

A Biographical Account of William Gurnall,
(the Author of *'The Christian in Complete Armour.'*)
by
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WILLIAM GURNALL, author of *'The Christian in Complete Armour,'* is a man about whom the world possesses singularly little information. Perhaps there is no writer who has left a name so familiar to all readers of puritan theology, but of whose personal history so little is known. Except the three facts, that he was a puritan divine of the seventeenth century,—that he was minister of Lavenham,—and that he wrote a well-known book of practical divinity, most persons know nothing of William Gurnall.

This dearth of information about so good a man appears at first sight extraordinary and unaccountable. Born, as he was, in a seaport town of no mean importance,—the son of parents who held a prominent position in the town,—educated at Cambridge, at one of the best-known colleges of the day,—the contemporary of leading divines of the commonwealth times,—minister of the largest church in West Suffolk for the uninterrupted period of thirty-five years,—author of a work which, from its first appearance, was eminently popular,—Gurnall was a man, we naturally feel, of whom more ought to be known. How is it then that more is not known? How shall we account for the absence of any notice of him in the biographical writings of his day?

I believe that these questions admit of a very simple answer. That answer is to be found in the line of conduct which Gurnall followed in the year 1662, on the passing of the Act of Uniformity. He did not secede from the Church of England. He was not one of the famous two thousand ministers who gave up their preferment on St. Bartholomew's Day, and became Nonconformists. He retained his position, and continued rector of Lavenham. Puritan as he undoubtedly was, both in doctrine and practice, he did not do what many of his brethren did. When Baxter, Manton, Owen, Goodwin, and a host of other giants in theology, seceded from the Church of England, Gurnall stood fast, and refused to move. He did not act with the party with which he had generally acted, and was left behind.

The result of this line of conduct can easily be imagined. Whatever opinions we may hold about Gurnall's conformity, we must all allow that the course he took was not likely to make him a favourite with either of the two great religious parties into which England was divided. A neutral is never popular in a season of strife and controversy. Both sides suspect him. Each party is offended at him for not casting his weight into their scale. This, I suspect, was precisely Gurnall's position. He was a Puritan in doctrine, and yet he steadfastly adhered to the Church of England. He was a minister of the Church of England, and yet a thorough Puritan both in preaching and practice. In fact, he was just the man to be disliked and slighted by both sides.

I throw out the conjecture I have made with considerable diffidence. It is undoubtedly nothing but a conjecture. But I look at the broad fact that the biographical writers who have handled Gurnall's age, have chronicled scores of names of far less weight than his, and have refused to say a word about the author of *'The Christian in Complete Armour.'* Calamy, Clarke, Neal, and Brooke have written hundreds of pages about men for whom the world cares nothing now, but not a page about Gurnall! I leave it to others to offer a better explanation of this fact if they can. I must be allowed to retain my own settled conviction, that we should know far more about

Gurnall if he had not submitted to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and retained the pulpit of Lavenham parish church.

Almost the only source of information about Gurnall which we now possess is a small volume, published in 1830, by a writer named M'Keon, entitled, 'An Inquiry into the Birthplace, Parentage, Life, and Writings of the Rev. William Gurnall, formerly Rector of Lavenham, in Suffolk, and Author of "The Christian in Complete Armour."' This book was printed and published for the author at Woodbridge, in Suffolk, and not in London. It is owing to this circumstance, perhaps, that it seems to have attracted little notice, and to have become comparatively unknown.

Mr. M'Keon was an inhabitant of Lavenham, and likely to procure information about Gurnall, if any one could. He was undoubtedly a painstaking man, and an antiquarian of considerable research. His accuracy and correctness are worthy of all commendation. There is hardly a single date or fact in his book which I have not taken the trouble to verify by inquiry and investigation; and there is hardly one, I feel bound to say, in which I have found him wrong. But it cannot be said that his 'Inquiry' is written in a popular and attractive style. In accumulating facts he was most successful; in arranging and exhibiting them to the reading public I certainly think he failed. He seems, in fact, to have been a type of that peculiar class of men who have the faculty of getting things into their heads, while they are unable to bring them out again—mighty at heaping up knowledge, but impotent at spreading it—clever at accumulating literary treasure, but utterly incapable of spending it.

However, whatever may be the faults of Mr. M'Keon's book, it is certainly the only attempt at any account of Gurnall which has hitherto existed. A funeral sermon, to be sure, was preached by Gurnall's friend and neighbour, the well-known commentator Burkitt. But the information it contains is comparatively very small. I must therefore frankly avow that I am indebted to Mr. M'Keon's work for the greater part of the facts about Gurnall which I have brought together in the following pages. I have tried to re-arrange these facts. I have endeavoured to present them to the reader in an attractive form, by illustrating them with some cross lights from the history of Gurnall's times. I have added a few facts which Mr. M'Keon was probably unable to obtain. But I think it only fair to state that Mr. M'Keon's book is the principal mine from which the biographical account of Gurnall now presented to the reader has been drawn. If I have added anything of interest to his work, it is almost always by following up clues which his volume indicated or put into my hand.

William Gurnall was born at Lynn, in the county of Norfolk, in the year 1616, and was baptized at St. Margaret's Church in that town, on the 17th of November, 1616. His father and mother were married at St. Margaret's Church on the 31st of December, 1615, and the subject of this memoir was therefore their eldest child.¹

It has often been observed that the mothers of great men, and especially of great divines, have been remarkable for strong mind and force of intellect. Mothers have been found, as a general rule, to influence children's character far more than fathers. How far this was true in the case of Gurnall we have unfortunately no means of judging. We only know that his mother's maiden name was Catherine Dressit, and that in all probability she was a native of Lynn.

Gregory, the father of William Gurnall, appears to have been one of the principal inhabitants of Lynn. At any rate he was an alderman of his native town in the year when his son was born, and was mayor of the borough eight years afterwards, in 1624. Nothing is known of his calling or occupation. The fact that his son died possessed of certain landed property at Walpole, a country parish not far from Lynn,

makes it highly probable that Gregory Gurnall was a landed proprietor. But on this point nothing certain is known.

Gurnall had the misfortune to lose his father when he was only fifteen years old. His death is recorded in the register of St. Margaret's, Lynn, as having taken place on the 14th of October, 1631. He was buried in St. Margaret's Church, and a tomb was erected to his memory, with a curious inscription. This tomb is no longer extant, as the spire of St. Margaret's Church was blown down in a violent hurricane in the year 1741, and falling on the body of the church destroyed a large portion of the building. Mackerell's History of Lynn, published about four years before the hurricane, records the inscription. If epitaphs were worth anything, the language of Gregory Gurnall's epitaph might lead us to the conclusion that he was a godly man. But unhappily it is too well known that tombstones are not always to be trusted.

How long Gurnall's mother survived his father there is no evidence to show. M'Keon conjectures that she married again. It is certainly a curious fact that Burkitt, the commentator, in his funeral sermon following on William Gurnall, uses the language:—'How great was that tribute of veneration and respect which he constantly paid to the hoary hairs of his aged parents.' Considering that his father died when he was only fifteen years old, these words can hardly be supposed to apply to Gregory Gurnall. Unless therefore the word 'parents' in Burkitt's sermon is a printer's mistake for 'parent,' it seems a very probable idea that Gurnall's mother married again, and that he had a kind and loving stepfather. But who he was, and how long his mother lived, we do not know.

The first fifteen years of Gurnall's life appear to have been spent in his native town of Lynn. There is at any rate no doubt that he was educated at the free grammar-school of that town up to the time when he went to Cambridge. The fact is recorded in the books of the school.

The first fifteen years of life have often so much weight in the formation of a man's character, that it would be very interesting to find out the influences under which William Gurnall spent his early years. Unhappily we possess no materials for doing this. Ambrose Fish was appointed master of Lynn Grammar-school in 1626, in the place of Mr. Robinson, deceased, and Robert Woodmansea was appointed master in 1627. But we know nothing of these men. I can only point out two things which appear to me deserving of attention.

For one thing, we may probably trace up to Lynn, Gurnall's puritan predilections and opinions. Lynn was one of the chief towns of the most thoroughly Protestant district in England in the seventeenth century. In the days of Queen Mary and Elizabeth the inhabitants of Norfolk and Suffolk were famous for their deep attachment to the doctrines of the Reformation. In the days of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth, they were no less famous for their steadfast adherence to puritan principles. In no part of England were high-church opinions so thoroughly disliked as in the diocese of Norwich, and in no diocese were the minds of people so continually exasperated by vexatious persecution of Nonconformist ship

Brought up in a large market-town like Lynn, we cannot doubt that the religious atmosphere in which young Gurnall moved was essentially puritan. If, as it seems not unlikely, from a comparison of dates, the famous John Arrowsmith and Samuel Fairclough were ministers at Lynn during Gurnall's school-days, we get an additional ray of light thrown on the source of his doctrinal opinions. To hear men like Arrowsmith and Fairclough preach every Sunday, and perhaps to be solemnly catechised or examined by Arrowsmith on stated public occasions, were just the things likely to produce an indelible impression on a mind like Gurnall's³

For another thing, we probably owe to Gurnall's early residence at Lynn, his remarkable familiarity with the sea, sailors, and shipping. I was once puzzled to make out the reason why nautical illustrations so frequently occur in his writings. It did not surprise me to find an author like Gurnall who delighted in illustrations, pressing everything in town and country into his service. I could understand the man who was rector of a Suffolk town for thirty-five years, drawing comparisons from shops and farms, and streets, and fields and horses, and cattle and corn, and grass and flowers. I could understand the minister who lived through the bloody wars of the commonwealth times using abundant imagery from the habits of soldiers and from the battlefield. But I never could understand Gurnall's familiarity with the sea and shipping until I found out that he was born and bred in Lynn. He knew well what a sailor's life was. He had seen the quaint-looking craft which carried on the coasting trade of Lynn. He had doubtless talked with sailors who could tell the perils of 'the Wash,' the Lincolnshire coast, the Norfolk Sands, and the voyage to the Humber. Hence came his nautical illustrations in Lavenham pulpit. How true it is that all knowledge is useful to a minister of Christ. The man of God makes everything he has seen serviceable to his Master's cause.

The next thing that we know about Gurnall is his connection with Cambridge as a pensioner of Emmanuel College. It appears that Lynn corporation had two scholarships at Emmanuel in its gift, connected with the grammar-school of the town. To one of these Gurnall was presented by the corporation in December, 1631, not long after his father's death. A correspondent of M'Keon at Lynn says: 'I find on reference to the corporation books, that on the 2d December, 1631, William Gurnall, son of Gregory Gurnall, alderman there, lately deceased, and one of the scholars of Lynn school, was nominated to one of the scholarships in Emmanuel College, Cambridge, called Lynn scholarship, or Mr. Titleys scholarship; and that on the 11th of June, 1632, the nomination, dated 29th March then last, passed the corporation seal.

Of Gurnall's history during his residence at Cambridge we know literally nothing, with the exception of the following bald facts. The college books record that William Gurnall, pensioner, of Norfolk, was admitted March 29, 1632, was B.A., 1635, and M.A., 1639. It is certain that he was never elected a fellow of his college, and as the Lynn scholarship was only tenable for seven years, it is highly probable that he ceased to reside at Cambridge in the year 1639, when he took his degree as M.A., and received no further assistance from his scholarship.

It would no doubt be highly interesting, if we knew something of Gurnall's history during the seven years of his university life. The character of a young man is generally moulded for life during the period between sixteen and twenty-three, and our author was probably no exception to this rule. Who were his friends and companions? Who were his tutors and lecturers? Was he a reading man? Whom did he walk with and talk with? What great preacher did he hear in the university pulpit? What were his habits and ways of employing his time? What side did he espouse in the mighty controversies of the day? All these are questions which it would be very pleasant to have answered. The answers would throw great light on many a passage in his after-life and writings. But the answers unhappily are not forthcoming. The only light that we can throw on Gurnall's university life, consists of a few facts about his college, and the general state of England between 1632 and 1639.

