

UP AND DOWN THE DEANERY.
BY THE DEAN RURAL.

Prebendary Francis Charles Hingeston-Randolph

(Reprinted in the Kingsbridge Gazette from the Salcombe Parish Magazine.)

RINGMORE (no chapter number) 24 February 1888

And now my Wanderings and my Work are done, and I come back to the Old Home, by the Southern Sea, and to the venerable Sanctuary, which for the long period of eight-and-twenty years have been the scene of "Ups and Downs" of another sort – those of my Life and Ministry. "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? but there is Mercy with Thee." *Miserere Domine!*

I do not know whether, as a Country Parson, I shall be classed with "Parents and Poets" if I appear to be over-fond of my own, and say that, all our Churches, there are none that can compare, for interest and for antiquity and (using the word technically) for "character," with All-Hallows', Ringmore: but I am conscious of no partiality in saying this; and I may, perhaps, be permitted to add that I have qualified myself, in practice as well as in theory, to express very decided opinions on all questions affecting the history and architecture of our ancient Churches, without incurring the charge of presumption.

The Churches of Devonshire and Cornwall, the old Diocese of Exeter (as everyone knows who knows anything about the matter), were, for the most part, so disguised, during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, and many of them so disfigured, by tasteless and debased additions, that they have become a very proverb for sameness.

The multiplication of altars, in the period referred to, involved the necessity of "chapels" to contain them, to make room for which the old transepts, one or both, were ruthlessly swept away, and for the side walls of Nave and Chancel were substituted

coarsely constructed arcades of granite (and, often enough, of mere surface-moor-stone), opening into the new aisles. In very few instances were these additions made because increased accommodation was necessary; for they were, for the most part, intended, not for congregational purposes, but simply (so to speak) to house the peculiar practices referred to above, which were never so much in vogue as in the days immediately preceding the Reformation. But Ringmore Church comes down to us, all but unchanged, from the period when English Church Architecture was at its best, and brings along with it, from the days before Domesday, a fragment of the old Saxon Sanctuary in which the first Christian fathers of the hamlet worshipped God – the oldest Ecclesiastical fabrick, as I believe, in Devonshire. That old church was, undoubtedly cruciform, the North Transept being then, as now, the “Manor-Chapel”; and when, in the Thirteenth Century, it was resolved to rebuild the Church (which had probably, fallen into decay, by reason of its great antiquity), the Lord of the Manor must have been unwilling to part with the old familiar walls, dear to himself as they had been to his ancestors; and so it was retained. When I came here, early in 1860, no one knew what a treasure had come down to us from the dim Past: for the windows had been built up, and all traces of them carefully concealed by thick coats of plaster within and of “rough-cast” - they call it, appropriately enough, “slapdash” down here – without. But I noted, at once, the great thickness of the walls, and the contrast, which, even in close disguise, they presented with the rest of the Church; and I cannot say that I was greatly surprised when, the veils that concealed them being removed, the little, narrow, ante-Norman windows hidden from time immemorial from the eyes of men, and one of them broken into by a Sixteenth-Century staircase to the Roodloft, were displayed in all their simple and time-honoured beauty. The upper part of the North Gable had been rebuilt, and a new window substituted for the window of Saxon times, and a new roof had been set up when the rebuilt Church was roofed in the Thirteenth Century; that is to say, the Lord of the Manor “restored” his Chapel, though he would not take it down, - but in all

other respects, it remains untouched. This transept is of unusual length and must have been very large in proportion to the size of the old Church, as it is to that of the present structure.

In the Thirteenth Century, as I have said, the rebuilding took place, the Nave early in the Century (and its West Wall, being of great thickness, was probably retained from the first Church); the Chancel, rather later, but in the same Century, as there is abundant evidence to shew. There are no aisles whatever; the Church was never added to and the only side-altar which it could have contained must have stood in the Manor-Chapel. The Tower stands on the south side of the Nave, and its lowest stage serves as a Porch: it is crowned by a low spire, and must have been erected at the end of the Fourteenth Century. Its builders however, like the builders of the great Mother-Church of Exeter, were careful to build on the same lines as their predecessors and their work harmonises in a very remarkable manner with the older work, so that only an "expert" would detect the fact that the whole Church is not the work of one hand and of one time.

I must reserve for another Chapter a fuller account of this most interesting House of God.

F. C. H. R.

Chapter XXXIII. – RINGMORE (Continued.) 6 April 1888

Our little Parish lies in the very bosom of Bigbury Bay; just in the midst, between its extreme headlands, Stoke Point, towards Plymouth and Bolt Tail, looking towards the East. The cliff-line is magnificent; tall, bold, rugged, and wonderfully varied in colour and outline. And we have three deeply cut coombes and coves; Challaborough and

Westcombe, East and West, and Ayrmer in the midst. Our soil is exceeding good; what old Devonshire Writers used to call "a fertile glebe." So that, altogether, ours is a favoured land; and it is no matter, therefore, for surprise that we find evidence of its having attracted settlers at a very early date. Settlers always look out for pleasant places, and great was the sagacity which they shewed in selecting them. Accordingly, we find along our northern "coasts" – our *land* "coasts," I mean, not our sea-coasts – most interesting traces of "settlement" in prehistorick times. On the high ground towards Modbury, some two miles from the Church, I have a detached piece of glebe, two large fields, called Higher and Lower "Sevenstones." Four main roads meet here, and the place is known as "Sevenstones Cross." A short mile westward is a considerable state, Langston, now broken into two, South-Langston, in Ringmore, and Lower-Langston, in the Parish of Kingston. Between these points is a straight and level road, running along the ridge of the hill, and forming throughout its whole length, the boundary between the two Parishes, a fact which proves the road to be a very antient "Way" indeed, for it must have been made before the two parishes were formed, that is to say, before Saxon times. Of the "Stones" nothing remains to us but their names; we may see, however, what they were like in the neighbouring County of Cornwall, where similar reliques of an antient Superstition wrought rudely in imperishable granite, still survive the "Seven-Maidens," turned into stone (as the country-folk surmise), for dancing on Sunday; and more than one "Lang" (*i.e.* "Long") Stone, - the "Stone-henge of the far Western Land. Coming into the domain of History we find that Our Parish was well "settled" in Saxon Days; for we learn from *Domesday-Book* that in the day on which King Edward the Confessor "was living and dead," it contained two Manors – "Reinmore" (as Ringmore was written then) and "Ocheneberie" – a name but little changed in form, and not different at all in sound from our modern "Okenbury." Judhel de Totenais was the great Landowner, or "Capital Lord" then; and of him "Radulfus" (also written *Randulphus* *i.e.* Randolph or Ralph), held both Manors. In the Confessor's

time Hecus (as he is called, in a Latinized form, in the "Exeter-Domesday") held Ringmore, and Tovi held Okenbury. "Hecus" is written "Heche" in the "Exchequer Domesday"; and it is worthy of note that his name survives to our town times in the scarcely changed form of "Hatch." There are some old tombstones of the Family in our Churchyard, and on one of them the name actually appears as "Hetch." A worthy old Farmer of this name was one of the Tenants on the Manor, not very long before my time; and people are still alive who can remember him well. Was there anyone at hand, then, I wonder, to tell him that he tilled the selfsame soil that Heche tilled in the Confessor's day, and to talk to him about his antient lineage? I fear not. Let us hope that, at any-rate, there was someone to remind him of a far better and older Lineage, in which all Faithfull Souls, whatever their earthly descent may be – high and low, rich and poor – have part (whose names, indeed, may not be written in the *Domesday-Book* of this World, but in "Another Book," which will be opened on the Great Domesday – "the Book of Life"), in that "Love which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God."

Of course, the famous Survey gives us many curious and interesting scraps of information about the conditions of these Manors at the early date, A.D. 1086, that is to say, just twenty years after the Norman Conquest.

The King appointed certain Commissioners, called the King's Justiciaries, of whom the chief, whose names are recorded were Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln, Walter Giffard, Earl of Buckingham, Henry de Ferrers, and Adam, brother to Eudo Dapifer. Their duties were most minutely and strictly defined and it will be seen how great care was taken to provide for the accuracy and completeness of their report. On the oaths of the Sheriffs, the Lords of the Manors, the Parsons of the Churches, the Reeves of the Hundreds, the bailiffs and villains (not, of course, what we mean when we talk of

“villians” now, but rather, as we say, “Villagers;” very small tenants of just enough land to sustain themselves and their families; but, at the mere will of their Lords, as Blackstone tells us, and counted among his goods and chattels: they were attached to the soil and tilled it), these Commissioners were to ascertain the name of every place, who held it when Edward the Confessor was King and who when the Survey was made; how many “hides” of land there were in each Manor; how many carucates” in demesne (*i.e.* in the Lord’s own occupation); how many “homagers”; how many “villains”; how many “cotters”; how many “serfs”; how many “freemen”; how many tenants in “soccage” (by which was meant a certain antient tenure which obliged the tenants on a Manor to cultivate his land for their Lord); what the extent of woodland; how much meadow and pasture; what mills and fishponds; what had been taken away or added; the gross value in the Confessor’s time and at that time; and how much each free-man and soc-man had before, and then.

Of course, all these items of enquiry would not be applicable in every place; and the Survey, which in some Counties was executed with much minuteness and care, was very imperfectly made in others. The Churches, for instance, were carefully set down in one County, which is made to appear all but Churchless, though we know that that was very far from being the case. And the aggregate number of the population is obviously under the mark nearly everywhere. Let us see what we are told of the two Manors here. Old Master Heche, then, gelded (*i.e.* paid tribute or tax) for one hide and a half; a “hide” being as much arable land as could be ploughed with one plough in a year. The whole of the land consisted of six “carucates,” that is, as much as six “carucae” (or ploughs) could plough in the year. Radulphus held in demesne half a hide, with two ploughs, and the villains one hide with three ploughs. There were six villains, six bordarers, and two serfs. The number of sheep was sixty seven; and there were six acres of meadow and two of pasture. The “bordarers” were better off, in some respects, than the “villains”;

each had his own "bord" (or cottage) with a parcel of ground attached thereto, according to Kennet, who says that they were required to supply their Lord with poultry and eggs and other small provisions, for his board and entertainment. The value of the Manor was thirty shillings in the Confessor's time, and at the time of the Great Survey it was found to be the same; which shews that it had not suffered at all from the changes and troubles of those intervening years – so eventful, and, in the case of many Estates, less "out of the way" than we were (and are) down here, so injurious both to the Lords and to their dependants, for the time, at any rate, as to the value of the land. I need scarcely say that a "Shilling" *then* was a very different thing from what it is *now*; like the a "penny-day" in the parable, which sounds such very "poor wages" in the ears of our wage-earning class, when it is read out in our Country Churches.

