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ALMOST
FAIRYLAND

PERSONAL
NOTES
CONCERNING
THE ISLE OF
WIGHT

BY
JOHN MORGAN
RICHARDS
1872-1913



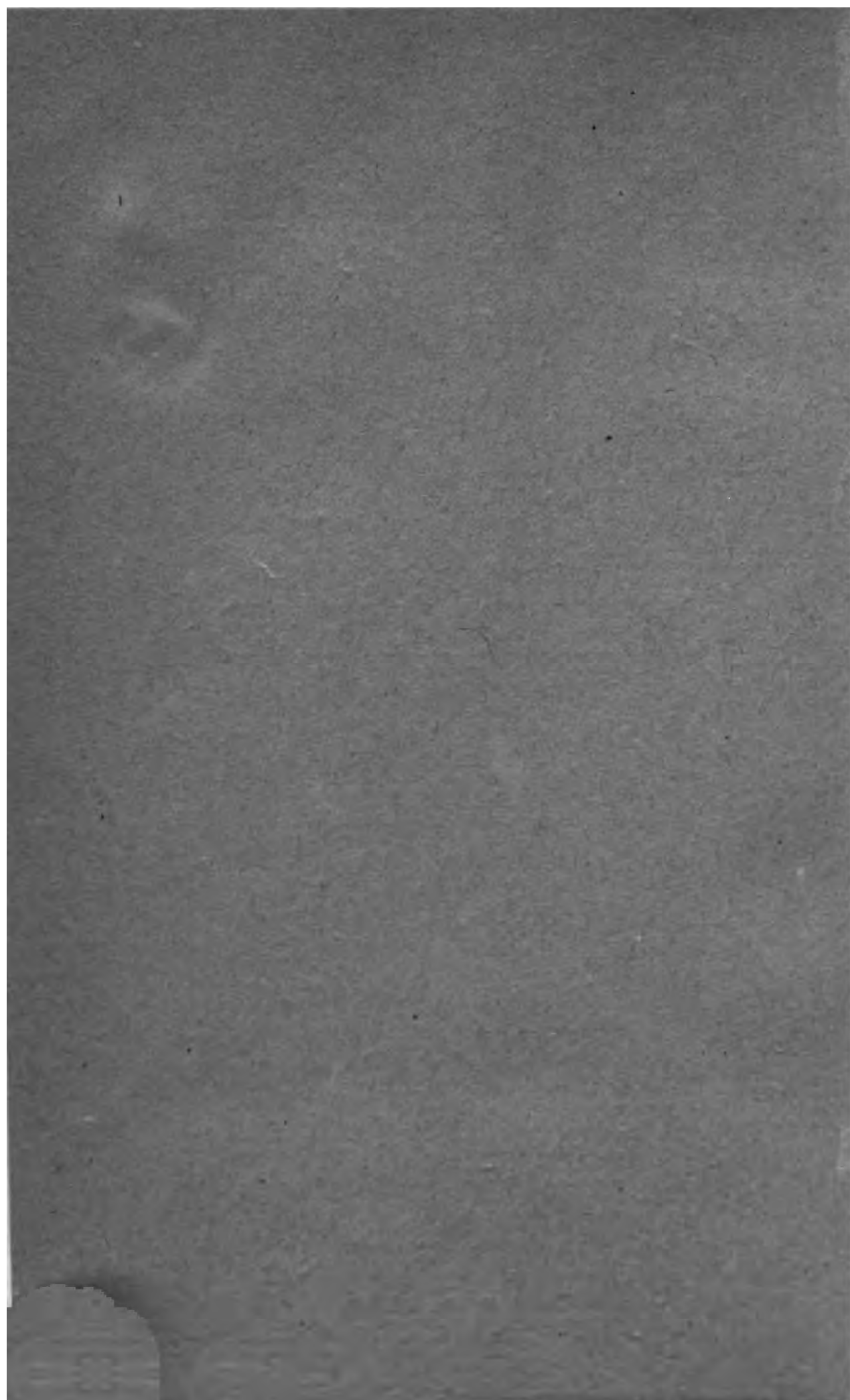
JOHN HOGG



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Mrs. John Morgan Richards.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

PERSONAL NOTES
CONCERNING THE
ISLE OF WIGHT

By

JOHN MORGAN RICHARDS

*American Visitor and
Resident for more than
40 years — 1872-1913*

AUTHOR OF
'WITH JOHN BULL & JONATHAN:
REMINISCENCES OF SIXTY YEARS OF
AN AMERICAN'S LIFE IN ENGLAND
AND THE UNITED STATES'; 'THE
LIFE OF JOHN OLIVER HOBBS'
ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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DEDICATION

TO PAST, PRESENT, AND
FUTURE VISITORS AND RESIDENTS
OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS volume contains records of my 'Personal Recollections' mainly concerning Ventnor,¹ covering a period of more than forty years as visitor and resident in the Isle of Wight.

I am aware that the ego is in evidence on every page. I could have substituted fictitious names for real characters and possibly produced a more entertaining narrative. However, the 'story' is told. Readers will decide for themselves if acceptable or otherwise. To me it has been a genuine pleasure to give brief outlines and sketches of those who have really shared and helped us to enjoy and appreciate the delights we have experienced in 'Almost Fairyland.' In doing this I trust I have not 'by thoughtless word hurt the heart of any friend.'

JOHN MORGAN RICHARDS.

STEEPHILL CASTLE, I.W.

February 1914.

¹ Originally published in the *Isle of Wight Advertiser*, Ventnor.

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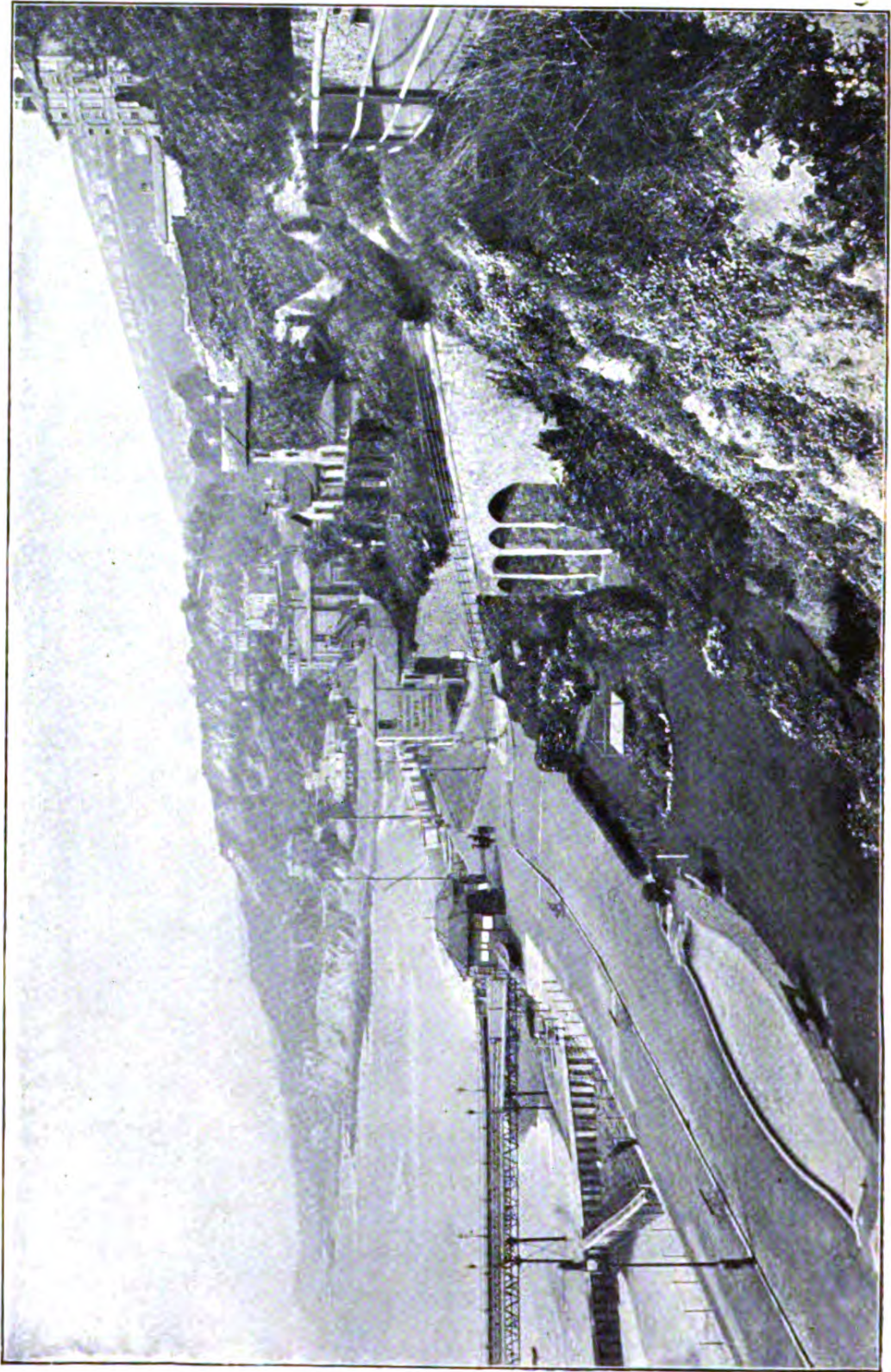
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VENTNOR, LOOKING WEST.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

CHAPTER I

ALMOST 'Fairyland!' Why not 'Fairyland' without the qualifying adverb? Because it is not in the least a phantom, visionary, or 'will-o'-the-wisp' island. It does possess, however, the 'Fairyland' quality and suggestion. The 'Blessed Damozel' may not appear every morning on the peak of St. Boniface with three lilies in her hand and seven stars in her hair. It may not be entirely Elysian, perhaps no 'Paphian Bowers' are visible, yet there is romantic beauty enough to satisfy even the most ardent dreamer and enthusiast.

I have never been able to appreciate nor to understand why it is that Vectensians are constantly challenged to explain why they live in the Isle of Wight at all. It reminds me to suggest the reply of an American resident in one of the delectable 'Happy Valleys' in California who, when thus challenged, promptly said, 'Anyone who doesn't like this

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

region, a lunatic asylum is the place for him anyhow.'

As the sea surrounds the island (it would not be an island if it did not) an occasional spell of 'in the doldrums' is inevitable, but it only means a little break and rest from the general delights of the climate and surroundings to gain new strength for further activities.

To sneer or suggestively smile without giving strong reasons makes no impression, it 'is like hearing the music of a dance you cannot go to.'

I am quite willing to admit that there are a number of things that could be done in Ventnor that would attract an enormous influx of visitors and tourists, and before I conclude I hope to explain my views on this point and to state what I would gladly do myself were I one of the 'rich millionaires' (which I am not) we hear so much about and so seldom see; I mean things I would *do*, not as a 'Speculation' but as a sound 'Investment' with the sanction of the Council and Local Government Board, assured that I should be as well rewarded in cash dividends as in the satisfaction that one would experience in seeing the thrift and advance of this 'Almost Fairyland.'

Meantime I must proceed with my 'Forty years ago story.' Perhaps I may inspire some appreciative capitalist to make the 'Investment.'

DELIGHTFUL VENTNOR

'Delighted' was the well-considered verdict and opinion of our little group after a most joyful first visit to the island in 1872, and this point of view has been maintained and enlarged by almost consecutive yearly experience ever since. We have proclaimed and declaimed our opinion in season and out of season, and urged its privileges and delights upon friends and acquaintances, and have yet to receive a single protest or contradiction of our estimate of this 'Almost Fairyland' find in the county of Hampshire. It is true that at the date above mentioned we had not had any exhaustive experience of other seaside resorts of Great Britain, but we had seen Ramsgate and Margate and Brighton at their best and had had brief glimpses of other popular places, but we never felt elsewhere the charm and delight that captured our fancy and revealed to us our ideals of country and seaside life that instantly claimed our delighted souls and held them captive to this very day.

In every issue of the newspapers of Ventnor and other island towns very eloquent and admirably written articles have appeared, and continue to appear, describing the local scenery and the many attractions of the town and island, also the climatic conditions, vital statistics, purity of the water supply, drainage and other matters of important concern to the public. I will not at this point attempt to enlarge this particular

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

subject, but I do most fully endorse the opinions so ably expressed. At the time of our first visit we had scarcely read a word or line about the island, and with an open mind discovered for ourselves that which we then so greatly enjoyed and appreciated and in which we have continued to find such true delight and pleasure. It was at the end of May and the full glory of Nature's spring greeted us. We did not miss seeing on the hill-sides the four G's, viz. the 'Glorious Glory of the Golden Gorse,' just as we observe it to-day and love it.

Suggestion has been made to me that as my entire family have for so long a period made our home in this fragrant isle and been so loyal to the tempting call, a record of our fidelity might be of interest to others, particularly to those who, like ourselves, seek the best that can be found as a retreat and refuge from town life.

It was most fitting and appropriate that our experiences and impressions should first find expression through the medium of the *Isle of Wight Advertiser*, for the excellent reason that we are indebted to a former editor and proprietor of this journal for our introduction to the island and to Ventnor.

Arriving from the United States in 1867, it was not until 1872 that we made any attempt to get away from London for even a short country-side holiday.

Like most of our compatriots we were

FIRST VISIT

inclined to fly to Paris and other near-by continental cities when we could break away from town for a little change. It was perhaps well that we did so at that particular time, for had we not we should never have seen France under the Empire, nor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie in the great capital hailed by the population as their chosen rulers. Alas ! on September 2, 1870, Napoleon III, with an army of more than 80,000 men, was the prisoner of war of the Emperor of Prussia.

On September 4, the Third Republic was proclaimed and a Republic France has been ever since.

In the early part of 1872 the late Mr. Fletcher Moor, then an entire stranger to me, called at my office in connection with a matter of business. Spreading out a copy of the *Advertiser* before me I noticed that the front page was occupied by an illustration of Ventnor, representing an interesting woodcut view of the town from the sea to the downs. I was much taken with the picture and Mr. Fletcher Moor's graphic and earnest description, and he strongly urged me to visit the island. Before we parted I promised that we would certainly come to Ventnor, and I was shown quite recently, by Mr. W. B. Judd, the visitor's register at the Royal Marine Hotel, in which I had entered the names of myself, wife, and two children in 1872. The two children were

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

my daughter Pearl, aged four and a half years, and my son John, junr., but three months old. In 1872, and for some years after, the journey from London was rarely accomplished under five to six hours. The distance is but 92 miles, but the changes and transfers from train to boat and boat to train were certainly tedious. I am bound to remember and relate that our first journey to Ventnor was rather disappointing. What would present-day travellers to the Isle of Wight think of the railway arrangements from the mainland to the island between 1863 and 1876? By the courtesy of Mr. H. K. Day, the general manager of the Isle of Wight Railway, I am able to give the official details. Here is Mr. Day's letter :

Sandown, May 9, 1913.

DEAR SIR,—This Company's railway was opened to Shanklin in 1863 and extended to Ventnor in 1864.

At this time passengers for London were conveyed by omnibus from Ryde St. John's Road to Ryde Esplanade, from which point they passed to Ryde Pier Head over the old Ryde pier by horse tram.

From Pier Head the passengers proceeded by boat to Southsea Pier and from thence by horse tram to Portsmouth Town Station.

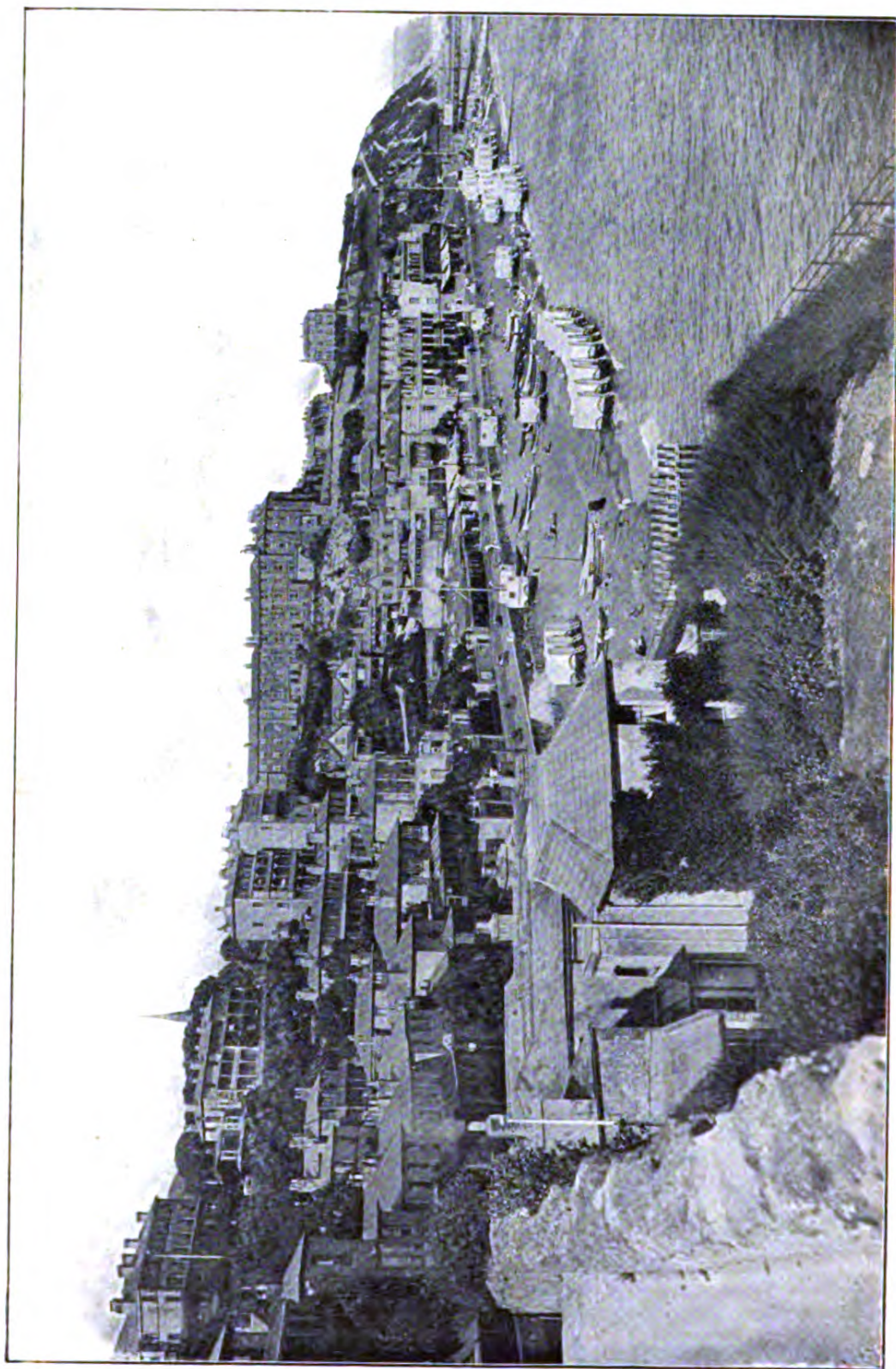
Passengers had the option, as now, of also proceeding to London via Stokes Bay.

In the year 1871 the 'buses at Ryde were dispensed with, the tramway having been extended from the Esplanade to St. John's Road; the use of this was discontinued in 1881, the joint South Western and Brighton Companies having constructed the present pier and railway from Ryde Pier Head to Ryde St. John's Road.

The extension of the railway from Portsmouth Town to Portsmouth Harbour was opened in 1876.

It might be of interest to you to mention that between 1863 and 1864 the connecting link between Shanklin and





VENTNOR, LOOKING EAST.

EN ROUTE

Ventnor was by coach, provided by Messrs. Bush and Judd; and Mr. William Mew Judd, now residing at Heidelberg, Ventnor, claims that he was thus the first stationmaster at that point, he having to deal with the traffic to and from the town.

Yours faithfully,
(Signed) H. K. DAY.

The scramble at Portsmouth and Ryde for tram accommodation was not an agreeable experience, and with a party of children and nurses with luggage, perambulators and bath tubs, a man needed to be something of an 'organiser' to get through without losing his temper and some of his belongings as well.

Another difficulty was of frequent occurrence—'long waits' at Portsmouth Harbour for the boat to cross to Ryde; also 'waits' at St. John's Road for the train to Ventnor. When delays occur in the present scheduled system I think of what happened in those long ago days and make no complaint. Happily the train service in 1913 is really very good and punctual—but open to improvement.

Despite the fatigue and tediousness of the journey of which I am now speaking, at the finish we were not daunted or discouraged in our holiday plan. There was the satisfying reward that awaited us at the 'Journey's End.'

CHAPTER II

I THINK I must immediately ask my readers to be very indulgent in reference to any failure of chronological order in my narrative. No diary has been kept of events, I rely entirely upon memory. Thoughts do not all come at once. I must speak of 'things' as they occur to my mind. This may result in a 'Literary Puzzle.' If it should, I will endeavour to unravel any mystery or confusion before I finish.

We got here! As we were a large party with youngsters and nurses I had written to Mr. Fletcher Moor to secure us 'good lodgings.' He replied, 'Go to a hotel for a few days and while there choose for yourself from a selected list of apartments I will have ready for you.' This he kindly provided, explaining the several town levels, Esplanade, Marine Parade, Belgrave Road, St. Boniface Road, &c. I am glad to remember our first introduction to the Royal Marine Hotel which was then, and continues to this day, unrivalled in the island as 'first class.' It was not quite the large and imposing structure that now exists. I think the important

THE 'ROYAL MARINE'

eastern wing was not added until some years later. The rooms allotted to us were on the first floor of the western extension, and as I remember them I think they consisted of a portion of what are now the premises of the County and Castle Club. The view from the windows facing the sea was magnificent, and we were charmed.

The hotel was conducted under the names of Messrs. Bush and Judd, but Mr. William Mew Judd owned, controlled and managed everything pertaining to this excellent establishment, assisted by his esteemed wife. These genial and kind hosts promptly made our acquaintance and we were at once 'at home' and as comfortable as we had ever been in our lives in any hotel or in any country we had ever visited. Scores and scores of our friends have since that time patronised this hotel, as we have ourselves upon endless occasions—and have always thoroughly appreciated its hospitable welcome. Mr. William Mew Judd retired some years ago from the active management, and is now living in the town enjoying very good health and a fine example of what the climate of 'Almost Fairyland' will enable a man to achieve in health and endurance. He was succeeded by his son, William B. Judd, who is aided by his wife as second-in-command exactly as his own mother in the old days had shared the responsibilities with her 'partner,' and no higher tribute can be paid to her

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

tact and ability than to say this, and also that the son is 'following in his father's footsteps' in the most able and efficient manner, the mantle of the father's and mother's popularity has fallen upon shoulders supremely well adapted to maintain the high character of the 'Royal Marine.' So the name 'Judd' stands to-day, as it always has and always will, as representing the best in hotel management. Also like his father Mr. W. B. Judd takes an important and active interest in the town affairs. This year (1913) he has been elected to the vice-chairmanship of the local governing body, his services being greatly appreciated by his fellow-townsmen and ratepayers. Mr. William Mew Judd has a keen sense of humour, and I am always amused to recall his spontaneous and hearty laughter in his encounter with our little party at the date I have first mentioned. The great transatlantic travel did not set in until some years later. American guests were more of a novelty than in these days. This was the case not only in the Isle of Wight but everywhere in England. My wife's sister Miss Arnold (later she became Mrs. Henry Terry and will be remembered by some of our Ventnor friends) was with us, and Mrs. Richards and her sister were certainly bright and unusually active young American women, and were in the early twenties as to age. They had a fairly fluent American vocabulary, and their replies in conversation with Mr.



WM. MEW JUDD.



‘THOSE UNITED STATES’

Judd in discussing ‘Those United States,’ and ‘American affairs’ amused him tremendously. There was a display of sweet sentiment in it as well as dry humour, and he liked it, and I can even now hear his shouts of laughter. He may not remember the incident, but if he does he will admit that he was unable to disturb their patriotic loyalty to the Stars and Stripes. Anyhow, on our return to the hotel from our first ramble we were astonished and gratified to find an American flag floating from the flagstaff and the star-spangled banner gaily welcoming us to lunch.

Mr. W. M. Judd knows the Isle of Wight from its discovery I should say. Anyone who shared with us a few years ago the great pleasure of hearing his ‘talks’ in the Parish Rooms about early Ventnor will realise and recall the splendid memory he has for past events and the charming manner in which he related ‘his recollections.’

On the subject of hotels I entirely believe the Ventnor hotels and in fact the island hotels are exceptionally good. Guests are well looked after, and everything that is possible is done for their comfort. It is proverbial that the Isle of Wight landlords ‘*can keep a hotel.*’

What did we first do? What everyone really does on coming for the first time to any waterside resort, whether sea, river or lake. We made straightway for the front and shore. Pearl galloped like a war horse

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

from one end of the sands to the other in wild delight. Discovering the implements of children's joy, 'bucket and spade,' I was soon conducted to the Esplanade emporium, and in ten minutes she was the busiest child of the lot, digging and building 'houses founded in sand.' We had brought with us from town a young footman, thinking he might be handy in our lodgings as valet and to 'wait.' He had offered if we would have him here 'to watch out for Miss Pearl' when not with her mother or aunt, instead of our bringing an under-nursemaid. The vanity of human calculation was soon developed, for he was chaffed and laughed at by the maids in charge of children on the beach, and soon came to me to say, 'Very sorry, sir, but I cannot manage it!' I concluded to send him back to town the next day, but he informed me in the morning that he had engaged himself with one of the jobmasters in the town and was to drive a 'pony chaise.' This really happened, and Charles became a Ventnor jehu, continuing the job for several years after. During the morning of our first day I looked over the stock-in-trade and 'outfits' of the several boatmen, their craft, bathing machines, &c. Among the names adorning boats and machines then, as now, were both Spencer and Blake, with a third proprietor named William Cass. I had some conversation with William Cass, with the result that I ventured into his row-

VENTNOR ESPLANADE

boat and was rowed to St. Catherine's Lighthouse and back in great form. This was the introduction to some hundreds of subsequent voyages in the Ventnor waters undertaken by myself and other members of my family under the able pilotage of William Cass and his stalwart son, who assisted him in those days in his boating business. This initial 'voyage' gave me a perfect picture and complete understanding and idea of the lie of the land and the undercliff as seen from the sea in front of Ventnor. From William Cass I learned quite a lot, and enjoyed his outspoken views regarding the town and neighbourhood. He had lived in the island all his life and had the perfect dialect and voice of a native Isle of Wight boatman. He was postman as well as boatman (only two deliveries a day, then the rest of the time was his own), and for many years after, as I have said, we constantly employed him and always held him in great esteem as an honest, good sort. Four or five years ago I met him on the Esplanade and tried to recall myself to his remembrance. The old man was more than octogenarian and was enfeebled as well as elderly. He did not remember me. He had long since given up his boats and bathing machines and been pensioned by the Post Office. He died a year or two ago. I must state that in my dilemma at loss of the servant Charles and the necessity to secure a maid for my little daughter I spoke to William Cass.

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He said, 'I wish you would let my daughter Mary see your wife with a view of an engagement.' This was a happy suggestion. Mary Cass entered our service and remained I do not know how many years, made two trips to America with us, and finally married some one in U.S. whom she had met in our travels. I will just mention one further circumstance about William Cass. Little Pearl invited him to come to London for a week's visit, and in her company with his daughter Mary he was 'conducted' to every well-known 'sight' in town, from the Tower, British Museum, and Zoo to several theatres and all the public parks—the finest holiday he ever had—and about the only one.' The Messrs. Spencer and Blake and their sons were all of them on the most friendly footing with my children during season after season and year after year, and are held in grateful remembrance by all of us for their invariable and unaffected kindness. At this juncture I may as well mention our lodging-house experience, for after a week at the 'Royal Marine' we removed to 'Belinda House' on the Esplanade, kept by Mr. and Mrs. Tuddenham. We engaged the same lodgings for several years. On the two last occasions the house was kept by Mr. and Mrs. Steer. We also had for several seasons 'Richmond Villa,' once 'Hughenden,' and upon another occasion 1 Marine Parade. From first to last we certainly, during the fifteen years

‘BELINDA HOUSE’

from 1872 to 1887, occupied eight or ten different houses on or near the sea front for our holidays in the months of August and September. It is a pleasure to state that in every one of these houses we were admirably served and made wholly comfortable.

At ‘Belinda House’ we had our first experience in the use of very highly-polished table knives, polished down to thin pointed blades with an edge almost like an Italian stiletto. Another novelty to us was the heating of the water in the tea urn after it was brought to the table by dropping into the water a red-hot iron block. We fairly jumped from our chairs at the first sound of the sizzling and escape of steam from the spout of the urn. We soon became familiar with these ‘outfits.’

NOTE.—I have most regretfully to mention the death early in July 1913 of our long-time friend and greatly esteemed fellow townsman, Mr. William Mew Judd, aged 81 years. Mr. J. N. Cater, the Chairman of the Ventnor District Council, at the first meeting of the Council after the sad event spoke as follows: ‘It was his duty and privilege to move a vote of condolence and sympathy with the family of the late Mr. W. Mew Judd. As a member of the Town Commissioners and the old Local Board, Mr. Judd had served the town as Chairman of the Board with great zeal and success and also with marked geniality and impartiality. He had a wonderful memory. Every good object was sure of the help of his great social gifts, and he was undoubtedly the most prominent citizen Ventnor had had for many years. Many knew him as a genial and charming personal friend, and he was beloved by young and old alike. His chief delight was in promoting sport which had for its object the amusement of visitors and the welfare of the town generally.’

These sentiments are fully endorsed by all who knew Mr. Judd.

CHAPTER III

IN 1887 we made a change to the Belgrave Road level. The children would not hear of any residence away from the shore till this time. I must here record that our personal group had extended to four, my son, Nelson, having been born in 1874 and my daughter, Dorothy, in 1880. Further than this, my two brothers-in-law, Mr. Henry Terry and Mr. Albert Arnold, with their families, joined us year by year, taking lodgings near us. We could fill a coach or char-à-banc and find room for some of the children's playfellows and companions as well. Mr. George Jackman was from the first our dependence for driving outfits, and well he always fulfilled the trust. Mr. Jackman, I will venture to say, has during the last forty years supplied the horse power and vehicles for our three families that would show a remarkable record as to miles covered, and, so far as I can remember, without an accident of any kind. He always provided for us the best he had.

I think it was August 1 in that year we, happily, were able to secure 'Rock Cottage'



WILLIAM SPINDLER.



MAJOR THEODORE R. SAUNDERS.

ROCK COTTAGE

261 and the hospitable care of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gibbs. To this cottage we joyfully came for a good many years, and even after Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs sold the property we came to their successors certainly for three years more. I can never speak in sufficient appreciation of what Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs did for us in the way of perfect comfort, combined with a certain confidence and trust that secured to us the very best that could be had in domestic home-like arrangements. Mrs. Gibbs was a wonderful housekeeper and provider, and she always more than met every expectation and desire of a rather exacting family. Mr. Gibbs had a unique personality, and it was never a surprise to us that he gained the confidence of his fellow-townsmen and became an extremely useful member of the Urban District Council and other governing bodies. A man of excellent judgment and common sense, public spirited, and alive to further and advance in any way in his power all means for improving the town and district. Mr. Gibbs died in 1908, sincerely mourned and regretted by everybody who knew him. A beautiful memorial has been placed in Holy Trinity Church, subscribed by his many island friends. Only recently Mrs. Gibbs most generously presented to the town a suitable bell for the pierhead, to inform and warn steam packets desiring to land during fog or thick weather, the bell to be inscribed 'In memory of Thomas Gibbs.'

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Mr. Gibbs had a fund of anecdotes and interesting incidents concerning local affairs and always delighted to entertain us with stories told in his own inimitable way. Mark Norman, the geologist of the island (and fishmonger as well) was his particular local idol, and he never tired of quoting 'old Norman,' as he was pleased to call him. Mark Norman must certainly have been not only a clever man and natural genius, but had a quiet wit and a ready tongue in argument. I never met him but once, and that was on a Sunday morning in the Ventnor Park, when I was sitting with Mrs. Richards and a friend. Mr. Norman was passing, and my wife hailed him 'Good morning' and remarked 'What fine walks they have laid out in this park, Mr. Norman. Don't you enjoy them?' He hesitated a moment and then replied in a deep sepulchral voice, 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.' The subject was dropped, and Mark Norman pursued his way along the 'path.'

Returning to the subject of early activities and sight-seeing, I must remark that as our first move was towards the sea front, our next desire was to ascend the Downs and get a look at what was to be seen up there and from there. This impulse to 'get to the top' is, I believe, natural to everybody. I have observed in Switzerland that while one moves to the lake shore as a first desire, they very soon 'lift their eyes to the hills'



THE SUN-DIAL, BRADING.

OLD BRADING CHURCHYARD

and mountains and long to scale the heights. In Switzerland this wish can be satisfied with the greatest ease and comfort, for funicular railways carry you up and down quickly and safely, and with no fatigue. Not so, however, is the process at Ventnor to reach the summit of St. Boniface. We were all young and active in those days and accomplished our desire without any difficulty, taking water at the 'Wishing Well,' and enjoying the view of the landscape and sea, which from that height is very grand and impressive. I have never again personally attempted this climb, but I am waiting in all confidence and hope to do so in real Switzerland comfort.

Resuming my narrative of 'First Week Events,' I will mention on our third day we consulted Mr. Judd as to a carriage drive, and at his suggestion made our first excursion to Shanklin, Sandown, and Brading. The two places first named we shall speak of later. At Brading the coachman called our attention to 'Old Brading' Church, remarking that in the churchyard there was a grave that all strangers visited. 'Whose grave is it?' said I. 'Oh, it is the grave of a pious little female called Jane.' I then remembered that as a boy in Sunday school in New York State I had taken from the school library a little book written by the Rev. Legh Richmond, entitled 'The Young Cottager,' and another 'The Dairyman's

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Daughter,' and that the scene of both stories was laid in the Isle of Wight. I told my wife and sister-in-law of this ; we all became much interested, stopped the carriage, entered the churchyard and found the sacred spot. The inscription on the tombstone so well known was reverently read. We were also shown 'Little Jane's Cottage,' which still retains its original appearance with thatched roof and diamond window panes, a real old-fashioned Isle of Wight cottage. We all agreed that we must soon pay a visit to Arreton where 'The Dairyman's Daughter' lived and died. This we did a few days later, and saw the cottage, the church, and the churchyard. The inscription on the tombstone of Elizabeth Walbridge, like that of Little Jane, is a 'Sermon in Stone.' I must here remark that the small volumes by the Rev. Legh Richmond are, I really believe, better known and more largely read in the United States than in this country. I have been told that for years nearly every American visitor to the island invariably makes a pilgrimage to Brading and Arreton. These books have for half a century been included in every Sunday school library supplied by the American Sunday School Society ; hence the interest always manifested by Americans in visiting these simple pathetic shrines of 'The Dairyman's Daughter' and 'Little Jane.' I must not omit to mention the toll-gates which seemed to bar our way about



LITTLE JANE'S COTTAGE, BRADING.

‘UNDERMOUNT’ AND ‘EAST DENE’

every three or four miles. The toll was small—but it was inconvenient to be so frequently ‘held up.’ These toll-gates disappeared many years ago.

I called upon Mr. Fletcher Moor to say that we should very much like to see over the grounds of two or three private mansions in the neighbourhood, and he kindly obtained permission for us to visit ‘Undermount,’ then the residence of Lady Pringle, and ‘East Dene,’ the residence of Mr. Snowdon Henry, J.P., both located in Bonchurch. The grounds of Steephill Castle we could not see, as at this time preparation was being made for the homecoming of young Squire Hambrough after his marriage. It goes without saying that the grounds and mansions of both ‘Undermount’ and ‘East Dene’ were fine examples of the very best description of private residences, and we were charmed with every feature that came under our notice. It would not be possible to do justice by any pen-pictures I can draw to the many delightful drives and walks we accomplished in this undercliff section of ‘Almost Fairyland.’ We have visited and revisited every part of the island over and over again, and nothing has grown stale or unprofitable to us.

Passing along the Esplanade quite recently I was surprised to observe how very few changes had taken place there since 1872. The majority of the houses remain to-day as

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

they then existed. 'Belinda House' has been re-named 'Carthage.' The fine Hôtel Métropole (originally called the Queen's Hotel) has been built upon the site of several small villas, including the old Beach Cottage, with its thatched roof—all were removed to make way for the new building, and a similar demolition was made for the Esplanade Pavilion, built in 1896. The old original pier has been greatly extended and was almost rebuilt in 1886-7, and the pavilion at the pierhead erected. The new pier was designed by Mr. Theodore R. Saunders, M.Inst.C.E., one of our first and best island friends and acquaintances, and who is responsible for many of the most important public buildings in Ventnor and other parts of the island, notably the Ventnor Town Hall and Pavilion, Sandown Pier, &c.

CHAPTER IV

IN the last chapter, when remarking concerning the Esplanade, I stated that 'I was surprised on making a recent visit along the front to observe how few changes had taken place since 1872.' This should be qualified by the statement that the sameness was between Undercliff House and the Esplanade Pavilion. From that point eastward the changes and improvements are of a very important and interesting character. The Pavilion, though not built until 1896, at once supplied a large hall, suitable for concerts, dramatic entertainments, balls, &c. A reading room and lounge were fitted up, also billiard and smoking rooms. Adding the Queen's Hotel (as then called, now Métropole), the extended pier and pavilion, since 1886 there were new and highly practical facilities at the disposal of both residents and visitors.

The Eastern Esplanade extension (now nearly completed, 1913) is a very fine and greatly needed improvement, and affords nearly 300 feet of new and additional carriage and footway; it will be greatly appreciated, and is of inestimable value to the town,

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

while the Cascade and adjacent garden, which has been neatly described as 'a little corner of Switzerland,' has been embellished—from what in 1872 and for many years after was a most unsightly bit of neglected ground, called 'the triangular piece of land'—by the planting of creeping plants and beautiful flowers, and has been turned into a garden of loveliness. The late William Spindler, of Old Park, once offered to buy this triangular piece of land and present it to the town, if they would improve and develop it. The Council were unable to accept the offer at that time, owing to sub-leases and other legal complications, but the town subsequently did purchase it, and carried out the suggestion of this generous townsman at their own cost and charge, though Mr. Spindler did not live to see his cherished wish fulfilled.

One misses, not only on the esplanade, but all along the cliff between Ventnor and Blackgang, the neat and trim coastguardsmen in their man-o'-war kit, with spy-glass at hand for 'observations.' These servicemen have been withdrawn, for some good reason, no doubt; but it used to be pleasant to meet them and to have a few words of nautical conversation and gossip.