The college to which Gurnall belonged was always famous in the seventeenth century for its theological tendencies. It was eminently a puritan college.

Sir Walter Mildmay of Chelmsford, in Essex, was the founder of Emmanuel College, and even from its very foundation in 1585, it seems to have been notorious for

its attachment to puritan principles. Fuller, in his history of Cambridge, relates that on 'Sir Walter Mildmay coming to court, soon after he had founded his college, Queen Elizabeth said to him, "Sir Walter, I hear you have erected a puritan foundation." "No, madam" saith he, "far be it from me to countenance anything contrary to your established laws; but I have set an acorn, which, when it becomes an oak, God alone knows what will be the fruit thereof." Sure I am (adds Fuller, writing about 1650) at this day it hath overshadowed all the university, more than a moiety of the present masters of colleges being bred therein.'

The number of leading divines of the seventeenth century who were educated at Emmanuel is certainly extraordinary. Beside Bishop Hall and Bishop Bedell, we find in the list of its members the names of Stephen Marshall, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Sheppard, Thomas Hooker, Ezekiel Culverwell, Ralph Gudworth, Samuel Croke, John Cotton, John Stoughton, Anthony Burgess, Laurence Ghaderton, John Preston, Anthony Tuckney, Lazarus Seaman, Matthew Poole, Samuel Clarke, Ralph Venning, Thomas Watson, Stephen Charnock, William Bridge, Peter Sterry, Samuel Cradock. Any one familiar with puritan divinity will see at a glance that this catalogue embraces the names of some of the most eminent puritan writers. Some of them no doubt were cotemporaries and fellow-students of Gurnall himself.

From inquiries which I have made, I have succeeded in obtaining some information about Emmanuel College between the years 1632 and 1639, which I think will not be devoid of interest to all admirers of Gurnall. At any rate it will show who were at Emmanuel when he was there, both as an undergraduate and a graduate, and with what kind of minds he was associated.

The masters at Emmanuel in Gurnall's time were (1.) William Sancroft, uncle of the archbishop, who held the office from 1628 to 1637, and (2.) Holdsworth, who held the office from 1637 to 1645, when he was ejected by the Earl of Manchester. He was a zealous advocate of the king, and attended him during his confinement in the Isle of Wight, and soon after, according to Neal, died of grief.

The reason why Gurnall was never elected fellow of his college appears to have been the high character and attainment of his competitors. According to the books of Emmanuel, Ralph Cudworth was elected fellow in 1639, Worthington (afterward master of Jesus) in 1641, and Sancroft (afterward Archbishop of Canterbury), in 1642.

The fellows of Emmanuel between 1632 and 1639 were the following:—Walter Foster, Richard Clarke, John Ward, Thomas Ball, Ezekiel Wright, Thomas Hill, Nicholas Hall, William Bridge, Samuel Bowles, Henry Salmon, David Ensigne, Anthony Burgess, Thomas Holbeck, Thomas Horton, Malachi Harris, R. Sorsby, Benjamin Whichcot, John Henderson, John Almond, R. Weller, Peter Sterry, Laurence Sarson, John Saddler, Ralph Cudworth.

'All the fellows,' says a member of Emmanuel, 'seem to have been tutors in their day, though some had more pupils than others. As far as our books lead us to infer, Hill, Hall, Burgess, Holbeck, Ensigne, Salmon, Whichcot, all seem to have been most popular tutors in their day. We have no tutors' books which tell us under whom Gurnall was admitted.'

When I add to the above information the fact that Horrox the astronomer was admitted at Emmanuel in 1632, the same year as Gurnall, and that Archbishop Sancroft, the famous non-juror, was admitted in 1633, I shall have exhausted all the stock of information that I have been able to scrape together about Gurnall's college life and his cotemporaries.

Seven years spent at a college like Emmanuel could not fail to have an effect on Gurnall's mind. Brought up from his boyhood to honour and reverence the Puritans

as the excellent of the earth, at Lynn, trained afterwards at a college where the whole atmosphere was peculiarly puritan, it would have been strange indeed if Gurnall had grown up without decided puritan opinions.

The state of England during the seven years of Gurnall's university life was very peculiar. It was the crisis of the troubled period between the reformation and the commonwealth times. The suicidal blind misgovernment of Charles 1. was rapidly paving the way for the destruction of the throne. The undisguised Romish tendencies and bitter persecutions of Archbishop Laud, and his fellow-workers, were doing the same for the Church of England. From one end of the country to the other there were discontent, murmuring, controversy, bitterness, and party spirit. On every side there were symptoms of a coming break-up, or a violent conflict both in church and state.

Cambridge, we need not doubt, had its full share of all the troubles and discomfort of this stormy period. The following passage from Fuller's History of Cambridge records things which happened there in 1632—the very year that Gurnall entered Emmanuel—things which no doubt he saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears:—

'This year, "says Fuller, "a grave divine preaching before the university at St. Mary's, had this passage in his sermon: "That as at the Olympian games he was counted the conqueror who could drive his chariot wheels nearest to the mark, yet so as not to hinder his running, or stick thereon, so he, who in his sermons could preach near Popery, and yet no Popery, there was your man." And, indeed, it now began to be the complaint of most moderate men, that many in the university, both in school and pulpit, approached the opinion of the Church of Rome more than ever before

'Mr. Bernard, lecturer of St. Sepulchre's in London, preached at St. Mary's in the afternoon of May 6th, his text, 1 Sam. iv. 21: "The glory is departed from Israel," &c. In handling whereof he let fall some passages which gave distaste to a prevalent party in the university, as for saying, (1.) That God's ordinances, when blended and adulterated with innovations of men, cease to be God's ordinances, and he owneth them no longer. (2.) That it is impossible any should be saved, living and dying without repentance in the doctrine of Rome, as the Tridentine Council hath decreed it. (3.) That treason is not limited to the blood royal; but that he is a traitor against a nation that depriveth it of God's ordinances. (4.) That some shamefully symbolize in Pelagian error and superstitious ceremonies with the Church of Rome.—Let us pray such to their conversion or to their destruction, &c.

'Dr. Cumber, vice-chancellor, gave speedy notice hereof to Dr. Laud, Bishop of London, though he (so quick his university intelligence) had information thereof before. Therefore he was brought into the high commission, and a recantation tendered to him, which he refused to subscribe, though professing his sincere sorrow and penitency, in his petition and letter to the bishop, for any oversight and unbecoming expression in his sermon. Hereupon he was sent back to the new prison, where he died. If he was miserably abused therein by his keepers, as some have reported, to the shortening of his life, he that maketh inquisition for blood, either hath, or will be, a revenger thereof.'

This deplorable affair took place, let us remember, in the year 1632, the very year that Gurnall came up to reside at Emmanuel. How much stir it would excite among the undergraduates of a thoroughly puritan college we can easily imagine. All who know anything of an English university, know how ready the undergraduates are, as a body, to sympathize with the persecuted and oppressed.

It was during Gurnall's residence at Cambridge that Dr. Ward, one of the representatives of the Church of England at the Synod of Dort, gave the following unsatisfactory

description of the state of the university, in a letter to Archbishop Usher, dated 1634. He says, It may be you are willing to hear of our university affairs. I may truly say I never knew them in worse condition since I was a member thereof, which is almost forty-six years'⁴

It was during Gurnall's residence at Cambridge that the infamous sentence on Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton, was passed in the court of Star Chamber. For publishing certain alleged libels on the Church of England these unfortunate men were condemned to stand in the pillory, and have their ears publicly cut off. The sentence was actually carried into effect, June 30, 1637, in Palacyard. Bastwick was a physician, who had been educated at Emmanuel College. We can easily imagine the sensation which his punishment would create within the walls of his old college.

It was during Gurnall's residence at Cambridge that the famous disturbances in Scotland arose, out of Archbishop Laud's attempt to introduce the notorious Scotch Liturgy, with its popish communion office, into the churches of Edinburgh. The well-known riot in St. Giles' Church, when a stool was thrown at the Bishop of Edinburgh's head by a zealous woman called Jenny Geddes, took place on Sunday, July 23, 1637.

It was during Gurnall's residence at Cambridge that John Hampden began the unhappy struggle between the king and his subjects by refusing to pay ship-money. The decision of the chief-justice was given against him on the 9th of June, 1637.

I mention these facts and dates in order to give the reader some idea of the times in which Gurnall passed through his university career. We cannot doubt that his character and opinions must have been strongly influenced by them. No one could be at Cambridge from 1632 to 1639, without seeing and hearing things which would leave a mark on his memory for life, and without coming across a stream of conflicting opinions which he would remember to his dying day. No doubt Gurnall became acquainted with some of the best specimens of the puritan divines. No doubt also he saw in the heart of a puritan college enough to make him feel that all Puritans were not perfect men. I venture the conjecture that his after-life at every step was greatly influenced by the recollection of what he saw at Emmanuel, Cambridge.

The five years of Gurnall's life immediately after he left Cambridge in 1639, are a period in his history of which nothing whatever seems to be known. I must honestly confess that I can throw little light upon it, and can only offer surmises and conjectures. He disappears from our notice on leaving Emmanuel in 1639. He does not appear again till he is made rector of Lavenham in 1644. But how, and where, and in what manner, and in what capacity, he spent the intervening interval of five years, we have no certain record.

It would be difficult to name five years of English history in which so many important events occurred, as between 1639 and 1644. Within these five years the famous Long Parliament commenced its sittings, the no less famous Westminster Assembly of divines was convened, Lord Strafford was beheaded, Archbishop Laud committed to prison, and the Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber abolished. Within these five years the civil war between the king and the parliament actually broke out, the standard was raised at Nottingham, the battles of Edgehill, Newbury, and Marston Moor were fought, and Hampden, Pym, and Lord Falkland were all laid in their graves. Last, but not least, the 'Solemn League and Covenant' was subscribed by the adherents of the parliament side, in which, among other things, they pledged themselves to endeavour the extirpation of popery and prelacy, that is, church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy.'

And what was Gurnall doing all these five years? We cannot tell. Perhaps he was staying quietly with his friends at Lynn. Perhaps he was hearing and learning what he could in London. Perhaps he was turning to account his university education by acting as tutor to some noble family, as many young divines did in that day. These are idle conjectures after all. There are only two facts that we know about him. One is that he must have been ordained some time between 1639 and 1644. The other is that he must have preached at Sudbury within this period. This last point is made clear by his own words, in a letter addressed to Sir Symond D'Ewes, in which he speaks of the Sudbury people making difficulties about his removal to Lavenham.

The subject of Gurnall's entrance into the ministry is shrouded in complete obscurity. There is no one point in his personal history about which we know so little. When he was ordained, where he was ordained, to what cure of souls he was ordained, by whom he was ordained, whether he was first ordained by episcopal or by presbyterian ordination, are things about which we are entirely in the dark. After a good deal of troublesome research and investigation into the subject, I must honestly confess that I can find out nothing about it. I have only discovered, by the kindness of the present Bishop of Norwich and the late Bishop of Ely, that his name does not appear in the ordination registers of Norwich and Ely between 1639 and 1644. It is of course possible that he was ordained by the bishop of some other diocese, though even then it is certain that he was only ordained deacon. But it is far more probable that he entered the ministry without receiving episcopal orders at all. Most likely he was set apart for the work as a presbyterian minister with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

I am not disposed to waste the reader's time by entering into any discussion of the comparative merits of episcopal and presbyterian orders, though, of course, I have my own opinions as a conscientious Episcopalian. I only venture the remark that we have no right to infer anything as to Gurnall's opinions about Episcopacy, from his want of episcopal orders. We must remember the peculiar times in which he entered the ministry. There was probably no alternative left to him. He must either have been ordained by presbyterian ordination, or not have been ordained at all.

