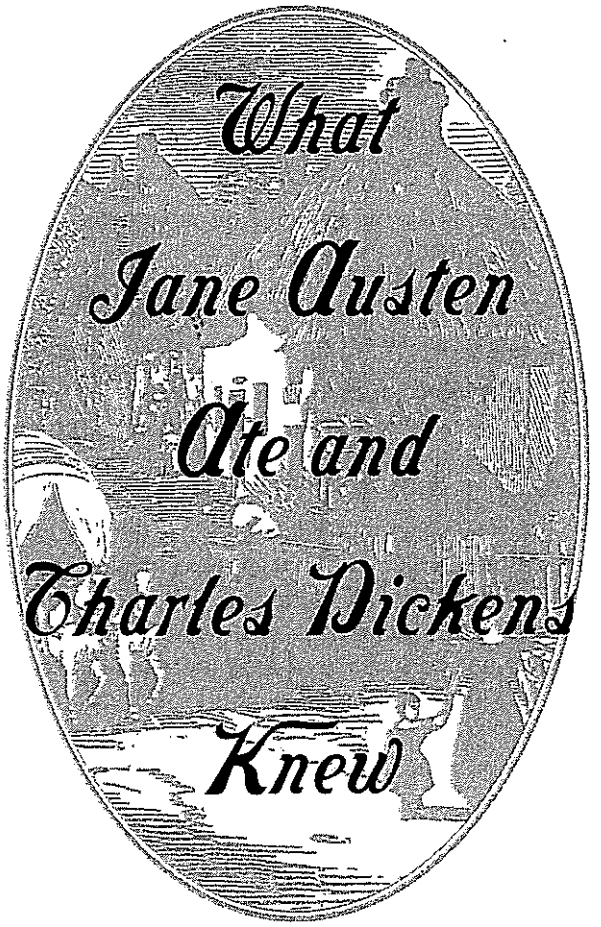
DANIEL POOL



FROM FOX HUNTING TO WHIST—
THE FACTS OF DAILY LIFE
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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The Church of England

In 1800 the Church of England enjoyed a position of extraordinary influence in English society. It was the official state church, it had its own court system, with virtually exclusive jurisdiction over wills,

The Church, Somerford Keynes.

marriages, and divorces, it was entitled to one tenth of the nation's farm produce each year through the tithing system, and its members alone were eligible to attend (and teach at) Oxford and Cambridge and to hold public office. Significantly, its leader, the archbishop of Canterbury, took precedence over everyone in the kingdom except the royal family and, along with the archbishop of York, sat in the House of Lords along with the church's twenty-four bishops. It was, of course, the Protestant church that Henry VIII created when he broke with Rome. The monarch thereafter was "supreme governor" of the church, and by law the Book of Common Prayer was required to be used in all church services so as to ensure the uniformity of liturgical practices and worship. The "prayer book," as it was sometimes called, contained among other things the text for the service of the two sacraments of the church—baptism and communion—and a rubric, or set of directions printed in red for the conduct of services. The prayer book also contained a catechism, a series of questions and answers concerning the faith to be mastered by those seeking to undergo confirmation, along with the Thirty-nine Articles, the elements of belief to which a clergyman or lay member of the church had to subscribe. The articles contained a number of relatively straightforward statements of Christian faith, together with some deliberately anti-Catholic dicta such as a requirement that services be conducted only in English. Parents customarily took

their newborns to church to be christened, or made a member of the church, by being dipped in water while friends or relatives of the family called godparents forswore the devil for the child on its behalf. When the child reached its teens and had mastered the catechism, it ratified or "confirmed" those same promises independently—now that it had come of age—at a confirmation ceremony, in order to demonstrate that it now appreciated the full import of the promises its godparents had made on its behalf. This involved a laying on of hands by the bishop to make the confirmation candidate an adult member of the church.

As befitted a large and powerful institution, the Church of England had an elaborate hierarchy of governance. At the top, just below the monarch, were the archbishop of Canterbury, who lived in Lambeth Palace, just across the Thames from Westminster; and the archbishop of York, each with responsibility for the "province" covering his part of England. The archbishops were chosen, generally from among the bishops, by the prime minister. The Canterbury prelate, by long custom, had precedence over his counterpart in the north of England. In addition to exercising a general supervision over the church, the archbishops are of most interest to the novel reader because of their ability to grant special marriage licenses enabling one to get married anywhere at any time.