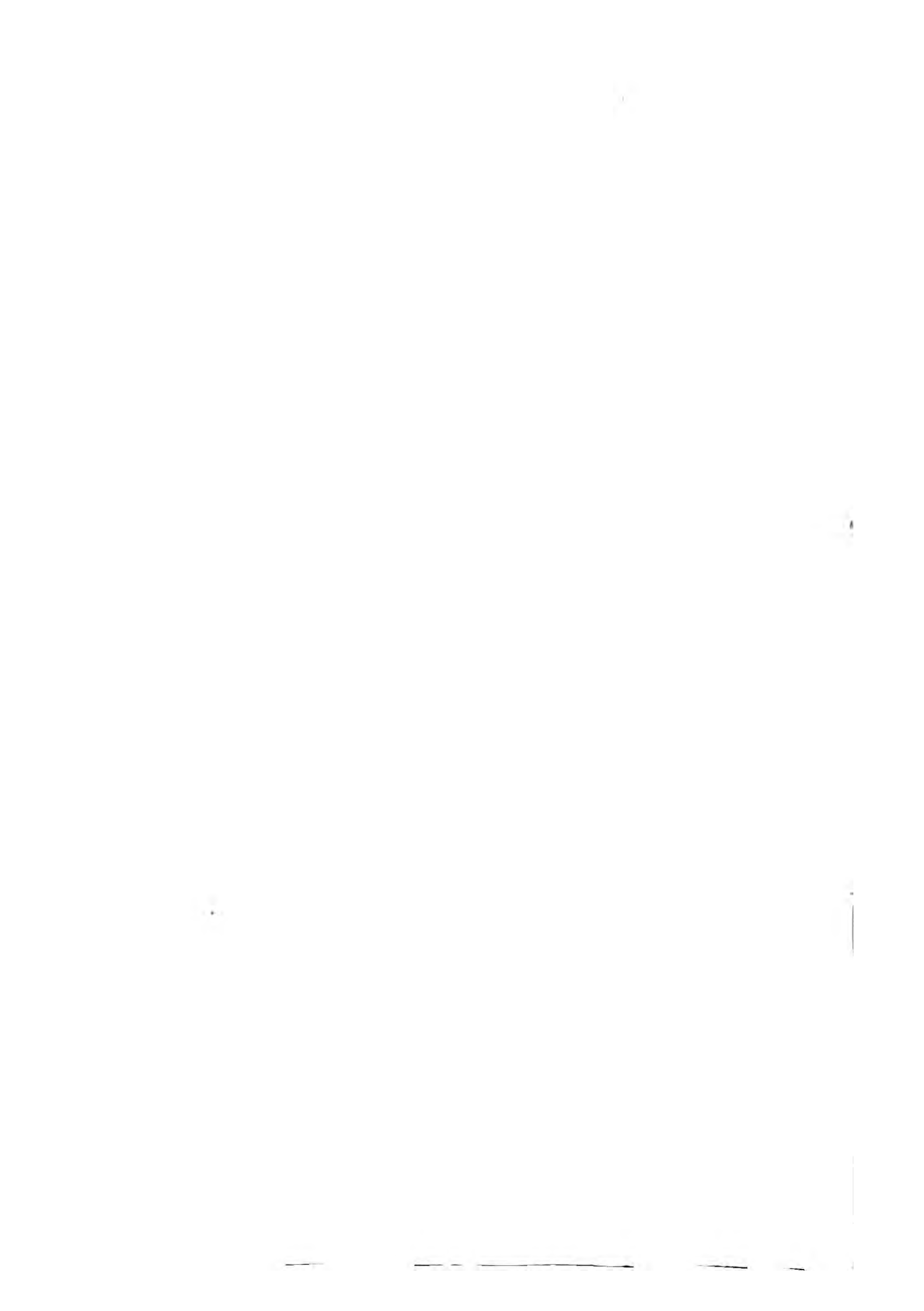
The bathing machines and boats are there, and so, I am glad to say, are Messrs. Blake and Spencer, active and aquatic as ever, their outfits being kept up to date, and with



SPENCER AND SONS, VENTNOR.



BLAKE AND SONS, VENTNOR.



‘BRIGHT STAR OF ’OPE’

motor-boats and launches added to their equipment, such as were unheard of in the seventies. Messrs. Spencer have added to their original business that of steamship agents, and now book passengers to all parts of the world. They would have hesitated to undertake an enterprise like this forty years ago, but ‘Almost Fairyland’ has enlarged their outlook, and they are no longer content to limit their passenger traffic to ‘along shore.’ Standing by the steps leading to the sands I had only to listen and in imagination could again hear ‘Old Uncle John,’ the children’s Caruso of that day, accompanied on his music machine, singing ‘Bright Star of ’Ope.’

Our children regarded Messrs. Blake and Spencer as sort of twin Father Neptunes, and had they been asked ‘Who rules the waves?’ I doubt if they would have replied in the words of ‘Rule, Britannia,’ but would have said ‘Blake and Spencer, of course.’ We always felt certain security against mishaps, knowing how vigilant and careful they were to have an eye on all the youngsters.

All our children being so fond of ‘Almost Fairyland,’ it was a happy circumstance when they were old enough (1882) to be sent to a preparatory school, that the very fine establishment at Appuldurcombe Park was then in a very sound and flourishing condition, and my sons, John and Nelson, there received their first experience in boarding-school life.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Three of their young Ventnor friends, two sons of the Rev. A. L. B. Peile, then Rector of Holy Trinity, and a son of Colonel Fisher of this town, were already pupils at Appuldurcombe, so they had the advantage of immediate comradeship on leaving home for the first time. We were greatly sorry that after two years this splendid establishment was closed. We transferred the boys to Eastbourne College.

In 1883, I think it was, we made the personal acquaintance through Major Saunders of Mr. William Spindler and his family then residing at Old Park. Mr. Spindler was a German and had come to the Isle of Wight to live a leisurely life after a most strenuous business career in his own country. From this time forward and during all our subsequent visits to Ventnor, we spent a great deal of time at Old Park by invitation of its hospitable owner and Mrs. Spindler. He most thoroughly enjoyed his property and delighted to stroll over it day by day with a friend, and to talk about future plans of improvement and development. Mr. Spindler died quite suddenly and unexpectedly in 1889. Had he lived I really believe that by this time St. Lawrence would have been rightly called 'Spindler,' and a town perhaps rivalling Ventnor would be in existence to-day, including sea wall and esplanade on the fore-shore. He held the most uncompromising views as to controlling the *sea*, and spent

OLD PARK

huge sums in initial experiments to form a sea wall that would realise his own idea of defending encroachments from the sea.

The Old Park estate contains a large acreage, and the building sites available were, and are now, of an ideal character. Old Park is now on the register of estate agents 'for sale,' and has been unoccupied since the death of Mrs. Spindler in 1906. It is pleasant to recall many sunny and happy hours at Old Park and the delightful friendship of those warm-hearted and genial friends.

The benefit conferred upon the Undercliff District by Mr. William Spindler will never be forgotten. At Whitwell he was a most generous subscriber to the fund required to lay on a supply of pure drinking water for the inhabitants who had long suffered in health through drinking the water from the local wells and springs. Without his energy, determination, and financial aid, it would not have been possible to accomplish at that urgent time this prime necessity for wholesome living in that district. Mr. Granville Ward, of Freshwater, made a free gift of land for the reservoir and granted also the water supply from springs on his estate. The work was carried out under the direction of Mr. Theodore Saunders, C.E., the cost of this undertaking, over £600, was contributed by Mr. William Spindler. It was his plan that drinking fountains with cups attached were placed in convenient positions all through

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Whitwell. One has to feel regret that these fountains to-day are allowed to become rusty and dirty, and scarcely one of them has now a drinking cup. Surely the local Council can have these essentials looked after and the complete utility of the 'stands' restored?

Mr. Spindler presented St. Rhadagund's Church at Whitwell with a peal of bells and also a clock for the church tower. He was also largely concerned in a very important improvement which for many years had been under consideration by the local authorities, viz. the construction of a suitable thoroughfare from the Gills Cliff Road to Whitwell, the main object being to make an easier approach by the avoidance of 'Whitwell Shute,' and thus open up an alternative route to and from Ventnor.

A committee was formed of which the late Mr. J. B. Martin was the chairman, and the late Mr. Spindler started the subscriptions with a donation of £200. Other subscriptions soon came in, and a final subscription from the Highway Commissioners enabled the committee to put the matter in the hands of Mr. Theodore Saunders, the engineer, to carry out. The road was completed during the year 1891, and just ten years later the same engineer (Mr. Saunders) completed the road from Whitwell to Niton, which was a vast improvement for all vehicular traffic, and avoided the necessity for using either of



MARK H. NORMAN.



THOMAS GIBBS.

VENTNOR IMPROVEMENTS

the dangerous shutes known as 'Whitwell Shute' and 'Kingsgate Shute.'

In 1887 Mr. Spindler wrote and published a pamphlet, entitled 'A few Remarks about Ventnor and the Isle of Wight,' in which the following inscription is printed: 'To the inhabitants of Ventnor I dedicate this little pamphlet with my most hearty wishes for the prosperity of their town, to which I owe the recovery of my health.'

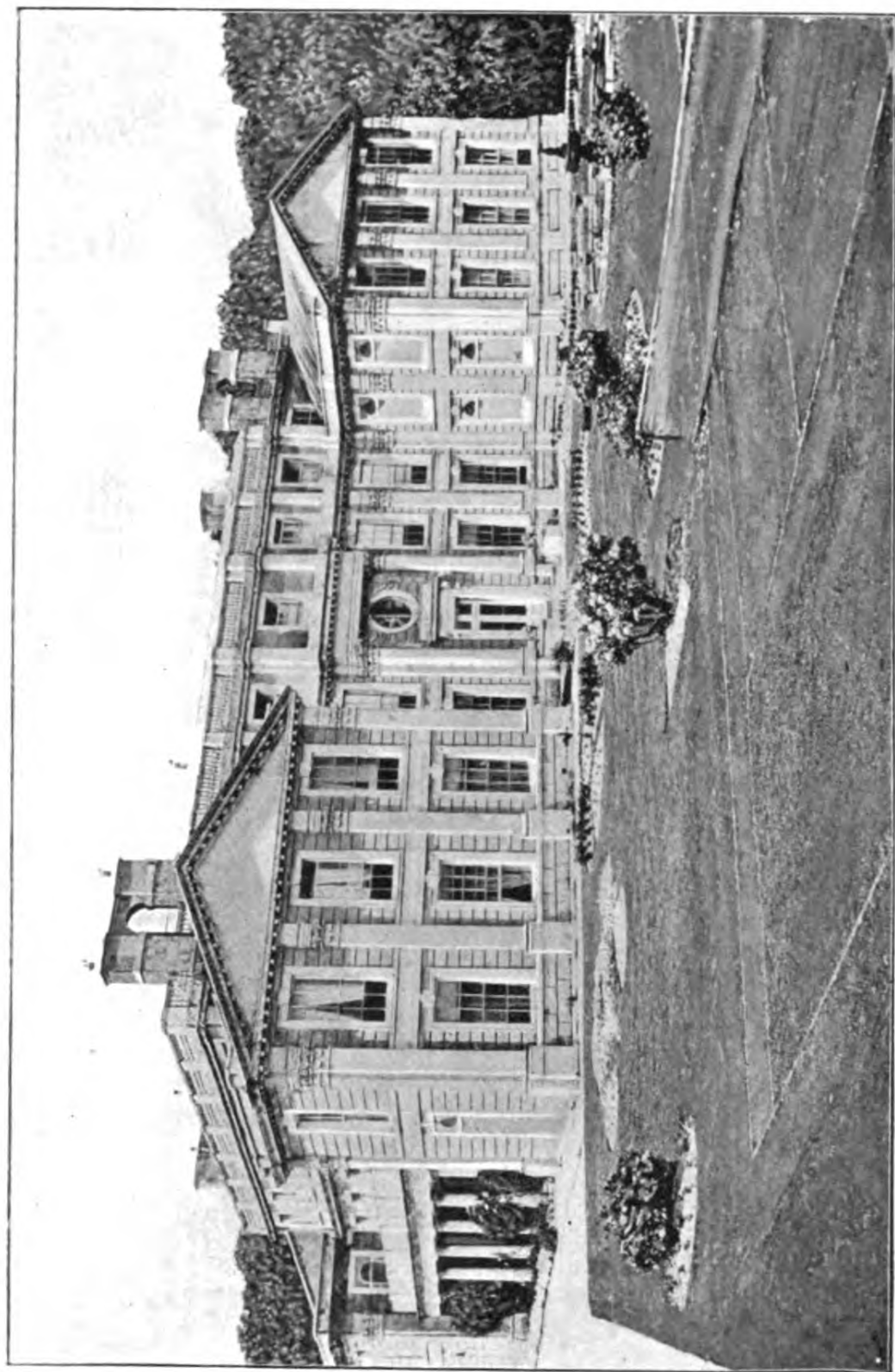
In this pamphlet Mr. Spindler honestly and fearlessly stated his views and opinions upon many subjects bearing upon the best methods to improve the town and to attract visitors. A considerable number of the projects were carried out during his life, notably the laying out of the Ventnor Park and Gardens, the building of the fine road known now as Park Avenue, thus making an attractive approach to the town from the west.

I have already pointed out the changes in Ventnor that had taken place on the Esplanade as seen to-day in contrast with the early seventies. The inhabitants have not been idle or indifferent to the needs of their 'Almost Fairyland,' and in every direction and on all sides there is ample evidence (but which I will not describe in detail) of their active endeavour and enterprise to do the best they can with the 'ways and means' at their disposal. The authorities realise the necessity and importance of creating new attractions and advanced facilities both for

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

the residents and for visitors whose presence and patronage they desire to cultivate and establish.

In Chapter I it may be remembered that I stated that, were I a millionaire, there were a number of things I would gladly do myself for Ventnor, not as 'speculation' but as sound 'investment,' that I believed would be well rewarded. As a digression from my narrative, I propose now to give the details and particulars of *one* of these 'projects.' I shall not say that it stands *first* in my estimate of what would be a profitable attraction for this town, but it is simply *one* of a number that I believe in, and may perhaps contain a suggestion for some far-seeing investor.



APPULDURCOMBE ABBEY.

CHAPTER V

THUS far I have been writing of *realities* old and new, I am now venturing for a moment into the 'realms of fancy' and imagining, if you please, Ventnorians awakening some fine morning to behold an Observation Tower—a magnificent stone structure, grand, stately, and imposing, 200 feet high and 330 feet above sea level—solidly built and placed on the highest point of the beautiful plateau of the eastern upper level of Ventnor Park; the tower fitted with passenger lifts and staircase to ascend to the very top, with two intermediate balconies, where one may step off for a view, finally proceeding upward to the dome—powerful glasses and telescope at hand to obtain distant views. I can also in imagination see very substantial groups of people day after day landing from the steamers at the pier, and from both railway stations, making their way to the tall tower, plenty of the townspeople, residents and visitors, moving forward in the same direction, all looking gratified, eager and alert to 'observe.'

I now return to the realms of 'fact,' and

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

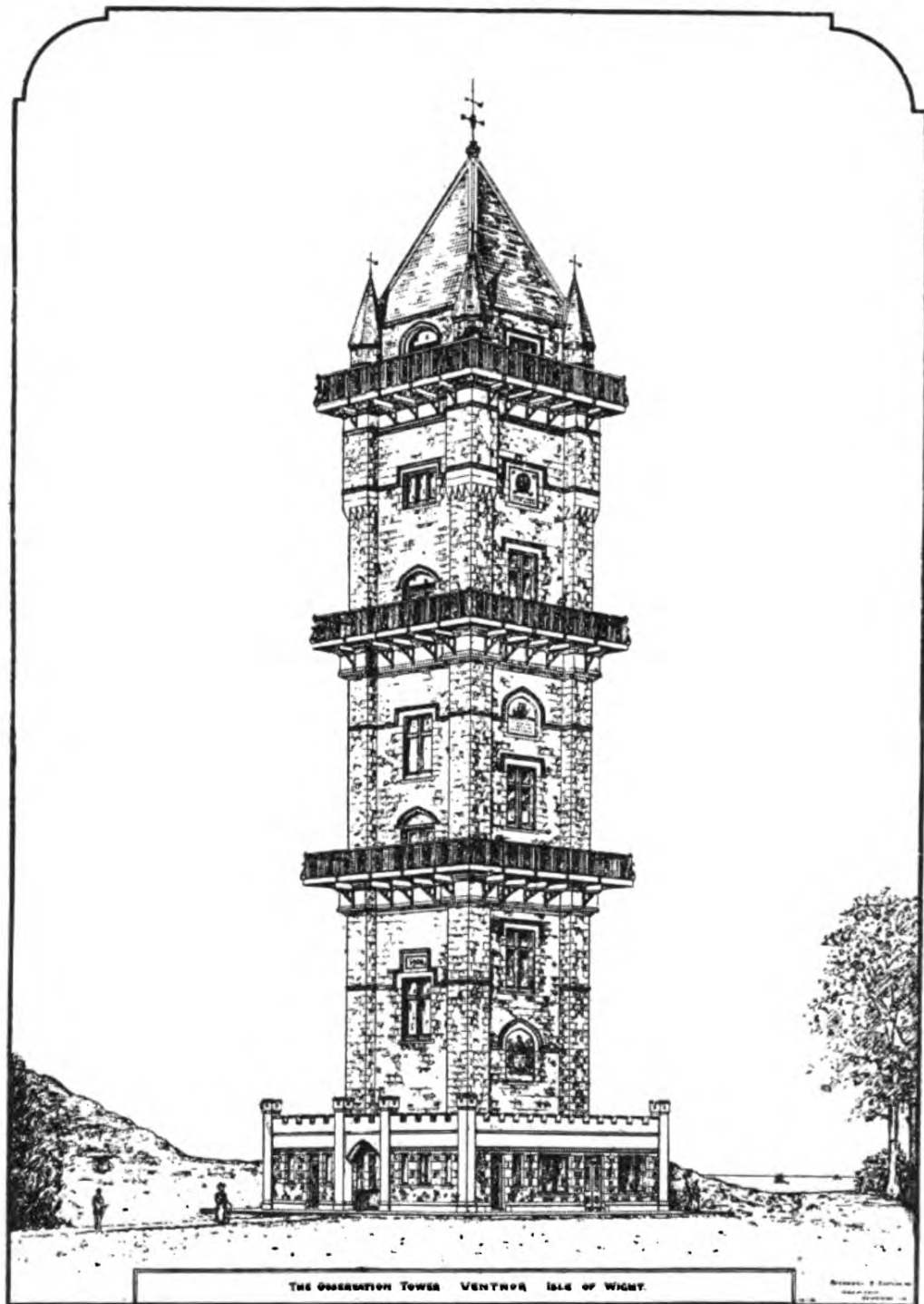
will give the reasons why I would build an 'Observation Tower' to benefit Ventnor. I will say at the outset that the cost of the structure such as I have described, and an illustration of which is here shown (copied from the architect's and engineer's original drawing) would not deplete the millionaire's capital in any alarming or serious way. I have had the plans and estimates in my possession for eight years, and what I thought so seriously of in 1904 I have had a constant and growing belief in ever since.

(1) I assume that everybody who will carefully consider the subject will agree that a practical, as well as an entirely new, novel and unique, attraction has an enormous advantage over something that dozens and even hundreds of other towns possess.

(2) As there is not an Observation Tower anywhere on the sea coast of England that I have been able to hear of, the unique and solitary example of such a structure at Ventnor is certain to excite and maintain a surprising interest, and for all time. The entire Press of the United Kingdom would refer to it and suggest a visit.

(3) The instinctive inclination and desire possessed by everybody is to 'get up higher' and 'look things over': only a person here and there cares to descend into a coal—or even a gold—mine, whereas the impulse to ascend is irresistible, be it man, woman, or child.

100



PROPOSED OBSERVATION TOWER, VENTNOR, I.W.

WANTED—AN OBSERVATION TOWER

(4) If patronage is assured, all other details fall into line and contribute to a triumphant success of what would be a unique, interesting, instructive, and magnetic attraction—plus sound investment.

Can anyone point out a failure of success which has attended the building of any known tower in the world—barring the Tower of Babel—for which the reasons are fully explained in biblical history? The project in this case being so ambitious as an attempt to reach the Heavens, this would have to fail, even if the confounding of languages had not intervened to baffle the builders.

I entirely believe that an Observation Tower at Ventnor would, in the course of time and in reasonable comparison as to position and available population, become as famous as the renowned 'Leaning Tower,' which for seven centuries has drawn multitudes to Pisa, or the Eiffel Tower of the Champ de Mars, Paris, of modern days (the highest artificial structure in the world), visited by thousands every month in the year.

There is always, of course, a large number of holiday makers with a fortnight in hand who visit the island or any seaside place, who are quite happy and content to sit on the shore, walk up and down the pier, do a little boating and bathing, watch the youngsters dig in the sand, observe acrobats, and listen to the songs and chaff of the minstrel troupes.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

But there is a far larger constituency to be looked after.

Something has to be done to interest visitors to make their home here for longer periods, those who will desire to return again and again and persuade others to come, and to whom the above-recited mild diversions do not strongly appeal.

The Ventnor Park is easy of access, is beautifully planned and laid out, but it must be supplemented by special attractions, beyond successful horticulture and landscape gardening. Comparatively speaking, very few people, either residents or visitors, now use the Park.

In addition to the really excellent lawn tennis courts—and bowling green which is to be—there must be added the ascent of the 'Observation Tower' as a chief and paramount attraction. The base of the tower would be so constructed as to supply accommodation for further very essential and much-needed accessories—public rooms, warm, well ventilated and cheerful, fitted up as reading rooms, well supplied with periodicals and newspapers, the pleasure of a lounge where acquaintances might meet and exchange remarks on the topics of the day. There could also be a shooting gallery, bowling alley, perhaps room for light refreshments, photograph gallery, a small hall for cinema show, public telephone, perhaps wireless telegraphy apparatus—for Marconi-

SHOULD COUNCIL PROVIDE A SITE ?

grams—&c. These supplemental features are practical and interesting to entertain, divert and amuse the public, available, of course, in all weathers, winter and summer. These are features that not only invite but compel attention.

It goes without saying that a superior band should be provided and play regularly every morning and afternoon at fixed hours.

With the 'Observation Tower' and accessories I think a step in the right direction would be made. Ventnor would begin to rise as a town to a level with the beauties and opportunities of its position, with all the great natural attractiveness as a background to support every effort to advancement.

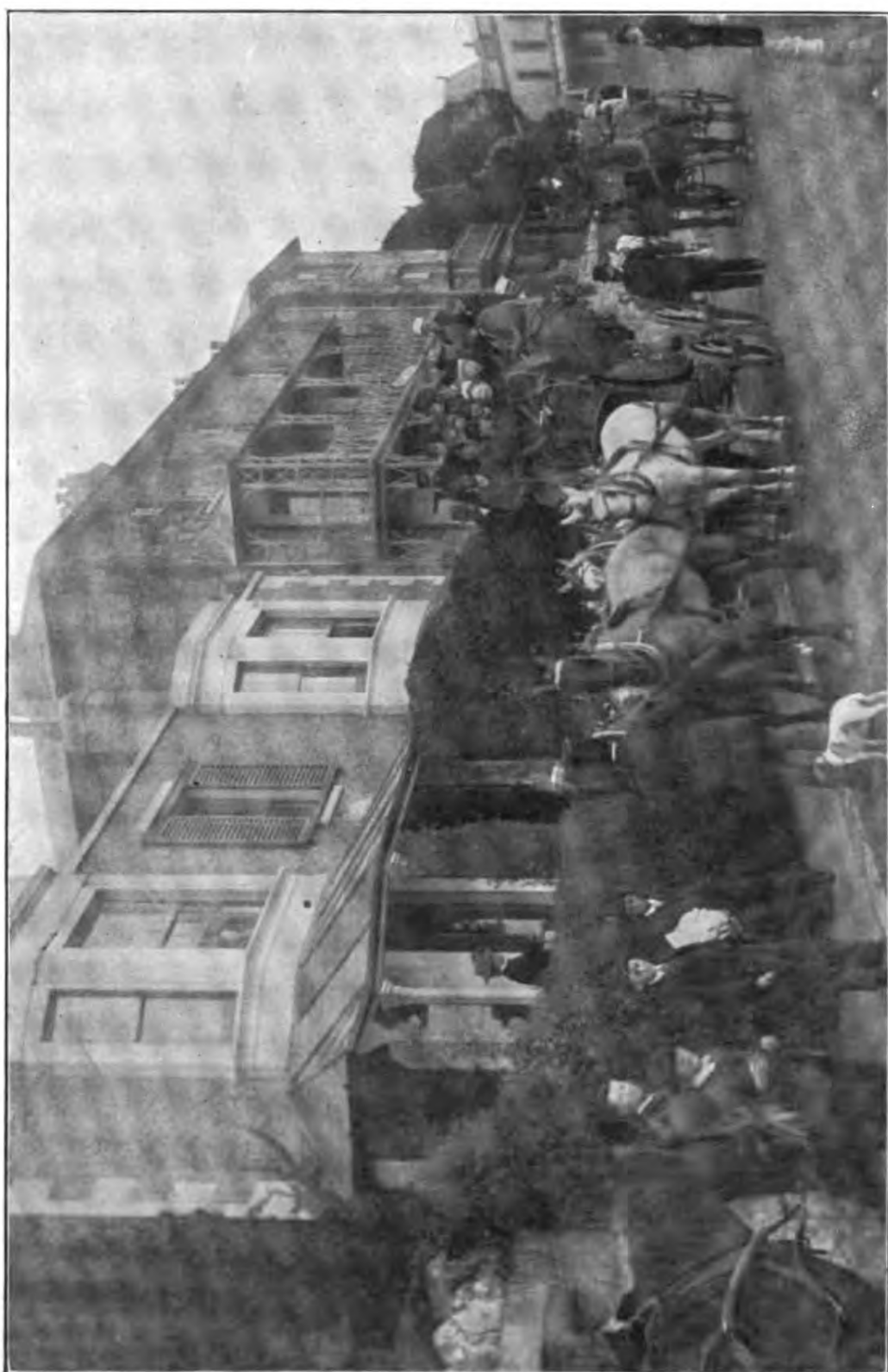
I at once anticipate a question that would be raised. 'Why should the town provide a private investor a "site" for the tower in their Park without a consideration?' The answer is, 'Terms to be arranged.' The Council might think a very nominal ground rent would meet the case in view of the exceptional and obvious advantages to the town that would arise from such an attraction.

Should there be any difficulties about the suggested site for the tower, there are other eligible positions available and easily negotiated.

I have now explained Project No. 1, and I hope, if it is favourably considered by the residents of Ventnor, some 'investor' will

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

come forward and carry it out. I cannot undertake or promise to enter into a correspondence on the subject either with those in favour of it or in opposition to it, but I am prepared to put any *bona-fide* investor who may feel interested in the subject in communication with the engineer and architect who prepared the plans and estimates for me. Later on I shall return to the subject of further 'things' I would like to see accomplished for the advance of Ventnor.



ROCK COTTAGE, VENTNOR, AND COACHING PARTY.

CHAPTER VI

ACCOMPANIED by our two brothers-in-law, Terry and Arnold, and their families we 'played truant' from the island upon several occasions. This was more their desire than ours, but the argument was, 'Perhaps there are better things elsewhere—suppose we try.' We did try. We were a congenial party and could have a fairly 'good time' anywhere. One summer was spent at Lowestoft, another at Folkestone, then at Eastbourne, and another at Oban, Scotland. Once we all travelled with our three families to Ilfracombe to pass our holiday there, but remained only one day and hurried on to Ventnor. The children found the beach too rocky and the whole outlook so unfamiliar that we were entreated to change our plan. All these places were interesting, and had many attractive features, but there was never the homelike feeling of 'Almost Fairyland,' and after 1887 we attempted no further experiments for holiday quarters. Terry and I once toured Devon, Cornwall, and Dorset, stopping at all the 'resorts' for a look. Result—the same. 'We liked Ventnor best of all.'

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

In 1886, while at Rock Cottage, we had the great pleasure to receive there as our guests for a fortnight the Rev. Dr. Parker (minister of the City Temple, London), and Mrs. Parker. This was the first of half a dozen holiday visits that these very dear friends were able to spend with us in the Isle of Wight. We had ourselves been members of the City Temple since 1872. It was Dr. Parker's plan and idea that during his annual vacation of six weeks, i.e. from the middle of July to September 1, he should really rest from pulpit work, and only upon very special occasions would he break this rule. Upon this first visit the Rev. R. Allen Davies, minister of the Congregational Church, called and begged me to persuade Dr. Parker to preach at least once in his church. I told him that I did not like to urge him, but would support his personal request, so they met and after a most pleasant interview Mr. Davies said, 'Now, Dr. Parker, will you preach for me?' His first reply was not very hopeful. 'But,' said Mr. Davies, 'it is known all over the island that you are here, and on every hand I know there is a great desire to hear you, and it will gratify a large congregation who will assemble. It will do great good and help my own work as well. Name your own day and hour and I will issue the notice. Do say yes.' 'Very well,' said Dr. Parker, 'I will preach at a service you can announce for next Thursday morning at 12 o'clock,



REV. DR. PARKER.

A MIDDAY SERMON

the whole service to be one hour only in duration.' 'Dear Dr. Parker,' said Mr. Davies, '12 o'clock in the day is impracticable—please say Wednesday at 3 p.m. Wednesday is a half holiday in nearly all the island towns.' 'No,' replied Dr. Parker, 'you have just told me that many wish to hear me preach. We must test the question. If your information is correct, they will come at the hour I state just as they do at the City Temple in London every Thursday at noon. Thursday is my day, and 12 o'clock the hour.' 'Very well,' said Mr. Davies, 'I agree,' and the notice was given. Needless to say the Congregational Church was crowded and Dr. Parker conducted the whole service exactly as was his custom in London. He preached from the text Acts x. 6—'He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner whose house is by the seaside. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.' Dr. Parker always preached extempore, and it was to him apparently a very easy undertaking. No doubt he *could* preach without any great mental effort in preparation, but this he never did. He never entered the pulpit without the most thorough study of his subject, but he had, of course, his own method. I do not think anyone who heard Dr. Parker in Ventnor that Thursday in August 1886 will ever forget the service. I shall speak of other visits of Dr. and Mrs. Parker later on, but I may say that the

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above occasion was the only one upon which he preached in the Isle of Wight. Most friendly relations existed between my family and those of all the clergy and churches in Ventnor, but, as Nonconformists, if we attended any church service it was usually at the Congregational Church. We were much attached to the Rev. Allen Davies for whom we had the greatest regard, and this friendship was happily maintained up to the time of his regretted death in 1905. A fine tablet in marble has been set up to his memory in the Congregational Church to the Glory of God, and to record some particulars of his more than forty years of faithful, devoted work and service in this town and island. The tablet has also inscribed upon it the following most fitting and appropriate scripture text: 'They that turn many to Righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever'—Dan. xii. 3. He was an ideal preacher and pastor and endeared himself to all who knew him. His long residence here and acquaintance throughout Hampshire secured for him the deserved title of 'Bishop of the Isle of Wight.' His broad and sympathetic views broke down all barriers of sectarianism. Established Churchman and Free Churchman alike held him in high honour. It was always a pleasure to me to comply with his occasional request to take the chair at his anniversary services

HYMNOLOGY

and at other public meetings at the Congregational Church and Hall.

Writing the word 'bishop' reminds me that when I was told that Bishop Thomas Ken, one of the fathers of English hymnology, while he held the living of Brighthstone in the Isle of Wight in 1672, wrote the morning hymn beginning :

Awake, my soul, and with the sun,
Thy daily stage of duty run ;
Shake off dull sloth and joyful rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

—and also the evening hymn :

Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light.

—hymns which are household words wherever the English tongue is spoken—I felt that I should like to hear one of these hymns sung in Isle of Wight churches now and then ; but I have to relate, to my regret, that I cannot remember a single occasion when either hymn was given out at any church service in Ventnor. No doubt they are often sung, but I cannot remember to have heard them. Having been written in the island, and the one first mentioned evidently under the influence of the sunshine that belongs to Vectis, it seems to me that it is a hymn that should not be overlooked. We all know that the closing verses of both of these remarkable hymns are very rarely omitted from

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

some weekly service in every church in Christendom, forming the only Doxology I have ever heard in Nonconformist churches :

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,

usually sung to the tune of the 'Old Hundredth.' 'Almost Fairyland' must not forget Bishop Thomas Ken or that he composed in the Isle of Wight hymns of imperishable renown, containing a message to every living soul that may well be observed.

Hampshire may well be proud of its hymn writers. Isaac Watts was born at Southampton in 1764, and I was greatly interested and delighted when as lately as August 1912 we had the privilege of visiting his birth-place there, where many relics are sacredly preserved, amongst others his writing desk, at which he wrote many of his wonderful hymns, and among others :

There is a land of pure delight,

containing the familiar line :

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,

said to have been suggested by his sight of our fragrant island, looking across Southampton Water.

Then there is Mrs. Jemima Luke, long a resident of Newport, I.W., and the author of the immortal poem for children :

I think when I read that sweet story of old.



MRS. JEMIMA LUKE.

HYMNOLOGY

Mrs. Richards sought out Mrs. Luke and frequently called upon her in her comfortable home. Upon one occasion she asked Mrs. Luke, then in her eighty-first year, to write out for her in her own handwriting the above-mentioned hymn, in order that she might have it reproduced in facsimile and sold as a souvenir at the great bazaar of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, held in London, March 1895. This request was granted. There was a peculiar appropriateness in this kindly act, as Mrs. Luke was the daughter of Thomas Thomson, one of the principal founders of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society and one of the three original honorary secretaries. There was a great demand for this souvenir, which was neatly printed and contained by her portrait and autograph.

The late Duke of Edinburgh, 'our Sailor Prince,' opened the bazaar. Mrs. Richards had secured the services from the African Mission of three little Kafir boys to sing Mrs. Luke's hymn and to assist in selling the souvenir. These children had very remarkable voices and knew the song and tune perfectly. The official programme was rather a long one, and the committee cut down the children's hymn to two verses, to the great disappointment of Mrs. Richards and the little black vocalists. However, when H.R.H. called at Mrs. Richards' stall she asked the Duke if he would remain for a moment and allow the boys to sing the last verse of 'The

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Child's Desire,' as that contained the *raison d'être* for these little Africans to sing the hymn. 'Certainly,' he instantly replied, 'let them sing it now.' They at once stood upon chairs and sang with startling effect :

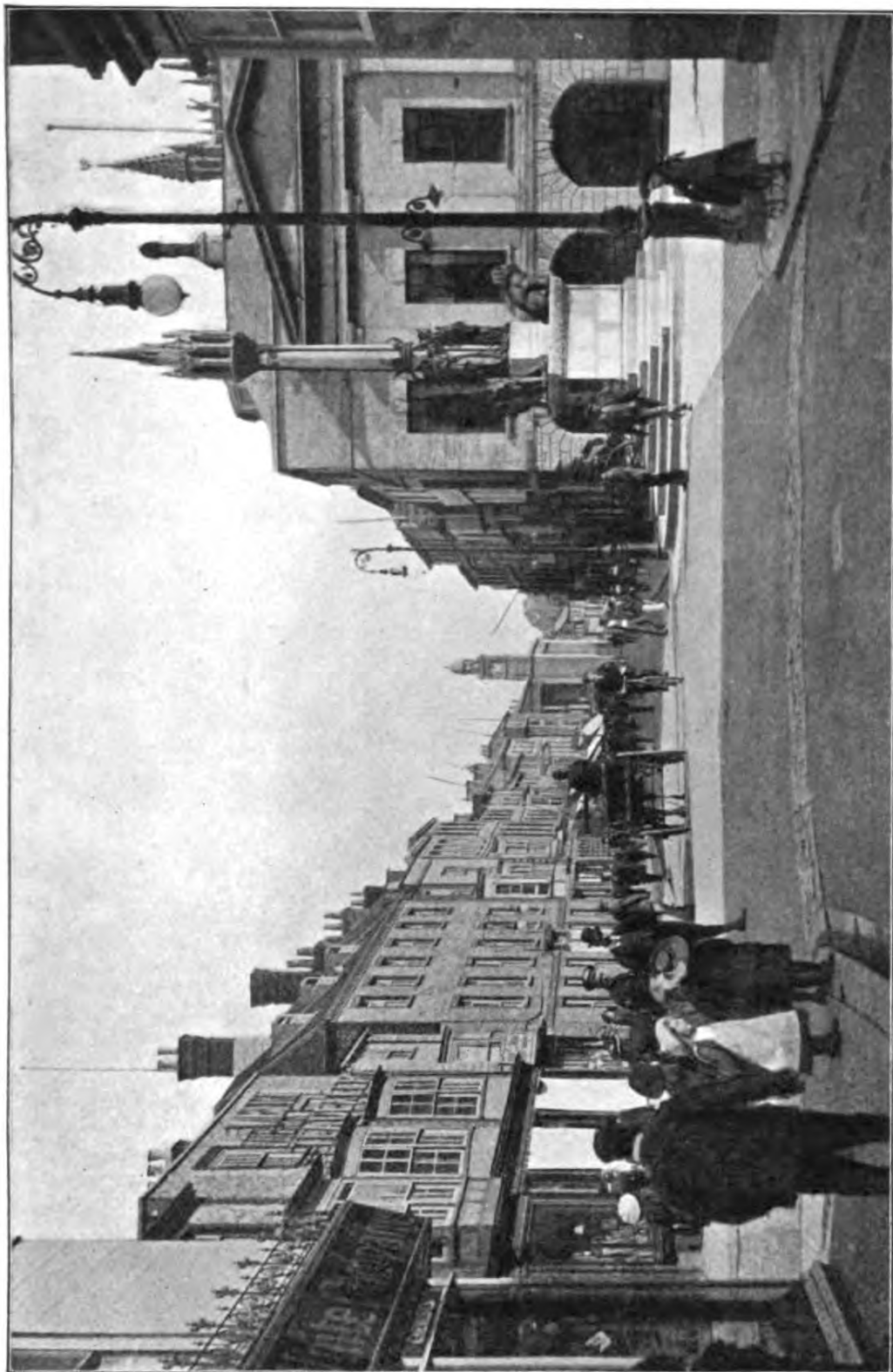
I long for the joy of that glorious time,
The sweetest and brightest and best,
When the *dear little children of every clime*
Shall crowd to His arms and be blest.

He seemed quite overcome with emotion for an instant, then thanked them, accepted a copy of the souvenir and passed on. It was a thrilling moment in the hall. Subsequently a member of the Duke's suite returned to the stall and said he desired each of the little Kafirs to receive a sovereign, which they gratefully accepted.

Another children's song, quite as widely known and popular, is :

There's a Friend for little children
Above the bright blue sky.

Its author, Albert Midlane, was a native of Newport, I.W., and composed this hymn at Newport. Both of the above hymns will be found in all published song collections for children. There are probably but very few Sunday school scholars who cannot both repeat and sing these remarkable compositions of Mrs. Jemima Luke and Mr. Albert Midlane. It is impossible to estimate the almost infinite good the writers of these matchless hymns have accomplished for



HIGH STREET, NEWPORT.



HYMNOLOGY

mankind. I place hymns as an influence to guide, direct and comfort, as second only to the Holy Scriptures, which are their real foundation and inspiration.

As an item of interest in connection with hymns, I may mention that I was told by an authority on hymnology that the hymn (one of Dr. Parker's great favourites),

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,

written by Ray Palmer, an American divine, and composed during his theological student days, had been more widely translated into foreign languages than any hymn in the Congregational Church Hymnal.

