

one. The inn was the most primitive house of entertainment that some of the party had ever seen. My knowledge of the language did us some good, and the people were perfectly obliging, and very anxious to comply with our demands as far as they were practicable; and so the night was passed somehow or another, and the delicious weather in the morning, and the charming drive to Valencia, soon obliterated all recollection of its inconveniences. Our road wound in and out of different gorges, passed the Pena Gelosa Hills—the whole air was scented with the different aromatic herbs that grew so luxuriantly everywhere—and gradually brought us more and more into the lovely fertile land of Valencia—a very land of plenty amidst all the beautiful produce of those southern regions—till we reached Burjasot, a most charming spot, embosomed in gardens, which cover the gentle slopes on which it stands. Here all the wealthy Valencians retire to enjoy the soft refreshing breezes. There are most curious caves dug in the hill, of Moorish origin, and these are used for preserving corn. The figs that grow in this sunny spot are said to be superior to any that can be produced elsewhere; plants have been sent both to Italy and France, but the Burjasotes fondly flatter themselves that their produce does not equal that from the parent trees. The view of Valencia from the esplanade is beyond everything charming, surrounded, as it seems to be, by those most picturesque trees, the oriental palm and the beautiful cypress. The moon was shining on the deep blue sea, and lighting up all heaven and earth with its soft and solemn light, as we entered Valencia, and took possession of the comfortable rooms ordered for us by our kind friends.

PEEPS THROUGH LOOPHOLES AT MEN, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS.

BY CUTBERT BEDE.

"Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd."
COWPER.

NO. IX.—COUNTRY LETTER-CARRIERS.

THE country letter-carrier and village postman is always a noteworthy person in a rural community. Expected alike by gentle and simple, known to every one in the neighbourhood, from the squire to his humblest tenant, from the farmer to the day-labourer, from the parson and doctor to the sexton and shopman, the country letter-carrier is welcomed in his coming and bidden God-speed in his going. Other men might come and other men might go, and their going and coming might not attract the special attention of a neighbourhood; but a week's absence of the letter-carrier from his accustomed round would be little short of a calamity to the whole district. Nowadays, when half-a-dozen deliveries *per diem* are deemed barely sufficient for the transaction of the domestic and mercantile needs and necessities of the mighty million "of the great Babel," it requires some mental exertion to endeavour to realise that former state of things in the United Kingdom, when the sending of a letter was as grave a business as the sending of an embassy; and when, till comparatively modern days, the country letter-carrier, with his tin horn, was a being as unknown as the unicorn, and equally as useless to society. But, while that heraldic quadruped still remains in the realms of myth and fiction, and only emerges from them to dance attendance on the royal arms, the country letter-carrier has become an established fact and a necessity of our social existence. What

should we do without him, we country folk and rural people, "remote, unfriended, solitary, slow," in the nooks and corners of the land, in villages like our *Minima Parva*? As it is, we are frequently accused of stagnation by our friends from town, but that stagnation would assume a deeper degree of quiescent immobility, if we were cut off from all communication with our letter-carrier. He is a daily link between us and the outer world of distant friends and relatives, a medium through whose agency we can obtain peeps through the loopholes of the press; a "messenger of grief, perhaps, to thousands, and of joy to some," and "the herald of a noisy world," who, even now, often ushers in his budget of news "with heart-shaking music."

