

A RECORD OF THE  
PARISH *of* SHRIVENHAM  
BERKSHIRE

*By the Rev.*

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VIEW OF THE S.W. CORNER OF THE CHURCH  
FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

OXFORD  
FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

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To  
WALTER BULKELEY

9TH VISCOUNT BARRINGTON  
*a constant friend for nearly  
forty years, I dedicate what this  
book records of the village  
with which he and his family  
have been so long and  
closely associated*



## PREFACE

**W**HAT is written and contained in the following pages makes no claim to originality of thought, or to any literary merit. It is but an honest and, if with modesty it may be said, a painstaking effort to put into some permanent and, it is hoped, a readable form, what may not be altogether without interest for those who have been, or who now are, in any way associated with this particular Berkshire village.

Apart from any personal feeling such as that of incompetence to undertake it creditably, the difficulties that beset any attempt that might be made to write a local history are neither small nor few. For accurate statement of facts the writer is dependent for such knowledge as can be acquired from old manuscripts, charters, deeds, county histories, parochial documents, and traditions, and the search for such information in museums, public offices, and libraries, diocesan registries, parish records, and so forth, is no light or easy task. Without accuracy of statement such a book could have but little, if any, worth for those who might look to find any interest in it, and, lest error be stereotyped through publication, all possible

care has been taken that no assertions should herein be made that do not carry with them the justification and the warranty of truth; though reliance must of necessity be placed on the creditableness of authorities referred to for information, or fact. For a long time past I have been gathering—and with the help of others, which I would gratefully acknowledge—such information as could be obtained from the aforementioned sources, yet without the urge that has been given me to go forward by the Rev. P. J. Goodrich, lately Rector of Hatford, Berks., who has written the history of that village, and but for his encouragement to put my collected notes into shape, they would, it is all too likely, be still lying in the box in my study, which has been their resting-place for many years! To him, too, would I express my indebtedness for much valued assistance so ungrudgingly given in the production of this book, and for collaboration in preparing it for the press. Yet when all has been put in order there still remains the discomfiting sense of an uncompleted task, and the reproachful feeling that more might have been added to what this book records had further and prolonged research been made. But *tempus fugit*, and to undertake such research would necessarily postpone

indefinitely the realization of a wish that has long been cherished, to place on record historical and other facts in connexion with the place where—with the exception of the seven previous years—the whole of my ministry in the Church has been exercised, and where now more than half of my life has been spent. So, with all its shortcomings and omissions, I commend this unpretentious little volume to the goodwill of any who may chance to read it, and to those especially of my friends and neighbours, for whom, as is hoped, it may prove to be of some little interest.

E. F. H.

SHRIVENHAM VICARAGE,

October 1928.

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CHAPTER I  
THE VILLAGE

In Berkshire homes is happiness,  
Where truth and honour stand;  
In Berkshire hearts contentment,  
And love of Berkshire land.

WILFRED HOWE NURSE.

**S**HRIVENHAM, with a population of six hundred souls, is the Berkshire village of which it is the aim of this book to record the history—past and present. Seventy-two miles from London, and twenty-three from Oxford, it lies in the Vale of the famous White Horse Hill, that gives its title to the Rural Deanery to which it belongs. It is pleasantly situated on the extreme western boundary of the county on the Bath and Oxford main road, midway between Swindon, the well-known centre of the Great Western Railway Works, and the less familiar provincial town of Faringdon; and is in full view of the Berkshire Downs.