The bishops, priests (i.e., the local rectors and vicars), and deacons made up the three "orders" of church. Laypeople becoming ordained thus spoke of "taking orders." Historically, bishops were chosen by the monarch, but by the 1800s Parliament—as it had with so many other royal functions—had largely usurped this one, too. Casaubon "is a tiptop man and may be a bishop—that kind of thing, you know, if Peel gets in," says Mr. Brooke to Dorothea in *Middlemarch.* When a bishop died, as we see at the beginning of *Barchester Towers,* the prime minister consulted with the two archbishops on what was supposed to be a list of at least three candidates. When one had been agreed upon, a written *congé d'élire* ("permission to elect") was sent to the dean and chapter of the bishop's see authorizing them to select a new bishop, as was their nominal right. But this was merely a courtesy. The *congé d'élire* always included a Letter Missive—which designated the person whom the chapter was actually required to elect.

The bishop's special responsibilities were to ordain new clergy, to confirm the faithful who wanted to become full members of the church, and to supervise the diocese, the administrative unit of the

church over which he had authority. If he were lucky, he would eventually get to sit in the House of Lords. Historically, both archbishops and the nation's twenty-four bishops all had had seats there, but when the population grew and the church created additional bishops in the 1800s, no additional parliamentary seats were created for the additional clergy. In consequence, except for the bishops of London, Durham, and Winchester, the twenty-four episcopal seats in the House of Lords had to be parceled out on the basis of seniority, and some clerics just got left out until the older bishops died off. Dr. Proudie in *Barchester Towers* is lucky. "He was selected for the vacant bishopric, and on the next vacancy which might occur in a diocese would take his place in the House of Lords." Nonetheless, in the House of Lords or not, the post of bishop was a grand one. The bishop was customarily addressed as "My Lord," and his primary residence was always known as a "palace." As garb emblematic of the office, he wore an apron and sleeves made of lawn, one of the finest varieties of linen.

The archdeacon was the bishop's subordinate and assisted him in governing the diocese, in part through the making of "visitations," or inspection tours throughout the parishes in the diocese. He was often assisted by one or more rural deans, who kept tabs on parish operations in the diocese. In the immediate vicinity of the bishop's cathedral there was invariably a chapter house, a meeting place for the dean, and canons who composed the chapter. They were in charge of seeing to the physical maintenance of the cathedral and the conduct of its services. The canons were sometimes referred to as prebendaries, since they were generally paid by a prebend, or a share of the endowment that had at one time been given to the cathdedral. (Cathedrals often had attached to them as well a precentor or a minor canon who helped with the choral services; the minor canon was *not* a member of the chapter.)

The local representative of the church was the parish "priest," as the vicar, rector, or perpetual curate of a parish was known. He conducted the services in the local parish church, tended to the sick, officiated at baptisms, christenings, funerals, and so on. His post was officially known as a "benefice" or a "living" and it could be used to maintain a handsome life-style. The minister was entitled to all or part of the local tithes, the mandatory annual payments by parishioners to sustain the church, which, until they were commuted to a monetary payment in 1840, consisted of one tenth of the farm produce in the area. In addition, he was often able to obtain some

revenue from the glebe, that is, the farmlands that went along with the parsonage itself. The glebe could be quite a help to a clergyman with a large family, like Jane Austen's father, who used the glebe at Steventon to grow wheat and raise sheep, cows, and pigs to help feed his eight children. In *The Warden,* we learn that the living of Septimus Harding, Crabtree Parva, "was only worth some eighty pounds a year, and a small house and glebe," but that there were also sizable livings like Crabtree Canonicorum, where "there are four hundred acres of glebe; and the great and small tithes, which both go to the rector, are worth four hundred pounds a year more."

Naturally, as we learn in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park,* these were sought-after positions, especially since the only formal obligation was to preach one Sunday sermon each week. Some livings were "within the gift" of the bishop. Such a living, called a "collation," could be bestowed by him unilaterally, and its incumbents were called "rectors" and received all the tithes. Other parishes, however, were administered by "vicars," who were entitled to only part of the produce, the so-called "small tithes," because these clergy were actually the representatives ("vicar" has the same root as "vicarious") of the *real* rectors. These latter reserved for themselves the "great tithes" of corn, wood, and hay. Typically, such a parish was one in which a monastic order centuries before had purchased the living and in so doing become the de facto rector and received all the tithes. In such instances, the order appointed a deputy or vicar (or sometimes a "perpetual curate" like the accused Mr. Crawley in *The Last Chronicle of Barset;* the Brontës' father was the real-life perpetual curate at Haworth) to perform the clerical duties of the parish. In later years, such livings generally passed into the hands of large landowners, like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is the "patron" of the obsequious Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice,* and then people might curry favor with the patron to get the post, since the church would not usually ordain someone a full priest unless he had a living to go to.