CHAPTER VII

IN September 1887, an event took place in Ventnor of important and, I may add of almost pathetic interest, viz. the sale by auction at Steephill Castle of the costly and unique assemblage of property contained in this fine mansion. The sale occupied five days, September 19-24, and included everything of value almost without reserve. The sale was conducted by Messrs. Francis Pittis and Son, and I think the actual auctioneer of the occasion was our esteemed townsman, Mr. E. G. H. Wetherick. The catalogue is a little volume of 66 pages; there were 1,248 items disposed of. Major Dudley Albert Hambrough, to the consternation and great regret of everybody, had decided to remove to the mainland, and the Steephill Estate into which he had entered as sole owner in 1870 was sold in 1887 to Mr. Henry Sewell, a native of the Island of Jamaica, who took possession of the property after the above sale of effects. Mr. Sewell purchased all the fittings of the castle and grounds known as 'landlord's fixtures,' and also secured at the

STEEPHILL CASTLE SALE

sale very many of the important pieces of valuable furniture contained in the drawing-room, library and dining-room. The sale created great interest throughout Hampshire, and 'souvenirs' of Steephill and the Hambrough family were eagerly bought by local people, and I have often been shown little articles in numerous houses which were purchased at this memorable sale. The name of Hambrough is associated with so many important events in Ventnor that it will be held in reverent respect for all time. It is gratifying to know that several streets in the town bear the name of Hambrough in full or in part; 'Dudley' Road and 'Albert' Street are of course known as a link in the Hambrough chain.

I have not referred to my daughter, Pearl, since my first notes. I then mentioned that she accompanied us on our first visit to 'Almost Fairyland' in 1872 when four-and-a-half years old. She was as enthusiastic in her love for Ventnor as any of us, and as the eldest of our group had always a voice in our summer plans, and came regularly with us to the island year after year. She was a familiar figure and personality in the town all her life. Her marriage to Mr. Craigie took place in 1887. It was no surprise to us that she desired to join us in our holidays after her marriage. She, therefore, came with Mr. Craigie to Rock Cottage in the following August and September 1887. We had also

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in our company at that time Mrs. Richards' youngest sister, Miss Susie Arnold.

Pearl had become an exceptionally good pianist, an accomplishment for which she had a natural taste and inclination, and had studied carefully both in London and Paris, and Miss Arnold was a student at the Royal Academy of Music, London, for vocal instruction, and was regarded as a very promising pupil. Mr. Gibbs soon discovered this combination of musical talent lodging beneath his roof, and suggested a concert in the town hall to raise a fund to supply chairs for the large hall. These amateur musicians adopted this suggestion, and we also secured for the occasion the invaluable services of Mrs. Georgina Weldon, well known as one of the finest non-professional vocalists of the day. A date was arranged and the sale of tickets began forthwith, Mr. Gibbs proving the best of 'Box Office Managers,' and with the assistance of Mrs. Richards they made a certainty of splendid support, selling all the reserved places in advance. The concert was a fine success for both 'artists' and the 'fund,' and was the first of several other entertainments within two or three years of a similar character which Mr. Gibbs organised for these 'volunteers' anxious to assist any local fund which seemed urgent. These efforts in a good cause were greatly appreciated in the town, and our little group were abundantly rewarded for their efforts by the generous



MRS. CRAIGIE

ROCK COTTAGE

approval of their audiences. Concerts of this kind have prevailed ever since, as they were in vogue long before in Ventnor, and many 'volunteers,' as kindly disposed as my wife, my daughter, and my sister-in-law, have given equally delightful and successful entertainments and for similar worthy objects.

I could easily fill a page of space in this book were I to name the very many kind friends in Ventnor who constantly interested themselves in the cause of charity and other purposes for doing good during these many years. The names of Mrs. Whitehead and Mrs. Olive instantly occur to me as among those whose unfailing kindness could be relied upon. Scarcely a month ever passes in which there is not some attractive function organised with most successful results.

In the summer of 1890 Mr. and Mrs. Craigie again came with us to Rock Cottage, and on August 15 of that year the only child of the marriage, John Churchill Craigie, was born in that cottage.

Mrs. Craigie had occupied herself really seriously in literary work and study since 1886, but had never published any of her writings until 1888-9. These first efforts took the form of a series of sketches for a society journal in London called *Life*, and were entitled 'The Note Book of a Diner Out,' signed 'Diogenes Pessimus.' Between the year 1891 and her lamented death on August 13, 1906, she wrote and published

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under the pseudonym of 'John Oliver Hobbes,' fourteen novels and seven plays. She delivered numerous lectures both in this country and in the United States, besides contributing to magazines, reviews, and newspapers, and was throughout her life one of the most indefatigable, painstaking, and industrious workers I have ever known. Her first book was entitled 'Some Emotions and a Moral,' and the last, 'The Dream and the Business.' A great deal of her work was done in the Isle of Wight, and she loved Ventnor. Her 'Life and Letters,' were published by John Murray, London, in 1911.

I do not seem to remember that at any time between 1872 and 1900 one heard the complaints which have prevailed in later years concerning the lack of prosperity in the town. Perhaps as we were then only here during the height of the season (August and September) it was not a time of year in which conditions could very well be unsatisfactory. We certainly found everything flourishing and lively whenever we came, and there was always an atmosphere of 'full up' and 'going strong,' lodgings well let and coaches running to full limit. The only 'gloom' we ever observed in the expression of the jobmasters, boatmen, and bathing-machine owners was in the event of a 'rainy day or two,' which seemed to discourage them mightily. Happily, the sun shone most of the time, and records for many years show more

FOR A RAINY DAY

hours of sunshine in the Undercliff than in any other part of England.

Our little party used to settle quietly into literature when the rains descended, and a fresh raid was promptly organised on our long-time and unfailing friend 'Knight's Library.' This interesting repository of 'everything to read' was a perfect joy to us then, as it is to-day, and we certainly made the most of its ample privileges. I could always count half a dozen or more 'Knight's Library' volumes in our rooms. Besides the literature, when anything was wanted that could possibly be supplied by an up-to-date stationer or bookseller, the word was always—'You can get it at Knight's.'

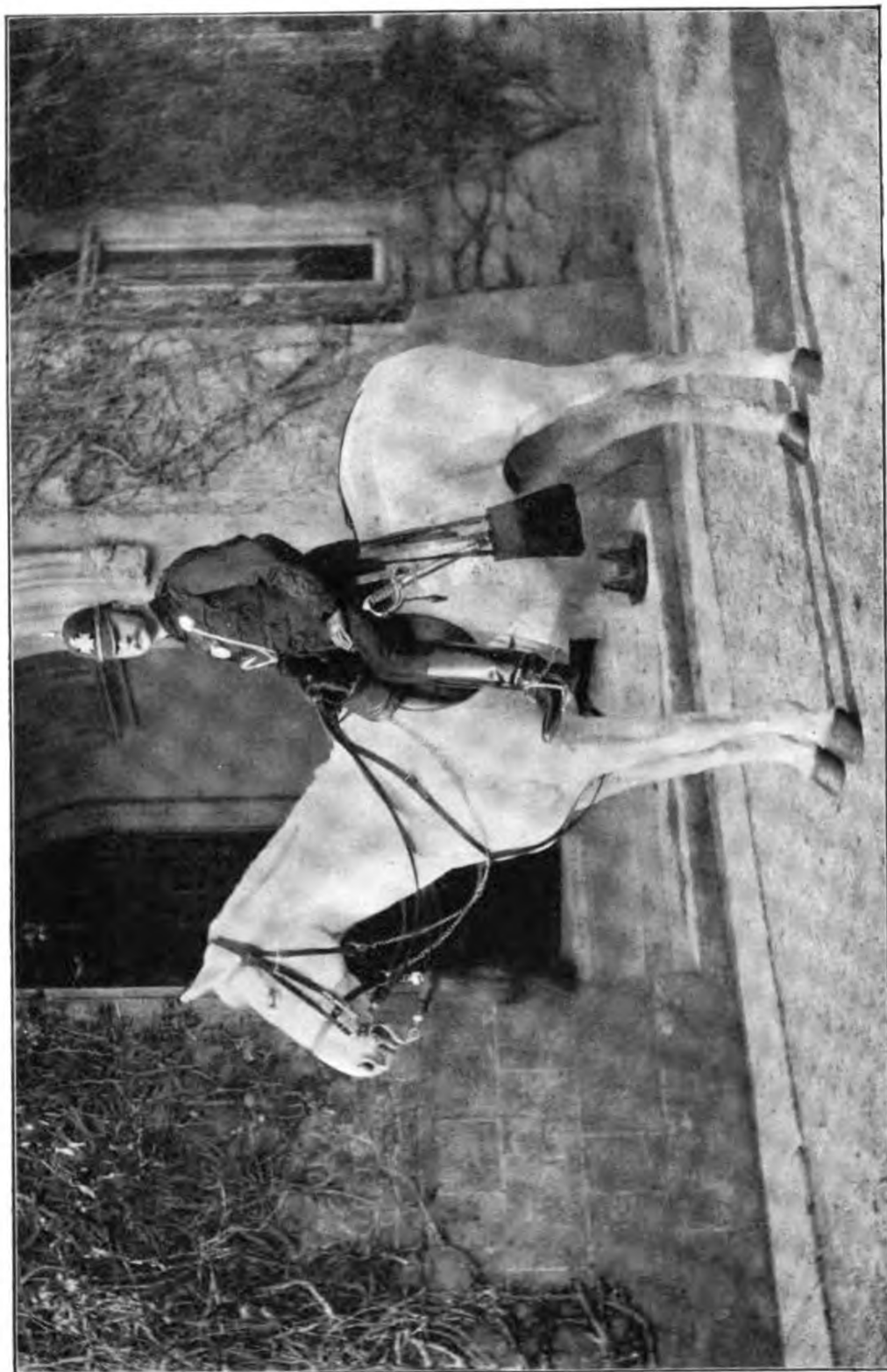
The trouble about rainy weather is this, experience has proved that you cannot make up losses as a consequence of wet days *by subsequent* sunshine and fair weather—the 'opportunity' has slipped by. People do not duplicate plans and expeditions. They either forget their needs and intentions had it been clear and bright or submit to the self-denial as wholesome discipline and start a fresh programme. The owners even of the greatest retail establishments in towns and cities will bear witness that the purchases not made on a rainy day never make good by double the business when the clouds have rolled by, so their advance estimates and calculations always include the drop and loss which are bound to happen in adverse weather.

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This rule will work out in a similar way with all undertakings and trading that are dependent upon the caprice and varying inclination of people, as distinct from household supplies and daily needs. The butcher, the baker, and the milkman can smile as blandly in rainy weather as in fair.

We naturally sympathise with our seaside season workers who find their takings much reduced when the Clerk of the Weather is a little trying.

I must not overlook to mention the Ventnor Club which was organised and opened in 1883. The Club House, now known as Belgrave Chambers, was built for the purpose of a social club by the late William Spindler, and gave club privileges to a goodly number of residents and also a substantial visitors' list. Terry, Arnold, and myself were among the original members, Mr. William Spindler was president, and our constant friend, Mr. Theodore Saunders, accepted the post of honorary club secretary. It was a delightful little club and many congenial friends became members, among whom I must mention Major Dudley Hambrough, Alexander Houston, J. G. Livesay, Beaumont Atkinson, the late Col. Currie, Capt. David Maitland McGill Crichton, Commander Anson, R.N., &c. We certainly enjoyed this club, and I was personally very sorry when it became necessary to close it. The building is now converted into offices. Its situation is unique.



MAJOR DUDLEY ALBERT HAMBROUGH.

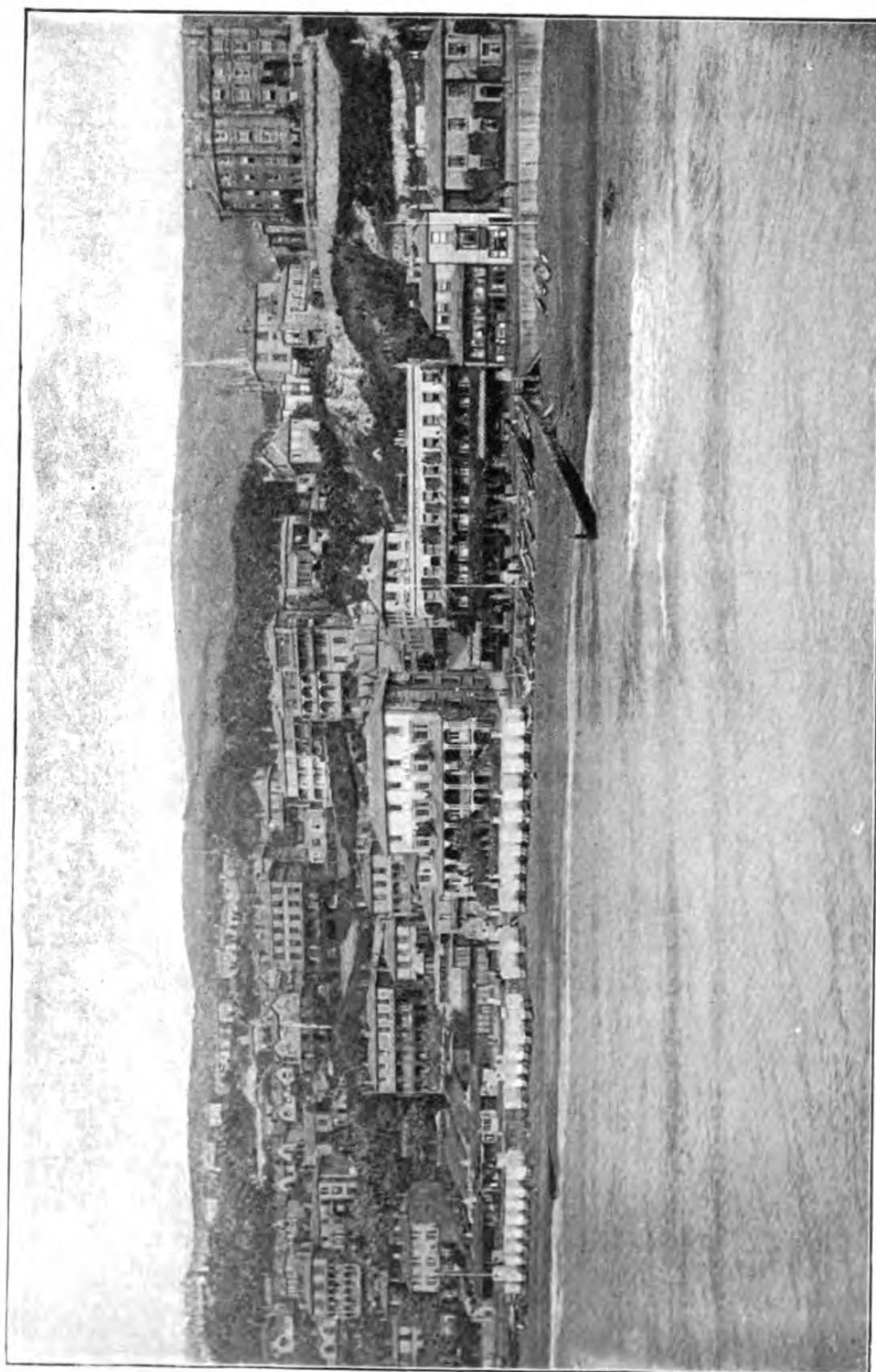
VENTNOR CLUB

The rear windows and balconies afford a fine sea view, and on a warm day the cool breezes one may 'catch' are most refreshing. I congratulate Major Saunders whenever I enter his offices, which are established in Belgrave Chambers, on having such exceptionally light and airy facilities for conducting his business. I joined the County and Castle Club a good many years ago, and this supplies all the social club requirements of the town and is admirably equipped and managed.

CHAPTER VIII

I HAVE not been approached by any investor to take up my 'Observation Tower' project, but I have received a good many favourable opinions and appreciations concerning it; but I must state just one unfavourable judgment made by a lady. She said she 'did not think such a tower was needed in the Park, there was already a fine bandstand, and if people wished to observe from a higher elevation the park-keeper would be very glad to allow people for a penny to go to the first floor of the Lodge and look out of the windows.'

I have just had my attention called to the fact that there is a tower on the River Mersey, and I have had sent me the prospectus of the 'Observation Tower' located at New Brighton, Cheshire, not far from Liverpool, which of course has an enormous population to 'feed' it. Over ten million persons have paid for admission since the opening a few years ago. It is a very elaborate structure and replete with many amusement accessories, situated in grounds and gardens of 35 acres. It is an enormous financial success.



VENTNOR FROM THE SEA.

FURTHER PROJECTS FOR VENTNOR

Week by week our local papers contain projects for the 'Advance of Ventnor.' The Advertising Committee are active and energetic. It would be most unfair to suggest that there was any lack of enterprise and endeavour to do what seems most desirable in the interest of the town. Just now there is the problem of the motor-bus to give facilities for easy access from the esplanade to the upper levels and railway station, and will be at once tested and tried. The engagement of a superior band for the summer months is being strongly urged. In view of the above facts I feel some reluctance to make any further statement as to what I would do 'were I a millionaire,' but as I am not suggesting any outlay on the part of the ratepayers, or extra work for the District Council, no harm can be done if I fulfil my promise as given in Chapter V as to 'further things,' none of which are startling, nor will they be new.

First, any scheme or project for the advance of Ventnor that does not include a fine and up-to-date 18-hole golf course would be sadly incomplete. The present golf course is but nine holes and is not considered first-class by any means. There is plenty of land available to extend the course to the desired size, but it requires an outlay of money. Then, if completed, there is the enormous difficulty of 'getting up there.' There is ample evidence to demonstrate that nowadays a

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decided preference is given for holidays to places containing superior links. Young, middle-aged, and even elderly men desire golf, and it is a necessity of the age. If land were available along the St. Lawrence Road, that would be a site and position with no drawback whatever. It is my suggestion that an investor should inquire into this alternative facility for golfers and attract them to Ventnor.

A project for the construction of a Funicular Railway to the top of the Downs is another vital question. It has been most thoroughly and eloquently explained to the Council and to the ratepayers of Ventnor over and over again, and while all agree as to its infinite advantage and desirability it has been negatived by the vote of the ratepayers, but entirely in consequence of the cost and the uncertainty of income that might arise.

A modified proposal to provide a Lift from the Esplanade to Church Street has also been elaborately and carefully placed before the Council, but, like the Funicular, has been declined and for precisely the same reason.

Both proposals are entirely practical, but the cost will not be voted by the town. Will an 'investor' take it up, immortalise himself, and make Ventnor the most popular seaside resort on the South Coast? Here are a few points for a capitalist to consider, and as they are prepared by an engineer of experience

FUNICULAR RAILWAYS

and reputation they can be relied upon as sound :

Lifts, or Funicular Railways, in Ventnor to be successful :

(1) Should be arranged in independent sections and should not be one continuous line.

(a) To allow of passengers being distributed in the town and thus helping trade, instead of being carried straight through either to the Railway Station or to the Esplanade.

(b) If continuous, the station, whether in Pier Street, Church Street, or elsewhere would have to be underground and could only be approached by steps or an incline.

(2) Should be absolutely straight.

(a) For easy, safe, and cheap working.

(b) Friction on ropes, rails, &c. Curves in the line will necessitate considerable extra expense for current.

(3) For delivery of passengers' luggage and goods the Lift, or Funicular Railway will be useless, as all goods could be delivered equally cheaply from the present I.W. Railway Station at Ventnor as from the lift stations.

(4) Any Lift or Funicular Railway suitable for Ventnor will have to be mostly in tunnel, at least to the foot of the Downs.

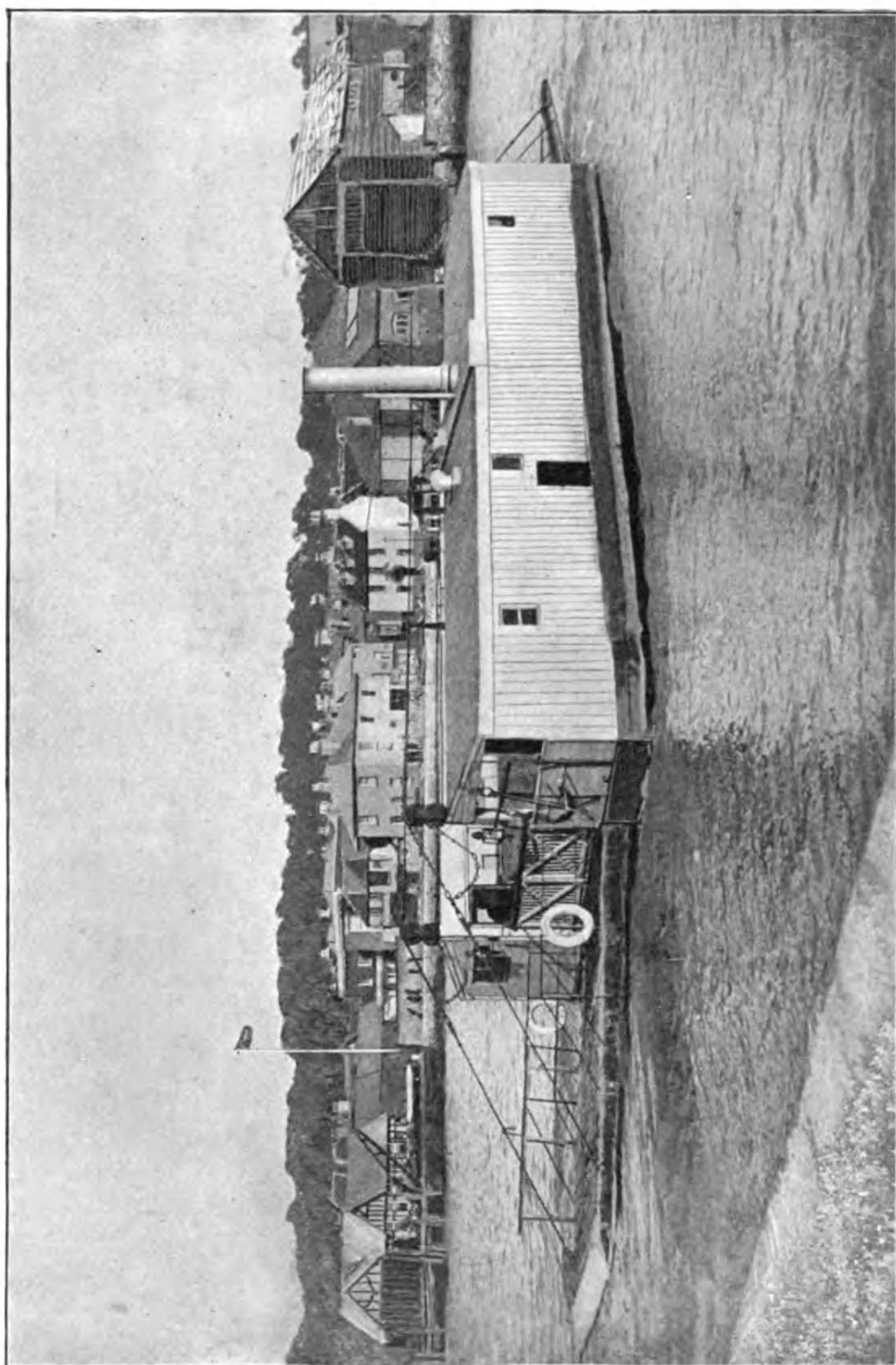
Should the motor-buses now in use and working prove entirely satisfactory—and

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

everyone would be glad if they do—they could continue to run until the Funicular was constructed, and I would suggest that the Bus Co. be then compensated in some fair way, if their service could not be worked in competition with the Funicular. They would certainly, if starting now, have a monopoly for a considerable time. 'The Funicular to the top of the Downs' is the real requirement, and cannot be substituted by any other method of conveyance.

My final suggestion is to give enthusiastic support for the tunnel under the Solent to bring passengers to and from the mainland to the Isle of Wight without the change to boat. The latest plan, and the one most approved, is Stokes Bay to Ryde, and I am told that a Parliament Bill is to be obtained next session to authorise a company, now formed, to construct such a tunnel. This will be the opportunity of all investors to help complete my programme of suggestions.

In commercial enterprise risks and uncertainties have to be considered. But commerce would cease to exist to-morrow if it could be conducted only on the lines of 'dead certainty.' No one would hesitate to invest if an absolute success was assured. A town is a commercial enterprise in a certain sense. The inhabitants must bear in mind that certain attractions and facilities for recreation and enjoyment go hand-in-hand with water supply, drainage, street paving



FLOATING BRIDGE AT COWES.

A TUNNEL TO THE MAINLAND

and lighting, and must be provided even if considerable outlay is involved without the inevitable question of 'Will it pay?' being answered 'Yes' in advance. Experience proves that towns do not come to grief where enterprise and a 'go-ahead' spirit are to the front. Extra rates are more than made up by the augmented value of all property holdings. Optimism controlled by good sound judgment is better than pessimism which always sees a 'lion in the way.'

I have examined the advertisements of quite one hundred British resorts in order to see what they could claim that the Isle of Wight could not supply. I read of one island described as 'Nestling in the trough of the sea.' I at once decided that we could offer something better than that anyhow. Taking the entire list there was really nothing described as picturesque and beautiful that could rival 'Almost Fairyland.' But without exception *all* resorts make a prominent feature of 'Superior Golf Links.'

The Ventnor Publicity Committee may be interested to read the following headlines taken from advertisements of summer resorts in the United States this year, 1913 :

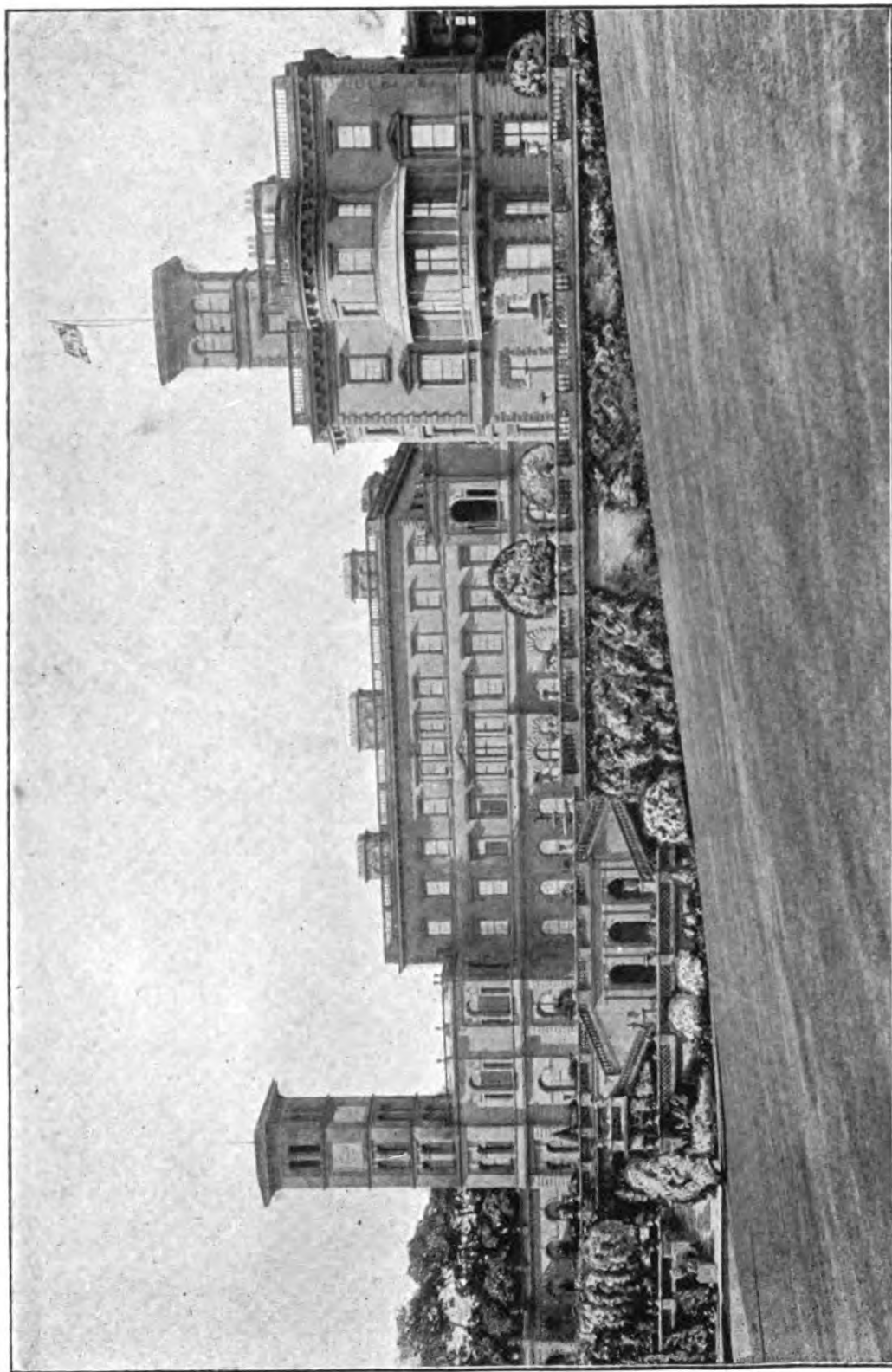
- 'The Land of the Sky.'
- 'Glorious Panorama, Exhilarating Air.'
- 'Amid Hills and Cliffs.'
- 'Tonic in the Air.'
- 'Rugged Hills, Grassy Valleys, Babbling Streams, Dusky Woods.'

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

- 'Beach washed by Surging Waves of Atlantic Ocean.'
- 'Land of Health and Happiness.'
- 'Where Water, Wood and Mountain meet.'
- 'Ideal Vacation Land.'
- 'A Summer Paradise.'
- 'Nature's Garden and Summer Playground.'
- 'Historic, Picturesque, and Healthful.'
- 'Health, Comfort, Relaxation, and Pleasure.'
- 'Renewed strength awaits you.'
- 'Summer Home for Discriminating People.'
- 'Get away to Happiness.'
- 'Rest and Pleasure walk hand-in-hand.'
- 'You feel the thrill on arrival.'

Golf links figure conspicuously in all American advertisements of resorts. I will only add, for the benefit of our American friends, go at once to 'Almost Fairyland, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England, and be 'Quite Happy.'

I have now given particulars of the several things I would like to see carried out in the town, and drop the subject.



OSBORNE HOUSE.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN we came to 'Almost Fairyland' for our holidays in 1897, to our very great regret we were not joined by our brothers-in-law Terry and Arnold and their families, as had been the plan for so many happy summers previously. Both had entered into business arrangements that necessitated their return to the United States. As I am often asked by old friends who remember them in Ventnor as to their welfare, I may state that the Terrys now live in St. Paul, Minn., and the Arnolds in Boston, Mass., all flourishing and happy—Both have daughters married—and we often hear from them and with enthusiastic desire to be in England again, particularly in the Isle of Wight.

In that year Dr. and Mrs. Parker were again able to spend a fortnight with us. The time was spent in exploiting by coach and rail different parts of the island. Dr. Parker was very fond of walking exercises and often started an hour or more in advance of our vehicles and leisurely trudged along the road till we overtook him. He was rather a silent man when either walking or driving, but when

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

at rest in our house was always as energetic as any of our party and was most interesting and entertaining in all his conversation. The Parkers expressed a wish to go over Osborne House, which was not possible until the Queen had left the island for Scotland. Mrs. Richards then wrote to the Queen and received per return from her secretary, General Sir Henry Ponsonby, the requested letter of permit. We drove to East Cowes with our letter and had a very delightful day, being shown everything of interest in Osborne House and grounds. Dr. Parker's first text on resuming the services at the City Temple about ten days later was from 2 Chron. xxx. 6: 'Went with the letters from the king.'

In 1898 Dr. and Mrs. Parker visited us for two weeks, and we sorrowfully had to note her failing health. Dr. Parker resumed his services at the City Temple the first Sunday in October, and Mrs. Parker was able to take her accustomed place in the choir for the opening service and for one or two Sundays after. But her illness became serious at this time, and after many weeks of fluctuating symptoms she died January 27, 1899. She was a remarkably fine-looking woman with many accomplishments, and a most interesting personality in every way. Her loss was deeply lamented by all who knew her. Dr. Parker was inconsolable and never rallied or again approached his usual cheerfulness and happy frame of mind, though he struggled

COVE COTTAGE

very hard to do so. Her death literally broke his heart; they had spent thirty-four happy years together. Both had amazing health and presented an appearance of exceptional physical perfection. Dr. Parker came alone to us for a fortnight in the summers of 1899, 1900, and 1901. He used to say, 'I have come to see you because I know *she* would have wished me to do so.' There was even an attitude of despair, wholly unlike his former self.

He greatly desired to die, but he wished to do his work to the end and limit of his strength. He studied to be cheerful and cordial, but one knew he was unhappy. In 1902 he told me he felt a dread of the sea journey across the Solent and did not come to the island. He preached in the City Temple for the last time at 12 o'clock on Thursday morning on October 2, 1902, and died on November 28, 1902. Both Dr. and Mrs. Parker were enthusiastic lovers of the Isle of Wight and always delighted to speak of their holidays here.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Schmalz came to Ventnor this year (1897) and at our suggestion rented Cove Cottage. It was in the grounds of Cove Cottage and under the fine fig tree which is close to the entrance gate Mr. Schmalz painted his celebrated picture 'Rabboni—Master,' which has been exhibited throughout England with others of his Scriptural subjects. Mrs. Schmalz sat under the fig tree many

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

hours, sometimes at early dawn and again at sunset, as she was his model for 'Mary.' Mr. and Mrs. Schmalz often joined us in various holiday plans and added much to our pleasure. Mrs. Schmalz' sister, Miss Dorothy Dene, was model for a good many of Lord Leighton's masterpieces. Mr. Herbert Schmalz has a fine picture in the Royal Academy this year (1913), Gallery No. 1, entitled 'Fruits of the Earth.' I must here also note that our dear and old friends Capt. 'Davy' Crichton and Mrs. Crichton with their beautiful children once lived in the same Cove Cottage, and sorry indeed were we and many others in Ventnor at the death of 'Davy' in 1889. I think he was only thirty-five. Shortly afterwards came the removal of this family from the island. We have happily been able to keep in touch with these old friends. Only two years ago (1912) Mrs. Crichton came and spent two or three days with us. Her sons and daughters are all married and settled, and she now, like ourselves, has the delight of grandchildren. Her eldest son, Charlie, inherited the Lauderdale Estates in Scotland, to which his father was the heir.

Among our intimate friends who made holiday here in the late eighties and joined our young people in many joyful excursions and little festivities were the De Vere Stacpoole family, consisting of mother, three daughters, and two sons, the youngest of the family,

A GIFTED AUTHOR AND HIS WIFE

Mr. Harry De Vere Stacpoole, is none other than the distinguished novelist of this day, who since 1911 has, with his accomplished wife, established his residence in Ventnor, spending a good portion of each year in 'Almost Fairyland.' His graceful pen has for a series of years provided many thousands of readers with volumes of romance, mystery, and adventure, and there are few among us who have not been thrilled by the stories of 'The Blue Lagoon,' 'The Ship of Coral,' 'Pools of Silence,' and many others. Since his residence in our town he has written and published 'The Order of Release' and 'The Street of the Flute Player,' remarkably successful works. Mrs. H. De Vere Stacpoole has also felt the influence of our inspiring island and has accomplished the unprecedented record of any writer of a first book, of five editions within as many months, of her well-known novel 'Monte Carlo.' Only last year (June 1913) I had a letter from 'Harry' from which I quote *verbatim et literatim*: 'We want to get back to Ventnor. There is no place like it—absolutely none.'

In August and September 1898 we took up our residence at the Marine Hotel. Mr. Walter Spindler was at this time anxious to finish a portrait of me which he had begun in May in London, and in order to have 'sittings' at convenient hours Mrs. Spindler invited Pearl and me to visit at Old Park for a fortnight in September, during which

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

time the portrait was successfully completed. It is considered an excellent production. Mr. Walter Spindler had remarkable talent, and several of his works have been exhibited in the Salon at Paris and Royal Academy in London, notably a portrait of Madame Sarah Bernhardt, which has been reproduced in her 'Life,' a most interesting volume. He contributed to this book several full-page illustrations of the great actress in some of her most celebrated rôles.

For our holidays in 1899 we decided to take a rather large furnished residence with grounds and stabling if we could find a suitable one near Ventnor. We had advised the local house agents early in the year of our requirements. In July Messrs. Mitchell wrote me that Steephill Castle would be let furnished for August and September, as Mr. Sewell and family were abroad. At my request Mr. Mitchell came to London for an interview on the subject, the result of which was that I agreed to rent the premises for August and September with an option for the month of October, and I signed an agreement to that effect. Within a week, however, Messrs. Mitchell travelled to London to tell me that Mr. Sewell's solicitors had received a cable from him cancelling his instructions to let the Castle furnished as he had other plans. This was rather awkward for Messrs. Mitchell as well as for me, but the agreement at this point was only a one-sided affair,



THE PIER, COWES.

