes forth upon the silver haze of the sky, and on the wilderness of a sea that has sighed till it can sigh no longer. Or it may be heard at some Methodist Camp Meeting upon a Welsh hillside, but in the churches it is gone for ever. If I were a musician I would take it as the subject for the *adagio* in a Wesleyan symphony.

Gone now are the clarinet, the violoncello and the trombone, wild minstrelsy as of the doleful creatures in Ezekiel, discordant, but infinitely pathetic. Gone is that scarebabe stentor, that bellowing bull of Bashan the village blacksmith, gone is the melodious carpenter, gone the brawny shepherd with the red hair, who roared more lustily than all, until they came to the words, "Shepherds with your flocks abiding," when modesty covered him with confusion, and compelled him to be silent, as though his own health were being drunk. They were doomed and had a presentiment of evil, even

when first I saw them, but they had still a little lease of choir life remaining, and they roared out

> [wick-ed hands have pierced and nailed him, pierced and nailed him to a tree.]

but no description can give a proper idea of the effect. When I was last in Battersby church there was a harmonium played by a sweet-looking girl with a choir of school children around her, and they chanted the canticles to the most correct of chants, and they sang Hymns Ancient and Modern; the high pews were gone, nay, the very gallery in which the old choir had sung was removed as an accursed thing which might remind the people of the high places, and Theobald was old, and Christina was lying under the yew trees in the churchyard.

But in the evening later on I saw three very old men come chuckling out of a dissenting chapel, and surely enough they were my old friends the blacksmith, the carpenter and the shepherd. There was a look of content upon their faces which made me feel certain they had been singing; not doubtless with the old glory of the violoncello, the clarinet and the trombone, but still songs of Sion and no new fangled papistry.

CHAPTER XV

The hymn had engaged my attention; when it was over I had time to take stock of the congregation. They were chiefly farmers-fat, very well-to-do folk, who had come some of them with their wives and children from outlying farms two and three miles away; haters of popery and of anything which any one might choose to say was popish; good, sensible fellows who detested theory of any kind, whose ideal was the maintenance of the *status quo* with perhaps a loving reminiscence of old war times, and a sense of wrong that the weather was not more completely under their control, who desired higher prices and cheaper wages, but otherwise were most contented when things were changing least; tolerators, if not lovers, of all that was familiar, haters of all that was unfamiliar; they would have been equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted, and at seeing it practised.

"What can there be in common between Theobald and his parishioners?" said Christina to me, in the course of the evening, when her husband was for a few moments absent. "Of course one must not complain, but I assure you it grieves me to see a man of Theobald's ability thrown away upon such a place as this. If we had only been at Gaysbury, where there are the A's, the B's, the C's, and Lord D's place, as you know, quite close, I should not then have felt that we were living in such a desert; but I suppose it is for the

best," she added more cheerfully; "and then of course the Bishop will come to us whenever he is in the neighbourhood, and if we were at Gaysbury he might have gone to Lord D's."

Perhaps I have now said enough to indicate the kind of place in which Theobald's lines were cast, and the sort of woman he had married. As for his own habits, I see him trudging through muddy lanes and over long sweeps of plover-haunted pastures to visit a dying cottager's wife. He takes her meat and wine from his own table, and that not a little only but liberally. According to his lights also, he administers what he is pleased to call spiritual consolation.

"I am afraid I'm going to Hell, Sir," says the sick woman with a whine. "Oh, Sir, save me, save me, don't let me go there. I couldn't stand it, Sir, I should die with fear, the very thought of it drives me into a cold sweat all over."

"Mrs Thompson," says Theobald gravely, "you must have faith in the precious blood of your Redeemer; it is He alone who can save you."