At Okenbury, Tovi gelded for half a hide, as much as three ploughs could work. It will be seen that at Ringmore but twice as many ploughs were needed for three times as much land, which quite agrees with the state of things to-day, for Okenbury is a hilly farm and much more troublesome and expensive to work than the Home-Manor is. Radulphus held in demesne here, only one "virgata terrae" that is about a quarter of a "hide," with one plough, and the villains held the same. There were five villains, two bordarers, and one serf; forty sheep and two acres of meadow.

The value, however, was forty shillings more than that of Ringmore, and very different from the comparative value of the two estates now. It must have been, I suppose, in a higher state of cultivation just then.

I reserve for my next Chapter the particulars which have come down to us as to the subsequent Lords of these Lands.

CHAPTER XXXIV – RINGMORE (*Continued.*) 4 May 1888

After Domesday we know but little of the early History of the Manors of this Parish. But it is certain that William Fitz-Stephen held the Manor of Ringmore in Henry the Second's time, and it appears that Gilbert Fitz-Stephen held it in 1243. It passed, soon afterwards, to the antient family of Fissacre: Sir Giles de Fissacre was Lord of the Manor in the time of Edward I., and (the Advowson of the Parish being parcel thereof) presented to the Living in 1284, as we learn from the Register of Bishop Quivil. Isabel de Fissacre held it in 1315. In 1324, Sire Robert le Jeu presented to the Living; and in 1354 (as we gather from Bishop Grandisson's Register), Edmund and Oliver Champernoune presented, being Patrons for that turn only, "in virtue of an assignment of the Manor and Advowson to them made by one Ralph Gamelyn, a priest." It would be interesting to know who this priest, with a strange name, was. But so far, I have not been able to trace him; he was, probably, a Trustee, acting on behalf of a Minor; as, I suspect, Sir Robert le Jeu, also was. In 1345, William Ferrers, of Churston, held one Fee in the Manors of Ringmore and Okenbury, and also in Marwell and Langston, two other Estates in the Parish. Soon afterwards, we find our Manor in the possession of the Kirkhams; and thenceforth the history pursues the even tenour of its way, almost to our own time. This antient and honourable Family held it for about four hundred years, and the Advowson of the Living with it for the greater part of the time.

The Kirkhams were, originally, of Ashcombe, the Manor of which they possessed for a long period. We meet with them, there, as early as the reign of Henry the Third, and their good work which they did for the House of their God and for the Offices thereof, is still commemorated by the shield of their Arms – "Argent, three Lions rampant gules," carven on one of the capitals of the Nave arcade. In the time of Edward the First

they acquired Blagdon, in the Parish of Paignton, by marriage with the heiress of Deneis, and made it their head-quarters; but in the 17th Century this Estate passed to Sir George Blount, Bart., of Sodington who had married the heiress, and the name of Kirkham ceased from Blagdon. There is a most beautiful Monument in Paignton Church in memory of members of this Family, or, rather, as it has been aptly called a Monumental Screen, embracing two fine Altar-tombs under richly carved canopies: every part of the work is covered with sculpture. Alas, it suffered severely from the hands of the ruthless iconoclasts of the seventeenth century, and no inscription remains to tell us the names of those who rest beneath, but the details of the work belong to the style of architecture which prevailed in the time of Edward the Fourth, and I have very little doubt that it was erected in memory of Nicholas Kirkham, who presented to Ringmore in 1465. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Sir William Kirkham distributed his estate amongst his sons, devising to Richard, his eldest son, Blagdon and Collaton-Kirkham; Pinhoe to his son Francis; and Bidwell, in the parish of Newton St. Cyres, to Thomas; Ringmore went, apparently, with Pinhoe; but we find it in the possession of the Bidwell Kirkhams, in the end.

It is, of course, well known that, at the time of the Reformation, some of the antient County Families refused to accept the "new teaching," as they deemed it; and, in many conspicuous instances these families still maintain the ground which they took up then: - the Howards, the Arundels, the Stonors, the Welds, the Blounts, the Throckmortons, and many another antient Race, and among them the Kirkhams. At first, it was not at all impossible for prudent and loyal men to steer their way, in comparative security through the perils of the time; but on the accession of Elizabeth all was changed. The Pope, seeing that nothing could be gained by waiting or compromise, excommunicated the Queen of England and her people; and, the Church of England being thus finally severed from that of Rome, a strong line of demarcation was at once drawn between

those who had accepted, and those who refused to accept the new order of things. Free from the political complications of the time, and from the fierceness of temper that was engendered thereby, we are able to regard both the feelings and the deeds of Englishmen, in those stirring and troublesome times, calmly and judicially; and the impartial Historian of to-day estimates their character and measures their actions in the spirit of justice, tempered by sympathy, and apart from the blinding influences of prejudice. The part taken by the gallant and loyal Lord Howard of Effingham in the defeat of the Armada, ought to convince even the most bigoted people that those who still clave to what they believed to be "the Old Faith" could, nevertheless, be thoroughly true to their Queen and Country, - Englishmen *first*. And everyone knows the difference, now-a-day, between those who have left us, as converts to modern Romanism, and those whose Religion is inherited and traditional, who have little or no sympathy with Ultramontane innovations, and additions to the doctrines which they received from their Fathers. There is evidence to shew that the Kirkhams, generation after generation, submitted themselves, in all respects but one, to the Powers which they knew were "ordained of God," living in peace and amity with their neighbours, taking no part whatever in the treacheries of the times, and doing, each one, his duty in his day. And so they were left in peaceable and undisturbed possession of their lands and goods, and enjoyed more than one special mark of Royal favour and protection. They were "Recusants," no doubt; but, as far as I can learn, they never troubled other people, or made themselves conspicuous for their recusancy; and when Francis Kirkham, of Pinhoe, and Elizabeth his wife, were presented to Bishop Hall, on the 11th of April, 1689, because they refused to attend the Parish-Church, and were suspected of worshipping God, at home, according to the old Rites, they were able to produce Letters of Dispensation, which, on account of their high character for loyalty and love of peace, had been granted to them by King Charles the First only a year before. [We cannot refuse to pay tribute of respect and honour which respects but one, to the Powers which

they knew were "ordained of God," living in peace and amity with their neighbours, taking no part whatever in the treacheries of the times, and doing, each one, his duty in his day. And so they were left in peaceable and undisturbed possession of their lands and goods, and enjoyed more than one special mark of Royal favour and protection. They were "Recusants," no doubt; but, as far as I can learn, they never troubled other people, or made themselves conspicuous for their recusancy; and when Francis Kirkham, of Pinhoe, and Elizabeth his wife, were presented to Bishop Hall, on the 11th of April, 1689, because they refused to attend the Parish-Church, and were suspected of worshipping God, at home, according to the old Rites, they were able to produce Letters of Dispensation, which, on account of their high character for loyalty and love of peace, had been granted to them by King Charles the First only a year before.] We cannot refuse to pay that tribute of respect and honour which is their due to such men as these, or refuse our sympathy with them when we come across the traces which have come down to us of the difficulties and troubles which, even in the sunshine of Royal favour and approval, it was their lot to endure. In the Yew Garden, at Bedwell, under the sombre shade of those funereal trees, there are some humble graves, unmarked, nameless, which were the scenes of more than one strangely weird Burial, conducted secretly, by night. Here, it is believed, rests the body of "Captain Southcote," as he was commonly called – a Devonshire man and a Monk of the Benedictine Order, who was the secret chaplain of the Family, and is known to have died in the House in June, 1653. His name really was Southcote – Amandus Southcote; and his calling was, doubtless known well enough to the neighbours, far and near; but no one meddled with "the Captain" or his Patron: the Kirkhams were too well loved for that. Here, too, died, and was buried under the Yew-trees, yet another Benedictine, John Maurus Scroggs; who, after serving, for many years, in the secret Oratory of Bidwell, succumbed, after a painful illness, to "an inward imposthume," on the 9th of July, 1672, in his fifty-sixth year.

I mentioned, above, that the heiress of the Blagdon Kirkhams married Sir George Blount; and I see that their eldest son, Walter Kirkham Blount, was a man of scholarly repute. He translated the Offices of the Holy-Week from the Missal and Breviary – an octavo volume, of more than 600 pages, enriched with plates, and published in Paris in 1670. The book is dedicated to his Mother, and he says – “it was begun by my late most honoured Father, a little before his death, and by his order continued by myself.”

The last of the Bidwell Kirkhams was Francis, who died on the 20th of April 1770: a few years previously – I believe in 1759 – The Manor of Ringmore had been sold to Mr Roe. Just below our Church is a substantially built house, now gutted from end to end and converted into a barn, which Francis Kirkham gave to the poor of the Parish, for a place of refuge and rest for those who were worn-out and past work, for ever. I shall have something more to say about this old “Almshouse” in another Chapter. F. C. H. R.

[Prebendary Randolph asks us to say that, in the last Chapter, there are several misprints, one of which is so misleading that it must be corrected. Eight lines from the end, *read*: “The value, however, was forty shillings; more than that of Ringmore,” that is more by ten shillings, as Ringmore was valued at thirty. Okenbury was not worth “forty shillings more than Ringmore,” which would be seventy shillings.]

