

# CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT

TO

## BELL NEWS & RINGERS' RECORD.

### THE PARSON AND THE RINGERS.

A few years ago, I devoted my usual autumn holiday to a bicycle tour in the Eastern Counties. I had a roving commission from the editor of the *Blankshire Herald* to interview all sorts and conditions of men, but somehow my escape from the desk had not been favorable to literary activity. One Saturday afternoon, I was sitting in the parlour of the inn at Newhampton, lamenting the infertility of my brain, and rather hard up for a job, having been kept indoors all day by the rain. I had read all the newspapers and smoked as many pipes as were good for me, when at last I turned my attention to an unpromising library which occupied a portion of a single shelf. The only book which took my fancy was a novelette of the smallest size, entitled, \**The Scudamore Chimes: a story for Church Bell Ringers.*" It was of the tract and leaflet species, and the style of the narrative would not have recommended it to me, but I had been a bit of a bell-ringer myself years ago, and was glad to be reminded of a pursuit which I had once found very fascinating.

Before I proceed further I ought, perhaps, to apologise to the author of "*The Scudamore Chimes*" for writing a sequel to his story. If this were a romance I dare say I should be guilty of piracy, or plagiarism, or some other literary crime, but I think there cannot be much harm in continuing a real history which another writer brought down to date, and left unfinished.

Ten years before, I read, *Scudamore*, with its beautiful church and beautiful peal of eight bells, was cursed with an ungodly set of ringers. The old Vicar had been too good-natured to keep them in order, but he had lately made way for a successor who wielded a new broom.

The Rev. Cuthbert Elkington had "a look of great firmness on his face, and especially around the small, tightly-closed mouth." He was then "about thirty, but his black hair was already touched with grey, and worn thin over the high forehead from hard work." He had many virtues, and, one would have thought, might have reformed the old ringers. However, he adopted the easier method of getting rid of them, with the exception of one Abdiel, Ben Dawson, and put in their place a band of exemplary young men. "Mr. Elkington was not contented with having his ringers attend church, and nothing more. Very soon they became, one and all, regular communicants. . . . The bright early sun is lighting up the glorious east window of St. James's, *Scudamore*, on Easter morning. It is eight o'clock, and the Early Celebration is just over. Ben and the other young men are still kneeling in their places. Ben's head has sunk down on his folded hands, and a halo of many-coloured lights from the stained glass of the east window gleams on his hair, and strays down over his white surplice."

And there the story left them. What had come of it all? Had the old ringers gone to the dogs their own way, and had the new ones learnt to ring without ceasing to pray? Elkington I had known slightly at college, and alas! I had seen a notice of his death in the newspaper not many months since. Young men "with high foreheads and hair prematurely grey, and thin from hard work," do not wear well. A good man, and one who would improved had he lived to be a bishop, but with all his faults, one who would do more good in his time than most of us, if we live to be a hundred.

I was not long in ascertaining that *Scudamore* was within an hour's run by rail of the place where I was staying. So I deter-

mined to go and see the end of the story for myself, and as the rain had cleared off, I was soon bowling along on the road to the station. Before it was dark, I had delivered up my ticket, and was within sight and hearing of

the old church tower,  
Where bells, the poor man's only music, rang,  
From morn to evening, all the hot fair day.

The weather had been neither hot nor fair, but the bells had been ringing for some village festival all day, as I heard at the inn, and when I had despatched my frugal meal, I made my way to the church, and into the belfry. The ringers appeared to be practising some intricate method in which they were not very perfect, but otherwise they were fairly proficient in the management of the bells, and were a smart-looking set of young men. Each man wore, suspended from a button-hole, a little bronze medal, stamped with an Early English effigy of St. Cuthbert, the patron of their Guild, and some of them wore the blue ribbon of sobriety as well. The belfry was neatly, and even handsomely furnished in ecclesiastical style, and there were seats, and pegs for coats and hats. Soon after my arrival there was a pause in the ringing, and I introduced myself:

"I used to be a ringer myself some years ago, though I never got beyond Grindstone Bob, and I thought you would not mind my having a look at you. You seem to be ringing some difficult method; what is it?"

The conductor answered my question, an intelligent-looking man, about thirty years old, who, whatever his other qualities might be, was probably not deficient in self-assertion. "We are always pleased to see ringers—perhaps you would like to have a pull with us? We are learning *Stedman*, and some of the young hands find it harder than what they have been used to. Bob Triples we can manage pretty well."

