

*The Parish Clerk () by Peter Hampson Ditchfield Part 1 out of 6. theinnatdunvilla.com homepage; Index of The Parish Clerk () Next part (2) Produced by Jonathan Ingram, Charlie Kirschner and the Online.*

Home - Random Browse I thought to myself that the practice was excellent, and felt that if ever I became a clergyman of which honour there was very small probability, I would obey the Prayer Book and catechise. Since then I have catechised ten, twenty, fifty young people, and not infrequently five hundred to one thousand, and rarely two to three thousand on a Sunday afternoon, often, however, much exhausted having to preach in the evening and dreadfully cast down at my own failure in not catechising better. A lovely effigy of Southey occupied his place in Crosthwaite Church, and I found myself again amidst the enchanting views of and about Derwentwater. I was told that he had resigned, that he lived still at no very great distance. I think he was succeeded by his son as clerk. After some trouble I found my aged friend, and told him that very many years ago I was at the church when Southey, the poet, was there, and I wanted to know if the catechising was continued. I lived here all these years, and was clerk for nearly all the time. Well, there was a clergyman of that name come here four Sundays, many a year ago, when the vicar was from home; and now I come to think of it, he did catechise on the Sunday afternoon. But he is the only man that ever did so here. But I think it likely that the incident at Crosthwaite Church was a chief cause of my trying to be a catechist, and I conclude by saying to any one in holy orders, or preparing to receive them. Make catechising an important effort in your ministry. It was a small parish. The vicar was a learned man, and an authority as an antiquary, and a man of high character. On a certain Sunday morning I was detailed to perform all the "duties" of Morning Prayer. Doubtless I was too energetic in my efforts at preaching, for my "action" proved, almost to an alarming extent, that the huge pulpit cushion had not been "dusted" for a lengthy period. But it was at the very commencement of divine service that the clerk demonstrated his originality in the proper discharge of his duties. Gill, aged 86, has many recollections of old clerks and their ways. In a parish in Nottinghamshire there was an old clerk who was nearly blind. There were two services on Sunday in summer, and only morning service in winter. The clerk knew the morning Psalms quite well by heart, but not so the evening Psalms. On one occasion when his verse should have been read, he was unable to recollect it. Knocking at the pulpit door and no notice being taken of him, he proceeded to pull the black gown, and made the curate come down, change his robes, and complete the service in the orthodox fashion. In another Notts church, during service, there was an encounter between two clerks. The regular clerk having been taken ill was unequal to his duties for some weeks, and appointed a man to carry them out for him. On the restoration to health of the real clerk he came into church to resume his duties, but found the man he had appointed occupying the box—the so-called desk. Whereupon they had a scuffle in the aisle. William Selwyn recollects the following incidents in the parish of F—, near Cambridge: Here up to the end of the sixties and well into the seventies a most quaint service was in fashion. The morning service began with a metrical Psalm—Tate and Brady—led by the clerk of these more hereafter. This being ended, the vicar commenced the service always with the sentence "O Lord, correct me"—never any other. Then all things went on in the regular course till the end of the Litany, when the clerk would be heard stamping down the church and ascending the gallery in order to be ready for the second metrical Psalm. That ended, the vicar would commence with the ante-Communion service from the reading-desk. This went on in due course till the end of the Nicene Creed, when without sermon, prayers, or blessing, the morning service came to an abrupt termination. The afternoon service was identical, save that it ended with a sermon and the blessing. But the chief peculiarity was the clerk and the singing. The metrical Psalm chosen was invariably one for the day of the month whatever it might be. The usual village band—fiddle, trombone, etc. Usually the number of verses was four, but sometimes the clerk would go on to six, or even seven. Once, I remember, this led to a somewhat ludicrous result. It was the seventh day of the month, consequently the thirty-fifth was the metrical Psalm to be sung. I think my late revered relative, Canon Selwyn, learnt then with astonishment, as I did myself, of the existence of the following lines within the folds of the Prayer Book: In the afternoon the band migrated to the dissenting chapel. On one occasion the band

failed to appear, and the clerk was left alone. However, he made the best of it, with scant support from the congregation, so turning to them at the end, said in a loud voice, "Thank you for your help! From these ludicrous scenes it is refreshing to turn to a service which, though primitive, was conducted with the utmost reverence and decency. When I was instituted in all the singing was conducted, and most reverently conducted, under the auspices of the clerk. He was a handsome man, with a flowing beard, magnificent bass voice, and a wooden leg. With two or three sons, daughters, and others in the village he carried on the choir, and though there were only hymns, nothing could be better. Of its kind I have seldom heard anything better. They had to yield to the inexorable march of time, but I parted from them with regret. Though we now have a surpliced choir of men and boys, with a trained organist and choirmaster, I always look back to my good old friend with his daughters and their companions, who were the leaders of the singing in the early days of my incumbency. Canon Hemmans tell his reminiscences of Thomas Evison, parish clerk of Wragby, Lincolnshire, who died in , aged eighty-two years. He speaks of him as "a dear old friend, for whom I had a profound regard, and to whom I was grateful for much help during my noviciate at my first and only curacy. Settled on his well-known corner seat in the "Red Lion," he would be seen each evening smoking his pipe and laying down the law in the character of the village oracle. This action showed some courage, as almost all the parish belonged to the squire, who was a strong Tory of the old school. Canon Hemmans was curate of Wragby with the Rev. Yard from to , succeeding the present Dean of St. Sibthorpe, and Keble, and when expounding then unaccustomed and forgotten truths, he found the clerk a most intelligent and attentive hearer. Evison used to attend the daily services, except the Wednesday and Friday Litany, which service was too short for him. When he was baptizing a child privately, the name Thirza was given to the child, which he did not recognise as a Bible name. This is not an uncommon book, and the clerk said these people believed it was as true as the Bible, because it claimed to be about Bible characters. Evison was a diligent reader of newspapers, which were much fewer in his day, and studied diligently the sermons reported in the local Press. He was much puzzled by the reference to "the leg end" of the story of the raising of Lazarus in a sermon preached by the Bishop of London, afterwards Archbishop Tait. Of course he miscalled words. During the Russian War he told Mr. Hemmans that we were not fighting for "territorial possessions," and he always read "Moabites and Hungarians" in his rendering of the sixth verse of the 83rd Psalm. After the resignation of Mr. Yard in a Low Churchman was appointed, who restored the use of the black gown. Hemmans had to preach in the evening of the first Sunday, and was undecided as to whether he ought to continue to use the surplice. He consulted Evison, whose brave advice was, "Stick to your colours. On the following Sunday the vicar spoke of "the filthy stream of politics. He used to keep a pony and gig, and his foreman, one Solomon Bingham, was a local preacher. When there came a rough Sunday morning the kind old clerk would say: You may have my trap. Burrows sends me a charming description of an old-fashioned service, and some clerkly manners which are worth recording. From twenty-five to thirty years ago the small Bedfordshire village of Tingrith had quaint customs and ceremonies which to-day exist only in the memory of the few. The lady of the manor was perhaps best described by a neighbouring squire as a "potentate in petticoats. Legend has it that one ancient schoolmaster whom this good lady appointed was not overgood at spelling, and would allow a pupil to laboriously spell out a word and wait for him to explain. The women sat on one side of the centre aisle and the men on the other, the former attired in clean cotton gowns and the latter in their Sunday smocks. The rector would take his place at the desk, and the occupants of the centre aisle would rise respectfully to their feet in anticipation. A white-haired butler and a younger footman"with many brass buttons on their coat-tails"would fling wide the double doors and stand one on either side until the old lady swept in; then one door was closed and the other only left open for less-important worshippers to enter. As she passed between the men and women to the big pew joining the chancel screen, they all touched their forelocks or dropped curtsies before resuming their seats. Before this aristocratic personage began her devotions she would face round and with the aid of a large monocle, which hung round her neck on a broad black ribbon, would make a silent call over, and for the tardy, or non-arrivals, there was a lecture in store. The servants of her household had the whole of one side aisle allotted to their use. The farmers had the other. When a hymn was given out the schoolmaster would vigorously apply a tuning-fork to his knee, and having thus got the key

