

# ONLY A GHOST !

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BY

IRENÆUS THE DEACON.



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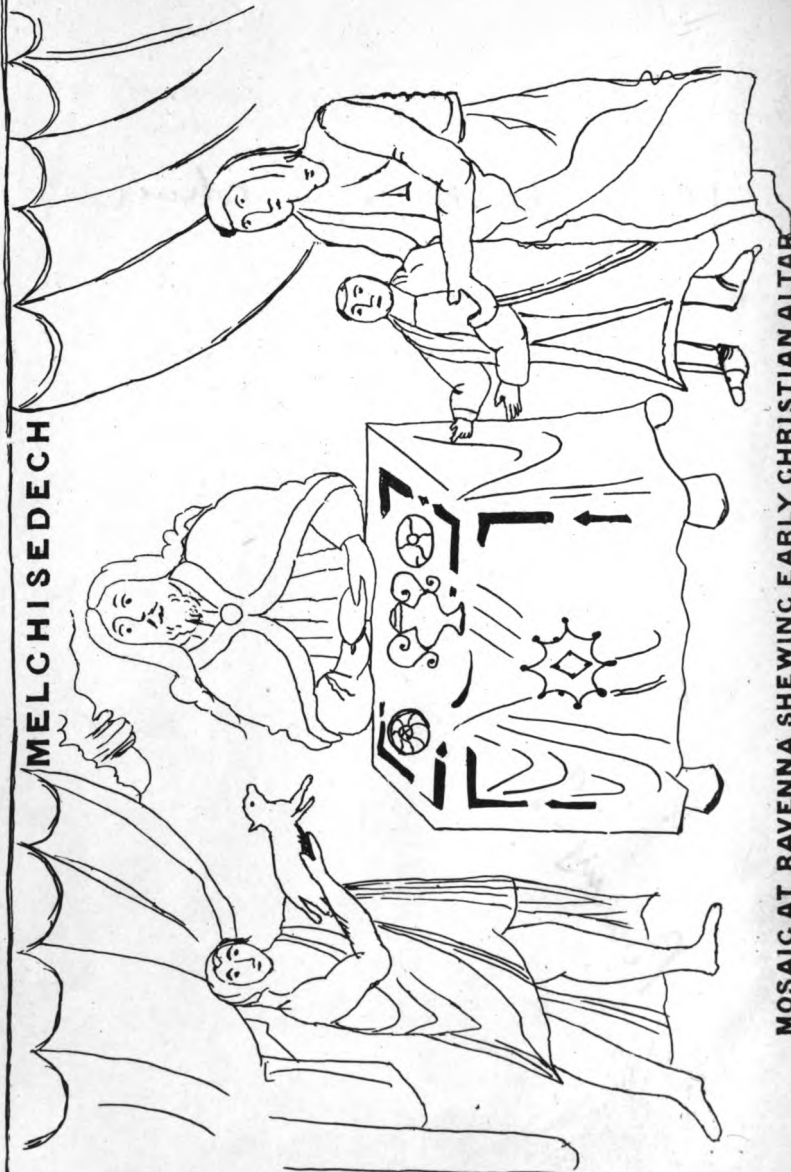
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MELCHISEDECH



MOSAIC AT RAVENNA SHEWING EARLY CHRISTIAN ALTAR

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# ONLY A GHOST!

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## CHAPTER I.

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### WHY I CAME TO LONDON.

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I AM a Ghost. Reader, don't be alarmed, but nevertheless I repeat, I am a Ghost. A ghost of 1520 years' standing; for in the year 347 I was still a deacon of the Church of the Holy Cross, at Jerusalem, under the Blessed Cyril, bishop of the same. And why am I now in London? Why have I left the holy shades and the company of blessed spirits to glide about this black and by no means saintly city? Before I disappear into my peaceful abode I will place on record why I left it, and who induced me to commit such an act of folly. On his release from the flesh and his appearance in the world of spirits, the Rev. Edward Starch, Rector of Grubbington-in-the Clay, told me that if I wished to see primitive Christianity, set forth as in the times when I lived on earth, I had only to go to Great Britain and listen

to the performance of the "incomparable liturgy" there used. Of course, as a faithful though unworthy deacon of St. Cyril's Church, I took a grave and sympathising interest in all the holy Churches over the world at all times and in all countries; and though I should have preferred visiting Jerusalem once more, or Antioch, or Constantinople, I heard the spirit of the Ancient Church was in England, and to England accordingly I went. In London I was told I should find the true spirit of Primitive Christianity, for many were the epithets of grace lavished upon it. I heard England called the most religious country in the world, and London the city of enlightenment. I heard that all its inhabitants were interested in the spread of the Gospel, and that they considered themselves the most godly people on the earth. So to London methought I would go, to find churches like the Holy Cross, and bishops like St. Cyril reigning over each.

Now, as a ghost, of course I am invisible, but when I wish for information I have the power of investing myself with the outward appearance of an intelligent stranger, and of assuming the language of the country in which I am sojourning. People who would naturally be shy of a Greek-speaking ghost, might have no objection to impart information to a quiet looking stranger dressed in black, and indulging in broken English. When necessary, I can immediately

resume my invisibility. I need scarcely say that this when done suddenly, and on the impulse of the moment, has been productive of much embarrassment to my earthly companions, but has relieved me sometimes from positions which might have become slightly disagreeable. One fine day then, I found myself in the streets of London, amongst a hurrying crowd all seemingly too busy to give a poor ghost the slightest particle of information. I ran up against an elderly gentleman of mild and prepossessing appearance, whose hat I knocked off quite by accident; "I beg your pardon, sir," said I, returning it to him, "I am a stranger here, could you give me any information on the state of religion in London?"

