AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC CHRISTIAN.

" AND a downright unneighbourly act I calls it, and I don't care what nobody says neither," exclaimed old Tom Campion, when he was informed that one of his tenants could not be called upon to replace a chimney which had been blown down in a recent hurricane, on the ground that the damage had been caused ``by the act of God. " Here have I stood fair by Him all my life, never missed a Sunday o' church, not as I could help leastways, paid my fees and my tithes regular, and now He've gone and acted like this by me. I shan't go nigh His house, I reckon not for a month, seeing as He won't leave my houses alone, and I don't care what no parson says to the contrary."

And old Tom was as good as his word. Indeed, though the rector scolded me upstairs and downstairs for saying so, I will own that I was positively glad that, after having been heard to make the remarks which have been recorded, the old man's seat in church should have been vacant for the next four Sundays. For Tom Campion's integrity of purpose was a sort of byword in our parish. It was all very well for that licensed backbiter John Ball to stigmatise old Tom as " the very obstinatest old devil as ever I clapt eyes on." Different people may call the same thing by different names, and what John meant and what I mean come to pretty nearly the same thing in the end, and I prefer to call it integrity of purpose.

It was that quality at any rate, call it by what name you please, that made Tom Campion the best -liked and the most highly respected man in our parish.

"Glad to see the old gemman's time up," remarked the parish clerk to the rector when Tom made his reappearance in church ; " it didn't seem natural like not to see him in his place. But Lord bless your heart alive, sir, it would have been the worst thing for the parish as ever was for any one to go and think as old Tom Campion could ever go back on what he'd once said. There'd be no dependency left whatsoever."

Hereupon the rector and the clerk, staunch friends as they were, fell into a rather warm discussion . on the matter ; and it was then, because I showed myself to be of the clerk's way of thinking, that the rector fell foul of me.

"You are more than half a heathen at heart yourself, George," he said at last. "What makes you think that, sir?"

"Why, your making such a point of a man's merit in keeping a heathenish vow of that sort." "Well, you go and talk it out with old Tom himself, sir," I replied ; " don't waste your wrath upon me : I am very poor game."

The rector apparently took my suggestion, and three days later came and called upon me for the express purpose of tell- ing me that I was not so very far wrong after all.

"Well, George," he said, "I am not going so far as to say that you are right or that I am convinced ; but I will allow that you have reason, as the French say."

"You don't think old Tom and myself a pair of heathens, then, sir?"

"We will leave you out of the question, George ; but I'll grant you that, according to his lights, Tom Campion is a better Christian than many of us are. His is Christianity of a rugged type, and anthropomorphic to a degree ; but I fancy it will pass muster when many other claims are rejected. ' Look you here, Reverend,' he said to me, 'you've had your say, and I've listened to you quiet. I won't say as how I agrees with you; but then, preaching is your trade, and not mine. What I do say, and I holds to it, is that it were a downright unneighbourly act to blow down the chimneys of my house ; and I done what I said I'd do, to show as I don't think it kind of Him, But there that is gone and past, and I count we're square ; and just to show that I don't bear no ill- will, what I says now is this : if anybody blows the chimneys of His house down, or seeing that He ain't got no chimneys to speak on, if anything goes wrong to the roofing, or the tiles, or the tower, well, my name is Tom Campion, and I'll pay for damage.' And then, before I left the house, he put half-a-sovereign into my hand.' What's that for, Mr Campion?' I said. ' Well,' he said, ' I mostin general puts my half-crown into the bag on Sundays ; and if I did stop at home, same as I Said I would do, I never counted as I were going to make no money out of the job, and I ain't a-going to neither.'"

This anthropomorphic Christian, to borrow the rector's phraseology, was a specimen of a class practically extinct in England, a yeoman - farmer for farmer he preferred to call himself who could trace his pedigree back for some twenty generations, as lord of the manor and a large landed proprietor, to all intents and purposes hereditary squire of our parish. How it came to pass that the world, which had educated so many families out of all resemblance to their forefathers, had apparently overlooked the Campions, and left each successive generation as illiterate as its predecessor, I cannot pretend to say. But this much I know if my own knowledge, that, unsophisticated and rough of speech as he was, old Tom had more of the instincts of a gentleman than half the men one meets in the world, who wear tall hats and frock-coats, and are dubbed esquires or known by some higher title. If he spoke the Queen's English much after the fashion and with the accent of an ordi- nary yokel, if his knowledge of grammar was faulty and he had failed to master the laws of euphemism, I can safely say that I never heard the old fellow use an expression that would either raise a blush on a woman's cheek or shock the ears of the most strait-laced Puritan. He was a Conservative to the backbone a Conservative of the deepest dye if we accept Nuttall's definition of the term as "one who would conserve old institutions, and is averse to change." Though he took little or no in- terest in contemporary politics, and sturdily refused to register his vote for our local candidate from the time that the party colour in the district was changed from blue to pink, he showed his conservatism in the management of his own estate. His ploughs were drawn by oxen, his corn-fields reaped with the sickle, the grain thrashed out with the flail.