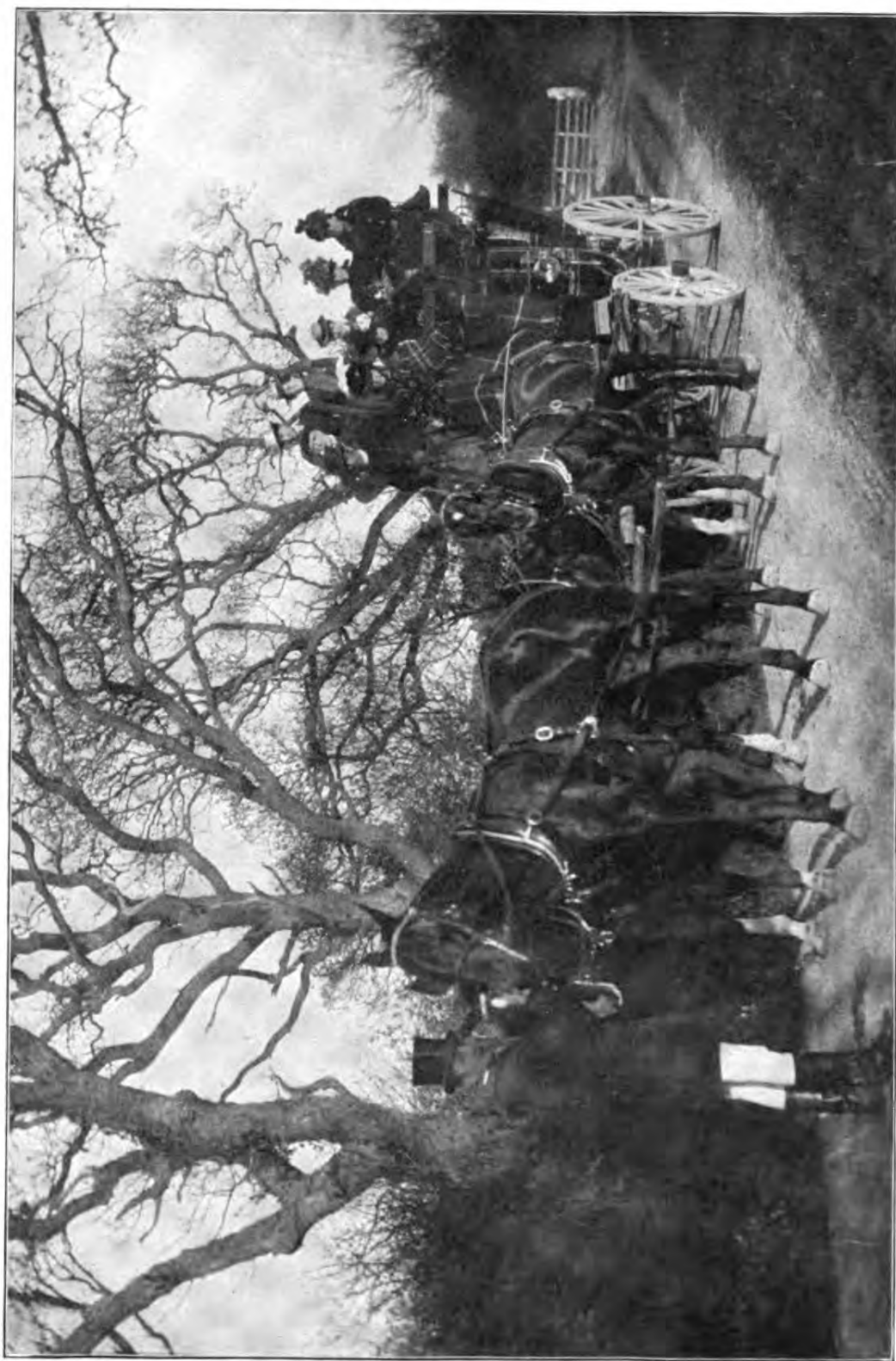
NORRIS CASTLE

and of course I could only regret Mr. Sewell's unexpected decision. By an odd coincidence the very day we got this word a friend of Lord Ampthill's was calling at our house in Lancaster Gate, London, and, hearing our news, said, 'Lord Ampthill wishes to let Norris Castle at East Cowes for the summer. You had better see the place.' I got Pearl, John, junr., and Dorothy to go the next day and inspect the premises. Their report was most satisfactory, and I entered into an agreement on the same lines as I had arranged for Steephill, and we all moved down from London on August 1. It happened to be a very exceptional season at Cowes. The Queen was in residence at Osborne, and owing to an accident to the Prince of Wales, which caused him to be very lame for two or three months, he remained on board the Royal Yacht in Cowes Harbour for over a month, and afterwards landed and remained at Osborne for another month. These unusual circumstances kept the town of Cowes and the harbour extremely lively during the whole season, and rendered our own stay at Norris very interesting in many ways. The accommodation at Norris Castle was ample, and we were able to entertain a good number of our friends both from America and England. We extended our stay for a third month, and the time passed off quickly. The grounds were extensive, and there was a fine boat-house and boating facilities. We exchanged

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

courtesies with Osborne House and were allowed access to the grounds, and Osborne guests visited Norris. There was little temptation to explore the neighbourhood; it was quite difficult to get up a party disposed to drive. We had a steam launch for cruising and for conveyance to West Cowes. The weather was particularly favourable the whole season and the summer holiday was pronounced most successful; still, we did not like the Cowes district so well as Ventnor.

In May 1900 we came down from London to Cowes with our friends Mr. and Mrs. George Fulford of Canada and had a week's coaching on the Island. We were put up at the popular Gloster Hotel. Mr. George Jackman of Ventnor supplied the coach and horses. We were highly favoured as to weather and were able to visit nearly all the favourite places in 'Almost Fairyland'—a spring holiday of great pleasure and delight to all of us.



THE RICHARDS' AND FULFORDS' ISLAND COACH DRIVE.

CHAPTER X

WHILE at Norris Castle my son Nelson had quite a unique aquatic experience which I venture to think will interest island readers, and I, therefore, publish his own account of it as originally written by him at the time. His adventure is described as 'A long paddle round the Isle of Wight in a canoe':

One Saturday morning in September, 1898, at 6.30, without washing, shaving, or breakfast, without any kind of programme or preparation, I embarked alone at Norris Castle, East Cowes, in a small Rob-Roy, Wee Winn, and started paddling towards Ryde. The sun poured down its volume of heat, and very soon it was advisable to sit in my skin, a costume I continued wearing during the day. At the present moment my blistered shoulders and legs make me regret this bit of folly, which at the time, however, seemed in harmony with my exploit.

Long strokes carried the canoe past Osborne, past Ryde, and no mishap occurred till I ran foul of the sandbanks off Sea View. Every five minutes I had to get out and push or punt my canoe along, and then (9.15) hunger set in and a frightful thirst. At Sea View I landed for breakfast, and received a warm welcome from the local boatmen, who thronged me to the number of three.

Half an hour later I was heading for Bembridge and in due course found myself on the rocky ledge against which I had been carefully warned. I got out, however, and stretched myself, and was soon afloat again. Then my tide began to fail me and I had to creep along Sandown Bay, hugging the shore. The rippling waves broke over my ship, but we made good progress. Summer girls with red parasols loited in boats, bathers of both sexes in all kinds of costumes lined the beach, and a prettier sight it would be difficult to

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

find. I longed to jump overboard and cool myself. But I had to stick to business. Off Dunnose the wind rose and there was a slight swell in the race, which continued till Ventnor was reached—12.30.

One o'clock saw us on our way again, and with the full ebb tide under the keel, St. Lawrence, St. Catherine's Light, and the dreaded Blackgang Bay were left behind. I paddled on, sometimes five miles from the shore, sometimes grating on the shingle. But these long trips out to sea took time. To my horror I noticed that the flood had commenced, and that probably I should not be able to make the Needles. I was getting fagged, so I went ashore to rest a bit for half an hour and then started once more, heading for the Needles. I seemed to make no way against the strong tide, and was fast losing heart.

The sun began to set. I could almost touch the rocks, but could not pass them. I tried every means in my power to cheer myself on. I sang, I counted the strokes. The blood-red glow of the sun threw into horrid relief the towering cliffs, and the sea-gulls hung ghoulish over the rocks, when at last I shot the Needles at 7 o'clock, having taken nearly two hours in doubling the point.

At Alum Bay I had four cups of tea at 2d. each, and another most unwholesome bun. I had been paddling now about thirteen hours, and had still nearly twenty miles to go. The moon came out, the sea flattened down, and everything seemed wrapped in darkness and quiet. Now and again a distant roar reminded me of the sandbanks and ledges of rocks, and many times I had to go a mile out into the Channel to avoid disaster. The moon was a faithful ally. In its quivering path shoals or hidden rocks were easily seen. Four hours and a half I paddled on in the semi-darkness, no sound no ripple, no light ashore or at sea. The coastline seemed interminable, and corner after corner was despairingly turned, till at last Cowes Roads hove in view.

I pulled myself together and effected a landing at Norris at 11.30, having paddled for seventeen hours with little more than one hour's rest for fodder. This trip, which anyone might undertake, obviously depends on the weather, and in this respect I was well favoured.

In this connection I may mention that in the autumn of 1877 I made a pedestrian tour myself round the island with Mr. Frederick Vanduzer who was residing with us at Belinda House. We walked from Ventnor to the Needles the first day, keeping as near the



THE NEEDLES.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

cliff as we could the whole distance. The next day we proceeded via Yarmouth to Cowes, the next day to Ryde, and reached Ventnor about 3 P.M. on the third day. The distance as we traversed it was about sixty-six miles. We enjoyed it very much and were not lame, halt, or blind on our arrival. We have, of course, taken the sea trip around the island, and driven from end to end scores of times, by coach and private conveyance. To-day motor cars can take one the complete circuit and across in a matter of four or five hours.

Both my sons after leaving Eastbourne College proceeded with their studies at Cambridge University, John entering Trinity and Nelson Trinity Hall. They remained for the full three years' course and then joined me in my office in London, and are now managers and partners in the business, largely relieving me of active responsibility, a state of affairs which I most gratefully appreciate after more than fifty years of rather exceptional strenuous commercial activity.

Before breaking up our visit at Norris Castle that year (1898) my daughter Pearl (Mrs. Craigie), a little apprehensive that we might again go to Cowes instead of Ventnor for our next holiday, negotiated a lease of St. Lawrence Lodge on the Old Park Estate, where she might reside at least part of the year and secure a quiet retreat for her literary work. She remodelled the interior

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

of the house and adapted certain rooms to suit her own fancy as a library and study. She certainly succeeded well with the plans. The house is now known as 'Craigie Lodge,' and is to this day regarded as one of the most attractive and desirable bijou residences in the island. As circumstances subsequently developed, nearly equal facilities for her work were available for her without this separate establishment, but she never regretted the plan she had made, and was able to make a practical though only occasional use of the Lodge for a number of years, and enjoyed it. What really happened in the summer of 1899 was that Mrs. Spindler informed us that she would let us Old Park for three months during her absence abroad, an offer we eagerly accepted, and went into residence on August 1, remaining until November 1. We knew the place so well and every part of the grounds and mansion were so familiar that we felt really at home. Mrs. Spindler, by leaving her own well-trained servants to assist the domestic working, enabled us to have an exceptional and ideal holiday with no bother whatever. We had many friends to visit us; others came to the romantic Sandrock Hotel close by, among them my sister Mrs. Marean and her husband, Judge Marean, of Brooklyn, N.Y., to be near us and join in our various plans. My brother-in-law and sister had regularly for some ten years crossed the Atlantic for their

‘WHO MIGHT THE GENTLEMAN BE?’

summer vacation, and invariably allotted a fortnight at least to ‘Almost Fairyland’ to enjoy the restfulness of the beloved island.

I must also particularly mention our old friends from oversea, Mr. and Mrs. Brent Good, and Mr. and Mrs. John Watson Cox, all of New York, who were happily able to spend a little time with us. Whenever we meet they enthusiastically recall the delights of Old Park and Ventnor. This was the first year of the South African War, and I remember our anxiety for the latest news, and often sending into Ventnor late in the evening for newspapers—no telephone at Old Park. Mrs. Richards was at that time a Pro-Boer, and considered President Kruger’s attitude justified. One morning we were driving along the high road to Ventnor, and she stopped the carriage to say good morning to a labourer breaking stones on the wayside, and said, ‘Here’s a shilling: I want you to drink to the health of President Kruger.’ He took off his hat and said, ‘Thank you kindly, lidy, so I will; but who might the gentleman be, ma’am?’ This ignorance on the part of the stone-breaker as to the identity of the great Boer hero was quite a shock, and there was ‘nothing doing’ in the way of ‘tips’ for some time after.

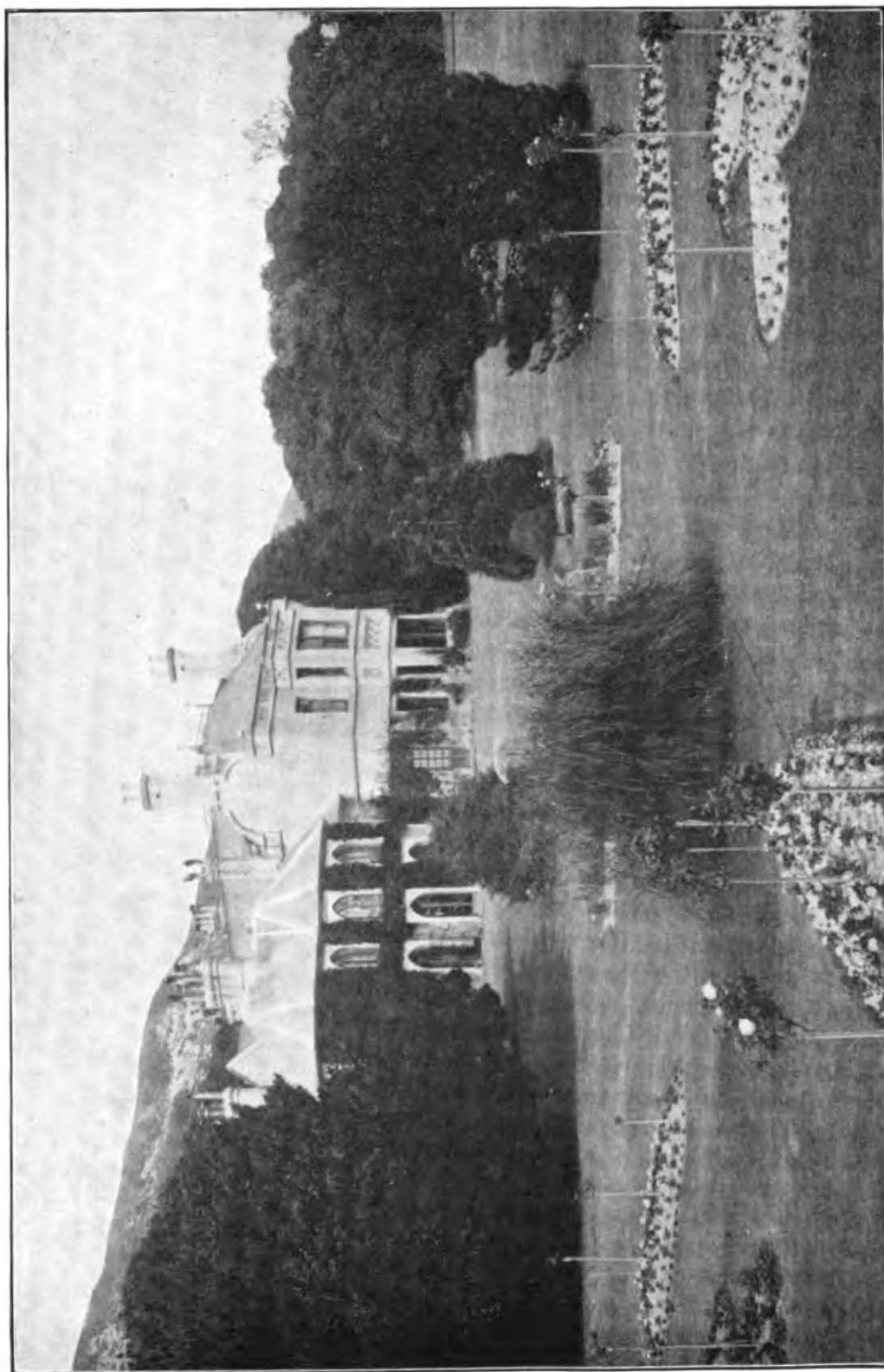
The great International Yacht Race at New York took place that summer, Sir Thomas Lipton with his *Shamrock I* making his first effort to ‘lift the cup’ and restore

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

to England the trophy won by the yacht *America* in 1851. This race was a prolonged affair owing to the becalmed condition of the sea off Sandy Hook, and we were constantly on the alert for the latest 'runs,' sending in to the County and Castle Club at all hours. The race ended as we all know in the defeat of the British yacht. This has happened on three subsequent trials, and now Sir Thomas has challenged for a fourth and final effort in 1914. I certainly believe that Americans generally as well as the English will be glad if he is at last successful with his *Shamrock IV*, now building at Southampton.

The grounds at Old Park are very beautiful. The place was kept up to the highest point of excellence in every respect, whilst the gardens and greenhouses contained everything the heart of man or woman could desire in the way of choicest fruits, vegetables, and flowers. The lawn was ideal with shade trees that especially lent their shelter for most successful alfresco luncheon parties and afternoon teas, the sea view adding glory to the scene. Well, we did enjoy ourselves! and we were happily enabled to entertain many of our friends, who seem never to forget the joyful summer-time at Old Park in 1899.

During September H.M. the Queen attended a charity fête in the grounds of Carisbrooke Castle. We drove from Old Park with a



OLD PARK, ST. LAWRENCE, I.W.

CARISBROOKE CASTLE FÊTE

large house-party—a glorious day and most enjoyable. Among the entertainments given on that day was the performance in the Castle by Mr. George Alexander (now Sir George) and Miss Julie Opp and the St. James's Theatre Company, of Mrs. Craigie's play 'A Repentance,' a one-act tragedy. The Queen sent for Mr. Alexander after the performance and personally thanked him and congratulated him. Mrs. Craigie unfortunately was absent at Munich for the Wagner festival which she had been commissioned by *The Times* to report.

A somewhat pathetic incident occurred. Mrs. Richards and Mrs. Craigie were very anxious to secure for a rising vocalist an opportunity to sing before the Queen. A song had been arranged for him on the Carisbrooke programme, but, alas! his 'turn' was called and the song given before the Queen arrived. On our return to Old Park the incident was being deplored by our vocalist friend, when Judge Marean humorously remarked, 'Well, after all you DID sing *before the Queen—got there!*' I am afraid this was not much of a consolation.

It is rather sad to note that this very exceptional marine estate of Old Park is now unoccupied, and has been since the lamented death of Mrs. Spindler in 1906. If its attractions could be made known to those seeking a very remarkable seaside residence it would soon be alive with the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

activities of some appreciative family who would be glad that they had discovered such a unique and quite perfect home. November 1 came all too soon, we had regretfully to 'pack up' and return to London, but full to the brim with joyful memories. Some readers may remark: 'What about doctors and illness? You never say a word on this subject.' Well, we could chant 'Te Deum laudamus' all day long, for in truth we all enjoyed remarkable health, and even our children when young escaped all the usual juvenile ailments. The island air seemed to agree with the Richards family. We were always filled with gratitude to God that this was so.

It was in this year (1899) that the I.W. Central Railway completed the line as far as St. Lawrence, and as I remember the traffic it was better supported by passengers for Newport and Cowes than it is to-day with its station through to Ventnor.



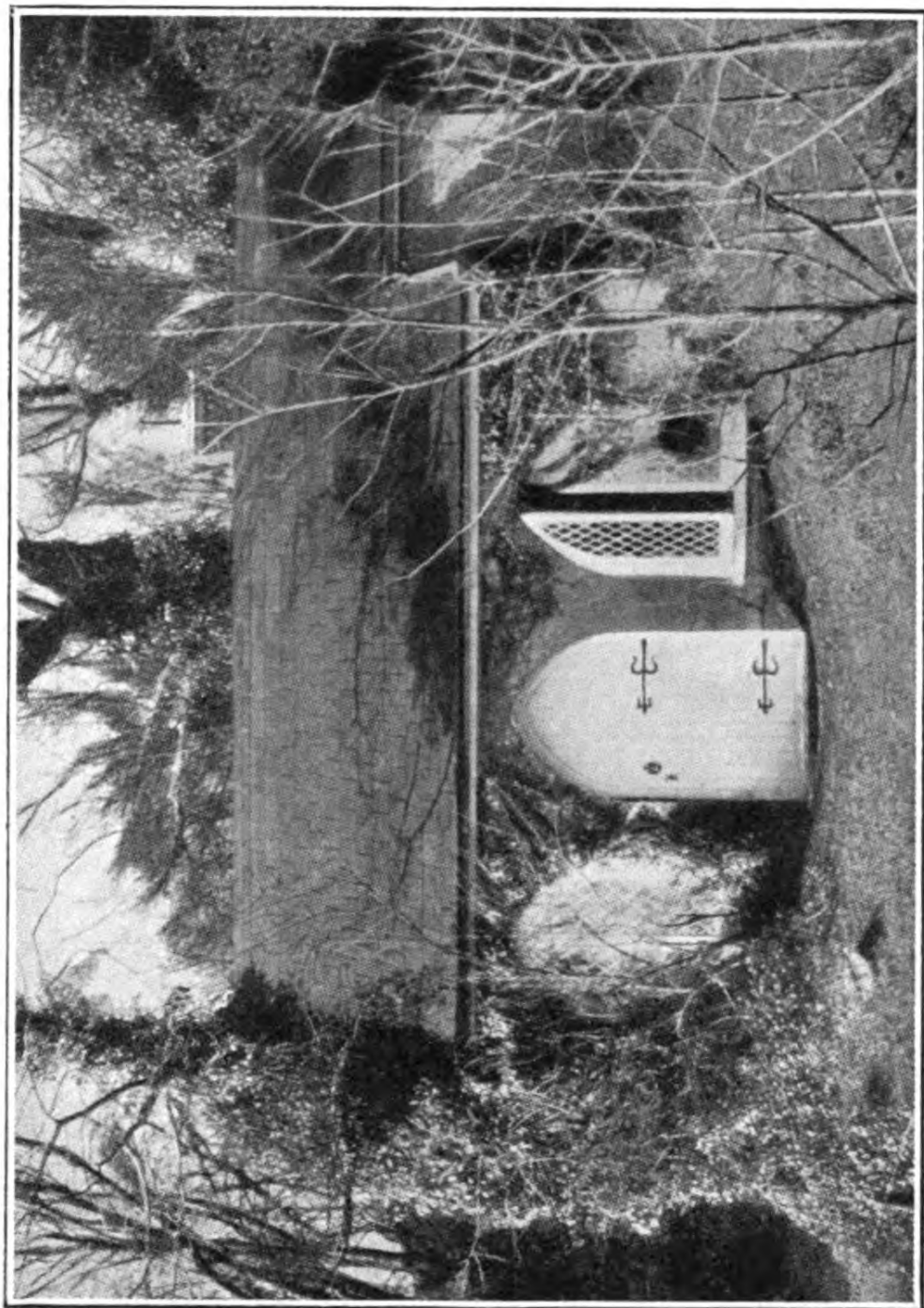
THE LANDSLIP

CHAPTER XI

HOLIDAY time was very close upon us in 1900 before we had been able to settle upon a house for our usual stay in the island. Negotiations which had been pending for some time between Mr. William Sewell, the owner of the Steephill Castle Estate, and the directors of the I.W. Central Railway Company, resulted in the sale of the whole property to Mr. Charles Mortimer. A Parliament Bill had given 'right of way' to the railway company to run their line through a portion of the estate upon compensation being paid for such right, but Mr. Sewell decided to sell outright. Mr. Mortimer was interested in the railway, and by purchasing Steephill was in a position to give favourable terms to the new undertaking. So the line was completed through to Ventnor Town early in 1900. Mr. Mortimer had at first determined to reside in the Castle with his family. He purchased all the furniture and fittings. Having a fine residential estate in Surrey he afterwards concluded to sell or let Steephill. We were offered it 'to let' furnished for three months, August to October, and accepted the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

terms, moving down from London on July 26. We had to supplement the furniture by sending from our town house two pantech-nicon van loads of requisites, but we were soon settled and found the Castle and grounds perfectly delightful in every respect. Steephill, besides being most lavishly and expensively constructed, is one of the most conveniently arranged mansions I have ever had the pleasure of examining. As we were always immediately asked by friends calling or visiting for a few particulars concerning the Castle and grounds, I will here briefly record the usual reply given: 'The grounds of Steephill were laid out in 1762, a thatched cottage residence being built in 1764 by the Hon. Hans Stanley, Life Governor of the Isle of Wight, where he lived for upwards of twenty years. In 1781, the estate was purchased by the Hon. Wilbraham Tollemache, afterwards 5th Earl of Dysart. On his death in 1821 it descended to his sister, Lady Louisa Manners, who in 1828 conveyed to John Hambrough. The Castle was erected by him in 1833, the architect being Mr. James Sanderson, famous for his restoration of the Chapel of King Henry VII at Westminster Abbey.' [It was in this very Chapel of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey that the very interesting and remarkable ceremony was held in July 1913, when the knightly 'Order of the Bath' was once more installed in its ancient and splendid home.]



GOVERNOR HANS STANLEY'S COTTAGE, STEEPHILL.

STEEPHILL CASTLE

The Hambrough family lived here in succession from 1833 to 1887, a period of fifty-four years. We were at some disadvantage in the 'working' arrangements at first owing to the stables and a large part of the kitchen gardens having been cut out of the estate for the convenience of the railway line, a wholly wasteful and unnecessary proceeding, but nevertheless it had taken place. We were obliged to get stabling in the town, and our fruit and vegetables and milk supplies as well of the local dealers, a great contrast to the experience of 1898 at Norris Castle, and 1899 at Old Park. All this disadvantage has long since been made good. The stables at Steephill to-day are equal, if not superior, to any in the island, and the kitchen gardens, conservatories, vineries, &c., are quite perfect in every respect. It is well known that the grounds at Steephill are very remarkably laid out, and contain many unique features of exceptional interest. During our first fortnight in August we gave permission, after getting the consent of the owner, for a military tattoo and illuminated garden party to be held for the benefit of the equipment fund of Princess Beatrice's I.W. Volunteers, Ventnor Detachment—Captain Wm. B. Judd. The attendance was enormous; the grounds were crowded from 3 P.M. up to midnight. It was really a very beautiful scene, and I am glad to say the gate receipts were large. This was our first experience of lending grounds

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

for any public function. We really enjoyed the whole affair.

We got in, during September, two very fine four-in-hand coach drives, organised by Mr. Jackman—one to Freshwater and another to Cowes, filling the coach with our own house-party. On the occasion of our visit to Cowes we were interested in a call we made at Kent Cottage, where Madame Bricka was installed as governess to the young princes, Edward (now Prince of Wales) and his brother, Albert Frederick. Prince Edward wrote his autograph for each lady of our party, a souvenir they were much pleased to possess. At Freshwater we got permission to go over the grounds of Farringford. Lord Tennyson was absent. All the party were delighted with the day's outing, and all came away with a flower or other little emblem to keep as a memento of the visit to Tennyson's island home. Tennis and croquet were the chief diversions of the younger members of our party at Steephill. There never seemed a dull moment or any difficulty to fill in all the time in some satisfactory way. Mrs. Craigie had become a Catholic and was received into the Church of Rome in 1892. She invited to visit us here this summer the Rev. Father Gavin, of the Farm Street Church of the Jesuit Fathers, and the Rev. Father Brown, of Vauxhall Catholic Church (now Monsignor Brown, Vicar-General of Southwark). Dr. Parker was here at the



SHANKLIN CHINE.

LITERATURE AND THE CHURCH

same time. It was delightful to observe how very happily these clerics got on together and how much they enjoyed the exchange of views and little friendly discussions. At this same time Mr. Owen Seaman (now Sir Owen and editor of *Punch*) was another of our guests. The dinner and after-dinner conversation was always highly entertaining, yet one would naturally have said that there could be no congenial topic for four men of such widely different moods and bent of mind. In October the Rev. Newman Hall and Mrs. Hall, whom we had known in London for many years, came for a few days. Mr. Hall, though over eighty-five years of age, was very active and energetic. He had no regular pastorate, having resigned in 1892 from Christ Church, Westminster Bridge, which he had built, but was travelling in England and Scotland, preaching as an evangelist. He had a fine presence and an exceptionally engaging voice and manner, and was as fascinating in table-talk and general conversation as in pulpit or platform oratory. He was greatly beloved in the United States. A stout advocate for the cause of the 'North' in the great Civil War, 1860-65, a war he deeply lamented, he held that the great problem of slavery emancipation could, seemingly, only thus have been solved. Soon after the close of the war and the triumph of the Northern armies he went out to America. He delivered addresses on inter-

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

national brotherhood in most of the great cities of the United States. Collections were made, in accordance with custom, but the whole result—without any deduction for the lecturer or his personal expenses—was paid over to a committee in New York towards erecting an international monument in London, to be called 'Lincoln Tower,' in memory of the martyred President and of his advocacy of emancipation. He raised by these addresses no less a sum than £3500—half the sum required. The other half was contributed by British donors, thus making the tower international. So the Lincoln Tower was duly erected, the foundation stone being laid by H.E. the American Ambassador, General Robert C. Schenck, appropriately on July 4. The base of the tower forms the main entrance to Christ Church. As a visible sign the steeple is decorated by structural stars and stripes in red stone upon white. The front porch has over it a carved representation of an angel holding a scroll with the motto of the Church, 'Christ is all in all.' Christ Church was opened for divine worship on July 4, 1876 (the Centenary of the American Declaration of Independence). Nearly all Americans visiting London are wont to pay a visit to Christ Church and to the Tower, appreciating fully the patriotic and noble spirit which had influenced Newman Hall to secure in London a lasting memorial

A FAVOURITE U.S.A. PREACHER

of Abraham Lincoln, the martyred President of the United States. I must mention one peculiar feature of Christ Church—namely, the fine organ is placed on one side of the chancel. Mr. Hall said he disliked a great organ facing the congregation, so instead of a choir gazing at a congregation—gazing on them as at a concert—in Christ Church the singers are ranged in the chancel, sideways, facing the organist. As preacher, evangelist, lecturer, and author, the Rev. Newman Hall had an extraordinary career of great and lasting influences. It is said that one small booklet written by him has sold to the great number of four million copies and has been translated into forty different languages. Turning to our visitors' book, October 11, 1900, I find that after his signature and that of Mrs. Hall he wrote, 'Come to Jesus'—the title of the little book above referred to. He died at his beautiful residence, Vine House, Hampstead Heath, in February 1902. Mrs. Richards saw him only a few hours before his death. Christ Church stands in Westminster Bridge Road.

Another preacher who came to us with Dr. Parker was the Rev. William Adamson, D.D., a Scotch Presbyterian, and pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Windermere. He was a charming man, and his broad Scotch accent in speaking was most delightful. Dr. Parker, used, however, to check him some-

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

times, saying he 'spoke too rapidly.' At sixty-five years of age even a stalwart Scotsman could hardly revise his method of speech, and Dr. Adamson would only smile. We were all very fond of these clergyman visitors and their presence greatly added to our holiday joy. Mrs. Craigie was at this time much interested in a play she had written for Mr. (now Sir) George Alexander, to be performed at St. James's Theatre, which had been the scene of her first dramatic success in the play 'The Ambassador,' and she had quite a number of theatrical friends down who were to appear in this new play, 'The Wisdom of the Wise.' They were one and all most charming as guests, and we enjoyed their company.

A literary interest connected with Steeplehill is worthy of mention. A well-known novelist, Helen Mathers (Mrs. Henry Reeves) resided here for some time in the early eighties with her sister, the wife of Major Dudley Hambrough. Several of her books have had a very large popular sale, notably, 'Comin' thro' the Rye,' 'Cherry Ripe' and 'Bam Wildfire.' This last-named volume was written at Steeplehill and many of the scenes and descriptions relate to this Castle and grounds. Mrs. Reeves once called upon Mrs. Craigie in London, and among other things said: 'I have sometimes felt a little jealous of your work and popularity, but now that I have met and seen you I am no longer in

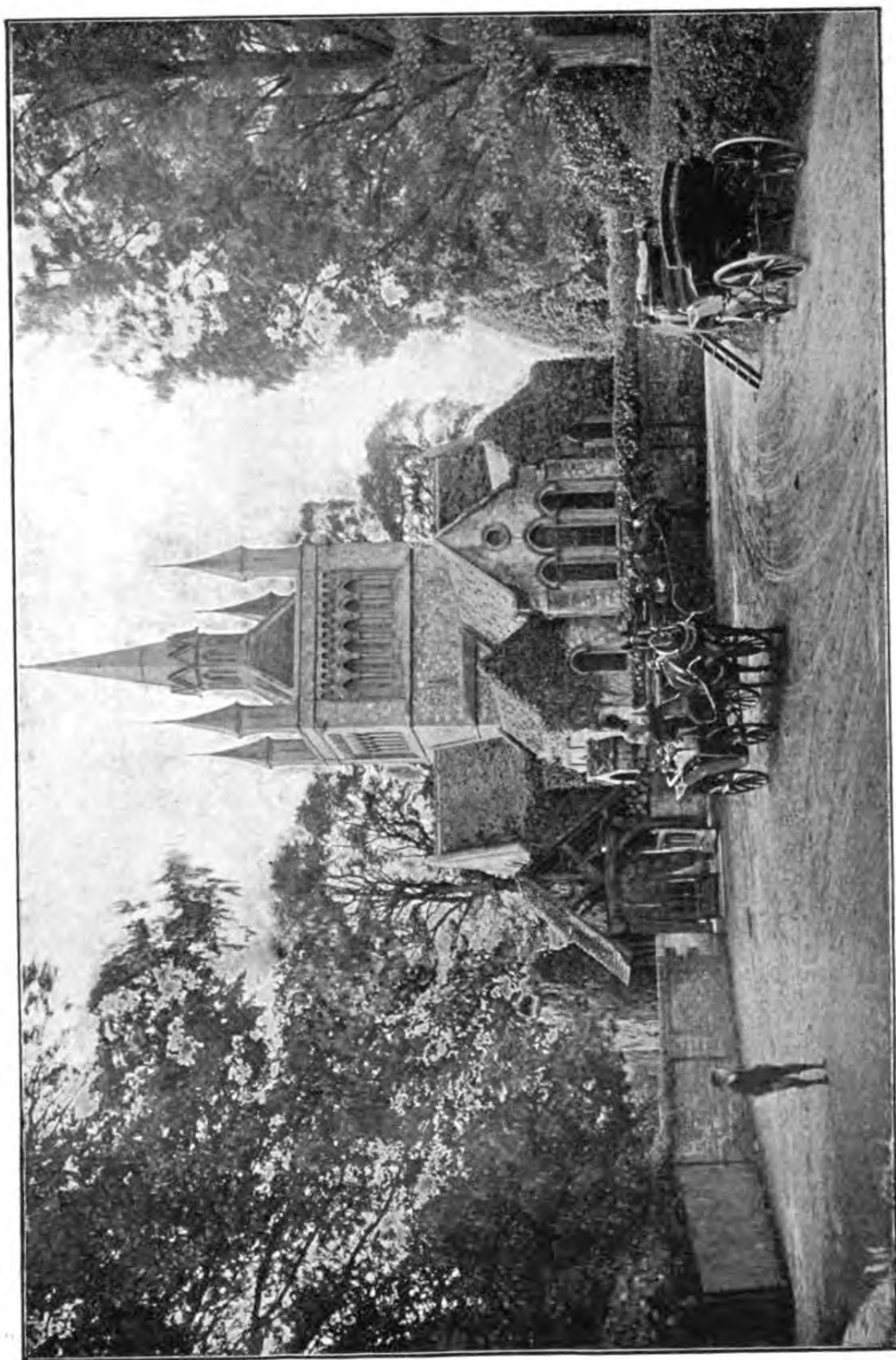
A POPULAR AUTHOR

that frame of mind ; in future I shall join loudly in the applause.' I have met Mrs. Reeves several times since and she has always enjoyed very much any conversation concerning the Isle of Wight and Ventnor and heartily agreed with our estimate of 'Almost Fairyland.'

CHAPTER XII

IN January 1901 an event occurred in the Isle of Wight of great national and world-wide importance—namely, the death of the beloved Queen Victoria, which took place at Osborne House on the 4th of the month, immediately followed by the accession to the throne of His Majesty King Edward VII. With the death of H.M. the Queen, Osborne House, which for so many years had been a favourite royal residence for part of each year, practically ceased to exist as such, and soon after was, together with the entire estate, conveyed to the nation by the King to be occupied in future as the Royal Naval College. It was strongly believed at the time that these changes at Osborne would unfavourably affect the prosperity of Cowes and indeed of the whole island. I am not able to state that this has been the result. The establishment of the Royal Naval College has been a great boon to the naval department, affording ideal conditions for the housing and training of naval cadets.

The year 1901 was also that in which the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York



WHIPPINGHAM CHURCH.

FAMILY RÉUNION

(now King George and Queen Mary) made their interesting voyage round the world. We were fortunate in having sent us a permit to view their ship of state, the *Ophir*, while at Portsmouth, and just a few days before the embarkation. The *Ophir* with her royal and distinguished company put to sea on March 15. The Duke and Duchess, after an absence of eight months, arrived home and made their entry into London on November 2 following, and on this same day the *Gazette* announced that the King had been pleased to create His Royal Highness Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester. It should be stated that this royal tour had been fully decided upon and arranged before the death of Queen Victoria. It must have called for no small sacrifice on the part of the King to add to his solicitude at this trying time, by a separation from his son and the heir apparent to the throne.

We were again able to arrange (1901) with the owner of the Steephill Estate to occupy the premises for the months of August, September, and October. We really were settled in on July 15 and remained till nearly the end of November. Early in August was, of course, the usual Cowes Week, and we had an exceptionally joyful experience. Several members of my family from 'over sea' were with us and we had a number of London friends here also. An old friend, Captain Emerson, of Baltimore, U.S., arrived

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

at Cowes with his magnificent steam yacht, *Margaret Emerson*, having on board his daughter, after whom the yacht was named. This lady is now Mrs. Albert G. Vanderbilt, having married in London about two years ago. They royally entertained several of our family on board during that week, also giving them the privilege of the 'Squadron' Lawn and other pleasing events by sea and land. On August 4 they brought the yacht around to Ventnor and anchored off the pier, coming to Steephill for luncheon, afterwards inviting our entire house party on board the *Margaret Emerson*; we steamed to the Needles and back—a grand day and smooth water giving all of us a most delightful sea trip. We were sorry to leave the yacht and did not do so until the 'anchor was weighed.' We then departed with the 'good-bye' chorus, and remember to this day the truly enchanting afternoon spent in cruising off 'Almost Fairyland' with these charming friends.

Notwithstanding the many attractions of the neighbourhood there never seemed any lack of interest in and about Steephill, and there was very little inclination on the part of guests or family to go farther afield for amusement or diversion. Steephill Cove on the estate afforded excellent facilities for both sea bathing and boating; so with the tennis courts, croquet lawn, and pleasure grounds, everybody seemed content and satisfied. I suppose we entertained each other. It is an

BONCHURCH

interesting fact, however, and one which I am not the first to discover, that people take greater interest in visiting places and shrines associated with literary work than almost any other subject, unless it be a battlefield. I remember once casually mentioning that William Black, the novelist, wrote his popular novel, 'Madcap Violet,' at the Sandrock Hotel, Niton. This meant afternoon tea there the next day. This is as it should be. There are many interesting literary associations in or about Ventnor, as is well known. I have often visited and taken friends to see the old church at Bonchurch (twelfth century) dedicated to St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany. The real interest was the churchyard, and to see the burial place of William Adams, the author of 'The Shadow of the Cross,' and of John Sterling, the intimate associate of Carlyle, whose beautiful biography of his friend is one of the treasures of literature. Charles Dickens lived in Bonchurch for some months in 1849 and wrote a large portion of 'David Copperfield' there. Lord Macaulay resided for some time at Madeira Hall, Bonchurch, and there wrote portions of his 'History of England.' This very beautiful place is now owned and occupied by Mrs. Hougham Bell. The Macaulay room is preserved.