Religion! you *should* have seen his face, he started at the word as if he had been shot. (They didn't shoot in *my* day, but I heard of such things afterwards.) I was surprised at the effect the mere pronouncing of the word had in "the most religious city in the world." He turned and walked with me up the street. If he had only had the remotest idea that I was the deacon Irenæus of Jerusalem in the 4th century he would, I feel persuaded, have fled as fast as his legs would carry him. But he thought I was only an Intelligent Stranger, and so he put his arm through mine and walked on. He seemed to be a confiding sort of person, and somehow or other I have always remarked that I possessed a supernatural power of fascination,



which drew out the hearts and brains of those I met with.

“ I am a stranger here,” I again said ; “ could you give me any information on the state of religion in England ? ”

“ Religion,” said my stout friend ; “ humph ! what’s your line ? ”

“ Line ? ” what could he mean ? “ I don’t exactly understand your method of expressing yourself,” I replied.

“ Eh ? I mean what sort do you affect ? ”

“ Affect ? ” said I, “ I did not know religion was a matter of affectation. In *my* day it was a very real thing, and often cost a man his life.”

“ Ah, poor things, overwork I suppose ; should learn to take it easy, no use killing oneself for an idea.”

“ Idea ? ” more incomprehensible still. “ But you have not answered my question about religion ? ”

“ Religion ? ” replied my friend ; “ Ah, yes to be sure. Which do you prefer ? ”

“ *Which ?* ” said I in amazement ; “ why the Christian religion to be sure.”

“ Yes, but there are such a lot of them,” replied my friend. “ High and Low, and Puseyite and Ritualist, and Papist and Baptist, and Wesleyan and Methodist, and Calvinist and Independent, and Bible Christians and . . . ”

“Stop, stop,” replied I, “you puzzle me more than ever; who may you be? are you a deacon?” hoping I might find a kindred spirit in my new acquaintance.

“My name’s Boodle; and as to being a Deacon, I’d as soon be a chimney sweep.”

I *was* astonished. To speak thus of an office I had always looked upon as one of the chiefest honours the Christian Church had to bestow. As for myself I had never considered myself worthy to fill it, but had been persuaded into accepting it by the blessed Cyril himself. He vainly tried to ordain me priest, but I considered myself too highly honoured already, and nothing would induce me to accept that awful dignity.

For a moment I forgot I was a ghost.

“*I was a deacon once,*” I said, “the deacon Irenæ . . .” I stopped in time, “One of seven belonging to the Church of Holy Cross, and—

“What, seven to one Church?” said Boodle, “that must have been a precious long way off, *we* should have cut you down.”

“Cut me down? There were a hundred to S. Sophia, in Constantinople.”

“What, all in residence?” asked Boodle.

“Of course;” what could he mean?

“What frightful extravagance! Reduction is the order of the day; *we* should make very short work of

that. But you spoke of Holy Cross Church. Where may that be, pray?"

"In Jerusalem," I replied.

"Ha! Palestine Exploration Fund and all that; yes, I know; perhaps you were dug out with the rest?"

"Dug out with the rest?"

"Yes, with the lamp and the dishes, and all the things they found, you know;" and off Boodle went into a Ha, ha, ha! which took him some minutes to recover.

I did not know what he meant, and thought I had met with an unfortunate man afflicted by the loss of his reasoning powers. However, as I am a ghost it did not matter to me, for should he become violent I had nothing to do but to disappear.

"But you want to know something about the last new thing in religion?"

I did not at all like his way of putting it, but thought I had better humour him, so said "Yes."

"Well, the swell thing now is to go and hear a gospel address in the Drill Hall."

"Is that a Church?"

"Dear me, no; but you don't know the meaning of the word Church. A Church is an assembly of faithful people. Well, Delia Perkins gives the next gospel address."

"And who is Delia Perkins?"

“Delia Perkins *was*—a very wicked woman; Delia Perkins *is*—a saint.”

“Poor soul! poor soul! Was her time of penance and probation long?”

“Penance? what for?”

“Why you said she sinned and then repented; she lapsed, I imagine, in the persecution. For how long was she put out of the Church?”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” replied Boodle, “the Church considers itself extremely honoured by having her bright eyes in it.”

“But of course the priest absolved her first?”

“How provoking you are. We have none of that ritualistic nonsense here. She says she can do her own soul without any of your priests and rubbish.”

“Anon! anon! then will I lend her the Treatise of S. John Chrysostom the Golden Mouthed upon the Priesthood; it came after my time, but I doubt not I can procure it, and she will see how great is the office she despises.”

“Read? my dear fellow, I should like to see her do it! No one has any time to read now. By the time we have done our *Times*, and our *Pall Mall*, and our *Temple Bar*, we have read enough to float our minds for the day, and a big book sends the best of us into a fit of sulks.”

“But stay; has not S. Paul a passage forbidding women to speak in the Church? Perhaps though

you never heard of S. Paul?" for my mind misgave me, my informant appearing so very ignorant on some points.

"Oh, yes I have, and I know the passage you refer to. But there S. Paul speaks of the Church; now the Drill Hall isn't a Church."

"But if I understood you rightly, you said just now it *is*. You said a Church was an assembly of faithful people. Pardon me, is not this arguing in a circle?"

"Oh bother!" replied my illogical friend, "how you worry one, I never was brought up to theology."

