

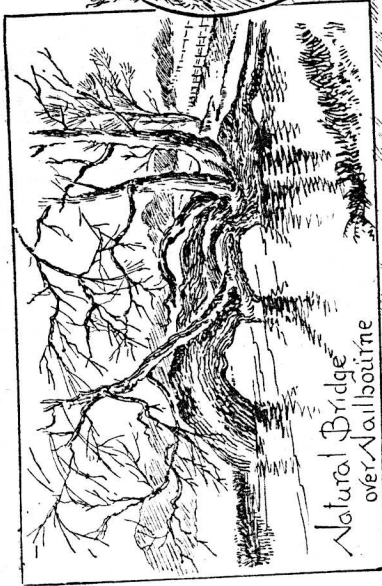
## BRIDGE.

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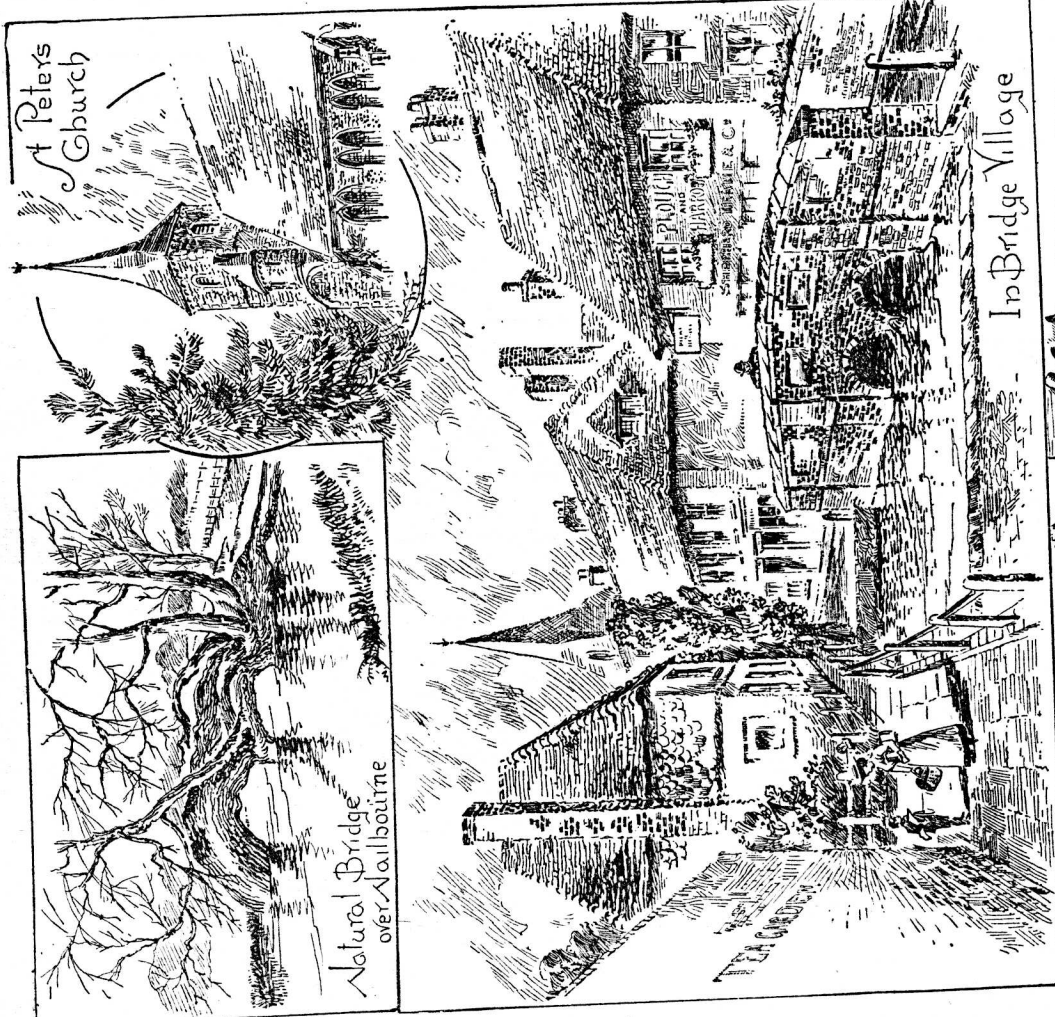