" When you've got men and beasts a-working, you know where you are, Master George," he remarked to me one day as I walked round his farm with him ; " and what's more, if so be as the work ain't done, you knows who to drop on to. Now, what manner of good would it be to blow up an engine, as blows itself up often enough just when you don't want it to."

On the subject of machinery Tom held much the same views as those entertained by Tennyson's Northern Farmer : " But summun 'ull come ater me mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steam, Huzzin' an' maazin' the blessed fields wi' the divil's oan team ; Sin I mun doy, I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet ; But sin I mun doy, T mun doy ; for I couldn't abear to see it. " But Tom Campion found even higher authority for his objection. For after a careful perusal of the Thirty-nine Articles, in his opinion at all events by no means the least edifying part of the Prayer-book, he successfully convinced himself that the use of machinery not only came under the heading of a work of supererogation, but was further- more a "fond thing vainly in- vented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture," and even partook of the nature of a " blasphemous fable " and "dangerous deceit."

I am afraid that in Tom's eyes I was accounted as only an indifferent theologian. For when we were discussing the merits of a steam-plough which was being largely advertised, and he had produced for mybenefit a Prayer-book with the passages I have quoted from the Articles underlined with red ink, I failed to trace the connection with the matter in dispute.

"Why, it's writ plain as plain can be, ain't it, Master George ? "

" Oh yes, it's plain enough ; but there's nothing about steamploughs."

"Ah well, you bide a bit. Ploughs come often enough in the Bible, don't they?" "Yes." " And oxen for ploughing ? "

"Yes."

" But there ain't not a word said about those blessed steamploughs, is there ? "

"No, but —”

" There ain't no but about it ; it's as plain as plain can be. There's the warranty in Scripture for the plough, and for the oxen ; but they steam-ploughs," here he quoted from the Prayer-book, "is a 'fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture.' No, no, Master George. I've heard tell as you be high learned in Latin and Greek and all that mullock ; but I reckon as old Tom Campion knows his way about his Bible and his Prayerbook just as well as you and both the reverends rolled into one."

Apart from matters pastoral and agricultural, not the Yorkshire farmer who lives his life through in his native dale, not the ploughman who has plodded his weary way homewards along the same beaten track from boyhood to old age, troubled himself less about the ways of the outside world than my old friend Tom. Even the relaxations which he allowed himself so far formed part of his regular life that they must have come to him rather in the light of things that, having been always done, must on that account never be left undone, than as real recreation. Twice a-week in the hunting season he rode, and, so men said, rode straighter than most of the field to the hounds ; twice in the season there was a meet at the Park Hall, and Tom Campion brought forth of his best cheer for all who cared to partake of it. It was only by an accident that I learned that his liberality went even further on these occasions. Going down to see the meet one morning, I was rather amused to find that John Ball, though he could only hobble a few yards beyond his own doorway, was taking quite as keen an interest in the pro- ceedings as any one of his more active neighbours. I should re- mark that, albeit we did not take much count of St Lubbock's Day in our village, the days when the hounds met at the Park Hall were religiously kept as public holidays.

"Well, there's a plaguey lot on 'em, ain't there, mister?" said John, addressing me ; " and blessed if there ain't more a-coming, I can hear 'em miles off. I counts as there's two things as they smart folk gets in our parish as they won't find not in one-half of they places as they goes to, no, nor a quarter either."

" And what are those, John ? "

"Why, a fox in the covert, and a bellyful of victual, and I reckon as one ain't much count in fox-hunting without t'other. There's two class of folk as goes arter the fox, Master George them as likes the riding, and them as likes the victuals. I wish as one-half on 'em would stay at home, drat 'em, or breakfast, as they calls it, afore they starts."

"Why, what earthly differ- ence can it make to you?"

" Difference to me ? The dif- ference of a week's eating, of course. You ain't half awake, Master George. Perhaps you don't know as the old gemman always sends the victuals as is over, meat and drink both, down our street. I gotten half a turkey once, and a bottle of wine and all, one day as it were raining hard, and now mebbe there won't be nothing but a loaf or two o' bread, and perhaps a bit of cheese, for old John Ball. I wish the rain would come down and drownd one-half on 'em, I do. It's downright robbery I calls it."