"But are you sure, Sir," says she, looking wistfully at him, "that He will forgive me-for I've not been a very good woman, indeed I haven't-and if God would only say 'Yes' outright with His mouth when I ask whether my sins are forgiven me-"

"But they *are* forgiven you, Mrs Thompson," says Theobald with some sternness, for the same

ground has been gone over a good many times already, and he has borne the unhappy woman's misgivings now for a full quarter of an hour. Then he puts a stop to the conversation by repeating prayers taken from the "Visitation of the Sick," and overawes the poor wretch from expressing further anxiety as to her condition.

"Can't you tell me, Sir," she exclaims piteously, as she sees that he is preparing to go away, "can't you tell me that there is no Day of Judgement, and that there is no such place as Hell? I can do without the Heaven, Sir, but I cannot do with the Hell." Theobald is much shocked.

"Mrs Thompson," he rejoins impressively, "let me implore you to suffer no doubt concerning these two cornerstones of our religion to cross your mind at a moment like the present. If there is one thing more certain than another it is that we shall all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ, and that the wicked will be consumed in a lake of everlasting fire. Doubt this, Mrs Thompson, and you are lost."

The poor woman buries her fevered head in the coverlet in a paroxysm of fear which at last finds relief in tears.

"Mrs Thompson," says Theobald, with his hand on the door, "compose yourself, be calm; you must please to take my word for it that at the Day of Judgement your sins will be all washed white in the blood of the Lamb, Mrs Thompson. Yea," he exclaims

frantically, “though they be as scarlet, yet shall they be as white as wool,” and he makes off as fast as he can from the fetid atmosphere of the cottage to the pure air outside. Oh, how thankful he is when the interview is over!

He returns home, conscious that he has done his duty, and administered the comforts of religion to a dying sinner. His admiring wife awaits him at the Rectory, and assures him that never yet was clergyman so devoted to the welfare of his flock. He believes her; he has a natural tendency to believe everything that is told him, and who should know the facts of the case better than his wife? Poor fellow! He has done his best, but what does a fish’s best come to when the fish is out of water? He has left meat and wine-that he can do; he will call again and will leave more meat and wine; day after day he trudges over the same plover-haunted fields, and listens at the end of his walk to the same agony of forebodings, which day after day he silences, but does not remove, till at last a merciful weakness renders the sufferer careless of her future, and Theobald is satisfied that her mind is now peacefully at rest in Jesus.

CHAPTER XVI

He does not like this branch of his profession-indeed he hates it-but will not admit it to

himself. The habit of not admitting things to himself has become a confirmed one with him. Nevertheless there haunts him an ill defined sense that life would be pleasanter if there were no sick sinners, or if they would at any rate face an eternity of torture with more indifference. He does not feel that he is in his element. The farmers look as if they were in their element. They are full-bodied, healthy and contented; but between him and them there is a great gulf fixed. A hard and drawn look begins to settle about the corners of his mouth, so that even if he were not in a black coat and white tie a child might know him for a parson.

He knows that he is doing his duty. Every day convinces him of this more firmly; but then there is not much duty for him to do. He is sadly in want of occupation. He has no taste for any of those field sports which were not considered unbecoming for a clergyman forty years ago. He does not ride, nor shoot, nor fish, nor course, nor play cricket. Study, to do him justice, he had never really liked, and what inducement was there for him to study at Battersby? He reads neither old books nor new ones. He does not interest himself in art or science or politics, but he sets his back up with some promptness if any of them show any development unfamiliar to himself. True, he writes his own sermons, but even his wife considers that his *forte* lies rather in the example of his life (which is one long act of self-devotion) than in his utterances from the

pulpit. After breakfast he retires to his study; he cuts little bits out of the Bible and gums them with exquisite neatness by the side of other little bits; this he calls making a Harmony of the Old and New Testaments. Alongside the extracts he copies in the very perfection of hand-writing extracts from Mede (the only man, according to Theobald, who really understood the Book of Revelation), Patrick, and other old divines. He works steadily at this for half an hour every morning during many years, and the result is doubtless valuable. After some years have gone by he hears his children their lessons, and the daily oft-repeated screams that issue from the study during the lesson hours tell their own horrible story over the house. He has also taken to collecting a *hortus siccus* , and through the interest of his father was once mentioned in the Saturday Magazine as having been the first to find a plant, whose name I have forgotten, in the neighbourhood of Battersby. This number of the Saturday Magazine has been bound in red morocco, and is kept upon the drawing-room table. He potters about his garden; if he hears a hen cackling he runs and tells Christina, and straightway goes hunting for the egg.