In charters, deeds, and registers there is much variation of form and spelling in the name of this Berkshire village. In the Red Book of the Exchequer (Rolls Series) it is called Scriveham; in the Rotuli Hundredorum (the Hundred Rolls) it is Scrivenham; and elsewhere Shriveham, and sometimes Shrineham. A charter gives the name in late spelling as Scriuenham;<sup>1</sup> and in a foot-note, showing a variation in earlier spelling, the name

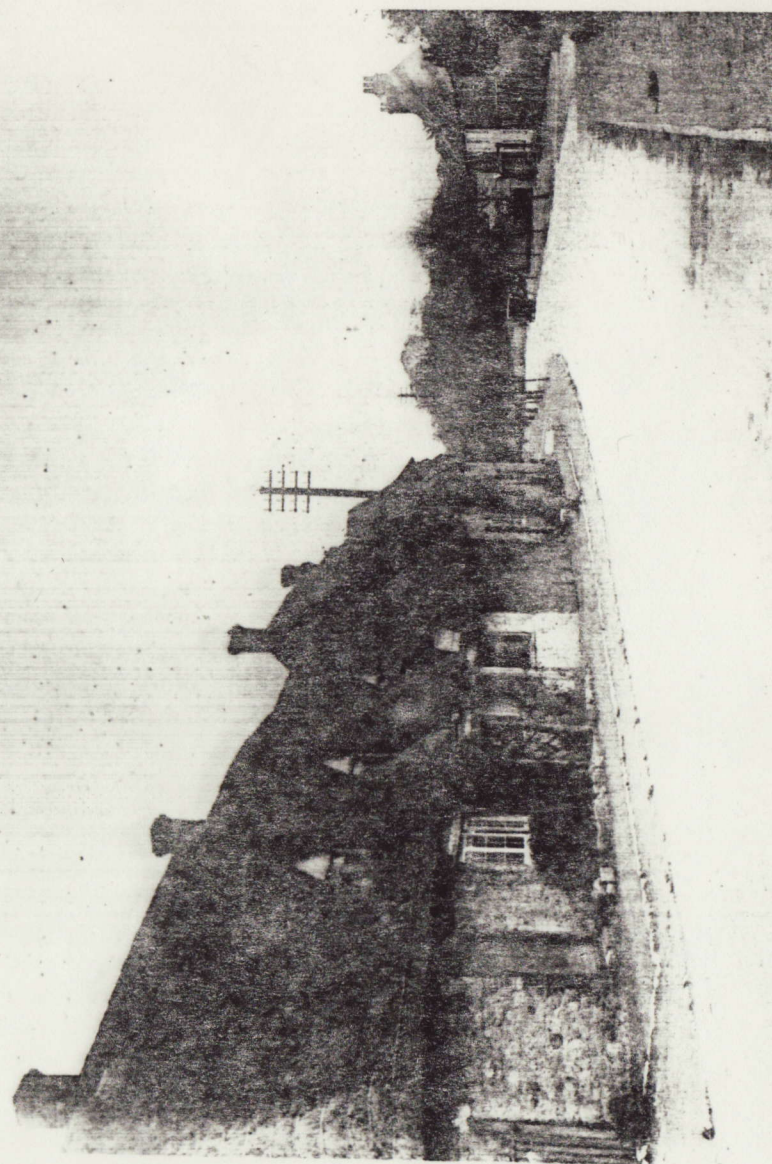
<sup>1</sup> *Cartularium Saxonicum*, Birch, vol. i, 506.

is given as Scrivenanhom, thus indicating that a syllable has been lost. And what meaning is there that could be assigned to the name that our village bears, whatever variety of forms it may from time to time have assumed? It had once been thought that the name signified 'Sheriff's home', but Dr. Skeat<sup>1</sup> has ruled it otherwise; and having regard to the full Anglo-Saxon form of the name—Scrifenan-ham—explains its meaning as being 'Scrifena's enclosure'—Scrifena denoting a person.

In the majority of cases place-names are said to be of simple, and often of trivial, origin; and when the oldest form can be recovered the interpretation is often ready at hand and obvious. Whatever ambiguity there may be about it, we may fairly put out of court the idea—sometimes popularly held—that the explanation of the name is to be found in Shrivng—Shrivng-ham, and may reasonably, and with perhaps but little fear of contradiction, give assent to the meaning of the name of this Berkshire village as interpreted by Dr. Skeat.