"Then why talk about it, if you have no time to read about it?" Here I remembered the saying, that every Englishman considers himself born a farmer and a theologian, however ignorant he may be on every other subject.

"My dear sir, if we only talked about what we understood, our conversation would be extremely limited. But to tell you the truth, I am glad you have no fancy for the renowned Delia, for I am in reality an old fashioned Anglican, and don't approve of all these new lights. Moderation say I, moderation, and leave these frights and fervours to Happy Tommy and the rest of them."

"And who is Happy Tommy?"

"A converted collier. He tells exciting tales of how he dragged his grandmother round the room by

her white hair when he was drunk, and multitudes crowd to hear him, for the greater the sinner the greater the saint."

"And was this man baptized before he perpetrated these atrocities?"

"I suppose so."

I was aghast. "The Blessed Cyril would have insisted on years of lowly penitence before he re-admitted him to Christian fellowship. You would have seen such a man when truly repentant fall at the feet of the faithful and implore their prayers. You would have seen him in the porch weeping scalding tears, and counting himself unworthy even to hear the prayers, much less to join in them: you would have seen"——

"Well, I don't know anything about your friend the Blessed Cyril, but I *do* know that people here don't make such a fuss about repentance. The more atrocious the crimes, the more they like to talk about them, and the more people crowd to hear them."

"Do you not remember how we read that holy Paul, when converted, went into the wilderness for three years to fit himself to preach the gospel?"

"My dear fellow, we've got no desert here, except one of brick and mortar, and there is no glory to be gained by hiding oneself."

"Of course not. But what has a Christian to do with glory? Read Tertullian's 'De Coronâ' and you

will see, though afterwards he lapsed into heresy, how nobly and beautifully he speaks in that treatise of the glory which is our Master's alone."

"What's the gentleman's name? Tertullian? Oh, ah, something ritualistic I suppose. Tomorrow's Sunday: you had better come to *my* church, St. Silas."

"With pleasure. What hour does the great Liturgy begin?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"Surely that is rather late?"

"Not at all. Quite early enough. Some very extreme people assemble at seven or eight o'clock, but it's not considered at all the thing. In fact it's very extreme."

I thought something about the extreme of laziness, but said nothing, especially as Boodle held out his card in the kindest manner. I promised to be faithful to the appointment, and having waited till my friend had turned the corner of the street, for fear of startling him by my sudden disappearance, I dropped the Intelligent Stranger and subsided into the Ghost.

## CHAPTER II.

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### HOW I WENT TO CHURCH WITH BOODLE.

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PUNCTUAL to my appointment, I was at the door of St. Silas's a little before eleven. Crowds were streaming in at the three doors which led into the church. "This looks well," thought I, "devotion to the Christian Faith seems to have a home within this city. I wonder if they have had a persecution here lately." Boodle was late, and a roll of distant thunder from within told me that something had begun. I soon saw my fat friend puffing up the steps.

"Come along," he said, "I'm late. They don't keep seats beyond the first lesson."

"Keep seats!" I did not understand him. He spoke as if he were talking of the amphitheatre. The Gentiles always had their seats kept for them there, but I scarcely thought Christians would in this matter imitate the unbelievers: and "the lesson," lesson of what? There was no time to ask questions



though, and we hurried into church. They had not yet begun, though a mighty instrument of music, perched on high, was giving forth a roll of harmony.

“Confound it,” said Boodle, “they’ve stuffed an old woman into my seat, and I’ve only one, too; they might have waited a few minutes.”

“*My seat again.*” I was so aghast at his profane language in the holy precincts that I *could* not ask him for an explanation. But what I saw explained itself. The whole building was mapped out into little divisions with high but thin walls between. These little divisions were lined with seats, some had crimson cushions, and some had not. I imagined the thin walls were to prevent any pushing and quarrelling that might take place (for I had always heard that the English were the most pugnacious people in the world), and I also judged that the cushions were for the comforts of invalids. I could not help thinking what an advance civilization had made since *my* time. My stout friend beckoned to a busy-looking gentleman in a short black gown and a stick, and told him to “put us into a seat.” Now I could speedily have dispensed with the attentions of the busy gentleman by dropping the Intelligent Stranger and resuming the Ghost, but I was again afraid of the effect such a proceeding might have upon Boodle, whose nerves I perceived were not of the strongest order. However, I saw a row of seats without backs or cushions, and I

said to him, "Why cannot we sit here?" "My dear fellow," he replied, "they are the free seats," and his tone of contempt showed me that somehow or other they "were not the thing." "Oh, I understand," a ray of light shooting across my mind, "those are the places for the penitents; in *my* time they were not allowed to come beyond the entrance."

Boodle lifted his eyebrows, and I saw that I had said something wrong again, so I resolved to be silent and watch the service. In the meantime we had been conducted to a red-cushioned seat and the door carefully shut upon us. I thought at first we were to be locked in, for fear we might wish to go away before the proper time, but I heard no sound of the key being turned upon us.