" You ungracious old villain," I exclaimed, "you ought to be grateful if you get anything at all."

" So I are grateful, ain't I ? But I'd be a d d sight gratefuller for half a turkey than a loaf of bread, and so'd you'd be if your belly was empty, Master George;" and with this parting shot the old cobbler hobbled back into his house and slammed the door behind him.

In addition to following the hounds Tom rode or drove to our market once a-week to at- tend the farmers' ordinary, "not as I wouldn't liever eat my own dinner at home," as he explained to me, "nor as I wants to meet any one in partic'lar ; but I counts as when a man has made it his business to put a dinner on the table every Saturday a -purpose for us farmers, it's no more nor a neighbourly act to go and eat it."

" But I suppose you pay for it, Mr Campion."

"In course we all pays for it," was the answer; "some pays three shillings every time they comes, and stays away when they've a mind to. But I can't abide they messy goings on. I pays my cheque for eight pound on the fust of January every year, as'll cover Christmas turkey and all, and then they knows as Tom Campion'll be there to time."

Journeys in the way of busi- ness to fairs or sales, no matter the distance, were always ac- complished in an old-fashioned gig drawn by one of the skewbald nags for the breeding of which Tom Campion had won so great a reputation in our country-side. Only once in his life, and then with many misgivings, did he adventure a journey by rail on an occasion when a heavy fall of snow practically made a forty -mile drive impossible. I had so carefully mapped out his route for him, and put everything so clearly on paper, that when I saw him start for the station it seemed impossible for him to go wrong. But his own version of the transaction pointed to the fact that he was rather an embarrassing passenger, though I am afraid that to his dying day he considered himself an injured individual, and even bore a grudge against myself as the author of his misfortunes. Here is his own ac- count of his experiences of rail- way travelling :

"Fust of all I gets to what they calls a office. Such a thing to call a office I never seed in my life, a great ugly boarding with a hole in it and a roomful of old women. Well, they shoved and I shoved, and they called me anyhow. And a young chap puts his head out of the hole and asks me what I wants. "Well, I don't want no more shoving, I says ; I wants a ticket fust-class, sameas you told me. Then he wants to know where I am a-going to, and I was just telling him that that were my business and not hisn, when I minds to look at your paper as you give me. Well, I gets my ticket and I pays for it, and tells him as he may keep the coppers, which you'd have thought he'd have bit my nose off. Then I wants to go back same way as I came, and has to shove through an- other pack of old women as calls me worse nor the fust lot. Then I gets into a train fust class, same as you told me, and then some one blows a whistle fit to make your ears split. Just as I pokes my head out of window to see who's a-whistling, she goes off with a jerk as well anigh knocked my hat off, and then I were well anigh sick. "Well, I weren't going to have that, no, not at no price, so fust time as she stops out I gets, and then I found as I'd come the wrong road, and were farther off nor when I started. Then a chap wants to know who'd put me into the train, and I lets on as Tom Campion ain't quite a baby in arms as wanted putting. And then they says as they wants a shilling over that job, and I can go back in an hour. Not me, says I ; I'd liever by a long way walk than go in your jolting trains. Then they wants my ticket, and I wants my money back, but we couldn't do a deal nohow. I says as I knows a chap at home, meaning you, as often goes in your trains, and it'll come in handy for him, and they all laughs at me. But here's the ticket ; I brought him back right enough : 'tweren't likely as I were going to part with it, as I paid more'n seven bob for 'un. And then I goes and hires a chap to drive me home, and I gave him a suvrin for going of it."

And from that day forward old Tom entertained the most lively aversion for everything connected with railway travel- ling ; and having somewhere at the bottom of his heart a liking for my unworthy self, and having, moreover, his stable full of those skewbald horses, he more than once volunteered to drive me unconscionable distances, partly, as I verily believe, out of anxiety for my personal safety, and partly from a charitable wish to diminish the receipts of the railway company.

Nor again, as I had occasion to know to my cost, had he much confidence in either the efficacy or the honesty of our telegraphic arrangements elec- tricity, as having " no warranty in Scripture," being also re- ferred to the category of " dangerous deceits." Early one morning I received an urgent message from him to the effect that he wanted to see me at once on an urgent and most important business.

" I never seed the gaffer more put about in my life," explained the messenger, an old farm hand. " He said if it so be as 'ow you couldn't come, I were to get one of the reverends ; but as how and if you was about, he'd take it kind if you was to come at onst, as he reckoned he'd liever have you nor a whole biling of parsons."