The plain truth is that the times when Gurnall entered the ministry were times of disorder and confusion. It was a period of transition. Everything that had been settled and established in church and state was being pulled to pieces. They were strange times, and strange things happened in them. We may well expect to find that there were all sorts of irregularities and diversities of practice about ordination.

Bishop Hall, in his famous account of himself called 'His Hard Measure,' makes the following statement, which deserves the more notice because he was Bishop of Norwich, and Lavenham was then in his diocese. He says, 'After the covenant was appointed to be taken (September 26, 1643), and was generally swallowed of both clergy and laity, my power of ordination was with some violence restrained. For when I was going on in my wonted course, which no law or ordinance had inhibited, certain forward volunteers in the city, banding together, stirred up the mayor, and aldermen, and sheriffs (of Norwich), to call me to an account for an open violation of their covenant.

'To this purpose divers of them came to my gate at a very unseasonable time, and knocking very vehemently, required to speak with the bishop. Messages were sent to them to know their business; nothing would satisfy them but the bishop's presence. At last I came down to them and demanded what the matter was; they would have the gate opened, and then they would tell me. I answered that I would know them better first; if they had anything to say to me I was ready to hear them. They told me they

had a writing for me from the mayor and some other of their magistrates. The paper contained both a challenge of me for breaking the covenant, in ordaining ministers, and withal required me to give in the names of those which were ordained by me both then and formerly since the covenant. My answer was that the mayor was much abused by those who had misinformed him and drawn that paper from him; that I would the next day give a full answer to the writing. They moved that my answer might be by my personal appearance at the guildhall. I asked them when they ever heard of a Bishop of Norwich appearing before a mayor. I knew mine own place, and would take that way of answer which I thought fit, and so dismissed them, who had given out that day, that had they known before of mine ordaining, they would have pulled me and those whom I ordained out of the chapel by the ears' (Hall's Works, vol. i. p. 54 ; P. Hall's edition).

Let us add to this curious testimony the following passage from Neal, the well-known historian of the Puritans. He says: 'From the time of taking the covenant (Sept. 28, 1643), we may date the entire dissolution of the hierarchy, though it was not as yet abolished by an ordinance of parliament. There were no ecclesiastical courts, no visitations, no wearing the habits, no regard paid to the canons or ceremonies, or even to the Common Prayer. He says immediately afterwards; 'Upon the sitting of the Assembly of Divines all church worship went through their hands. The parishes elected their ministers. The assembly examined and approved of them, and the parliament confirmed them in their benefices without any regard to the archbishop or his vicar. Thus the Earl of Manchester filled the vacant pulpits in the associated counties.' (Neal's History, vol. iii. p. 79, 80; Toulmin's edition.)

After reading these passages we may well understand why there is no record of Gurnall's ordination as deacon in the registers of Norwich or Ely. He began his ministry in the diocese of Norwich, and was an inhabitant of one of the most thoroughly puritan districts of the seven 'associated counties.' Whether he desired episcopal ordination or not we do not know, though his subsequent ordination by Bishop Reynolds, at a later period of his ministry, ought not to be forgotten. But it is highly probable that at the time when he entered the ministry, he could not have received episcopal ordination even if he had wished it.

The matter after all is not one of primary importance. The divine right of Episcopacy, to the exclusion of all other forms of church government, and the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination to make a right minister of Christ, are positions that cannot be established from Scripture. The 23d article of the Church of England has exhibited a wise moderation in handling the whole question. It says, 'It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching or ministering the sacrament in the congregation before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same.' But the article cautiously avoids defining too closely what are valid orders. It goes on: 'Those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to the work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.' This, we need not doubt, was Gurnall's position. Episcopal ordination he probably did not receive on entering the ministry, and most likely could not have obtained it. But that he was 'lawfully called and sent into the Lord's vineyard' we need not doubt, though in all probability it was only 'by laying on of the hands of the presbytery.'

We now come to the most important event in Gurnall's life, and the one which fixed him down in one spot for the remaining thirty-five years of his life. That event was his appointment to be minister of the parish of Lavenham, in Suffolk. This, it ap-

pears, happened about the month of December, 1644, when he was twenty-eight years old.

The manner of Gurnall's appointment was somewhat singular, and curiously illustrative of the strange and troublesome times in which it took place. Sir Symond D'Ewes, the famous antiquary, was patron of the living of Lavenham, and chief proprietor in the parish. It appears that he gave the living to Gurnall at the request of the parishioners, and the appointment was ratified by order of the House of Commons.

The order of the House of Commons is so peculiar a document, that I venture to transcribe it whole and entire, as M 'Keen gives it, from an extract from the Journals of the House, furnished to him by the clerk of the journals.

'16^o Decembris, 1644, 20 Car. 1. Lavenham Lavenham Rectory, WHEREAS the Church of in the county of Suffolk, lately became void by the decease of Ambrose Coppinger, Doctor of Divinity, and that Sir Symond D'Ewes, patron of the said church, hath conferred the advowson of the same upon William Gurnall, Master of Arts, & learned, godly, and orthodox divine: It is ordered by the House of Commons that the said William Gurnall shall be, and continue, rector and incumbent of the same church during the term of his natural life, and shall have, receive, and enjoy all such tithes, as other rectors and incumbents of same church before him have had, received, and enjoyed. Provided always that the same William Gurnall do pay upon his avoidance all such first-fruits and tithes unto his Majesty, as by the laws of this realm are, and shall be due from time to time' (vol. iii. p. 725).⁵

A careful reader can hardly fail to notice some amusing points in this document. The right of Sir Symond D'Ewes to present is stated and allowed, and yet the presentation must be ratified by the order of the House of Commons ! Gurnall's qualifications are broadly stated. The House declares him to be 'learned, godly, and orthodox!' The king's name is carefully brought in, though the parliament was at open war with him, and provision is inserted for the payment of first-fruits to his majesty! The name, office, and authority of the Bishop of Norwich, in whose diocese Lavenham was, are as utterly ignored as if they had never existed ! Truly we may say that Gurnall lived in strange times!

What chain of providential circumstances led Gurnall to & town in the south-west corner of Suffolk, after leaving Cambridge, we do not know. Why the good man should turn up at Sudbury and Lavenham, five years after leaving Emmanuel, is a point which must be left to conjecture. We know nothing certain about it. It is, however, not unworthy of notice, that there was a certain James Gurnall living at Lavenham in 1644, who had a daughter baptized there on the 4th of September in that year. It is by no means improbable, as M 'Keen suggests, that this James Gurnall was a relative of the Gurnalls of Lynn, and that the relationship was the cause of William Gurnall visiting Lavenham, and becoming known in the neighbourhood.

It is also worthy of notice that Henry Coppinger, who died rector of Lavenham in 1622, and was father of Gurnall's predecessor, Ambrose Coppinger, was connected by marriage with Gurnall's native place, Lynn. It is stated on a monument erected to his memory in Lavenham church, that he married Ann daughter of Henry Fisher, of Lynn, in Norfolk. Lynn was not so large a place that the families of Gurnall and Mr. Coppinger would not be acquainted with one another, and this may have been another cause of his settling in Lavenham. These are of course only conjectures, but I think them worth mentioning, and they must be taken for what they are worth.

How Gurnall became acquainted with Sir Symond D'Ewes, and whether he was appointed by him to the rectory of Lavenham on public or private grounds, we have no

means of ascertaining. A statement quoted by M'Keon from a manuscript in Herald's College, by Mr. Appleton, about Suffolk, is manifestly a mistake. He says Sir Symond D'Ewes 'freely and very willingly gave the rectory of Lavenham unto Mr. William Gurnall, now incumbent there, although to him then unknown, at the request of the parish, which hath been much for the benefit of the town in many ways.' Appleton was clearly misinformed here. There is a correspondence extant in the Harleian MS. between Gurnall and Sir Symond D'Ewes, of which the first letter is dated March, 1644. Beside this, Sir Symond was elected M.P. for Sudbury in 1640, and resided in the parish of Lavenham, so that he could hardly fail to know something about Gurnall.

The correspondence between Gurnall and Sir Symond D'Ewes, to which reference has been made, is a curiosity in its way. It consists of eight Latin letters, composed in the most approved classical style, and affording evidence that Gurnall was a tolerably good Latin scholar. Judged by the standard of modern times the matter of these letters is not much to be admired. There is a tone of obsequiousness and flattery about them which to our eyes seems very unworthy of a Christian, and very unlike what we should have expected from a Puritan. But it is only fair to remember the fashion of Gurnall's age. Dedications and letters to public men in the seventeenth century are often stuffed with high-flown language and hyperbolic compliments. It was as common to write in such a strain as it is for us to sign ourselves 'your obedient servant.' The words meant nothing, and were only used because it was the custom to use them. If Gurnall had not written his Latin letters to Sir Symond D'Ewes in a very verbose, extravagant, and complimentary style, he would probably have been set down as an illiterate and unpolished man.

Some account of the contents of these eight letters will perhaps be found interesting. They throw some little light, at any rate, on Gurnall's presentation to Lavenham; and if we knew the meaning of the allusions which they contain, we should understand a good deal better than we do now, the history of his settlement in the place with which his name is inseparably connected.⁶

The first letter is dated Lavenham, March 26, 1644. It is a petition on behalf of a man who had been wounded in the service of the state, and appears to have been bearer of the letter. It contains some general remarks on the discredit thrown upon religion when wounded soldiers are neglected, and on the duty of providing them with comfortable maintenance. Beside this there is nothing worth notice.

The second letter is dated July 24, 1644. It is endorsed 'to the Right Worthy Sir Symond D'Ewes, at his lodgings in Margaret, Westminster.' The place from which it is written is not stated. In this letter for the first time the subject of Gurnall's appointment to Lavenham is mentioned. There seems to have been some difficulty about the matter, which at this distance of time we cannot of course explain. The letter was evidently written while the difficulty was pending. It contains the following passage, which I give in M'Keen's translation in its entirety:—

'I have received your letter breathing nothing but love, and should immediately have answered it, had I not been called into Norfolk on public business. On my return I promised myself some certain grounds for a reply. But alas! the knot which I left to be untied I found still more perplexed and involved, so that I appeared, like the ship of St. Paul, to have "fallen into a place where two seas met." While my mind is fixed on Lavenham, there threatens a storm at Sudbury, which accuses me of being lured by a golden bait. But were I to refuse this providence held out to me by your hands, I might, not unjustly, appear disobedient to God, and ungrateful to you who offer it to me. In such a storm a skilful pilot (I mean Solomon) suggested to me, "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Most willingly therefore did I submit the hearing

and determining the whole cause to certain ministers in my neighbourhood. If I must die, I could wish it should be in the hands of the most skilful physicians; if I must err, I should wish it to be among men most famous for their learning and piety. In a short time I hope to finish this whole business, and then I will write again to your honour.'

This is a curious letter. One would like to know what was the knotty point which Gurnall could not untie, and who were the 'certain ministers' whom he consulted. One thing at any rate it helps to confirm. It seems to indicate that Gurnall was a minister at Sudbury before he was rector of Lavenham. Yet it is a singular fact, that at the present time no inhabitant of Sudbury, to whom I have applied, seems to know anything about Gurnall's connection with the town.