So accustomed do we grow to places and things as they now are that it is no easy matter to think of the village and its inhabitants under conditions other than those with which we have become familiar, and with such facts in connexion with it as come within living memory; and it is with the present-day village that this chapter must chiefly concern itself. Yet be it stated that here in days gone by was a royal residence. In the year 1204 King John became possessed of Beckett—mentioned in Domesday as Becote—which once

<sup>1</sup> *Berkshire Place-names.*



THE VILLAGE STREET



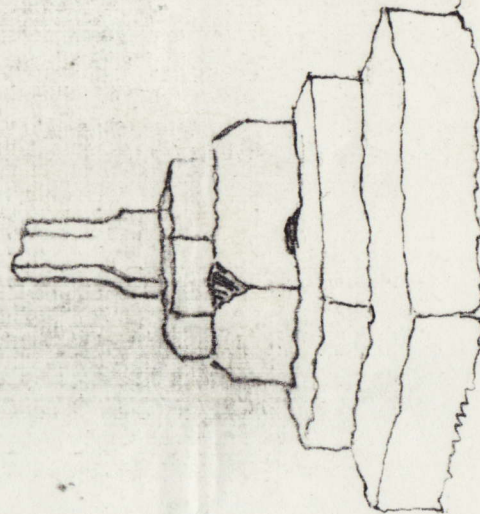
had been the property of the Earls of Evreux; whilst a mandate issued in the King's name to the Sheriff of Oxford, and dated as dispatched from Beckett, may afford some proof of his living there from time to time. With royalty thus in mind in connexion with our village, an injunction laid on the owner of Fowersmill in the fourteenth century may here not inappropriately be mentioned. In the year 1367, the de Becotes held the manor by service of coming before the King whenever he should pass over the bridge by the mill, and showing him two capons, make him a somewhat tantalizing offer in such Latin words as these (Latin certainly more quaint than classic!): 'Ecce, domine istos duos capones, quos alias habebitis, sed non nunc', meaning, 'See here, Sir, these two capons, which you shall have at some other time, but not now.' As there is no record of any passage of the King through our borders this prescribed condition of service has probably never been fulfilled.

'The world of to-day is very different from the world of the past,' there are few, if any, who would challenge the truth of this verdict on human affairs; and such a pronouncement is in no small measure true of the countryside; for those who have any inside knowledge can bear their testimony to the changes—whether for better or worse—which have within living memory come over the village, and the spirit of village life. Motor traffic in its every shape and form—however great its advantages, and manifold its conveniences—has ruthlessly broken in upon and disturbed the once peacefulness and quiet of many a country parish; and those who, like the

writer, can think of our Berkshire village as it is to-day, and as it was some twenty or thirty years ago, will be able to enter into the feelings of an old inhabitant, who was once heard to exclaim, 'Why, we are becoming more like London every day!' Nor can our village be said to have altogether escaped those hands of destruction which have been laid on the picturesqueness and on many a beauty-spot of rural England by garages, with their array of petrol and other pumps of gorgeous and divers colours—those Aunt Sallies of the road; by galvanized buildings; by wayside bungalows and government houses—more useful than ornamental. Yet in spite of the ravages of modern times, our village can scarcely fail to arrest the attention of the visitor and the wayfarer by its pleasing appearance; by its box hedges; by its still remaining rows of thatched cottages; by the wide street running through its centre, bordered by lime-trees planted in commemoration of the coronation of King Edward VII; though in these latter days these trees have been in some measure mutilated as obstructing by their spreading branches the light and air of the dwellings which they overshadow. Yet, whatever the more recent invasions on its seclusion and its peace, the outstanding features of the village yet remain, even though not wholly 'untouched by time's rude hand'.