In 1830, some 7,268 of the 11,342 livings in England and Wales were in the control of private parties. Lady Catherine bestowed her living gratis on the unctuous Mr. Collins, and Sir Thomas Bertram in *Mansfield Park,* likewise, gave a living at Mansfield free to the Rev. Mr. Norris, who has "scarcely any private fortune" and who is both his friend and the new husband of his sister-in-law. Since they carried a nice steady income with them, however, such livings were much sought after, and, in fact, they were widely bought and sold—

just like annuities—as well as simply given away. In fact, when the Rev. Mr. Norris dies, Sir Thomas winds up selling the Mansfield living to a Dr. Grant in order to pay for his son Tom's "extravagance." Indeed, as late as the 1880s, perhaps one third of the 6,000 livings in private hands were still bought and sold in this manner. They were even advertised for sale in the *Times*. "Often the notice mentions that the incumbent is old," wrote a contemporary observer, "and the property is so much the more valuable, for the succession will be speedier."

Told in *Sense and Sensibility* of a living worth "about two hundred a year," John Dashwood finds it all but incredible that it should have been given away: "For the next presentation to a living of that value—supposing the late incumbent to have been old and sickly and likely to vacate it soon—he might have got I dare say—fourteen hundred pounds." In a well-to-do family, the alternative to giving away the living or selling it was to give it to one of the younger sons in the family who would not, like the eldest, be inheriting the estate. This, in fact, is what Sir Thomas proposes to do with two livings at his disposal in *Mansfield Park*, i.e., to give them to his younger son Edmund. The problem here was always that of ensuring that the living would somehow become vacant at precisely the time that the son fulfilled the requirements for ordination and was actually eligible to become the incumbent. Typically, a family with a younger son in this situation would keep such a living "warm" for him—as Sir Thomas Bertram tries to do for Edmund—by appointing a friend and/or curate to fill the post on a temporary basis until the son was ordained. This was the plan with one of the livings destined for Edmund, which, had his brother's extravagance not necessitated selling it, "would have been duly given to some friend to hold till he were old enough for orders." John Dashwood infers a similar scheme in *Sense and Sensibility* upon hearing that Colonel Brandon has offered a free living to Edward Ferrars: "Edward is only to hold the living till the person to whom the Colonel has really sold the presentation is old enough to take it."

If you *did* get a living, there was a certain ritual to be observed in assuming the office. Once you had been appointed (or "presented") to the living by your patron, if the living was not a collation, the bishop was then more or less obligated to "institute" you, or perform the tasks necessary to make you the true spiritual incumbent of the priest's office in the parish. In addition, you also had to be "inducted," that is, placed in possession of the physical church

property itself, which might involve being led up to the church door and having your hands placed on it, ringing the bells, and so on. Chapter 23 of *Barchester Towers* is entitled "Mr. Arabin reads himself in at St. Ewold's"—this additional step called for the reading aloud of the Thirty-nine Articles to the congregation from the pulpit of the parish church.

Below the bishop and the parish priest came the third and lowest of the three orders of the church, the deacon. He was a parson in training who assisted the parish priest in conducting the services, especially communion, helped the children with their catechism and visited the sick. After a year he could become a rector or vicar himself.

Altogether different from the dean was the curate, a full-fledged clergyman—but one without a benefice or living of his own. He assisted the rector or vicar in a parish. The curate was not the same as the perpetual curate, who was basically the same as a vicar, i.e., a permanent incumbent of a living which belonged to some lay rector. The real curate was, in fact, the "poor relation" of the Church of England, a source of cheap labor who very often made life cushy for clergymen who held livings but didn't really want to do the parish work associated with them. In *Middlemarch*, for example, Edward Casaubon is the rector at Lowick, but his absorption in his studies leads him to abjure all duties except giving the Sunday sermon; he leaves the rest to his curate.