The third letter is dated Sudbury, September 1, 1644. At the time when it was written it was evidently a settled thing, that Gurnall should have the living of Lavenham, though the appointment was not yet completed. Amidst a quantity of verbose and fulsome compliments, which can only be excused by the customs of Gurnall's day, the following paragraphs are worth quoting:—

'I firmly believe, most worshipful, that the only happiness which you hope or wish for in this filthy world is that of doing good. In this humble and grateful disposition therefore, you may triumph that the numerous population of Lavenham now enjoy under your shadow the gospel.'

'If God should bless my slender labours, whatever they may be, as many as may be imbued with divine light, or cherished with its dew, will be a solace, and even a crown to you, under whose shield I fight. Happy indeed, still more and more, might we have had the English nation, which we now see so universally torn by civil wars, if with the same care with which you have laboured, all our patrons had striven in the propagation of the gospel. But alas! many make a market of the souls of others, while they peril their own. This will redound to your great honour. Not less do you strive to give than others to sell the priesthood.'

The postscript to this letter is curious. Gurnall says, 'One thing at the end of your letter I had almost forgot. You therein just mention the bishop. My doubts increase as to the propriety of going to him, particularly since the opinions both of the clergy and of the people have become known to me.'

The fourth letter is dated Lavenham, October 26, 1644. It is a complimentary letter written on the occasion of Sir Symond. D'Ewes giving Gurnall a copy of some antiquarian work he had lately published. It contains no allusion to the subject of the living of Lavenham, and there is nothing in it worth quoting.

The fifth letter is dated Lavenham, November 21, 1644, and is one of the most important of the whole series. I shall therefore give it entire.

'Right worshipful Sir,—At length my frail bark, after a difficult navigation, has safely reached the port of Lavenham. Nothing now remains for me but to return my thanks to you, under whose shadow I enjoy this happiness, and with sound principles to imbue, and with paternal care to instruct, the numerous people which you have committed to me, particularly in times like these, fermenting with many errors, when, like Rome of old, who borrowed gods from all parts of the world, we also borrow errors which have already been buried, and yet after burial again revive. My only solace in this world will now be to preserve, by earnest and continued prayer, this my congregation, pure and unspotted amongst so many corruptions.

'By your letter to Henry Coppinger, I find that certain of the Sudbury people, in your hearing, have said that some new agreement had been entered into between us. I wonder from whence this fable has taken its origin. I do not admit one atom of it. It is nothing new for the sweetest wine of love sometimes to degenerate into vinegar. I

hope, however, in a short time that my Sudbury friends will be restored to their former serenity, although like the troubled sea they are now in a state of considerable agitation. With respect to the bishop, I hope he will find some other way of instituting me, or else your most honourable House will do it. And all the inhabitants of Lavenham most humbly congratulate you, right worshipful, for in this affair you have left no stone unturned. We also earnestly desire that the matter may, if possible, be completed within these six months, which are now fast wearing away. I would willingly go to London in order that whatever remains to be done may receive the finishing stroke. May the great and good God pour his blessing on thee and thine, and may he continue to be thy sun and shield. So prays most earnestly your very humble servant in Christ, WILLIAM GURNALL.'

The matter referred to in the letter can of course only be explained by conjecture. It certainly seems to indicate that Gurnall was once a popular minister at Sudbury, and that his removal to the rectory of Lavenham was not approved by the Sudbury people. The six months mentioned most probably mean the six months immediately following the last rector's death. The precise date of the death of Coppinger, Gurnall's predecessor, is not known.

The sixth letter is dated Lavenham, January 6, 1645. It is clear from its contents, that whatever may have been the difficulties which stood in the way of his appointment to Lavenham, they were now all overcome, and he was finally settled in possession of the living. He says, 'Honoured Sir, most opportunely have I received the order of your honourable House. By your care and exertion alone has it been obtained; and all your favours toward me have, by this fresh proof of your kindness, been brought to a completion—this last having given perfection to the rest. What is a presentation without orders? What are orders without institution? Successfully, however, have you finished all these things, so that my thanks are due to you, not only as patron, but as ordainer and institutor, for under your auspices all these things have been performed. I well know how much of your time is occupied by public business, while the arduous affairs of the nation are under consideration, and also with what indefatigable labour you pursue more severe studies. The weight therefore of this your favour is so much the more increased, when we see that among matters of greater importance you still find leisure to attend to these our affairs, trifling indeed in comparison, but such as would, I believe, from our want of skill, have been a complete snare to us, had we not been speedily delivered from them by your prudence.'

About the matters referred to in this letter, we know nothing more than what Gurnall tells us. His expressions certainly seem to imply that he owed his ordination, by whatever hands he was ordained, to the interest of Sir Symond D'Ewes.

The seventh letter is dated Lavenham, March 20, 1647. It contains nothing worth quoting, and is entirely occupied with lamentations over the troublous time which the nation was passing through, and words of devout encouragement to Sir Symond D'Ewes, whose position in parliament was probably not a very easy one at this period.

The eighth and last letter is dated October 30, 16048, and was evidently written in reply to an order of the House of Commons, calling on Gurnall to preach before the House. He says, among other things, 'Your letter reached me yesterday as I was descending from the pulpit, thoroughly fatigued; and today, having finished one sermon, I am preparing another for to-morrow. You will therefore, I trust, readily pardon both the brevity and unpolished style of any answer. As to the affair mentioned in your letter to me that I have been, by an order of the House, appointed to preach before you on the 29th of November next, it is a burden much too weighty for my shoulders, particularly at this time, when so many infirmities oppress me, that I can scarcely, with-

out danger to my health, remain a short time in the open air. Much less therefore could I undertake so long a journey in so winterly a season. I am persuaded that the gentlemen who have proposed this, know not the shattered state of my body, and have scarcely considered the distance of the place. Most humbly and earnestly therefore I entreat that, by your persuasion, which I know to be unparalleled, and in that honourable House most weighty, this burden may be laid on other shoulders; for under it, in any infirm state of health, I must of necessity sink.'

This letter is interesting on more than one account. It shows the high esteem in which Gurnall was held as a preacher. None but the most eminent and gifted divines of the day were summoned to preach before the House of Commons.. It also shows the weak state of health in which Gurnall was at a comparatively early period of his ministry at Lavenham. To this state of health we may perhaps attribute the retired life which he seems to have lived, and the comparatively small information which we possess about him.

Having now brought Gurnall to the place where he lived and exercised his ministry for no less than thirty-five years, some information about Lavenham will probably be interesting to most readers.

Lavenham is a small town in the southwest corner of Suffolk, lying in a rural parish of about 2800 acres, and containing at this time about 1800 people. In Gurnall's time it was in the diocese of Norwich. It is now in the diocese of Ely. It had once a market; and before the invention of the steam-engine, was famous for the manufacture of blue cloth and serge, for the better regulation of which, three guilds, or companies, of St. Peters, Holy Trinity, and Corpus Christi, were establish. Its manufactures have now dwindled down into one silk-mill, and its market is no longer held. The market-place, with an ancient cross in the centre, exists still. The De Veres, Earls of Oxford, were once the principal proprietors of Lavenham, and had a large park here, comprising nearly half the parish. In the reign of Elizabeth, Edward, then Earl of Oxford, sold his property at Lavenham, together with the advowson of the living, to Paul D'Ewes, Esq., father of Sir Symond D'Ewes, the patron of William Gurnall, and to this sale therefore the good man's connection with Lavenham must be traced.

The living to which Gurnall was appointed was no doubt a very valuable one. At this day the tithes are commuted at £850 a year, and there are 140 acres of glebe attached to the rectory. Allowing for the difference in the value of money two hundred years ago, the rector of Lavenham must have been comparatively very well off. It is however a curious fact, recorded by Fuller in his Church History, that in the year 1577, the living of Lavenham had a narrow escape of being reduced to half its value, and was only saved by the firmness of the rector. The whole transaction is worth reading, as illustrating the disorders and irregularities in ecclesiastical matters, which great laymen too often attempted to perpetrate in the sixteenth century, and too often with success.

Fuller says, 'In the year 1622, Henry Coppinger, formerly fellow of St. John's College in Cambridge, prebendary of York, once chaplain to Ambrose, Earl of Warwick (whose funeral sermon he preached), made master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, by his majesty's mandates, though afterwards resigning his right at the queen's request (shall I call it?), to prevent trouble, ended his religious life. He was the sixth son of Henry Coppinger, Esq., of Buxhall, in Suffolk, by Agnes, daughter of Sir Thomas Jermyn. His father, on his death-bed, asking him what course of life he would embrace, he answered he intended to be a divine. "I liked it well," said the old gentleman, "otherwise what shall I say to Martin Luther when I shall see him in heaven, and he knows that God gave me eleven sons, and I made not one of them a minister?"

An expression proportionable enough to Luther's judgment, who maintained, some hours before his death, that the saints in heaven shall knowingly converse one with another.

'Lavenham living fell void, which both deserved a good minister, being a rich parsonage, and needed one, it being more than suspected that Dr. Reynolds, late incumbent, who ran away to Rome, had left some superstitious leaven behind him. The Earl of Oxford being patron, presents Mr. Coppinger to it, but adding withal, that he would pay no tithes of his park, being almost half the land of the parish. Coppinger desired to resign it again to his lordship, rather than by such sinful gratitude to betray the rights of the church. "Well!" said the earl," if you be of that mind, then take the tithes; I scorn that my estate should swell with church goods." However, it afterwards cost Mr. Coppinger sixteen hundred pounds in keeping his questioned—and recovering his detained—right, in suit with the agent for the next minor Earl of Oxford and others; all which he left to his church's quiet possession, being zealous in God's cause, but remiss in his own.

'He lived forty and five years the painful parson at Lavenham, in which market-town there are about nine hundred communicants, among whom, all this time, no difference did arise which he did not compound. He had a bountiful hand and plentiful purse (his paternal inheritance by death of elder brothers and other transactions, descending upon him), bequeathing twenty pounds in money, and ten pounds per annum, to the poor of the parish; in the chancel whereof he lieth buried under a fine monument, dying on St. Thomas' Day, in the threescore and twelfth year of his age.'

The lawsuit referred to by Fuller seems at any rate not to have prevented Henry Coppinger being succeeded by his son Ambrose as rector of Lavenham, at whose death Gurnall was appointed to the living. The Henry Coppinger referred to by Gurnall in one of his letters to Sir Symond D'Ewes, was no doubt a member of the family of Gurnall's predecessor, and a descendant of the rector whose firmness preserved half the tithes of Lavenham from the Earl of Oxford's shameful attempt to deprive the living of them.

The parish church of Lavenham, in which Gurnall preached for thirty-five years, must naturally possess much interest in the eyes of all true admirers of his works. The pulpit in which the good man preached the substance of *The Christian in Complete Armour*, no longer exists. But the fabric of the church is in all probability exactly what it was two hundred years ago.

Lavenham Church is one of the finest and handsomest ecclesiastical buildings in the county of Suffolk. 'It stands at the west end of the town, and was erected on the site of the ancient fabric, in the 15th and early part of the 16th centuries, chiefly at the cost of the Earl of Oxford, and the wealthy family of Spring, whose arms are to be seen in many parts of the building. It is in the later style of decorated English architecture, and is constructed of freestone, curiously ornamented with flint, a material commonly used in Suffolk churches, from the scarcity of stone. It is 156 feet long, and 68 broad. The tower, which is of singular beauty, is 141 feet high, and 42 in diameter, and contains an excellent peal of eight bells, of which the tenor weighs 23 cwt., and was cast in 1625. In the interior the roof is richly carved, and two pews, formerly belonging to the Earls of Oxford and the Springs, though now somewhat decayed, are highly finished specimens of Gothic work, in the elaborate style of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster. In the windows are considerable remains of ancient stained glass, and the porch is of highly ornamental architecture, adorned with armorial bearings.' The above account is principally extracted from White's *History of Suffolk*, and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the details it contains.