THE Romans were the cleverest road makers in the world. Many of those they laid some two thousand years ago are still in existence, or rather, their foundations survive, and no others of more recent make are equal to them in firmness, nor are they likely to prove as durable. And one of the most important of these old Roman roads is known as Watling Street, extending from Dover to London. On the run of this ancient highway stands the village of Bridge, just outside the cathedral city of Canterbury. What sights have passed this way in all those two thousand years! Here Roman legions marched, here came merchants from the south with pack horses laden with costly goods, here for hundreds of years have trod the feeble and smarting feet of pilgrims and the ancient mendicant and modern tramp; here have come horse-drawn vehicles, market carts, and luxuriously fitted carriages of the rich, and the modest caravan of the gipsy; here has resounded the stirring note of the silver trumpet of the Roman hosts and later from the horn of the guard of the London and Dover coach; and now the horn of the motor makes less noise, and not such sweet music, and the rubber-tyred wheels send up dense clouds of dust.

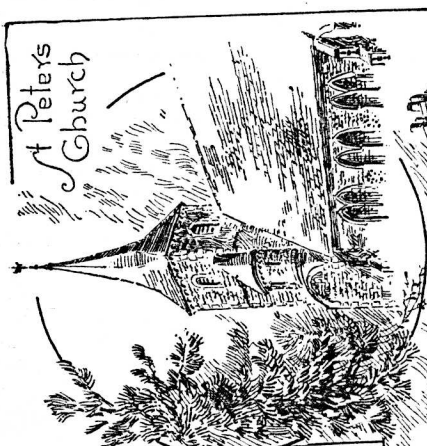
The little village street of Bridge has stood there all these years and seen all these passing sights. Yet to look at it now, it does not impress you with antiquity. The architect who takes a glimpse at the church will tell you that the Normans have left traces of their skill behind; but, beyond this, we see nothing to recall the centuries of the far past. And it is not pretentious of great beauty, as Kent villages go. The street is long, with houses mainly humble in appearance, and built without a vestige of architectural style.



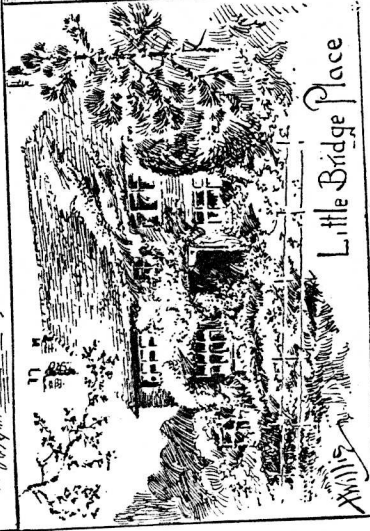
Natural Bridge  
over Nailbourne



Iron Bridge Village



St Peters Church



Little Bridge Place



Unique  
Altar Tomb



Across the main street is a bridge, but when I was in the village last autumn it seemed a superfluous erection. There was the bed of a river but no water, save a few trickles that could not have the audacity to call themselves a stream. Weeds were growing in abundance and house refuse, broken pots and pans lay in the thick rank grass. Where was the water? Two months afterwards I was again at Bridge. Down the river bed came a sweeping torrent, washing away everything in its course, flooding fields with its overflow, inundating roadways along the Elham Valley as far as Littlebourne. It was the Nailbourne, one of those mysterious streams that suddenly rise and just as suddenly disappear. This one in the Elham Valley rises in a field at Ottinge, close to Lyminge and takes its course through the low-lying country until it joins another stream that rises at Lyminge and the two combine till they empty themselves into the river that has its source at Littlebourne and thence onward to join the Stour. In the Alkham valley another Nailbourne rises, and in various parts of England similar intermittent streams are to be found under the name of Winterbournes.

So, although the bridge and river cutting seems quite unnecessary at some periods, it is absolutely essential that they be in readiness to save flooding when the Nailbourne appears at Bridge. The old structure, built of stone and brick something over a hundred years ago, gives a touch of beauty to the scene at this end of the street. The arches are low and support the high road, while a wooden footbridge leads us along the path over another part of the hollow to a quaint little building now used as a dairy.