would start the tune, which was taken up lustily by the children round him. This was all the singing they had in the service. The clerk said all the amens except when he was asleep. The rector was never known to preach more than ten minutes at a time, and this was always so simple an exposition of the Scripture that the most illiterate could understand. But no pen can pay tribute enough to the sweet earnestness of those little sermons, or, having heard them, ever go away unimpressed. At the end of the service no one of the congregation moved until the lady of the manor sailed out of the great square pew. Then the men and women rose as before and bowed and bobbed as she passed down the aisle. The two menservants again flung wide the double doors and stood stiffly on either side as she passed out; then sedately walked home behind her at a respectful distance. This finished he would blow out his candle with most audible vigour, and every one in his neighbourhood would have their handkerchiefs ready to drop their noses into. This same clerk also took up his stand by the chancel steps with a black rod in his hand, and with tremendous importance marched in front of the rector down the aisle to the vestry under the belfry, and waited outside while the clergyman changed his surplice for a black cassock, then escorted him again to the pulpit stairs. Reeve, rector of Stondon Massey, Essex, contributes the following excellent stories of old-time services. The following story is well authenticated in the annals of the family, and must belong to the latter part of the eighteenth century or the commencement of the nineteenth century. It was, of course, a well-established custom in those old times for the church clerk to give out the number of the hymn to be sung, which he did with much unction and long preamble. The moments thus employed would be turned to account in the afternoon by the officiating clergyman, who would take the opportunity of retiring to the vestry to exchange his surplice for his academic gown wherein to preach.

Chapter 2 : parish clerk | eBay

*The Parish Clerk () by Peter Hampson Ditchfield Part 5 out of 6. [theinnatdunvilla.com](http://theinnatdunvilla.com) homepage; Index of The Parish Clerk () Previous part (4) Next part (6).*

It was his duty also to give out the hymns. I have known him play an eight-line tune to a four-line verse or psalm--we used Tate and Brady , repeating the words of each verse twice! The organ produced the most curious sounds. In course of time the mice got into it, and the churchwardens, of whom the clerk was one, approached the vicar with the information, at the same time venturing a hint that the organ was quite worn out and that a harmonium would be more acceptable to the congregation than the present music. His reply was that a harmonium was not a sufficiently sacred instrument, and added, "Let a mouse-trap be set at once. He appears to have fulfilled his office satisfactorily up to about , when his mind became somewhat feeble. Nevertheless, no desire was apparent to shorten the days of his office, as he was regular in his attendance and musically inclined; but when he began to play pranks upon the vicar it became necessary to consider the advisability of finding a substitute who should do the work and receive half the pay. One of his escapades was to stand up in the middle of service and call the vicar a liar; at another time he announced that a wedding was to take place on a certain day. The vicar, therefore, attended and waited for an hour, when the clerk affirmed that he must have dreamed it! Dicker was given to the study of astronomy, and it is related that he once gave a lecture on this subject in the Public Rooms. There is close to the town a small park in memory of one of the Duller family. A man one night was much alarmed when walking therein to discover a bright light in one of the trees, and, later, to hear the voice of the worthy clerk, who addressed him in these words: I am Robert Dicker, clerk of the parish. I am examining the stars. The wheel mentioned above was part of one of his tricycle schemes. His first attempt in cycle-making resulted in the construction of a bicycle the wheels of which resembled the top of a round deal table; this soon came to grief. His second endeavour was more successful and became a tricycle, the wheels of which were made of wrought iron and the base of a triangular shape. Upon the large end he placed an arm-chair, averring that it would be useful to rest in whenever he should grow weary! Then, making another attempt, he succeeded in turning out being aided by another person a very respectable and useful tricycle upon which he made many journeys to Barnstaple and elsewhere. However, just as an end comes to everything that is mortal, so did an end come to our friend the clerk; for, as so many stories finish, he died in a good old age, and his substitute reigned in his stead. The following reminiscences of a parish clerk were sent by the Rev. Legge, who has since died. And the converse of this is true of a race of men who before long will be "improved" off the face of the earth, if the restoration of our parish churches is to go on at the present rate. I allude to the old parish clerks of our boy-hood days. Who does not remember their quaint figures and quaint, though somewhat irreverent, manner of leading the responses of the congregation? It is well indeed that our churches, sadly given over to the laxity and carelessness of a bygone age, should be renovated and beautified, the tone of the services raised, and the "bray" of the old clerks, unsuited to the devotional feelings of a more enlightened day, silenced, but still a shade of regret will be mingled with their dismissal, if only for the sake of the large stock of amusing anecdotes which their names recall. He was a little man but possessed of a consequential manner sufficient for a giant. A shoemaker by trade, his real element was in the church. His conversation was embellished by high-flown grandiloquence, and he invariably walked upon the heels of his boots. This latter peculiarity, as may well be imagined, was the cause of a most comical effect whenever he had occasion to leave his seat and clatter down the aisle of the church. His manner of reading the responses in the service can only be compared to a kind of bellow--as my father used to say, "he bellowed like a calf"--and his rendering of parts of it was calculated to raise a smile upon the lips of the most devout. The following are a few instances of his perversions of the text. Whether he had ever attended a fish-dinner at Greenwich and his mind had thus become impressed with the number and variety of the inhabitants of the deep, history does not record, but, be that as it may, "Bring hither the tabret" was invariably read as "Bring hither the turbot. My father once took the trouble to point out and try to correct some of his inaccuracies, but he never attempted it again. Old Russell listened attentively and respectfully, but when the