At the present day there can be no doubt that Lavenham is a far less important place than it was two hundred years ago. The county in which it is situated no longer occupies the position it once occupied among the counties of England. Without mines or manufactures, or large seaport towns, the eastern counties have stood still in material prosperity, while the rest of England has moved on. The village towns, with which Suffolk is rather thickly dotted, are almost all in a decaying or stationary condition. The old glory of such places as Eye, Framlingham, Bungay, Orford, Southwold, Dunwich, Aldeburgh, Hadleigh, Bildeston, and Debenham, has clean passed away. Lavenham has shared the fate of these places. It is now nothing more than a quiet village in an agricultural district, remarkable only for its beautiful church and its numerous old charitable institutions.

The thirty-five years during which Gurnall lived at Lavenham, and filled the pulpit of the old parish church, were years full of stirring incidents in English history. The final overthrow of the king's party in the commonwealth wars, the beheading of Charles I., the establishment of the protectorate, the death of Oliver Cromwell, the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne, the passing of the Act of Uniformity, the ejection of two thousand ministers of the Church of England which followed that act, and the intolerant persecution of all nonconformists which disgraced this country for many years after the act was passed, are events with which every student of English history is familiar. What Gurnall thought of most of these we have no means of knowing. What part he took, if any, and how he acted amidst the political and ecclesiastical convulsions which distracted the country, we cannot say. His health in all probability prevented him from frequently leaving his own home, or doing much outside his own parish. Be the cause what it may, I am obliged to confess that the facts on record about the last thirty-five years of his life are exceedingly few.

It is certainly somewhat remarkable that during the period of Gurnall's ministry at Lavenham, that is between 1644 and 1679, some of the best and holiest puritan divines were at one time or another living within twenty miles of Gurnall's home at Lavenham. I will give their names.

The famous John Owen, whose name is familiar to every reader of pure English theology, began his ministry at Fordham and Goggeshall in Essex, and only left the latter place when Cromwell made him dean of Christ Church, and vice-chancellor of Oxford, in 1650, six years after Gurnall became rector of Lavenham.

Stephen Marshall, one of the most celebrated divines in the Westminster Assembly, and a prominent character in the commonwealth times, was minister of Wethersfield and Finchingfield, in Essex, shortly "before Gurnall came to Lavenham, and spent the last two years of his life at Ipswich, where he died in 1655.

Matthew Newcomen, another eminent member of the Westminster Assembly, and an assistant of Arrowsmith and Tuckney in drawing up the well-known Assembly's Catechism, was vicar of Dedham in Essex, after the famous John Rogers was ejected in 1629, until the time of his own ejection by the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

Thomas Young, another distinguished member of the Westminster Assembly, and Milton's tutor, was vicar of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, for the thirty years before 1643, when he became pastor of a church in Duke's Place, London. Afterwards, being ejected in 1650, he retired to Stowmarket, and died there in 1655. He was one of the five authors of the famous controversial work, called *Smectymnuus*, which made a great stir in the first half of the seventeenth century. It was so called from the initial letters of the names of its five writers, viz. Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstow. Of these five men, let us remember, no less than three died within a few hours' reach of Gurnall.

It would be easy to add other great names to this list, such as those of Daniel Rogers, who died at Wethersfield in 1652; Blackerby, who died at Great Thurlow in 1648; Fairclough, who was ejected from Kedington in 1662, and was succeeded by Tiltotson; and Owen Stockton, who was ejected from St. Andrew's, Colchester, in 1662. Beside these good men, there were some who are less well known, such as William Sparrow of Halstead in Essex, John Fairfax of Barking in Suffolk, Matthias Candler of Coddham in Suffolk, Samuel Spring of Greeting St. Mary in Suffolk, Stephen Scanderet of Haverhill in Suffolk, Tobias Keg of Hemingstone in Suffolk, Brunning and Stonham of Ipswich, Storer of Stowmarket, all of whom were eminent puritan ministers, and were ejected in 1662. Their histories will be found in Calamy's *Non-conformists' Memorial*. All these men, I repeat, lived within twenty miles of Gurnall, and must have come in contact with him occasionally.

It would be deeply interesting if we knew whether Gurnall had much communication with these good men. My own private impression is that he had not. Ill-health in all probability kept him much at home. But I suspect this was not all. I am inclined to think that Gurnall was a man of retiring and cautious temperament, and naturally disinclined to go much into society. Above all, I am strongly inclined to think that he liked the Episcopal Church and the Prayer Book better than many of his neighbours did, and naturally withdrew from close intimacy with them. All these, however, are only conjectures, and I shall therefore pass on to the only remaining facts that remain to be told about Gurnall's history.

In the year 1645, the year following his appointment to Lavenham, Gurnall was married to Sarah Mott, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Mott, vicar of Stoke by Nayland. By this lady, who survived him some years, he had ten children, eight of whom were living at his death.

In the year 1662, when no less than two thousand ministers were ejected from the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity, Gurnall signed the declaration required by the act on August 20, was ordained priest by the Bishop of Norwich, the well-known Bishop Reynolds, on August 21, and went through the forms of episcopal institution to Lavenham on the presentation of Thomas Bowes, of Bromley Hall, in Essex, a connection of the D'Ewes family, on August 22. The close proximity of these three dates is very remarkable! The result was, that while many of his puritan brethren resigned their preferments, he retained his position as rector of Lavenham until his death.

This part of Gurnall's history undoubtedly demands some consideration? At first sight undeniably there is something curious about it. That a minister of at least eighteen years' standing should submit to receive priest's orders at a bishop's hands—that a preacher of notoriously puritan sentiments should sit still and retain his connection with the Church of England, while nearly all his puritan brethren around him seceded—in all this there is something strange. That it really was so is as certain as possible. A facsimile of his subscription which I have obtained from the registry of Norwich places the matter beyond doubt. It is a doubly interesting document, as containing the only specimen I know of Gurnall's handwriting.⁷

That Gurnall's conformity brought on him great obloquy and reproach we may well suppose. A libellous attack⁸ on him was published in the year 1665, quoted by Bishop Kennett, which contains the following passage. 'Neither is Mr. Gurnall alone in these horrible defilements, hateful to the word of God and his saints, but is compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, even in the same county where himself liveth, men of the same order of anti-Christian priesthood and brethren in the same iniquity with himself.'

That he brought on himself much private sorrow and discomfort by his conformity we may easily believe. His own wife's father, Mr. Mott, of Stoke by Nayland, was one of the two thousand who went out of the Church of England for conscience' sake. Above all, the value of his living at Lavenham, and the large size of the family dependent on him, would be sure to cause men to cast suspicion on what he did, and to question the sincerity of his motives.

But after all, the point remains to be considered, did Gurnall do anything inconsistent with his character as a minister of Christ? Was there anything abstractedly wrong in his conformity? Was there anything in the antecedents of his history to make it base or dishonourable to retain his post at Lavenham, to subscribe the declaration of the Act of Uniformity, to assent to the liturgy, and to submit to receive priest's orders at Bishop Reynolds' hands? On these points I have something to say.

I shall clear the way by saying that I thoroughly disapprove the Act of Uniformity, although personally I feel no difficulty about its requirements. To show my own feeling about it, I will quote a passage from a lecture on 'Baxter and his Times,' which I delivered in London ten years ago. I retract nothing contained in that passage, notwithstanding all that has happened in the last ten years—

'The crowning piece of folly which the majority in the Church of England committed under the Stuarts, was procuring the Act of Uniformity to be enacted in the year 1662. This, you must remember, took place at the beginning of Charles II's reign, and shortly after the re-establishment of the monarchy and the church.

'This famous act imposed terms and conditions of holding office on all ministers of the Church of England which had never been imposed before, from the time of the Reformation. It was notoriously so framed as to be offensive to the consciences of the Puritans, and to drive them out of the church. For this purpose it was entirely successful. Within a year no less than two thousand clergymen resigned their livings rather than accept its terms. Many of these two thousand were the best, the ablest, and the holiest ministers of the day. Many a man, who had been regularly ordained by bishops, and spent twenty or thirty years in the service of the church without molestation, was suddenly commanded to accept new conditions of holding preferment, and turned out to starve because he refused. Sixty of the leading parishes in London were at once deprived of their ministers, and their congregations left like sheep without a shepherd. Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant church.

'It was a disgraceful deed, because it was a flat contradiction to the king's own promise at Breda, before he came back from exile. He was brought back on the distinct understanding that the Church of England should be re-established on such a broad and liberal basis as to satisfy the conscientious scruples of the Puritans. Had it not been for the assistance of the Puritans he would never have got back at all. And yet as soon as the reins of power were fairly in the king's Lands, his promise was deliberately broken.

'It was a disgraceful deed, because the great majority of the ejected ministers might easily have been retained in the church by a few small concessions. They had no abstract objection to Episcopacy or to a liturgy. A few alterations in the prayers, and a moderate liberty in the conduct of divine worship, according to Baxter's calculation, would have satisfied sixteen hundred out of the two thousand. But the ruling party were determined not to make a single concession. They had no wish to keep the Puritans in. When some one observed to Archbishop Sheldon, the chief mover in the business, that he thought many of the Puritans would conform, and accept the Act of Uniformity, the archbishop replied, "I am afraid they will." To show the spirit of the

ruling party in the church, they actually added to the number of apocryphal lessons in the Prayer Book calendar at this time. They made it a matter of congratulation among themselves that they had thrust out the Puritans, and got in Bel and the Dragon.

‘It was a disgraceful deed, because the ejected ministers were, many of them, men of such ability and attainments, that great sacrifices ought to have been made in order to retain them in the church. Baxter, Poole, Manton, Bates, Calamy, Brooks, Watson, Charnock, Caryl, Howe, Flavel, Bridge, Jenkyn, Owen, Goodwin, are names whose praise is even now in all the churches. The men who turned them out were not to be compared to them. The names of the vast majority of them are hardly known. But they had power on their side, and they were resolved to use it.

‘It was a disgraceful deed, because it showed the world that the leaders of the Church of England, like the Bourbons in modern times, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing during their exile. They had not forgotten the old bad ways of Laud, which had brought such misery on England. They had not learned that conciliation and concession are the most becoming graces in the rulers of a church, and that persecution, in the long run, is sure to be a losing game.

‘Against the policy of the ruling party in the Church of England, under the Stuarts, I always shall protest. I do not feel the scruples which Baxter and his ejected brethren felt about the Act of Uniformity. Much as I respect them, I think them wrong and misguided in their judgments. But I think that Archbishop Sheldon, and the men who refused to go one step to meet them, were far more wrong and far more misguided. I believe they did an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired, by sowing the seeds of endless divisions. They were the men who laid the foundation of English dissent. I believe they recklessly threw away a golden opportunity of doing good. They might easily have made my own beloved church far more effective and far more useful than she ever has been by wise and timely concessions. They refused to do this, and, instead of a healing measure, brought forward their unhappy Act of Uniformity. I disavow any sympathy with their proceedings, and can never think of them without the deepest regret.’

But while I protest against the Act of Uniformity as an unjust, unwise, impolitic, unstatesmanlike, and hard measure, I do not for a moment admit that no good man could possibly submit to its requirements. On the contrary, I can quite understand that many holy and faithful ministers would do as Gurnall did, and act as he acted. They would argue that we cannot have everything to our mind in this world below—that the way of patience was better than the way of secession—that there is nothing abstractedly wrong in forms of prayer—that it is better to put up with some things we do not like in a church, than to throw away opportunities of usefulness—that it was better to accept the Prayer Book with all its blemishes and have liberty to preach the gospel, than to refuse the Prayer Book and be silenced altogether—that so long as the thirty-nine articles were sound and uninjured, they could not be compelled to preach unsound doctrine—and that so long as they were allowed to preach sound doctrine, they ought not to refuse the opportunity, but to preach, and stand by their flocks. All this I can conceive a good man saying to himself. Whether Gurnall reasoned in this manner I cannot pretend to say. But I think he might have done so.

