

1639 to 1662, through the exciting and disturbing period of Puritan fanaticism, he seems to have held his course in the fearless discharge of his duties, though they must have betrayed a somewhat dangerous sympathy with the views of his patron, the unfortunate Archbishop Laud; for the baptism of one child after another is recorded in the Church Register Book, not merely with the day of the month, but always as having been solemnized on one of the Church Festivals, an observance which had fallen into such disfavor in those troublous days that it needed no little personal courage and depth of principle to maintain it.

His successor's coming to live in the Parish is thus alluded to in an entry in the churchwardens' accounts, under the year 1665:—"Paid more by order and agreement of the Parish for ffeting (fetching?) of the Minister's housall (household?) to Detling £2."

THE PARISH.

In the history of any parish, there is necessarily much which would not be deemed worthy of notice in the general narrative of a County Historian; many minor local details which would not be likely to find a place in the broader field of his narrative, yet much which has interest for, and to some extent concerns, the individual parish itself.

Sources
of
Information.

From what sources is such information to be collected? There is the memory of "the oldest inhabitant;" there are the still floating traditions of a previous generation, for, say the present century; beyond these again, we can summon to our aid the Church Registers, and the Parish Vestry books, if happily they have been at all preserved. From the one we can trace the pass-

ing away of older families which have become extinct, and the appearance of the more recent immigrants ; while from the other we can assign their local habitation, the relative importance of their positions, and their changes of place and rank. But besides and beyond all these are Records, in the carefully docketted Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, and the priceless treasures of Old Manuscripts arranged in the archives of the British Museum. From all these combined, it is possible to some extent to re-people, as it were, even a small Kentish village ; to trace out even the minutiae of its past existence ; its old inhabitants, its old customs, and its old-world history. Such shall now be our attempt.

It is satisfactory to know, that although Detling does not appear to have ever risen to the dignity of supplying from its residents a Sheriff for the county, or a "Knight of the Shire," or even a Justice of the Peace, it has at any rate kept itself clear from the great political convulsions with which the county of Kent has been No dignitaries but no rebels. connected ; none of its denizens appear enrolled on the list of Jack Cade's, or Wyatt's rebellion, or Wat Tyler's insurrection. So far its course appears to have been a smooth and uneventful one, little affected or identified with the events passing around. Its Lords of the manor, and chief owners of the land, have been absentees ; its principal residents have belonged to that class formerly known as "yeomen," a name once of goodly repute, though now so much gone out of fashion. Thus for several centuries it would seem to have constituted a little world—perhaps more properly a little kingdom—within itself ; families have lived on, generation after generation, identified with the soil they rented, the lands only changing hands as sire

passed them on to son, (or daughter*); the labourers succeeding as it were by inheritance to the places which their fathers had filled; such seems to have been its condition during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and first half of the eighteenth century.

But the last half-century has witnessed a great change here; its healthy and picturesque position has attracted strangers to the family residences which have sprung up on its hill side; and Detling now so picturesque, with its gables, peeping out from its varied foliage, with a back-ground of scarped downs, presents a very different aspect from that it wore fifty years ago. The houses at East Court, Lynchfield, the Croft, Hillfield, the Vicarage, have all been erected within that period.

Probably West Court, although in more narrow proportions than it now presents, and the house half-way up the street, occupied by Miss Dawson, were the only two to be then regarded as Family residences; the latter is always described in the Vestry Books as "the Great House:" while the house at Harple was described in the 16th century as a "Mansion;" of which there only remains the spacious kitchen, and what formed the hall, now converted into a small dwelling-house.

How this little village was peopled 550 years ago, may not appear a matter of much importance to the general reader, yet an account of "Detling in days gone by" would be incomplete without some reference to it, and should these pages catch the eye of an antiquarian, he will recognise the value

* A Rich married an Allen in 1660, and a Rugg married a Rich in 1706; and in each case succeeded as tenants of the greater part of the land.

of these fossil specimens of parochial history. From documents in the Public Record Office,* Subsidy Rolls of the reign of Edward III., Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Elizabeth, and a Hearth Roll in that of James II., some insight will be gained into the component parts of the early population.