The situation in another nearby town is somewhat different, as we learn when Eliot tells us of the rector, Mr. Cadwallader, "being resident in Freshitt and keeping a curate in Tipton." That is, the rector held more than one living simultaneously, not an unusual circumstance in the early part of the century. "Her father was a clergyman," we learn of Catherine Morland in the first paragraph of *Northanger Abbey*. "He had a considerable independence besides two good livings." Jane Austen's father himself was rector of both Deane and Steventon in Hampshire, and the incumbents of no fewer than 6,120 out of the 10,533 livings in England in 1827 were nonresidents. Where the rector was a nonresident, the spiritual care of the parish would generally be entrusted to a curate. It was also not unusual for a clergyman to hold an incumbency and a nonparochial post like a deanery. Sometimes, as in the case of the Reverend Vesey Stanhope, whose family's return wreaks such havoc in the Barchester Close in *Barchester Towers*, the rector did not even have to live in England. "He held a prebendal stall in the diocese; one of

the best residences in the close; and the two large rectories of Crabtree Canonicorum, and Stogpingum. Indeed," says Trollope, "he had the cure of three parishes, for that of Eiderdown was joined to Stogpingum. He had resided in Italy for twelve years." However, in the wake of the reform spirit that swept through England in the fourth and fifth decades of the century, this practice of pluralism, as it was called, became the target of increasing criticism, and the Pluralities Act of 1838 officially abolished it.

In fact, this criticism was part of a larger wave of reaction against laxity in the church, a reaction born in part of the preachings of John Wesley, a member of the Church of England who had begun preaching a new, back-to-the-Bible, born-again gospel of the heart at open-air services attended by craftsmen, poor people, and laborers in the early 1700s. His followers separated from the church of England and formed the Methodist Church. Its grim emphasis on hellfire and damnation made the term "methodist" a by-word for dour, uncharitable churchgoing fanaticism. The term is applied to the misanthropic farm servant Joseph in *Wuthering Heights* and to Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* by Mrs. Cadwallader when she describes Dorothea as having "a great deal of nonsense in her—a flighty sort of Methodistical stuff." None of the Victorian novelists seem to have liked the sect; in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the villainous Alec d'Urberville becomes a preacher for the "Ranters," or Primitive Methodists, without any discernible change except to make his sordid passion more hypocritical.

Wesley's message was really for the poor and the working class. When it filtered upward to the middle class, it took the form of the Evangelical movement, whose members, like the Brontës' father, remained inside the Church of England. Not that the Evangelicals pleased Dickens and Trollope any more than the Methodists. Murdstone and Obadiah Slope are classic portraits of the baneful influence of the new movement. "Low Church" in their tendencies, they preached the desperately sinful nature of man and abhorred ceremony and ritual. As other influences from within the Church of England grew, they transformed it from the relatively relaxed latitudinarian institution that we encounter in *Middlemarch* or *Silas Marner* ("there was no reason, then, why the rector's dancing should not be received as part of the fitness of things quite as much as the Squire's") into the austere, disapproving bastion of grimness that Bishop Proudie and his wife represent in *Barchester Towers*. "I can remember," says one observer in *The Last Chronicle of*

Barset, recalling the earlier era, "when the clergymen did more dancing in Barchester than all the young men in the city put together."

Barchester Towers centers on the conflict between the Low Church tendencies of this new Evangelical faction and the old-fashioned High Church tendencies represented by Archdeacon Grantly. But in fact, the "High Church" group split within itself. Originally, High Church designated no more than the old, comfortably Tory group within the Church of England, the element characterized by men like the Grantlys in *Barchester Towers* and the morally relaxed, hunting and fishing clergy in *Middlemarch.* However, a group at Oxford University centered around John Keble and E. B. Pusey, a professor of Hebrew, began publishing in the 1830s a series of tracts (the group was sometimes known as the Tractarians) opining that the church was *too* close to the people. They suggested reconsidering some of the practices that had gone out when the church had divorced itself from Rome, such as chanting, the wearing of colored vestments, and so forth. But this High Church predilection for ritual and semi-Catholic doctrine, as Trollope points out, was no more to the liking of the old-fashioned Grantly faction than the Low Church tendencies of the Proudies. "They all preached in their black gowns as their fathers had done before them; they wore ordinary black cloth waistcoats; they had no candles on their altars, either lighted or unlighted; they made no private genuflexions. . . . The services were decently and demurely read in their parish churches, chanting was confined to the cathedral, and the science of intoning was unknown. One young man who had come direct from Oxford as a curate to Plumstead had, after the lapse of two or three Sundays, made a faint attempt, much to the bewilderment of the poorer part of the congregation." The conflict is dramatized in the dispute between Obadiah Slope and Mr. Arabin, the former declaring that "the main part of the consecration of a clergyman was the self-devotion of the inner man to the duties of the ministry. Mr. Arabin contended that a man was not consecrated at all, had, indeed, no single attribute of a clergyman, unless he became so through the imposition of some bishop's hands, who had become a bishop through the imposition of other hands, and so on in a direct line to one of the apostles." The battles between these groups went on for years, with the addition of still another, "Broad Church," faction, which tried to provide for a moderate, common ground among the other groups. As late as 1874, however, feeling