The plain truth is, that before anyone condemns Gurnall for submitting to the Act of Uniformity, he ought in common justice to remember the times and circumstances in which Gurnall first entered the ministry. He became a minister of the gospel at a period in English history when it was impossible to obtain episcopal ordination, and the use of the Prayer Book was almost forbidden. I have no doubt he was quite right in accepting the position of things which he found around him. The imposition of epis-

copal hands is not absolutely necessary to make a valid ordination. The use of the Church of England liturgy is not essential to the being of a church. At the time when Gurnall entered the ministry he could neither have Episcopacy nor the Prayer Book, and he entered the ministry without them. Let others say what they will, I do not think he was wrong. It is better to have the gospel preached without bishops and prayer books, than not to have any preaching at all.

But after all, there is not the slightest proof that Gurnall had any conscientious objection either to Episcopacy or the liturgy of the Church of England. For anything we can discover, he had never committed himself to any such condemnation of them as to make it inconsistent to approve and adopt them. What right then have we to find fault with him because he submitted to the requirements of the act of 1662? He was ordained priest by Bishop Reynolds, because he could not be an incumbent in the diocese without priest's orders. But who shall say that he would not gladly have received episcopal orders twenty years before if it had been possible to obtain them? He declared his assent and consent to all things contained in the Prayer Book. But. Who shall say that he would not have done the same at any period in his life? He had never been a member of the Westminster Assembly, like many of the two thousand ejected divines. He had never been mixed up in their public proceedings, discussions, and controversies, like Owen, Newcomen, Baxter, and many more. He had been a quiet retired preacher in a country parish, and there is really no proof whatever that his retention of his position at Lavenham was inconsistent with anything in his previous life.

One more circumstance ought not to be forgotten in forming our estimate of Gurnall's conduct at this crisis of his life. The bishop in whose diocese he was living, and at whose hands he accepted re-ordination, was Bishop Reynolds, himself a Puritan in doctrine, and notoriously the most mild and lenient man on the episcopal bench in dealing with scrupulous clergymen. We cannot doubt that such a man as Reynolds would use every effort to meet Gurnall's scruples, if he had any. We cannot doubt that he would strain every nerve to retain as many of the clergy as possible within the pale of the church, and to prevent secession. I confess to a strong suspicion that this circumstance weighed much in Gurnall's mind. Few men can do more by kindness, and less by harshness, in dealing with men, than bishops. If Gurnall ever had any doubts about remaining in the Church of England in 1662, I think it very likely that his good bishop's character turned the scale. In short, I venture the guess, that he might have gone out of Lavenham rectory, and followed his father-in-law, Mr. Mott, in secession, if the occupier of Norwich palace had been any other bishop than Reynolds⁹

I leave the subject of Gurnall's conduct in 1662 with the reader. It is one on which different men will have different opinions, according to the stand-point which they occupy. Some in the present day would have thought more highly of Gurnall if he had refused to submit to the Act of Uniformity, and had gone out with the famous two thousand. I, and many others perhaps, think more highly of him because he held his ground and did not secede. Which of us is right will never, probably, be settled in this world. I only desire to record my own opinion, that Gurnall was probably just as courageous, conscientious, and high-principled in deciding to stay in, as hundreds of his two thousand ejected brethren were in deciding to go out. In movements like that of 1662, the seceding party has not always a monopoly of grace and courage. There were many cases, I have no doubt, in which it showed more courage to submit to the Act of Uniformity than to refuse submission, and in which it cost a man far more to hold his living than to throw it up. I should not wonder if Gurnall's was one.

About Gurnall's life after the year 1662 we know literally nothing at all. We may well suppose that his latter years were saddened by the events of the year 1662. Human nature would not be what it is, if his retention of his position, and subscription to the Act of Uniformity, did not create some estrangement of feeling between himself and his seceding brethren. But we really have no right to speak decidedly on the matter. There are floating traditions in the neighbourhood of Lavenham that he never was the same man as a minister after 1662, that he had been before—that there was no power or blessing attending his ministry from that time forward. But I must plainly say, that I cannot discern any foundation for these traditions. I regard them as nothing better than lying stories. Such stories are often current about eminent servants of Christ. His refusal to give up his post at Lavenham, when many other ministers seceded, would no doubt give great annoyance to the bitterest and most extreme non-conformists in that part of Suffolk, since it would weaken their hands and strengthen the Church of England. I should therefore expect, as a matter of course, that all manner of false reports would be current about him. Lies are Satan's chief weapons against God's saints.

Gurnall died, October 12th, 1679, and was buried at Lavenham, in the sixty-third year of his age. There is internal evidence, we have already seen, in his letters and elsewhere, that he was always a man of weak health. But we know not whether he died suddenly or of a lingering illness. The fact, however, that he made his will the day before he died would rather point to the conclusion that he had been ill some time.

M'Keon has procured a copy of Gurnall's will, which I here subjoin, as it may interest many readers.

In the name of God Amen. The Eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy-nine, I, William Gurnall of Lavenham, in the county of Suffolk, clerk, weak of body, but thanks be to God, of sound mind and memory, resigning up my soul in the first place into the hands of God, my Lord, Redeemer, and Saviour, and yielding my body to the earth, to be buried at the discretion of my executrix, as concerning that worldly estate which it has pleased God to bestow upon me, do make and ordain, this, my last will and testament as followeth:—That is to say, I give and decree all my free land and tenements, with all their appurtenances whatsoever, lying and being in Walpole or elsewhere, in Monkland, in the county of Norfolk, unto Sarah, my well-beloved wife, and her heirs, to hold to her, the said Sarah, to her own proper use, for, and during the time of her natural life, and after her decease to some one of my children, as she shall declare in, and by her last will and testament. And I do give and decree also all my goods and chattels, debts, and personal estate whatsoever, unto the said Sarah, my well-beloved wife, as well for her own comfortable subsistence and maintenance, and the better to enable her for the bringing up of my younger children, as also in trust and confidence that she will preserve and dispose of the residue and surplusage thereof amongst my children, respecting the circumstances of those of them which are not yet provided for, in such manner, and in such proportion as in her discretion she shall think most meet and fit; only I decree, if my son John shall be a scholar, that she will give my books to him. And I do hereby nominate, constitute, and appoint the said Sarah, my well-beloved wife, to be sole executrix of this my will, which I have caused to be written and have thereunto set my hand and seal, the day of grace aforesaid. Subscribed sealed, published, and declared by the said William Gurnall, to be his last will and testament, in the presence of us, Thomas Mott, Bezal. Peachie, John Pinchbeck.'

The first of these three witnesses was most probably the father or brother of Mrs. Gurnall. She was daughter of Thomas Mott. The second was evidently the husband of his third daughter, Catherine. The third was perhaps the lawyer who drew up the will. The books mentioned in the will are probably the very books which Gurnall's son, John, afterwards left by his will, in 1699, to his brother Joseph, and his nephew Leonard Shaftoe, of Newcastle. The 'English books' were left to Joseph Gurnall, and the 'rest of the books and manuscripts to Leonard Shaftoe. They are now probably scat-

tered to the four winds, and dispersed, if not destroyed. The end to which good men's libraries finally come, is a melancholy subject. Few things are so much loved by some, and despised and neglected by others, as books, and specially theological books.

The precise spot in which Gurnall was buried is not known. We cannot tell whether his bones are lying in the church or in the churchyard. No tombstone or monumental slab marks the place of his interment. Nothing, from some cause or other, seems to have been erected to his memory. 'The only sepulchral notice to be found of him,' says M'Keon, 'is on a black marble slab in the chancel, which has this inscription:

"Here lieth the body of Mary, late wife of Mr. Henry Boughton, of this parish, and daughter of the late Reverend Mr. Samuel Beachcroft, Rector of Semer, and grand-daughter of the late Reverend Mr. William Gurnall, who was rector of this parish thirty-five years. She died the 14th of October, 1741, aged 78 years.'

Under this slab in the chancel is a vault, which M'Keon conjectures is Gurnall's resting-place, from the fact of Mrs. Boughton having been buried here instead of being buried with the Boughton family in the family vault, near the great south door. However, it is only a conjecture.

A funeral sermon was preached in Lavenham Church, in commemoration of Gurnall, shortly after his funeral, by the well-known commentator on the New Testament, Burkitt, who was at that time rector of Milden, near Lavenham. It is still extant, and bears the following title: 'The people's zeal provoked to an holy emulation by the pious and instructive example of their dead minister; as a seasonable memento to the parishioners of Lavenham in Suffolk.'

Burkitt's sermon was on Heb. xiii. 7: 'Remember them that have the rule over you,' &c. It was both preached and published by request, and is prefaced by an epistle dedicatory 'to my honoured friend, Mrs. Sarah Gurnall, the sorrowful relict of Mr. William Gurnall, late of Lavenham, deceased, and to the rest of the sorrowing inhabitants of that town.' It is a respectable composition, though somewhat quaint, and rather flowery and high-flown in style. But it is but fair to Burkitt to remember that he was comparatively young when he preached it, being only twenty-nine years old. A few extracts from it will probably be found interesting, I shall select these parts only which refer to Gurnall.

Burkitt's epistle dedicatory concludes with the following passage:—'To inform and convince you how highly accountable you are to Almighty God, both for the long enjoyment of his ministry, and also for the happy advantage of his example, is the honest design of the following sermon: and also to let this censorious age (in which some persons are so overgrown with the anti-episcopal jaundice, that their eye can see nothing in a conformist but what is discoloured and of a different tincture), understand and know that you had a conformist for your minister, who rendered solid religion amiable, by a conversation in all things worthy of it; who did by a regular piety, a strict sobriety, a catholic and diffusive charity, render religion venerable to the world; one whose whole time, strength, and parts, were piously devoted to God and his sacred service.

'Moses, I observe, was in one particular privileged by God above all other holy persons: their souls (in common with his) at death have angels for their convoy towards the mansions of bliss and glory: but he had an angel for his sexton, who buried his body in an unknown place, lest the Israelites should superstitiously idolize and adore it;—there would be no fear at all of any such offensive adoration on your part, were I able (as indeed I am not) to draw to the life the fair effigies of your absent minister,

who was, like Moses, faithful in all God's house whilst he lived, and not unlike him at his death; his meek soul gliding from him in a fine imperceptible vehicle; and he dying as the modern Jews by tradition tell us Moses did, *ad nutum Dei, et osculo oris ejus*—at God's beck, and as it were with a kiss of God's mouth. It was no more betwixt God and them but this. Go up and die.

To conclude then, may all your practices appear to the world in a faithful compliance with what was truly imitable and praiseworthy in him. May the living example of your dead minister be exemplified in the lives of you his people. May you daily dress by his glass, and walk in his pious and devout footsteps. May you all meet him with astonishing joy, and behold him also with unutterable delight and comfort, in the day of your great audit,—this is, and ever shall be, the hearty and affectionate supplication of your sympathizing friend and servant,

WILLIAM BURKITT.

'Milden, Dec. 10, 1679.'

The sermon contains the following sentences which are worth transcribing: 'How lovely was that copy of religion which he set before you in his daily conversation! So forcible was the majesty of that holiness that shined forth in him, that it did extort a veneration from its most violent opposers; and so convictive also that it pierced the very consciences of his enemies, and constrained them whom prejudice only had made his foes, tacitly to acknowledge that God was in him of a truth.' (p. 9, Baynes' reprint, 1829.)