The parish church of St. Peter, once a chapel to the church of Patrixbourne—the living of the combined places is still one—stands at the extreme end of the village on a sunken piece of ground and surrounded by yews. It is compact in appearance, strictly neat and clean, its walls of black polished flint and its stone windows all being in such a perfect state of preservation that one might mistake it for a modern church. But the archæologist knows better. For, although the restoration in 1860 was so complete that much of the church was re-built, Norman work can still be seen outside in several places. The tower, situated at the south-western corner, is Norman in its lower part, but the shingled spire is modern. A unique stair turret projects on the south side, square in the lower part, but belted above, the latter shape giving it an Oriental character. Up in the belfry are three bells, two without any wording, but the third is inscribed

as follows:—ANE: MARIA: GRACIA: PLENA: DUS: TECU. This tenor bell is supposed to have been made as long ago as the fourteenth century by one William le Belyetre, of Canterbury. There are two Norman doorways, the smaller one in the north-east corner, by the side of the chancel, having deep chevron moulding that catches our eye as we walk down the hill towards the church. The west doorway is a good specimen, its fine moulding standing out in bold relief, but, unfortunately, the three heads—one in the centre and the other two supporting the hood—are battered. The shafts have carved capitals.

Entering the building the casual observer might imagine that it is modern, so trim and fresh are the walls and stonework. And much of it is comparatively modernized, the barrel roof of the nave and the timbered roofs of the aisles containing much new woodwork. Some of the piers of the arcades, themselves of Early English origin, have been altered. There are four of these arches dividing the nave from the north aisle, and the pieces which were once square have been replaced by two circular ones, crowned with floral capitals of Early English design. The arcade on the south side is of three bays and the three arches are fine specimens of Early English work. In the north aisle there is nothing to specially note, but in the south aisle the windows are peculiar, as the centre shafts project and stand out by themselves in front of the glass. One of these windows contains stained glass and was erected to the memory of May, wife of Major Farwell, of the 44th Regiment, and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Winter, of Bridge Hill, who died at Madras in 1882. In the eastern wall of this aisle is a huge wheel window, while below are two Norman windows, deeply splayed and filled with stained glass.

By the light of the west coloured window of Perpendicular date, and erected to the memory of Dr. Amelius Sicard, who died in 1880, we notice an entrance to the vestry under the tower, with a fine stone arch, with its rich billet moulding, supported by grotesque heads. Another fine arch also gives entrance to the vestry from the south aisle. The font stands in the centre, a dark marble octagonal bowl being supported by eight shafts of the same material and surrounding a large centre one. At the head of the nave is a very handsome oak pulpit standing on a stone base.

To approach the chancel we walk up two steps, and on the wall are the treasures of the church. On a recess to the left is



the recumbent stone effigy of an ecclesiastic in robes, Macobus Kasey, vicar of Patribourne, who died in 1512, and the strange feature is a bit of masonry or wall built right across the centre of the figure, dividing it in two. Above, let into the wall, is a mutilated Latin inscription and a hand with pointing finger at its side. Near by are marble tablets on the wall, one with a shield of arms and the other with the gruesome ornamentation of a skull and cross-bones and spade and matlock. Between, on a black stone slab, is this inscription:—

“JOANE THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF WALTER HARFLET OF BEAKESBOVRNE ESQ. THE FIRST WIFE OF SR. ARNOLD BRAEMS KNT. DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 26 DAY OF JVLV 1635 AND LYETH BVRIED IN THE PARISH CHVRCH OF ST. MARIES DOVOR ERECTED TO HER LASTING MEMORY. ELIZABETH THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF SIR DUDLEY DIGGS OF CHILHAM CASTLE KNHT. MASTER OF THE ROVLES SECOND WIFE OF SIR ARNOLD BRAEMS KNHT. DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 27TH DAY OF MAY 1643 AND LYETH BVRIED IN THE MIDLE OF THIS CHANCEL WHERE HER NAME IS ENGRAVEN AND FOR WHOM THIS MONVMENT IS ERECTED.”