A personage so important is worthy of special treatment, particularly from the pen of one who, for many years, has been so dependent upon his services. Let the country letter-carriers, then, be my theme, in this September month, when the scattered unity of our population will, in their home tours and foreign travels, make acquaintance with so many specimens of this widespread class. We will not, then, here trouble ourselves with any search into the recondite history of the conveyance of letters in earlier times. The horse-posts of Cyrus are dead and gone, and the doves of Anacreon but rarely have their modern counterparts, unless it be in the pigeons tossed in the air from the Epsom downs. In the twenty-three centuries that have elapsed since Mordecai, at the bidding of King Ahasuerus, "sent letters by post on horseback," with other "posts that rode upon mules and camels" (Esther ix. 10, 14), the world's history will tell of numerous schemes and varying methods that have been devised and employed to ensure the safe and speedy transmission of intelligence. It would require many pages merely to give an abstract of such schemes and methods of which the Oriental nations were the chief originators; and it would demand a still larger space to trace the rise of our own great central establishment at St. Martin's-le-Grand, and the gradual development of its wonderful machinery of management, from the royal liveried postmen of Henry the Third's day to Mr. Ralph Allen's establishment of cross-posts in 1720, from Mr. Palmer's mail-coach system of 1784, to the development, by Rowland Hill, of that penny postage system, introduced on January 10, 1840, which, nearly a century before, had been established in Edinburgh by Peter Williamson, and which had been purchased of him by the government in 1760. Leaving, therefore, this larger portion of this great subject, with its various branches, such as the introduction of the book post in 1848, the pattern post, the money orders, the savings' bank, and the various beneficial ways in which the Post-office system is worked, and which have already been noticed in these pages,* I would here restrict myself to a mention of those humble officials of the Post-office who so largely assist in carrying out its efficiency in the remotest nooks and corners of the land, by tramping their weary rounds, day after day, through sunshine and storm, mud and dust, heat and cold, at one time moist with July heat, at another with "spattered boots" and "frozen locks," like the Olney letter-carrier who brought Cowper's newspaper as the dusk of the winter evening was gathering round.

For, the gentle poet and the good people at Olney would appear to have been obliged to wait for their letters and papers until late in the afternoon, being in the condition of those described by Crabbe,

* See the Leisure Hour, "Post-office Progress," No. 692; "Post-office Annual Report," No. 706, and other articles.

"Who, far from town,
Wait till the postman brings the packet down."

And this is a condition that still obtains in many rural spots where the letter-carrier does not deliver up his bag to the keeper of the receiving-house until nearly midday. And the worst of it is, that the later the post is in coming in, the earlier it is in going out; so that, to answer letters by return of post is a business that entirely breaks into the whole day. If we are expecting to receive an important letter we cannot stir from home until it has been delivered; and then we are unduly hurried in replying to it. In the days of Cowper and Crabbe, correspondents did not expect to receive such speedy replies to their communications as they look for in this present day of railways, telegraphs, and penny postage; though, to be sure, Cowper, in 1765, wrote from Huntingdon to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, "If I was to measure your obligation to write by my own desire to hear from you, I should call you an idle correspondent if a post went by without bringing me a letter." But then (as Southey said) Cowper was one of the best letter-writers of the century, and he was not "so unreasonable" as to expect his cousin to write to him when it was not convenient for her to do so. The transmission of correspondence, slow and tedious as it then was, when compared with our own day, had been greatly accelerated since Taylor, the water poet, described the postmaster of that same county-town of Huntingdon, as he found him in 1618. The name of this worthy was Riggs, and he kept the Crown Inn in the High Street of "the gloomy brewer's" town; for the postmasters of that day were usually innkeepers. "He was informed who I was," says Taylor, "and wherefore I undertook this my penniless progress; wherefore he came up to our chamber and supped with us, and very bountifully called for three quarts of wine and sugar, and four jugs of beer. He did drink and begin healths like a horse-leech, and swallowed down his cups without feeling as if he had had the dropsy or nine pound of sponge in his maw. In a word, as he is a post, he drank post, striving and calling by all means to make the reckoning great, or to make us men of great reckoning. But in his payment he was tired like a jade, leaving the gentleman that was with me to discharge the terrible shot, or else one of my horses must have lain in pawn for his superfluous calling and unmannerly intrusion." Such is the poet's portraiture of the Huntingdon postmaster forty-two years before the General Post-office was established by Act of Parliament, and deprived innkeepers and private persons of the privilege to "provide and prepare horses and furniture to let to hire unto all through posts and persons riding in post, by commission or without, to and from all and every the places of England, Scotland, and Ireland, where any post-roads are." From 1660 such persons were to be appointed only by the Postmaster-General and his deputies; and they were not only to supply horses at half-an-hour's notice, but also to provide a guide with a horn to such as rode post.