At the entrance to the village on the east side, and lying between the Faringdon and the Longcot roads, is Beckett House, with its prettily wooded pleasure-grounds and park, and once the seat of Viscount Barrington. The road approach-

*Remains of X in Street, i. Strouwenham  
J. C. Buckler 1819*



REMAINS OF CROSS IN STREET  
From a drawing by J. C. Buckler, 1819

ing the house was formerly the old coach road, on which the old milestone may still be seen. The road led past the house and crossed a ford where the Cradle Bridge, as it is called, now stands. The Inigo Jones garden house on the terrace above proved a pleasant place for Lord Barrington's guests to view the coach as it passed on its way with its living freight. Beckett is an ancient place, though the larger part of the house is modern, built in 1834 in the Elizabethan style. But on this, as on many an ancestral home in England, Ichabod is writ large—the glory is departed. Under the strain and stress of these present times the estate has been sold, broken up, and, passing into other hands, has now ceased to be the property of the Barrington family. Under new ownership the house has been reconstructed and its dimensions reduced by the pulling down of the older and other portions of it; whilst much of the fine timber in the adjoining woods has been felled.

In any description of the village, attention may be drawn to a small group of once stately elm-trees, standing on a slight elevation in the centre of the village and the village street, and in former days sheltering under their branches outward signs and symbols of the law and the Gospel. For here stood, side by side, the village Cross—the emblem of Christian faith and hope—and the whipping-post, with its terrors and humiliation for delinquents and transgressors of the law, though there is but little that can now be shown of their former existence. Of the village Cross there remains only the stones that once formed its base, and the name that it has given to this

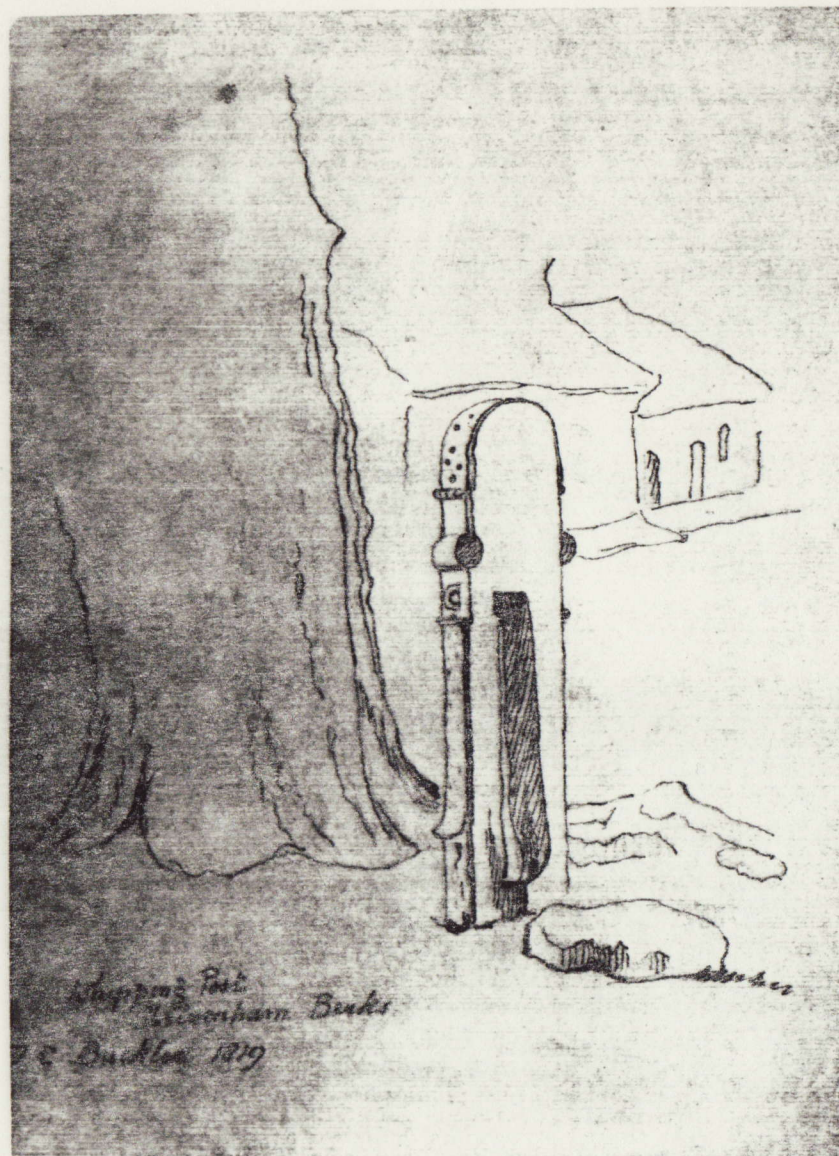
clump of elms, which are known locally as the Cross trees. Of the whipping-post there is but little that remains; the only surviving portion of it is now kept in the school.