lecture was over he dismissed the subject with a superior shake of the head and the disdainful remark, "Well, sir, I have heard tell of people who think with you. Old Russell, for many years clerk of the parish of East Lavant in the county of Sussex. A farmyard of six outbuildings abutted upon the church burial ground, and it was but natural that all the fowls should stray into it to feed and enjoy themselves in the grass. Amongst these was a goodly flock of guinea-fowls, which oftentimes no little disturbed the congregation by their peculiar cry of "Come back! His voice, never at any time very strong, was completely drowned. Whereupon old Russell hastily left his seat, book in hand, and clattering as usual on his heels down the aisle disappeared through the door on vengeance bent. The discomfiture of the offending fowls was instantly apparent by the change in their cry to one more piercing still as they fled away in terror. Then all was still, and back comes old Russell, a gleam of triumph on his face and somewhat out of breath, but nevertheless able without much difficulty to take up the responses in the canticle which followed the lesson. Scarcely, however, had the congregation resumed their seats for the reading of the second lesson when the offending flock again gathered round the west door, and again, as if in defiant derision of Russell, raised their mocking cry of "Come back! Now it so happened that the lesson was a short one, and, moreover, Russell took more time, making a farther excursion into the churchyard than before, in order if possible to be rid entirely of the noisy intruders. Just as he returned to the church door, this time completely breathless, the first verse of the canticle which followed was being read, but Russell was equal to the occasion. The scene may be imagined, but scarcely described: It chanced one Sunday that a parishioner coming into church after the service had begun omitted to close the door, causing thereby an unseemly draught. My father directed Russell to shut it. Accordingly, book in hand and with a thumb between the leaves to keep the place, he sallied forth. The answer was so indistinctly given that he had to repeat the question more than once, and even then the name remained a mystery. All he could make out was something which sounded like "Harmun," the godfather indignantly asserting the while that it was a "Scriptur" name. In his perplexity my father turned to Russell with the query: Old Russell has now slept with his fathers for many years, and the few stories which I have related about him do not by any means exhaust the list of his oddities. Many of the parishioners to this day, no doubt, will call to mind the quaint way in which, if he thought any one was misbehaving himself in church, he would rise slowly from his seat with such majesty as his diminutive stature could command, and shading his spectacles with his hand, gaze sternly in the offending quarter; how on a certain Communion Sunday he forgot the wine to be used in the sacred office, and when my father directed his attention to the omission, after sundry dives under the altar-cloth he at last produced a common rush basket, and from it a black bottle; how on another Sunday, being desirous to free the church from smoke which had escaped from a refractory stove, he deliberately mounted upon the altar and remained standing there while he opened a small lattice in the east window. All these circumstances will, no doubt, be recalled by some one or other in the parish. But, gentle reader, be not overharsh in passing judgment upon him. I verily believe that he had no more desire to be irreverent than you or I have. The fault lay rather in the religious coldness and carelessness of those days than in him. He was liked and respected by every one as a harmless, inoffensive, good-hearted old fellow, and I cannot better close this brief account of some of his peculiarities than by saying--as I do with all my heart--Peace to his ashes! Eagles was once puzzled when the sponsor gave the name "Acts. So Acts was the babe, and will be while in this life, and will be doubly, trebly so registered if ever he marries or dies. Afterwards, in the vestry, I asked the good woman what made her choose such a name. Legge adds the following stories: My first curacy was in Norfolk in the year , a period when the old style of parish clerk had not disappeared. On one occasion I was asked by a friend in a neighbouring parish to take a funeral service for him. On arriving at the church I was received by a very eccentric clerk. It seemed as if his legs were hung upon wires, and before the service began he danced about the church in a most peculiar and laughable manner, and in addition to this he had a hideous squint, one eye looking north and the other south. The service proceeded with due decorum until we arrived at the grave, when those who were preparing to lower the coffin in it discovered that it had not been dug large enough to receive it. This of course created a very awkward pause while it was made larger, and the chief mourner utilised it by gently remonstrating with the clerk for his carelessness. In reply he gave a solemn shake of his head, cast one eye into the grave and the other at the chief mourner, and merely remarked, "Putty pretty nigh though," meaning

that the offence after all was not so very great, as he had almost accomplished his task. Obligated to keep my countenance, I had, as may be imagined, some difficulty. A very amusing incident once took place when I had a couple before me to be married. All went well until I asked the question, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man? As all was confusion I signed to the old clerk to put matters straight. Attired in a brown coat and leather gaiters, with spectacles on his nose, and a large Prayer Book in his hands, he came shuffling forward from the background, exclaiming out loud, "Bless me, bless me! Many years ago ecclesiastical matters in Norfolk were in a very slack state--rectors and vicars lived away from their parishes, subscribing amongst them to pay the salary of a curate to undertake the church services. As his duties were consequently manifold some parishes were without his presence on Sunday for a month and sometimes longer. The parish clerk would stand outside the church and watch for the coming parson, and if he saw him in the distance would immediately begin to toll the bell; if not, the parish was without a service on that day. It happened on one of these monthly occasions that on the arrival of the parson at the church he was met by the clerk at the door, who, pulling his forelock, addressed him as follows: Canon Venables contributes the following: The first parish clerk I can in the least degree remember was certainly entitled to be regarded as a "character," albeit not in all moral respects what would be called a moral character. Shrewd, clever, and better informed than the inhabitants of his little village of some eighty folk, he was not "looked up to," but was regarded with suspicion, and, in short, was not popular, while treated with a certain amount of deference, being a man of some knowledge and ability. He came over every Sunday and ministered two services. In those days the only organ was a good long pitch-pipe constructed principally of wood and, I imagine, about twelve inches in length. But upon the parish clerk devolved the onerous and it may be added in this case sonorous duty of starting the hymn and the singing. In those days few could read, and the method was adopted and I know successfully adopted a few years later of announcing two lines of the verse to be sung, and sometimes the whole verse. At last a crisis came. The hymn and psalm were announced. The pitch-pipe rightly adjusted gave the proper keynote, and the clerk essayed to sing. But from some cause matters were not harmonious and none attempted to help the clerk. After which, I think, he usually came just inside the church once every Sunday, but never to get further than to take a seat close to the door. He died at a great age. Two or three of his successors were worthy men. One of them would carefully recite the Psalms for the coming Sunday within church or elsewhere during the week, and he read with proper feeling and good sense. Another of the same little parish, well up in his Bible, once helped the very excellent clergyman at a baptism in a critical moment. The clerk was equal to the occasion, for the parson was well up in his Bible too. All in the diocese of Oxford. It was in the twenties that I must have seen old P. The little congregation listened with seeming contentment, and it is worth recording that the parson always preached in the surplice.

**Chapter 3 : HOT FREE BOOKS – The Parish Clerk () – Peter Hampson Ditchfield 6**

*The Parish Clerk () by P. H. (Peter Hampson), Ditchfield. Thanks for Sharing! You submitted the following rating and review. We'll publish them on our.*