This horn was the customary badge of office of the country letter-carrier; and, when Cowper removed from Huntingdon to Olney—still keeping to the banks of that river whose scenery he loved, and in whose "noble stream," as he called it, he loved, while at Huntingdon, to bathe three times a week—the approach of the letter-carrier, as he came over the long straggling bridge (the forerunner of the present structure) "that with its wearisome but needful length" spanned the waters of the Ouse, widened to a "wintry flood," was heralded to the poet and the people of Olney by the

sound of his "twanging horn." Indeed, the long tin horn was not the peculiar badge of the country letter-carrier, for it also was used by the town distributor of correspondence and news: and it will probably be within the personal recollection of many of my readers, that the delivery of letters in London and other large cities, was accompanied by a hideous fanfaronade of tin horns, each postman performing a wild solo with a power equal to the "blast of that dread horn" borne on those Fontarabian echoes that came to the ears of King Charles. The arrival of the mail-coach was announced by a similar tin-horn solo, except in those cases where the red-coated guard was a sufficient musician to play upon the key-bugle. Such a musician was the "Charley James" of my younger days, the celebrated guard of that most celebrated coach the "Hirondelle" (the word was always pronounced as spelt), which, with the "Hibernia," conveyed the mails from Worcester to Shrewsbury. On May-day they raced to see which coach could accomplish the journey in the briefest time; the coaches were gay with May-boughs, the horses with ribbons and resplendent harness, and the guards with new redcoats, and Charley James "qui scarletum coatum habebat," as the comic Latin grammar says, played spirit-stirring melodies on the silver key-bugle which had been presented to him by admirers of his musical talent. But that was an exceptional case, and the common tin-horn was the normal instrument and badge of office of the mail-guards and letter-carriers.

It was with such tin-horns that the "Mercuries" and "hawkers," as the newsvendors of Cowper's day were called, announced the publication of "The Spectator," "The Flying Post," and other papers of the period; and it was with similar twanging horns that the victories of the British arms by land and sea, under the great captains of the age, Nelson and Wellington, were first heralded to a noisy world. "Glorious news!" "Great victory!" "A thousand prisoners!" and such like cries, were shouted by them in stentorian tones in the brief intervals when their horns were silent, and these cries took the place of those sensational advertisements of the penny press, which we are daily accustomed to see in railway-stations and in newsagents' windows. A roll of the "Extraordinary Gazette" in one hand, and a copy of the same tied round their hat, proclaimed their calling, even if any one had been so deaf as not to hear the noise of their horns and clamour. At length these tin-horns became a nuisance so intolerable, that, in the early part of the reign of George IV, they were forbidden by law to be used in the London streets. A fine of ten shillings was to be the penalty for a first conviction of the offender, and twenty shillings for a second conviction. Thus in towns the tin-horn was put down, together with muffin-bells, dustmen's-bells, and other similar disagreeables, although the two last-named are still permitted at London-super-Mare, much to the annoyance of Brighton visitors, especially those who are invalids, and have been recommended to lodgings in a quiet street, where, as is always the case with "quiet streets," the fish-sellers, the nigger vocalists, the acrobats, the Punch shows, the stray musicians, and the other flotsam and jetsam of a fashionable seaside town, most do congregate, making the street as "full of noises" as Prospero's island, and giving the modern Hogarth a subject for a companion picture to his "Enraged Musician."

The urban letter-carrier has vanished, together with his tin-horn; and the town postman has changed to a smart-liveried person whose sharp rat-tat and hurried walk are heard several times in the course of the day.