CHAPTER XXXV. – RINGMORE (*Continued*). 18 May 1888

The latest page in the history of our Manor is a deeply interesting one to us, and especially to myself as the Parson of the Parish. Eight-and-twenty years ago, when I entered into residence, I found everything – it is no exaggeration to say so – in ruins; and, what was worse, there seemed to be no hope of a better state of things. The farm-buildings were in a deplorable condition, especially at Marwell, where the farm-house

was, simply, a decayed and most wretched cottage; and as to the houses of the poor, they were the misery of my life. I soon found that the circumstances of the estate were such as to preclude all possibility of remedy for no one could tell how long; we had to be content with the half yearly visits of an Agent who was powerless to help out. He could do no more than patch up the poor old tenements just enough to keep out some of the rain and the worst of the wind; and, as a matter of fact, we had to make the best of a bad business for very nearly the first quarter of a century of my Incumbency. We were almost beginning to get used to it, when the change came. And a blessed change it was! The gentleman into whose hands the property then fell is a man of means, and also, one of the few who thoroughly understand and heartily accept the responsibilities and the duty of those to whom much has been given; and, although he is altogether non-resident, and never sees or is likely to see, the place except when he comes down to me now and then for a day, for the sole purpose of ascertaining what ought to be done, and how best to do it, he at once set about the work of rebuilding, repair, and – from my point of view – reparation. So we have a veritable transformation-scene in our Parish; and, as the village, which contains near all the houses (and all the houses of the poor except one), is, happily, on the Manor, the reformation is complete. The work began, of necessity, with Marwell, where the farm-buildings were of the most wretched description, and, in fact, consisted of little more than the old thatched cottages, of what was, once, Marwell Village, gutted of their contents and converted into stables, bullock-houses, and the like, which at the best, were as inadequate and unsuitable for their purpose as it is possible to conceive. The decayed timbers were giving away under huge accumulations of antient thatch, and the poor old cob walls were crumbling into dust. A friendly storm came, just at the moment when the dawn of better things made its appearance, and literally levelled the wretched hovels with the ground. Forthwith, the ruins were cleared away, and a “model” farmyard took their place; and when it was finished, a new farm-house was also built. This was the beginning of the good work;

and from that time up to the present year, which has witnessed the finishing touches, the much-needed reformation has gone on without ceasing. The other farm-places were put into thorough order, and to a great extent rebuilt; and then the work on the cottages was commenced. Every little home was dealt with, and with a most generous hand; and small gardens were enlarged, and new gardens were enclosed where there were none before; and the result is that we have now a model village, instead of, perhaps, the worst village in Devonshire. "All things," we are told, "come to those who wait." And, certainly, we waited long; and weary work it was: but I cannot be too thankful for such a blessed change. May it be abundantly blessed to my people. Lord Devon's respected Agent, Mr Drew, paid us a visit a short time since, and was delighted with what has been done; he said he could scarcely imagine a prettier village; and, indeed, the situation is a lovely one, and it was always picturesque, even in its dilapidated condition. But the picturesque is not always satisfactory; for houses are intended to be lived in, and not only to be sketched! There are, now, but three farms on the Manor, and they are held by only two tenants. Times have changed, indeed; and, I fear, that small farms, of the old-fashioned sort, have become almost impossible under the altered conditions of our great Agricultural Industry. The "small men" who held their own in days gone by, and flourished in a humble and unambitious way, have gone to the wall nearly everywhere. They could not compete with men whose holdings are measured by miles in the almost boundless tracts of the New World. But their extinction is a great loss to the community at large; there are fewer labourers, and the country is being all but depopulated; family after family being driven into the larger towns – to find work sometimes, no doubt; but often enough to earn but a poor and precarious living at the expense of crowded populations whose demand for employment was already far greater than the supply. And those who are old enough to remember the former times cannot help deploring the disappearance from our county parishes of so many happy and contented, if humble and poor, centres of country life and activity. No doubt

compensations, neither few nor insignificant, are to be found in the new order of things; but the loss is great, nevertheless. I have seen in an old Document, of the year 1755, which affords a striking illustration of the greatness of the change which, in little more than a Century, has befallen our own Parish. It shows that there were, at one time, no less than twenty-five tenant farmers on the Manor and Marwell alone, and it gives their names – names which either still survive, or at least, are preserved on the quaint old tombstones in our Holy Ground, where the “rude forefathers” of our hamlets sleep. – William Woodmason, a (a name which I have found in its original form, “Wodemanstone,” in a Deed of 1397), James, William and Benjamin Hooppell, Philip and James Gillard, Margaret Lethbridge, John Coker, Peter Lambell, Andrew Wakeham, John and Timothy Hatch, (descended, doubtless, as I have already pointed out, from old Hetch, “Lord of the Manor” in Edward-the-Confessor’s day), John Maunder, Joan Prideaux (an antient and honourable name, in these parts for many a Century), Stephen Symons, John Freeman (still a most abundant name in Ringmore and Kingston), William Hill (there are memorials of Hills in our Churchyard, and the respected Churchwarden of Salcombe is a scion of the race), George Terry, John Fox, and Richard and John Frowde – ancestors, by the way, of the men who have made the name of Frowde famous in our time. I found one of these tiny farms – “Mill-Hills Farm” – still lingering in 1860, last relick of the state of things which prevailed in 1755; held too, by a Coker, one of the old names – a little tenement of but six acres and a half, divided into no less than eight enclosures, with miniature buildings and comfortable but simple cottage-home. Is recent Legislation destined to restore to us, in any shape or form, the “old order?” I doubt it. It sufficed, and sufficed well, for the time then present; but it seems after all to have died a natural death. And it must be confessed that we have no mean substitute for it in the recent ample and generous gift of garden-ground, with no increase of rent, to all our people, coupled, not with any legalised assignment of what are called “Allotments,” but with full opportunities of obtaining

“potato-ground,” as we call it, for all who desire it. We part with the past with regret; but we are far from having any reason for being dissatisfied with the present: all things considered our people, at large, were never better off, as to their share and interest in “the land,” than they are now.

F. C. H. R.

CHAPTER XXXVII RINGMORE (Continued.) 28 December 1888

It is pleasant to know that these simple chapters of our local history have proved interesting to the readers of the *Salcombe Parish Magazine* at large; and the later chapters have, naturally enough, been read with great interest by my own people, from some of whom (reviving old memories) they have been the means of eliciting odds and ends of long forgotten incidents in the past of our parish. For instance, my reference to Mill Hills Farm, the last of the small holdings which survived till my own time, reminded one of the Parishioners, long a widow, of the old Parchment Deed connected with the little tenement which she had carefully kept as a relique of by-gone days; and I was asked to go and look at it. It will be remembered that in the long list of our farmers of 1755 the name of John Coker appeared, and that I mentioned that a Coker still held “Mill Hills” Farm in 1860. The date of my old friend’s deed turned out to be 1754: it is a lease of the tiny tenement to John Coker, her late husband’s grandfather, for ninety-nine years, on lives. It bears the signature of the good old Lord of the Manor, “Francis Kirkham”, written in a fine, bold hand. There is internal evidence to show that it took the place of a similar lease which had just expired, showing that the “Mill Hills” had been held continually by the Coker family for a good part of two centuries at least, and, also, that probably for the whole period, and certainly for more than a century, a Coker had been the village carpenter, thus supplementing the work and modest profits of his little farm, generation after generation, by his useful trade. It will be remembered also,

that the Kirkhams were hereditary Roman Catholicicks, not perverts ? to modern Romanism, but men who had never seen their way to accept the Reformation; and this fact comes out clearly in the Lease, the Quarter days being referred to, in antient form, as the Four Principal Feasts, and among them the Feast of Our Most Holy Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary – which indeed, we still call, in less formal phrase, “Lady Day”. I alluded in a former chapter to the fact that this Francis Kirkham, who sold the manor in 1759, had previously given to the poor of the parish, for ever, a house of refuge for their declining years, close to the church; and I promised to say something more about this thoughtful gift to the worn out labourer. Its history is a strange one and, from my point of view, a cruel one; and I have often regretted that I was not Rector of Ringmore some twenty years sooner, that I might have had my say in the matter, when the proposal for its alienation came up. This house of rest, it must not be forgotten, was given to “the Poor”, it was not given to “the parish”, by which I mean the parish vestry and the “overseers” of the poor. No doubt, it had come to be used as a “poor house”; but it was nothing of the sort, for all that: it was the heritage of the poor themselves. But the poor had few friends in those times and no friends at all, I fear, when questions of rates were concerned; and in those dead old days, when men had not learnt, because they had not been taught, that “there is no respect of persons with Him”, and in an out of the way place like this, the poor were quite helpless when their little heritage was claimed as parish property; and probably enough, none of them knew, by that time, that the house had been freely given to them nearly a hundred years before, and that it was their very own. I daresay, too, that the process had been a gradual one; the poor could not keep their “home” in repair; and as there was no one here, then, to help them and plead their cause, they were probably glad enough to have the necessary work done for them by anyone who would undertake to do it. And so it came to pass that our little “alms house” (which unhappily had no endowment whatever), became a reputed “poor-house”, and its true history was perhaps forgotten by all.

The old parish book shows that it was sold, in 1839, to the then Lord of the Manor (who was, probably, very glad to get rid of an encumbrance, on his estate, and who, speedily, turned it into a very useful cattle house, and a granary barn for the tenant of the higher farm), for the sum of £33. And so, for ever passed away from our poor that which had been given to them, for ever, by one who remembered the poor, and was careful to do something for their lasting help before he sold to another the heritage (for so many centuries) of his antient race.

The old book shews, further, what the "parish" did with the money, and it was very far indeed from being the most creditable part of the transaction. They lost no time in spending it; and this is how it was done. Church-rates, as we know, were levied on a large scale in those days, and were applied for all sorts of local purposes. Someone killed a fox on the 15th of December, 1840, and he had seven shillings for his pains. The year before, another fox had expiated his raids on the poultry-yard by his death, and the same sum, paid to the slayer, was brought into the account. A local lawyer had two pounds, our parish's share of his bill "about Prowse (and others from the parish of Bigbury) who had been transported". They gave the "Parson" a new "Surplis", with a bag to keep it in, at a cost of £1 16s 10¹/₂d. The highway rate being behind hand, they cleared off the balance against the parish, and the rest of the money, except for one notable item, went to discharge the liabilities of the Churchwardens, on the general account of the Church-rate. Finally – and this is the exception alluded to, - they took the view which was usual in those days of the injunction not to "muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn"; they felt, no doubt, that the labourer was worthy of his reward; and so they devoted the sum of £4 0s 7¹/₂d to what used to be called "settling the account", that is to say, giving themselves a good dinner at the public house. So lavish was the expenditure, that year, that, in addition to the purchase money of the Poor-House, they had to make a Church-rate of some £12, and only the meagre balance of five shillings and ninepence remained, when all was over, to the credit of the next

year.