An exquisite piece of Norman carving that was once the filling of an archway has also been reclaimed from the north wall of the chancel. There are two rows of subjects. Those in the upper range are too mutilated to be clearly made out, but the lower compartments represent the angel of the Lord expelling Adam and Eve from Paradise, with the words “Justitia Dei” on a label over their heads; the second, Adam and Eve on each side of the forbidden tree, with the Devil climbing up it in the shape of a cormorant; the third, Cain's offering; the fourth, Abel's offering, with the flames and smoke rising from the sacrificial pile; and the fifth, Cain slaying his brother. Above this old bit of carving is a seventeenth century painting on copper of Robert Bargrave. On the opposite wall is some more stone carving in the shape of scrolls, possibly taken from some old tombstones or slabs and inserted in their present position quite recently. The east window that lights the chancel is of stained glass and represents scenes in the life of Christ, but a window of greater antiquity is the small one in the north aisle, deeply-splayed, containing stained glass and of Norman date. The north chancel was once used as a village school.

Various tablets hang on the walls of the church—to the memory of Baron de Montesquien, of Bridge, died 1824; Martha Baldock, of Bridge, and buried at Elham, died 1826; Lieutenant-Colonel E. J. Pratt, 9th Lancers, died on his passage home from India in 1857; Amelius Sicard, M.R.C.S., of Bridge, died 1880; and John Lansberry, died 1849; Beby Fitch, wife of Thomas Fitch, died 1807. Another inscription is as follows:—

“This tablet is erected by the Guardians of the Bridge Union as a mark of their respect and esteem for the memory of the late Mr. William Forth who from the formation of the Union, a period of 30 years, performed the duties of Relieving Officer, Master, and finally Clerk. A zealous, upright officer and kind friend to the poor. He died, regretted by all who knew him, on the 18th day of April, 1865, in the 70th year of his age.”

There are also tablets relating to vaults containing the mortal remains of James Lord, of Patricxbourne, and Catherine Brice.

Let us now retrace our steps down the village to the bridge, just opposite to which hangs a sign from the Plough Inn to inform us that the Fire Brigade has its headquarters within. This brigade was formed in 1873, the residents of the district purchasing the engine. At that time the Marquess Conyngham took a keen interest in fire-extinguishing apparatus, and he undertook the captaincy, the other members being Messrs. Smith, Pilcher, Verrier, Sargent, Hardiman, Hodges, Evers, Jarvis, Garland, Winter and Carpenter. In 1878 the Earl of Mount Charles, the marquess's son, was captain, with Messrs. R. Smith and F. J. D. Sams as lieutenants. The present honorary secretary, Mr. C. Wills, has seen no less than thirty-three years' service.

Strolling up the street we find some of the houses shaded by the branches of lime trees, and then comes the village smithy—how luxuriantly the moss grows and blooms on the tiles hereabouts!—more trees shade a house from the western sun and then we come to the oldest building in Bridge. This is one of the old frame houses of the sixteenth century, the timber beams being filled in with bricks. Additions have been made, but apparently it was once a pretentious house, though now divided into the habitation of several families. At the upper end of the street are villas—the “west end” of



Bridge. Here, too, is the Post Office, a quaint little building with the shop floor much below the level of the road.

One old relic of Bridge—the village stocks—has disappeared, no one knows where; and yet it was famous for having the following lines inscribed upon it:—

He who will not the law obey,  
Here in ye stocks must surely lay.

The Public Hall stands in the centre of the village, a building that was increased to its present size in 1878, when, among other charitable actions, the Marquess Conyngham presented it to the village in celebration of the coming of age of his eldest son, the Earl of Mount Charles. It is used for entertainments and meetings, and a reading room, but when the Parish Council came into being the Marquess had an inscription placed in the interior stating that the hall was his property, and was lent to the vicar of the parish.

Taking the Patrixbourne turning at the Red Lion, one comes immediately upon the modern Wesleyan chapel, the only Nonconformist place of worship to supply the two parishes. Until 1894 Dissenters must needs trudge to Canterbury for service, but in that year the present modest building—of corrugated iron and lined inside with wood—was opened, the site having been given by Mr. Perry and the fund raised by public subscription.