"Every day, as sure as the clock, somebody hears the postman's knock," is the not very recondite remark of a song, whose popularity is due to the liveness of the air to which it has been wedded; which air, by the way, strongly recalls the melody of "The Witches' Dance," in Locke's music to "Macbeth." But, though "somebody hears the postman's knock," it is highly satisfactory to the inhabitants of "the great Babel" that nobody hears the postman's horn. Yet, as fashions survive in the country long after they have gone out of date in town, so the postman's horn is still to be heard "twanging" as it did eighty years ago at Olney. In rural districts, the letter-carriers, as they plod their round from village to village, still, in numerous instances, continue to herald their approach with that "heart-shaking music" in which they indulged in Cowper's day. Here, for example, in *Minima Parva*, I hear the sound of such a twanging horn from such a country letter-carrier nearly every day in the year; and experienced ears will detect its peculiar twang from the like tin-horn performance of the rag and bone collector, as he also makes his rounds from cottage to cottage, and announces his coming with horn-blowing. Indeed, those lines of Cowper's—the seven first in the fourth book of "The Task"—would still aptly describe the country letter-carrier of the present day, as he may be found in many rural districts. And dear to artists is the country letter-carrier! Painters of the English *genre* class delight in him; and very rarely is there an exhibition of modern paintings without a picture of the country letter-carrier depicted under some one of the many varieties that he presents. And it may not be out of place to say that those seven lines from "The Task" descriptive of the Olney postman appeared in the catalogue of "The Exhibition of Drawings and Sketches by Amateur Artists," held at 121, Pall Mall, in the year 1853, appended to drawing No. 394, the amateur artist of which was the present writer, who had long loved the poet of Olney and all his works, and who, in that drawing, endeavoured to realise his idea of Cowper's country letter-carrier.

But, to come to real artists—to such men as Mr. Frederick Goodall, and those who have limned the country letter-carrier in his many aspects and diverse surroundings. Some have represented him, as Mr. Goodall has done, lounging in the yard of the village inn while its inmates and frequenters discussed the news in the opened paper or looked at their letters. Others have shown him turning away with a pitying expression from the widow to whom he has given the black-edged envelope, whose contents will inform her of the death of her only son. "Sad news from India" was the title of this picture, produced at the time of the mutiny. Again, too, has he been shown, handing to a pleased recipient the white-enamelled envelope with its wedding-cards. "It'll be your turn next, miss!" was the suggestive title. For it is a pleasing characteristic of the country letter-carrier, that he has a word for every one. The town postman is too hurried in his duties to allow him to converse even with the policeman; and he is little more than a human machine performing its work at a regularly-sustained speed, and marking its rapid progress by a sharp rat-tat, as the letters are slipped into the box, and the postman is rat-tatting at the next house before the servant can answer the door. If the town postman has occasion to pause for a talk, his conversation is of the most business-like character, to ask for a signature for the receipt of a registered letter, or something equally official. But the country letter-carrier has a word for every one he meets, from the

stone-breaker on the road to the squire in "the high hall-garden." Sometimes he has to read to the recipient the letter that he delivers, spelling out the crabbed handwriting of the ill-written scrawl that would tax even the powers of that so-called "blind man" at the General Post-office, whose peculiar province it is to decipher those postal addresses that seem to other persons as difficult as cuneiform inscriptions; and this is one phase of his varied character which has been represented by artists. Others have depicted his increased importance on St. Valentine's Day, which is a day that always adds largely to the letter-carrier's labours both in country and town. Charles Lamb wrote of it, that, on this day, "the weary and all forspent twopenny postman sinks beneath a load of delicate embarrassments not his own." And Elia thus speaks of the postman's knock:—"Not many sounds in life, and I include all urban and all rural sounds, exceed in interest a knock at the door. It 'gives a very echo to the throne where Hope is seated.' But, its issues seldom answer to this oracle within. It is so seldom that just the person we want to see comes. But of all the clamorous visitations, the welcomed in expectation is the sound that ushers in, or seems to usher in, a valentine. As the raven himself was hoarse that announced the fatal entrance of Duncan, so the knock of the postman on this day is light, airy, and confident." And so, the letter-carrier on Valentine's Day is a subject of which Mr. G. Thomas and other artists have taken advantage. Last year, in the Suffolk Street Exhibition, there was a very clever picture by Mr. W. Hemsley, called "The Village Postman, 'nothing, I'm afraid, this morning, miss.'" To which title were appended these lines from the passage in "The Task":

"Messenger of grief,
Perhaps, to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy."

The expected message in this instance would appear to have been a joyous one, to judge from the expression of the bright-faced and brightly-dressed young lady who looked anxiously over the old postman's shoulder, as, with spectacles on nose, he turned over the letters in his hand. The pastoral landscape behind these well-drawn figures made the picture a pleasing and characteristic representation of the modern country letter-carrier in England. What he is in Ireland, Mr. Erskine Nicol has shown us in his important picture of "The Cross Roads," in this year's exhibition of the Royal Academy, where "Shaun the Post" is seen getting his bags in readiness for the expected car.