was still running sufficiently high on the matter to lead to the passage of the Public Worship Act, under whose provisions a number of Anglican churchmen actually went to jail for allegedly introducing "Catholic" practices into their worship.

Oxford and Cambridge

"Yes, 'tis a serious-minded place. Not but there's wenches in the streets o' nights," says a carter to Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure* about Christminster, which Thomas Hardy meant to stand in for Oxford. "You know, I suppose, that they raise pa'sons there like radishes in a bed? And though it do take—how many years, Bob?—five years to turn a lirruping hobble-de-hoy chap into a solemn preaching man, with no corrupt passions, they'll do it, if it can be done, and polish un off like the workmen they be, and turn un out wi' a long face, and a black coat and waistcoat, and a religious collar and hat."

And so they did—just as Oxford and Cambridge also turned out future prime ministers, distinguished physicians, would-be barristers, and countless numbers of perfectly ordinary aristocrats and country squires.

Each some fifty or so miles north of London, both Oxford and Cambridge dated back to the 1200s when Oxford was founded along the Thames by a "university" or collective organization of scholars and their masters, and Cambridge by a splinter group from Oxford a few years later.

The two universities were organized around colleges, which were some twenty or more units of residency and instruction. Each college had a head (known variously as a president, dean, warden, provost, or master), a governing body of "fellows," some of them tutors of the undergraduates, and a number of undergraduate students. All Souls, Balliol, Christ Church, Jesus, Magdalen, Merton, Oriel, and Trinity were among the more famous of the colleges at Oxford; Corpus (Christi), Emmanuel, Jesus, King's, Magdalene, Queen's, St. John's, and Trinity among the more celebrated at Cambridge. Collectively, the heads of the colleges ran the university. Although administration was nominally in the charge of a chancellor

(Prince Albert for a while at Cambridge), a vice-chancellor selected by the colleges really ran things. Instruction—such as there was—took place within the colleges, since for much of the century the university made only perfunctory attempts to provide university-wide instruction. The tutors who took charge of this instruction within a college were fellows, that is, undergraduates who had been elected to permanent membership in the college's governing body as a consequence of doing well on undergraduate exams. Fellowship brought with it not only influence within the college but a permanent stipend, frequently without any duties attached to it, so that a fellowship, if you wanted to be nonresident, as some were, was really a kind of permanent subsidy to start you—or keep you—going in a career. Angel Clare apostrophizes Tess Durbeyfield, calling her "the great prize of my life—my Fellowship, I call you. My brother's fellowship was won at his college, mine at Talbothays Dairy."

What was college life like? Students attended chapel at eight o'clock, then they had meetings with their tutors in the morning and lectures—if there were any—in the afternoon. They dined "in Hall" at five and were required to be back in their college by nine. If they were not, they were fined. Discipline for the colleges was enforced by two proctors assisted by men known as "bull-dogs." An American visitor to Oxford in the 1870s noted that they wandered in search of rule-breaking undergraduates through "the streets day and night and are obliged to look into billiard rooms, hotels, and bars, and have the right to search any house in town with only ten minutes' notice, by virtue of an old provision in the charter of Oxford." Infractions of the rules could result in confinement within the college boundaries (being "gated"), suspension (being "rusticated"), or expulsion (being "sent down"). (To be "plucked" was to fail an exam.) The undergraduate curriculum took three years to complete, the university terms being Michaelmas, Hilary, Easter, and Trinity at Oxford; Michaelmas, Lent, and Easter at Cambridge.