When the two Miss Allabys came, as they sometimes did, to stay with Christina, they said the life led by their sister and brother-in-law was an idyll. Happy indeed was Christina in her choice, for that she had had a choice was a fiction which soon took root

among them-and happy Theobald in his Christina. Somehow or other Christina was always a little shy of cards when her sisters were staying with her, though at other times she enjoyed a game of cribbage or a rubber of whist heartily enough, but her sisters knew they would never be asked to Battersby again if they were to refer to that little matter, and on the whole it was worth their while to be asked to Battersby. If Theobald's temper was rather irritable he did not vent it upon them.

By nature reserved, if he could have found someone to cook his dinner for him, he would rather have lived in a desert island than not. In his heart of hearts he held with Pope that "the greatest nuisance to mankind is man" or words to that effect-only that women, with the exception perhaps of Christina, were worse. Yet for all this when visitors called he put a better face on it than anyone who was behind the scenes would have expected.

He was quick too at introducing the names of any literary celebrities whom he had met at his father's house, and soon established an all-round reputation which satisfied even Christina herself.

Who so *integer vitæ scelerisque purus* , it was asked, as Mr Pontifex of Battersby? Who so fit to be consulted if any difficulty about parish management should arise? Who such a happy mixture of the sincere uninquiring Christian and of the man of the world? For so people actually called him. They said he was such an

admirable man of business. Certainly if he had said he would pay a sum of money at a certain time, the money would be forthcoming on the appointed day, and this is saying a good deal for any man. His constitutional timidity rendered him incapable of an attempt to overreach when there was the remotest chance of opposition or publicity, and his correct bearing and somewhat stern expression were a great protection to him against being overreached. He never talked of money, and invariably changed the subject whenever money was introduced. His expression of unutterable horror at all kinds of meanness was a sufficient guarantee that he was not mean himself. Besides he had no business transactions save of the most ordinary butcher's book and baker's book description. His tastes-if he had any-were, as we have seen, simple; he had £900 a year and a house; the neighbourhood was cheap, and for some time he had no children to be a drag upon him. Who was not to be envied, and if envied why then respected, if Theobald was not enviable?

Yet I imagine that Christina was on the whole happier than her husband. She had not to go and visit sick parishioners, and the management of her house and the keeping of her accounts afforded as much occupation as she desired. Her principal duty was, as she well said, to her husband-to love him, honour him, and keep him in a good temper. To do her justice she

fulfilled this duty to the uttermost of her power. It would have been better perhaps if she had not so frequently assured her husband that he was the best and wisest of mankind, for no one in his little world ever dreamed of telling him anything else, and it was not long before he ceased to have any doubt upon the matter. As for his temper, which had become very violent at times, she took care to humour it on the slightest sign of an approaching outbreak. She had early found that this was much the easiest plan. The thunder was seldom for herself. Long before her marriage even she had studied his little ways, and knew how to add fuel to the fire as long as the fire seemed to want it, and then to damp it judiciously down, making as little smoke as possible.