A primitive country letter-carrier will be seen in this sportsman's month, by many an English deer-stalker, grouse-shooter, fisherman, or tourist, in the wild and pleasant places of Scotland and the West Highlands. When the blessings of the post had been spread far and wide, and every town in the United Kingdom could boast of its post-office, it necessarily happened that, in thinly-populated districts, the mail carts had to be supplemented by letter-carriers; and this was especially the case in the Scottish Highlands. But when the universal penny had penetrated into the remotest regions, and the number of letters and letter-writers had increased, proportionate facilities were granted for the spread and interchange of their communications; and, at the present day, there are few villages in the Scottish Highlands that cannot show to their Gaelic-speaking inhabitants some one heather thatched cottage, marked out from its neighbours by being dignified with a board on which is painted the magic English legend "Post-office." This cottage is

commonly the village shop, wherein all the necessaries of life can be obtained, from candles and bacon to linen and broad-cloth. If the village is not on one of those famous turnpikeless roads that are daily traversed by dashing mail-carts, the letter-bag is taken to the nearest point at which the mail-cart will pass. Of course, too, it happens, as in many rural districts in England, that there are people who are so locally situated as to be cut off from the nearest receiving-house by some miles of hill and dale; and such persons are necessarily compelled to establish for postal purposes their own letter-carrier—the *gille-ruithe*—to give him his proper Gaelic designation. These gillies, whose daily duty it is to carry the laird's letter-bag to and from the mail-cart, are usually lads; for the word *Gillie* (or rather *gille*) is not strictly confined to the age of boyhood, any more than our English postboy is prevented by his boyish appellation from being a wizened man of sixty; and *gille* is any servant, whether he be the *gille-ruithe* or "running footman," or the *gille-cois* or "footman," or the *gille-each* or "groom." And *Gillie Callum*, who gave his name to the tune to which the sword dance (hence called after him) is performed, was a servant named *Calum*. The modern *gille-ruithe*, then, the running footman, or letter-carrier *gillie*, is usually a lad, and more frequently accomplishes his to and fro journeys in the normal West Highland manner of children and women, that is, with bare legs and feet. But the *gillie* from whom I, one September, made a sketch, was somewhat of a swell, and had been endued by his laird with stout boots and a velvet coat, around which was slung the deerskin letter-bag. As he had to traverse the ground between his master's house and the post-office four times a day, and as the distance, though only three miles by the crow's flight, was "over brake, brook, and scaur," and down into the heart of a deep glen and "squinting" (the Queen herself has adopted this expressive word in her "Journal") the shoulder of a precipitous hill, we may fairly admit that this Highland specimen of a letter-carrier did a fair amount of walking ere the Sabbath brought him that rest which its very name implies, but which is denied to so many country letter-carriers in England.

Such a *gille-ruithe* as I then saw, was once an important member in the establishment of every Highland laird. His duties compelled him to be continually on the move, and frequently to undertake long and perilous journeys in the delivery of his master's missive. The crossing of a river when it was "in spate" or swollen, was an ordinary circumstance required in the duties of the *gille-ruithe*, whose inventive powers were often severely taxed to devise an expedient for keeping his laird's letter safe from wet, while he stemmed the torrent or swam the river. And when the abilities for letter-writing increased, and the facilities for intercommunication of ideas were heightened and developed, the office of the *gille-ruithe* was not discarded in the Western Highlands, the running footman being retained for postal services, and not for attendance upon carriages and state coaches—a custom preserved to the present century, and recorded in the sign of "The Running Footman," in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, London. Some Highland families of distinction—like the Duke of Gordon at the end of the seventeenth century—were accustomed to supply their lack of postal news by sending their *gille-ruithe* on a month's tour, with instructions to store up in his mind as large a budget of information as he could diligently acquire and carefully remember. So that a letter-carrier who adequately filled such an occupation, must have had much of that

talent which distinguished Mr. William Woodfall, who, when the "Morning Chronicle" was started in 1769, and the reporting of parliamentary debates was forbidden by the standing orders of both Houses, was accustomed to listen to the speeches and write a report of them from memory. Previous to that, the pen of Dr. Johnson had been employed to write such allegorical or imaginary debates as should escape the penalty of the act; a circumstance thus referred to by Dr. W. H. Russell, in his speech at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner, on the 6th of last June:—