Class distinctions were rife. In some colleges the nobility wore distinctive clothing and sat at special tables. Their caps sometimes carried special tassels or "tufts"; "tuft-hunting" passed into the language as a synonym for sucking up to the aristocracy. Scholarship students ("sizars" at Cambridge; "servitors" at Oxford) were publicly distinguished from their fellow students, who were called "commoners" at Oxford and "pensioners" at Cambridge. Scholarships could provide great opportunity, though; we are told in *Bar-*

chester Towers that Obadiah Slope has progressed from sizar to M.A. to preacher.

For many years, an inordinate percentage of Oxford and Cambridge graduates became Church of England clergy. At Oxford, for example, 18 of the 19 heads of colleges were clergymen as late as 1851, as were 349 out of the 542 fellows, and 215 undergraduates were ordained that year. The university offered several routes into the church. On the one hand, you could graduate as a simple B.A. and become a rector or vicar, as Fred Vincy considers doing in *Middlemarch*. On the other, as in the case of Mr. Arabin in *Barchester Towers*, if there was no living immediately available, you could become a fellow and teach—Mr. Arabin is a professor of poetry—while waiting for a parish position to open up.

Partly because of this clerical tradition, fellows had to be unmarried until the 1880s (even though clergy outside the universities were almost always married). And until 1871 you could not hold the post of fellow or any other faculty or administrative position in the universities without being a member of the Church of England, nor could you matriculate in either of the universities without church membership until 1854. It is this deep intertwining of the church and academic life that suggests why the most important movement within the nineteenth-century Church of England—the aptly named Oxford Movement—originated at one of the two universities. Mr. Arabin—sent to Barchester to do battle with the Low Church Obadiah Slope—is, of course, an Oxford man, but then Oxford was always the more Tory and High Church of the two universities, even before Newman and Keble. The liberal-leaning Mr. Brooke, the adherent of Wilberforce and of "Thought," tells us in *Middlemarch* how he "was at Cambridge when Wordsworth was there." Indeed, Cambridge had a reputation for rationalism and mathematics exemplified in the career of her most famous scholar, Isaac Newton. In reviewing a prospective teacher's qualifications for a young Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, Mr. Riley thinks that, after all, the man in question "was an Oxford man, and the Oxford men were always—no, no, it was the Cambridge men who were always good mathematicians."

There were, of course, those undergraduates who did not become clerics, who kept horses, led dissolute lives, caroused, got into debt, and did all the other things that were the essence of a solid liberal arts education for many in the upper classes. Each college at

Oxford, for example, had its own crew of eight oarsmen. At the end of *Jude the Obscure*, the boat racing, or "bumping," provides an ironic counterpoint to the description of Jude's death.

At the same time, however, there was a gradual effort during the 1800s to introduce higher academic standards in the colleges. In the early part of the century, Cambridge created its tripos exams, so called from the three-legged wooden stools on which the examiners usually sat. These were honors exams in classics and math. The best math honors students were called wranglers and the best of these wranglers was called the senior wrangler. At Oxford, the top distinction in a subject was a "first"—starting in 1808 the man who did best in both math and classics there got a "double first"—an award given to both William Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel. (But not—we are clearly told—to Mr. Arabin, who "had occupied himself too much with High Church matters . . . to devote himself with sufficient vigour to the acquisition of a double first.")

The pace of educational reform, however, was slow, and in the middle of the century Parliament unleashed a commission on the universities to inquire if they couldn't—like everything else retrograde in the country—be reformed. The commission recommended that the university side of things be built up, the colleges' power reduced, the antiquated provisions for scholarships and the like be ended, and various other reforms be introduced to nudge the universities quietly into the nineteenth century. This was done, and, in addition, the Test Acts were abolished, fellows were allowed to marry, and the universities expanded in size—by 1900, Oxford was some 2,500 strong; Cambridge had grown to almost 2,800.

Schools

The picture of educators in the nineteenth-century novel is fairly grim—tormented governesses like Jane Eyre, evil schoolmasters like Wackford Squeers or Eugene Hexam, fatuous headmistresses like the pompous Miss Pinkerton, the obnoxious Mr. McChoakumchild, and the unhappy would-be instructress Sue Bridehead, who runs away from her teacher's college—the dreary catalogue goes on and on.