In money matters she was scrupulousness itself. Theobald made her a quarterly allowance for her dress, pocket money and little charities and presents. In these last items she was liberal in proportion to her income; indeed she dressed with great economy and gave away whatever was over in presents or charity. Oh, what a comfort it was to Theobald to reflect that he had a wife on whom he could rely never to cost him a sixpence of unauthorised expenditure! Letting alone her absolute submission, the perfect coincidence of her opinion with his own upon every subject and her constant assurances to him that he was right in everything which he took it into his head to say or do, what a tower of strength to

him was her exactness in money matters! As years went by he became as fond of his wife as it was in his nature to be of any living thing, and applauded himself for having stuck to his engagement-a piece of virtue of which he was now reaping the reward. Even when Christina did outrun her quarterly stipend by some thirty shillings or a couple of pounds, it was always made perfectly clear to Theobald how the deficiency had arisen-there had been an unusually costly evening dress bought which was to last a long time, or somebody's unexpected wedding had necessitated a more handsome present than the quarter's balance would quite allow: the excess of expenditure was always repaid in the following quarter or quarters even though it were only ten shillings at a time.

I believe, however, that after they had been married some twenty years, Christina had somewhat fallen from her original perfection as regards money. She had got gradually in arrear during many successive quarters, till she had contracted a chronic loan a sort of domestic national debt, amounting to between seven and eight pounds. Theobald at length felt that a remonstrance had become imperative, and took advantage of his silver wedding day to inform Christina that her indebtedness was cancelled, and at the same time to beg that she would endeavour henceforth to equalise her expenditure and her income. She burst into tears of love and gratitude, assured him that he was the

best and most generous of men, and never during the remainder of her married life was she a single shilling behind hand.

Christina hated change of all sorts no less cordially than her husband. She and Theobald had nearly everything in this world that they could wish for; why, then, should people desire to introduce all sorts of changes of which no one could foresee the end? Religion, she was deeply convinced, had long since attained its final development, nor could it enter into the heart of reasonable man to conceive any faith more perfect than was inculcated by the Church of England. She could imagine no position more honourable than that of a clergyman's wife unless indeed it were a bishop's. Considering his father's influence it was not at all impossible that Theobald might be a bishop some day-and then-then would occur to her that one little flaw in the practice of the Church of England-a flaw not indeed in its doctrine, but in its policy, which she believed on the whole to be a mistaken one in this respect. I mean the fact that a bishop's wife does not take the rank of her husband.

This had been the doing of Elizabeth, who had been a bad woman, of exceeding doubtful moral character, and at heart a Papist to the last. Perhaps people ought to have been above mere considerations of worldly dignity, but the world was as it was, and such things carried weight with them, whether they

ought to do so or no. Her influence as plain Mrs Pontifex, wife, we will say, of the Bishop of Winchester, would no doubt be considerable. Such a character as hers could not fail to carry weight if she were ever in a sufficiently conspicuous sphere for its influence to be widely felt; but as Lady Winchester-or the Bishopess-which would sound quite nicely-who could doubt that her power for good would be enhanced? And it would be all the nicer because if she had a daughter the daughter would not be a Bishopess unless indeed she were to marry a Bishop too, which would not be likely.

These were her thoughts upon her good days; at other times she would, to do her justice, have doubts whether she was in all respects as spiritually minded as she ought to be. She must press on, press on, till every enemy to her salvation was surmounted and Satan himself lay bruised under her feet. It occurred to her on one of these occasions that she might steal a march over some of her contemporaries if she were to leave off eating black puddings, of which whenever they had killed a pig she had hitherto partaken freely; and if she were also careful that no fowls were served at her table which had had their necks wrung, but only such as had had their throats cut and been allowed to bleed. St Paul and the Church of Jerusalem had insisted upon it as necessary that even Gentile converts should abstain from things strangled and from blood, and they had

joined this prohibition with that of a vice about the abominable nature of which there could be no question; it would be well therefore to abstain in future and see whether any noteworthy spiritual result ensued. She did abstain, and was certain that from the day of her resolve she had felt stronger, purer in heart, and in all respects more spiritually minded than she had ever felt hitherto. Theobald did not lay so much stress on this as she did, but as she settled what he should have at dinner she could take care that he got no strangled fowls; as for black puddings, happily, he had seen them made when he was a boy, and had never got over his aversion for them. She wished the matter were one of more general observance than it was; this was just a case in which as Lady Winchester she might have been able to do what as plain Mrs Pontifex it was hopeless even to attempt.