By their central position these Cross trees afford a convenient gathering-place for the loiterer and the idler, and many is the idle tale, many the story of village scandal and village gossip, that their 'whispering leaves' could tell. It is reasonable to suppose that these trees were planted at the same time as those in the churchyard which a manuscript note in a Church register affirms to have been in 1740. Be this so or not, they manifest evident tokens of age and of senile decay through limbs and branches which fall from them from time to time, threatening, if not actual bodily harm, at any rate damage to surrounding premises. On the principle of 'safety first' these trees have lately been severely dealt with, and can no longer be regarded as things of beauty.

On the north side of the Cross trees is the approach to the village church, of which an account is given in the following chapter; whilst opposite on the south side, and lying back some few yards from the road, is the Vicarage.

Hard by on the west side of the Cross trees, from which presumably it takes its present name,<sup>1</sup> is a striking-looking house with an old-time garden, which, with the exception of its outbuildings, and possibly of its entrance-porch, is of Inigo Jones architecture. Separated from this by a narrow road on the same side of the street are the village schools, with the master's house adjoining.

<sup>1</sup> Elm Tree House.



THE WHIPPING-POST

From a drawing by J. C. Buckler, 1819

Unlike some buildings of this description, they are of pleasing appearance, built of grey stone. They were erected by voluntary subscriptions in the year 1863, on a site given by William Keppel, Viscount Barrington; and as set forth in the Trust Deed—'for the education of the children of the parish of Shrivenham, and to be conducted upon the principles of the National Society for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church'. They were altered and added to in 1899 when a new class-room was built, and the present infant department enlarged. In connexion with the village school be here recorded the long and faithful service of Henry C. E. Olliver and Alice his wife,<sup>1</sup> names held in respect and esteem by the two generations of the children that they taught.

Facing the road that divides the school buildings from Elm Tree House is the entrance to the Manor House. Of ancient date the house belonged formerly to the Fairthorne family, until in 1926 it was purchased by the present owner and occupant, Mr. W. Parsons. On the south side of the village street, and adjoining the Post Office, is the Men's Institute; a grey stone building, erected by subscription on a site given by the present Viscount Barrington, who laid the foundation stone on 19 May 1904. It was opened in the following year by the late Mr. A. K. Loyd, K.C., who at the time represented the constituency in Parliament. It consists of two rooms, is well furnished, contains a good library, and is much used

<sup>1</sup> Head Master, 1883-1921. Head Mistress, 1883; died 8th Dec., 1917.

by the young men and others during the winter months.

Lying between the eastern wall of the Churchyard and the Faringdon Road is a row of ten Almshouses, the charitable gift to the parish of Sir Henry Martin in the year 1642. Though two of the original ten houses were rebuilt by a former Vicar—Archdeacon Berens. As their date will suggest, they are ill-adapted to present-day needs and standards of living. Carrying with them a small weekly payment they serve, however, a useful purpose in providing homes for the older members of the community.