The reality most children encountered was perhaps not as bad as this list would suggest. At the top of the ladder came the great "public" schools, so called because originally they were open to all. The public schools were nonprofit institutions founded with money left by generous donors to teach the local lads in the town of Eton or Harrow or wherever Latin and Greek grammar. (Hence, "grammar schools.") It was not until later that they began to take rich children, and, in so doing, to become more like what we would consider private schools. The public schools were of great social importance but little literary consequence; not even Dickens, perhaps the novelist most concerned with education, deals with them other than by a passing reference.

However, they at least provided some form of education. Much of what passed for elementary and secondary education in England in 1800 was—to put it kindly—catch as catch can, as witness the kind of dame or evening school that Pip attends in *Great Expectations*, "taught" by an old woman "of unlimited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven each every evening, in the society of youth who paid twopence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it," or her real-life counterpart who was appointed parish schoolmaster because "he was past minding the pigs."

There was no national school system at the beginning of the era, and no one cared. The poor were apprenticed at an early age or went to work in the fields, and the rich had a governess for their daughter and a clergyman tutor for their son until he went away to Eton or Oxford. (Women, of course, generally did not learn Latin and Greek, "those provinces of masculine knowledge," as Eliot calls them in *Middlemarch*, whose mastery, Dorothea Brooke initially believes, would allow her a vantage point from "which all truth could be seen more clearly." In 1869, an etiquette manual observed that "gentlemen should not make use of classical quotations in the presence of ladies, without apologizing for, or translating them.")

It was not until members of the Church of England became appalled at the thought of lower-class children growing up in godlessness because they could not read the Bible that things changed. In 1811 those who were worried formed the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales to spread the Word of God by teaching people to read the Bible.

At first the institutions they created were Sunday schools only,

but gradually they became weekday elementary schools. They were such a hit that by 1839 Parliament was supporting these "national" schools, as they were called, with an annual grant of £30,000, a public subsidy of religious education that is not quite so surprising if we recall that the Church of England was the official state church. Most national schools were run on the monitorial, or mutual, system, which was advertised as permitting the remarkably cost-saving and efficient pupil-teacher ratio of 500 to 1. The teacher taught the monitors, who were students themselves, and then the monitors went and taught the bulk of the children while the teacher taught still more monitors. After a special Privy Council committee report, this evolved into the pupil-teacher system, that is, pupils were formally apprenticed to a teacher for a period of time during which they were trained in teaching techniques, at the end of which time they could take an exam for "training college" (a teacher's college). If they completed the training college curriculum they would theoretically be in excellent shape to obtain the certificate that allowed them to teach.

It was a noble idea and a chance—the only chance—for a "poor" person to get any higher education in Britain for much of the nineteenth century. The training school, however, often emphasized mastery of a killingly heavy dose of facts. Mr. McChoakumchild, the schoolmaster in the ghastly opening scenes of *Hard Times*, is a product of just such a course: "He and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs . . . he had worked his stony way into Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council's Schedule B, and had taken the bloom off the higher branches of mathematics and physical science, French, German, Latin and Greek. He knew all about the watersheds of all the world (whatever they are), and all the histories of all the peoples, and all the names of all the rivers and mountains. . . . If he had only learnt a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more!"

Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* attends such a college near the end of the century, a grim place from the sound of it, as Hardy points out while telling us the population from which its students were drawn: "The seventy young women, of ages varying in the main from nineteen to one-and-twenty, though several were older, who at this date filled the species of nunnery known as the Training School at Melchester, formed a very mixed community, which in-

cluded the daughters of mechanics, curates, surgeons, shop-keepers, farmers, dairymen, soldiers, sailors and villagers."

In 1862 the government took another halting step toward uniform national education (elementary education was not made compulsory until 1880) by requiring children in subsidized schools to meet a series of standards—the boys and girls being required by the end of the sixth standard to read and write simple passages and to do arithmetic, and the girls to be capable in needlework, too. As late as 1871 more than 19 percent of the men and 26 percent of the women getting married could only make an "X" next to their name in the parish register. By 1891 these percentages dropped to about 7 each.

But it was not a matter of simply learning to read or write when one attended these schools, for the children were exposed to the world outside their own local area, sometimes in ways that set them apart from the older generation. "Mrs. Durbeyfield habitually spoke the dialect," Hardy tells us of Tess's mother, "her daughter, who had passed the Sixth Standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect at home, more or less, ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality." It was a dramatic change in the old ways—one can scarcely conceive of the intellectually egalitarian romance between Angel Clare and a cottager's daughter like Tess taking place half a century earlier.

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