Characteristics of French and English Painting in the 18th Century. Eighteen Plates, 2 vols, London , vol. Poynter, The National Gallery, 3 vols, London , vol. Ditchfield, The Parish Clerk, London , p. Lippmann, The National Gallery: Whitley, Thomas Gainsborough, London , p. Rimbault Dibdin, Thomas Gainsborough –”, London , pp. A Pleasant Company, London , p. Whitley, Artists and their Friends in England –”, 2 vols, London , vol. Short, The Painter in History, London , p. An Exhibition of Paintings, Tate Gallery , p. A Pictorial Record, Trowbridge , reproduced fig. Since it was first documented in , this painting has been identified as a portrait of Edward Orpin –”, the long-serving Parish Clerk of Bradford-upon-Avon in Wiltshire. The sitter rests his right hand over the top of the upright volume and appears to have just turned a page with his left hand. His head is turned to his left, so that his face is illuminated by daylight which enters the scene from a plain window opening at top right. He wears a thick outdoor coat and breeches revealed as blue when the painting was cleaned in the s, formerly having the appearance of being green , with a high-necked waistcoat and necktie. He wears his own hair rather than a wig, grey, shoulder-length and unpowdered. The upward glance of the sitter and the illuminated face was a conventional motif in eighteenth-century portraiture, suggestive of in this case, divine inspiration. The picture was noted as hanging in their home, Shockerwick House near Bath, by the topographer John Britton in a survey of Wiltshire published in In Mr Wiltshire, of Shockerwick, he [Gainsborough] found a substantial patron: One of them, a waggon and horses, with human figures, is well known to, and duly admired by, artists and amateurs. Edward Orpin came from a family of Bradford tradesmen, and had started life as a cooper before becoming a much-employed and long-serving local official. With his long service, and his prominent historic home in the town centre now known as Orpin House he was a well-known local figure. Circumstantial evidence has lent credibility to the attribution of the portrait to Gainsborough, despite the absence of supporting documentation. All the other paintings attributed to Gainsborough in the Wiltshire sale of , and apparently sharing the same provenance, remain identified as works by that artist. The painting was acclaimed as a masterpiece when it was first displayed as part of the National Gallery collection of British art at South Kensington in A reporter for the London newspaper, the Standard 26 December , was enraptured: The artist has drawn with his pencil as noble a portrait of the parish clerk as that the poet Goldsmith drew in verse of the country clergyman. We might wish for more such deserving subjects for the pencil, and for more Gainsboroughs to appreciate and do justice to them. In the picture was introduced into a new hang at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, paired with the famous painting by Gainsborough of Mrs Siddons National Gallery, London at either side of the acclaimed landscape by the same artist, The Watering Place National Gallery, London. Many pictures from that list [i. At the Gainsborough exhibition at the Tate Gallery in , where it was hung among unquestionable Gainsboroughs of all periods, it became clear that this attribution was impossible, and I can only suppose the picture is by William Hoare, whose work at Bath, during the years that Gainsborough lived there, occasionally shows some similarity to Gainsborough. The situation may be further complicated by the existence of other pictures apparently showing the same sitter. It is possible to read the paintings as complimentary, showing the sitter attending to the secular and religious duties which made up his role as parish clerk. The painting was acquired in as a Gainsborough as part of the collection John G. Johnson –” and is now listed as British School. Although this picture appears quite certainly to have the same Wiltshire provenance, the identification as Foote –” and therefore of the reliability of the early stories about the Wiltshire collection –” is questioned in John Ingamells, National Portrait Gallery: Mid –”Georgian Portrait, London , p. Notably, given the later attribution histories of the paintings in the Wiltshire collection, one contemporary, J. No, I should not sir. Manson, Hours in the Tate Gallery, London , p. Volume 7 , pp. Jackson to the editor, Academy, 27 April , p. This painting formerly belonged to Sir Thomas Lavie and then to his son, Captain George Lavie, RN; then to his widow, who was a relative of mine; and came into my possession about

twenty years ago. Sir Edward Cockburn, and many others who have seen it in my house, are all satisfied that it is a work of a master hand. I have never exhibited it or shown it outside my own place, but should be very pleased to let you or any other person view it. The miser is surprised while counting his money:

Chapter 4 : Sluggard waker - Wikipedia

*The Parish Clerk () The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and.*

Frith From a photograph by Messrs. Drawn by the Rev. Julian Charles Young By permission of Messrs. By John Absolon From a photograph by Messrs. Before the recollection of their quaint ways, their curious manners and customs, has quite passed away, it has been thought advisable to collect all that can be gathered together concerning them. Much light has in recent years been thrown upon the history of the office. The learned notes appended to Dr. By the kindness of many friends and of many correspondents who are personally unknown to me, I have been enabled to collect a large number of anecdotes, recollections, facts, and biographical sketches of many clerks in different parts of England, and I am greatly indebted to those who have so kindly supplied me with so much valuable information. Many of the writers are far advanced in years, when the labour of putting pen to paper is a sore burden. I am deeply grateful to them for the trouble which they kindly took in recording their recollections of the scenes of their youth. I have been much amused by the humorous stories of old clerkly ways, by the facetiae which have been sent to me, and I have been much impressed by the records of faithful service and devotion to duty shown by many holders of the office who won the esteem and affectionate regard of both priest and people. It is impossible for me to publish the names of all those who have kindly written to me, but I wish especially to thank the Rev. Canon Venables, who first suggested the idea of this work, and to whom it owes its conception and initiation[1]; to the Rev. Charles Wise, and many others, who have taken a kindly interest in the writing of this book. Gaskell Exton for sending to me an account of a Yorkshire clerk which, by the kindness of the editor of the Yorkshire Weekly Post, I am enabled to reproduce. Since the above was written, and while this book has been passing through the press, the venerable clergyman, Canon Venables, has been called away from earth. A zealous parish priest, a voluminous writer, a true friend, he will be much missed by all who knew him. Some months ago he sent me some recollections of his early days, of the clerks he had known, and his reflections on his long ministry, and these have been recorded in this book, and will now have a pathetic interest for his many friends and for all who admired his noble, earnest, and strenuous life. The Oxford Movement has much to answer for! People who have scarcely passed the rubicon of middle life can recall the curious scene which greeted their eyes each Sunday morning when life was young, and perhaps retain a tenderness for old abuses, and, like George Eliot, have a lingering liking for nasal clerks and top-booted clerics, and sigh for the departed shades of vulgar errors. The woodwork was high and panelled, sometimes richly carved, as at Whalley Church, Lancashire, where some pews have posts at the corners like an old-fashioned four-posted bed. Such a pew all furnished and adorned did a worthy clerk point out to the witty Bishop of Oxford, Bishop Wilberforce, with much pride and satisfaction. Page 4 Then the choir sat in the west gallery and made strange noises and sang curious tunes, the echoes of which we shall try to catch. No organ then pealed forth its reverent tones and awaked the church with dulcet harmonies: Think of the poetical beauties of the following lines, sung with vigour by a bald-headed clerk: Those Doxologies at the end! What a trouble they were! There they were, but the right one was hard to find. Some had two syllables too much to suit the tune, and some had two syllables too little. But a pitch-pipe was not usually the sole instrument. Many village churches had their band, composed of fiddles, flutes, clarionets, and sometimes bassoons and a drum. John Eagles in his Essays. In order to preserve strict historical accuracy, I may add that this invitation was recorded in the year , and therefore could have no reference to evolutionary theories and the Descent of Man. Page 5 When the clerk gave out the hymn or Psalm, or on rare occasions the anthem, there was a strange sound of tuning up the instruments, and then the instruments wailed forth discordant melody. The clerk conducted the choir, composed of village lads and maidens, with a few stalwart basses and tenors. It was often a curious performance. And they were all so proud of their performance. No one could sleep through the terrible din. They were terrible inflictions. Every bumpkin had his favourite solo, and oh! It was all very strange and curious. He was the only person who understood its mechanism and how to change the barrels. Sometimes accidents happened, as at Aston Church,