I appreciated the compliment, and was ready to go. In his latter years Tom had fallen into the habit of sending for me in this rather peremptory manner pretty frequently ; and as he showed me a great deal of civility in many small ways, I was only too willing to help him in his petty difficulties. But I was so well accustomed to being confronted by a molehill when the urgency of a message rather pointed to the existence of a mountain, that I did not feel any special anxiety on the present occasion. Moreover, I happened to know that the old man was suffering under the infliction of the yearly visit of his widowed sister, a thorn in the flesh permitted to buffet him for exactly thirty-one days out of the three hundred and sixty-five. How Tom stood the lady's presence for so long a time was always a mystery to myself, and to a good many others besides."

" I'd jolly well gag her or cut her dratted tongue out if she were mine," was John Ball's comment on this elderly edition of Mrs Joe Gargery.

" Well, Mr Campion, and what's the matter now ? " I inquired, after shaking hands with Mrs Stern.

"Matter!" was the reply; "well, there's a whole mullock of matter, and all along of your railway folk, Master George. This is how it were : at the back end of last summer I was along o' neighbour Stiles, and it were hot, and he gives me a glass of right-down good cider, and then he lets on as it were a more wholesomer drink for chaps of our age nor any of your beers or wines, and as how he'll give me a cask if I has a mind to take it, seeing as he has a cousin in Devonshire who makes it. Well, it had gone right clean out of my mind till I meets him at market a week or more back, and then he tells me as how he've ordered it, andthen this morning I gets this. Just you see what you make of it, Master George," and he handed me a letter.

It turned out to be from a station-master some way down the line, and ran as follows :

" SlE, I have to inform you that a cask of cider addressed to you is now lying in our office pending instructions. It was consigned to us from the SouthWestern Railway, but we found that the cask was leaking so badly that it was impossible to forward it," &c., &c.

" Well, I hardly know what to advise, Mr Campion," and I handed him back the letter.

" I tells him as it ain't no manner of use his fussing andworriting himself," struck in Mrs Stern ; " it's a little cross as is sent him, and it will all come right in the end."

" It's a cask of cider as have been sent me, and some one else is a drinking of it half-way, and there'll be precious little of it left when it gets this end, if it ever do get," growled Tom.

" You don't know any one, I suppose, in those parts, MrCampion, who would go and see him about it. Let's see, what's the place he writes fromBourton?"

" Bourton ? Why, that's where my husband's brother keeps his hotel," exclaimed MrsStern. " He had a carriage accident many years ago, MrGeorge, and he has kept a hotel ever since."

" That's right enough," chimed in Tom. "Bill Stern was pitched out of his cart when he were drunk, and he keeps the inn there 'cos one of his legs is shorter than t'other, so as he can get his drink without 'aving to go out and fetch it."

"Tom is always running down my poor husband's family, Mr George: they were gentlefolk as has come down a bit in the world. But Tom was very glad when I married all the same."

" Yes, that we all on us was," assented Tom with much energy ; " and I were main sorry when Jack Stern died and all. But I count it a matter of calling spades spades instead o' shovels. You calls it a hotel and I calls it a inn, and you says as it were a carriage accident, and I says as how he were pitched out of his cart when he was drunk; but I reckon that ain't much good on to my cider."

"Why, he's just the man, Mr Campion," I said; "you have only got to telegraph to him, and he'll get the cider bottled off for you in no time."

" I ain't a - never done no telegraphing, and I don't know as I am a-going to begin neither, Master George. I counts as it's like one of the trains as you made me go in : I minds as I sees they posts alongside of the line, not as they didn't talk of putting up a post in one of my fields, but I gave a young chap who were messing about a suvrin to put un somewhere else and he did. I weren't a-going to have no messages a-going through my field and a-scaring the beasts."

Finally, after much per- suasion on my part, and much hanging back upon Tom's, we drove off together to the nearest telegraph - office, and a telegram, almost as lengthy and as intelligible as Mr Samuel Weller's love-letter, was despatched to the innkeeper.

" Will you pay for an answer, sir ? " inquired the clerk.

"I'll pay when I gets it," was the reply ; and then fol- lowed an argument, the clerk of course insisting upon pre- payment, and Tom avowing that he would only pay upon delivery. Finally, I threw a shilling on the counter, and succeeded with some difficulty in getting Tom out of the office.

"Well, here's your bob, Master George," he said, tendering the coin ; " but I counts as we've done wrong a-paying of it."

To most men under similar circumstances the laconic an- swer "All right," which ar- rived within the hour, would have seemed satisfactory. But Tom was very far from being contented, arguing that he had not got his money's worth.

"Where's the rest, young man ? " he inquired of the tele- graph-clerk.

"That is all the message, sir."