Preceded by the busy man in the short black gown and the stick in his hand a quiet gentleman arrayed in white ascended a short wooden tower and went down on his knees within it. The other Christians took no notice of him at all and might as well have been asleep for anything they seemed to care. In a little while he got up and muttered something and then began an address, "Dearly Beloved." I thought the dearly beloved objects of his affection seemed wondrous cold in their method of returning it, for though they arose from their seats they scarcely paid any attention to him or showed any animation whatever. When Boodle got into his seat he stood

for a few seconds and stuck his nose into his hat. This curious proceeding did not seem to excite any astonishment on the part of our neighbours. The ceremony to me had no meaning, and as the Blessed Cyril had always warned us never to do anything for the sake of mere form or without a meaning, I kept to my own practice and that of my fellow-worshippers in Holy Cross, and bowing low, reverently made the sign of the Cross. I heard the rustle of a silk dress evidently shaken with rage and disgust, and saw on my right an elderly lady whose face was suffused with anger. She edged off from me with a look of indignation, and whispered to her neighbour, "Puseyite!" What *could* she mean! I looked again, for I knew old ladies were often afraid of insects, and I thought perhaps some loathsome animal of that name might have been crawling on her muff.

"Shall I catch it for you, ma'am?" I whispered as politely as possible. The old lady shook herself again and immediately changed places with her companion. These English are strange people; what could I have done to offend her! I was grieved that I should have done so, and in my distress I very nearly turned into Irenaeus the Deacon, but on the whole thought I might complicate the situation still further by so doing. The service went on. There were singings, readings, prayers, but no Amens like claps of thunder, no responses like the roaring of the

sea—such as *I* remember in Jerusalem and the churches where I had the honour to minister. The attitudes, too, of the worshippers astonished me. Boodle took it easy and sat through all the prayers, and many more followed his example. Some placed their knees upon high cushions, which conveniently hoisted their bodies up until midway they leant upon the red-cushioned seats. This was called kneeling, but it did not look to me like the attitude of the penitents in Holy Cross, in the year of grace, 348. I at first did as I was accustomed to do in the church of the Blessed Cyril, and stood upon my feet as we always did on the Lord's Day and on the Forty Days after the Resurrection Day. But seeing that this created astonishment, and being anxious in all things to avoid giving offence I went down upon my knees, declining the high cushion, which would have caused the action to become an unreality.

By degrees this sleepy kind of worship came to an end; though far be it from me to speak ill of any kind of Christian observance, I cannot help calling it sleepy, for none seemed the better or the worse for it, and not a muscle of any one's countenance changed. A gentle murmur was the utmost notice bestowed upon any of the petitions presented to the throne in their name, and the sentiments of sorrow, penitence, joy, and hope sung for them by a few voices near the magnificent instrument of music in the gal-

lery, seemed to wake no answering echo in their hearts.

At the end of the church against the wall and covered with red was what looked to me an altar in spite of two red cushions at each end of it. We had no cushions to recline on in the church of the Holy Cross in the year 348 at Jerusalem. I had wondered all through the service when the Great Liturgy was going to begin, for of course the altar would not then stand useless. At last the gentleman arrayed in white went to one end of the altar, and placing his elbows on the cushion hoisted himself up to his knees on a short bench before him, whilst another gentleman likewise in white did exactly the same exactly opposite to him at the other end, and with their heads in their hands and their elbows on the altar they repeated something in a gentle and monotonous tone. Whilst this was going on some one touched my shoulder in a manner which showed me it was no denizen of earth, and I saw above me the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch of Grubbington-in-the-Clay contemplating the scene with the most sublime satisfaction. "Ah!" he said to me, and spirit voices have the gift of not disturbing an earthly congregation, "this is the true spirit of Anglicanism, see how far removed from Popish superstition on the one hand and from Puritanical baldness on the other. Look at the bright example of Primitive Christianity!"

“Reading the Ten Commandments in front of a red altar with nothing on it?” said I, as one of the reverend gentlemen advanced to the rails in front of the altar. “It is not the least like what took place in *my* time!”

Now you must know that in the Holy Shades no religious animosities exist. Each ghost has his own peculiar liking, and generally continues attached to what he loved most during his sojourn on earth, but he never considers it necessary to use bad language to the other ghosts if they should be of a different way of thinking; and such terms as vulgar Protestant and superstitious Papist are never heard amongst us. We all hope there are many different ways of looking at the same truth. So I did not feel at all angry with the ghost of the Rev. Edward Starch, but calmly nodded to it as it floated above me. I could not help imagining what would be the feelings of that old lady in the rustling silk if she only knew how close her dainty bonnet was to the peaceful shade; and worse still, should she ever discover that the quiet gentleman on her left was the Deacon Irenaeus of the year 348. After the Gospel and the Creed, one of the sleepy clergymen aforesaid ascended the steps of a high pulpit and began his sermon. “That is good,” whispered the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch, “now you see the real primitive way of doing things.”

“And where are the children?” said I, “I see none.” The shade pointed to a gallery at the west end, over the music gallery. It was crowded with little faces, some full of mischief, most, heavy with sleep.

“Humph!” said I, “*we* used to place them close to the altar. The Blessed Cyril always said the children were worthiest to be near it. And where are the poor? I see none.”

The shade pointed to the seats for the penitents as I thought, and I saw about a score of persons who looked as if they wished they were anywhere else.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.”

I was startled; I thought it must be another ghost making a quotation in an ironical manner: but no, it was the text of the coming sermon, and the voice was very earthly.

Could any one have a nobler theme? One to make the heart glow and the tongue utter words of fire, to rouse the whole man to animation. I could not help thinking what the holy Cyril would have made of it. But the sleepy preacher was, if possible, more sleepy than his congregation. He told them how thankful they ought to be that they lived in such a favoured land, where every one might hear the truth if he

would listen, (here the deaf old people in the far-off free seats began to fidget); how thankful they ought to be that England was England, and not any other country; how thankful they ought to be for their pastors, meaning himself, no doubt, and the other gentleman in white, who was nodding his head in the most emphatic manner inside the altar rails, whether with sleep or with assent I could not quite make out; how thankful they ought to be that grace had been given them to do right; and, in short, how thankful they ought to be they were not as other men; and, having sent most of his congregation to sleep and very nearly himself also, he brought himself up with a jerk, and abruptly concluded before that catastrophe occurred. Then returning to the Holy Table, the offerings of the faithful were collected.