Yorkshire, some time in the thirties. One Sunday morning during the singing of a hymn the music came to a sudden stop. At another church, in Huntingdonshire, the organ was hidden from view by drawn curtains, behind which the clerk used to retire when he had given out the Psalm. A vestry meeting was held to consider about having a quire in church, and buying a barrel-organ with half a dozen simple Psalm tunes upon it, which Davy was to turn while the parson put his gown on, and the children taught to sing to. The clerk was ordered to write to the squire and ask him for a liberal subscription. This was his letter: The music of the village musicians in the west gallery was certainly not of the highest order. The instruments were often out of tune, and the fiddle-player and the flutist were often at logger-heads; but it was a sad pity when their labours were brought to an end, and the mechanical organ took their place. The very fact that all these players took a keen interest in the conduct of Divine service was in itself an advantage. The barrel-organ killed the old musical life of the village. England was once the most musical nation in Europe. Puritanism tried to kill music. Organs were broken everywhere in the cathedrals and colleges, choirs dispersed and musical publications ceased. The professional players on violins, lutes, and flutes who had performed in the theatres or at Court wandered away into the villages, taught the rustics how to play on their beloved instruments in the taverns and ale-houses, and bequeathed their fiddles and clarionets to their rustic friends. Thus the rural orchestra had its birth, and right heartily did they perform not only in church, but at village feasts and harvest homes, wakes and weddings. The parish clerk was usually their leader, and was a welcome visitor in farm or cottage or at the manor when he conducted his companions to sing the Christmas carols. The barrel-organ sealed the fate of the village orchestra. Then the harmonium came, played by the school-mistress or some other village performer. No wonder the clerk was indignant. His musical autocracy had been overthrown. THE VILLAGE CHOIR] Archbishop Tait once said that there is no one who does not look back with a kind of shame to the sort of sermons which were preached, the sort of clergymen who preached them, the sort of building in which they preached them, and the sort of psalmody with which the service was ushered in. Beresford Hope thus describes the kind of service that went on in the time of George IV in a market town of Surrey not far from London. It was a handsome Gothic church, the chancel being cut off from the nave by a solid partition covered with verses and strange paintings, among which Moses and Aaron show in peculiar uncouthness. The aisles were filled with family pews or private boxes, raised aloft, and approached by private doors and staircases. These were owned by the magnates of the place, who were wont to bow their recognitions across the nave. There was a decrepit west gallery for the band, and the ground floor was crammed with cranky pews of every shape. The ante-Communion Service was read from the desk, separated from the liturgy and sermon by such renderings of Tate and Brady as the unruly gang of volunteers with fiddles and wind instruments in the gallery pleased to contribute. The clerk, a wizened old fellow in a brown wig, repeated the responses in a nasal twang, and with a substitution of w for v so constant as not even to spare the Beliefs; while the local rendering of briefs, citations, and excommunications included announcements by this worthy, after the Nicene Creed, of meetings at the town inn of the executors of a deceased duke. Two hopeful cubs of the clerk sprawled behind him in the desk, and the back-handers occasionally intended to reduce them to order were apt to resound against the impassive boards. During the sermon this zealous servant of the sanctuary would take up his broom and sweep out the middle alley, in order to save himself the fatigue of a weekday visit. Soon, however, the clerk and his broom followed Moses and Aaron, the fiddles and the bassoons into the land of shadows. Curious stories are often told of the careless parsons of former days, of their irreverence, their love of sport, their neglect of their parishes, their quaint and irreverent manners; but such characters, about whom these stories were told, were exceptional. By far the greater number lived well and did their Page 8 duty and passed away, and left no memories behind except in the tender recollections of a few simple-minded folk. There were few local newspapers in those days to tell their virtues, to print their sermons or their speeches at the opening of bazaars or flower-shows. They did their duty and passed away and were forgotten; while the parsons, like the wretch Chowne of the Maid of Sker, live on in anecdote, and grave folk shake their heads and think that the times must have been very bad, and the clergy a disgrace to their cloth. As with the clerk, so with his master; the evil that men do lives after them, the good is forgotten. There has been a vast amount of exaggeration in the accounts that have come down to us of the faithlessness, sluggishness, idleness, and base

conduct of the clergy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and perhaps a little too much boasting about the progress which our age has witnessed. It would be an easy task to record the lives of many worthy country clergymen of the much-abused Hanoverian period, who were exemplary parish priests, pious, laborious, and beloved. In recording the eccentricities and lack of reverence of many clerics and their faithful servitors, it is well to remember the many bright lights that shone like lamps in a dark place. It would be a difficult task to write a history of our parish priesthood, for reasons which have already been stated, and such a labour is beyond our present purpose. But it may be well to record a few of the observations which contemporary writers have made upon the parsons of their day in order to show that they were by no means a set of careless, disreputable, and unworthy men. Wordsworth alludes to him in his eighteenth sonnet on Durdon as a worthy compeer of the country parson of Chaucer, and in the seventh book of the Excursion an abstract of his character is given: In this occurs the following extract from a letter dated He is settled among the people that are happy among themselves, and lives in the greatest unanimity and friendship with them; and, I believe, the minister and people are exceedingly satisfied with each other: A man who for his candour and meekness, his sober, chaste, and virtuous conversation, his soundness in principle and practice, is an ornament to his profession and an honour to the country he is in; and bear with me if I say, the plainness of his dress, the sanctity of his manners, the simplicity of his doctrine, and the vehemence of his expression, have a sort of resemblance to the pure practice of primitive Christianity. He reared and educated a numerous family of twelve children. Every Sunday he entertained those members of his congregation who came from a distance, taught the village school, acted as scrivener and lawyer for the district, farmed, and helped his neighbours in haymaking and sheep-shearing, spun cloth, studied natural history, and, in spite of all this, was throughout a devoted and earnest parish priest. Abraham Adams in his Joseph Andrews. As a companion picture he drew the character of the pig-keeping Parson Trulliber, no scandalous cleric, though he cared more for his cows and pigs than he did for his parishioners. Syntax is a good example of an old-world parson, whose biographer thus describes his laborious life: To bury these, to christen those, And marry such fond folks as chose To change the tenor of their life, And risk the matrimonial strife. Clitherow tells me of a friend who was going to be married and who requested a neighbour to take his two services for him during his brief honeymoon. The neighbour at first hesitated, but at last consented, having six other services to take on the one Sunday. On Sunday morning he used to ride to Hauxton, which he could see from the high road to Newton. If there was a congregation, the clerk used to waggle his hat on the top of a long pole kept in the church porch, and Field had to turn down the road and take the service. If there was no congregation he went on straight to Newton, where there was always a congregation, as two old ladies were always present. Field used to turn his pony loose in the churchyard, and as he entered the church began the Exhortation, so that by the time he was robed he had progressed well through the service.