There are still old people living in our village who remember, with affectionate appreciation of its comfort and value, their old "Poor-House"; under whose shadow their Fathers and Mothers had spent their last days, when the active battle of their laborious life was over, in happiness and peace. The labourer's task was done in the case of all that dwelt therein. They had always been friends and neighbours; and now they were only brought a little nearer together, under a common roof-tree, old jealousies and the little quarrels of the Past forgotten; all living in contemplation of the near approach of their great change, and the prospect of being soon conveyed to their last Home in the quiet Churchyard, which they could see from their windows. It was a most comfortable and home-like place; and round the common hearth, day after day, when the shades of even began to fall, it was their wont to gather – as one family – and talk over old days and old ways. They are all, let us hope, at rest now, awaiting the Day when they will be called to a better Home "that is, an Heavenly". Their children, and children's children, know only by our village tradition what was once given to them, and by them has been lost – "for ever": they dread to think of the substitute provided for them by modern men, long miles away; and their one hope is that they may never see *that* "Poor-House" – a hope in which their Pastor shares to the full, as all with human hearts and human sympathies must do. "I know not why" – let the Christian Poet clothe my thought in words, for me, better than I can hope to do myself, -

I know not why – but when they tell
Of houses fair and wide,
Where troops of poor men go to dwell
In chambers side by side;
And when they vaunt that in those walls
They have there worship-day
Where the stern signal coldly calls

The prisoned poor to Pray, -
I think upon that antient Home,
Beside the Churchyard wall,
Where roses round the porch would roam,
And gentle jasmines fall.
I see the old man of my Lay,
His grey head bowed and bare;
He kneels by one dear wall to pray,
The sunlight in his hair.
Well may they strive, as wise men will
To work with wit and gold;
I think my own dear village still
Was happier of old.
O for the poor man's Church again,
With one roof over all,
Where the true hearts of Englishmen
Might beat beside the wall;
The Altars where, in bygone days,
Our fathers were forgiven,
Who went, with meek and faithful ways,
Through the old aisles, to Heaven!

F.C.H.R.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. RINGMORE (*Continued*). (No date)

There is a bright side to every cloud! And if it be, as assuredly it is, a very real loss to our labouring poor, when their task is done and they are worn out for work, that "the House," far away among strangers, has taken the place of the old "Home" in the familiar village, they are not altogether losers by the change. For, alas, it cannot be doubted that they had much to endure, very many of them, under the old system, when, week after week, they were brought face to face, at the pay-table, with those who had to pay, as it were, out of their own pockets, and as a purely local "rate," the very moneys which made up the "old age" pittance.

Many of the farmers, then as now, were good and kind-hearted men, and did not grudge that pittance to the aged pensioners who had worn themselves out in their service; but some of them were hard men indeed, grudging every penny that the Law compelled them to pay, and even grudging the few last days of eventide which it pleaseth the Great Father to bestow, because He is the Father of the Poor, and "so," as in so many other ways, "giveth His Beloved sleep." This was, of course, before my time: but I have heard of it, often enough, from very aged people, survivals from that – from this point of view – dreary past, who have told me strange and weird stories of their own experiences, and of the experience of those that have gone before, to the land where all things, such as these, are forgotten. The whole union is "one parish" now; and this great change has at least, removed all personal and direct temptation to grind the faces of the poor. Men say that a "Board" has no conscience and no heart, which, I suppose, is true enough; but, having served more than once as "Guardian" for my own parish, I am glad and thankful to be able to bear witness to the fact that neither heart nor conscience is wanting to the Board which sits at Kingsbridge. Its members, are, for the most part shrewd and "hard-headed men of business" and doubtless economical and careful in

their management; and this is right: there is neither grace nor virtue in extravagance and waste, or in reckless pauperizing of those whose misfortune it is to be dependant and poor. But it is the proud boast of our Kingsbridge Board that it is never hard upon the deserving poor, but quite the contrary, and I am pleased to be able to say that this is no mere empty boast, but that it is fully justified by the conduct of the great majority of our Guardians, as I know from my own experience. I do not think that we shall ever hear one of *them* blurt out, with a scowl on his face and fierce impatience with the Providence and Will of God in the tone of his voice, as years ago, one of our ratepayers was not ashamed to do at our pay-table here, - "*How much longer are you going to live then?*" And outrages of that sort were neither few nor far between in those days. This at any rate, is a blessed change; blessed for the Poor, and blessed for the Guardians of the Poor, too. Witness the excellent feeling shown, only the other day, when a clause in a famous Bill (which has since become an Act, but purged of the obnoxious clause in question), was only suspected of being a sort of bribe to the ratepayers - a scheme for making it "worth while" to drive the worn-out poor from their homes into the exile and separation, *before* death them doth part of "the House." Led by brave Tom Adams of Malborough, our men, almost with one voice, cried shame on the proposal, and determined that such a thing should not be, if they could help it. And this seems to have been the general feeling, up and down the land everywhere. So there is, as I said, a "bright lining" to their cloud, as, indeed, to all other clouds - if we only knew it. And, in the contemplation of it, it seems almost possible to abandon our regrets over the loss of all those lovely houses of the poor, under whose roof-tree, in every parish, the sons and daughters of want and sorrow, were wont, as one family, to spend the last days of the years of their pilgrimage. Never-the-less, it is hard to part, and in so may instances for every, with this most pleasing feature of the village life of Old England: happy the parishes in which the hard and fast lines of the modern and the inevitable are supplemented still by the village almshouse. There are many of them, thank God, to be

found yet, scattered up and down the land, refuges of the weary and heavy-laden; and ther ought (as I have shewn) to be one of them here still, and there would be if good old Francis Kirkham had only be-thought him of taking measures for the protection and permanence of his benevolent gift. "Good and true of heart" himself, no doubt it never occurred to him to suspect his fellow men, or to think that the time would ever come when men would venture, "because of advantage," even to rob the poor! But that time, as we have seen, *did* come; and the House which he gave to our poor for ever has become but a Memory of the Past.

There is another House, hard by, an older House far than that which our poor have lost, and it is their's still, for the Father's House is the faithful and dutiful Children's Home – the outward and visible expression (if I may so say), in their midst, of the kingdom which cannot be moved, the Eternal House, not made with hands, "the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth" whose Builder and Maker is the Lord. Our people have seen their "earthly" House taken away from them; but they have seen *this* House, freed from the squalor and decay which seemed to have claimed it for their own, putting on, once again, its beautiful garments" and opening its gates wide to all who are "glad" when the Lord's servants "say to them. Let us go unto the House of the Lord" – the true Home of all Faithful Souls, till, at last, they lay them down to rest under its shadow.

CHAPTER XXXIX. – RINGMORE (*Continued.*) 1 February 1889

Our old Parish Account-Book begins with the "Disbursements of William Stidston and James Frowde, Churchwardens, from Easter, 1770, to Easter 1771;" and the record is complete from that date to the present day. There are no Frowdes in Ringmore now; but, for a very long period, they flourished abundantly in this Parish, and, in the neighbouring Parish of Kingston, as the Parish Registers testify, and several of their

memorials remain in our Churchyard. Some of their descendants, who have made the name famous in our own time, write themselves "Froude"; but that was not the antient manner, which, however, has been retained by my friends, Captain Frowde, of Newent and the well-known Henry Frowde, of "the Row." The first page is signed by "Elias Whitheare, officiating Minister." who, for many years, was Curate in sole charge of Ringmore, and, also, of the neighbouring Parish of Bigbury. He wrote a really splendid hand, and his name and repute still remain in these parts; for, undoubtedly, he was "a character," and there is a tradition that he was a great exorcist, and very successful in laying ghosts! I remember noticing, when first I entered Bigbury Rectory, in 1860, that the step at the front-door was a large monumental slab, which had evidently once formed part of the pavement of the Parish-Church; traces of the inscription still remained along its margin, and an old inhabitant told me, in tones of awe, that "Parson Whitheare" put it there, and that he was very familiar indeed with the spirits of the departed!

There are many curious things in this old Book, and some of the spelling is wonderful. For instances, the annual charge of five shillings for "washing the lining" is suggestive of an intelligible, but at any rate, very partial purification of the Parson's surplice, &c. In 1777, the village-laundress had six-and-sixpence for her work, and it was "linen" on that occasion; but the good woman was paid for "wishing" it, and the extra eighteen pence was for "taking out of stins out of the surplice." The said "stins" evidently exercised the Parochial mind exceedingly for the wardens forthwith purchased, for two-and-twopence",

a slip to put the surplice in, and the additional eighteen-pence became a permanent charge "for tacking care of it." Those "stins" were, doubtless, a great grievance, for the disfigured vestment was a brand-new one, and had cost the Parish, only the year before, no less a sum than £2 14s. 2½d. We still call our roofs "the healing," down here; and a

good old word it is, living on from Anglo-Saxon times. "The *healer* is as bad as the stealer" is a familiar proverb; but how many of those who quote it know that "the healer" is the man who covers the theft roofs it over, in fact, and keeps it snug? But some knowledge of this sort is almost necessary to the interpretation of the charge of 6s. 3d, made in 1774, "for helling stones for the Church."

"Coting the Eivay" appears among the "Disbustments" in the same year, and this was a tolerably regular charge till some wiseace reformed the ivy out of the way, altogether. Of course, the Bishop appears as "the Buship," as, no doubt, they called him; and the local pronunciation of other familiar words is evidenced by the charge of one shilling "for the Bearth of a Preans," i.e., I presume for a copy of the "Thanksgiving" for the happy event. This was in 1779, and refers to a son of King George the Third, whose name has long been forgotten, Prince Octavius, who was born on the 23rd of February in that year, and died in May, 1783. In 1780, the Wardens expended a shilling in like commemoration of the birth of Prince Alfred, and another for a form of Prayer "for a fast." "Collecting rats," in 1783, refers to no worse vermin than the "rates." What, I wonder, was the "Letter consarning Seasons," which cost them a shilling in 1786? And a "Letter consarning the Donations" on which they had to lay out sixpence in 1787? The advent of "Tate and Brady" is commemorated in 1788, when it cost them 8s. to provide "a new Prayer Book with ye new vercon Salms." Perhaps, the most curious Entry in the Book is that of the regular payment by those honest Wardens of the customary fee to my predecessors in the honourable office of Dean-Rural; he is frequently styled the "Dane Ruler," a title which suggests a suspicion that he must have been a much more impressive individual than he is now; not to say a bit of an autocrat! And how generous were the "Churchwardens" in those days! In 1794, they actually "paid the Parson for the Conformation, 5s.!" And, year by year, they gave him his dinner at the Visitation, "disbusting" half-a-crown for the purpose; but, alas, the

naughty fellows always spent 6s. 4d. on *their own!* I fear the 1s. 4d. extra must have been expended on that still too popular beverage – Plymouth Gin!