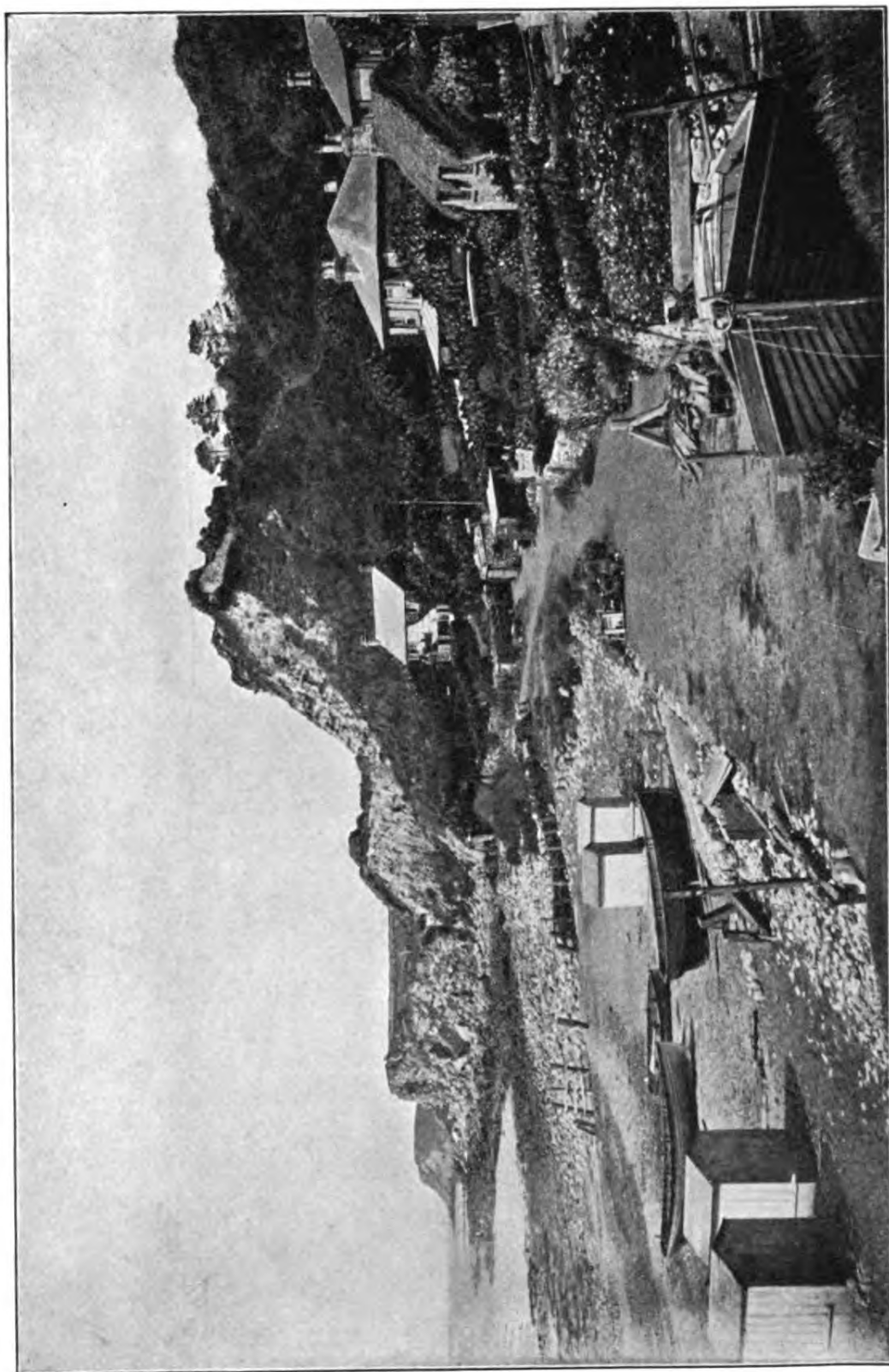
I have been told that Charles Dickens made his home while at Bonchurch at Madeira Cliff, which is the next property to Madeira Hall,

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

on Trinity Road. I have also seen it stated that this residence was the birthplace of 'Great Expectations.' I do not think that this latter statement is correct. In 'Dickens' Life and Letters' we find that he did not again visit the Isle of Wight after 1849, and 'Great Expectations' was written between December 1860 and August 1861. His biography states that 'David Copperfield' (written in 1849-50) would generally be named as the novel in which his power was at its zenith. We are, therefore, quite willing to adopt the fact that the last-named volume was largely work accomplished in the Isle of Wight.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, poet and critic, certainly lived in the early eighties at East Dene, Bonchurch (afterwards the estate of Mr. Snowden Henry, J.P., and now the Convent of the Sacred Heart). Some of his most beautiful compositions were, however, actually written at 'The Orchard,' Niton Bay—a place owned by some of his relatives and at which he was a constant visitor. Mr. Swinburne died in 1911, and the burial took place in the churchyard of St. Boniface, Bonchurch, and many visits are made to view his grave.

Two important and interesting family events occurred this year—the first was the arrival of a grandson in January, the first-born of my second son, Nelson, whose aquatic



STEEPHILL COVE.

FAMILY EVENTS

experience round the island from Norris Castle was described in Chapter X. He was married in November of that year (1899) to Miss Dorothy Bishop, the daughter of Captain Edgar Bishop, our neighbour and friend in Lancaster Gate. The ceremony took place at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, Canon Ridgway (now Bishop of Chichester) officiating. My son, accompanied by his wife, joined our holiday party the following year at Old Park, and were with us this year (1901) at Steephill, together with Master Arnold—his first visit, of course, to 'Almost Fairyland.' The other happy event was the marriage, on October 30, during our Steephill holidays, of our second daughter, Dorothy Christine Richards, to Mr. George William Yelverton Prendergast, H.B.M. Vice-Consul at Scutari, Albania, second son of General Sir Harry Prendergast, G.C.B., V.C., of Heron Court, Richmond, which took place at Holy Trinity, Ventnor. The officiating clergymen were the Rev. A. P. Clayton, Vicar, and the Rev. G. P. Bassett Kerry, Vicar of Ventnor. We gratefully remember the sympathetic local interest in this event. Every effort was made by the townspeople to give due honour to the occasion. From Steephill Castle to the church the route was one mass of decoration—flags, banners, and decorative colour being displayed from almost every window, while every few yards a string of flags crossed the

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street. The castle grounds had the attention of the local coastguards, and while a string of bunting and banners was suspended from tree to tree across the drive, the entrance gate and the inner archway were draped with huge English and American flags. After the ceremony the guests were all entertained to breakfast at Steephill, and the bands of both the Volunteer Artillery and Rifle Volunteers attended and played selections until evening. The newly-married couple left, amid a storm of congratulations and good wishes, for London. The honeymoon was spent at Monte Carlo, Nice, and the Mediterranean, and afterwards they proceeded to Scutari.

Strange to say that almost at the very moment while writing the foregoing notes a wire reached me (July 24, 1913) advising the sudden death at Richmond, Surrey, of General Sir Harry Prendergast—the father-in-law of my daughter, Dorothy. General Prendergast dined with me on the Independence Day anniversary banquet (July 4, 1913) at the Savoy Hotel. He attended the rehearsal at Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey, on Monday, July 21, as he was one of the holders of the Order of the Bath, to whom a stall was allotted for the ceremony on the following day, July 22. He was taken ill the night following the rehearsal and was unable to be present at the ceremony he had rehearsed with many others the previous day. His symptoms did not improve, and his death

A DISTINGUISHED GENERAL

took place on the 24th. General Prendergast had a most distinguished and notable career, and was well known, both as soldier and civilian. His last visit to Ventnor was in October 1912. 'Soldier rest, thy warfare o'er.'

CHAPTER XIII

MR. CHARLES MORTIMER desired to sell the Steephill Estate, consequently our tenancy for the summer of 1902 was subject to certain conditions in event of a purchaser coming along desiring immediate possession. We were not disturbed, I am glad to say, and were able to fully enjoy and appreciate a renewal of the arrangements that had so entirely pleased us for the two preceding summers. My personal holiday was broken in upon for five weeks (from September 1) as I had to go out to America. I had not been across for some five years. I had a most instructive and interesting visit, noting the extraordinary and improved changes that had taken place in almost every department of building and street organisation. This was as noticeable in Boston, Philadelphia and the West as in New York. The comforts of the ocean voyage had also been enormously improved, making the six or seven days at sea a perfect delight. I am often asked by English friends as to the most favourable time to visit the United States. Undoubtedly between September 10 and November 30.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE U.S.A.

The climate during this period is very bright and invigorating, beginning with a temperature of about 60 to 65 degrees and gradually dropping in November to 25 or 30 degrees above zero; very little rain. The autumn tints that tinge the foliage have never failed to capture the most enthusiastic admiration of all visitors to the States. It is always convenient to make headquarters at New York and to take the eastern and western towns from there. Travelling facilities and routes have had the careful attention of 'travel organisers' that cannot be improved. I will only name two places which should never be omitted to be visited by British tourists, but often are—namely, Washington (the national capital) and Niagara Falls, either of which are worth crossing the ocean to visit if nothing else were possible other than the port of arrival and departure, the greatest city in the Union—New York. People who do not entirely understand American methods often adversely criticise what they term the casual and seemingly indifferent attitude of all public servants, such as railway, hotel, shop assistants, &c. There is certainly a complete absence of the British 'Thanks' and respectful address, but rudeness is not really intended. It is the custom of the country. They seem to assume you know they thank you and that they are willing to serve and to do your bidding, and do not always expect you to

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

say 'Please,' though most people do say it. I confess that I do not like this American habit, but it cannot be cured, and may as well be endured as a necessary experience. It would be a rare occasion that a person could say he was not really well and promptly served or failed to get what was wanted. It is the casual manner that causes annoyance and surprise, so contrary to all British or even Continental usage. It is well to remark that the feature of the 'casual manner' is very apt to be adopted by foreigners who come by the thousand to the U.S., who instead of adhering to their natural and proper training of outward respect do not by example and precept attempt the needed reformation of their fellow-workers in America. A good many years ago an American friend said to me the very day of his arrival in London: 'I notice newsboys comb their hair and wear shoes, and also that 'bus conductors wear top hats and say "Thank you" on collecting your fare.'

Having been asked if I thought there was really a decline in the popularity of Ventnor—say for the period covered by the last ten or twelve years—I have taken the list of residents and householders published in the *Isle of Wight Advertiser* issued in 1901 and the same from an issue of 1913. I find that the number of houses occupied by residents in Ventnor in 1901 stands at 190, and in Bonchurch at 42. In 1913 the figures



STEPS TO THE KEEP, CARISBROOKE CASTLE.

THE LURE OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

show 255 in Ventnor and 37 in Bonchurch. Lodging-houses stand in 1913 practically as in 1901. Whether this means anything definite as to 'decline or fall' I hardly know, but I do know that of late years there has been not only a considerable but really a large and noticeable increase in the arrivals from Germany. These tourists stay from two to three weeks and are good patrons of the local hotels and of all the pleasure 'outings' that the town can offer by sea and land. They are very desirable patrons of 'Almost Fairyland' and are most heartily welcome.

In confirmation of this opinion regarding the advent of German visitors in excess of either English or American visitors, I may quote from an article which has recently appeared in a London newspaper from the able pen of Mr. H. Hamilton Fyfe concerning Germans in the Isle of Wight, and in which is given the following reason for their selection of this English seaside resort :

The Germans are drawn to the Isle of Wight by the same attractions which have made the Italian Riviera such a favourite German holiday-ground. There is here all the velvety enchantment, all the luxuriance, all the beauty of the Ligurian coast. The people have soft voices. The country has soft curves. After the harshness of the Prussian climate, after the sandy wastes which surround Berlin, this wooing atmosphere, these gently rolling downs, these flowery meadows, these woods washed almost by the murmuring sea, fill the Teutonic soul with content. The German, as Mr. Price Collier brilliantly contends in his latest book, is an idealist, a creature of sentiment. His nature is to dream. It is only by forcing himself against his temperament that he becomes a 'hustler.' Therefore he enjoys the mildness which some Englishmen say is enervating.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

I hope Mr. Hamilton Fyfe will make frequent visits to 'Almost Fairyland.' No author or journalist in this country is more competent to estimate and describe seaside and countryside environments, and grasp the points of advantage and importance.

Owing to my journey out to America we arranged to remain rather later than usual at Steepphill. We had a very pleasant summer and autumn, with many friends visiting us from time to time. On August 10 we had the very pleasing news from Scutari, Albania, of the birth at the British Consulate of a son, Jeffery Prendergast, to our son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. George Prendergast. My son Nelson's second son, James, was born here on September 25. We now had a little group of four grandsons. In October Mrs. Craigie finished her tenth novel, 'Love and the Soul Hunters,' and passed the MS. on to her publishers in London and New York. She was now free from work for the time being and able to accept an invitation to witness the Indian Durbar and pay a visit to India as the guest of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, with whose wife, the late Lady Curzon, she was on terms of intimate friendship. Before the sailing date she had the pleasure of knowing that the play, 'The Bishop's Move,' which she had written in conjunction with Mr. Murray Carson, had been produced at the Garrick Theatre and was an entire success. Just as she was

‘IMPERIAL INDIA’

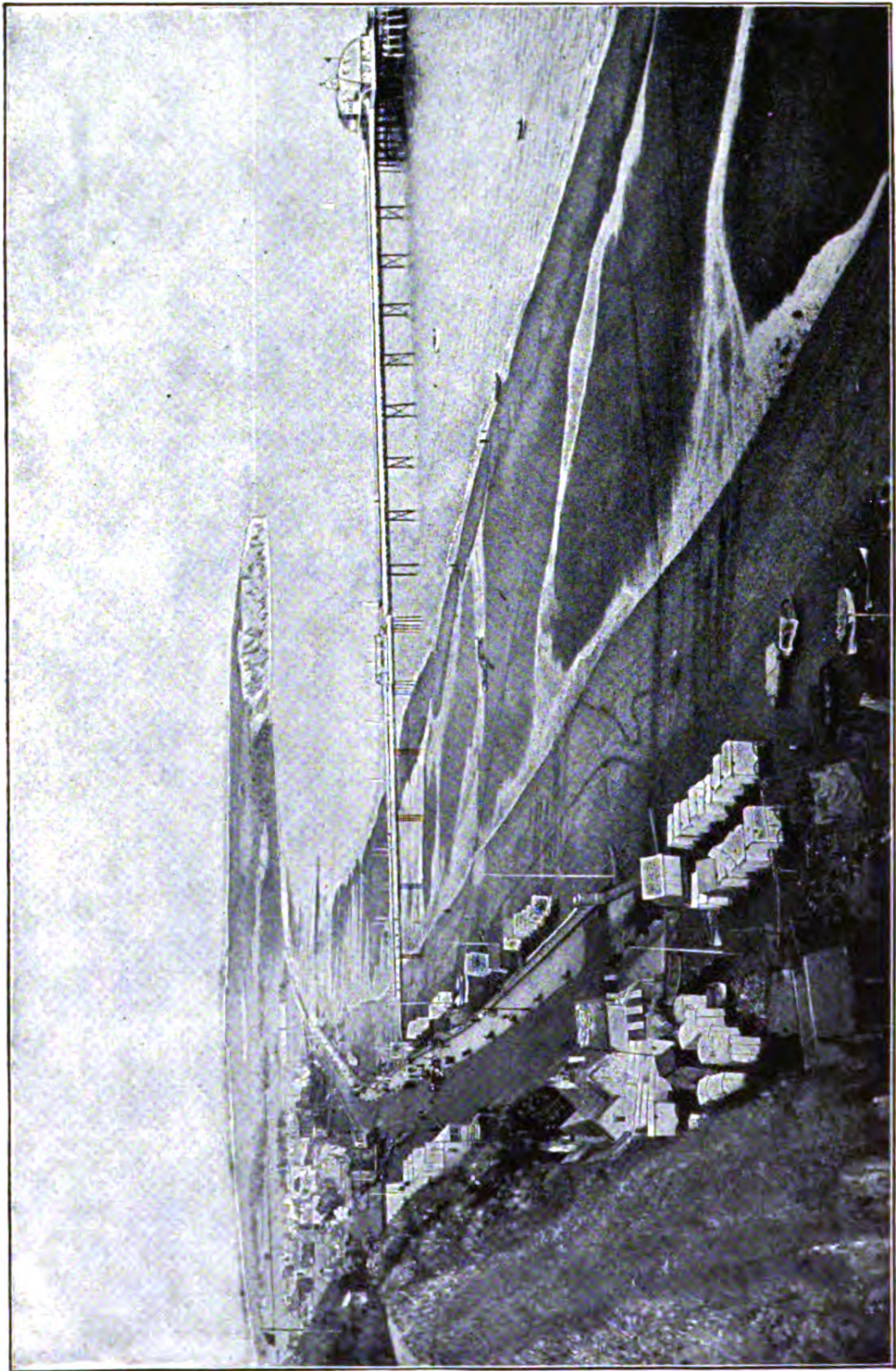
leaving for Marseilles, *en route* for India, she told me she had signed an agreement to report the Durbar and her impressions of India for joint publication by *Collier's Weekly* in New York and the London *Daily Graphic*. It was like her to do this. Her energy and natural industry would not allow her to take the much-needed holiday free from care and responsibility, so she had this important task to deal with as well as to fulfil the social engagements the visit involved. However, she accomplished it all and, after an absence of nearly four months, arrived home in good health. Her letters to the journals above referred to were collected and published in 1903, under the title of ‘Imperial India.’

There is no shooting worth mentioning on the Steephill Estate, so to my regret I have never been able to do any shooting here myself or to have any shooting parties, but a very old friend, now deceased (Mr. Alf. Cooke, of Weetwood Hall, Leeds), who had a magnificent shoot of upwards of 2000 acres at Scoreby, near York, had been in the habit for a series of years of including me in his party for partridge shooting in September and pheasants in October—sport which I very much enjoyed, and I was enabled to get at least four ‘outings’ of this very agreeable sort year by year until 1902. At one time at Steephill the shooting was very fine indeed, but this was many years ago

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and before some hundreds of acres of land had been sold from the original estate. The present acreage, which is ample for pleasure grounds and pasturage and which is finely wooded, is not sufficient to preserve game. The gardeners manage to secure a rabbit or two now and again ! I may mention, however, that there are many excellent shooting preserves in 'Almost Fairyland.' Among them may be named on the estate of Sir Charles Seely, Bart., Brooke House, between Ventnor and Freshwater ; also Alverstone, near Sandown, on the property of Lord Alverstone (late Lord Chief Justice of England), the 'bags,' both partridges and pheasants, for many days during the shooting season being enormous. As to hunting, the Isle of Wight has a very favourable record indeed. A hunt of a high character has been maintained for many years. The late Empress of Austria came to Steephill for one hunting season and expressed herself delighted with her experience. The hunt is now under the mastership of Colonel Howard-Brooke, J.P., and is well supported by local lovers of this fascinating sport.

Horse racing has a place in 'Almost Fairyland,' and an excellent course is established at Asheys Heath and is said to be one of the best. The late William Mew Judd, a keen sportsman, was the founder of this race-course. Two meetings were formerly held yearly at Rew—spring and autumn—one



SANDOWN AND CULVER CLIFF.

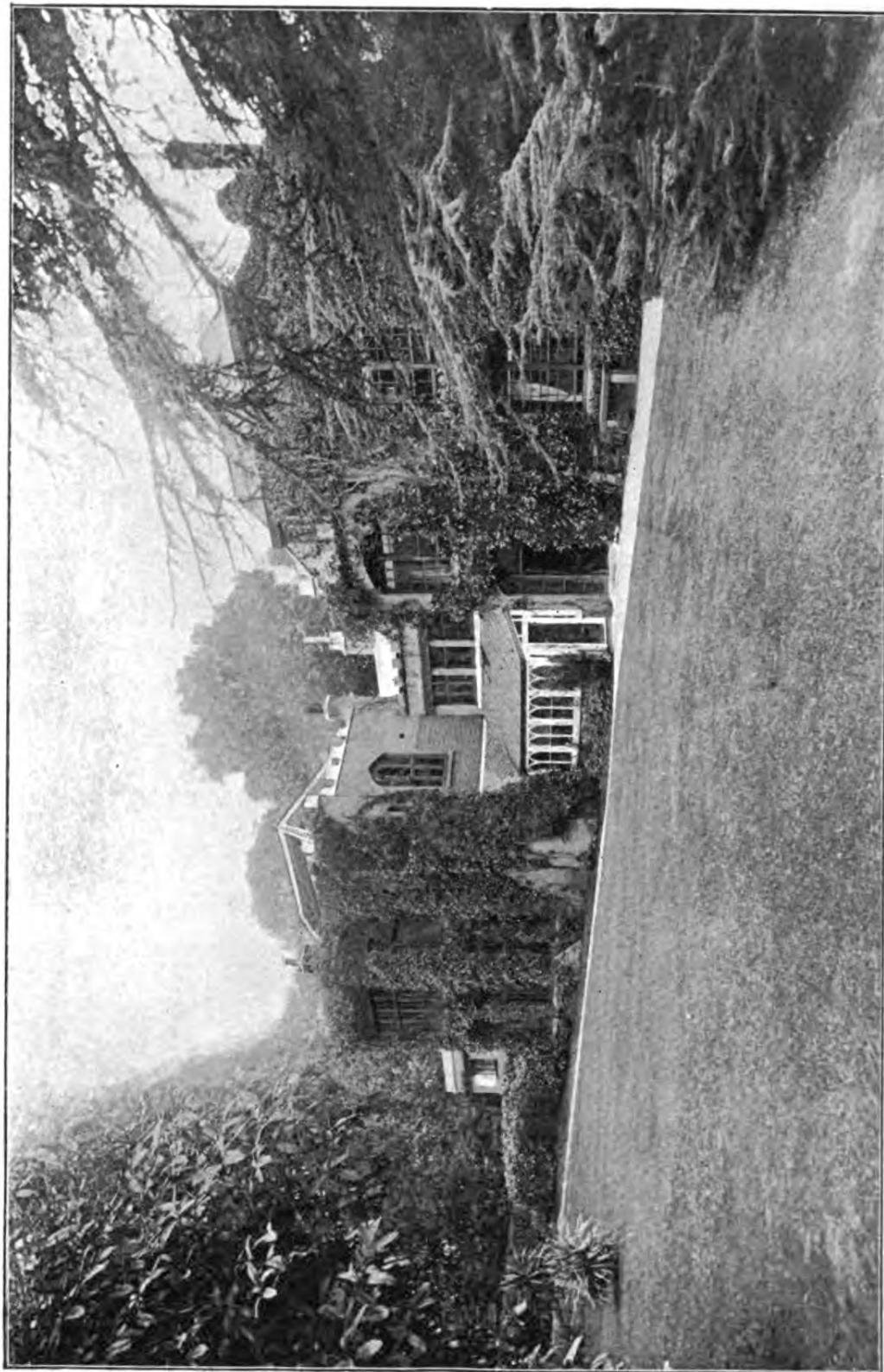
HUNTING—RACING—GOLF

for steeplechasing on the downs, and one in the valley for hurdle and flat racing. I must admit that I have never 'taken up' either hunting or racing and am not an authority on the subject.

I am delighted to read in the *Isle of Wight Advertiser* (August 2, 1913) a note by 'A Peripatetic Penman' that a sound rumour is in circulation of a prospect of an 18-hole up-to-date golf course being shortly laid out in Ventnor within easy reach by the new Road Car service. This is indeed welcome news.

CHAPTER XIV

CONTINUING my notes in reference to literary work and authors whose names are associated with 'Almost Fairyland,' I am sure it will be instantly conceded that Alfred, 1st Lord Tennyson, was the most distinguished writer of poetic literature the Isle of Wight has ever known; indeed, it has been said that no poet has ever held all England quite so long in unbroken sway as did Tennyson. The popularity of his writings encircles the entire world. Removing to Freshwater in 1853, when in his forty-fourth year, he first leased Farringford and afterwards bought it, and in subsequent years developed it into the beautiful place it afterwards became and now is. It is said that the charms of Farringford entered into his life and coloured it with its delicate enchantment. 'The Charge of the Light Brigade,' published in 1854, was written at Farringford, and nearly all his subsequent work was wholly or in part written in his island home. 'Akbar's Dream' was the last work finished and completed in 1892, the year of his death, and at the great age of 84. His residence in



FARRINGTON, FRESHWATER, LORD TENNYSON'S RESIDENCE.

‘A SEA OF RAINBOW TINTS’

‘Almost Fairyland’ for some thirty-eight years loudly proclaims his love for it. Farringford is now owned and occupied by Hallam, 2nd Lord Tennyson, and while he has a London residence and another country estate (Adlworth, near Haslemere in Surrey) a good part of each year is spent at Freshwater. Tennyson’s Monument, erected on the top of Freshwater Downs, is a permanent memorial of the great poet and links his name for ever with the Isle of Wight.

William Dean Howells, one of the most eminent of modern American novelists and authors, after a visit here, in a charming article in *Harper’s Magazine*, entitled ‘By way of Southampton to London,’ pays a tribute to ‘Almost Fairyland,’ and thus speaks of Ventnor :

The lovely little town, which is like an English water-colour for the rich soft blur of its grays, and blues, and greens, has a sea at its feet of an almost Bermudian variety of rainbow tints and a milky horizon all its own, with the sails of fishing boats drowning in it, like moths that had got into the milk.

The streets rise in amphitheatrical terraces from the shore, and where they cease to have the liveliness of watering-place shops they have domesticity of residential hotel and summer lodging houses and private villas, set in depths of myrtle and oleander and laurel ; some of the better looking houses were thatched, perhaps to satisfy a sentiment for rusticity.

On September 9, 1903, I entered into an agreement with Mr. Charles Mortimer for the purchase of Steephill Castle and estate, also to take over the whole of the furniture and fittings. My entire family favoured this purchase. Our tenancy of Steephill for several

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months for three consecutive years was sufficient experience to justify our desire to make the place our permanent country home. We knew all there was to know about it and possessed such accurate knowledge of the locality that we had no inquiries to make of anyone. So we gladly took possession at once. Writing now, after ten years' residence, we have only to be thankful we could buy the property. We thought well of it at the beginning, and this opinion has been enlarged and strengthened every day since. The purchase of a country property by those who have spent their whole lives in great cities and towns is a problem for very careful consideration. No man acts wisely in making such an investment unless he is well assured that his family, from youngest to eldest, really like and care for the country home. Happily, as already stated, my family were unanimous in reference to this choice. Before committing myself to an actual agreement to purchase several of us visited quite twenty properties in the home counties. We never wavered for a moment when a comparison was made. We kept on with our house in London, but we were able to spend considerable time at Steephill other than for the summer months and came down to the island as often as we possibly could, finding both winter and spring had here such charm and advantage that we all preferred to escape from London.

Having purchased the property, we all

RESTORATIONS AT STEEPHILL

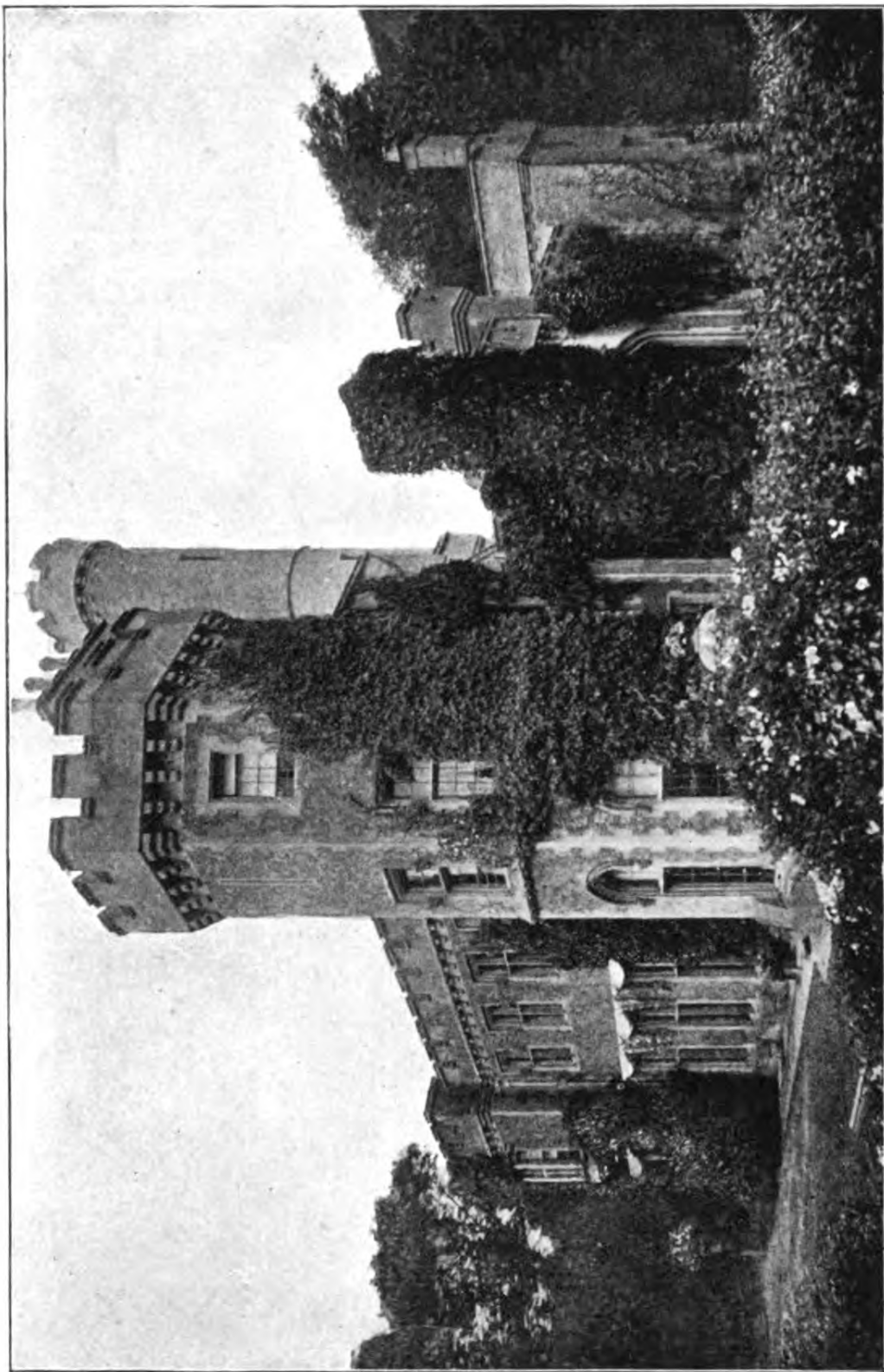
naturally took a lively interest in certain plans to 'make good' all deficiencies in the amenities of the estate. It was necessary to build stables, lay out a large kitchen garden, erect vineries, and restore the 'Governor's Cottage,' besides numerous small but important dilapidations. We also added to our equipment a large bathing house at Steephill Cove. With the help and professional advice of Major Theodore R. Saunders, F.S.A., all these items were immediately put in hand. The stables, which are considered exceptionally fine, were designed by him and erected under his supervision by Mr. Albert Sims, builder, of Ventnor, a most conscientious and honest man, loyally fulfilling every detail of his contract. The foundations were laid during November and in the following August (1904) the stables were sufficiently completed to be of service and entirely finished in October, and I had the pleasure of giving, at Messrs. Booth's excellent establishment, a supper to Mr. Albert Sims and 'his merry men' just before Christmas. All the further restorations and general repairs at the Castle and in the grounds were promptly carried out by Messrs. J. R. Webber & Son, and as in the case of Mr. Albert Sims, I am able to say that I had never to criticise unfavourably anything undertaken by these upright and straightforward builders, their charges were always just and the work promptly done. A distinguished journalist visiting here after

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the completion recently wrote for the *Lady's Pictorial* a description of Steephill which is quite comprehensive and explains its attractions and points of interest. Many things are told which I have thus far omitted to state, and are given much more clearly and better than I can do it. I therefore quote some extracts from this journal, in the belief that it may be of some interest to my readers, who may not have visited the grounds or be familiar with the plan of the interior of the Castle :

On several occasions Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited the Castle to enjoy the views, choosing the South and West terraces as their favourite walks, the former now being known as Queen Victoria's Promenade. The grounds were visited and greatly admired by King Edward and Queen Alexandra, then Prince and Princess of Wales. In 1874 the Castle was occupied during the autumn by the late Empress Elizabeth of Austria and her suite. Her Majesty used as her bedroom the smaller of the two drawing-rooms, known as the Empress's Room. She spent almost all her days in the grounds, enjoying the lovely views. A shrub known as 'Christ's Thorn,' which was brought from the East and traditionally declared to have descended from that used by the Roman soldiers to make the crown of thorns for the Founder of Christianity, held a great fascination for the Empress. She would speak to her maids of honour of the pain such a crown must have caused. Little then did Her Majesty imagine that she would die at the hands of a barbarous assassin ! A volume of the *Illustrated London News* for 1842 gives Steephill Castle as the winter residence of the Queen Dowager, who was Adelaide, widowed Queen of William IV.

So much for some of its associations : the beauties are so pronounced and so numerous that no description can be adequate. It is some years since I have seen them, but their memory is green and very pleasant. The walks within the grounds extend to over three miles. There are beautiful lawns, rare specimen shrubs which grow freely and luxuriantly, white and scarlet bloom chestnut trees, cedars of Lebanon, camellias, magnolias, and myrtles. Part of the



STEEP HILL CASTLE, VENTNOR.

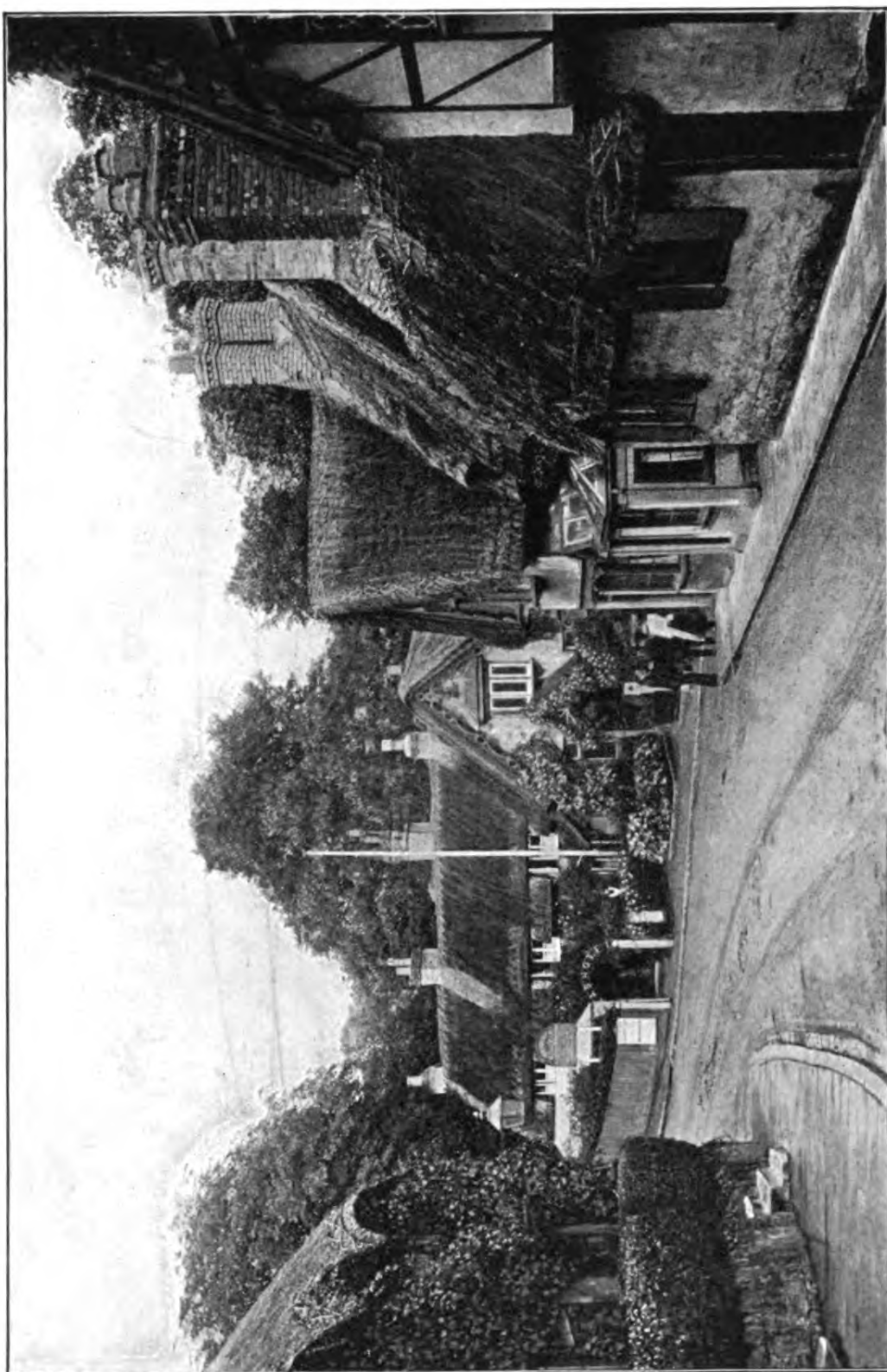
STEEPHILL CASTLE

grounds are wild, and a fine effect is secured in one by a freak of the strata of the cliff projecting horizontally and known as the Devil's Bridge. Ravens build in the cliffs, and the falcon hawk, the only proper species for hawking, is frequently seen. Near the Castle, to the north, is a double-gabled stone cottage, built by the Hon. Hans Stanley, when Governor of the Isle of Wight, in 1764. The view is particularly fine and he was wont to retire there for quiet meditation. The Castle has a vestibule, which has a richly grained ceiling with carved bosses and Gothic folding doors; these lead to a corridor through a screen of carved oak filled with figures, and on to the hall, which is all in oak, some richly carved. At the right is the billiard room, with a ribbed oak ceiling and faced by a large stained-glass window. To the left are the library and study. The dining room is finely proportioned and has a black marble chimney-piece and a polished pine ceiling. The drawing-rooms run the whole width of the west front, making one very spacious and noble, or two large, apartments. Both ceilings are in panelled oak. On the first floor are bedroom suites for guests, and when the party overflows the excellent accommodation of the Castle there are four bachelors' bedrooms in a pretty villa near it. There is a large conservatory, kitchen garden, flower garden, vineries and glass houses for special fruits, and in the grounds is a spacious swimming bath, constructed under the terrace.

In 1904 we got away from London for the summer during July. My brother, James Richards, from New York, who had been travelling in Italy, Spain, and France since July, arrived at Steephill, making his first visit to England since 1896. He had arranged for a lengthened holiday and was happily able to remain with us for nearly a year. On January 4, 1905, for the benefit of the Ventnor Cricket Club (Dr. Victor Blake was captain at that time), my brother gave a most interesting and highly appreciated lantern lecture in our drawing-room, having for his subject 'New York City.' There was a large attendance and the funds of the Cricket Club

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benefited to the extent of £15. During his visit he presided at various local meetings and lectures, entering fully into the life of the town and its interests, and was greatly liked by everybody. As I am often asked as to his welfare, I am glad to say that he is in excellent health and continuing his practice of law in New York. He was married in New York shortly after his return from England. We spent our first Christmas at Steephill in 1904, and had with us for the festive season our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Brent Good, of New York. Throughout the year we had many visitors and friends, both English and American. The year 1905 was quite eventful; we certainly spent more time at Steephill than ever before. On October 2 we gave an informal reception to a large company of representatives of the London and provincial Press, who had been visiting the island, partly for pleasure and partly to write up the locality in the interests of a financial company. A large banquet was given on the evening of October 1 at the Royal Hotel at which I was asked to preside and did so; a very interesting evening and we greatly enjoyed the reception here the next day. On October 16 Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., came for a few days, during which time the news was received of the death of Sir Henry Irving, the most distinguished and prominent English actor at the close of the Victorian era, and I remember that Mr. O'Connor,



SHANKLIN OLD VILLAGE.