**Chapter 5 : The Parish Clerk () by Peter Hampson Ditchfield - Full Text Free Book (Part 1/6)**

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Of course this worthy scribe taught the children in the school, though writing was happily considered a superfluous accomplishment. The music of the village musicians in the west gallery was certainly not of the highest order. The instruments were often out of tune, and the fiddle-player and the flutist were often at logger-heads; but it was a sad pity when their labours were brought to an end, and the mechanical organ took their place. The very fact that all these players took a keen interest in the conduct of Divine service was in itself an advantage. The barrel-organ killed the old musical life of the village. England was once the most musical nation in Europe. Puritanism tried to kill music. Organs were broken everywhere in the cathedrals and colleges, choirs dispersed and musical publications ceased. The professional players on violins, lutes, and flutes who had performed in the theatres or at Court wandered away into the villages, taught the rustics how to play on their beloved instruments in the taverns and ale-houses, and bequeathed their fiddles and clarionets to their rustic friends. Thus the rural orchestra had its birth, and right heartily did they perform not only in church, but at village feasts and harvest homes, wakes and weddings. The parish clerk was usually their leader, and was a welcome visitor in farm or cottage or at the manor when he conducted his companions to sing the Christmas carols. The barrel-organ sealed the fate of the village orchestra. The old fiddles were wanted no more, and were hung up in the cottages as relics of the "good old times. Then the harmonium came, played by the school-mistress or some other village performer. No wonder the clerk was indignant. His musical autocracy had been overthrown. At one church--Swanscombe, Kent--when, in , the change had taken place, and a kind lady, Miss F, had consented to play the new harmonium, the clerk, village cobbler and leader of parish orchestra, gave out the hymn in his accustomed fashion, and then, with consummate scorn, bellowed out, "Now, then, Miss F, strike up! THE VILLAGE CHOIR] Archbishop Tait once said that there is no one who does not look back with a kind of shame to the sort of sermons which were preached, the sort of clergymen who preached them, the sort of building in which they preached them, and the sort of psalmody with which the service was ushered in. Beresford Hope thus describes the kind of service that went on in the time of George IV in a market town of Surrey not far from London. It was a handsome Gothic church, the chancel being cut off from the nave by a solid partition covered with verses and strange paintings, among which Moses and Aaron show in peculiar uncouthness. The aisles were filled with family pews or private boxes, raised aloft, and approached by private doors and staircases. These were owned by the magnates of the place, who were wont to bow their recognitions across the nave. There was a decrepit west gallery for the band, and the ground floor was crammed with cranky pews of every shape. The ante-Communion Service was read from the desk, separated from the liturgy and sermon by such renderings of Tate and Brady as the unruly gang of volunteers with fiddles and wind instruments in the gallery pleased to contribute. Two hopeful cubs of the clerk sprawled behind him in the desk, and the back-handers occasionally intended to reduce them to order were apt to resound against the impassive boards. During the sermon this zealous servant of the sanctuary would take up his broom and sweep out the middle alley, in order to save himself the fatigue of a weekday visit. Soon, however, the clerk and his broom followed Moses and Aaron, the fiddles and the bassoons into the land of shadows. No sketch of bygone times, in which the clerk flourished in all his glory, would be complete without some reference to the important person who occupied the second tier in the "three-decker," and decked in gown and bands delivered somnolent sermons from its upper storey. Curious stories are often told of the careless parsons of former days, of their irreverence, their love of sport, their neglect of their parishes, their quaint and irreverent manners; but such characters, about whom these stories were told, were exceptional. By far the greater number lived well and did their duty and passed away, and left no memories behind except in the tender recollections of a few simple-minded folk. There were few local newspapers in those days to tell their virtues, to print their sermons or their speeches at the opening of bazaars or flower-shows. As with the

clerk, so with his master; the evil that men do lives after them, the good is forgotten. There has been a vast amount of exaggeration in the accounts that have come down to us of the faithlessness, sluggishness, idleness, and base conduct of the clergy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and perhaps a little too much boasting about the progress which our age has witnessed. It would be an easy task to record the lives of many worthy country clergymen of the much-abused Hanoverian period, who were exemplary parish priests, pious, laborious, and beloved. In recording the eccentricities and lack of reverence of many clerics and their faithful servitors, it is well to remember the many bright lights that shone like lamps in a dark place. It would be a difficult task to write a history of our parish priesthood, for reasons which have already been stated, and such a labour is beyond our present purpose. But it may be well to record a few of the observations which contemporary writers have made upon the parsons of their day in order to show that they were by no means a set of careless, disreputable, and unworthy men. During the greater part of the eighteenth century there lived at Seathwaite, Lancashire, as curate, the famous Robert Walker, styled "the Wonderful," "a man singular for his temperance, industry, and integrity," as the parish register records. In this occurs the following extract from a letter dated He is settled among the people that are happy among themselves, and lives in the greatest unanimity and friendship with them; and, I believe, the minister and people are exceedingly satisfied with each other: A man who for his candour and meekness, his sober, chaste, and virtuous conversation, his soundness in principle and practice, is an ornament to his profession and an honour to the country he is in; and bear with me if I say, the plainness of his dress, the sanctity of his manners, the simplicity of his doctrine, and the vehemence of his expression, have a sort of resemblance to the pure practice of primitive Christianity. He reared and educated a numerous family of twelve children. Every Sunday he entertained those members of his congregation who came from a distance, taught the village school, acted as scrivener and lawyer for the district, farmed, and helped his neighbours in haymaking and sheep-shearing, spun cloth, studied natural history, and, in spite of all this, was throughout a devoted and earnest parish priest. He was certainly entitled to his epithet "the Wonderful. As a companion picture he drew the character of the pig-keeping Parson Trulliber, no scandalous cleric, though he cared more for his cows and pigs than he did for his parishioners. The rich approved--of them in awe he stood; The poor admired--they all believed him good; The old and serious of his habits spoke; The frank and youthful loved his pleasant joke; Mothers approved a safe contented guest, And daughters one who backed each small request; In him his flock found nothing to condemn; Him sectaries liked--he never troubled them; No trifles failed his yielding mind to please, And all his passions sunk in early ease; Nor one so old has left this world of sin More like the being that he entered in. Syntax is a good example of an old-world parson, whose biographer thus describes his laborious life: Through eight long miles he took his way, To preach, to grumble, and to pray; To cheer the good, to warn the sinner, And if he got it,--eat a dinner: To bury these, to christen those, And marry such fond folks as chose To change the tenor of their life, And risk the matrimonial strife. It was no uncommon thing for a clergyman to hold half a dozen benefices, in one of which he would reside, and appoint curates with slender stipends to the rest, only showing himself "when tithing time draws near. Clitherow tells me of a friend who was going to be married and who requested a neighbour to take his two services for him during his brief honeymoon. The neighbour at first hesitated, but at last consented, having six other services to take on the one Sunday. An old clergyman named Field lived at Cambridge and served three country parishes--Hauxton, Newton, and Barnington. On Sunday morning he used to ride to Hauxton, which he could see from the high road to Newton. If there was a congregation, the clerk used to waggle his hat on the top of a long pole kept in the church porch, and Field had to turn down the road and take the service. If there was no congregation he went on straight to Newton, where there was always a congregation, as two old ladies were always present. Field used to turn his pony loose in the churchyard, and as he entered the church began the Exhortation, so that by the time he was robed he had progressed well through the service. My informant, the Rev. It was this pluralism that led to much abuse, much neglect, and much carelessness. However, enough has been said about the shepherd, and we must return to his helper, the clerk, with whose biography and history we are mainly concerned. Pope Gregory the Great, in writing to St. King Ethelbert, by the advice of his Witenagemote, introduced certain judicial decrees, which set down what satisfaction should be given by those who stole anything belonging to the church. The canons