“Capital!” whispered in ghostly language the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch. “Capital! They have succeeded in carrying this point. This is the great Anglican battle-ground, the Prayer for the Church Militant:” as the clergy resumed their former position at the north and south end.

After the Prayer and whilst I was waiting for the Liturgy to proceed, to my astonishment and the great relief of the congregation the Blessing was pronounced and the assembly broke up.

“Are we to go now?” said I to Boodle.

“Go? I should think so. What more do you



want? Haven't you had enough?" Boodle yawned and looked about for his hat.

"But what does all this lead up to?" said I, "if not to the Bread of Life? and how can they all fast to this hour and then go away without the Celestial Food?"

Boodle looked at me in astonishment. "You don't mean to say you think these people have had no breakfast?"

"The Faithful at Holy Cross never ate until they had had the Holy Bread, and on Wednesdays and Fridays, the stations, you know, they took no food till three in the afternoon, for the services were not over till then."

"My goodness me!" said Boodle. "And where do you say is that remarkable place?"

"In Jerusalem," I replied.

"And does Bishop Gobat approve of these ritualistic proceedings?"

"I don't know," I replied. "I don't know anything about Bishop Gobat. This was a very long long time ago. In the year. . . ." Here I stopped, remembering I am a ghost and that Boodle did not know it.

"A very long time ago? I should rather think it was," said Boodle.

"Pardon me," I whispered, slightly irritated, "Have you any business to collect the alms of the

Faithful and not to give them the Bread of Life? It seems to me to be all take and no give."

"All take? I should think so. It's awful humbug I think; but it doesn't hurt *me* much, for I never put in more than a threepenny bit."

"No doubt you feel hurt at not receiving your due: bread upon the Day of Bread. No wonder your offering is small."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I have not had what you speak of for many a long year."

"What! are you excommunicate?" asked I in horror. Suppose I had been making friends with some profane person under the ban of the church.

"My dear fellow, what are you talking of? We don't do such things now-a-days."

As we went out I said to the busy man in black, who stood at the door—

"At what hour are the Holy Mysteries celebrated in this church?"

He looked at me from head to foot and said, "Mystery? Mystery? We doesn't have nothink of that 'ere sort here. We don't believe in no mysteries whatsomdever!"

"But surely, surely the Holy Sacrifice is offered some time or other?"

"Oh, you be one of the Red letter lot be you? We don't 'old to none of that ritualistic nonsense."

More puzzled than ever I went on with Boodle.

As we left the holy precincts, I said to him, "Have the majority of the faithful in that church never been within the sacred walls before?"

"Why should you think so?"

"Because in the opening address such great pains were taken to explain to those present what they had come for. It began if I remember right, "Dearly beloved."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Boodle, "that has been going on no end of a time. *Whenever, wherever*, you go to church, even if you go twice every day of your life, week-days and Sundays, you will never be allowed to say your prayers until you have heard an explanation of why you came, and what you came for. For the last 300 years that has been going on with unintermitting perseverance."

"And the poor things have not learnt it yet; what a long time it takes to din an idea into an Englishman's head. We certainly were not so long about it in *my* day. In fact we should not have gone to church at all until we were quite certain why we went."

"Come along," said Boodle, "we shall just be in time to hear the crack preacher at St. Timothy's Chapel."

CHAPTER III.

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“ THE POPULAR PREACHER.”

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THERE was a great crowd within St. Timothy's Church, and many stood in the centre passage and in the doorway. Except the mere fact of this standing crowd I could not see anything that the least reminded me of Holy Cross Church. At the end of the building, where in *my* day the altar would have stood, I saw a high wooden rostrum from which a grave, thin, yellow-looking person preached. He was clothed in a mourning garment of solemn black. “ Is he doing penance for the sins of the people ? ” said I to Boodle. “ What are you thinking of ? ” he answered, “ the penance is, *I* should say, on the side of those who listen.” The faithful here were shut four or five together between very high walls, I supposed they were the wooden walls of Old England which I had heard of since I had been in London. Boodle told me the service began later at St. Timothy's than at

St. Silas's, and that the sermon from the Rev. Ebenezer Growler was quite the thing to hear. The preacher was exciting himself in a manner which did my heart good to see, for I thought such earnestness could not fail to hit the mark.

"Listen!" said Boodle, "quite a burst of eloquence." And the preacher thumped the cushion in front of him, balanced himself on his toes, and shouted—

"Take heed, brethren, of superstition! above all of that new heresy called Ritualism! remember we have no priesthood, no sacrifice."

"Good heavens!" I whispered to Boodle, "does he not remember what the blessed Andrew said when taken before the Roman Prefect. . ."

"Blessed fiddlestick!" replied Boodle, "you don't suppose a popular preacher has time to read anything, do you?"

I was amazed. I listened with shuddering frame to an elaborate disproof of what we at Holy Cross used to call the Catholic Faith. We were exhorted by Mr. Growler *not* to attend church except on the Sabbath; *not* to believe in absolution; *not* to believe in the priesthood; *not* to believe in times and seasons; *not* to esteem one day more than another; but above all to beware of certain churches which he named in full.