A FATAL ACCIDENT

who always carried with him a small portable typewriting machine, at which he was an expert operator, sat up nearly all night writing for *T.P.'s Weekly* a biographical notice concerning the great actor. On the very same day we had most regretfully to hear by cable of the death of Senator the Hon. George T. Fulford of Canada. Senator Fulford had been associated with my firm in London in important business transactions since 1893, and had with his family spent Easter this very year (1905) with us at Steephill. He was the victim of a very sad motor-car accident, having been killed while touring for pleasure with his wife and daughter near Boston, Mass. His sudden and unexpected death was a great shock and caused us all great distress as we were all much attached to him and regarded him as among our most valued friends. His death made it necessary for me to go out to New York and to Canada as soon as I could arrange to do so. At this time I had just finished my book entitled 'With John Bull and Jonathan: Sixty Years of an American's Life in America and Great Britain.' The book was being printed at Edinburgh, N.B., and I got my daughter Pearl (Mrs. Craigie) to go with me to Scotland, and in twelve hours, with her assistance, the whole of the proofs were passed for press. I was then free from any urgent private engagements and arranged to leave for New York at once. Mrs. Craigie

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had signed an agreement to deliver lectures in the U.S., to begin at the end of November, so I was quite unexpectedly able to accompany her across the ocean. Miss Blanche Eliot, one of her most intimate friends, was able to join us and remain with her during her tour. My brother James also crossed with us on his return to America. We left Liverpool early in November on the Cunard s.s. *Campania*, a voyage of seven days finding us in New York. After seeing my daughter and Miss Eliot comfortably put up at the Hôtel Netherlands I had to proceed at once to Canada on business connected with the Fulford Estate. I was promptly able to accomplish what was necessary and, after a week in New York and Boston to visit my relations and friends, I sailed for Liverpool, arriving home at Steephill eight days later. Mrs. Craigie soon began her American lecture tour and fulfilled as far as possible her engagements with the public, which involved visiting many of the principal cities. The work was very severe, but was continued until February 1906, when she left New York, arriving home again safe and well, to our great relief and delight.

CHAPTER XV

WHEN a town-bred man becomes responsible for the proper management of pleasure-grounds, gardens, vineries, and for horticulture in general, even upon a small scale, he must make up his mind to surrender the direction of affairs to his gardener. 'Every man his own gardener' will not develop satisfactory results any better than in the instance of 'Every man his own lawyer,' or 'doctor.' A little knowledge is *not*, however, a *dangerous thing*, but may be a useful asset. In my case, when this responsibility had to be assumed, I unhesitatingly surrendered, and for a really practical, well trained, working gardener I have the greatest respect. I *did* have just a *little knowledge*, and I will explain the limits.

When a lad of eleven my grandfather placed me on a farm in New York State which was owned and managed by a very practical working farmer, a man of good old Puritan stock, and a firm believer in the adage that—

He who by the plough would thrive
Must either hold himself or drive.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

I was received in the family as one of its own members; great interest was taken to teach and show me the working side of farm life. I remained with these kind friends some two years, and there acquired all the working knowledge of horticulture, gardening, and agriculture (which, of course, could not be very serious at that age) that I have ever possessed, for immediately after the two years I went to New York City, beginning a commercial career in a merchant's office, and never had aught to do with farming or gardening from that day until the purchase of the Steephill Estate—an interval of sixty years; and I write these slight particulars to explain that the early lessons I received from my farmer friends in New York State had not been forgotten, and that I was able to fairly well understand and appreciate plans submitted to me by my gardener here in reference to selection of seeds and vegetables to be grown, and other details concerning not only the kitchen garden, but the care of the floral department, vines and fruits, and the hay crop. My former tutor in New York State had several weather 'outlooks,' which I always have remembered, and have proved to be quite as accurate in England as they were in the American climate. Here are his forecasts. (He never owned or consulted a barometer.) 'If the sun rises clear and soon disappears behind a cloud, it means rain before close of the day.' 'If the sun sets in

WEATHER LORE

a cloud, rain almost certain the next day.' 'If a rain-storm comes along and the fowls run for shelter, it will be but a shower. If they remain out in the rain, it will not cease raining for some hours.' 'If the sheep collect close together or run about in groups instead of feeding scattered through the field, expect rain shortly. But if the cattle keep together in groups or lying down in the field, no fear of rain.' In 'Almost Fairyland' we have found that the 'Gibbs' weather gauge is fairly dependable. Mr. Gibbs always kept in the hall at Rock Cottage a long strip of seaweed. If the weather was to be fine, the seaweed would be dry and firm. If it became damp and limp, rain was near. I employ the Gibbs' system at Steephill, and consult it more often than I do the barometer. Used in connection with my early farming forecasts I am not often caught in the rain without an umbrella. My American farmer in the hay- and harvest-field never consulted his watch to ascertain the time, but would turn his back to the sun in order to cast a shadow, and would tell the time to within a quarter of an hour by the length of the shadow, a result his practical eye could determine.

I also learned a great deal about taking care of horses and the amount of feed required, and was also taught to harness a horse and both to ride and drive. I was taught to milk a cow, and really did upon one occasion milk one of the cows we purchased here in

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1905. In order to stimulate an interest in my work he would allot me one row of Indian corn the whole length of the field, which I was always to weed and care for until gathered. When the farm crop was sold the value of my row was given me as a prize. He also allotted me a lamb from the sheepfold each year, which I was to watch and look after, and when market time came I was given as a prize the value of the lamb I reared. These prizes doubtless caused me to keep a more watchful eye on the cornfield and the sheep-run. These juvenile farming experiences I have always considered of very great value to me, my general health as a growing boy was strengthened, and the discipline as to plain, wholesome food, and the very uneventful and unexciting daily routine were certainly good training. But that I should ever have the opportunity to revive these early lessons in any practical way in the direction of gardening on land of my own never entered my mind, but it came to pass even at this very late day that I could do so, and it has added considerably to my interest and pleasure.

To give one illustration of my gardening knowledge, I had received from an American friend the first year of my possession at Steep-hill a package of American seed corn (called in U.S. Indian corn). He remarked that he hoped I had retained a remembrance of the delight of 'green corn' as a summer vegetable,

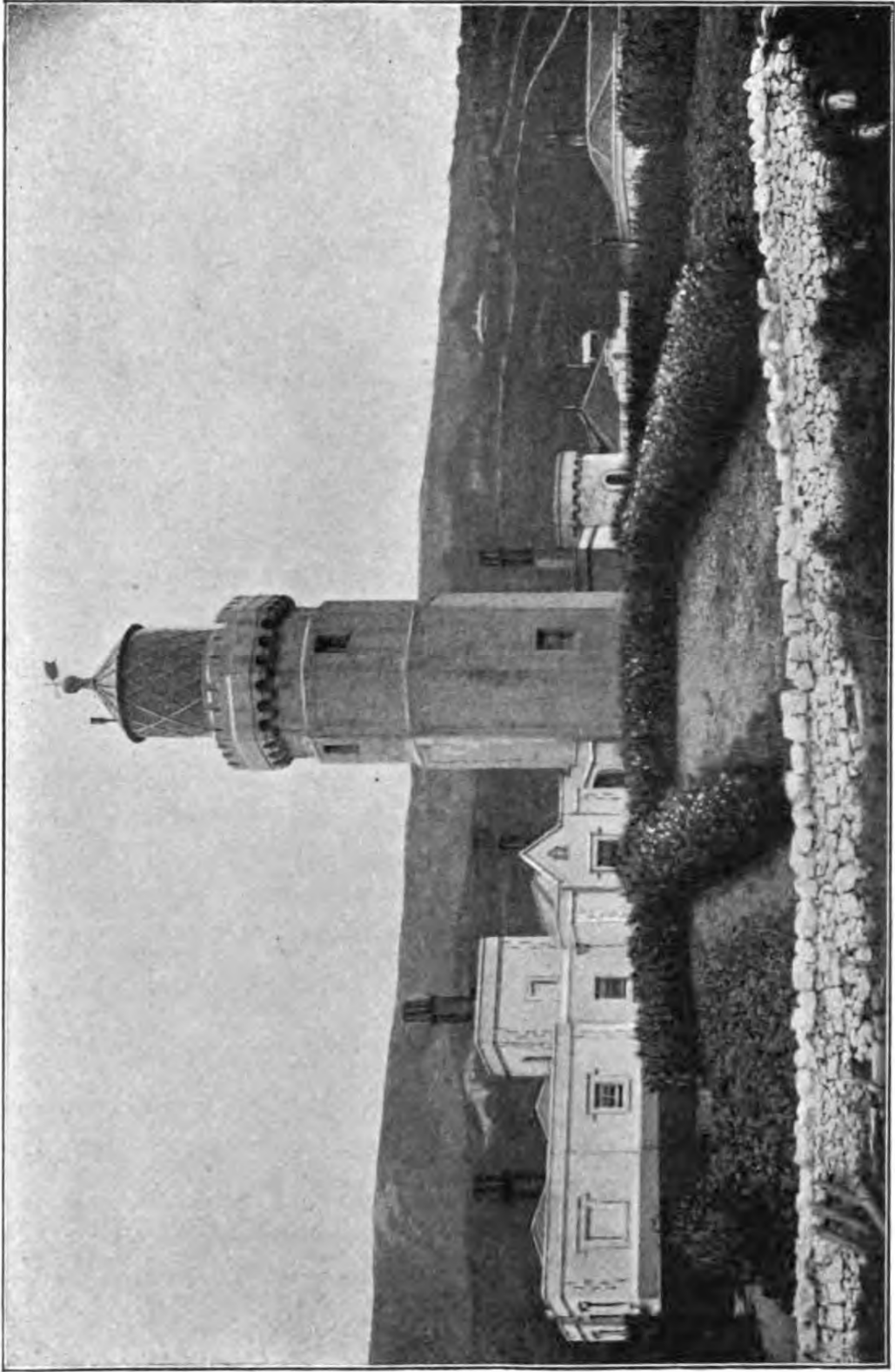
'GREEN CORN' EXPERIMENTS

and as he had never been able to have any corn in this country except 'canned goods,' he hoped, now that I had a garden, I would plant and grow a few 'ears' so that on his forthcoming visit he might have a green corn festival with me and 'renew our youth.' I handed the seed corn to my gardener, asking him to select the most sunny and warm spot in our gardens and to plant the golden kernels and see what we could produce. He expressed doubt as to a successful result, saying he had never seen anything of the kind growing in England. 'Never mind,' I said, 'plant it, anyhow.' This was in April, the correct season. He returned to me shortly, explaining that there were no directions on the package of seed, but he presumed it must be planted in drills the same as peas. Here it was that my little knowledge could be put to use. I instantly remembered that I had been taught to plant corn in hills, the same as potatoes, and to put five or six seeds in each hill, the hills to be about fourteen inches apart. So we started our miniature cornfield, and after much care and cultivation about the middle of September the 'Green Corn Festival' was possible, but our friend was not in the country to share it with me. Green corn boiled *on* the 'cob' and eaten *from* the 'cob' is the *primitive*, and at the same time the ideal method, though not perhaps a dainty performance. We really did renew our corn

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taste and settled that henceforth corn would be a constant adjunct to our garden produce. Alas! the next year and the next the crop failed. There was not a sufficient number of really warm days in 1906 and 1907 to mature it. This year (1913) we have hit upon a plan which we believe will succeed. We planted the seeds under glass in April and got a good start, and transplanted when the stalks were about six inches high; there is now every prospect of triumph even should we have a cool September. In any case 'American Green Corn' can now be bought in Covent Garden Market freshly imported from the U.S., so that all lovers of the 'real thing' may have all they wish. My ambition, however, is to raise our own corn.

In connection with my own cheerful and happy experience as an American taking up country-side life and estate responsibility in England after a fairly long career in commercial affairs, I have the privilege to mention that my most intimate and lifelong friend and business associate in both New York and London, Mr. William P. Ward, after more than fifty years of activity, including years of foreign travel, decided over twelve months ago that he would follow my example and take up a country property. He proceeded, after anxious and careful selection, to locate himself and wife in a very beautiful place in Surrey. (We wish they had settled upon 'Almost Fairyland.'



ST. CATHERINE'S LIGHTHOUSE.

‘FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD’

They know and love the place well and have often been our most welcome guests. I think they felt as it was a new experience that they ought to be within a moderate motor drive of London, and proximity to up-to-date golf links was indispensable.) Some of his friends said ‘Impossible,’ that he would be bored to death with lawns, gardens and greenhouses, and the quiet, and would sell out in less than a year for 10s. in the pound, if necessary, to get away from it. Personally, I did not believe this, though he had never had the experience of an unbroken week in the country in all his life. Well, we have visited Mr. and Mrs. Ward in Surrey, and can bear testimony to their absolute content. We constantly meet and exchange letters; only last August I had one in which he says, in view of a two weeks’ necessary absence from ‘home,’ ‘As the day comes for starting I must confess I am sorry to be away from here even for a single day; it seems to be wasting opportunity and privilege to be off the place. Two weeks loom up as a long time to be absent from “Wraylands.”’ From the very first day he ‘took to the job,’ and really loves his country home and life beyond all his previous experiences. He takes the keenest interest in every detail of the actual work on the estate, and is never idle a moment. The days are all too short to get in all the pleasant plans he has arranged to accomplish.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

I predict that in a year or two he will be an exhibitor in all the local shows, and win first prizes for fruit, flowers, and garden produce, and his 'study' will be adorned with gold and silver medals and cups.

As Mrs. Richards and I have always taken a warm interest in the annual local shows of the Horticultural Societies in 'Almost Fairyland,' my 'farm' days are constantly brought to mind, giving me added pleasure in inspecting the results of the 'small and large holders' competing for prizes. This feeling of interest is daily aroused when passing through our own gardens, though I must admit that my gardener has never but on the one 'corn' occasion asked for 'instructions.' I have had melon seeds from oversea which entirely succeed in our own glasshouses, and in one of our watercourses we have been able to cultivate American pond lilies, the original plants having been sent us from Philadelphia. I have been asked, if I could begin again and choose a career, would I like to continue the farm life in America and become a farmer? I say 'No' without any hesitation whatever. I am sure I should never have been happy as a farmer. Long after I left the little farm and became interested in commerce that made it necessary to travel largely and constantly in the U.S., often when my train used to pass alongside the large and small farms in New York, Michigan, Ohio, and other western

AMERICAN FARMING

states, even to the Pacific slope, and I could observe the work going on at all seasons, planting, and sowing, and reaping, I always felt inwardly glad that I had taken up another career, not because the work was hard or uninteresting, but that it did not carry with it the interests and possibilities I was anxious and ambitious to secure. Contrasting farming as it exists to-day in 'Almost Fairyland' with the farming I experienced sixty years ago, I am compelled to say that I do *not* observe the enterprise and activity of the American farmer, nor do many of them use the labour-saving inventions in vogue so long ago in U.S. I frequently see grain being cut with a hand sickle. There the farmer is working his own land and freehold, working hard at it himself, the family assisting in the domestic work for the common weal and good. Here the land is mostly leasehold, and a sort of dullness sets in that discourages development, beyond an income to pay the rent and the gain of a few pounds per annum surplus. No wonder the younger generation are hurrying away to Canada and Australia !

CHAPTER XVI

EVERY year in August for the last ten years I have received a registered circular letter from some conscientious, law-abiding parliamentary elector, of which the following is a copy. Sometimes the document is post-marked Shanklin; last year (1913) it came from Ashey, I.W. :

OCCUPATION FRANCHISE

(Parliamentary and Local Government).

To Mr. John Morgan Richards,
Steephill Castle, Ventnor.

I hereby give you notice that I object to your name being retained on Division 1 of the Occupiers List of Electors for the Parish of Ventnor as a Parliamentary Elector for the Parliamentary Division of the County of the Isle of Wight (and as a County Elector for the Administrative County of the Isle of Wight), on the following grounds, viz.,

1. That you have not occupied the qualifying premises as owner or tenant for twelve months immediately preceding July 15, in this year.

2. That you are an alien.

Dated the 20th day of August, 1913.

(Signed) —————

In England parliamentary and municipal votes at all elections are allowed to those whose names appear on the list of voters issued annually. The qualification extends to males

ALIEN DISENFRANCHISEMENT

over the age of 21 years who either (1) possess freehold or leasehold property of a certain value in the Parliamentary division ; (2) have occupied lands or tenements for twelve months before registration ; (3) occupied a dwelling-house, or a portion of a house upon which rates have been paid ; or (4) qualified as a lodger for twelve months, the lodgings being of the value of £10 unfurnished. There are certain other fancy privileges, such as those to freemen of boroughs and to liverymen of the City of London. The *municipal franchise* extends to women who are householders and have been in occupation for one year. The conditions of male voters under the municipal franchise are practically identical with those governing the parliamentary vote.

These privileges, however, do *not* include *aliens*, no matter what may be their vested interests in landed property or the amount of their payment in rates and taxes.

Objection 1 in the notice is, of course, absurd.

Objection 2 is legal and correct, and I may mention that I have never had the delight of the franchise, even for *local* items in the town of Ventnor. Two or three years ago, when a poll of the town was taken as to the advisability of establishing the proposed funicular railway from the Esplanade to the top of St. Boniface Down, I attended at the Town Hall, according to public notice, to cast my vote. I was promptly rejected as 'not entitled.' Under these circumstances

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I remain neutral, and properly so, and, I may add, do not contribute to election and canvassing funds, nor do I attend political meetings. As an alien I have never experienced the slightest unfairness or unjust treatment in the law courts or in any question upon which it became necessary to assert my individual rights. The law that forbids my vote exempts me from all 'jury duty,' it being the right of any litigant to have his case tried by a jury of his own countrymen. So after all I am quite content and do not intend to take out 'naturalisation papers,' which would, of course, at once place me on an equal footing of citizenship.

In the United States practically the same law exists, though there are slightly different conditions in each of the forty-eight States. Naturalisation of aliens is essential to secure voting privileges and is easily obtained upon compliance with all the requirements of the law, but the applicant for naturalisation papers is not called upon to renounce allegiance to any foreign sovereignty. But any alien who has borne an hereditary title or been a member of an order of nobility must renounce such title or position before becoming naturalised.

The cost of naturalisation papers in U.S. is 16s., in Great Britain £5, with a fee of 10s. for registration.

In 1906 our first oversea visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Willis T. Hanson, of Schenectady,

VISITORS FROM OVER THE SEA

New York. These old friends had crossed from America in February with Mrs. Craigie on her return from her lecture tour in U.S. They could only give us a week-end, but it was a very pleasant three days for us all. At Easter we were able to welcome Mr. and Mrs. J. N. Sears, of New York. Mr. Sears is the active partner in the renowned publishing house of D. Appleton & Co. They had issued several of Mrs. Craigie's works in U.S., and while here Mr. Sears secured her last completed book, 'The Dream and the Business.'

On June 22 my son Nelson's third child, Betty, was born here.

In July Mr. and Mrs. Franklin MacVeagh, of Chicago, came for a few days. Mr. MacVeagh has been the Secretary of the Treasury during the Taft administration. Mrs. George Fulford (widow of our friend, Senator Fulford, whose sad death I mentioned in Chapter IV), with her son and daughter, arrived here from Canada late in April, and after a visit here joined us in London. General Sir Harry Prendergast was with us for several weeks in April and May. General Prendergast had a very severe illness while here, from which he made a good recovery, and gratefully proclaimed his acknowledgements to the able Ventnor doctors and the fine air of 'Almost Fairyland.' My brother James and his wife on bridal tour also visited us at this time. In July our long-time friend of

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Old Park, Mrs. William Spindler, died, and on July 16 Pearl's devoted friend, Lady Curzon, passed away in London after a rather long illness. These most sad events were taken much to heart by Mrs. Craigie, but we did not nor could we imagine or believe that on August 13, and but a few hours after leaving us here at Steephill in apparently good health, we should be suddenly informed of her death in our London house. I will not dwell upon these matters except to say that we can never forget, or cease to deeply appreciate, all the kind and boundless sympathy extended to us by everyone who knew us, not only in 'Almost Fairyland,' but everywhere. We spent the rest of the year quietly at Steephill, only journeying to London when absolutely necessary.

In 1907 besides our two selves our resident family consisted of my daughter, Mrs. Prendergast and her son Jeffery (Mr. George Prendergast having died in 1903 while at Mentone, on his way home from Scutari—a brilliant career being thus suddenly cut short; he was a fine character and greatly beloved and mourned by us all, as well as by his own family and friends, by whom and to whom he was greatly attached), John Craigie, my sister, Mrs. Cummings, and my eldest and unmarried son, John junior. With the exception of a few days in London we were constantly at Steephill, and enjoyed many pleasant visits from our friends.



CRAIGIE LODGE.

VISIT OF U.D.C. ASSOCIATION

St. Lawrence Lodge and gardens, which Mrs. Craigie had held only upon lease, we decided to purchase from the executors of the Old Park Estate. This was accomplished in June and the name was changed to Craigie Lodge. It was soon afterwards let to our friend, Mrs. Mary F. Raphael, a well-known painter. A marble tablet was placed on the fascia of the Lodge and inscribed—

PEARL MARY TERESA CRAIGIE,
Novelist and Dramatist,
lived here
1899-1902.

Late in July we had the pleasure of giving an afternoon garden party to the Urban District Councils Association, who had been holding their annual meeting this year in Ventnor. They had a week of work and sight-seeing, and came to us just at the conclusion of a very interesting and quite exciting week. There was a company of over a hundred, and we had every reason to believe that they enjoyed Steephill and returned to their homes in different parts of England with a very favourable impression of 'Almost Fairyland.'

We had been considering for some little time the advisability of having a complete change and long holiday abroad, and in September we decided to close Steephill and also our house in Lancaster Gate, leaving both establishments in charge of housekeepers

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only. On October 5, Mrs. Richards and I, accompanied by Mrs. Prendergast and Jeffery, left London for Montreux. We had no definite plan, but expected after two or three weeks in Switzerland to proceed south. However, we were so contented and happy at Montreux that we actually remained there three months. Our sons, John and Nelson (and wife), with John Craigie, to our great delight, came on to visit us at Christmas, remaining a week. On January 7 we left Montreux for Milan, thence to Florence, Rome, Pisa, Genoa, Turin, Aix-les-Bains, arriving in Paris at the end of February, and in London early in March, going at once to Lancaster Gate, having been absent five months. The change of climate so early in the year, a most imprudent plan, resulted in my getting an attack of pleurisy at our house in town. It was not until the middle of April that I was sufficiently recovered to remove to Teignmouth in Devon. We shortly after decided to sell our house in Lancaster Gate and get back to Steephill. This sale was accomplished in due course, and on June 5, with what gratitude and joy I cannot describe, we were able to arrive at Steephill again, after an absence of eight months.

CHAPTER XVII

HAVING disposed of our London residence we were now free to concentrate our domestic tendencies and wishes on Steephill, and glad were we to do this. We had reserved from the sale of furniture and effects all our 'household gods,' by which I mean all those things which were precious to us and helped to endear our home, things collected and accumulated during many years and items that cannot be duplicated; such things do not exist in pairs or dozens and are priceless through sentiment and association. I was a pleasing task to distribute them throughout the rooms here: thus the valued and familiar treasures and comforts gave further delight and pleasure to us all, our library of books and collection of pictures being among our 'reserves.' We were quite settled in again by the middle of June 1908, after our long holiday abroad, and the events described in Chapter XVI. On July 1 we went to London. The memorial to Mrs. Craigie at University College was unveiled by Lord Curzon of Kedleston on this date. We remained in town for the banquet of the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

American Society on Independence Day, July 4, and to attend the Ambassador's reception to Americans, which was given at Dorchester House. This enabled us to again meet very many old friends—a great pleasure. We were home again on the 8th. On July 29 the Undercliff Horticultural Society held their annual show in our grounds, the tents being erected in the forecourt; large attendance and a successful exhibition. During Cowes Week King Edward and Queen Alexandra made a cruise round the Isle of Wight in the battleship *Indomitable*, and passed close in off Ventnor, and we all had a good view of the royal party from the upper level of the Ventnor Park. On August 14 a benefit entertainment for the Ventnor Cricket Club was given at the Pavilion by Dr. and Mrs. Victor Blake, who were about to leave Ventnor, Dr. Blake having accepted an important appointment under Government, which made it necessary to remove to Portsmouth as headquarters. I was invited to make a public presentation to these old friends, on behalf of the club, of which he had long been an active member and captain; this I had the pleasure to do, deeply regretting, as all who knew them did, that they were to leave Ventnor. Also in August Mrs. Richards opened the Godshill Horticultural Show and distributed the prizes, and in the same month rendered the same service at Wroxall. In both places she urged the cultivation of

GERMAN MEDICOS AT VENTNOR

onions, and offered a challenge cup for future competition. This seemed to interest the 'small and large holders' very much.

During our eight months' absence several important changes had taken place at the Congregational Church. The Rev. C. H. Poynton, who had for a year or more been associate pastor with the late Rev. Allen Davies and who had been called to the full charge of the services at the time of Mr. Davies' lamented death, resigned the position, and the Rev. Herbert E. Heywood had been called to the pastorate and was duly installed in April 1908.

Early in September a violent gale visited this section of the island, and among other damage in different sections of 'Almost Fairyland' we had several large trees in the upper grounds at Steephill blown down, and our bathing house at Steephill Cove was swept quite away from the foundation and completely wrecked. We immediately rebuilt it, and with some 'anchorage' supports to avert a similar disaster. On September 3 a large delegation of German physicians and surgeons paid a visit to Ventnor. A reception was given them at the Royal National Hospital, which I attended with others of the committee. On September 9, Mrs. Richards opened a sale of work for the benefit of the Manse Fund of the Congregational Church at 'Hillside,' by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Mitchell. 'Hillside' has an interesting

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

history, and is beautifully situated in the Newport Road. The Rev. Wm. Adams, author of the 'Shadow of the Cross,' once lived here, as also did John Sterling. 'Hillside' is one of the most popular 'homes when away from home' that can be found in 'Almost Fairyland,' and has for many years been highly commended and patronised by visitors from every part of the world. On December 7 a very interesting public meeting was held at the town hall, called by the District Council to consider a proposal for the construction of a Funicular Railway from the Esplanade to the top of St. Boniface Down. The scheme was carefully explained by Mr. F. B. Behr, an engineer who had prepared plans and specifications with an estimate of cost. The chairman, members of the Council, and also private citizens spoke for and against the project, and the result of the meeting was that the matter should be decided by a poll being taken from the ratepayers of the district. The poll was taken within the following fortnight, and the whole scheme negatived. This decision was due to the considerable cost for construction and the uncertain income to be derived. The town would incur a liability of about £20,000. No one disputed that a railway of some description to secure easy and comfortable access to the different levels of the town was greatly to be desired, so it is to be hoped that this may yet be accomplished. Personally, I am still on the look out



VIEW IN VENTNOR PARK.

VOYAGE TO SOUTH AFRICA

for a capitalist to come along and build the line.

During August and September we again had the delight of the children and grandchildren assembling at Steephill, and very delightful holidays we all had. The visits from friends and relatives from oversea were again a pleasant feature of the summer and autumn months.

At Christmas we had our accustomed family gathering and réunion.

Early in 1909 I began 'The Life and Letters of Mrs. Craigie,' and occupied myself several hours daily in the examination of letters and the preparation of notes for the biography.

In March, having quite unexpectedly some important business in South Africa that required prompt attention, I decided to make the journey myself. Mrs. Richards was quite enthusiastic about the voyage and gladly consented to accompany me. We estimated that we should be absent from Steephill at least three months, so we again, as in 1907, left the castle in charge of our housekeeper and sailed from Southampton on the Union Castle liner *Armada*, on April 3. The steamer called at Madeira three days later for a few hours, and then proceeded, arriving at Cape Town on the morning of the 20th, a voyage of exactly seventeen days. We both had experienced many sea voyages, and knew something of 'life on the ocean wave,' but

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never had we had such perfect comfort and delight at sea as on the *Armada Castle*. Ours was not an unusual experience, as practically the whole year round, barring the first three days (the Bay of Biscay is occasionally riotous) between Southampton and Madeira, you get a smooth sea and ideal weather, never too warm, but entirely comfortable, while the ship service in all departments and food are up to the highest standard. We had never enjoyed any previous sea voyage so much, and were really sorry to leave the ship, but were consoled by the fact that all being well we should be able to re-embark on the same or similar ship of this line in a few weeks' time for our return home. I can hardly describe our feelings when our ship reached Table Bay and we landed under the shadow of Table Mountain at Cape Town; suffice it to say that we were thrilled with everything that met the eye, and were full to the brim with amazement to find such evidences of prosperous civilisation and enterprise. Our South African experience has, of course, nothing directly to do with our subject, 'Almost Fairyland,' but I must just briefly state that after three weeks in Cape Town we went up the coast by sea to Port Elizabeth, East London, and Durban, making short visits at each place, from Durban by rail to Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith to Johannesburg, thence to Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Kimberley: from the latter place by

POST-IMPRESSIONS OF BOER WAR

rail back to Cape Town, and on June 2 we sailed on the s.s. *Saxon* for Southampton and home. We arrived at Steephill on June 19, all well, having had from first to last a wonderfully enjoyable journey and experience. All our family were assembled at Steephill to meet us, and we could sing the *Te Deum* laudamus from hearts indeed filled with thanksgiving. I cannot resist saying that for anyone desiring the most complete change and rest nothing can equal a trip to the Cape and back. It is like a pleasure yachting voyage, only far more comfortable. The places and sights to see in South Africa are of surpassing interest, greatly intensified by the history created by the second great Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902. We could only hold our breath in awe and wonder on a visit to Groote-Schuur, Cecil Rhodes's renowned seat and park close to Cape Town, which was bequeathed by him as the residence of the future Prime Ministers of the Union of South Africa; and what has one to say when inspecting the battlefields in and around Colenso, Ladysmith, Modder River, Spion Kop, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein, Mafeking, Pretoria, and Kimberley? Mrs. Richards will not admit that she is a pro-Boer, but when we arrived at Pretoria one frosty morning at nine o'clock she would not have any breakfast until we had driven from the hotel to Kruger's former residence and she had stroked the manes of the cast-iron lions still guarding the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

steps of the entrance door, and had looked through the windows of the ground floor rooms (no admittance), and seen the faded and dusty wreaths piled up in the rooms which are preserved as a memorial to the ex-President of the Transvaal Colony. The travelling arrangements and facilities for getting about in South Africa are quite as up to date as in England. The railways are owned by the Cape Government and perfectly equipped. Dining cars and sleeping coaches are of the best models. The hotels in the principal towns are exceedingly good. As to the question of climate and health, even the troops enjoy better health there than anywhere else within the Empire. The cost of living, railway fares, and hotel tariff are not greater than in Hampshire.

CHAPTER XVIII

‘DISCERN of the coming on of years, and think not to do the same things still; for age will not be defied.’ Francis Bacon, the illustrious philosopher and statesman, said this many years before any of us were born, but it is as true to-day as when he wisely gave the message and many others to mankind. In taking up a countryside life I have constantly to explain to friends that ‘I prefer and enjoy it.’ The younger of my acquaintance cannot understand how I can be contented month in and month out away from London and the stir and excitement of business affairs, to which they know I gave, for so many years, my constant and unceasing attention. ‘How do you manage to fill in your time?’ ‘Are you not bored by the quiet and sameness of things day after day?’ are some of the questions I have to answer. Well, I am able to assure them all that my time is not spent ‘lying on a rock and watching a barnacle,’ or ‘looking at the moon’s path over the sea,’ or ‘listening to the night wind in the leaves,’ but I keep close company with Nature all the same. I do not golf, tennis,

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

ride, shoot, or fish, but I do walk and drive, and I am never in the least cut off from the world's activities, commercial or social. I am 'of it' but not 'in it,' so to speak, and am not indifferent to any of the interests that have ruled my life. Indeed, I have more time to contemplate and observe than ever. *Boredom*, indeed! It is more like *rapture* to have very few fixed engagements or definite plans; being able to control one's time is of itself a boon and constant delight, and I entirely enjoy it. So I always reply to my friends, 'Don't worry! Thank you, I am quite happy at Steephill!' I have never to be wondering what I can do next to occupy my time. The days are not long enough ever to accomplish all the things that spontaneously interest my attention, and I feel like Thoreau 'that my days are not minced into hours, nor fretted by the ticking of a clock.'

Soon after our return from South Africa, in June, and our usual domestic affairs were arranged and in working order, I resumed my work upon the preparation of material for the biographical sketch I was to write for the 'Life and Letters of Mrs. Craigie.' At this work I usually occupied myself from two to three hours almost daily. I had arranged for the publication before the end of the year, though there was no necessity for haste and I could proceed according to circumstances and inclination. A good deal of correspondence was inevitable to obtain

HORTICULTURAL SHOWS

original letters with permission to publish. In August Mrs. Richards again opened the horticultural shows at Godshill and Wroxall and distributed the prizes—a keen competition for the silver challenge cup for onions at both shows. Onions of such unusual size and quality had never before been produced in 'Almost Fairyland.' Also in August we lent the grounds on Sunday (15th) for a sacred concert to aid the local and Ryde infirmaries.

Early in September we had a visit from the Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D., of New York, on holiday. Dr. Parkhurst is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Madison Square, New York, and has also for years been the active and energetic president of the Society for the Prevention of Crime in New York and has accomplished most useful reform.

On September 17 I had the pleasure of attending a luncheon on board the Union Castle liner s.s. *Briton*, at Southampton, as a member of the Imperial Industries Club. After the lunch the whole company was transferred to a large steam tender, and an inspection was thus afforded of the docks, shipping, warehouses, and cold storage establishments located at Southampton, all new 'sights' to me. Tea was served at the Pier Pavilion and in the evening a most interesting banquet was held at the South-Western Hotel, presided over by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir George Wyatt Truscott, Bart. I was

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

glad to have the company at the banquet of Major T. R. Saunders and Mr. E. G. H. Wetherick, of Ventnor.

On October 6 Mrs. Richards and I were invited by Miss Marie Corelli to a very interesting ceremony at Stratford-on-Avon—the presentation by her of Harvard House to Harvard University, it being the birth-place of Thomas Harvard, the founder of the American university bearing his name. Mr. Whitelaw Reid, the American Ambassador, gave the address, supported by several other interesting speakers. A banquet was subsequently given by Miss Corelli, and a most delightful day, from first to last, was spent. Miss Corelli provided special trains from London to go and return, and everything was carried out in the most perfect manner.

Miss Marie Corelli on November 9 accepted the invitation of the Society of American Women in London to a luncheon at the Hôtel Cecil. We were both able to attend this interesting function and Miss Corelli made a brilliant speech.

On October 15 I took the chair for the annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society, held at the Literary Institute, and a few days later at a similar gathering at the Town Hall for the Education Committee meeting, and on October 25 at the Wesleyan Methodist Church for a lecture by the Rev. W. Lax.

On November 11 I occupied the chair for

ST. LAWRENCE HALL

the annual meeting of the London Missionary Society at the Congregational Church.

Late this year our old friends and nearest neighbours to the west of Steephill, Sir Thomas and Lady Brooke-Hitching, to our great regret removed to Ryde. We were glad they did not leave 'Almost Fairyland.' Their residence, St. Lawrence Hall, adjoins the Steephill Estate, and was originally built and occupied by Major Fisher, an old island resident. Sir Thomas accepted an offer to purchase made by Sir Charles Cayzer, Bart., and the whole transaction, including their removal from the town, was accomplished within a month, and the new owners in possession. Sir Charles immediately began extensive alterations and improvements which still continue to be in progress. St. Lawrence Hall is certainly a most attractive property.

The parliamentary elections which took place early in the year 1910, the preparations for which began in December, were of an interesting and exciting character. Mr. Godfrey Baring, the Liberal member for the island since 1906, was opposed by Mr. Douglas Hall, Unionist candidate. Although I am not entitled to a vote at a parliamentary election by reason of my being an alien, as explained in Chapter XVI, it was impossible to be otherwise than considerably interested in the contest as to who should represent 'Almost Fairyland' in the next Parliament. It was a most energetically fought battle and resulted

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

in the return of Mr. Douglas Hall. We were personally hopeful that Mr. Baring would again be elected. He had long resided in the island and was thoroughly acquainted with its needs and requirements, and most active in his endeavours to promote the best interests of his constituency. He was extremely popular, and it was hard to believe that any candidate, Unionist or Liberal, could possibly be elected against him. He did not fail through lack of energy and endeavour, and the majority for Mr. Douglas Hall was a small one. When the 'unexpected' election came on a little later (December 1910) Mr. Baring declined to stand again, and one could not be surprised. He must have felt, as most of the Liberals of the island felt, that he deserved the election for services already rendered, if for no other reason. However, he stood for the Barnstaple Division (Devon) and was promptly returned. Meantime, Mr. C. Scaramanga Ralli, an influential and well-known island man, came forward as the Liberal candidate to oppose Mr. Hall. This contest, like the previous one, created an enormous excitement in the Wight.

Mr. C. Scaramanga Ralli's eloquence and personal magnetism were phenomenal. However, when the counting took place the Unionist candidate was again returned. A great deal was said about non-resident votes and the successful efforts of the Unionists in getting to the polls all the 'out-voters' that

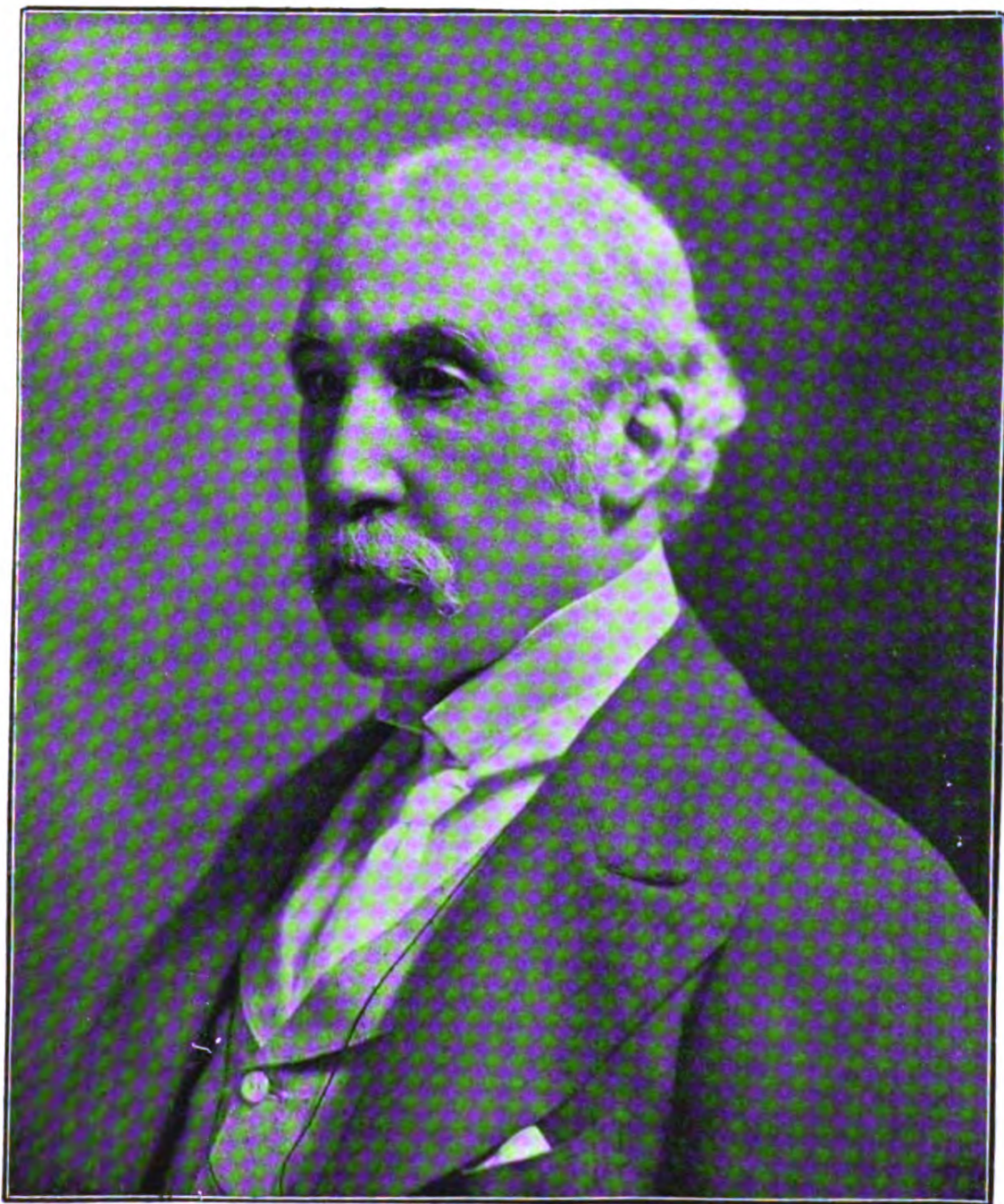
WESTERN CLIFFS

could possibly be persuaded to come to the island to vote for Mr. Douglas Hall. It is pleasing to mention in this connection that a baronetcy was conferred upon Mr. Godfrey Baring in 1911, an honour which he richly deserved. The congratulations which were showered upon the baronet would leave him in no doubt as to the high regard and appreciation in which he is held by his old constituency.