of King Edgar, which may be attributed to the wise counsel of St. Dunstan, ordered every clergyman to attend the synod yearly and to bring his clerk with him. A clergyman is still a "clerk in Holy Orders," and a parish clerk signified one who belonged to the rank of minor orders and assisted the parish priest in the services of the parish church. We find traces of him abroad in early days. In the seventh century, the canons of the Ninth Council of Toledo and of the Council of Merida tell of his services in the worship of the sanctuary, and in the ninth century he has risen to prominence in the Gallican Church, as we gather from the inquiries instituted by Archbishop Hincmar, of Rheims, who demanded of the rural deans whether each presbyter had a clerk who could keep school, or read the epistle, or was able to sing. Every incumbent is ordered to have a clerk who shall sing with him the service, read the epistle and lesson, teach in the school, and admonish the parishioners to send their children to the church to be instructed in the faith. It was thus in ancient days that the Church provided for the education of children, a duty which she has always endeavoured to perform. Her officers were the schoolmasters. The weird cry of the abolition of tests for teachers was then happily unknown. The strenuous Bishop Grosseteste, for the better ordering of his diocese of Lincoln, laid down the injunction that "in every church of sufficient means there shall be a deacon or sub-deacon; but in the rest a fitting and honest clerk to serve the priest in a comely habit. This rule provided for poor scholars who intended to proceed to the priesthood, and also secured suitable teachers for the children of the parishes. It appears that an attempt was made to enforce celibacy on the holders of minor orders, an experiment which was not crowned with success. William Lyndewoode, Official Principal of the Archbishop of Canterbury in , speaks thus of the married clerk: If, however, he were married, albeit not twice, yet so long as he wears the clerical habit and tonsure he shall be held a clerk in two respects, to wit, that he may enjoy the clerical privilege in his person, and that he may not be brought before the secular judges. But in all other respects he shall be considered as a layman. We shall see presently how they were incorporated into fraternities or guilds, and how they played a prominent part in civic functions, in state funerals, and in ecclesiastical matters. The Reformation rather added to than diminished the importance of the office and the dignity of the holder of it. From the days of Augustine to the present time it has never ceased to exist. The clerk is the last representative of the minor orders which the ecclesiastical changes wrought in the sixteenth century have left us. This full staff would, of course, be not available for every country church, and for such parishes a clerk and a boy acolyte doubtless sufficed, though in large churches there were representatives of all these various officials. They disappeared in the Reformation; only the clerk remained, incorporating in his own person the offices of reader, acolyte, sub-deacon. Just as in many instances the same individual rector or vicar continued to hold his living during the whole period of the Reformation era, witnessing the spoliation of his church by the greedy Commissioners of Henry VIII and Edward VI, the introduction of the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, the revival of the "old religion" under Queen Mary, the triumph of Reformation principles under Queen Elizabeth; so did the parish clerk continue to hold office also. The Reformation changed many of his functions and duties, but the office remained. Previous to the Reformation he received certain wages and many "perquisites" from the inhabitants of the parish for distributing the holy loaf and the holy water. In the following year we notice: Paid to Harry Water Clerk for his wage for a yere ended at thannacon of our lady a deg. In , Whitborne, the clerk, received 12 s. He no longer went round the parish bearing holy water, but the collecting of money for the holy loaf continued, the proceeds being devoted to the necessary expenses of the church. And for as much as the Parish-Clerk shall not hereafter go about the Parish with his Holy Water as hath been accustomed, he shall, instead of that labour, accompany the said Church-Wardens, and in a Book Register the name and Sum of every man that giveth any thing to the Poor, and the same shall intable; and against the next day of Collection, shall hang up somewhere in the Church in open place, to the intent the Poor having knowledge thereby, by whose Charity and Alms they be relieved, may pray for the increase and prosperity of the same[3]. Wickham Legg, Appendix IX, p. I shall refer later on to the survival of the collection of money for the holy loaf and to its transference to other uses. The clerk, therefore, appears to have continued to hold his office shorn of some of his former duties. He witnessed all the changes of that changeful time, the spoliation of his church, the selling of numerous altar cloths, vestments, banners, plate, and other costly furniture, and, moreover, took his part in the destruction of altars and the desecration of the sanctuary. In the accounts for the year of the Church of St. Lawrence,

Reading, appear the items: There was a time when the incumbents were forced to leave their cure and give place to an intruding minister appointed by the Cromwellian Parliament. But the clerk remained on to chant his "Amen" to the long-winded prayers of some black-gowned Puritan.

**Chapter 6 : The Parish Clerk () by Peter Hampson Ditchfield - read free book online - download eBook**

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By Thomas Gainsborough, R. Frith From a photograph by Messrs. Drawn by the Rev. Julian Charles Young By permission of Messrs. By John Absolon From a photograph by Messrs. Before the recollection of their quaint ways, their curious manners and customs, has quite passed away, it has been thought advisable to collect all that can be gathered together concerning them. Much light has in recent years been thrown upon the history of the office. The learned notes appended to Dr. By the kindness of many friends and of many correspondents who are personally unknown to me, I have been enabled to collect a large number of anecdotes, recollections, facts, and biographical sketches of many clerks in different parts of England, and I am greatly indebted to those who have so kindly supplied me with so much valuable information. Many of the writers are far advanced in years, when the labour of putting pen to paper is a sore burden. I am deeply grateful to them for the trouble which they kindly took in recording their recollections of the scenes of their youth. I have been much amused by the humorous stories of old clerkly ways, by the facetiae which have been sent to me, and I have been much impressed by the records of faithful service and devotion to duty shown by many holders of the office who won the esteem and affectionate regard of both priest and people. It is impossible for me to publish the names of all those who have kindly written to me, but I wish especially to thank the Rev. Canon Venables, who first suggested the idea of this work, and to whom it owes its conception and initiation[1]; to the Rev. Charles Wise, and many others, who have taken a kindly interest in the writing of this book. Gaskell Exton for sending to me an account of a Yorkshire clerk which, by the kindness of the editor of the Yorkshire Weekly Post, I am enabled to reproduce. Since the above was written, and while this book has been passing through the press, the venerable clergyman, Canon Venables, has been called away from earth. A zealous parish priest, a voluminous writer, a true friend, he will be much missed by all who knew him. Some months ago he sent me some recollections of his early days, of the clerks he had known, and his reflections on his long ministry, and these have been recorded in this book, and will now have a pathetic interest for his many friends and for all who admired his noble, earnest, and strenuous life. The Oxford Movement has much to answer for! People who have scarcely passed the rubicon of middle life can recall the curious scene which greeted their eyes each Sunday morning when life was young, and perhaps retain a tenderness for old abuses, and, like George Eliot, have a lingering liking for nasal clerks and top-booted clerics, and sigh for the departed shades of vulgar errors. Then and nowâ€”the contrast is great. Then the hideous Georgian "three-decker" reared its monstrous form, blocking out the sight of the sanctuary; immense pews like cattle-pens filled the nave. The woodwork was high and panelled, sometimes richly carved, as at Whalley Church, Lancashire, where some pews have posts at the corners like an old-fashioned four-posted bed. Such a pew all furnished and adorned did a worthy clerk point out to the witty Bishop of Oxford, Bishop Wilberforce, with much pride and satisfaction. Then the choir sat in the west gallery and made strange noises and sang curious tunes, the echoes of which we shall try to catch. No organ then pealed forth its reverent tones and awaked the church with dulcet harmonies: And thenâ€”what terrible hymns were sung! Well did Campbell say of Sternhold and Hopkins, the co-translators of the Psalms of David into English metre, "mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, they turned into bathos what they found sublime. Think of the poetical beauties of the following lines, sung with vigour by a bald-headed clerk: Those Doxologies at the end! What a trouble they were! There they were, but the right one was hard to find. Some had two syllables too much to suit the tune, and some had two syllables too little. But a pitch-pipe was not usually the sole instrument. Many village churches had their band, composed of fiddles, flutes, clarionets, and sometimes bassoons and a drum. John Eagles in his Essays. In order to preserve strict historical accuracy, I may add that this invitation was recorded in the year , and therefore could have no reference to evolutionary theories and the Descent of Man. When the clerk gave out the hymn or Psalm, or on rare occasions the anthem, there was a strange sound of tuning up the instruments, and then the instruments wailed forth discordant melody. The clerk conducted the