As we came out, after three quarters of an hour

of this wonderful performance, I said, "Are the objectionable churches tenanted by Gnostics?"

"By what?" said Boodle.

"By adherents of the Gnostic heresy?"

"I never heard of that heresy. We've plenty here, but none of that name, that I know of, at least."

"Tell me," I asked, "are these people superstitiously devoted to the priesthood? Do they throng to the churches to confess their sins before the whole congregation? Do they crowd inconveniently to the services so that their duties in the world are seriously hindered?"

"My dear fellow, it's all you can do to get them to come to church once a week."

"Then why did he preach to them as if they were never out of it?"

"Because that sort of thing goes down. The people haven't the slightest intention of honouring the priesthood, or of flocking to the churches, or of giving alms, or of beautifying God's House, and so the Rev. Ebenezer preaches up the holiness of ugliness and the filthiness of good works, and the people love to have it so, and he is asked to three dinners every night of the week."

"But he told them it was enough to keep the Sabbath, and yet they were keeping the Lord's Day. Now the primitive Christians kept both for a long

time, but by degrees left off the Jewish Sabbath. His language was a little confused."

"Don't be alarmed," said Boodle, "we haven't the slightest intention of keeping two Sundays a week, one is quite enough. When he said the Sabbath, he meant the Lord's Day."

"When he said Saturday, he meant Sunday. Very well, I shall know another time," I meekly remarked.

Just then I saw floating close to me the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch.

"Perfectly disgusting! was it not?" muttered the ghost.

"I am not sure it was more so than your pet service at St. Silas's," I replied.

"Why so," calmly inquired the ghost.

"Because *there* the preacher took certain truths for granted, but did not act on them. There was the appearance, but not the reality. He exhorted us to attend the Eucharist, and then sent us away without it. Now the preacher at St. Timothy's told us that there was nothing in anything, and gave us nothing. St. Cyril would be very much astonished at both of them."

"Humph!" said the ghost, and quietly floated away.

Now this dialogue being spoken in spirit language was utterly inaudible to my friend Boodle; he merely

thought I was looking up to see if it were going to rain.

“But tell me,” I continued, as we walked along the street, “what have the churches done which excited Mr. Growler’s wrath to that enormous pitch?”

“St. Chad’s and St. Thurstan’s and St. Ethelbert’s and the others? Oh nothing that *I* can understand. As far as *I* know they have kept exactly to the directions of the Book of Common Prayer, and when there were no directions they have tried to find out what was done at the time the Book was compiled.”

“That does not sound so very bad. But of course Mr. Growler is very particular in following the directions of some superior authority, as he is so anxious to make others take offence at the brethren.”

“Not at all. He does the whole thing in his own way, taking what he pleases and leaving out what he pleases; but people don’t mind it because he gives them very little trouble, and they come out pretty much the same as when they went in. Now the man at St. Chad’s is always worrying about fasting and praying and confessing your sins and the like, and people get no peace of their lives with his bother.”

“That sounds more like Holy Cross,” thought I.

“He is such a nuisance that Growler has set two fellows to watch him to see if he does anything actionable; he might bend his knee half an inch too



low or have too many things on the altar, and then Growler would have him up before the justices in a jiffy."

"Then the persecution here has not yet ended?"

I said, my spirits rising at the prospect of something like primitive Christianity. "You still hear the Pagan cry, 'To the lions with the Christians.'"

"Something like it; but the curious part of it is that instead of a Pagan cry, it is now a Christian cry, and instead of the lions, it is the lion and the unicorn. But come to me next Sunday and I will show you what goes on at St. Chad's."

The kindly Boodle turned the corner, waving his hand to me; and again I saw the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch.

"You won't like St. Chad's at all," said he, "I wouldn't go there if I were you. It's not in the least like anything Charles the First saw, or Laud, or Sancroft. It's not in the least like the interior of Bishop Andrews's Chapel, in the Hierurgia Anglicana. It's not in the least like St. George's Chapel, Windsor, or St. James's, Piccadilly."

"But my dear ghost," I replied, "you forget I have nothing to do with either. I go back far beyond two hundred or even *three* hundred years. I am looking for primitive Christianity, such as I remember it in the days of the blessed Cyril."

The ghost shook his head sadly. "If you're wise,"

said he, "you'll keep to the use of the last three hundred years."

"*My* 300 years are as good as *yours*," said I rather cantankerously, I must own, considering that I was a ghost of 1520 years standing.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SARUM USE.

ST. CHAD'S was difficult to find. It was in a poor part of the enormous town; I mean it was in that part of the town which was tenanted by the poor. Hidden by a number of sordid and densely populated buildings, the exterior presented no very striking features, but when I reached the entrance I saw at once that some sort of affinity could be claimed with Holy Cross Church at Jerusalem. The area was grand and spacious, full of seats truly, but these seats were so unpretentious and low that they did not attract the eye like those of St. Silas. There were no locks and no bolts and no doors to them. Boodle, true to his appointment, had joined me at the door, looking as if he did not like it much, but that he considered himself bound to keep his engagement.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said he, "rum looking place, ain't it?"

"More like a Church than anything I've seen yet.

I am pleased beyond measure at seeing such a crowd of real worshippers. But tell me who are those evil-looking persons to our left?"

"Oh, they are the spies."

"Spies? are they the persons who will carry the information to the Prefect?"

"Prefect, no. Privy Council."

"And how do they execute them here, by burning, crucifixion, or wild beasts?"

"We haven't got to that yet. It's a pleasure to come. Heavy fines are the great things now."