Along the Patrixbourne road we find the schools well shaded by trees. The bounds of Patrixbourne parish extend to this spot and the schools of Bridge stand within them. The original buildings are adjoining the master's house, all of those in the rear being additions necessitated by increasing numbers of scholars. Many years ago the Marquess Conyngham, of Bifrons, who took great interest in parish affairs, used to educate and clothe thirty girls of the parish at his own expense, at a schoolroom adjoining the lodge entrance to Bifrons Park, the remainder of the parish children receiving their education at the original schools. That it was not of a "higher" educational character may be judged from the fact that the predecessor of Mr. and Mrs. R. Wye, who were the first Government teachers in 1871, was unable to sign her name, and used to make a cross when receiving her cheque! It is not to be understood that writing was ignored, as this mistress had an assistant who taught that very necessary rudiment of all

education. But to return to the thirty girls. These were educated and clothed at the sole expense of the Marquess. The distinctive clothing consisted of an ordinary sailor hat with blue ribbon, a blue serge dress, a scarlet cloak in winter and a white one in summer. After some years the Marquess is said to have found the girls to be somewhat of an annoyance at the park entrance, and erected an additional building at the rear of the original schools, and two further enlargements have since taken place, the children of the combined parishes now being educated there. It is stated, however, that until as late as 1885 the girls wore the distinctive dress provided by the Marquess, but latterly the parents failed to appreciate what must have been given at considerable cost, and the benefactor, not desiring to bestow upon the parishioners at his own expense that which was not accepted with favour, put an end to the custom. When the schools were taken over by the Government he paid £50 a year towards the upkeep.

Not far from the schools stand the gas works that supply a wide district, 1859 being the date of their erection. Opposite run the green swards of Bifrons Park and by the roadside runs the Nailbourne that is bridged in a remarkable way by two fallen trees. Probably when the water once flowed along this river bed with exceptional violence the roots of the trees were undermined and the huge trunks fell. The woodman's axe spared them, even in their helpless position, but fresh branches have shot out through the bark and grown to a considerable height. And amid their branches one can clamber across the stream over the two natural bridges.

On the other side of the village stands Bridge Union Workhouse, charmingly situated on the slope of the hill overlooking the village and the valley, with the beautiful scenery of Bourne Park beyond. The red bricks give an appearance of cheerfulness, while the garden plots each side of the entrance are generally a blaze of flowers. The House, as the date shows on the building, was erected in 1835, and, the population in the parishes covered by the Union having shown little or no increase since that time, it has been subject to very little alteration. A number of East Kent workhouses are built on the quadrangle system, a favourite design of Sir Francis Head, a Commissioner in the early days of Poor Law Administration, and Bridge Workhouse is on this style, having its quadrangle, with entrance gate and offices on either side in front, a narrow two-storeyed building running round three sides, with the



chapel, cook-house, porter's lodge and exercise yard in the centre. It covers in all an area of four acres, with three acres of garden ground. It is interesting to recall the fact that the first meeting of the Bridge Board of Guardians was held on April 22nd, 1835, at the White Horse Inn, Bridge, the Workhouse not then being in existence. Before the formation of the Unions each parish, or many of them, dealt with their own poor, and the indoor poor were distributed in various old poor-houses at Ickham, Wickham, Waltham and other places. At this meeting the chair was taken by Sir Francis Head, the Poor Law Commissioner, who came down imbued with his official importance, and with sanguine hopes and confidence as to the wonderful effects likely to be wrought in elevating the working classes of the country. It would appear that he took the chair ex-officio, and made a lengthy address, which is copied verbatim in the minute book, and the following were the concluding words of his peroration: "I will now no longer trespass on your valuable time, but will conclude by expressing an earnest desire that the business of this day may be commenced, and that your future meetings may be conducted with that friendly, amicable feeling and that careful government of temper, which should distinguish the proceedings of all bodies of highly respectable men for the welfare of society, for the first time having met this day in Union." It was proposed by Mr. Lake, seconded by Mr. Denne Denne, that Mr. Richard Peckham should be chairman, and it may prove of interest to record the names of those who have succeeded him in that capacity: Mr. C. W. Dowsett, 1836; Mr. R. Lake, 1837; Mr. Charles Collard, 1838-1841; Mr. Henry Collard, 1841-1846; Mr. Charles Collard, 1846-1864; Captain Thomas Hilton, 1864-1870; Mr. David Collard, 1870-1877; Mr. W. Sims, 1877-1883; Mr. T. Louis Collard, 1883-1894; Mr. J. D. Maxted, C.C., 1894-1909. The first clerk was Mr. Herbert Collard, who held office until 1840; followed by Mr. W. Forth, 1840 to 1865; Mr. Allen Fielding, 1865 to 1895; and Mr. T. L. Collard from that time until the present. It is somewhat a unique record that Mr. T. L. Collard should have been eleven years chairman, followed by fourteen years' service as clerk to the same board. The first master (Mr. John Weeks) was known as the "Governor," and his wife as "Governess," at a joint salary of £80, but, whether it was due to himself or whether the Guardians failed to carry out the injunctions of Sir Francis Head as to the friendly, amicable feeling and careful government of temper, he did not find the office a bed of roses and resigned before the end of the year.