And thus this worthy couple jogged on from month to month and from year to year. The reader, if he has passed middle life and has a clerical connection, will probably remember scores and scores of rectors and rectors' wives who differed in no material respect from Theobald and Christina. Speaking from a recollection and experience extending over nearly eighty years from the time when I was myself a child in the nursery of a vicarage, I should say I had drawn the better rather than the worse side of the life of an English country parson of some fifty years ago. I admit, however, that there are no such people to be found

nowadays. A more united or, on the whole, happier, couple could not have been found in England. One grief only overshadowed the early years of their married life: I mean the fact that no living children were born to them.

CHAPTER XVII

In the course of time this sorrow was removed. At the beginning of the fifth year of her married life Christina was safely delivered of a boy. This was on the sixth of September 1835.

Word was immediately sent to old Mr Pontifex, who received the news with real pleasure. His son John's wife had borne daughters only, and he was seriously uneasy lest there should be a failure in the male line of his descendants. The good news, therefore, was doubly welcome, and caused as much delight at Elmhurst as dismay in Woburn Square, where the John Pontifexes were then living.

Here, indeed, this freak of fortune was felt to be all the more cruel on account of the impossibility of resenting it openly; but the delighted grandfather cared nothing for what the John Pontifexes might feel or not feel; he had wanted a grandson and he had got a grandson, and this should be enough for everybody; and, now that Mrs Theobald had taken to good ways, she might bring him more grandsons, which would be

desirable, for he should not feel safe with fewer than three.

He rang the bell for the butler.

"Gelstrap," he said solemnly, "I want to go down into the cellar."

Then Gelstrap preceded him with a candle, and he went into the inner vault where he kept his choicest wines.

He passed many bins: there was 1803 Port, 1792 Imperial Tokay, 1800 Claret, 1812 Sherry, these and many others were passed, but it was not for them that the head of the Pontifex family had gone down into his inner cellar. A bin, which had appeared empty until the full light of the candle had been brought to bear upon it, was now found to contain a single pint bottle. This was the object of Mr Pontifex's search.

Gelstrap had often pondered over this bottle. It had been placed there by Mr Pontifex himself about a dozen years previously, on his return from a visit to his friend the celebrated traveller Dr Jones-but there was no tablet above the bin which might give a clue to the nature of its contents. On more than one occasion when his master had gone out and left his keys accidentally behind him, as he sometimes did, Gelstrap had submitted the bottle to all the tests he could venture upon, but it was so carefully sealed that wisdom remained quite shut out from that entrance at which he would have welcomed her most gladly-and indeed from

all other entrances, for he could make out nothing at all.

And now the mystery was to be solved. But alas! it seemed as though the last chance of securing even a sip of the contents was to be removed for ever, for Mr Pontifex took the bottle into his own hands and held it up to the light after carefully examining the seal. He smiled and left the bin with the bottle in his hands.

Then came a catastrophe. He stumbled over an empty hamper; there was the sound of a fall-a smash of broken glass, and in an instant the cellar floor was covered with the liquid that had been preserved so carefully for so many years.

With his usual presence of mind Mr Pontifex gasped out a month's warning to Gelstrap. Then he got up, and stamped as Theobald had done when Christina had wanted not to order his dinner.

"It's water from the Jordan," he exclaimed furiously, "which I have been saving for the baptism of my eldest grandson. Damn you, Gelstrap, how dare you be so infernally careless as to leave that hamper littering about the cellar?"

I wonder the water of the sacred stream did not stand upright as an heap upon the cellar floor and rebuke him. Gelstrap told the other servants afterwards that his master's language had made his backbone curdle.

The moment, however, that he heard the word "water," he saw his way again, and flew to the pantry.

Before his master had well noted his absence he returned with a little sponge and a basin, and had begun sopping up the waters of the Jordan as though they had been a common slop.