I had always heard England was a money loving country, so I supposed this was the greatest punishment the persecutors could inflict.

"And what will these persons do?"

"Oh, they will watch narrowly to see whether the incumbent of the church bows his knee in the middle of a certain prayer, and whether he holds the chalice and paten too high, and a lot of little things you and I should never notice. But what this people hate most, the people who employ the spies, I mean, are lights on the altar, above it, or around it."

"And why?"

"Because there is an old custom that two lights shall be set on the altar to show that Christ is the Light of the World."

"And do these people say He is not the Light of the World? What odd Christians they must be!"

What is the name of the society who employs these spies?"

"The Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews—no, I don't mean that, I can't remember it exactly, I think it calls itself the Church Association."

It was a grand service certainly. The music, the animation of the priests, the devotion of the people, the want of distinction between rich and poor, the prominent position of the altar, the evident subordination of all to the great Christian Sacrifice, was refreshing to one who, like myself, was anxious to see a revival of things as they were under the blessed Cyril. At a certain point of the service a servant of the Church walked quietly up to the altar and lit the candles. I saw a self-satisfied smirk on the part of the spies, and heard the rustle of the paper on which they wrote down their remarks.

"That'll cost *him* £500," whispered Boodle to me, looking at the priest of St. Chad's.

"And serve him right," muttered the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch as it quietly floated by me, "I never lighted *my* candles at Grubbington-in-the-Clay. I considered they looked much better unlighted."

"They certainly were much more economical," I replied.

It did not matter the least when Starch and I

talked in church, because as we only used ghost language we disturbed nobody. It was another thing when Boodle began, for his remarks were so loud I had serious thoughts of suddenly becoming invisible. I was ashamed of being in his company, for no wooden walls hid us as in the other Churches. The main features of the service were grand, the sermon most interesting and rousing, but there were various little affectations that puzzled me and made me still sigh for Holy Cross and its simple majesty; everything there seemed so thoroughly *natural*, whilst at S. Chad's people seemed to be wondering whether all they were doing was in proper order. As we came out, and we did not come out until, as at Holy Cross, all was finished and an end made of the great Christian service of the Eucharist, Boodle turned to me and said, "Now I shall introduce you to that gentleman, and place you in better hands than mine. He will just suit you, for he understands all these things. Good-bye, I must be off home to dinner. Come and dine? no! well, never mind; see you another time." We passed into the little dark cloister leading out of the Church, and standing there I saw the individual in question, whom I recognised as one of the assistant priests with whose minute and rather nervous fussy ways I had been struck. He was a tall, lantern-jawed, cadaverous looking man, stiff as an iron rod and impracticable as a thunderbolt.

“The Rev. Octagon Fidgets,” murmured Boodle to me, and I heard him whisper to the person in question something about—

“Red-hot Ritualist—just your sort, you know,” meaning *me*. What he meant I could not imagine, no doubt it was something very appropriate.

The Rev. Octagon Fidgets bowed, and walking with me down the street, said in a hollow voice, “*Miserable* service, wasn’t it, Mr.—I didn’t quite catch your name.

“I should think you didn’t, and you’re not going to now,” thought I to myself. Then in answer to his question, “*Miserable* service?” said I, “in what way pray, sir?”

“Why, in the first place, didn’t you notice the frontal was all wrong?”

“What was the matter with it?”

“It was the colour of the Sunday, red. Now you know it ought to have been the colour of the saint whose day it was, that is—yellow, Sarum yellow—for St. Swithun, Bishop and Confessor. It is true some people have a notion that Sundays of a certain class take precedence of the Saint’s Day, but that is wrong, my dear sir, totally wrong;” and the Rev. Octagon struck his foot on the curb-stone with excitement. “I tell my respected incumbent over and over again about it, but he says he has little time for these things and he must stick to broad

principles, but,—hallo—hallo—what is happening to you. . . .”

At this moment, forgetting all my caution, I subsided from the visible to the invisible, and became the shadow of the deacon Irenæus. The reason was the sudden appearance of the two Church Association spies, peeping round the corner. I was so horribly nervous at their self-satisfied leer that I felt I could not face them, and I was also afraid lest a natural infirmity of temper should invite me to wreak my bodily combative powers upon them. So all things considered, I judged it better to put such a course entirely out of my own power, and their utter incapability of appreciating the invisible prevented their perceiving that a spirit was near them.

The Rev. Octagon Fidgets had a considerable insight into the other world, so he did not entirely lose sight of me. In a few words I explained to him who and what I was, and he did not even seem surprised. He said he was only “too delighted to have the opportunity of making my acquaintance.” But the martinet, fussy spirit was too strong in him to allow him to pass over his grievances, and he began again.

“*Don't* you think it a horrid shame to pass over St. Swithun?”

“When did he live?” said I.

“Somewhere about nine hundred and something.”



“ Ah that is long after my time, you see I am not a fair judge.”

“ You don't know anything about the Sarum yellow then ?” asked the reverend gentleman in a sepulchra tone.

“ Not I.”

“ What did you cover your altar with at Holy Cross ?”

“ With the best we had, generally white embroidered with black.”

“ Ah ! the white linen cloth you mean, but did you have that embroidered ?”

“ Yes ; why not ?”

“ The Privy Council would not allow that here, the white linen cloth must be perfectly plain.”

“ *We* never allowed outsiders to interfere,” said I indignantly.