I must reserve for another Chapter some notice of the interesting scraps of Village and Parish history with which this quaint old Book abounds.

F. C. H. R.

CHAPTER XL. – RINGMORE (*Continued*). (no date)

Even in the darkest days of the later life of the Church of England, in the midst of all the sad apathy and neglect, the Erastianism, and worse, of the Georgian period, we shall find many a bright spot, many a compensation, if we look for them. It has been often said, and said with truth, that the Church of England could not have lived through all that dead time, if she had not been endowed with a Divine, a supernatural life – a life which, I need scarcely say, could not continue to exist within her, without being manifested in manifold ways; as we know it *was* manifested, in countless ways and in every place. There was “a remnant” everywhere – a faithful few, who, in the midst of much unfaithfulness, “Kept the Faith.” There were Churches, then, with a “Communicants’ Roll” which puts to shame, in many cases, the same Churches now; Churches in which the attendance at week-day Services scarcely finds a parallel anywhere in our own day. And, although we know, to our cost, that the Sacred Buildings of the Church were, for the most part, little cared for, and in many places were suffered to fall into, almost, ruin, the carelessness was, by no means, universal; and many a Church still retains evidence of the fact that its guardians were not slow to do their best to keep it in decent order, according to their light. The same thing is true of the Services, *also*: and although I found Ringmore Church in a most miserable condition in 1860, its walls green with slime and disfigured by dirt, its pews tottering

and ragged and quite unfit for use, its Churchyard a wilderness of filth and weeds, and its very services, barely in existence, and almost wholly deserted, yet our "Old Book" shews clearly that many an effort was made by the village folk, from time to time, among themselves, at least to improve the singing; and that such poor work in the way of repairs as the Churchwardens knew how to accomplish, was not ungrudgingly done.

The bells, as might be expected, were the subject of much attention and care: and there are numerous entries which shew that they were regularly oiled, and all the year kept in good working order, year after year, for the first half-century of the Book. But then there came evil times – dreary days in which the Shepherd gave up his shepherding, and the sheep of the flock left him severly alone. And, then, the fierce south-westerns had it all their own way to say nothing of the busy jack-daws who did their best to complete the ruin and the desolation. I found the wheels in such a state that no one dared to use them; one bell held its ground and did service by means of a string tied to its clapper; another bell had lost its clapper altogether; another lay in fragments on the floor! And thereby hangs a tale: the last time the bells were rung – it was for a wedding – the clapper of the second bell fell out, and the "peal" came to a sudden end. But the ringers were not to be done out of their ringing and the expected fee, if they could help it; so they sent across the road and called the village blacksmith to the rescue. This worthy sat on a beam over against the tongueless bell, armed with his hammer, and the ringers began to chime, Master Vulcan coming in, with a heavy blow on the poor bell, when its turn came round. Alas, after a few rounds of this rough and ready sort, a terrible crash was heard: the bell lay in fragments on the belfry floor, and there it was suffered to lie till the day of my first heart-rending visit to our antient bell-chamber. I need not say, perhaps, that our modest little "peal" was restored many a long year ago; but I must add that it comprises one of the oldest bells in the Diocese, according to the great authority in such matters – the late Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, of Clyst St. George – a bell of Henry

the Sixth's time, bearing no name of founder or of Warden, but simply the founder's "mark," and this legend in Latin, - *Voce mea viva depello cuncta nociva*, " which words mean, being interpreted - "with my living voice I drive away all things that may do hurt."

There was quite a little "Church-restoration" in 1779, when the Wardens painted all the pews and desk and pulpit, at a cost of £5 11s. 6d., and spent the rates rather freely on the carpenter and the glazier. Then they rested awhile; but in 1783, still larger sums were spent, and this time chiefly on the roofs and floors. The turn of the bells came in 1785, when 12/9 was expended on "bringing home" a fine oak beam, which still does its duty bravely, and is as good as ever, all that it has had to go through notwithstanding. The second bell had a "new stock," and there is this curious record of part of the process - "Spent in taking up the bells, 1s. 3d.; ditto in putting of them down, 1s. 9d 3s." In the following year, I find evidence that they had *some* care for the Church-yard in those days, and actually spent 3s. 6d., in cleaning it; but the chief outlay in that year was for reslating the body of the Church throughout.

But the year 1786 is chiefly noteworthy for a grand reform in the way of conducting the services, so as to make them, I suppose, a little worthier of the renovated fabrick that they had been aforetime! But I must reserve my account of this interesting episode in the Church life of our Parish for another Chapter.

F. C. H. R.

CHAPTER XLI. - RINGMORE (*Continued*). 15 March 1889

It was the fashion, a short time ago, to criticise unmercifully the musical methods of our ancestors, in their Parish Churches. Nothing was right; everything was wrong. And the west gallery and its contents - "the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and

all kinds of musick," suggestive of nothing so much as of "Nebuchadnezzar's Band" and the plain of Dura, must be swept away with one fell swoop! No doubt, the immediate subjects of this widespread and almost simultaneous attack on an ancient institution were greatly aggrieved and angered, as, indeed, was natural. The gallery and its band died hard. But the dead-set against them and come in like a flood, and it proved irresistible. Churches were being restored on all sides, and every Church-restoration involved, of necessity, the demolition of the obnoxious fabric which shut out the tower, and both disfigured and darkened the Church. So the gallery and its minstrels went, and chancels were used, once more for the purpose for which they were built, and organ-builders flourished amazingly. Every little Church, it was thought, must have at least something more or less like an organ; and we can all remember the dismal days of the first "harmoniums," miserable little machines, emitting strange sounds scarcely distinguishable from groans, and often accompanying a performance on which the displaced denizens of the demolished gallery looked down with undisguised, and not altogether unjustifiable contempt. This was in the early days of the movement. We have lived to see the old growler develop into the sweet-voiced "American-Organ," while real Organs have been set up in thousands of Chancels, and Church-musick is studied as a profession, and there are Choral Services – I had nearly written – everywhere; and, strange to say, the old "Band" is coming back, wherever it can be managed, to supplement the Organ on grand occasions, under the high-sounding style of "Orchestral accompaniment." Men think and speak, now-a-days, with more respect than they used to do of that "old order," which has changed and given place to the new. And this is well: our fathers did what they could; and after all, what was there to make it wrong for an English Parson in his Church, any more than the sweet Psalmist in the Temple of old, to rejoice over "My Stringed Instruments?"

To return to our old Book. It was in the year 1786, more, therefore, than a century ago,

that the “rude forefathers of the hamlet” made up their minds to establish an improved choir, and even to spend a good bit of money in the process. They, actually, employed a musick-master to start the new move effectually, and a Mr Walters received £1 11s. 6d., “towards the singing.” “20 Singing Books” were provided at a cost of 9s 2d, and “a new Pipe and Candles” – they practised, therefore, in the evenings – involved an outlay of 10s. There is a charge, too, for the services of a Mr. Widdon – “spanning the Pipe, 6d.” And a good many pounds were spent on furnishing up the Church, so as to inaugurate the choir with a general neatness and tidiness to correspond; there was, of course, an ocean of white-wash let loose upon the walls, and the Bills of Mason, Carpenter, and Smith were unusually heavy. I must not omit to notice another item of expenditure in the year’s account, on an instrument which might perhaps have been the means of producing a little musick of a different sort, - Pd. For a New pare of Stockes and fetching of them, £0 15s. 3d.” I found the upper half of this venerable instrument of torture, in the Church Porch in 1860.

Meanwhile, the all important business of building the Gallery was in full swing; the charges coming into the next year’s account, - they gave the “Sexson,” in addition to his usual “Sallery,” 1s.6d. “for claring the Church when the Gallery was Duing,” “Pd. Phillip Couker (the village carpenter) and John, for building the Gallery, £14 14s.0d.,” and “Pd. Mr Walter the Remainder of His Sallery for instruckting the singing, £1 18s. 6d.,” and 6d. for a Singing Book which must have been of a superior sort, for the others cost 3 ½d. each. Altogether on one thing or another they spent, out of the Church-Rates for the two years, more than £50, quite a large sum for our little Parish. Of course, one expense led to another, and in 1788 the “Base Vile” cost seven guineas. What a terrible name for the poor thing! Let us hope it did not deserve it! Anyhow, it was worth taking care of, for “the Case of the Vile” cost 3s. 6d. Mr Walters again had his guinea-and-a-half for his musick-lessons, and also in 1789, in which latter

year Mr Thomas Randle, a Farmer in the Parish, had half-a-guinea for similar services, and Mr Walter was paid £1 1s. 4d. "for strings," on which 18s.2d. more was laid out in 1790, Mr Randle, who seems to have become choir-master, being paid a guinea – a charge which goes on, in the book, for years. The "strings" were a heavy item, no less than £1 8s. 4d. having been paid to a Mr. Wills, in 1794, "for three years Count," and £1 16s. 0d. in 1795. There are, also, considerable sums in the accounts for "candel light." It is evident, from all this, that our people took a very lively interest in Psalmody, and even in more ambitious sorts of musick. Tradition tells us that they were famous for their Anthems, and of the possibility, at least, of this being true I have seen abundant evidence. The Randles were a very musical Family, and they were no doubt, the life and soul of this movement. The late Mr. Robert Randle, the last farmer of the name in the parish was very proud of the old Anthem-Books, which he had inherited from the above-named Thomas. There were several of them, large Books, each containing a great number of Anthems, and all most beautifully written, "like copper-plate" without the least exaggeration. These Randles, father, son, and grandson, were famous for their handwriting, which was not only wonderfully neat and uniform, but full of character. They did good work in their day and generation, and they rest, side by side, in our quiet churchyard, immediately under the gallery, in which for so many years they reigned supreme.