Opposite the Workhouse racing stables were once kept by the late Mr. Howard, father of the recently deceased veterinary surgeon of that name. He regularly ran horses, more especially when races were held on Barham Downs, but the latter event finally collapsed owing to the dwindling of subscriptions, and the Easter Plate, run on Tuesday, is now unknown. But in bygone days this Plate was the envy of all owners in East Kent, and the keenest competition took place on the great day. A letter by a resident of Bridge, unfortunately undated, says:—"Bridge ought to have won the Plate with Black Girl, but we made money though even she did lose, and the old Squire made us full of beer. We drank his health and Black Girl's health till not one drop was left in the barrels on the lawn. Jabez lost his purse, but not money. His money went up Barham way. A betting man out of London must have had his beaver and his pockets, which he carries outside his coat, overfull of Bridge money when he reached London, for we lost all our bets. He went home Faversham road." Is this suggestive that if he had travelled via Bridge the beaver hat and outside pockets might have been lighter ere he reached London?

The old parish records contain many quaint and amusing items. In 1815 we find "Paid for prayer of thanksgiving for the battle of Waterloo, 1s." Later we see similar prayers paid for, but at varying prices, 1/3 and 1/2. Whether the prayers were paid for by length or by the amount of gratitude exhibited by the clergyman entrusted with the sacred task is not stated, but otherwise it is difficult to understand the varying charges.

The church plate at Bridge was all made in 1850 and presented by Mrs. Gregory, who generously restored the church in 1859. It consists of a cup, paten, flagon and two alms-plates, each bearing the monogram I.H.S. and the words, "For the Love of God."

There are two charities, dated April 13th, 1867, connected with Bridge, left by Mrs. Gregory, who formerly lived at Bridge Hill. The first is known as the educational charity of Mary Gregory, for the support of infants' and boys' school, and bringing in a nett annual income of £29/11/6, which amount has not been affected by the new Education Acts, as has been the case in some parishes. The second is known as the eleemosynary charity of Mary Gregory, and is of the annual value of £14/15/8, devoted to aged widows and deserving poor. The former each receive 7/6 at Christmas, and the latter two to four hundredweight of coal, according to circumstances of the participants.



All around Bridge are rich pastures and wood-land, with private parks, and from the hills pretty glimpses of truly rural Kent can be obtained. Years ago the village itself was unhealthy through the moisture occasioned by the stream, and Hasted further tells us that the hills were chalk and very barren and stone-clad. The chalk is still there, but the land looks far from barren, and trees appear to grow luxuriously, especially in the parks. Bridge Hill House stands in a delightful situation, its grounds sloping down towards the village. The residence is modern and belongs to Mr. Ralph Peto, but the Baroness Zborowski at present lives there.

Not far from the village street and standing within the limits of Bourne Park are the remains of what was once a very imposing mansion, built by a famous Dover merchant. I refer to Bridge Place, and the merchant was one Sir Arnold Braems. But let us dive back further into ancient history, when the manor of Bridge or Blackenansbury was in the possession of the Abbey of St. Augustine. It was the property of the monks until Henry the Eighth suppressed the Abbey and took unto himself their land, including the Manor of Bridge. But in the thirty-sixth year of his reign he granted it to Henry Lawrence to hold by Knight's service, and by this new owner a court was regularly held, the court lodge standing on the very spot now occupied by Bridge Place. Passing through several hands the land came into the possession of Sir Arnold Braems, who pulled down the court lodge and erected a magnificent mansion on the site.