We shall see how men in those days were known by their trade, or abode, or some personal mark, out of which in most cases sprang what came to be their family surnames. Among them appear a *Nicolaus de Weverynge*, a *Ricardus atte Hoke*, a *Johannes in the West Hale*, a *Ricardus Cok*,† and *Berkarius de Bakwille*, evidently "the shepherd." One name occurs from the Subsidy Roll of the 1st of Edward III., to the latest of Elizabeth, and beyond,—say over 300 years,—and seems already to have become a family name, though probably originating in the trade of the *weaver*; we refer to the name of WEBBE: from the year 1327 to 1632 this name appears constantly in connection with the parish. In the former year it was borne by one *Hamo Webbe*; who 45 years after was represented by a descendant *Johannes Webbe*; and the name does not die out in the parish till 1632. During the interval the family had risen to some importance; in the year 1590 "William Webbe of Detling" died possessed of a "Mansion" in Detling. His Will contains a wish that he should "be buried in the Churchyard there, on the east side of the alley leading to the Church porch, that is at the east end of the sepulchres where my father and grandfather were buried."‡ Among the early entries in the Church Registers the name occurs frequently from the year 1560 to 1632;§

* See Appendix D.

† Query the Parish *cook*, or the Keeper of the original "Cock Inn."

‡ Will in the Consistory Court of Canterbury.

§ See Appendix E.

and in many entries the said William Webbe is described as "*generosus*" (gentleman). He had by this time become possessed not only of "a mansion" (probably Harple House), which he bequeaths to his wife, but also of the small property, then known as the East Court Manor.* His son, also William Webbe, appears to have lived at Harple House, where his widow continued till her death in 1632, when the Burial Register tells us she was "buried in ye north Chancel besides her husband."

Another name, which has also disappeared from the parish, save only that it is retained in connection with a farm on the hill, occurs in the varying forms of *Pollehelle*, *Polehell*, *Polhill*, in all the Subsidy Rolls from Edward III. to the 40th of Elizabeth. In the Church Registers it undergoes other singular changes: in 1578, the head of the family is described as "John Pollye, yeoman," a few years after, it becomes "Polley," and in 1615 returns to something like its older form "Polhill," evidently being a branch of the once influential Kentish family of Chipstead Place, near Sevenoaks. They were also for a time the owners of the "Great House." After them it was occupied in succession by the Allens, the Riches, and the Ruggs, as the principal landholders in the village.

The Polhill
Family.

Of other names, still remaining in the parish, the earliest in point of time is that of *John Coulter*, who was churchwarden in the year 1593. The *Parkers* also appear in the parish rate books and registers in the latter part of the 16th century. In 1648 occurs the name of *Thomas Friar*, which soon changes into *Frier*, and

Other
families.

* See page 12.

eventually into *Fryer*. In 1681 appears the name of *John Dawson*, with whom the present family of that name is indirectly connected, and who in the last century became the owners of the "Great House." About the same time the name of *William Green* is met with; and in 1694 *Edmund Kidney* appears, no doubt the founder of the family now so largely represented in the parish under the altered form of *Kitney*, a change which took place about 100 years ago.

In the year 1705 the name of *Rugg* first appears, as borne by Robert Rugg, who married Patience the daughter of Thomas Rich, at that time the principal landholder in the parish; he became overseer in 1710, and churchwarden in 1714.

Allusion has been made to the "Cock Inn," (see page 51.) This is a long established institution of the parish. Far back in the 17th century the name ^{The} "Cock Inn," occurs in the Parish Vestry Books. Not that it always occupied its present site at the head of the village street; its original position was far up on the hill on the road to Rainham; and although there remains only the long disused old well attached to the former house, (of which not a vestige now stands,) to mark the spot in what is called "Well Platt," the whole length of the road along Upper and Lower Cox Street (corrupted from *Cock Street*) on to Cock Hill, bears witness to the former home of the "village chanticleer." It may, however, be open to very grave doubt if the Cock of that day, in that remote spot, midway between Chatham and Maidstone, and surrounded with woods, was not a *rendezvous* and harbour for burglars and poachers, and possibly smugglers,* altogether very different in character

* There are certainly several suspicious caves in the hill sides in these parts.

from the admirably ordered wayside "Public" which at the present day bears its name.

A glance over the Parish Vestry Books will also enable us to see something of the state of Detling under its social aspect some two hundred years ago. There is now but little intelligible connection between this little village and Rochester Bridge; but from a very early period the manor was charged towards its repairs, and there regularly occurs the appointment of two "Surveyors for Rochester Bridge;" and although in some years the appointment of surveyors of the highways was omitted, the claims of Rochester Bridge were never overlooked; nor the charge of the annual sum of two shillings for the journey there.