I need scarcely say that the glories of that gallery had faded away long before I became Parson of Ringmore. But Farmer Robert was still alive; and my coming was celebrated by a strong effort to revive the choir. And they *did* revive it. The worthy man got out his fiddle and the beloved Anthem-Books, the Clerk was annexed, and transferred from his desk to the gallery – was he not a cunning player on the flute? even a "second fiddle" was found; and, greatest triumph of all, our old friend the "Base Vile," which had been sold, years before, was brought back, on loan, from a neighbouring parish, and

its owner, Mr Robert Hooppell, a skilful musician, was imported with it. There were some capital singers, male and female; Farmer Robert's eldest daughter, who had a powerful and, withal, very beautiful voice, being a host in herself, as the saying is. I cannot help looking back with pleasure on this hearty and well-meant endeavour to share and promote the new Parson's work. Those fine old Anthem-Books, the result of so much patient and careful work, deserved to be used again; and I fostered my village-choir, and was quite proud of it, all through the time that the restoration of the Church was in hand, till I could see my way to better things. The better things came in due course; but they were, certainly, none the worse for being thus linked on to the worthy and loving work of worthy folk in the bygone days. They were always, those good Randles, loyal and true to me, and acquiesced most kindly in the change when it came, and the beloved gallery, which had stood for nearly 80 years was doomed to fall. I remember that dear old Robert shed a tear over it, and asked me to give him the panel, with its little shelf, behind which a Randle had sat from the beginning – even three generations, - that he might look at it sometimes! I need not say that that request was gladly and scrupulously complied with. He shed another tear, soon afterwards, when Mr Bevington had built his beautiful organ, on the north side of the Chancel, and Robert came down, at my request to hear it played for the first time. Mr Bevington began very softly, on the sweet Dulciana stop and the Bourdon, and the dethroned leader of the vanished orchestra was quite overcome by his, no doubt, strangely mixed feelings. "Oh Sir," he said to me, very quietly and with deep emotion, "it is beautiful – it is beautiful!" He had a soul for musick, had dear old Robert, if ever a man had.

F. C. H. R.

CHAPTER XLII. – RINGMORE (*Continued*). 3 May 1889

Who does not love the field-paths of Old England? Through every vale, round every hill-side; by every stream; from hamlet to hamlet, from homestead to homestead, from

Church to Church, the long, nay, endless track feels and finds its way everywhere – a might net-work, holding in its embrace all sorts and conditions of roving men, linking country to town, and land to sea. And men may come, and men may go, but, like the river, the field-path of Old England lives on for ever, pet-child of those beneficent laws which have, for centuries, in this important respect, made secure, against the encroachments of the few and the powerful, the immemorial rights of the many and the helpless. A Prince or a Duke may block up an antient pathway across his broad lands, if he will; but he knows that his poorest and most despised neighbour may pull the barrier down whenever he chooses, and that the Law of England will protect the weak.

The pathways of fair Devon are above all others, lovely, - are they not the garden-paths of the "Garden of England"? But, perhaps, the most interesting of them all are our "Church-paths." If we could take a bird's eye view of the land, we should see that every House of God is linked to its fellow by means of these most antient pathways, not a few of them dating from the time when, in the Providence of God, the Faith was first given to our favoured Land. Our simple forefathers used to say that they were worn by Angels' feet; and they regarded them as most sacred, and set up beside them, to cheer the pilgrim on his way and guide him to the Sanctuary, the Figure of the Redeemer's Cross, graven in enduring stone. In Cornwall, many hundreds of these venerable memorials of the piety and devotion of the fathers still remain to us; for they were wrought in imperishable granite, and even "the fury of the oppressor" in those dark days of rebellion, when, everywhere, he was "ready to destroy," touched them not. These paths lead not only from Church to Church, but from every little hamlet and from every solitary farm-house to the Common Home of the Faithful. We have a striking instance of this, close at hand, in a little farm-place, called Nodden, with its Mill in the valley below – the sound of the grinding has ceased within my memory, but it is still called "the Mill," – this farm is more in Ringmore than in Bigbury, to which it belongs; but the

silver line of its Church-path stretches far away, across the hills, from the very doors of the two houses to their own Mother-Church. There was a day when all these dedicated paths were trodden well, Sunday after Sunday, and on every Festal Day, while, as yet, Englishmen “continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ Doctrine and Fellowship, and in the Breaking of The Bread, and in the Prayers,” and were not, as they are now, “driven to and fro and tossed about” by every passing wind! May that day speedily return, in the Providence of God!

Perhaps it is not generally known how these Church-paths were kept up in bygone years. No doubt, for the most part, they kept themselves up. But they needed care and attention, from time to time, nevertheless. There are many tiny bridges in their course, and little bits of marshy ground which soon became impassable in winter; and in Devonshire there are thousands of “water meadows,” which are ankle-deep in water when “the water is out.” So these paths were taken under special care and protection of the Church, as was meet and right; and there is many an Entry in our old Book of sums expended from the Church-rate on their maintenance. Alas, the raised pathway across Rock-Meadow from Okenbury, has already nearly vanished, and when the farmer is irrigating his land, no one can pass that way, Church or no Church, dryshod. It is sad to think of an old institution such as this, so simple and yet so useful and practical, living on century after century, through all the long life of England’s “Church and Realm” to be abandoned in these last days, because so many who “profess and call themselves Christians” have forgotten what that meant – “I was glad when they said on me, Let us go unto the House of the Lord: our feet shall stand in Thy Gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a City that is in Unity in itself: for thither the Tribes go up, even the Tribes of the Lord.” “Go up!” What a world of meaning these words contain! Now-a-days, in (alas) how many cases is it true – the House of the Lord must go down to men, because men will not take the trouble to go up to the Holy Mount. People

expect even the means of worshipping the Lord their God to be brought close to their very doors, because it is too much trouble to traverse the long Church-path, as their forefathers used to do. They like Religion made easy, and don't care to take any pains or trouble in such a matter. It never seems to occur to them that only heathen people are entitled to cry – "Come over and help us" and that those who think themselves worthy of the Christian name have no right to plead, when the Church Bell calls them to Common Prayer in the consecrated Home of the Faithful, that the Church is a mile or two away, and it is too much trouble to go so far! No so our hardy progenitors – hardy in body, and hardy in soul and spirit. In the midst of the Parish of Bigbury, and entirely isolated from Kingston, the Parish of which it forms part, is an ancient Estate called Challons-combe; the name is corrupted into "Chance-combe," now. The old House, now a farm-house, is miles away from Kingston Church: other Churches are nearer. But straight across the hills and dales of a very hilly country, the long, long "Church-path" may still be traced: some of it has been broken up, but long lengths of it remain still, with its rude old-time stiles in every hedge along its course – a telling testimony to the faith and love of those who knew how best to take their rest – in doing the work, the solemn and blessed work, of the Day of Rest.

F. C. H. R.

CHAPER XLIII. – RINGMORE – (*continued*). (no date)

Our Church-path leads us back, naturally, to our Church; to which, indeed, having given a brief sketch of it at the outset, I promised to return.

It occupies a most commanding site, on the summit of the hill above the village; and there is a charming view of the sea from the Churchyard. On the far horizon, westward, the famed Eddystone Lighthouse – some eighteen miles away, "as the crow flies" looks,

ever, in solemn silence, towards us, - as it were a cloudy pillar in the day-time, and a pillar of fire by night; tower answering to tower, - no speech or language, but their voices are heard, nevertheless; - both point Heavenward; both are founded on a rock; around both surge, evermore, the waves of a troublesome world, - they stand, face to face - the Beacon of the Haven, where the toiling mariner "would be" "the Beacon of the Eternal Land." I am reminded, here, of a curious incident connected with the restoration of our Church. The tower is on the south side of the nave and consequently, the great west gable faces the sea and the storm, without the protection, which a tower in the more usual position, commonly affords. Its antient character had been completely obscured, both within and without: within by the huge singing-gallery: without, by ugly bright slating, which had been applied to the wall from top to bottom, like so much plate-armour, to protect it from the driving rains. No trace of the old west window was visible: but the wall had been pierced by a huge, square sash window above the gallery, and by a corresponding opening beneath. Of course, these horrors had to be abolished; and I made up my mind to insert a circular window of moderate size, well up in the gable, as more suitable than a larger window would be in so exposed a situation. I drew my plan accordingly and the new window was, actually, made and on the spot before I meddled with wall, or gallery. On the day appointed for fixing it we had stripped off a portion of the external slating, and were taking down the back-seat and panelling of the gallery, when, to my intense delight, I discovered the *lower half* of the original window, - it was a circular one, and so closely corresponding, in size with my new work that we were able to retain, unaltered, the long-concealed half of the splay! The dressed-stonework of the old "rose" had been knocked away, but there were indications that it had been, simply, a large foliated circle, without tracery; and such was the window that I had upon the ground, ready to be set up! A few days later, I was in the Churchyard, superintending the work of restoration, when a very old man made his appearance and said to me, - "If you please, Sir, they tell me that you have put up a round window *again*

and I am come down from St. Anne's Chapel" – a neighbouring village, - "on purpose to see it." The old man's manner surprised me – he was so very eager about the matter. I took him round to see the object of his visit, and he stood before it gazing quite reverentially and with a tear in his eye. "Ah, Sir," he said" my grandfather was one of the men who worked on the Lighthouse out yonder, and I often heard the old man say, when I was a youngster, that when it was clear weather, he could *see the round window in the west end of Ringmore Church*. And when they told me that there was a 'round window,' down here, again it brought back the old days, and I thought I must go and see it before I die." Of course, I told him all about our discovery, and shewed him what still remained of the very window which his Grandfather all those long years – just a century – ago, had strained his eyes to see, and it was quite touching to witness the affectionate interest with which the old man regarded the recovery of this long-buried link between his old age and the days of his youth. Now Smeaton's lighthouse was begun in June, 1757, and finished in August, 1759; and, as I have already mentioned, the gallery, to make room for which the old "round window" was abolished, was erected in 1786.