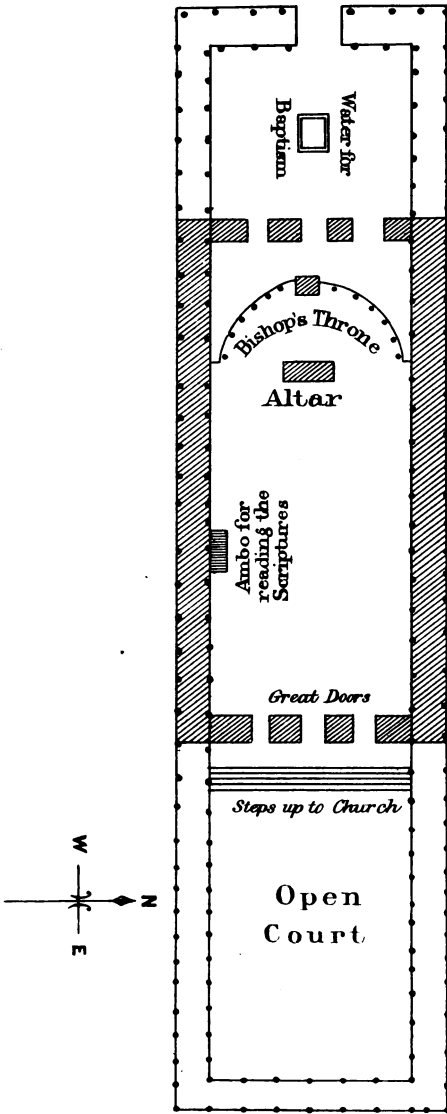
“ And what was your altar like ?”

“ Not so large as yours and not so high up. A marble table on four marble legs, the drapery hanging loosely over it, not stretched tight like yours.”

“ Humph,” muttered the curate of St. Chad's musingly.

“ And can you tell me,” said I turning questioner in *my* turn, “ why at St. Silas's the priest stood at the end of the altar, and also at St. Timothy's, whilst at St. Chad's he stood in front of it ?”

“ My dear sir, have you not heard that is the



BASILICA OR CHURCH OF HOLY CROSS.



question upon which half of the clergy of England are ready to tear the other half in pieces? The whole Church in this country is up in arms about the position of the priest at the altar: whether he ought to stand with his back, or his right shoulder to the people; which way did you do it?"

"Neither," said I. "The priest stood behind the altar, facing the people. But then the altar was at the west end of the church. The priest faced east and the people west."

"Humph!" said the curate again. "We seem to have departed from primitive practice in some things."

"Certainly," I replied. "For instance, it seemed to me very strange that the Epistoller and Gospeller should have read turning away from the people."

"That is old Sarum use," said the Rev. Octagon.

A very bad use, it struck me. "What is the use of reading so that people can't hear? When *we* read the gospel or the epistle we came out into the midst of the church and read with a loud and distinct voice. Then I remarked there was no reservation."

"Ah!" said the Curate, "it will be long before people have reverence enough to resort to the Blessed Sacrament for worship."

"I don't mean for worship," said I. "The reservation for purposes of worship was long after *my* time. We reserved for the sick and the absent, and sent it

to hem by the hands of the deacons. I was one of those happy persons who were messengers of the spiritual food—and very anxious were we that no one should be deprived of it.”

“Humph!” said the Rev. Octagon again, “of course, as you were on the spot I cannot contradict you.”

“Tell me too,” said I, “why you shut the doors and allowed none to depart before the more solemn part of the services? I saw several most anxious to go away, and others fidgetting much.”

“Because,” replied the Curate, “all should stay and worship. Those who depart show great irreverence towards that solemn service.”

“But does it not show greater irreverence to detain the unwilling? In my time we bade all depart who were not prepared to communicate faithfully and devoutly, and diligent care was taken that there should be no irreverent gazers even in the vicinity of the holy place. No need of keeping people in by force, we were only too anxious to get rid of those who did not wish to remain. In *my* day it was esteemed too high a privilege to be forced upon any one.”

“But you would not send those away who have communicated earlier and wish to mingle their intercessions with the rest?”

“By no means. Let them stay and take their

share in the priesthood of the people and in offering the holy sacrifice."

"But how?" said my friend; "you don't mean to deny that the consecration is effected by the words of Institution pronounced by the priest."

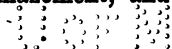
"No; but I deny it is entirely and alone. We always esteemed it effected by three things. The pronounciation of the words of Institution, the Prayer to the Holy Ghost, called the Invocation, which came after the Prayer of Consecration, and which I perceive you omit, and the Amen of the people. With *us* all three were necessary; and so you will see if you read the Liturgy of St. James, which was used at Jerusalem."

"Oh dear me!" said the Curate, "this is entirely a new light; and *I* thought if we went in for old Sarum we were sure to be all right."

"And I thought our Incomparable Liturgy was the model of all the primitive liturgies," said the shade of the Rev. Edward Starch as it floated down the Strand.

"No altar! no sacrifice! none of your Popery! down with it all!" muttered the two spies, still skulking round a corner.

I was fairly puzzled as I thought over all the divisions of the most learned Church in the most religious country in the world. Certainly the blessed Cyril would have been lost in amazement, and as



for me I could not find anything like the grandeur of Holy Cross Church in the year 347 or thereabouts.

One idea struck me as I prepared for flight, leaving the astonished Octagon standing on the pavement. As none of the examples I saw are exactly like what each professes to be, the image of primitive Christianity, would it not be better to leave off biting and devouring one another, and to work back by degrees to primitive models? I shall be most happy to come and show them my experiences of the same, but I do not for a moment suppose anybody will take my advice; for after all I am

ONLY A GHOST!







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