"Since the days when it was difficult for Dr. Johnson to write imaginary debates, in which he conferred, no doubt, a great deal of eloquence on what he dared say were very dull and stupid men, down to the present day, when the debates were enlivened by the speeches of a Gladstone and a Disraeli, the press had been growing with the growth of liberal institutions, and had been recognised more and more by the Parliament of this country."

The distance daily walked by a country letter-carrier, irrespective of weather and the state of the roads, is frequently very great. The Braemar letter-carrier, who died at the close of George the Third's reign, had, during the thirty-six years that he held the office, walked 260,000 miles in the execution of his duties, which would give an average of rather more than twenty-three miles a day for the six days of the week. I was personally acquainted with a similar case in a midland county, where the distance accomplished by the letter-carrier each working day of the week was twenty-two miles from point to point, though often more than this, especially on the day when the local newspaper had to be delivered at various farmhouses. The effort that had been made to obtain him a day of rest on the Sunday was only partially successful; and on Sundays he had to walk sixteen miles, the greater portion of his route lying over a wild, hilly, and heavy country. The man was an old soldier who had served in India; he stood six feet two, was as upright as "a post," and gave the military salute when he passed any one, walking with a steady, long, swinging step. He had two enforced holidays every year, on the days when he drew out his small pension, but on these days he had to pay a substitute. During the five years of my acquaintance with him, I never knew him to have but one other "holiday," and that was on the day of his wife's funeral; she was a black woman, and they had a large family of various gradations of hue between black and white. When I tried to speak a word of comfort to him on his loss, he expressed his grief somewhat oddly:—"To think," said this old soldier letter-carrier, "that she should die and leave me after I had taken the trouble to bring her so many thousand miles." Great as were the pedestrian feats of this country letter-carrier, they were exceeded by those of William Brockbank, "the walking post" from Manchester to Glossop, in 1808, and previous to that, the letter-carrier from Whitehouse to Ulverstone. If we may credit the published statements of this man's walking powers, "his daily task was not less than forty-seven miles." When Mr. Edmund Capern was the letter-carrier at Bideford, Devon, he made good and profitable use of his long walks by his poetical compositions.

The poet Coleridge was once walking in the Lake district, when he saw a young girl who was servant at the village inn, reluctantly giving back to the letter-carrier the letter he had brought for her, because she was unable to pay for its postage. Coleridge paid the shilling, and gave her the letter; and when the postman

had gone, received her explanation, that his kindly-meant payment was useless, as there was no writing in the letter, but merely certain marks on its outside, which let her know that her mother was well. They were too poor to correspond at the cost of a shilling a letter. Another person, similarly circumstanced, used to address a newspaper to her mother, addressed "Mrs. Campbell" if she was well, and Mrs. "Campbill" if she was ill; which was, certainly, in the latter case, a very unsatisfactory communication. But we may judge from the existence of such cases, what a widespread blessing it must have been, when the penny-stamped letters were first distributed by the country letter-carriers.

MY FIRST CURACY.

CHAPTER VIII.—SOME PAROCHIAL EXPERIENCES—PREACHING—LECTURES.

I MUST confess that my first curacy was no sinecure; for, as I have before observed, during the last few years of the late vicar's life the parish had been much neglected. Accordingly we found that many things wanted setting on foot, and maintaining in efficiency when fairly floated. Under the zealous guidance of my fellow-workman—for my vicar was really a fellow-labourer—we originated, and in several instances carried out successfully, various different schemes for the temporal and, I hope I may add, the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of the parish.

Our first aim was to endeavour to draw the parishioners more frequently and regularly to their church. I think that the new choir, about which I have already spoken, was one great means to this end. It gradually grew into popularity, and the pains taken by the vicar's wife and the other ladies I have mentioned, in regularly attending to and superintending the different practices of the choir, regardless of weather, reacted upon the attendance of the choir members and their friends.

