

**THE CHURCH-BUILDERS;
OR, DAYS OF YORE
AND DAYS THAT ARE,
A POEM IN TWO PARTS**

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The church-builders; or, Days of yore and days that are, a poem in two parts by Erasmus Yorick

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THE CHURCH-BUILDERS;

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A Poem, in Two Parts.

BY ERASMUS YORICK, B.A. Oxon.

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*Oph.* What means this, my Lord?

*Ham.* Marry, this is miching malicho; it means mischief.

\* \* \* \* \*

*King.* Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?

*Ham.* No, no, they do but jest; no offence i' the world.

~~~~~  
Curs'd be the line, how well see'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.—*Port.*



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1842.

1039.

P R E F A C E.

Few, the author imagines, except the insects themselves here transfixed with pins for specimens, will feel disposed to censure his doggerel. But if there be any, themselves of old-fashioned unobtrusive piety, who have scruples about the employment of ridicule against anything however remotely or only apparently connected with religion, to such he respectfully tenders this apology.

Nowhere does there breathe such a spirit of severe majestic piety, nowhere such awful reverence for every thing divine, as in those pages of excellent old Robert South (blessings on his memory!) where his caustic humour flays to the very bone the Tartuffes of his period. His wit irresistibly provokes laughter; but it is scarcely possible not to rise from the perusal of his sermons wiser and better men. The delicate and fearful spirit of Cowper was confessedly the very last in the world to impair, in the slightest degree, the veneration due to religion; yet who has not read, or,

having read, can forget his exquisite satire upon the popular priestling? It was felt by both these unexceptionable authorities, that the smile excited by exposing the affectations of pretenders to religion does not in the least extend to religion itself. It is true that Mrs. Trollope's novel, "The Vicar of Wrexhill," has been severely reprehended by all serious persons, and with justice; for, in her management of that work, she has not been careful to discriminate between the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of individuals and the general character of a class. Her Vicar, a hypocrite of the deepest dye, is made, whether purposely or not, to stand out as the representative of what are popularly called the Evangelical Clergy. There was a time, perhaps, when this epithet had a distinct and intelligible meaning as applied to those ministers of the Gospel who restored to their due prominence the evangelical tenets of free grace and justification by faith. For the most part these were exemplary men, distinguished by "setting forth both in their lives and doctrines the true and lively word." But their original marks of distinction have been long obliterated, since the class has silently and gradually absorbed into itself the entire body of earnest labourers. There remains a smaller party charged with arrogating to themselves the title of evangelical *par excellence*, which they are believed to identify with Calvinism: whether they are

right or wrong in this matter is no business of the author's; but he will do them the justice to say that, if there be such a character as the Vicar of Wrexhill, it is not among them that he is likely to be found: they have been charged with making more pretension to sanctity than their brethren; it may be so, but they do not possess less. Neither was it from this class particularly that the author selected his "précieuses ridicules" of either sex; they were fair game wherever found; and there was nowhere lack of them. Religion, though it be overstrained and fanatical, or even false, is no subject for pleasantry; but we cannot allow arrogant pretenders to religion to shelter their fopperies and inconsistencies under this plea. She "knows them not." They err not on the side of religion, but in defiance of her precepts and her spirit. They must be dragged from her venerable sanctuary; and those that love her best ought most to rejoice when the world is informed how entirely she is acquitted of their absurdities. But why not reprove them in a serious and affectionate spirit? Because it would be a mere casting of pearls before swine. They would exchange glances, sneers, and shrugs, one with another, as who should say—"Poor benighted creature!" Besides, who can "break a butterfly upon a wheel?" They are ridiculous, and there an end.

From some passages, the too hasty reader will be

ready to conclude that the author is a disciple of the Oxford school. That he "esteems them highly in love for their works' sake," is most true: he believes that they have done good service in their generation, and will yet do more; but he desires their company no longer than while they keep the Catholic high road. Generally, he is their admirer, but for disciple—he can only say with "master gentleman Conrade"—"Marry, sir, I am none." However, were he at issue with them upon more points than he is, he would be ashamed to join in the indiscriminating clamour which assails them. Never, surely, did the *profanum vulgus* give tongue upon such a false scent; and never did so many chime in with the senseless cry who ought to have known better! They have deserved, especially at the hands of our ecclesiastical superiors, the warmest acknowledgments for their powerful and fearless advocacy of those ancient church principles which have too long lain hidden and almost forgotten under the slimy deluge of Protestantism: in lieu of thanks they have been pelted with abuse and contumely.* What if, in addition to their invaluable defence of unquestionable Catholic verities, they have advanced one or two speculations respecting tenets certainly very ancient though not strictly Catholic? Let it be shown

* Τιαῦτ' ἀπήμω τοῦ φιλανθρώπου τροπου.

Æsch. Prom. Vinc.

where and how they have controverted any single point decided by our own or by the universal church. If they have not done this, it ill becomes the noisy sticklers for private judgment to call upon bishops to silence them; it is unadvisedly done of the bishops so to prostitute their authority. Whatever the church has not formally and verbally condemned is a fair subject of speculation. If our Articles be not stringent enough, draw up new ones *pro re natâ*; but, as they stand, let us not be excommunicated because our writings seem to some, *by implication*, to transgress them. And how is it that our Hampdens and Whatelys shall nibble at our sublimest and most ancient formularies, yet escape the censure of the many-headed monster? The reason is plain — because their mystifications smack *only* of Unitarianism; the Oxford school seems to savour of Popery. Poor old giant Pope! time-dishonoured Lion of the Vatican! Is it not enough that thou art dying by inches? Must thou also *in extremis* be kicked by asses? Even now we are so horribly afraid lest our old bugbear, Popery, should break in at the window, that we forget there is worse company stealing round by the back door. After all, people might understand, if they would, that, since the Roman church (previous to the Council of Trent) took away nothing from the Catholic faith, whatever we have of holy and true must find its counterpart more or less

distinctly traced in that communion ; and that, consequently, nothing can be so calculated to render Popery dangerous as the common folly of blending it with primitive and essential church principles, and so railing at both together.