Again: 'He being dead, yet speaketh; yea, dead as well as living, he is still your preacher, his shroud and coffin are his pulpit—his grave and tombstone are his temple, and he still preaches to you though he lies in silence before you and utters never a word, I mean by his pious and most instructive example left among you, and by that fair character and good report which he hath so deservedly obtained with you.' (p. 10, 11.) Again: 'I am sure it did not a little conduce to the support of your dying minister's spirit, when he had death before him in immediate prospect, to hope upon good grounds that he (as a spiritual father) should leave many children behind him, to carry on the work of Christ in the world, when his head should be laid among the clods.'" (p. 17.)

The last five pages of the sermon are so entirely occupied with Gurnall's character, that I think it best to give them unabridged:

'I infer from hence, in the first place, how signal your obligations are to Almighty God for the long enjoyment of that exemplary pattern of all true piety and virtue (your deceased minister, I mean), whom (for your sins, I fear) he hath lately taken from you. Show now your obedience to God, your respects to him, your kindness and charity to your own souls, by a zealous and faithful care to transcribe impartially in your own lives whatever was truly imitable in your minister's. And not to carry you beyond the confines of the text, let me earnestly bespeak your Christian compliance with a double duty here enjoined.

'I. To follow his faith.

'II. To imitate his exemplary conversation.

'I. Follow his faith, and that in a double respect, in the soundness of his faith, and in the steadfastness of his faith.

'I. Follow him in the soundness of his faith. The faith which he perseveringly professed, and taught, was that doctrine which is according to godliness; that faith which owns God for its immediate author and the Scripture for its infallible rule, the faith

that was once delivered to the saints, which is not the result of fancy and imagination, but the product of an eternal counsel, which was confirmed by the miracles and sealed with the blood of a Saviour. In a word, that faith which he so zealously taught had sure footing in the holy Scriptures. Whenever he propounded any truth which required not only the assent of your understandings, but also the obedience and adoration of your faith, he constantly showed you the canon of the Scriptures for its confirmation. If any then (which God forbid) should appear after him in this place, and attempt the proselyting of you to another gospel, or to any new doctrine of faith foreign to the Scriptures, should he pretend to the authority of a commissioned angel from heaven, let him be held accursed.

‘2. Follow him in the steadfastness of his faith. The same rule of faith which he laid before you at his first coming amongst you, he lived and preached by till the day of his death: and this I take the greater liberty to assert, because some persons have not blushed to tell the world publicly that since his conformity to the discipline of the church he had apostatized and revolted from that faith which he had formerly professed and taught; but be ye all assured, that, as to the great fundamentals of faith and religion, he was ever the same, and what he taught you to his last breath, I doubt not but he stood ready to confirm and seal with his blood, even in the fiercest flames of martyrdom, if God had called him to that fiery trial.

‘II. Imitate his Christian conversation. My meaning is, exemplify those evangelical graces and Christian virtues in your lives, which did so oriently shine forth in his. To propound a few:—

‘1. His eminent humility. This was the garment which covered all his excellent Accomplishments, although indeed their beauty was rendered more conspicuous and amiable by casting this veil over it. O what mean thoughts had he of himself! And was not only content, but desirous also, that others should have so too: no man ever expressed so low a value of his worth and merits as himself did. Everything in others that was good he admired as excellent, whilst the same or better in himself he thought not unworthily contemned: his eyes were full of his own deficiencies and others’ perfections.

In a word, he was a lovely valley, sweetly planted, well-watered, richly fruitful; imitate him then herein, and by a holy emulation study to excel him in this adorning grace; and for your help herein recollect what you heard from him in his elaborate discourses among you upon Phil. ii. 5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,)—this humble mind.

‘2. His extensive love: this grace did variously exert itself.

‘(1.) His love to God: he loved him exceedingly whom he could not love excessively, having such high and raised apprehensions of his Makers excellencies, as caused him to judge his prime and best affections unworthy to be placed on so divine an object.

‘(2.) His love to the holy Jesus: this was such a seraphic and divine fire in his soul, as did marvellously consume his love to the world and all sublunary comforts. You are witnesses, and all that knew him, in how eminent a measure and degree the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world by the cross of Christ.

‘(3.) His love to souls: this was it no doubt that made him so indefatigable both in his study and in the pulpit; from hence it was, that the throne of grace, his study, the pulpit, and his sick neighbours, had the whole of his time divided amongst them, and devoted to them.

‘(4.) HIS UNBOUNDED LOVE TO ALL CHRISTIANS; though they differed in their sentiments from him: he loved Christians for their Christianity, and did adore

the image of his Saviour wherein he saw it in any of his members unhappily persecuting one another with hard names and characters of reproach. How often did he PUBLICLY DEPLORE AND BEWAIL, that the greatest measure of love that is found at this day amongst the professors of the cross, was not true Christian love, but only love of a party! Follow him then in the impartial exercise of this grace, and for your help therein remember what he taught you from Eph. U. 2, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" and as you have any regard for the Author of your profession, take heed that a spirit of division (now) crowd not in among you: your unity is your strength as well as your beauty; persist therefore, I beseech you, in that Christian order amongst yourselves in which it was his great ambition all his days to preserve and keep you. Timely oppose the crafty design of the subtle adversary of souls, who will take this occasion (if possible), now the spiritual parent is out of the way, to set the children together by the ears.

'3. His diffusive charity: his alms were as exuberant as his love: misery and want, wherever he met them, did sufficiently endear their objects to him; he was none of those that hide their faces from the poor, nor of the number of them who satisfy their consciences with a single exercise of their charity once a year, but daily were the emanations of his bounty. Yet although he cast the seeds of his charity upon all sorts of ground, he sowed them thickest upon God's inclosure; my meaning is, he did good unto all, "but especially to those that were of the household of faith." Make him herein, and his example, the pattern of your daily imitation; for the world, which is chained together by intermingled love, will soon shatter and fall in pieces if charity shall once fail and die: and for your better help herein, call over those potent arguments for the exercise of this evangelical duty, which he urged upon you, from that apostolical injunction, Heb. xiii. 16, "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

'4. His persevering diligence and faithfulness in his place and station. You could not but observe that his whole disposal of himself was to perpetual industry and service; he not only avoided idleness, but seemed to have a forcible antipathy against it, and was often recommending it to you with great concern and vigour in his public advices, to be always furnished with somewhat to do; utte inveniat semper diabolus occupatum—that the devil may never find thee at leisure to listen to his temptations, as St. Hierom adviseth. The idle man's brain being, in truth, not only the devil's shop, but his kingdom too, a model of and an appendage unto hell; a plan (like that) given up to torture and mischief. As to himself, his chiefest recreation was variety of work; for beside those portions of time which the necessities of nature and of civil life extorted from him, there was not a minute of the day which he left vacant. Now to stimulate your zeal to a pious imitation of him herein also, let me admonish you to ruminate upon those accurate sermons you heard from him upon Mat. xx. 6, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

'5. His tender sympathy with the afflicted church of Christ. Like a true son of Zion he could not rejoice when his mother mourned, he daily felt as much by sympathy as he did by sense; and no wonder, for he that hath a stock going in the church's ship, cannot but lament and quake at every storm. O how frequent were his inquiries after her, how fervent were his prayers for her, how bowelly and compassionate were his mournings over her! The deplorable condition of the church and nation lay exceeding near his heart both living and dying; he preferring their happiness and welfare above his chief joy. Now in order to your attaining the same Christ-like temper with him, frequently meditate on what you heard from him upon Neh. i. 4, where the sympathizing prophet refuseth to drink wine, when the afflicted church drank water.

‘6. And lastly, to sum up all, imitate him in his daily care and endeavour to live religion in all his capacities. As a minister, ye are witnesses, and God also, how faithfully, how conscientiously he discharged his duty towards you. In the exercise of his ministerial function, if censure itself be able to tax him for any neglect, it must be in no more frequent visiting his flock, from which nothing but a weak body kept him, not a proud or unwilling mind; the obstruction he met with in this part of his duty, from his tender habit of body (which would not suffer him so frequently to perform it as he desired), was his great sorrow both living and dying; yet having this to comfort him, that the frailty of his body was his affliction but not his sin. Consider him in his next relative capacity, as a child, how dutiful and obsequious! O how great was that tribute of veneration and respect which he so constantly paid to the hoary hairs of his aged parents! As a husband, how tender and compassionate; as a parent, how indulgent and affectionate; as a minister, how kind and munificent! Thus was he universally good in all station’s, and lived religion in every capacity. And if you desire to imitate him herein also, as becomes you, dress then your souls by that glass daily, which his dying hand last held up before your eyes, I mean by heavenly meditation, make those useful truths your own, which you last heard from him upon Tit. ii. 12, “That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;” which Christian lesson, if it shall be as practically learned by you, as it was faithfully taught by him, I will be bold to say thus much in the singular commendation of you his people, that you will thereby give the world a convictive instance that this age hath virtues as stupendous as its vices!

‘THE CONCLUSION.—Thus I have given myself the satisfaction of doing my duty in propounding your ministers example to your Christian view. Let none censoriously say I have been all this while painting the prophet’s sepulchre. No, but describing the prophet himself, and with this single and sincere intention, that you may timely know you have had a prophet of the Lord among you; a person that had omnia in se sempiterna praeter corpusculum—all things living and lasting to eternity except his body, which was the only thing he had subject to mortality, and besides which, nothing of him doth see corruption. It will be below the merit of his person, as well as the greatness of our loss, to celebrate his death in womanish complaints, or indeed by any verbal lamentations; nor can anything beseem his memory but what is sacred and divine, as his writings are. May his just fame from them, and from his virtues, be precious to all succeeding ages; and when elegies committed to the trust of marble shall be as illegible as if they had been writ in water, when all stately pyramids shall be dissolved in dust, and all the venerable monuments of antiquity be devoured by the corroding teeth of time, then let this short character, describing him in his best and fullest portraiture, remain of him; viz. that he was a CHRISTIAN IN COMPLETE ARMOUR.’

Gurnall’s widow survived her husband nineteen years, and seems to have resided at Lavenham. At any rate she was buried at Lavenham on September 7, 1698, and the grant of administration to her property called her ‘Sarah Gurnall, widow, of Lavenham, deceased.’

Gurnall left at least eight children, according to M’Keon, two having died young.

1. Sarah, baptized April 2, 1646, married to Mr. Mayor of Newcastle-on-Tyne.
2. Susannah, baptized April 4, 1650, married the Rev. Samuel Beachcroft, of Emanuel College, Cambridge, rector of Semer, Suffolk.
3. Catherine, the date of whose baptism we do not know, married the Rev. Bezaliel Peachie, of Emanuel College, Cambridge, vicar of Bures St. Mary, near Sudbury, who was one of the witnesses of Gurnall’s will.

4. Elizabeth, baptized April 25, 1655, married the Rev. Philip Richardson of Christ's College, Cambridge, a clergyman of Ipswich.
5. Ann, baptized February 11, 1655, continued to live with her mother at Lavenham until her decease in 1698, and married in June, 1700, Mr. William Manthorp of Lowestoft.
6. Another sister, whose name is not known, married a Mr. Shaftoe of Newcastle-on-Tyne.
7. Thomas, baptized March 13, 1659, settled at Little Waldingfield, and was buried there in 1723.
8. Joseph, baptized July 23, 1662, was an attorney, and according to M'Keon's belief, resided at Lavenham.
9. John, baptized December 24, 1664, was sent to Christ's College, proceeded B.A. in 1685, and afterward became curate of Brockley until 1698. He was buried at Lavenham on February 6, 1700.
10. Leonard, baptized May 11, 1669, is one of whom nothing is known.