A few of the following entries, taken somewhat at random, will not be without interest.

"1665. July 4th. Paid more for a boocke to be rede one the the Thanksgiving Day for the Victory against the Hollanders, 6*d*."

"1665. Paid more for another Praier boocke, to be rede one the ffirst Wensday in every-month, in the tyme of the Visitation of this Plage, 6*d*."

"1666. Paid more for a Praier boocke, which was to be rede one the ffast Day on the 13th day of Ocober after the ffyre at London, 6*d*."

"1683. Paid more for a Praier booke for Thanksgiving after Guy Faux Plot, 6*d*."

"1703. Paid for Prayer Book for ye great ffast, commanded to be observed on account of the great Storm, Nov. 12th, 6*d*."

Other entries also have reference to that memorable Storm, among them the following:—

"1704. Paid to mason for work and for latt nails, for ye Church since ye great wind, £4 5*s*. 0*d*."

"1704. Paid more to Mr. Allen for six thousand and a halfe of plaine tyles, at five and thirtie shillings a thousand, towards ye repairs of ye Church, by reason of ye great tempest, £11 7*s*. 6*d*," (besides other items for smaller amounts.)

With the next century appears, year by year, a succession of items of a different character, and such too as a sportsman would perhaps say happily have become extinct.

"1708. Paid for six foxes heads, 6s."

"Paid for a graiye's (badger's) head, 1s."

"Paid for a hedghoge, 4d."

Such entries were perpetually appearing in the yearly expences.

One form of entry of annual occurrence discloses an appreciable change in the rate of charges for travelling:—

"Paid for three horses to Sittingbourne for Visitation, 4s. 6d."

A very note-worthy event in the Ecclesiastical history of the Parish is thus duly recorded; while Sidesmen appear to have been regularly appointed from the year 1614 through the rest of the 17th century, the year 1630, was thus signally marked by the addition to the Sidesmen of

"Two assistants for an extraordinary Visitation of my Lord's Grace this year." (Dr. Abbott was then Archbishop.)

The following entries in the Burial Register indicate a state of lawlessness existing two centuries and a half ago, very different from that of the present peaceful orderly village.

"1624. December 31. John Wells (an old poore man), some time of Bersted Parish died at old Barton's, in ye Rayes, and was buried in our churchyard.

"1624. January 14th. Roger Barton himself died shortly after, and was buried.

"These two weare mistrusted to be killed by one y^e beate them both a little before."

and again,

"1627. Maii 16. Stefan Beeching the Warrener of Boxley, died at Detling, in a ffeild not far from ye Street on Whitson

Monday, being supposed to be slayne by the Warrener of Detling and was buried here."

The year 1647 would seem to have been one of grave fatality in the little village :—

"Ellen Roades, killed by a fall into a draw-well, was buried the 6th July."

"Matthew Low, a Bricklayer, died at ye ale house and was buried September 23. *Advena fuit et a morbo in itinere correptus post dies aliquot occubuit.*"

Turning from deaths to births, we will close our extracts from the Church Register with the record of a somewhat startling event, which runs thus :—

1661. "Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Smith, Clerk of ye Parish, born of his wife Anne, on Thursday about 4 of ye clock in ye afternoon, June ye 20th, and baptized on Saturday, June 22nd, and Thomas, ye son of ye same Thomas Smith and Anne, his wife, born on Sunday after, about 4 of ye clock afternoon, baptized ye same day June 23rd. There was a third also stillborn (*anonyma*) a daughter born about five of ye clock on the same Sunday morning. *Mirabilis Deus in operibus suis.*"

This was the last entry made in the Baptismal Register by the Rev. W. Sutton, who died soon after, closing a long Vicariate, during a momentous quarter of a century, from 1639 to 1662.

CHARITIES.

Under the head of Charities, Detling certainly does not present a very brilliant appearance; possibly there is hardly a parish in the County which can show so insignificant an array of Benefactions. This may be partly accounted for by the circumstances of the parish already alluded to. For centuries it hardly had a resident landowner of any importance; its real landlords appeared in the Vestry Books under the

Charities
very few
in number.