choir, composed of village lads and maidens, with a few stalwart basses and tenors. It was often a curious performance. Everybody sang as loud as he could bawl; cheeks and elbows were at their utmost efforts, the bassoon vying with the clarionet, the goose-stop of the clarionet with the bassoon—it was Babel with the addition of the beasts. And they were all so proud of their performance. It was the only part of the service during which no one could sleep, said one of them with pride—and he was right. No one could sleep through the terrible din. They were the most important officials in the church, for did not the Psalms make it clear, "The singers go before, and the minstrels" which they understood to mean ministers "follow after"? They were terrible inflictions. Every bumpkin had his favourite solo, and oh! It was all very strange and curious. He was the only person who understood its mechanism and how to change the barrels. Sometimes accidents happened, as at Aston Church, Yorkshire, some time in the thirties. One Sunday morning during the singing of a hymn the music came to a sudden stop. At another church, in Huntingdonshire, the organ was hidden from view by drawn curtains, behind which the clerk used to retire when he had given out the Psalm. Every one knows the Lancashire dialect story of the "Barrel Organ" which refused to stop, and had to be carried out of church and sat upon, and yet still continued to pour forth its dirge-like melody. David Diggs may not have been a strictly historical character, but the sketch of him was doubtless founded upon fact, and the account of the introduction of the barrel-organ into the church of "Seatown" on the coast of Sussex is evidently drawn from life. A vestry meeting was held to consider about having a quire in church, and buying a barrel-organ with half a dozen simple Psalm tunes upon it, which Davy was to turn while the parson put his gown on, and the children taught to sing to. The clerk was ordered to write to the squire and ask him for a liberal subscription. This was his letter: The music of the village musicians in the west gallery was certainly not of the highest order. The instruments were often out of tune, and the fiddle-player and the flutist were often at logger-heads; but it was a sad pity when their labours were brought to an end, and the mechanical organ took their place. The very fact that all these players took a keen interest in the conduct of Divine service was in itself an advantage. The barrel-organ killed the old musical life of the village. England was once the most musical nation in Europe. Puritanism tried to kill music. Organs were broken everywhere in the cathedrals and colleges, choirs dispersed and musical publications ceased. The professional players on violins, lutes, and flutes who had performed in the theatres or at Court wandered away into the villages, taught the rustics how to play on their beloved instruments in the taverns and ale-houses, and bequeathed their fiddles and clarionets to their rustic friends. Thus the rural orchestra had its birth, and right heartily did they perform not only in church, but at village feasts and harvest homes, wakes and weddings. The parish clerk was usually their leader, and was a welcome visitor in farm or cottage or at the manor when he conducted his companions to sing the Christmas carols. The barrel-organ sealed the fate of the village orchestra. The old fiddles were wanted no more, and were hung up in the cottages as relics of the "good old times. Then the harmonium came, played by the school-mistress or some other village performer. No wonder the clerk was indignant. His musical autocracy had been overthrown. At one church—Swanscombe, Kent—when, in , the change had taken place, and a kind lady, Miss Fâ€”â€”, had consented to play the new harmonium, the clerk, village cobbler and leader of parish orchestra, gave out the hymn in his accustomed fashion, and then, with consummate scorn, bellowed out, "Now, then, Miss Fâ€”â€”, strike up! Archbishop Tait once said that there is no one who does not look back with a kind of shame to the sort of sermons which were preached, the sort of clergymen who preached them, the sort of building in which they preached them, and the sort of psalmody with which the service was ushered in. Beresford Hope thus describes the kind of service that went on in the time of George IV in a market town of Surrey not far from London. It was a handsome Gothic church, the chancel being cut off from the nave by a solid partition covered with verses and strange paintings, among which Moses and Aaron show in peculiar uncouthness. The aisles were filled with family pews or private boxes, raised aloft, and approached by private doors and staircases. These were owned by the magnates of the place, who were wont to bow their recognitions across the nave. There was a decrepit west gallery for the band, and the ground floor was crammed with cranky pews of every shape. The ante-Communion Service was read from the desk, separated from the liturgy and sermon by such renderings of Tate and Brady as the unruly gang of volunteers with fiddles and wind instruments in the gallery pleased to contribute. The clerk, a wizened old fellow in a brown

wig, repeated the responses in a nasal twang, and with a substitution of w for v so constant as not even to spare the Beliefs; while the local rendering of briefs, citations, and excommunications included announcements by this worthy, after the Nicene Creed, of meetings at the town inn of the executors of a deceased duke. Two hopeful cubs of the clerk sprawled behind him in the desk, and the back-handers occasionally intended to reduce them to order were apt to resound against the impassive boards. During the sermon this zealous servant of the sanctuary would take up his broom and sweep out the middle alley, in order to save himself the fatigue of a weekday visit. Soon, however, the clerk and his broom followed Moses and Aaron, the fiddles and the bassoons into the land of shadows. No sketch of bygone times, in which the clerk flourished in all his glory, would be complete without some reference to the important person who occupied the second tier in the "three-decker," and decked in gown and bands delivered somnolent sermons from its upper storey. Curious stories are often told of the careless parsons of former days, of their irreverence, their love of sport, their neglect of their parishes, their quaint and irreverent manners; but such characters, about whom these stories were told, were exceptional. By far the greater number lived well and did their duty and passed away, and left no memories behind except in the tender recollections of a few simple-minded folk. There were few local newspapers in those days to tell their virtues, to print their sermons or their speeches at the opening of bazaars or flower-shows. They did their duty and passed away and were forgotten; while the parsons, like the wretch Chowne of the Maid of Sker, live on in anecdote, and grave folk shake their heads and think that the times must have been very bad, and the clergy a disgrace to their cloth. As with the clerk, so with his master; the evil that men do lives after them, the good is forgotten. There has been a vast amount of exaggeration in the accounts that have come down to us of the faithlessness, sluggishness, idleness, and base conduct of the clergy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and perhaps a little too much boasting about the progress which our age has witnessed. It would be an easy task to record the lives of many worthy country clergymen of the much-abused Hanoverian period, who were exemplary parish priests, pious, laborious, and beloved. In recording the eccentricities and lack of reverence of many clerics and their faithful servitors, it is well to remember the many bright lights that shone like lamps in a dark place. It would be a difficult task to write a history of our parish priesthood, for reasons which have already been stated, and such a labour is beyond our present purpose. But it may be well to record a few of the observations which contemporary writers have made upon the parsons of their day in order to show that they were by no means a set of careless, disreputable, and unworthy men. During the greater part of the eighteenth century there lived at Seathwaite, Lancashire, as curate, the famous Robert Walker, styled "the Wonderful," "a man singular for his temperance, industry, and integrity," as the parish register records. Wordsworth alludes to him in his eighteenth sonnet on Durdon as a worthy compeer of the country parson of Chaucer, and in the seventh book of the Excursion an abstract of his character is given: In this occurs the following extract from a letter dated

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#### Chapter 8 : The Parish Clerk by P.H. Ditchfield

*The clerk's office was also discussed in the same century at a synod at Exeter in , when it was decided that where there was a school within ten miles of any parish some scholar should be chosen for the office of parish clerk.*

#### Chapter 9 : The Parish Clerk () eBook

*18th-century job undertaken by a parishioner (usually the parish clerk), in British churches.[1] The sole task of the sluggard waker was to watch the congregation during the services and tap anyone who appeared to be falling asleep sharply on the head.[2] The actual tapping was not done by hand, nor.*