It is difficult to described the condition of our Church as it was when I first saw it in 1860. The soil had accumulated around its walls to an unprecedented height. On the East and North the surface of the Churchyard was no less than twelve feet about the level of the floor within; and, all around, the walls were more or less buried except at the south doorway, where the huge banks were, of course, penetrated by the pathway that gave access to the building. The soil rose, considerably, above the sills of many of the windows, so that the modern casements, which had taken the place of the old stonework, occupied only the upper portion of each opening; and the several windows as well as the Chancel-doorway had been built up altogether. The state of things within may be easily imagined. The whole Church was, simply, reeking with damp; the white-washed walls being streaked from top to bottom with long stripes of green slime, many of which

were almost visibly in motion, descending an inch or two every damp day! The floors paved with miserable slate "rags," brought up from the cliffs, and highly charged with salt, literally shone with moisture, whenever the atmosphere was damp and sympathetick. The pews were a more significant lot; of all sizes, heights, shapes and colours, Some were painted, some left bare; a few were dignified with a vesture of baize, once green, but then in the last stage of dilapidation and decay. They carried on their very faces the story of their origin; one could trace the gradual growth of exclusiveness, false pride, and Stand-by-thy-Selfishness, which is, in brief, the history of that miserable pew-system of which even the sects are now ashamed. One curious result of their erection, by degrees, one after the other, and according to the taste and the ambition of the "owners," was, that the central passage up the Nave was *not* central, but, rather diagonal, of varying widths throughout, and, literally, meandering after the manner of a stream or a winding walk in a garden. I never, before, saw such high pews! The highest of all were the Rector's pews in the Chancel! And I shall never forget my sensations on my first Sunday, when I turned round to read the Ten Commandments, and found myself reading them to a wilderness of deal boxes, and to the distant occupants of the west gallery. The Church was fairly full throughout, but could not see so much as the top of a single head. The people were kneeling or crouching in the boxes which, for the moment, had engulfed them all. Of course it was impossible to endure, even for a time, such a state of things as this. I was young and impetuous then, and not at all disposed to be tolerant of the profanation of the Sanctuary. So the very next day, I secured the services of the village carpenter, and we two set to work on the Rectorial horse-boxes, cutting them down to a decent height, replacing the capping, and banishing the doors. This measure afforded partial relief; but, of course, the change only tended to exaggerate the evil aspect of pewdom in the Nave beyond; and, before the month was out, the carpenter and I spend a long day in the Church and applied the levelling process to the whole lot, and made short work of the doors! Some of the

people said, on the following Sunday, that they had a cold and curious feeling of being uncovered about the upper part of their bodies; but all were soon more than reconciled to the change, and began to regard my proceedings with interest, and to look forward to those coming events which, thus, cast their shadows fore. The Communion-Table was the smallest I ever saw, about the size of an ottoman; and the cloth which covered it was so terribly moth-eaten and so rotten, that it would scarcely bear handling. The floor around it was of wood, decayed and worm-eaten, and it yielded to the pressure of the foot in a most alarming manner. Later on, when the restoration of the Chancel was begun, I discovered, to my horror, that the apparent perils of the place had been anything but imaginary. A former Rector had excavated, for himself, a huge cavernous vault, the *only* covering of which was the boarding of this tremulous floor and the planks rested on rude joists of Scotch Fir, cut down and used at once – “green,” as they say; and I need not add that the dampness of the place had made its mark upon them all, and that it was only a question of time, and probably a very short time, when the Parson and the Holy Table should disappear into the chasm! Some coffins of children were found in this vault, and nothing between them and the open Church but a few crazy planks! There was plenty of Churchyard soil at hand to fill the place up withal; for by this time, I had a gang of labourers at work, digging the Church out; around the walls of which there is now a wide pathway, overhung, at a safe distance from the building, by the accumulated soil, sloped back into great grassy banks, which have a very picturesque and striking effect.

F. C. H. R.

RINGMORE (*Continued*). (no chapter number, nor date)

When the restoration of the Chancel was finished the Nave was taken in hand immediately. The people were greatly interested in the work, as well they might be; for by this time, they knew what “restoration” meant, - the gradual transformation of their

long neglected and desolate Church into something like what it was in its first days, when it came fresh from the hands of its builders. All gave willingly, according to their ability, though few, indeed, had much to give. One generous farmer gave me twenty pounds and promised (and kept his promise) to do all the carrying of materials that I required. And the Vestry voted a fourfold Church-rate.

We did the work little by little, taking the pews in successive sections till all, with their floors, were renewed. The Services were not suspended for a single Sunday. Happily, the walls were sound and strong, and the fine old fourteenth-century roofs capable of restoration. The latter had been completely covered with a lath-and-plaster ceiling, which was evidently in a rotten state, and very threatening it looked. I borrowed a long boat hook, one day, from a fisherman, and simply pricked with it a weak-looking place, the result being a crash and the descent of a mass of rotten rubbish which nearly buried me. Looking up, when the dust had cleared away I saw that I had brought down from six to eight square-feet of this miserable covering! But the walls, though sorely disfigured, were still solid and firm throughout, having been splendidly built. Seldom have I seen, anywhere, such careful bonding as our tower displays.

The storm, the blast, the tempest-shock,
 Have beat upon those walls in vain;
 She stands! a daughter of the rock,
 The changeless God's eternal fane.
 "Firm was their Faith, the antient bands,
 The wise of heart in wood and stone,
 Who reared with stern and trusty hands
 These dark grey towers of days unknown.
 "Huge, mighty, massive, hard and strong.
 Were the choice stones they lifted then;

The vision of their hope was long, -
 They know their God, those faithful men.
 "They pitched no tent for change or death,
 No home to last man's shadowy day;
 There, there, the everlasting breath
 Would breathe whole centuries away!

As I have said before the windows throughout the Church, save only the little Saxon windows in the Transept, had been destroyed, and wooden casements substituted. All, therefore, had to be renewed in stone, and all but three have been filled with stained glass, representing, as in the Chancel, the early Saints of our Native Land, - St. David of Wales, and his friend, St. Senan, whose Shrine is the "First and Last" Church in England; St. Alban; St. Piran, whose little Sanctuary (buried under the sands for centuries, till, some fifty years ago, the friendly gales from the Atlantick drew back again the veil which themselves had spread), the Christian Pilgrim still may visit. Room, too, has been found for the Saintly Bishop who, when the British race had been crushed under the heel of the invader and their Faith well nigh destroyed sent the great Missionary Augustine to convert our Saxon forefathers, and to turn them – *Angels* rather than *Angles*, as he said – from darkness to Light and from the power of Satan unto God. And so our storied windows have been made to tell of the Oneness of the Catholick Church, throughout all the world, and in every age of the One Hope of our Calling, the One Faith, the One Lord, the One Baptism; the One Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; the One Corner-Stone, Christ Jesus, Our Lord. For men may come and men may go, and, with them, "the commandments and doctrines of men," their other Gospels and their jarring sects; but she, the River of God that is full of Water, goes on for ever and ever!

The walls of the Nave (unlike those of the Chancel which were pointed internally), were plaster throughout, and richly adorned with colour of which there were traces everywhere. Above the Chancel-arch, which is of Thirteenth Century work, the painting remains, the whole surface of the wall looking westward being covered with a bold and beautiful diaper-pattern, of the same early date. In the days of ignorance it had been hidden by successive coats of coarse plaster and white wash, on which several sets of the Decalogue had been coarsely painted at successive periods; but happily, no injury was done to the interesting and precious treasure of antient village-art which they concealed, and very little touching up was needed to restore it to its original beauty. Here the plaster, as thin as a biscuit and wonderfully hard, is as sound and firm as it ever was; but that of the other walls had taken wet everywhere, and was so utterly rotten that none of it could be retained. Of course the paintings perished with it; but, here and there fragments of the subjects could be traced – a picture of the Crucifixion hard by where the antient Pulpit must have stood, and the new one stands, and the Legend of St. Christopher opposite the main entrance. Great part of the walls has now been richly coloured again – the work as well as the stained-glass windows of that excellent Artist Mr Horwood, of Frome, Selwood.

A word or two on the history of the setting up of the Tables of the Law in our Church, a history which I found plainly written on its walls; and very curious it is. They were painted, first, on the thick coat of plaster above the Chancel-Arch which, as I have said, had been run over the old Thirteenth Century painting for the purpose. This set was in what is called "Black Letter," in two panels formed by curious Arabesque scroll-work, and evidently of the date of the first Order to set them up. Later on, their somewhat illegible lettering must have been condemned as antiquated and they were covered with several thick coats of whitewash on which a new set was written in more modern guise. And these, in their turn, had to succumb to fresh layers of whitewash, on which a still more elegant set was painted, according to the taste of the time. The old Rood screen

was then standing; and, not long after this third-set was finished, it, also, was obliterated by the Churchwardens' familiar besom of destruction, and, the whole arch above the Screen having been boarded up, a fourth set was painted on the boards. But our forefathers were not long content with this arrangement. Of course the Screen with its superincumbent panelling darkened the Church abominably; so the whole fabrick, Screen and all, was ruthlessly swept away, and, the entire East wall of the Chancel having been covered with an enormous mass of boarding, rising, as I have already said, to the spring of the arch of the East window, a fifth set, the Creed and the Lord's prayer being added this time was displayed thereon. It is instructive to notice that such erections at the East End of the Chancel are of modern date; plainly the "East end of the Church" had reference to the Nave and not to a distant wall too far removed from the congregation to enable them to read what was written thereon. The custom is, practically obsolete now: there was a reason for it when the Bible was not in the hands of the people at large, and the poor could read little or nothing beyond what was inscribed on the walls of their Churches. As I have said before, the arrangement of the pews was as bad as could possibly be. Practically they ignored (so to speak) the very existence of the Altar, and were distributed around the Pulpit after the manner of a meeting-house. And this was how our misguided forefathers managed it. Immediately opposite the Transept (which is on the North – there is now, no South Transept), is the doorway leading to the very curious old stone staircase which affords access to the Tower. This doorway they built up, opening another, in the outside wall, for the use of the ringers (and a very unsightly affair they made of it). Here they built up a portentous erection, consisting of a huge pew, facing the Transept, in which, divided by a partition, Parson and Clerk performed the service in the style long since happily obsolete. Above their heads, and against the wall, rose a huge deal pulpit, which in its turn was surmounted by a large octagonal sounding board of such threatening aspect as to be positively alarming. I was very suspicious from the first of this monstrosity, and took