At the western end of the village, and at the junction of the Highworth and Shrivenham roads, is an imposing building known as the Memorial Hall. 'Exceeding magnificent' within and without, it was erected through the activities of the present Viscountess Barrington, and was formally opened in the summer of 1925 by H.R.H. Princess Beatrice. It is used chiefly for dances and other social gatherings. Adjoining are six houses and two shops, built for ex-service men disabled in the Great War, and a large recreation ground which serves for cricket, football, hockey, lawn tennis, and as a playing ground for the village children. On the side of the road opposite the Hall and the village pump is the old Pound, where straying cattle were interned until reclaimed by their lawful owners. Though a link with the customs of former days, it is now but rarely used for the purpose for which once it stood. Hard by on the opposite side of the road is the Wesleyan Chapel.

To help us picture to ourselves, in however

small a measure, the village, other than as we know it at the present time, a former inhabitant—the late Mr. Amariah Fairthorne, of the Manor House<sup>1</sup>—has left in writing some recollections of bygone days, and what he has recorded will scarcely fail to be of interest to any local readers of this book. In the centre of the village was formerly a village green, and opposite to the present school was a pond, which served as the last resting-place of dead cats and dogs, as well as a convenient receptacle for broken crockery and disused pots and pans. Happily this pond belongs to ancient history, and is now but a reminiscence of former days!

The terrace in front of Elm Tree House was a favourite and select place from which to watch the village amusements on the green below. The part of the house which now forms the kitchen, offices, &c., was a grocer's shop. Standing on the site of the present buildings in the yard was his candle factory. At the corner opposite<sup>2</sup> stood the original village inn, which was called 'the King's Arms'. This has ceased to exist, and the modern building on the other side of the main street—the 'Barrington Arms'—now supplies its place.

From the present 'Prince of Wales' Inn to the Faringdon road turning was a ditch with brambles growing round it, and at the corner (a dangerous one in these days of motor traffic) was a blacksmith's shop, kept by a man called Horne. Hence its present-day name of Horne's corner. The building now known as the Foresters' Hall served in those days for the village school. On the site

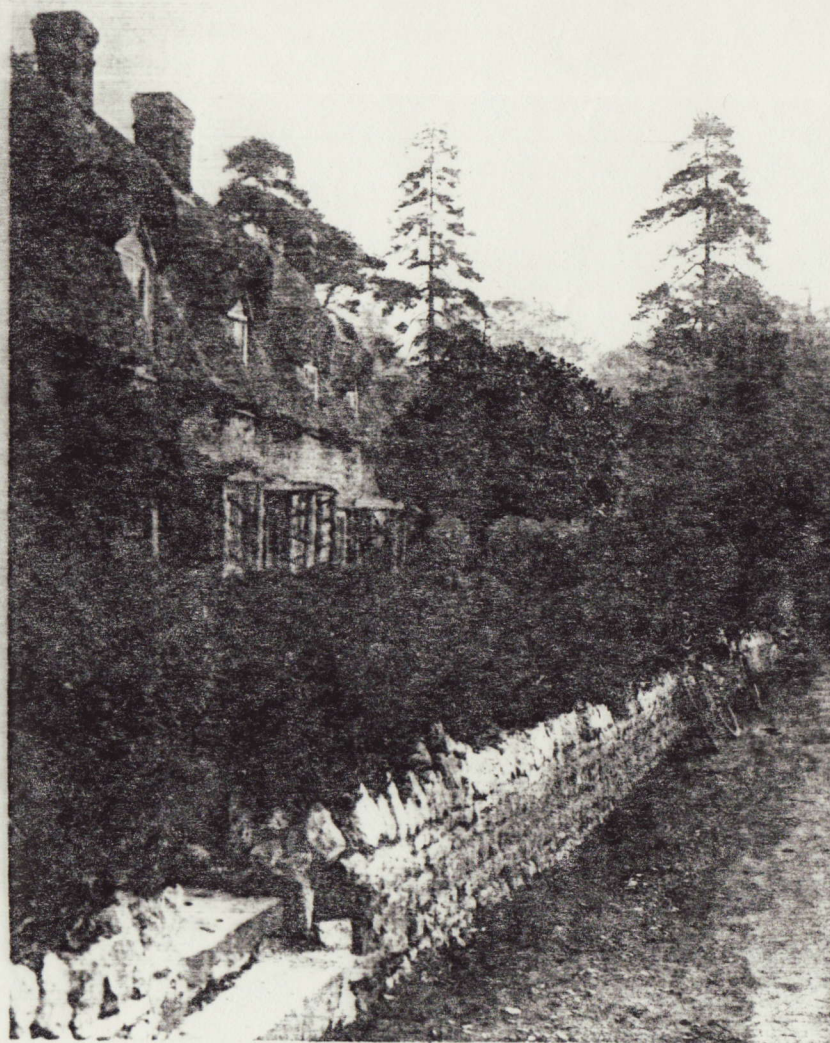
<sup>1</sup> Died 5 June 1907.