I can find no trace of Gurnall's descendants in the present day. There is no one, so far as I can learn, of his name at Lavenham. The rectory house in which he lived is no longer standing. The living of Lavenham has passed into the hands of Caius College, Cambridge. Everything connected with the good man, except his book, seems to have ragged away. By it alone, 'he being dead yet speaketh.'

I have now completely exhausted all the information I can supply about the author of *The Christian in Complete Armour*, and can only express my deep regret that I can tell the reader nothing more. It certainly does seem rather tantalizing that a writer of the seventeenth century,—who is better known by name than almost any of the Puritans—who lived within twenty miles of such men as Owen, Marshall, Newcomen, Young, and Stockton,—who resided for thirty-five years in a town, of some little importance two hundred years ago, in a county so well known at that time as Suffolk—that such a man should have passed away and so very little be known about him. 'But so it is. Gurnall's case, perhaps, does not stand alone. Perhaps the last day will prove that some of the best and holiest men that ever lived are hardly known.

Nothing now remains for me to do except to say a few words about Gurnall's literary works, which are now, for the first time, brought together in a complete form.

The first of Gurnall's works, and indeed the one by which he is commonly known, is his famous book, *The Christian in Complete Armour*. This well-known book consists, like many of the theological writings of the seventeenth century, of sermons or lectures delivered by the author in the course of his regular ministry, in a consecutive course on Eph. vi. 10-20.

It was originally published in three small 4to volumes, and in three portions, at three different times. The first volume, containing Eph. vi. 10-13, was published in 1655. This volume is dedicated to 'the inhabitants of Lavenham, my dearly beloved friends and neighbours,' and the dedication contains a distinct statement, that the book consists of sermons preached at Lavenham. 'What I present you,' says Gurnall, 'within this treatise, is a dish from your own table, and so (I hope) will go down the better. You cannot despise it, though the fare be mean, except you will blame yourselves who chose the cook.' There is a date at the end of the dedication which happily serves to show when the work was published. It is dated January 1, 1655. My copy is the second edition.

The second volume of the course, containing Eph. vi. 14-16, was published in 1658. It contains a dedication to Thomas Darcy, Esq., Mrs. Sisilia Darcy, his religious console, at Kentwell Hall in Suffolk, from which it appears that Mrs. Darcy was daughter of Sir Symond D'Ewes, Gurnall's patron. The dedication is dated Lavenham, October, 1657. My copy is the first edition.

The third volume of the work, containing Eph. vi. 17-20, was published in 1662. It is dedicated to Lady Mary Vere, Baroness of Tilbury, a lady well known in the seven-

teenth century, and daughter of William Tracey, Esq., of Toddington in Gloucestershire. The dedication is dated August 28, 1661. My copy is the first edition.

Comment, or recommendation, is perhaps needless in speaking of Gurnall's great work. The fact that a sixth edition was published in the year the author died, 1679, is enough to show that its merits were early recognized. The high reputation it has 'always borne among lovers of sound English divinity down to the present day, is another fact which ought not to be forgotten. Other theological works of the seventeenth century were famous in their day, but are now seldom read. The Christian in Complete Armour is a work that is read and enjoyed by thousands up to this time.

One grand peculiarity of *The Christian in Complete Armour* is the soundness and scriptural proportion of its doctrinal statements. There is nothing extravagant and overstretched in Gurnall's exhibition of any point, either in faith or practice. Nothing is glaringly over-coloured, nothing is completely thrown into the shade. In this respect it is eminently like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a work so beautifully proportioned in doctrine, that Calvinist and Arminian, Churchman and Dissenter, are all alike agreed in admiring it.

Another striking peculiarity of Gurnall's book is its profusion of illustrations and comparisons. You can hardly open a page of the work without meeting with some vivid image or picture of divine things, which lights up the whole subject under consideration like a sunbeam. I am not prepared to say that in this respect Gurnall surpasses Brookes, Watson, or Swinnock, but I am quite sure that he deserves to be classed with them. Happy would it be for the church if this gift of illustration was more common and more cultivated by preachers. The man whose sermons are best remembered is the man who, like his divine Master, 'uses similitudes.'

One more beautiful feature in Gurnall's book is its richness in pithy, pointed, and epigrammatical sayings. Page after page might be filled, if a collection was made of all the short, golden sentences which are to be found in *The Christian in Complete Armour*. You will often find in a line and a half some great truth, put so concisely, and yet so fully, that you really marvel how so much thought could be got into so few words.

It would be easy to heap up testimonies to the value of Gurnall's *Christian in Complete Armour*. Baxter and Flavel both thought most highly of the book. Toplady used to make copious extracts from it in his common-place book. John Newton said that if he was confined to one book beside the Bible, he dared say Gurnall's *Christian Armour* would be his choice. Cecil spent many of the last days of his life in reading it, and repeatedly expressed his admiration of it. But I have said enough already to weary the reader, and the best advice I can give him is to read the book for himself in the beautiful edition in which it now appears, and to judge for himself.

Two other books, and two only, are known to have been published by Gurnall, in addition to his great work *The Christian in Complete Armour*. Both of these are single sermons preached on special occasions.

One of these sermons is called 'The Magistrate's Portraiture drawn from the Word'. It was preached at Stowmarket, in Suffolk, upon August 20, 1656, 'before the election of parliament recurs for the same county,' and published the same year. The subject of the sermon is Isaiah i. 26. It is an excellent sermon, and worthy of the author in every way.

The other sermon is called 'The Christian's Labour and Reward.' It was preached at Castle Hedingham, in Essex, on January 10, 1671, and published in 1672. It consists chiefly of a discourse preached at the funeral of Lady Mary Vere, widow of Sir Horace Vere of Tilbury, the lady to whom the third volume of *The Christian in Com-*

plete Armour is dedicated. It contains a dedication to Elizabeth, Countess Dowager of Glare, who was Lady Mary Vere's daughter. It is a good sermon undoubtedly, but would have been better if it had been more compressed. However, the preachers of funeral sermons are seldom allowed much time for their preparation, and perhaps Gurnall had no time to make his sermon shorter.

These two sermons are now brought out for the first time in the same edition, and side by side with *The Christian in Complete Armour*, and the reading public will now, at last, possess *A COMPLETE EDITION OF GURNALL'S WORKS*.¹⁰

I have seen it asserted that Gurnall, in addition to the works already mentioned, published a volume of sermons in 1660. M'Keon says that this volume is mentioned in Cooke's *Preacher's Assistant*, published in 1783, and that a bookseller in London told him that he had himself seen a copy.

In reply to this I can only say that no such volume of sermons is to be found in the British Museum, nor in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, nor in the Redcross-street Library" in London. Neither can I hear of any living man, whether bookseller or collector of old divinity, who ever saw the volume. I must therefore be allowed to think that M'Keon made a mistake, and that no such volume was ever published.

I now conclude this preface by expressing my earnest hope that this new edition of Gurnall's work may find many readers as well as purchasers. It is indeed to be desired that solid scriptural theology, like that contained in these pages, should be valued and studied in the church. Books in which Scripture is reverently regarded as the only rule of faith and practice—books in which Christ and the Holy Ghost have their rightful office—books in which justification, and sanctification, and regeneration, and faith, and grace, and holiness are clearly, distinctly, and accurately delineated and exhibited, these are the only books which do real good. Few things need reviving more than a taste for such books as these among readers.

April 23, 1864

For my own, part, I can only say that I read everything I can get hold of which professes to throw light on my Master's business, and the work of Christ among men. But the more I read, the less I admire modern theology. The more I study the productions of the new schools of theological teachers, the more I marvel that men and women can be satisfied with such writing. There is a vagueness, a mistiness, a shallowness, an indistinctness, a superficiality, an aimlessness, a hollowness about the literature of the 'broader and kinder systems,' as they are called, which, to my mind, stamps their origin on their face. They are of the earth, earthy. I find more of definite soul-satisfying thought in one page of Gurnall than in five pages of such books as the leaders of the so-called 'Broad Church School' put forth. In matters of theology 'the old is better.'

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Mr. Hankinson, the present rector of St. Margaret's, Lynn, informs me that the name 'Gurnall,' to the best of his knowledge, is no longer known in Lynn. But he says that the name Gurling is not uncom-

mon, and that he has little doubt it was originally 'Gurnal.' He adds, 'I find an entry of baptism in 1799, where the name is "Gurnell or Gurling."

² Hairsnet, White, Corbet, Wren, and Montague were Bishops of Norwich between 1619 and 1641. Three of them, at least, viz. Harsnet, Wren, and Montague, were notoriously very High Churchmen, and strongly opposed to the Puritans.

³ John Arrowsmith was born at Gateshead in 1602. He was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and was chosen fellow of Katherine Hall. He was elected one of the university preachers, was beneficed at Lynn, and was afterwards preacher at St. Margaret's, Ironmonger's Lane, London. He was a leading member of the Westminster Assembly, and had a principal share in drawing up the Assembly's Catechism. He was elected master of St. John's College in 1644, and was chosen vice-chancellor of Cambridge in 1647. In 1651 he was appointed regius professor of divinity, and rector of Somersham. He was chosen master of Trinity College in 1653, died in 1659, and was buried in Trinity College Chapel. His commentary on the first seventeen verses of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, entitled 'God-Man,' gives a very favourable impression of his ability.

Samuel Fairclough was born at Haverhill in 1594, and was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge. He was appointed lecturer at Lynn by the mayor and aldermen in 1619, and continued there, according to Samuel Clarke, who gives a long and most interesting account of him, 'for some time.' The opposition and persecution of Harsnet, Bishop of Norwich, obliged him to resign this lecture. He was afterwards lecturer at Clare, in Suffolk, and was then appointed rector of Kedington by Sir N. Barnardiston. He resigned this living in 1662, on account of the Act of Uniformity. He died in retirement in 1677, aged 84. Though a retiring man, and not known by any writings, he seems to have been a man of singular gifts and graces. There is an interesting tablet in Heveningham Church, erected by his daughter, wife of Mr. Jones, rector of Heveningham. He lived at Heveningham for two years, but died at Stowmarket.

4 'Usher's Correspondence, No. 179.

5 The same record of Gurnall's presentation, word for word, is to be found in the Norwich Register of Institutions, No. 24. 1638-1648.

⁶ As a general rule I have given the letters as translated by M'Keon. In a few instances I have attempted to mend his translation.

⁷ By the kindness of the present Bishop of Norwich, I have been enabled to verify all the three remarkable dates above given from the registry at Norwich.

8 The title of this libellous attack is so curious that I give it entire—Covenant Renouncers Desperate Apostates, opened in two letters, written by a Christian friend to Mr. W. Gurnall, of Lavenham in Suffolk, which may indefinitely serve as an admonition to all such Presbyterian ministers or others, who have forced their conscience, not only to leap over, but to renounce their solemn covenant obligation to endeavour a reformation according to God's word, and the extirpation of all prelatical superstitions, and contrary thereunto conform to those superstitious vanities against which they had so solemnly sworn. Printed in Anti-turncoat Street, and sold at the sign of Truth's Delight, right opposite to Back-sliding Alley, 4to. 1665.'

9 Reynolds was made Bishop of Norwich by Charles II. in 1661. He was a thorough Puritan and a prominent member of the famous Westminster Assembly of Divines. When the bishopric of Norwich was offered to him, the bishopric of Hereford at the same time was offered to Baxter, the bishopric of Lichfield to Calamy, the deanery of Rochester to Manton, and the deanery of Coventry to Bates. All these eminent puritan divines refused preferment when Reynolds accepted. Their refusal, I venture to think, was the greatest misfortune that ever befell the Church of England, and the most singular instance of mistaken judgment on record in church history. If Reynolds, Baxter, and Calamy had all been bishops, and Manton and Bates been deans, I doubt if the Act of Uniformity, in its present shape, could ever have passed.

10 These two sermons are omitted from the present reprint.