The Ventnor Urban District Council had been for some years negotiating with the trustees of the Hambrough Estate for the purchase of the Ventnor Park and the land known as the Western Cliffs. The park proper was held on a long lease and the cliff upon temporary tenancy. The Council and ratepayers considered the purchase money demanded for the freehold excessive. The negotiations dragged along from year to year; finally, in 1910, the original terms were mutually agreed upon—anyhow, the town now owns the freehold, a most important and valuable acquisition. While the negotiations were pending the trustees declined to renew the agreement for the Western Cliffs and shut off with unclimbable iron fencing the whole of the area and blocked all approach by footway from the park and to the cliff path. As my land adjoined the Hambrough property I was able to assist the situation by granting a temporary right of way to and from the park to the cliff path, to the extent

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

of placing steps easy to climb on the Steephill Estate. This access is still available, and I have given a further lease of the 'Flowers Brook' field, which adjoins the Western Cliffs, thus giving a very new and beautiful walk around to the high road, supplying, besides, a large bit of vacant land as recreation ground for the young people for games and sports.



JOHN MORGAN RICHARDS.

CHAPTER XIX

IN February 1911 I was permitted, by the blessing of God, to attain and to pass my seventieth milestone in life's eventful walk. Most charming and cheering messages of congratulation reached me from all members of my family at home and abroad, and I do not think any of my friends who knew my birthday omitted to send me a message of 'many happy returns.' I most deeply appreciated all their thoughtful and kind wishes. On the anniversary day several old friends from America happened to be in London but could not conveniently come to Steephill, so we decided upon a little social dinner at the Savoy Hotel in town, and were able to have most of our immediate family with us as well—a very happy evening. Seventy years is a considerable age. I can perfectly remember my own impressions when a boy and even in middle life when considering the age of seventy years. I thought my grandparents at seventy were very old people indeed, and I had the same idea in reference to all those I knew who could say 'Three score and ten is my age,' so I naturally have

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

to wonder if I am creating the same impression among the younger company about me—probably I am. I do not to *myself* seem so elderly as I thought the others were. It is easy to believe that one may be generally regarded as ‘an old gentleman’ by his family and friends long before he is aware of the fact himself. The age comes along so gradually that the actively disposed, with good health, do not realise what others *do* observe. Then there are our contemporaries we daily meet, and it never occurs to us particularly to note a wrinkled brow or a less elastic step. Several things I did not do at seventy—namely, let out my waistcoat, wear a skull cap, or adopt carpet slippers when alone. However, circumstances which I have explained in previous chapters had made it both possible and convenient to live a more leisurely life and to make the very agreeable change of residence from town to country. I had been proceeding with the ‘Biographical Sketch and Letters of John Oliver Hobbes’ since the early part of 1910, but with some interruptions. However, on January 24 I was able to pass final proofs of them and forward to the publishers. The volume was duly issued by Mr. John Murray on March 15. I had every reason to be abundantly satisfied with the reception of the book by both press and public.

On March 17, Colonel Albert W. Swalm, the Consul of the U.S. at Southampton,

THE PASSING OF THE KING

delivered by my invitation a very interesting illustrated lecture at the Town Hall, Ventnor, on the great National Yellowstone Park in Arizona. The attendance was very large, and the gratifying proceeds were devoted to assisting the funds of the Congregational Church. Colonel and Mrs. Swalm were able to spend two days with us at Steephill, a most enjoyable visit for us all. The Easter holiday, April 14-18, enabled us to have all our London group with us again. The entire British Empire was thrown into mourning that year by the lamented death of King Edward VII, which occurred on May 6, after a brief illness. The State funeral took place a few days later. All the family except myself went to London to view the procession, which was one of very solemn interest and importance. Representatives from every civilised country and government were present. The burial was, of course, at Windsor Castle. George V succeeded to the throne, and the Coronation took place on June 22, 1911, the ceremonies lasting two days. We all went to London for a week. Mrs. Richards and I were able to view the procession on both days from the Reform Club, and to have as our guest Mrs. George Fulford, of Canada.

Through the enterprise of Mr. Wm. B. Judd, on August 12 'Almost Fairyland' had a very fairy-like demonstration of great interest, viz. a flying-machine exhibition was given from the large field on Whitwell

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

Road. Mr. James Valentine, a distinguished aviator, made three ascents, a most perfect and thrilling success on each occasion. The interest was very great and drew crowds from all parts of the island.

On August 15 our grandson, John Craigie, attained his majority, having been born twenty-one years ago (1890) at Rock Cottage, Ventnor. We had a family birthday dinner to celebrate the glad event. Most of the day had been spent by Mrs. Richards and myself at Southampton, where a dedication took place on the Western Esplanade, opposite the very spot where the Pilgrims embarked on August 15, 1620, of a site for the proposed monument to the memory of the Pilgrim Fathers. The ceremony was brief and simple, and I was invited to preside. A luncheon was given at the South-Western Hotel, presided over by the Mayor of Southampton, after which the company proceeded to the North Wall, and wreaths were laid on the spots selected for the memorial by several ladies of the company, among them being the Mayoress, Mrs. Swalm (wife of the American Consul), Miss Paterson (of Ventnor), and Mrs. Richards. Interesting speeches were made and plans arranged to have the corner-stone of the memorial laid on August 15, 1912.

On September 6 the Isle of Wight, and all England for that matter, was much interested in the successful swimming feat accomplished that day by Burgess, who swam



DR. WALTER HINES PAGE, AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE COURT OF ST. JAMES,
AND COL. ALBERT W. SWALM, U.S. CONSUL AT SOUTHAMPTON.

CHANNEL SWIMMERS

the Channel from Calais to Dover. Many unsuccessful attempts have been made, by the principal expert swimmers of the day, to perform this feat of skill and endurance, since Matthew Webb crossed in twenty-two hours in 1875—nearly forty years ago. Webb subsequently lost his life in an attempt to swim the rapids at Niagara Falls, a feat never yet accomplished by living man.

On September 10 we had a visit at Steephill from Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Langmuir, of Canada. We had other guests at the same time and were able to make up a coach party to Cowes. This unique and beautiful drive settled in the minds of these friends an everlasting devotion to 'Almost Fairyland.'

On November 30 we heard by cable of the death of Miss Cora Barnes at New York, our friend for over forty years, daughter of the late Demas Barnes, who was practically my first employer, and whose service I left in 1867 to try my fortunes in England. This was very sad news for all of us. Miss Barnes came to England year after year, and had but lately been our guest, unhappily for the last time. She possessed rare and unforgettable noble qualities, which included the genius of friendship, giving the best of herself to her friends and always deserving the best in them in return. Always a great lover of Ventnor Miss Barnes had with her mother and sister (previously to our having a house here) occupied for one season Rock Cottage,

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

and will be remembered by some of our Ventnor friends.

Notwithstanding our long residence in 'Almost Fairyland,' and in contradiction of my statement that we had driven to every part of it over and over again, I have to state that until October 2, 1911, we had never had a drive to Seaview from Ventnor. Some American friends had purchased a residence there, and on this day we made an afternoon excursion to call. Seaview certainly ranks among the best of the island towns, and has exceptional facilities for boating and sailing.

On November 3 we again had a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Brent Good, of New York. I think this was Mr. Good's sixtieth time of crossing the Atlantic (thirty voyages) and he had never missed visiting us. When they left here for London we followed them there and enjoyed visiting a few theatres together. Returning to Steephill on the 11th we fortunately reached Portsmouth at the moment of the departure of the s.s. *Medina* with the King and Queen on board, bound for India to attend the Durbar. The Ryde packet was just off, and we formed part of the voluntary 'escort' towards Spithead. The weather was simply tempestuous as well as rainy, and despite the playing of the band, waving of flags and booming of guns it was a dreary start, and we were not surprised afterwards to hear that the entire

THANKSGIVING DAY

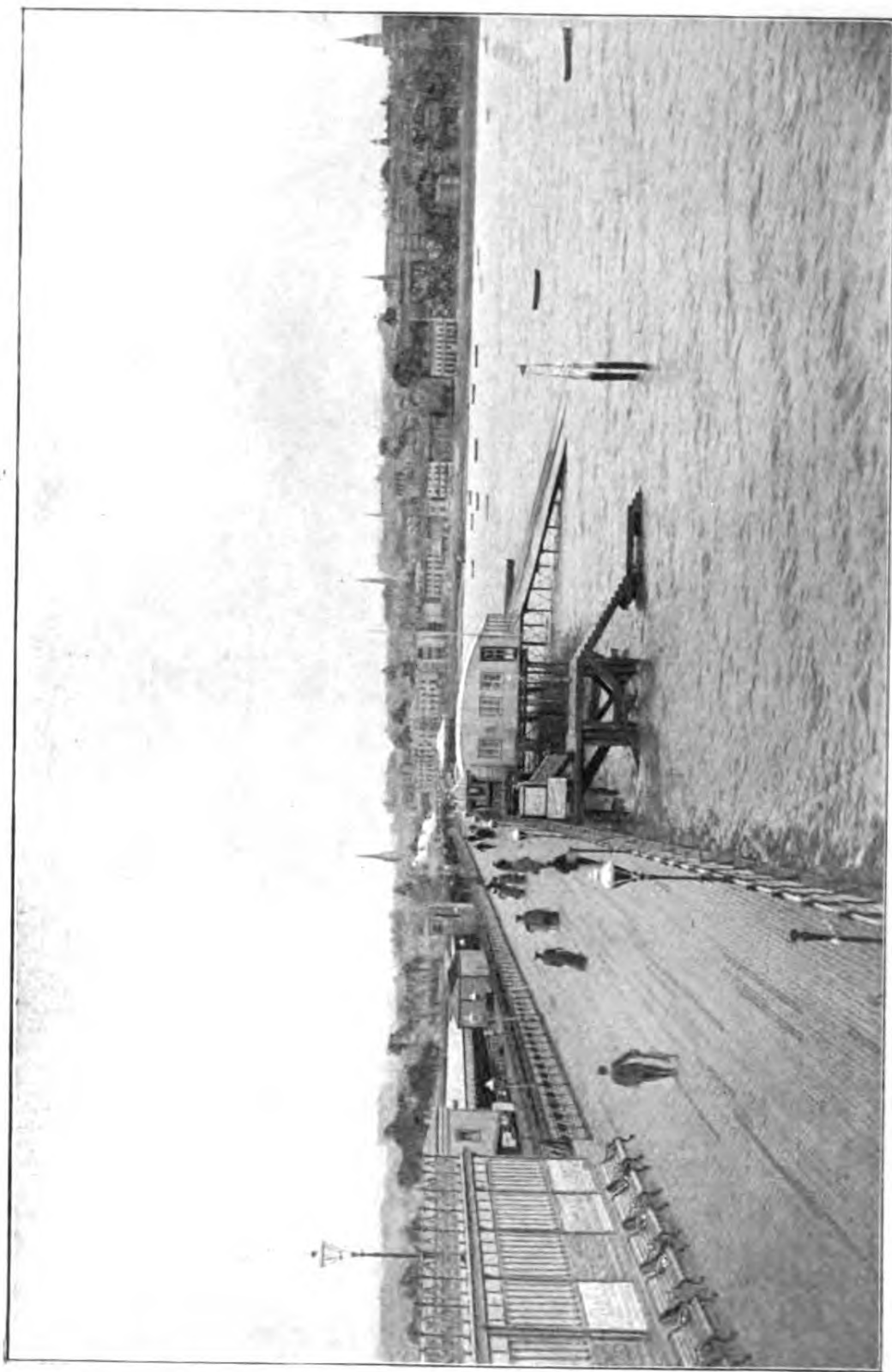
run to Gibraltar had been very rough and disagreeable.

On the 16th I took the chair for the London Missionary Society at the Congregational Church, and on the 21st we went to London, remaining until December 2. These days in town were enjoyably spent seeing friends, and included attending the Thanksgiving Day Banquet of the American Society on November 29, held at the Savoy Hotel. These annual celebrations of American festivals always bring together a large company of Americans resident in England, as well as visitors, affording an opportunity for happy réunions and meeting with our compatriots. This was the Sixteenth Thanksgiving Day Banquet, the Society having been formed in 1895 and includes a 'Benevolent' Branch, which is designed to assist Americans 'stranded' in England who deserve help. As we 'keep the flag flying' at Steephill we have sometimes to receive applications from 'distressed Americans'; a case in point occurred a short time ago when one of the steamers of the Atlantic Transport Line came to anchor off Ventnor and signalled for a boat to come alongside. Messrs. Spencer at once responded and were informed by the captain that he intended to land an American stowaway discovered since leaving the London Docks. The stowaway duly appeared at Steephill, and through my application to the American Society he was furnished with

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

a passage back to New York. It was a pathetic case—quite a lad, not a farthing in his pocket, and scanty clothes to cover him. He had worked a passage across as an experiment, but could not get a return job, so hid himself on this steamer, selecting his refuge near the boilers, intending to hide until at sea. He was practically roasted out and famished for food, and had to appear on deck to save his life, whereupon the captain landed him as above described. This sounds rather harsh treatment, but the captain explained that unless he did this his ship would be constantly burdened with ‘tramps.’





RYDE, FROM THE PIER

CHAPTER XX

I SHOULD be glad if I could interest more residents in Ventnor and Bonchurch in the well-known and long-established 'Literary and Scientific Institution' in High Street. Here are fine spacious rooms, fitted and adapted for all the purposes the title of the Institute suggests. There is the nucleus of an excellent library. The reading-room is open to members every day (Sundays excepted) from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., and the library four evenings of the week and two afternoons. The annual subscription is very small. Facilities are thus ready and waiting for all who desire to avail themselves of such valuable privileges.

It has been explained to me by Mr. J. N. Cater, the chairman of the Urban District Council, that a great need exists for the addition of good popular books for the library. Mr. Cater says they were really losing in membership because of inability to provide new books. The income from subscriptions, lectures, and social entertainments has never been sufficient to provide funds to keep the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

library in anything like an up-to-date condition, and is barely sufficient to pay the actual working expenses of the reading-room. Mr. Fred. L. Watkins, the highly esteemed president of the Literary and Scientific Institute, has also informed me how serious the position is without additions to the library are systematically made. Mr. Watkins has devoted an enormous amount of time to reorganising the whole working of the Institute and has himself delivered a series of lectures to aid the funds. It has been pointed out to me, and I now pass it along to others, that the Institute will be most grateful for any volumes of travel, biography, and fiction which anybody is disposed to donate to them. Books which have been read, and which it is not urgently desired to keep, might be placed at the disposal of the Institute for the use of its members. Several most kind supporters of the Institute have removed from the district and their contributions of books have ceased. Therefore it is hoped that others will respond. Illustrated papers and magazines are also much wanted for the reading-room. Perhaps some help will be given every Christmas or New's Year's Day both as to books and papers. This assistance would be a help to make the Institute what the president says it was intended to be and should be—the intellectual centre of the town. It does not seem to me improbable that among the many well-to-do families

BONCHURCH POND

residing in Ventnor and Bonchurch at least a hundred would be quite willing to donate to the Institute one volume a month of some book of travel, history, or fiction which had been read and put aside. This would mean that the library would benefit by 1200 volumes a year! Who will start this movement and begin to send their surplus literature to the Institute?

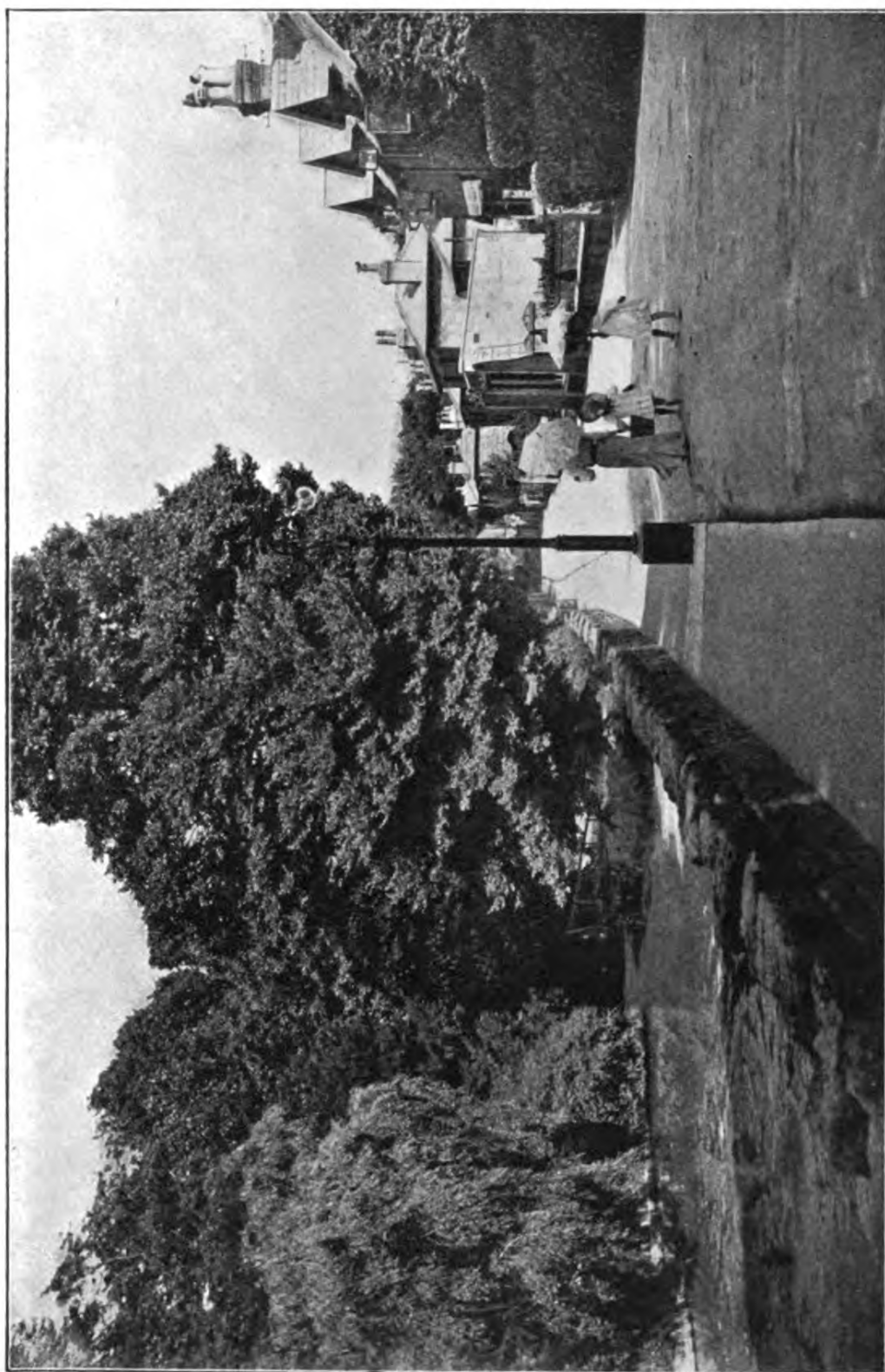
I ought long ago to have referred to the splendid improvement to be observed along the Bonchurch Road, accomplished, at a costly outlay, through the enterprise of the Misses Feilden, residing at 'Thorncliff.' I refer, of course, to the Bonchurch Pond. This originally beautiful miniature lake had for some reason been allowed to become a most unsightly ditch of muddy water, without a feature of interest about it other than a sigh of regret that it 'is not what once it was.' The Misses Feilden purchased the pond and the land adjacent and promptly employed the best available talent and experience to have the whole area of the pond and land 'reconstructed,' so to speak, and made attractive and beautiful. Every resident and visitor in both Bonchurch and Ventnor is extremely grateful to the Misses Feilden for what they have done to give back the old-time beauty of the pond, with many additional features of charming interest. Visitors again drive to Bonchurch to see the famous pond, and carry away with them

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

picture postcards as souvenirs to show to friends elsewhere.

A terrific gale visited this end of the island on December 10, 1911, in the early hours of the day. The largest and most treasured elm tree on the Steephill Estate was blown down across our western lawn. The stump of the tree measured 9 ft. 6 in. in circumference and 2ft. 4in. in diameter. As the fallen monarch of our 'forest' rested on its grassy bed its enormous branches covered the glass entrance doors and windows of the north drawing-room, but no glass was broken nor did any damage occur beyond the serious loss of the tree itself. Our neighbour and old friend, Mr. H. B. Bacon, came up with his photographic apparatus and got some very fine pictures of the 'wreck,' after which there was nothing to be done but to saw and chop up the fallen tree for firewood and plant a young sapling in its place. Needless to say, the disappearance of this huge tree is constantly remarked.

I must mention that Mr. Bacon has a rare gift in photographic art. What he accomplishes in 'results' as a hobby and for his own pleasure is amazing. It is not because he has the finest and best equipment, but it is owing to his artistic sense of 'how to do it.' He never selects the outlook or position for a view that would be chosen by the unlearned in the art, but always something far better. The photo



THE POND, BONCHURCH.

AN ARTIST IN PHOTOGRAPHY

views he has taken in our grounds are so far superior to anything obtained by even expert professionals that no comparison can be made. Mr. Bacon's pictures are all 'Whistlers' and 'Turners,' and we very highly value and appreciate those he has given us as souvenirs from time to time. I can imagine that his own album of views of 'Almost Fairyland' would be the most interesting volume of illustrations this island could produce.

Our usual Christmas house-party from London arrived on December 21. We had a week of most joyful festivity, and had some oversea friends with us.

On January 16, 1912, I took the chair at the Town Hall, Ryde, for Colonel Swalm's lecture for the benefit of the Ryde branch of the Y.M.C.A.

April 15 was the date of the loss at sea of the leviathan White Star Line steamship *Titanic*, together with most of her passengers and crew. It was the first and only voyage of this magnificent ship. We had witnessed, as did many others in Ventnor, her start for New York only four days previously, as she passed the Isle of Wight, proudly and gallantly forging her way through the Channel. The loss of this ship and her human freight created the most profound sensation throughout the world and occupied the attention of the newspapers reporting various incidents connected with the disaster

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

during the following six months. It is interesting to mention that during the forty-six years we have lived in England and our constant communication with America by travel and correspondence there has never been a single mishap at sea either to ourselves or friends, nor has there, to my knowledge, ever been a failure in the receipt or dispatch of letters. There are probably a dozen or more passenger steamships leaving the various ports of the United Kingdom for the United States every week in the year. The Inman Line steamer *City of Boston* was lost in 1870 with 177 passengers on board and never heard of again. The White Star Line steamer *Atlantic*, on a similar voyage, was wrecked in 1873, off Nova Scotia, and 577 lives lost. But the loss of the *Titanic*, wrecked by collision with an iceberg, was far and away the most serious disaster that has occurred within my recollection to any of the British liners, 1503 lives being lost. One steamer of the French line between Havre and New York, the *Ville du Havre*, was lost in 1873 and some 275 passengers perished. The oldest of the British passenger steamship companies, the Cunard Line, has never lost a passenger or a sack of mails since its establishment in 1840, a very remarkable and creditable record. This popular line has in its service two steamers—the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*—of 45,000 tons displacement; each burns 1000 tons of coal per day on a full day's

ROYALTY AT A BAZAAR

run, and they cross from Liverpool to New York under five days.

The island detachment of the Salvation Army were lent our grounds on June 24 for a 'Rally.' On July 10 the 'Band of Hope,' Ventnor Branch, held their annual outing for sports in the lower grounds. On August 2 a very interesting garden fête and bazaar was held in the grounds of Osborne Cottage, East Cowes. The Queen of Spain, accompanied by the King, opened the bazaar. Several members of the Royal Family were present—H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenberg, H.R.H. Princess Christian, H.R.H. the Duchess of Argyll and Duke of Argyll. The day was magnificent and the grounds very lovely. Amusements and entertainments abounded and excellent arrangements for refreshments. The Royal party joined the stallholders and assisted in every possible and agreeable way to make the affair successful, and successful it certainly was—enormous attendance and the 'selling' very brisk. Indeed, it is said to have been the most important in results of any bazaar or public fête ever held in 'Almost Fairyland.' We went over with a large house-party, and enjoyed the day greatly, as did our friends.

On August 3 Mrs. Richards presented the prizes at Whitwell Farm at the annual fête for the children and 'old folks' of the parish, organised by Mr. S. Beeden.

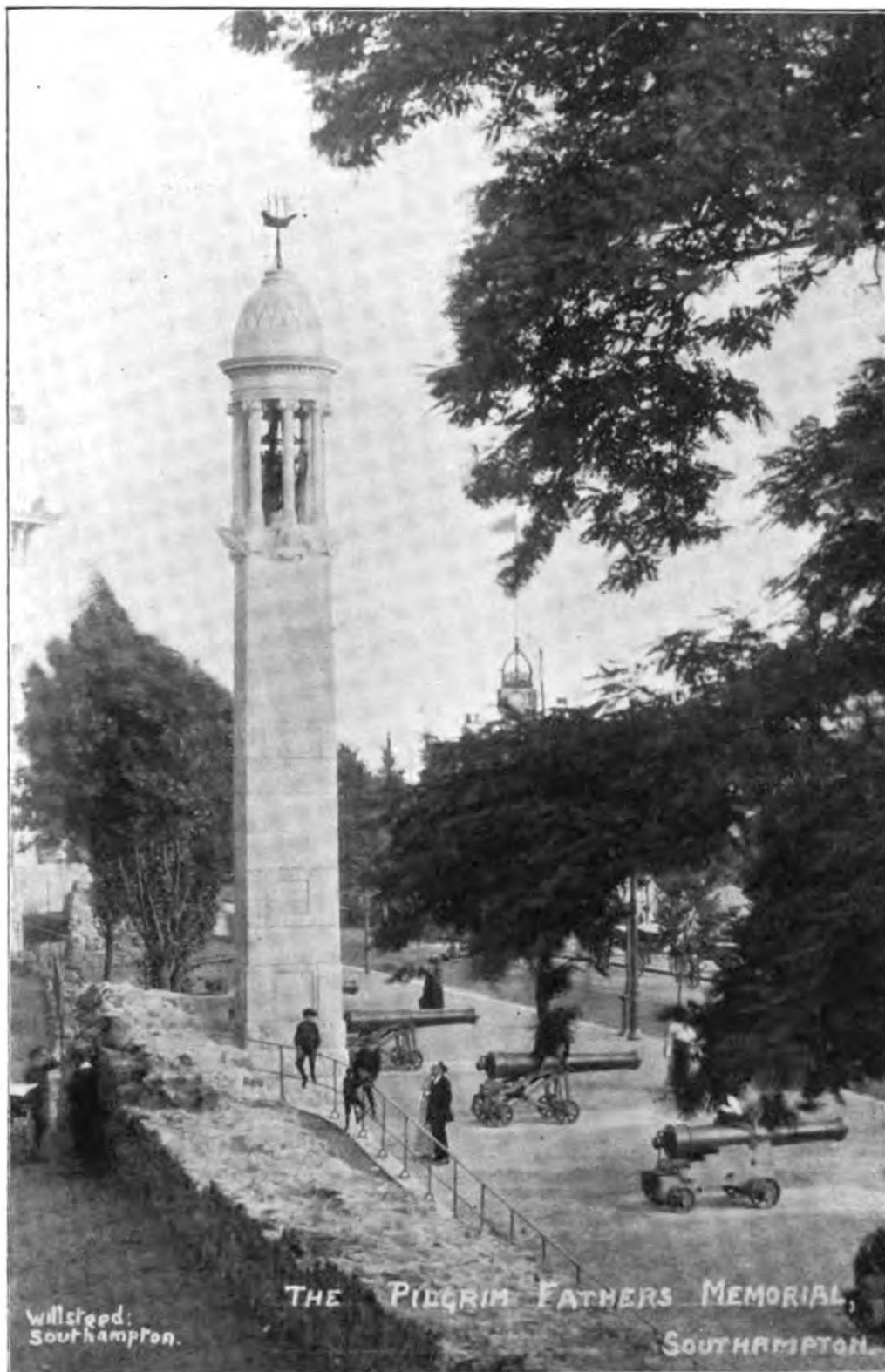
During Cowes week we had a large house-

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

party. Among our visitors was Miss Mary Lee, of Richmond, Virginia, daughter of General Robert E. Lee, the great Confederate Commander-in-Chief. We went to Cowes twice during the week, some of our friends going to the Squadron Club, and others visiting yachts in the harbour to which they were invited. Sir Thomas Lipton kindly received all our party on the *Erin*. Weather conditions were fine and all enjoyed it. The drive to Cowes is always a delight. On August 15 we went to Southampton for the Pilgrim Fathers Memorial ceremony of laying the corner-stones. A luncheon was held at the South-Western Hotel, after which the company adjourned as in 1911 to the Western Esplanade, and after speeches the corner-stones were well and truly laid to the glory of God and the immortal memory of the Pilgrim Fathers. The ladies officiating were the Mayoress of Southampton, Mrs. Swalm, Mrs. J. H. Seaverns, and Mrs. Richards. The Memorial was expected to be completed and unveiled on 'Pilgrim Day,' 1913.

Mrs. Richards again opened the Godshill and Wroxall Horticultural Show and distributed the prizes—the interest in onions being as exciting as ever.

On August 26 Mr. and Mrs. Martin Schultz invited us and other neighbours and friends to see a very interesting kinematograph exhibition held in the music room of their



THE PILGRIM FATHERS MEMORIAL, SOUTHAMPTON.

VENTNOR PICTURE PALACE

beautiful house, Coombe Wood, Bonchurch. The pictures were all exceptionally fine and rare, giving views of scenes in many different countries, a real afternoon of 'almost travelling and sightseeing.' The general effect was largely enhanced by the beauty of the setting. It was the first and only time I have known a kinema exhibition given in a private house.

The Ventnor Picture Palace was opened about two years ago by Mrs. Richards at the request of its enterprising founder. Mrs. Richards predicted from the platform that it would succeed and prosper, and so it has. This kinema show is well managed and a series of very interesting subjects are constantly presented, always affording a wholesome entertainment for young and old.

CHAPTER XXI

'ALMOST FAIRYLAND' was as much interested as any other part of Great Britain in the great coal strike which began in March 1912. Work was stopped in every coalfield in England, Scotland, and Wales. It was estimated that over 780,000 miners were on strike. This state of things produced a sort of paralysis in the general conduct of affairs throughout the country—rise in price of coal, restricted railway service, and many trade complications. Government intervention took place. The Prime Minister and certain of his colleagues, with expert advisers, held several important conferences with the masters and miners, the first of which took place on March 12. The following incident, which is of interest to some dwellers in 'Almost Fairyland,' took place as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of March 13, 1912 :

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

LADY'S PRESENT OF FLOWERS

The round-table conference, over which the Prime Minister presided, took place in the room at the Foreign Office in which Lord Salisbury's Cabinet Councils were held. In the centre of the table was set a magnificent bouquet of daffodils, bound up with red, white, and blue ribbons. The

DAFFODILS!

spectacle of such an unusual, though beautiful, decoration in a chamber in which discussions were to ensue which would result in raising the dark shadow hanging over the country or plunge it into even deeper blackness, must for a moment have surprised the representatives of the contending parties.

The presence of the flowers was explained as soon as the inscription on the attached card was seen. It read as follows: 'To the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, for the Council Table of Masters and Miners.'

Mrs. John Morgan Richards, of Steephill Castle, Ventnor, I.W., the mother of the late Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes), the novelist, and the wife of the oldest member of the American colony in England, was the lady to whom the idea had occurred that the sight of the mass of spring blooms might assist the conference in its deliberations.

Peace is not yet in sight, but so long as Mr. Asquith can keep the two parties together there is some little hope for a solution other than the disastrous one of national idleness, misery, and starvation.

Doubtless many of the owners and men yesterday noted the superb bouquet of daffodils sent 'for the council table' by a lady in the Isle of Wight, and tied up with the patriotic colours.

It was a charming, pathetic, and symbolic appeal which, coming from a lady who knows how much thousands of poorer women are now suffering from the strike all over the country, might well be taken to heart by those to whom it was sent.

The following letter was duly received by Mrs. Richards:

10 Downing Street,
Whitehall, S.W.
March 13, 1912.

Dear Madam,—The Prime Minister desires me to thank you for your very kind letter of the 11th instant, and for the beautiful flowers which you were so good as to send.

As you may have seen in the Press, the flowers were duly placed upon the Conference table.

Yours faithfully,
(Signed) F. W. LEITH ROSS.

MRS. RICHARDS.

A great many letters were received at Steep-hill during the week, expressing good wishes for sending the floral emblem, and other

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

letters asking for daffodils for hospitals, bazaars, &c.

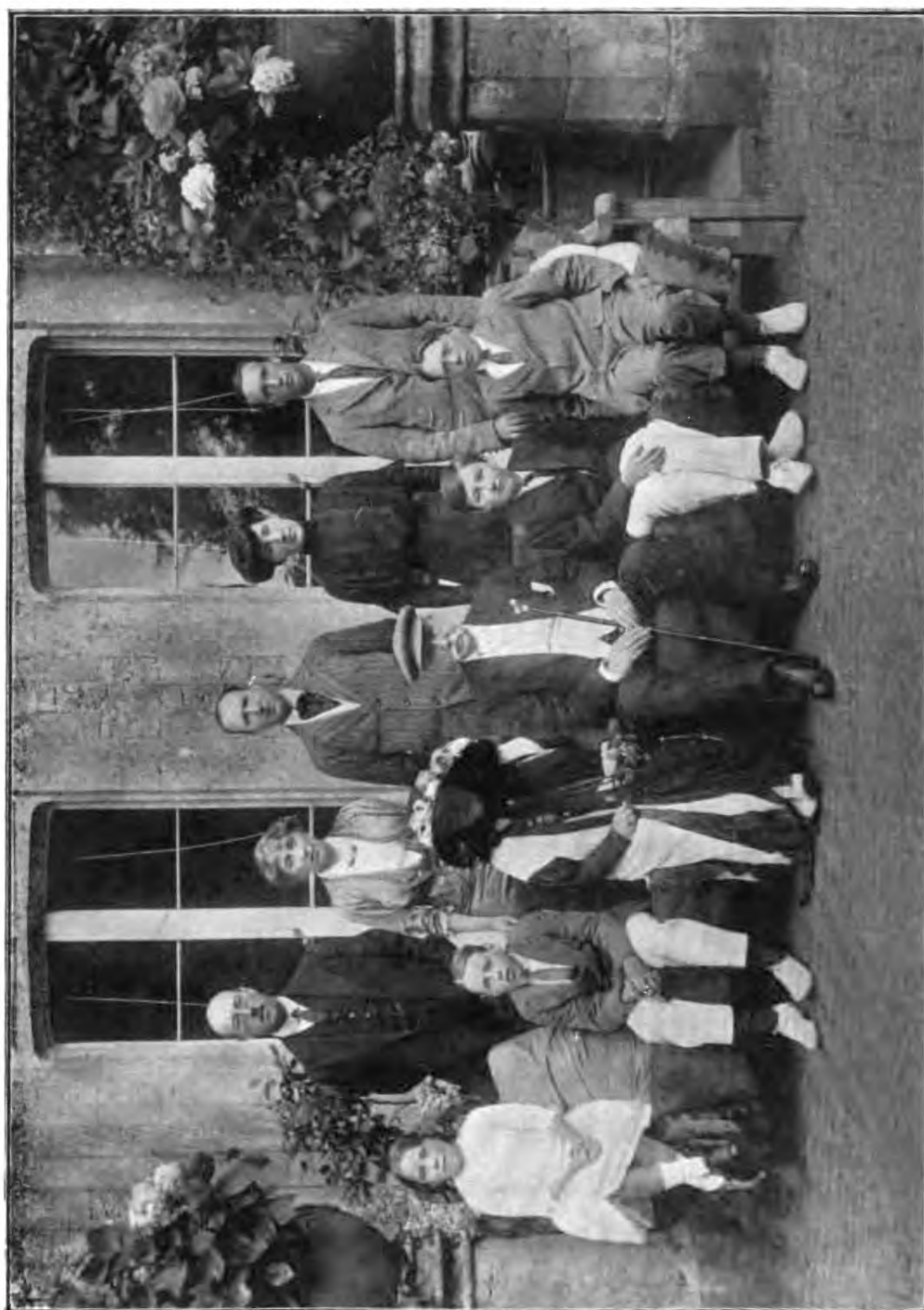
The coal strike did not end until April 8, nor until great suffering had been felt in many of the larger centres—food scarce, and indeed no coal obtainable by the poor. A Parliament Bill was duly passed, known as the 'Coal Mines Act,' which embodied the Minimum Wage condition. This Bill satisfied the miners, and on April 9 most of the pits were working normally.

I must mention that the daffodils were not grown at Steephill, but were all obtained from the very fine gardens known as the 'Daffodil Farm' at Apse Heath, between Sandown and Shanklin.

On December 15, 1912, the death occurred in London of Mr. Whitelaw Reid, the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Mr. Reid had represented the United States in this country with great distinction for more than eight years, and his death was greatly regretted by the people of both countries.

