

# Ballad: The Reverend Simon Magus

In the ballad "The Reverend Simon Magus," a wealthy and competitive advowson, sought after by many clergymen, comes to the attention of The Reverend Simon Magus. Desiring to purchase this valuable position, he engages with an agent to discuss acquiring the Cure of Otium-cum-Digge. The agent describes the vicarage as the epitome of comfort, free from duties, with an annual income of fifteen hundred pounds. He hints that the position will soon be available due to the current incumbent's advanced age of ninety-five, suggesting his coming demise as a relief.

The dialogue reveals the agent's insensitive and crass approach, engaging in unprofessional gestures such as winking and poking Simon Magus, who, in turn, reproaches him for his lack of decorum. Simon Magus insists that the agent's role is of significant importance, as he handles the spiritual leadership of communities, hinting at the sacredness of his intended purchase. The agent, somewhat taken aback, boasts about his success in this unique marketplace.

As the conversation continues, Simon Magus inquires about the vicarage's comforts, emphasizing his desire for modesty to match his role as a humble apostle. He expresses disinterest in extravagant features such as billiard rooms or stately trees, which the agent had assumed would be selling points. The agent, realizing the mismatch between the property's luxuries and the clergyman's aspirations for simplicity, suggests that the opulent vicarage might not align with Simon Magus's envisioned humble abode. This unveils a contrast between Simon Magus's supposed modesty and the inherent value placed on the material aspects of the advowson, subtly critiquing the commodification of religious roles and the expectations of clergymen's lifestyles.