<sup>2</sup> The present 'Pound's Stores'.

of the present school there stood a gabled house. This, it seems, had fallen into disrepair, and was pulled down when the school was built. On the opposite side, Ivy House was then a farmhouse attached to a farm in the possession of the Blagraves.<sup>1</sup> This was afterwards bought by Lord Barrington, and formed a part of the Becket estate.

If at the closing of this chapter any reflections might be made briefly on the village, and village life generally, it may be said that, though the need of more and better houses is as urgent in the country as in the towns, yet there is much in recent times that has contributed to the brightening of rural life. The inhabitants of the village have come to find relief from its proverbial dullness in the means afforded for social intercourse through such agencies as the Mothers' Union, the Women's Institute, and social clubs; whilst the isolation of the village has come to be less acutely felt by the easiness of access to neighbouring towns through the constant service of motor-buses, and wireless communication with the outside world—and those who are without their wireless apparatus in some form or other are now few in number. Many too are the opportunities

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Fairthorne speaks also of the Church as being in a 'a sorry state'. There were no pipes to drain the rain-water from the roof, which discharged itself on the paths below. The inside walls were whitewashed, and there were wooden pegs fixed to the pillars on which men hung their hats. In the chancel hung a large ladder, which was used when repairs were needed. The Church was not warmed. There was a grinding organ in the gallery, but the more cheerful tunes were suppressed as the Vicar objected to them!



THATCHED COTTAGES  
*South-east entrance to Village*

for recreation afforded by enthusiastic promoters of dances, whist-drives, and such-like diversions. Indeed, it might be sometimes wondered whether, for the general and moral welfare of the village, the pendulum of dullness has not swung too far in the opposite direction. Be this as it may, the spirit and the atmosphere of village life has in these latter days become an altogether changed one.

Whatever other means there may be for earning a livelihood, it is the business of the fields, the tillage of the ground, that must form the chief occupation in a country village. Yet, of however great importance the cultivation of the soil, the land affords but little attraction to many, and the more ambitious and enterprising of its youth will seek to find their living beyond the narrow boundaries of their village homes—whether in lands overseas; in naval, military, or civil service; or in the opportunities afforded by the larger centres of population. The law of the survival of the fittest does not always hold good in a country village!

Though be it said that in a single generation the Barrington family can tell of a Bishop, an Admiral, and a Judge, yet, so far as is known, none have gone forth from the village to the larger world outside that have risen to any great pre-eminence amongst their fellows. But here in humble surroundings, and under lowly roofs, has been, and is now being, lived many a quiet and unnoticed life of dutifulness in following the daily round, and in fulfilment of the common task, for the order and welfare of the home, for the good of the community, and in the interests of the common weal.