The Christmas Holidays of 1912 brought about a happy festival at Steephill, and the New Year, 1913, was upon us before our party broke up; but early in January my sister, Mrs. Cummings, who has long resided with us at Steephill, was summoned to America owing to the serious illness of our eldest sister, Mrs. E. C. Clarke, of Naples, New York, whom she had not seen for twenty years. A terrible voyage was experienced.





THREE GENERATIONS OF THE RICHARDS FAMILY.

GENERAL PROSPERITY

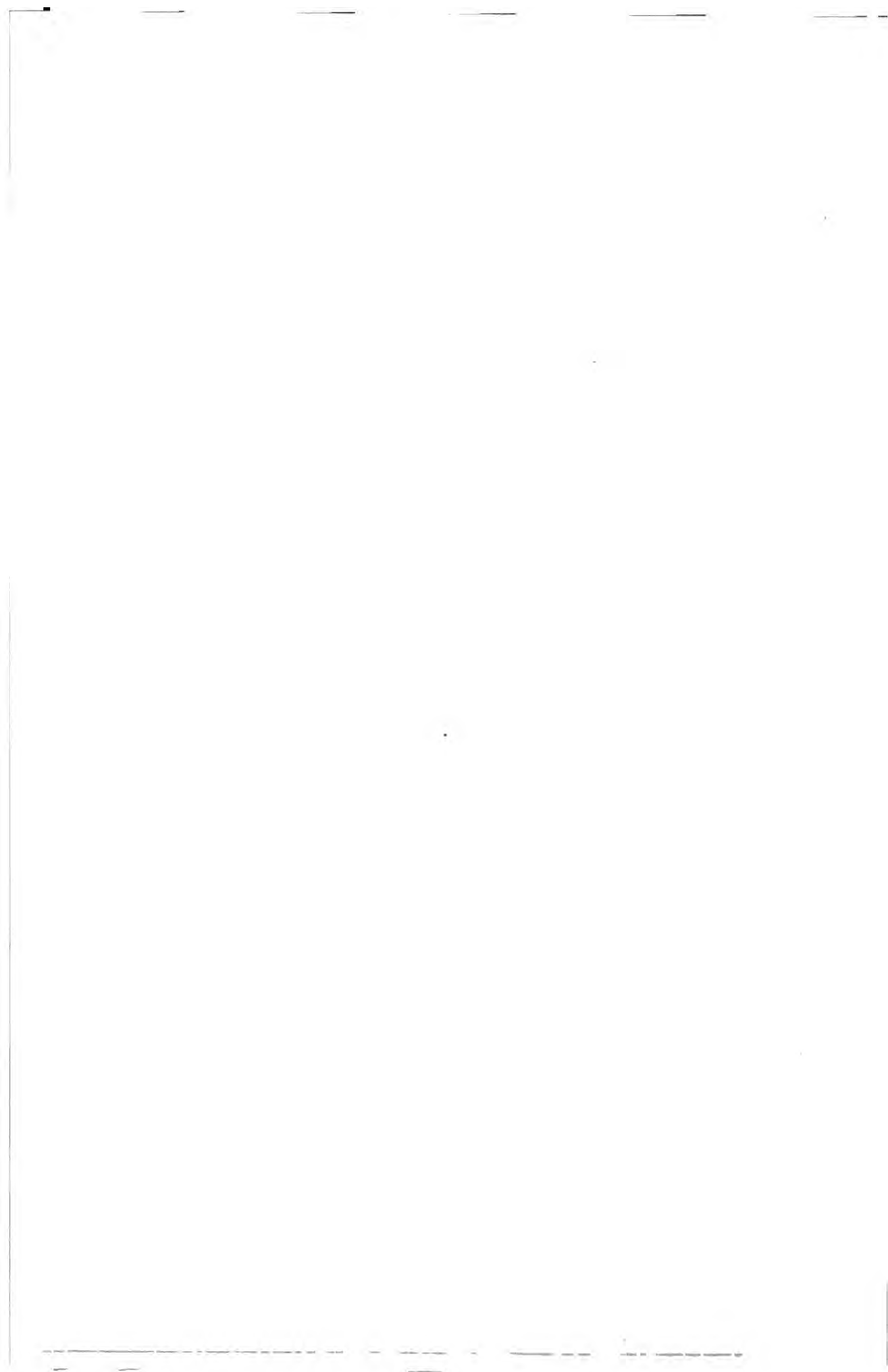
The gales in the Atlantic during January 1913 will long be remembered. I regret to say that our sister, Mrs. Clarke, died on March 29, and Mrs. Cummings returned here in June. Mrs. Clarke had once visited Ventnor, spending three weeks here as long ago as in 1872, and was the author of 'Village Life in America,' which was quite recently published in New York and London, and the little volume is quite well known in the Isle of Wight.

The year 1913, so far as now experienced by the country at large, has been a very prosperous and successful year in all departments of the world's work. In 'Almost Fairyland' the general improvement in 'results' applies to every sort and kind of trading and industry, with perhaps new building as an exception—the improvement in gardening and agriculture being really remarkable. The hay and grain harvests have been the largest for many years. Even from our small holding here at Steephill we had quite three times the hay ever secured since we took up the property. All the local tradespeople report excellent and greatly improved business, while those who rely upon visitors and strangers to occupy the hotels, boarding establishments, and lodging-houses all say 'exceptionally good season,' and some have said 'the best in ten years.' The boatmen, bathing-machine proprietors, and jobmasters repeat the verdict, 'very busy' and 'very satisfactory returns.' In fact, ever since Easter there has been a

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

cheerful air of prosperity throughout the town. The Sunday services in the churches have been remarkably well attended. All places of amusement are reported to have had 'record houses'—Hippodrome, Pier Pavilion, Picture Palace, &c., &c. When the 13th annual meeting of the Wroxall Horticultural Society was held this year (1913) on August 13, some said after Mrs. Richards had opened the show (a heavy shower occurring during the ceremony) how unlucky it was to have the show on the 13th, having the two other thirteens connected with it. As a matter of fact the show was a splendid success. The despised '13' has not proved, at any time this year that I can hear of, an enemy to prosperity either national or industrial.

Now then! A good word for Whitwell! I can now enjoy a drive through this picturesque little village. It is with very great pleasure that I am able to mention that the convenient and most useful drinking-water stands put up in Whitwell by the late Mr. William Spindler so many years ago for the benefit of its villagers, and which I have very seriously complained about in Chapter VI as being neglected and allowed to become rusty and a most unwholesome sight, have recently been entirely restored and renovated, all newly cleaned, scraped and painted, and present now an appearance of thrift and appreciation instead of neglect





ON THE ROAD TO BLACKGANG.

SOLENT TUNNEL

and indifference. I believe this much needed work was ordered by the County Council to be done. I am sure the inhabitants thank them, and I thank them also.

Nearly all the London dailies of October 25, 1913, mentioned an item of great interest to 'Almost Fairyland' concerning the tunnel under the Solent and connecting the Isle of Wight with the mainland. We have seen notices upon this subject many times, but 'nothing happens.' The one now referred to seems to have some official authority. The following is extracted from the *Daily Telegraph* :

SOLENT TUNNEL

ISLE OF WIGHT SCHEME

At yesterday's meeting of the Isle of Wight County Council, Sir Godfrey Baring, M.P., presiding, the Parliamentary Committee reported that they were still negotiating with regard to the proposed Solent Tunnel between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. No details were announced, it being stated that a full report would be given later on.

It is understood that the scheme under consideration is a revival of that which was promoted some years ago by the late Sir Blundell Maple, for the purpose of connecting the Isle of Wight with the mainland by a tunnel under the Solent between Lymington and a point a little to the east of Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, the distance being about three miles.

All the island people with whom I have spoken on the subject favour the Stokes Bay to Ryde, or the Hurst Castle route in preference to Lymington.

On the subject of tunnels it is most interesting to note that the Franco-British Travel Congress, in August 1913, again held meetings in London to discuss the question

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

of the great Channel Tunnel between England and France. The following statement was made at their last meeting :

Without any appeal from the Channel Tunnel Company, and without the slightest pressure being exercised from any outside source, the Government had themselves reopened the question by calling for special reports from the Departments immediately concerned—the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Board of Trade. And they knew, on the authority of the Prime Minister, that when these reports had been received they would be impartially considered by the Committee of Imperial Defence, upon whose recommendation the Government might be expected to act without hesitation.

This looks encouraging !

On August 15 we were able to muster a group of eight Americans from 'Almost Fairyland' to accompany us to Southampton for the unveiling of the completed Pilgrim Fathers' Memorial. As this was our third visit to Southampton on the same date for three years in succession it was very gratifying to witness this ceremony, which was performed by H.E. the American Ambassador, Dr. Walter Hines Page, who delivered a most eloquent address. The proceedings were of a highly interesting character.

It was explained that the erection of the memorial was not due to Southampton folk, who, speaking generally, had shown a remarkable indifference to the scheme, and the effort had been left to a few ; but residents of the United States, where many memorials to the Pilgrims have been erected, and where the people have established Pilgrim Societies in their honour all over the country,

PILGRIM FATHERS' MEMORIAL

had evinced a practical interest in the matter, and by their money contributions had made the erection of the memorial possible. The monument, which was designed by Mr. R. M. Lucas, F.R.I.B.A., of Southampton, and erected by Messrs. Garrett & Haysom of the same town, stands sixty feet high, and is surmounted by a cupola, in which is contained a 'lantern' modelled on the form of the receptacle in which the ancient mariners lit their beacon fires, and the whole structure is topped by a copper model of the *Mayflower*. Apart from its historical interest the monument is a handsome addition to the town's archæology, and the reproach has been removed from Southampton that a local event which was to have such an important effect upon the making of the world's modern history was in no way memorialised at the very port from which the founders of New England took their departure on August 15, 1620.

The following document on vellum, written by the United States Ambassador, Dr. Page, when he unveiled the Pilgrim Fathers' Memorial was forwarded to the Tudor House Museum, Southampton—

This monument to the Pilgrim Fathers is one of the pillars of the hope of mankind. The sons of those men, whose immortal experiences of freedom it commemorates, are drawn nearer to you by this tribute to their fathers. They send you their reverent thanks and give you this assurance—the old impulse of our destiny-led race, whatever new forms it may take with changing years, is not yet spent. The high, grim spirit of the Pilgrim still lives.

CHAPTER XXII

I HAVE recently read in the *Spectator* a very interesting note upon the subject of 'Diaries and Records,' in which the suggestion is made that every family, no matter how humble and retiring in their methods and plans, should appoint one of its number as 'historiographer,' whose duty it should be to make a slight sketch in words of every living member of the family, and put down a few characteristic sayings. None of us can see into the future much farther than the probable lifetime of our children and we do not always look even so far as that. Surely it would give us a sense of space if we could clearly see a little farther behind us. Some of the most interesting and readable works in our libraries are 'Journals' and 'Diaries,' and people generally are more interested in personalities than we are apt to think. There are at least a dozen weekly newspapers published in London, as well of course as in all large cities, that thrive and prosper chiefly through their method of collecting, editing and 'handing out' personal notes concerning people who are more or less in the public eye.

APPULDURCOMBE PARK

I intended to have made earlier mention of an 'Almost Fairyland' item of interest of which I was reminded during the last fortnight while in London. The Earl of Yarborough and Baron Worsley, whose family and history have been identified with the Isle of Wight since 1794, and who, as everyone knows, owned and occupied for years the family seat, Appuldurcombe Park, has let his London residence, 17 Albemarle Street, Piccadilly, for the last four years to our friend and compatriot, Mr. Gordon Selfridge, whom we frequently visit at Albemarle Street when in town. The chief interest in this magnificent mansion is the picture gallery which contains many priceless paintings by some of the great masters—Sir Joshua Reynolds, Turner, Rembrandt, Stubbs, and many of the great Italian painters. The collection is valued at, I think, £200,000, and is insured at that sum. Everything in the house is uniformly grand, and it is magnificently furnished. It has been truthfully said that on the opening of the hall door there is disclosed such a variety of beauty that all criticism is forgotten. Besides the wonderful pictures there is a rare collection of antiques brought by Sir Richard Worsley from Egypt, Turkey, and Italy. Most of these art treasures were originally placed in Appuldurcombe. The Earl of Yarborough has a country seat at Brocklesby Park, Lincolnshire, and as the family travel a great deal they have let the

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

London house to our friends for a term. Mr. Selfridge and his family frequently come to Ventnor and are strong advocates of 'Almost Fairyland.'

I am greatly pleased to mention that in response to an urgent appeal for books for the Literary and Scientific Institute, our very old friend Mrs. Georgina Weldon (now residing in Brighton) has sent me twenty-five volumes, a very interesting little collection. I hope that Mrs. Weldon's kind gift to the Institute may inspire some other readers to pass along any useful literature that they can conveniently spare.

A wedding took place in London on September 30, 1913, in which we as well as many others were much interested. This was the marriage of Miss Ella Prendergast, daughter of the late Sir Harry Prendergast, to Kaid General Sir Harry Maclean, K.C.M.G. Lady Maclean is the sister-in-law of our daughter, Mrs. George Prendergast. Master Jeffrey Prendergast, our grandson, was one of the pages at the ceremony which took place at All Saints' Church, Norfolk Square. A reception was held afterwards at the Alexandra Hotel, Knightsbridge. Kaid Sir Harry Maclean has had a most romantic career. Formerly in the 69th Foot, he became instructor to the Moorish Army under the late Sultan, whom he accompanied on his expeditions, and was colonel of his body-guard. He was captured by Raisuli in July

COTTAGE HOSPITAL

1907, while on a mission from the Sultan, and was held prisoner for some months, but was ransomed by the British Government on payment of £20,000. The Kaid and Lady Maclean left England for Tangier on October 21. The ex-King of Portugal and his mother, Queen Amélie, have occupied as tenants the Kaid's mansion at Richmond since taking up their residence in England.

I hope the plan which is now being promoted (October 1913) to provide a small cottage hospital for Ventnor, Bonchurch, St. Lawrence, Niton, Chale, Whitwell, Godshill, and Wroxall can be successfully carried through, if not for six beds then for three as a beginning, adding more as funds are received and necessity arises. The Committee cannot properly proceed further in the matter until they are in a position to estimate the financial support the scheme would be likely to receive from the residents of these districts, as it is not intended to make its maintenance a charge upon the rates. A circular I have received makes the following forcible statement :

The need for such an Institution has been long felt in this District. At present some patients have to be sent to Ryde, where their condition has entailed a certain amount of risk in doing so ; others for whom the Ryde Hospital has been unavailable, have had their recovery delayed from having to be treated in unsuitable surroundings in their own homes. It is felt that it is not wholly creditable to a locality with the population of the Undercliff that this state of affairs should be allowed to continue indefinitely.

(Signed),

On behalf of the Provisional Committee,
JOHN L. WHITEHEAD, Chairman.

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I think I must state that up to the present time I have not been approached by any capitalist desirous of undertaking the building of a funicular railway to the top of St. Boniface, or even the alternative and less costly project of a 'tube' from the esplanade to Church Street; nor have I been asked for particulars and estimates to build the 'Observation Tower.' I may say, in support of my claim, that the latter would be a sound investment; that I have had placed before me recently the profitable result which an enterprising builder of 'sky-scrapers' has accomplished in New York. It is well known that the lofty sky-scrapers erected in the Empire City of the United States can be numbered in hundreds, and free access to the top storey of any of them by express lifts is available for observation, but the latest building, the 'Woolworth' (fifty-seven storeys high) has reserved the seven floors above the fifty for observation, amusements, and refreshments, charging a fee of fifty cents to ascend. No less a sum than 12,000 dollars was taken for 'fares' the first fortnight, and it is stated that visitors as well as residents hurry along to the observation building, notwithstanding the fact that they may go up within seventy-five feet on as high a tower in hundreds of other buildings without paying a farthing for the privilege! I suppose we must wait for another Mr. Woolworth to undertake such an attraction for 'Almost Fairyland.' A hearty



WOOLWORTH BUILDING, NEW YORK.

METEOROLOGICAL STATION

welcome awaits the gentleman should he appear! Meantime, if we have not the observation tower we have really a most practical and eminently useful meteorological station in Ventnor Park, which is in charge of Mr. Fred. L. Watkins, as meteorologist. Perfect and accurate daily reports are therefore recorded. It is to be hoped, in the interest of the town, that these weather conditions will be supplied to the London daily press, thus informing the public what sort of weather is obtaining in 'Almost Fairyland,' and comparison made with other coast resorts.

To my great regret absence in London on Sunday, October 5, prevented my being present to hear the eloquent address on 'Character,' delivered by Mr. C. Scaramanga Ralli at the Ventnor Brotherhood meeting, held in the United Methodist Church. I think it is a remarkably soul-stirring and impressive message, and of vital importance. I wish it could be issued in pamphlet form and an edition of a million copies printed and distributed throughout the country for our young men to read. It is not a message to the Ventnor Brotherhood alone, but to the whole nation of young men. Mr. Ralli's concluding sentence must have made a deep impression. I cannot refrain from quoting it.

He said he rarely quoted scripture, because it was not his province to do so, but that he was never tired of the passage—

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

'Who are these arrayed in white?' The answer was 'These are they who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Did they know who they were? They were the men and women of character, and the blood of the Lamb was typical of self-sacrifice. It was of such as they that were the character-builders, not only of our own country, but of the world, of whom it was said in the Book: 'They are Mine,' saith the Lord, 'in the day that I make up my jewels.'

Upon three Sunday mornings recently the Rev. H. E. Heywood has delivered sermons in the Congregational Church, taking a hymn as his subject and text, and with remarkable success and appreciation. All great hymns are Holy Scripture in lyrical form, and it is no real departure from conventional usage to preach a sermon with a hymn as a text, and this was clearly demonstrated in the masterly and most able discourses delivered by Mr. Heywood. Cardinal Newman's 'Lead, kindly Light,' was Mr. Heywood's first subject, Mrs. Frances Alexander's 'There is a green hill far away' the next, and the third sermon was from Watts' 'O God, our help in ages past.' I am sure these hymn subjects, coupled with certain biographical particulars concerning the authors of these renowned hymns which Mr. Heywood includes in his discourse, must appeal to everybody. One cannot feel otherwise than uplifted. Personally I hope we may have further hymn sermons.

I have just seen No. 3 of the *Island Sunbeam*, a mid-monthly temperance paper for young people, published at a halfpenny



GATEWAY, CARISBROOKE CASTLE.

HAMPSHIRE AS A BIRTHPLACE

and edited by Miss Innell Jolliffe—a very bright little ‘paperette’ it is. The sun shines on every page and there is the fragrance of flowers to cheer the reader. I hope this new and useful journal will be subscribed for by every parent on the island and that they will let their children read it.

HAMPSHIRE AS A BIRTHPLACE

The secretary of the London Hampshire Society, while deprecating comparison with other counties of England in the production of great men, declares that Hampshire men are satisfied with the universally acknowledged fact that their county is the typical county of England, bound up, as its history is, with the early northern invaders who disturbed the ancient Britons and gave the district the name of ‘Home’ from which the county takes its name; with the wonderful history of Winchester, the *Ventu Belgarum* of the Romans, and the Camelot of the Round Table times; with William of Wykeham, the wonderful mediæval architect, to whom we owe both the cathedral and ancient school of Winchester; and with the innumerable sailors and warriors, poets and statesmen, writers and engineers, who sprang from the county.

If names are wanted, then here is a list, selected almost at random, which would certainly establish any claim to a high position in the realms of literature, art, science,

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

government, and philanthropy. Alfred the Great, who made this particular part of Wessex famous for its scrupulous honesty; Dibdin, the naval songster; Young, author of 'Night Thoughts'; Sir William Petty, Pepys' colleague at the Admiralty; Brunel, the engineer, born at Portsmouth; Gilbert White, the natural historian, of Selborne; John Keble and his brother hymnalist, Isaac Watts; Charles Dickens, born at Portsmouth; Lord Palmerston; Jonas Hanway, philanthropist, and the courageous user of umbrellas, born at Portsmouth; Izaak Walton, who wrote 'The Compleat Angler'; Sir Walter Besant, born at Portsmouth; Wesley; Sir Edward Elgar and Edwin Greene, composers; George Meredith, born at Portsmouth; Roundell Palmer, the first Earl of Selborne; and last, but not least, 'The Lady of the Lamp,' Florence Nightingale.

02

GOLDEN WEDDING

1883-1903

As December 31, 1913, was the fiftieth anniversary of our wedding, I am adding to this little volume a few particulars concerning the event, as reported in the London and local press.

CELEBRATION IN VENTNOR

The golden wedding of two of Ventnor's best known and highly esteemed residents, Mr. and Mrs. John Morgan Richards, of Steephill Castle, was celebrated with much rejoicing on Wednesday (December 31, 1913). It was a perfect day in point of weather, though winter's chill was in the air; the sun shone out with genial brightness as though to grace the happy occasion and to flood the world with the brightness that was flooding the hearts of the happy pair who were celebrating the jubilee of their wedded happiness.

During the day Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards were the recipients of hundreds of congratulatory letters and telegrams from both sides of the broad Atlantic, and from all classes—all class distinctions being for the time dropped, and heart spoke to heart without any intervening barrier.

The first public function of the day was a dinner given to about two hundred of the townspeople, those being selected who would be best able to enjoy the generous hospitality of the kind-hearted host and hostess.

The dinner was held in the Congregational Hall, which was gaily decorated for the occasion.

Mr. J. N. Cater, J.P. (chairman of the Urban District Council), presided, and seated with him at the table on the platform were the Rev. R. W. Colquhoun (Vicar of Ventnor), the Rev. H. E. and Mrs. Heywood, Mrs. J. N. Cater, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Brown, Miss Maude Medley, Miss Gwladys Williams, Miss Dorothy Wallder, Messrs. W. H. Lawler, Evan Jones, James Knight, J. Martin, C. T. Stevens, B. W. Russell, and J. C. B. Durrant.

After the fullest possible justice had been done to the good things provided, each of the male guests in the body of the hall was presented with a new briar pipe and an ounce of tobacco, while the lady guests were not forgotten, each being presented with half a pound of tea.

After a speech by the Chairman, a resolution was proposed by the Rev. H. E. Heywood, and seconded by the Rev. R. W. Colquhoun, thanking Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

for the generous way in which they had entertained them, and offering their cordial good wishes. The resolution was then put and carried amid applause. A charming musical programme was then carried out under the direction of Mr. Evan Jones.

THE 'AT HOME'

Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards gave an 'At Home' at Steephill Castle on Wednesday afternoon from four o'clock to six, when a large number of invited guests assembled to tender their personal congratulations to the host and hostess upon the happy occasion.

The beautiful entrance hall was charmingly and artistically decorated with flags and evergreens, and during the afternoon the excellent brass and reed band, under Bandmaster W. T. Hewitt, played a delightful selection of music.

The guests were received by Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards in the large and handsome drawing-rooms, and their guests were greeted with a cordiality that was characteristic of the genial, large-hearted host and hostess.

At five o'clock Mr. E. G. H. Wetherick, calling for silence, announced that Mr. J. N. Cater had something to say to them.

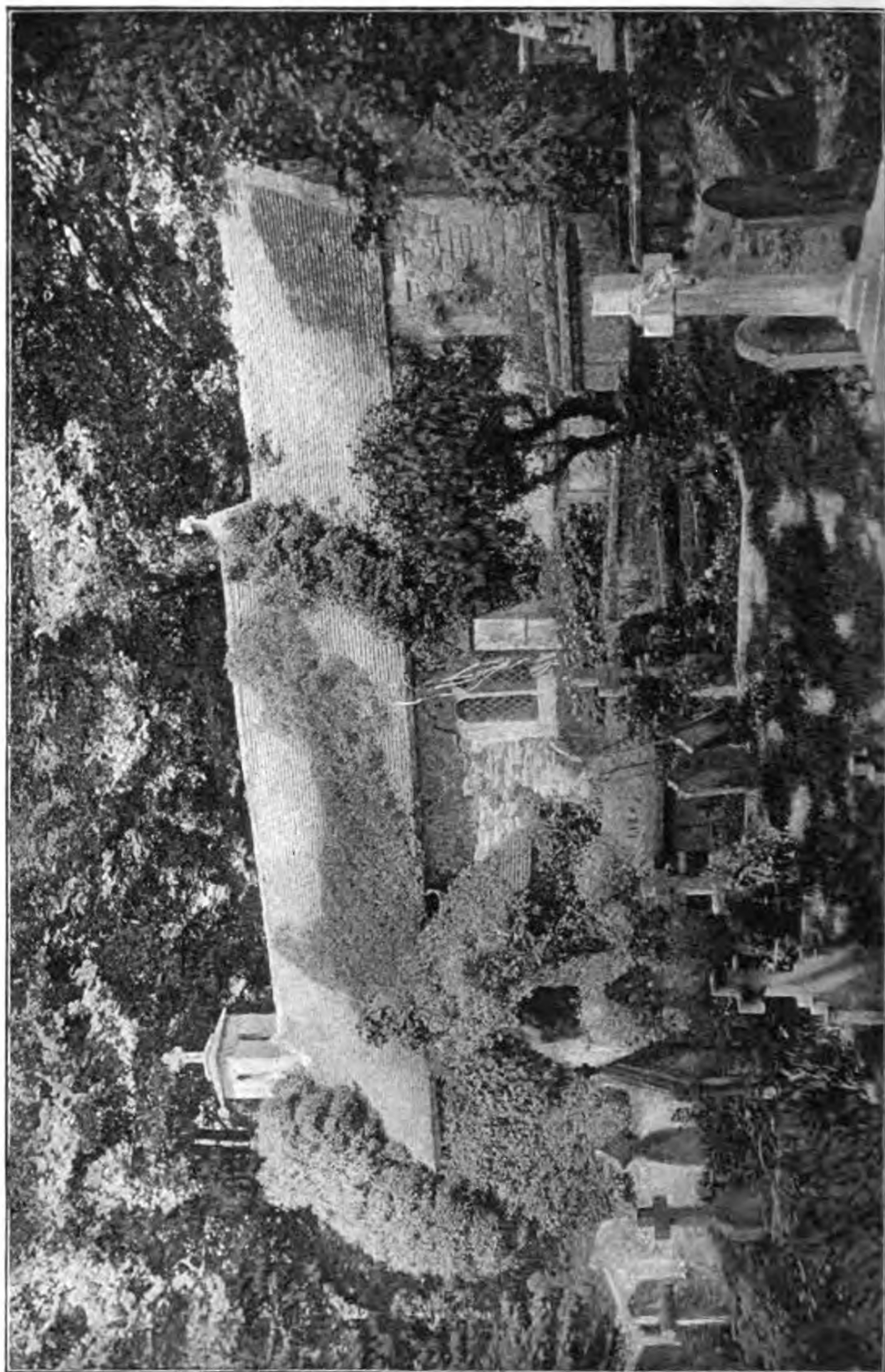
After a most sympathetic speech Mr. Cater then read the following address, which was signed by himself as the chairman of the District Council, Councillor W. B. Judd (vice-chairman of the Council), Councillor Dr. R. Robertson (ex-chairman of the Council), Rev. R. W. Colquhoun (Vicar of Ventnor), Rev. A. P. Clayton (Vicar of Holy Trinity, Ventnor), Rev. H. E. Heywood (Minister of the Congregational Church), and the Rev. T. F. Lockyer (Minister of the Wesleyan Church), members of the committee :—

TO MR. AND MRS. JOHN MORGAN RICHARDS
STEEPHILL CASTLE, VENTNOR

On the occasion of their Golden Wedding, December 31, 1913

As representing your fellow residents in Ventnor, We, the undersigned, desire to tender you our congratulations on this memorable completion of fifty years of united happy and beneficent life, and to express our cordial good wishes for the future.

During your long residence in Ventnor you have won not only the high esteem, but also the deep affection, of all who have had the privilege of your acquaintance.



THE OLD CHURCH, BONCHURCH.



THE CASCADE, VENTNOR.

THE CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS

To the exceptional ability, the high character, and the unfailing courtesy of the one, have been added the charming vivacity, the sympathetic kindness and the ready helpfulness of the other, and all these qualities had been placed without reserve at the disposal of every good cause in our town and neighbourhood.

We earnestly hope that you may long continue to reside in our midst, and pray that upon you and yours the divine blessing may ever rest.

Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards both replied expressing their deep and heartfelt thanks.

The following is a description of the beautiful Illuminated Address kindly presented by the inhabitants of Ventnor and neighbourhood. Size 39 in. by 31 in., in wide ornamental English gold frame. The upper part consists of flowers, treated naturally ; at either end roses, and between the bells and the centre ring, pansies (for heartsease), forget-me-nots, and maidenhair fern. The central ring represents a golden wedding-ring, within which is the date, December 31st, in a quatrefoil panel, and 'a true lover's knot below. On either side a golden bell, upon which, within a circular panel, the dates 1863-1913. At either end of this top device are festooned flags of England and America. The address itself comes within a cut-out panel of a bell shape and is done on vellum. The left-hand border has two cut panels, within which are views of Ventnor and of Steephill Castle sketched in water colours. Up the centre of the ornamental border is a band of forget-me-nots and ornamental scroll work on either side. Below the address panel is a centre one with the monogram J. M. R., and on either side a straight panel filled with pansies. The right-hand border is mainly ornamental scroll work, broken in the centre by two hearts intertwined. The general idea of the colouring is a warm golden brown, red and gold, with the flowers and flags in correct colours.

Congratulatory Addresses were also received from the following :—

The Wroxall Horticultural Society (framed and illuminated).

The Whitwell Parish Council.

The Whitwell Summer Fête Committee.

The Ventnor Congregational Church.

The Yarborough Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons.

The Indoor and Outdoor Staff of Steephill Castle
(framed and illuminated).

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

CELEBRATION IN LONDON

January 22, 1914

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

To most people in this country the celebration of the golden wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards may owe its chief interest to the fact that their eldest daughter was Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes). This was, however, scarcely the note struck at the banquet given in the Hotel Cecil last night in their honour by distinguished people, both of this side and the other side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Morgan Richards, as ex-chairman of the American Society in London, has been a peacemaker between the British and American peoples. Further, he has been a leader in the business and literary life of the metropolis. From 1888 to 1895 he was the proprietor of *The Academy*. Several books on English and American life have come from his pen, and he has given to the world 'The Life and Letters' of his distinguished daughter.

Sir George Riddell presided at the banquet, and amongst those present were :

The American Ambassador and Mrs. Page, Earl Curzon of Kedleston, the Hon. John Griffiths (Consul-General U.S.A.) and Mrs. Griffiths, Sir Jesse and Lady Boot, Lady de Bathe, Mr. F. M. Fisk, Mr. Peter Keary, Mr. Thomas J. Barratt, Mr. and Mrs. Van Duzer, Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Ward, Madame Selfridge, Mr. H. Gordon Selfridge, Mr. Harry Cooke, Dr. Pilley, Mr. L. B. Sebastian, K.C., Mr. A. E. Holden, Mr. Peter MacEwan, Mr. R. Dallas Ross, Mr. C. Urquhart-Fisher, Mr. George Hussey, Mr. H. Simonis, Mr. C. F. Higham, Mr. John Hart, Mr. Arthur Richardson, Mr. T. E. Kirby, Mr. John A. W. Mudie, Mr. A. McMonagle, Mr. Thomas Russell, Mr. F. C. Wise, Mr. H. K. Edge, Mr. E. Platt, Mr. Robert Liddiard, Mr. L. R. Gleason, Mr. Charles J. Anderson, Mr. A. McLellan, Mr. E. Sorrell, Mr. E. Greenwood, Mr. H. C. Anning, Mr. and Mrs. Secretan, Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Richards, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Richards, Mr. W. W. White, Mr. John Morgan Richards, jun., Mr. Charles Farnam, Mr. J. S. Brodhead, the Rev. F. W. Pitt, Mrs. George Prendergast, Mrs. Martin Schultz, Miss M. D. Smurthwaite, Mr. John Churchill Craigie, Mrs. Cummings, Madame Bricka, Mr. W. T. Shore, Mrs. Maitland-Mackgill-Crichton, Mr. H. E. Morgan, Mr. George King, Mr. and Mrs. George Wetton, Miss N. E. Trenaman, Mr. H. W. Chapman, Mr. G. A. Chapman, Mr. Godfrey J. Hogg, Mr. Robert Donald, Mr. Charles

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

Churchill, Mr. Albert Dawson, Mrs. C. H. Gough, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Gamage, Mr. Lewis Edmunds, K.C., Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Hind, and Mr. John C. Boot.

Royal Message

The toasts of the King and Queen and the United States of America were pledged by the company, and the chairman announced that her Majesty the Queen had sent to the guests of the evening the following telegram :

To Mr. and Mrs. Richards, Steephill Castle, Ventnor.—Pray accept my best wishes for your golden wedding day.—MARY R.

Sir George Riddell, in proposing the toast of the evening, said they were there to celebrate an interesting event in the life of a remarkable and interesting man, who, by his personal influence and charming personality, had done much to bring about a better feeling between two great nations. (Cheers.)

When Mr. Morgan Richards came to England in the year 1867, the relations between America and England were not what they are to-day. We did not understand the Americans, and they did not understand us. There were only twelve American firms carrying on business in England, and the traditional view of Americans created by Dickens still survived. The majority of English people were under the interesting but mistaken impression that most Americans were colonels with goatee beards, and that they all spoke with a nasal twang, and were addicted to strong language, tobacco, and expectoration. On the other hand, the Americans regarded the English as an effete and worn-out race, and he regretted to say that one of their greatest authors had the temerity to describe English matrons as being ' beefy.' (Laughter.)

To-day all classes of the English people loved to welcome the Americans. The aristocracy sold them their castles and married their daughters ; the commercial classes were always glad to make use of American ideas and inventions. Any Englishman who went to America was overwhelmed by kindness and hospitality.

Anglo-American Peacemakers

Mr. Morgan Richards, as one of the founders and past chairman of the American Society in London, had taken a leading part in bringing about this most beneficent change in the relations between the two peoples, and he

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

hoped that they would live to see the day when it would become the practice to set up monuments to the great peacemakers of the world, like Mr. Choate, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, Mr. Page, and last, but not least, Viscount Bryce.

'We are going to begin,' he said, 'by presenting Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards with a little monument, in the shape of a piece of plate, accompanied by the hope that they will hand it down to their descendants with the statement that it was given to them on the occasion of their golden wedding, in order to commemorate the part which they have taken in helping to remove those dislikes, suspicions, and misunderstandings which tend to produce great national conflagrations.' (Cheers.)

'It would not be fitting that I should sit down without referring to one of the greatest joys—certainly the greatest sorrow—of the married life of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards. That gifted woman, John Oliver Hobbes, the writer of some of the most brilliant and fascinating novels which have been published in the English language during the past thirty years, was the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards. On an occasion such as this the story of her wonderful life and its premature termination must be in the memory of everyone. Mrs. Craigie used to remark, "There is only one obligation in life, and that is courage." I will only say that Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards have borne their grief with a courage which has won the admiration of all their friends.

'Some time ago, one of my friends, who is considerably older than I am, said to me: "They always tell you that it is only the future that matters. Don't you believe it. The thing that really matters is the past. You cannot alter the past." That is why a golden wedding is such an interesting occasion. The future of youth is a valuable possession, but equally precious—perhaps more precious to the individual—are the happy memories of old age.' (Cheers.)

Mr. F. C. Van Duzen, hon. secretary of the American Society in London, added a few words in hearty endorsement of the toast.

The Presentation

The Chairman then, amid the cheers of the company, formally presented Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Richards with a massive silver-gilt centre-piece, consisting of a rose bowl and vases of Georgian design. Accompanying these articles was an album containing messages from a number of well-known people.

A TOKEN OF WORLDWIDE ESTEEM

Mr. Morgan Richards expressed the deep gratitude of himself and his wife for this token of the esteem of their numerous friends. 'There is no mistake about the fifty years—and we are getting on. (Laughter.) The official registers and calendars confirm all this.' To reach a golden wedding day is not an achievement of genius, or talent, or creative invention of any kind. It is by God's blessing and care that we are able to appear before you this evening. Your own infinite kindness has made us your welcome guests. American newspapers spoke of Americans long abroad as expatriates. He was glad to say that he had never felt the slightest wish to abandon his citizenship of the United States. (Hear, hear.) But he had a great affection for this country, and that this had been reciprocated he most gratefully acknowledged.

Referring to some of the changes that have taken place in London during the forty-six years of his residence in this country, Mr. Morgan Richards remarked that in 1867 there were less than a dozen American families resident in London. The Holborn Viaduct had not been built, nor the Thames Embankment, nor Blackfriars Bridge, nor Tower Bridge. There was not in 1867 a halfpenny daily newspaper, morning or evening, published in England. He well remembered at Liverpool the very day he landed seeing in Lime Street Station a large poster, '*Daily Telegraph*, largest circulation in the world,' a position he believed they could still claim as a penny newspaper—certainly a great record. There was not at that date the sixpenny telegram; no halfpenny postcards, no parcels post, no express delivery. Cables to America were a guinea a word.

He must say a few words about publicity. What was advertising? What was advertisement? There was no human being who could give a complete and exhaustive reply to that question. There were people who almost shuddered at the word—using it while they protested. Others associated it with nothing but vulgar acclaim. He took a very different view. (Hear, hear.) Advertising was the 'live wire' of all commerce, all enterprise, all progress in every department of the world's work. It was the 'live wire' of the Throne, of Parliaments, Republics, and Congress; the 'live wire' of the Bench and Bar and of the pulpit, of statesmen, divines, heroes, and poets. It was the 'live wire' of the Army and Navy. It was the evangel universal. It was the all-inclusive form of communication between nations, tribes, and peoples.

ALMOST FAIRYLAND

There might be other names for it, but it was advertisement all the same. Their own intelligence would enable them to realise what he meant ; anyhow they need not look for a better definition. (Hear, hear.)

Concluding, Mr. Richards said, ' You have made us very, very happy, and the memory of this day will be an everlasting joy. It will endow us for ever with ennobling illusions, fresh and imperishable. It means renewal of youth. So I say, God bless you all.'

He added the following lines from Newman's immortal poem .

' So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone ;
And with the morn, those Angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.'

Mrs. Richards' Happy Speech

The speech of the evening was that of Mrs. Richards. She told how when she first came to England she thought all the women cold. She had since learned to love them, and they had been very kind to her.

' Last summer,' she said, ' I had so many flowers sent to me and I wished to goodness—(laughter)—that I had a dish large enough to hold all the roses. My wish has come true. This wonderful thing (pointing to the handsome present—a golden rose bowl with attendant vases) will hold them all. I shall name all the roses after the people here to-night.' (Cheers.) As showing her universal love for the English people, she told how she had gone the other day to the house of a friend who said, ' Oh ! you horrid creature, do you still love Lloyd George ? ' ' Yes,' she said, ' ten thousand times, yes.' (Laughter.)

The toast of the Chairman and Committee was proposed in a striking speech by Mr. William Porter Ward, and was afterwards honoured, Sir George Riddell responding.

The service of plate presented to us was a massive Georgian centre-piece in silver gilt in the form of a rose bowl and four vases, from the establishment of Messrs. Elkington & Co., London. This was accompanied by an album containing expressions of esteem, and the autographs of the more than two hundred donors.