This old Knight had a remarkable history, reminding one of the worthy known as Customer Smyth, who is buried in Ashford church and gained his nickname by farming the customs of Kentish ports until Queen Elizabeth emptied his pockets and reduced his profits. Arnold Braems came of Flemish stock, his father being a Dover merchant in the time of Charles the First. When his monarch quarrelled with Parliament young Braems took the Royalist side, and held the rank of major in the East Kent force of stalwarts, who, under Mr. Hammond, of Nonington, hoped to wrest Dover Castle from the Roundheads. But they failed and Major Braems found it necessary to secrete himself. The Restoration, however, found him again in evidence, and within a fortnight he was elected Member of Parliament for Dover and received the honour of Knighthood at the hands of his grateful sovereign Charles the Second. But he remained at the House of Commons only a very short time, pre-

ferring a commercial life and using all his energy in developing Dover as a port. He acquired land all along the sea front, erecting huge buildings, and by thus monopolising the landing and warehousing of goods, and farming the harbour tolls and customs, made a huge fortune. Then occurred one of those strange incidents that so frequently mar a man's career. Up to this point he had been shrewd beyond measure, and yet he was unwise enough to build an enormous mansion at Bridge and expend so much wealth upon its construction and his household expenditure, that his fortune was exhausted to such an extent that he was financially crippled to the day of his death at the age of eighty. But maybe it was love of ostentation rather than an error of judgment that caused his loss; and this seems probable when we find that he was buried "in linen," a matter of extravagance for which a heavy fine was imposed for the benefit of the poor of the parish. In previous articles I have explained that law compelled everyone to be "buried in woollen" for the benefit of the home industry, and any infringement of this rule compelled the estate of the dead man to pay a heavy fine.

Bridge Place came into the possession of Walter Braems, the old merchant knight's son, but his widow sold it to Mr. John Taylor, of Bifrons, who pulled down the greater portion of it, as he found it too large for the average country gentleman to keep up. The place remained in possession of the Taylor family until it was purchased by the Marquess Conyngham, and became part of the Bifrons estate, and the present tenant is Mr. William Howard. The remaining part of the building was apparently one wing, and the wall upon which the stables are built marks the front of the old building, the foundations of which are still to be traced underground. The mansion was, judging from what is left of it, a comfortable place, the lower rooms having a good pitch, and all the apartments are well lighted. Bridge Place is now wreathed in ivy and approached by a drive commencing close by the church.

Although of no historical interest, Little Bridge Place, the residence of Mr. Louis Collard, standing close by Bridge Place, is picturesque and delightfully situated among a wealth of trees and shrubs. At one time it contained some rather fine mural tablets, but they mysteriously disappeared years ago.

Gorsley Wood stands partly in Bridge and partly in Bishopsbourne parish and here in the year 1882 three ancient tumuli were discovered, each containing a kistvaen or stone chest. The mounds



were close together and of various dimensions. The chests found in the first two were four feet long, while the third was only three feet in length. Cremation was undoubtedly in vogue amongst the British at the time of the Roman invasion and experts tell us that the charred ashes found inside these old chests were all that remained of the bodies of the dead. The largest mound was first opened and the workmen had not dug far before they came to a pavement of tiles roughly made and badly burnt. Next came to light a human skull, probably that of a young person, and those who took part in the disinterment were struck with the curious change that overcame the skull when it was exposed to the air when first unearthed. The veinous lines in the interior of the skull were clearly defined and of a bright colour, but in a few seconds their red appearance vanished and they could with difficulty be traced. It seems strange and marvellous that after all these centuries any sign of the veins should have remained in the skull. The large stone chest was then disclosed to view, the top stone of which was so heavy that it had to be removed by the help of pulleys attached to a tree. When the top was moved all that was found within was some charred wood, but there is but little doubt that the ashes of a cremated body had been placed within at the time of burial. Under the second mound was found a stone chest of the same dimensions as the first, but the third and smaller one contained a large quantity of bones broken into fragments, some having apparently been burnt. Under these remains were several large flint stones and it is supposed that on them the body had been placed before undergoing cremation. At the time of the discovery antiquarians discussed the matter with great keenness, some thinking that the three tumuli, being placed close together, were intended to imply a Triune God. Others believe that the one which contained the skull had been used as an altar before being covered in with earth and yet others think that they were simply the burial places of old British chieftains who lived seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago. There is nothing now in Gorsley Wood to indicate the spot where the remains lay.