" Why, I seen Master George give you a shilling with my own eyes, and I hear him say as he was paying for twenty words where's the other eigh- teen ? "

" There is no longer message come, sir. The party might have sent a long message had he wished to."

" Well, then, you give me my money back. I know'd as we'd done wrong a - paying of it, Master George."

Such was the burden of his discourse all the way home ; and when I tried to turn the tables on him by reminding him of the fact that by his own confession he always paid for his dinners at the ordinary in advance without any guarantee that a dinner, or at all events a good dinner, would be provided, he had his answer ready–

"A man of his word is a man of his word, and you know where you are. House ain't going to run away anyways, and you can take your money's worth out of the furniture, I reckon. But your trams and your telegraphs ain't nowise dependable things : they takes you where you doesn't want to go, and makes you pay for things as never comes, and there's no holding of 'em anyway."

It was a common saying in our village that a Campion did not know what fear was, and certainly Tom maintained the traditional character of the family. There came a day when the street hi which John Ball lived was in a state of panic. It might even be said that the local traffic was thoroughly disorganised, neither foot-passenger nor vehicle venturing to pass down the street. Women were shrieking, and men were standing in knots at each end of the street eagerly discuss- ing what was to be done next.

" Send for the reverend," said one.

" Or the constable," suggested another.

" I says you'd better go and fetch old Tom Campion, and he don't want no fetching neither, for here a comes."

This from John Ball, who generally managed to hit the right nail on the head.

" What's gone wrong ? " in- quired Tom, as he joined the group ; " what's all they womenfolk a-skirling at ? "

The baker briefly explained the situation–

"Why, there's Bill Hainesgot on the drink again, and he've locked himself up in his own house with a double-barrelled gun, and swears as he'll shoot anything as goes along the street. He've a-shot a cat and a-missed a dog, and puttenseven pellets in my Jack's legs already, blast him ! "

Bill Haines, I should remark,was a great upstanding fellow, a bricklayer by profession, who,when he kept sober, could earn as good wages as any man in the parish, but was an awkward customer to tackle when he was in his cups, which happened about once a-month.

" Having a day's shooting, is he?" said Tom, unconcernedly. " Well, and he ain't done much harm yet, I reckon ; there's plenty more cats in the village, and I seed your Jack up my apple-tree only last night. ButBill'll have to give me that gun," and paying no regard to the remonstrances of the men,or the shrill protestations of the women, Tom strode down the village in the direction of Haiues's house, followed by no less a person than John Ball, who kept up as best he could. It was John who described the subsequent proceedings to me–

" Walked straight up to the window, did old gemman, and there were Bill pointing the gun straight at him all the while, and a -vowing as he'd shoot. 'Done enough shooting for one day, ain't you, Bill?' says old gemman, as quiet as I'm talking now. 'Just you hand that gun out through window, or I'll kick the door in and come and take it,' he says ; and Bill he hands it out quiet as a lamb. ' Now you go to bed and sleep it off, my man,' says old gemman, and with that he walks back to where folk was standing. ' Here's half-a-suvrin, ' he says, ' for cat, and I reckon as it were a good job as it were shot ; and half - a - suvrin for Jack, as they pellets in his leg won't agree with tree-climbing,' he says ; ' and here's a suvrin for you, John Ball, as you're the only chap of the lot as has got any grit ; and now, all you other chaps had best hold your tongues, and tell the women-folk to give over skirling.' "

Apparently Tom Campion's advice was taken. At any rate the matter never came into the police-court, and Bill Haines, at the rector's instance, took the pledge, and became a reformed character.

Tom Campion was gathered to his fathers ten years ago, dying of a chill contracted in the hunting - field. I do not know that I have made him out to be a hero ; but his memory will long be cherished in our village as of a man who was never known to break his word or do an unkindness to his neighbour. As I followed him to the grave, and the funeral procession passed by John Ball's cottage, the old hunchbacked cobbler was standing in his doorway crying like a child. A few weeks later, when I was standing by his graveside with the two reverends, as Tom had always called them, the rector and his curate, I gathered for the first time in my life how highly the former had appraised him.

" We could well have spared a better man," remarked the curate.

" Ah, you think so," answered the rector drily : then after a minute's pause, turning to me he added, "I don't know whether you have the same feeling about old Tom Campion as I had, George, though you saw a good deal more of him than I did. You might search the churchyard through and not find a grave that covers a man to be called his equal. Many, I grant you, who are lying here had more polish, higher aspirations, and more abundant opportunities ; but this man," and here again he addressed the curate, "was, according to his lights, Terpaycovov avev "tyoyov a Nature's gentleman and a Nature's Christian."