an early opportunity of examining it. It was hung upon a long iron bar, fixed in its centre and attached to the wall above. Very rusty it looked; and, as the "board" was of considerable weight, and would simply have extinguished the unfortunate preacher if it had descended upon him, I thought that discretion was the better to assist me in inspecting it. And it was well that I did so; or I might not be writing the story of our Restoration, now! The sustaining bar, though rusty, was sound enough; but the strength of a chain is, of course, that of its weakest link. And, in this case, the weak link was at the wall end of the bar, which was hooked into an iron "eye" driven into an oak plug in the wall. The wall had, for many years, been taking damp, with the inevitable effect on the oak plug. It had, in fact, perished – all but a bare scrap of that wonderful thing, "heart of oak." How the suspended fabrick remained in place so many years I cannot imagine; but I was not long in discovering that my investigations were by no means premature; for the old carpenter, wanting to get a little higher on his ladder, and being somewhat stiff in the joints, incautiously rested his hand for a moment on the sound board by way of support, when, without a moment's warning, and with an appalling crash, down came the whole affair upon the pulpit below, and my too-trusting friend on the top of it. A very narrow escape we both had from a serious accident: but, happily for me, I had not relaxed the vigilance with which I commenced the enterprise, and happily for him he was on top of the ruin and not beneath it; but he had a good shake, poor man, nevertheless, and was not a little frightened. As for me, I could not help shuddering when I remembered that only the day before, I had occupied the doomed Pulpit twice, little knowing (much as I suspected the monster) in what an utter death-trap it had fallen to my lot, in the discharge of my duty, to hold forth the Word of Life. It was, indeed a Providential escape. After such an experience as this, I need scarcely say that I set about the demolition of all the wretched and rotten fittings of the Church with redoubled zeal. My people sympathised with me, as well they might; and the kindly feeling was speedily extended to themselves. For, a few Sundays later, some of

them were involved in a less perilous, but decidedly unpleasant collapse, nearer home. Between the Pulpit and the Chancel-Arch there was a large square pew, surrounded on all four sides by seats, the "foot-fingers" of the occupants – and the pew seated a dozen or more – meeting in the middle, after the fashion of the big bed of Ware. The Church was quite full, and this particular pew was crowded. All went well till about the middle of my sermon when, without an instant's warning there was a great crash, accompanied by sundry involuntary exclamations and some scarcely suppressed groans, and of course, by no small excitement on the part of the rest of the congregation. Looking down from the elevated level of the floor of the old Pulpit, I commanded a birds-eye view of the disaster. A whole seat had collapsed and its occupants were all, literally, in a heap on the floor. Of course, no great harm was done; but no further arguments were necessary, on my part, to prove that, even as a matter of mere expediency, to say nothing of safety, the time had come for providing for the worshippers something more worthy of the name of "Church accommodation." F. C. H. R.

CHAPTER XLIV – RINGMORE (*continued*).

The general Restoration of our Church was commenced early in 1861, and I began with the Chancel. All the windows had been destroyed, that is to say the mullions and tracery; but the splayed openings remained unchanged, and I found, built up in one of them, some fragments of dressed stone which served as a guide for the renewal of that which had perished. These windows, of which there are two on the South Side and one in the East Wall are very interesting constructionally, and, as far as I am aware unique in Devonshire; they rise, gradually, from West to East, following the antient levels of the Chancel floor, and the side window in the Sacrarium has a beautiful piscina, of Polyphant stone worked into the inner quoin of the splay. There were clear indications of the position of the steps and the level of the old Altar, and these, I need scarcely say, have been most strictly followed in the new work. When the Chancel was cleared of the

accumulated rubbish and dirt of long years of neglect, and the whole area exposed to view, we found-outlined in white on the nearly black surface of the earth-floor – four graves of antient shape this is, nearly rectangular, but a little wider at the head than at the foot. There were two on each side, arranged quite regularly, head to foot, in two lines. It was, of course, necessary to removed the earth to a considerable depth, to make room for a bed of concrete, and for ventilation under the new floors. And, as we went down, and had to cut into these antient graves, we found that they had simply been excavated in the rubbly sub-soil, with great care and neatness, and the sides lined with a coat of very hard plaster, not more than half-an-inch in thickness, and as white and fresh-looking still, as it could have been when the work was done. Both lines of graves were nearer to the middle of the Chancel than to the side walls, and they had, no doubt, been dug in the space between the antient choir-seats. That they were of great antiquity cannot be doubted; and, perhaps, they had been made while the Saxon Chancel was still standing. I had one of them cleared, carefully and reverently, to the bottom; but nothing was found except a small deposit of earth much darker than the rest. The depth was about five feet. Who were laid to rest in these strange burying places? We can only conjecture; but it seems at least likely that they were the graves of four of my predecessors in the Rectory of this Church – Pastors of the village flock, whose very names have perished out of the land, though they are written, we may hope and believe in the Book of Life. May they rest in Peace!

Of the antient fittings of the Chancel, it need scarcely be said, next to nothing remained – nothing in fact, but a small fragment of the lower part of the Rood-Screen, which I found buried between the sides of the pews, which were continued, without break from Nave to Chancel under the Chancel Arch. In fact, all the carved oak in the Church had perished, save only a few scraps of the old seats which had been used up as sleepers under the deal floor of the Nave, - one prettily carved bench-end, an inner standard

which had stood against the wall, a small piece of the rail of the back of one of the seats, and a portion of one of the seat boards. With these – and they were just enough for the purpose – I constructed a very nice little *sedile*, which now stands on the south side of the Sacramentum – an interesting “memory” of by-gone days, and a sorrowful evidence of the destruction of the beautiful work on which our forefathers had bestowed so much careful toil and their free-will offerings. I should mention that the whole of the East Wall, up to the level of the wall-plates had been covered with a mass of rough boarding, painted white, with staring blue borders, above which only the arch of the East window was visible. It was divided into four huge panels, on which had been painted the Two Tables of the Law and the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. The south-east window had been built up solidly, and so had two-thirds of the only other window in the Chancel, the gloom of which may be more easily imagined than described! I have always regretted that I did not have this strange scene photographed; for no one who sees our beautiful Chancel as it is *now*, can conceive what it was like *then*; even our older people have forgotten, by this time, the desolations of the Dreary Past.

Of course, the Chancel had to be, simply, gutted, of its contents, and refitted from end to end. The original levels, as I have said, were restored, rising by five steps and a footpace from the Nave level. There were indications in the East wall, of the length of the old Altar slab – seven feet; and, for the new Altar, these dimensions, I need not say, were strictly adhered to. The walls, throughout, were cleared of plaster, and pointed, as they were afore-time; and that this was so is shewn by the fact that the whole of the dressed stonework is flush with the unplastered surface of the walls. A beautiful Roodscreen, richly painted and gilded, was erected under the Chancel-arch, surmounted by the reverent representation of that great Mystery which is the Beginning and the Object of Faith, Jesus Christ, manifestly set forth crucified amongst us. Stalls for the surpliced choir, were placed on either side; and on the North side, a beautifully arranged

and sweet voiced organ, by Bevington. The Rector's Stall, "returned" against the Screen on the South Side, is a very old Glastonbury chair of oak, once the property of the late Dr. George Oliver, of Exeter, the learned author of the *Monasticon* of this Diocese. The Sanctuary-Lamp and all the other fittings for lighting the Chancel are of beautiful design and execution, the work of Messrs Hardman, of Birmingham. They embrace the two Altar Candlesticks of the English Church, carrying the "Lights" which are not needed, or intended, to aid the dulness of man's mortal sight, but as the reformers of K. Edward the Sixth's time declared to be lively symbols of a supernatural Light, even of Christ, the True Light of the world; to which end and purpose they have been used here for, now, more than a quarter of a Century, that is, from a date long before the commencement of those miserable contentious and "goings to law" before the world, about the Things of God, of which all "the good and true of heart" amongst us are now heartily ashamed. Between the "Lights" stands, under a canopy, the Symbol of our Salvation. Before the Altar are two brass standards, each carrying four candles, and along the side walls of the Sanctuary are fixed iron bars, bearing six candles on either side, with the Instruments of the Passion, painted on Shields, between them. This effective arrangement is an adaptation of the plan devised by Bishop Grandisson for the glorious Choir of his great Church of Ottery-St-Mary, his minutely detailed directions for which are set forth, at large, in his Register.

The stained glass in this part of the Church is greatly admired. It follows the style of the period in which the Chancel was built, the richer, and, so to speak, pictorial glass being confined to a third, the middle third, of the surface, the rest being what is called *grisaille* glass, that is, clear glass, covered with a running pattern, in outline, of oak, maple, and other foliage. The effect of this is to give great prominence to the pictures, while the Church is not darkened, as is so often the case when the windows are entirely filled with richly coloured glazing. Our Church being dedicated to All Saints, the subjects of the

pictures were chosen with special reference to that fact. In the East window, accordingly, the "King of Saints" occupies the central place – Christ Crucified, with His Blessed Mother and S. John the Divine, who stood by his Cross to the end, in the side lights. The south window of the Sanctuary contains the figures of three of those early Saints, Missionaries from Wales to our heathen forefathers in this Western Lane, who first preached the Cross in the wilds of Cornwall, and whose names survive to this day in the Dedications of the Churches which stand on the sites of the simple Oratories in which, first, were set up, in the midst of the darkness and the shadow of death, the Holy Sign of our Redemption and the Laver of Regeneration – St. Nectan of Hartland, St Endelient, and St Morweuna.

"They had their dwellings in the wilderness
 Or built them cells beside the shadowy sea,
 And there they dwelt with angels, like a dream;
 There they unrolled the Volume of the Book,
 And filled the Fields of the Evangelists
 With thoughts as sweet as flowers."

I must not forget to mention the beautiful little Greek "Icon" which hangs in the North wall: it represents the "Madonna and Child" embossed in silver, through apertures in which the faces, hands, and feet, portions of an exquisitely painted picture fixed behind, are seen, after the manner of the Holy Eastern Church. It was taken from a Church at Sebastopol, by an English Officer, on the day of the fall of that famous fortress, and for a long time, it was used as a decoration for a Plymouth Drawing-room. The Officer died, and his Widow, feeling that in some Church this venerable work of Sacred Art would find a resting place more suitable than a private room, offered it to me, and I need not say how gladly I welcomed the gift. The East Wall is richly diapered, and in

four niches are represented the Blessed Virgin, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Augustine of Canterbury, the Apostle of Saxon England. Along the stringcourse above the tiled reredos is the following inscription – words of the last Prophet under the First Covenant, the most appropriate to the place, - “FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN EVEN UNTO THE GOING DOWN OF THE SAME, MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE GENTILES; AND IN EVERY PLACE INCENSE SHALL BE OFFERED UNTO MY NAME AND A PURE OFFERING.”

F. C. H. R.