The next change my vicar and myself set about was to greatly simplify our sermons. We tried to make them as plain and practical as possible, and enlivened them with as many illustrations as we could from scripture, and from nature and life. I am persuaded that, in general, preachers take far too much for granted as to the knowledge of their hearers in regard to religious truths. Next we also shortened our discourses, making them seldom to exceed twenty minutes in their delivery. For occasional services, or for audiences in towns, who can congregate round a chosen preacher, this time is, of course, short; but for an ordinary mixed audience, especially in the country, I think it enough.

My vicar was no advocate for extempore addresses, and I myself fully agreed with him in this respect, not having "the gift": but though we did not preach extempore, we both made a point of studying our sermons well, so that we really *preached* them, and not *read* them, in the pulpit.

I remember that when I preached my first sermon, nervousness made me elevate my voice too much for the size of the church. I heard two or three remarks upon this first sermon of mine. One of the farmers said "he should like his farm boys to have such a voice to scare away the birds from the young wheat." Another labourer thought "it was not bad for a journeyman parson." Not at all a misnomer for a curate, I thought, when I had this remark repeated to me afterwards. Such hints were useful, both as regards overcoming nervousness and managing the voice.

The first time that I baptized a child, also, my gravity

and fortitude received a somewhat violent shock. The infant in question was more than two years old, and in its struggles to free itself from my arms, it seized my spectacles and dashed them into the font, exclaiming, "I won't, I won't." Now this font was rather a deep one, and as, on account of my deficiency in sight, I could not see to finish the ceremony without them, nothing remained to be done, after I had baptized the crying and struggling child, and gladly returned him to his mother's arms, than to strip up my sleeve and fish for my spectacles until I found them, which happily I quickly did, and having wiped and adjusted them, resumed the service, which I concluded without further accident; but my composure was slightly ruffled, as the affair happened in the presence of a large congregation of grinning rustics, and the squire's pew was full of magnates from a neighbouring hall.

Another and more important accident once made me exceedingly uncomfortable for a time. I was going to preach in the evening at a town about ten miles off from my parish, and in a church where the service was "strictly rubrical," and where the attendance was exceedingly large. This same church had been entirely restored by the resident parishioners themselves, without any assistance from outside. The vicar was popular, but just at this time in a bad state of health; accordingly, as I was well acquainted with him, I volunteered to assist him occasionally in the evening.

On this particular night I had to set off rather hurriedly, having been detained at home by unexpected extra work. When I arrived at the vestry I felt in my pocket for my sermon-case, but, alas! it was not there, nor in the pocket of my great-coat. Now I knew that the vicar was an exceedingly nervous man, and of course totally unprepared to preach, as he naturally expected that I had everything ready. Being late, the choir were already robed when I entered; so, as it was time for service to commence, I just asked for a Bible, which was given me, and I saw the vicar stare at my unusual request, because I had always arranged that I should read the lessons whenever I preached. I made no reply to his inquiring gaze, but silently followed him out of the vestry, and as I did so I could feel the cold chill down my back; but I resolved that I would brave out the matter, and that the vicar should be put to no inconvenience.

Although I read the lessons, as I have stated was my allotted task, yet I managed to find a text and arrange an outline of a sermon. The season was Advent. I took for my text, "He shall judge the world in righteousness." The suddenness of Christ's return, the signs of that coming, the events, as far as scripture tells of that day, the judgment itself, the effects of the judgment, the necessity of preparation for it, and that now, because none can tell how soon it may begin, these topics formed the subject of my discourse. I certainly trembled as I knelt in the pulpit, but I did earnestly pray for assistance from on high, that the congregation (and it was a vast one) might not suffer through my carelessness in losing my manuscript. I feel sure that the prayer was heard. All fear left me after I read the words of my text; and then, remembering whose message I had to deliver, I was able to proceed, and for twenty minutes never faltered or hesitated for a moment. I had preached in that church several times before, but never previously extempore, so perhaps it was from this fact, added to the solemnity of the subject, and the earnestness of the preacher, that the congregation was fixed in deepest attention.

Although my vicar and myself did not deliver strictly