"I'll filter it, Sir," said Gelstrap meekly. "It'll come quite clean."

Mr Pontifex saw hope in this suggestion, which was shortly carried out by the help of a piece of blotting paper and a funnel, under his own eyes. Eventually it was found that half a pint was saved, and this was held to be sufficient.

Then he made preparations for a visit to Battersby. He ordered goodly hampers of the choicest eatables, he selected a goodly hamper of choice drinkables. I say choice and not choicest, for although in his first exaltation he had selected some of his very best wine, yet on reflection he had felt that there was moderation in all things, and as he was parting with his best water from the Jordan, he would only send some of his second best wine.

Before he went to Battersby he stayed a day or two in London, which he now seldom did, being over seventy years old, and having practically retired from business. The John Pontifexes, who kept a sharp eye on him, discovered to their dismay that he had had an interview with his solicitors.

CHAPTER XVIII

For the first time in his life Theobald felt that he had done something right, and could look forward to meeting his father without alarm. The old gentleman, indeed, had written him a most cordial letter, announcing his intention of standing godfather to the boy-nay, I may as well give it in full, as it shows the writer at his best. It runs:

> "Dear Theobald,-Your letter gave me very sincere pleasure, the more so because I had made up my mind for the worst; pray accept my most hearty congratulations for my daughter-in-law and for yourself. "I have long preserved a phial of water from the Jordan for the christening of my first grandson, should it please God to grant me one. It was given me by my old friend Dr Jones. You will agree with me that though the efficacy of the sacrament does not depend upon the source of the baptismal waters, yet, *ceteris paribus* , there is a sentiment attaching to the waters of the Jordan which should not be despised. Small matters like this sometimes influence a child's whole future career. "I shall bring my own cook, and have told him to get everything ready for the christening dinner. Ask as many of your

best neighbours as your table will hold. By the way, I have told Lesueur *not to get a lobster* -you had better drive over yourself and get one from Saltness (for Battersby was only fourteen or fifteen miles from the sea coast); they are better there, at least I think so, than anywhere else in England. "I have put your boy down for something in the event of his attaining the age of twenty-one years. If your brother John continues to have nothing but girls I may do more later on, but I have many claims upon me, and am not as well off as you may imagine.

-Your affectionate father,
"G. PONTIFEX."

A few days afterwards the writer of the above letter made his appearance in a fly which had brought him from Gildenham to Battersby, a distance of fourteen miles. There was Lesueur, the cook, on the box with the driver, and as many hampers as the fly could carry were disposed upon the roof and elsewhere. Next day the John Pontifexes had to come, and Eliza and Maria, as well as Alethea, who, by her own special request, was godmother to the boy, for Mr Pontifex had decided that they were to form a happy family party; so come they all must, and be happy they all must, or it would be the worse for them. Next day the author of all

this hubbub was actually christened. Theobald had proposed to call him George after old Mr Pontifex, but strange to say, Mr Pontifex over-ruled him in favour of the name Ernest. The word "earnest" was just beginning to come into fashion, and he thought the possession of such a name might, like his having been baptised in water from the Jordan, have a permanent effect upon the boy's character, and influence him for good during the more critical periods of his life.

I was asked to be his second godfather, and was rejoiced to have an opportunity of meeting Alethea, whom I had not seen for some few years, but with whom I had been in constant correspondence. She and I had always been friends from the time we had played together as children onwards. When the death of her grandfather and grandmother severed her connection with Paleham my intimacy with the Pontifexes was kept up by my having been at school and college with Theobald, and each time I saw her I admired her more and more as the best, kindest, wittiest, most lovable, and, to my mind, handsomest woman whom I had ever seen. None of the Pontifexes were deficient in good looks; they were a well-grown shapely family enough, but Alethea was the flower of the flock even as regards good looks, while in respect of all other qualities that make a woman lovable, it seemed as though the stock that had been intended for the three daughters, and would have been about sufficient for them, had all been