I took a rope, and got through some rounds without much blundering. After complimenting me more than I deserved, the foreman directed my attention to a new peal-board, which he said had been put up that day. The board stated, in letters of gold on a black ground, that on the 1st of May, 188—, a true and complete peal, consisting of 5040 changes of Bob Triples, was rung by the St. Cuthbert's Guild of Ringers, in three hours and seven minutes: *Treble*—Benjamin Dawson (conductor); 2nd, William Lendrum; 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, John Jones, Peter Snell, etc. *Tenor*—Thomas Oliver.

"Dawson, Lendrum, Oliver! Why I have been reading about you all to-day, in '*The Scudamore Chimes!*'"

"Benjamin Dawson is my name, sir, at your service. Lendrum and Oliver belonged to the old set too, and the rest is young men who joined the Guild when the late Mr. Elkington established it, or since. Dear me! we have had a deal of changes since "*The Scudamore Chimes*" came out. Which made some talk in the parish, being supposed to have been wrote by the late Vicar's wife, under the pseudonym of Cuthbert Heriot; and was then Miss Poyson, and came to attend daily service from Mudway, where there was none except on Sundays. But whether she was the author or not was never rightly known. A very talented lady, sir, and played the organ in church, and now she resides again at Mudway, as a widow, with two young children."

"Well I am not surprised to see you here, though one can't count on finding any one at home at the end of ten years. But Oliver and Lendrum? I thought they were never coming into the church again."

"Well you see, sir, all the old ringers resigned, as is stated in

\* "*The Scudamore Chimes.*" London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

the book, except me, sir, as was a steady young man, and never agreed with their ways from the first. A smoking, swearing, beer-drinking, nut-cracking, lot of round ringers—that is, in the belfry. I'm not one of them as sees any harm in a man taking his glass, and smoking a pipe, at home, or in a respectable house, especially on occasions of thanksgiving or loyalty. But as I was saying, the old lot resigned, and Mr. Elkington chose a band of respectable church-going young men, and some of them took the pledge too. And they, being all new together, did not get on with the ropes so fast as Mr. Elkington wished, being a man as was never satisfied short of perfection. And so you see, sir, when Lendrum took offence with the chapel, through not being allowed to preach while Jem Barker was allowed, and came to attend church regular, Mr. Elkington got him to ring again. A good ringer, sir, for a round ringer, and soon learnt the method after we had an instructor. But Oliver, he never could learn it, except to ring the tenor behind, and I will say there's no man can beat Oliver at that—as true as clockwork, sir!

"Why Oliver was the man who swore he would never enter the church again till he was carried there! Did the Dissenters put his back up too?"

"No sir; Oliver was not given to religion any way—a straightforward man, but not one as was easy to change. But his son, as fine a young chap as you'd see any day, enlisted, and was killed at the Cape of Good Hope in the same engagement as Mr. Elkington's brother, being both in the same company, as I've heard; and the old man took on terribly about it, and the Vicar likewise being in trouble, there was no more bad blood between them, and so Oliver came to join us again too, but the rest never came back, except Ellaby and Croft for a time. Only to day is the Odd Fellows' annual dinner, and by their desire all the old ringers as could be collected have been ringing rounds and call-changes since morning. We have nothing to do with that, sir, but I gave them my permission for the use of the belfry without grudging. I said to them, says I, 'you can use the bells and the belfry at your pleasure till evening, but it is the Guild's practice-night, and after seven o'clock I must lock you out.'"

Presently Oliver came in to see his name on the peal-board.

"Hurrah! for the conquering hero!" cried of the young ringers. "Let's give him a fire!" With Ben Dawson's gracious permission several rounds were now rung, followed by triumphant volleys of discord.

Meanwhile being endowed with the miraculous ubiquity of the literary story-teller, I had not only taken my leave of the Scudamore ringers, but I had also transferred myself, in my astral and immaterial body, into the new Vicar's parlour. I need hardly say that it suited my purpose to remain invisible while so employed.

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The living of Scudamore was in the gift of the Master and Fellows of St. Boniface College, who were obliged to present alternately an ordinary and a Manx fellow. The Manx fellow was a native of the Isle of Man, who had graduated in honours. Although the founder of this fellowship had no doubt meant well, it is difficult to say what depth of ignorance might be below the reach of a wooden spoon at Oxbridge thirty years ago, and the men, as they were facetiously styled in college, had never been much appreciated by the dons at St. Boniface. To play a good hand at whist was the most that was expected from a Manx Fellow, and only one man on this foundation had been appointed to lecture, or hold any important office in the college. There was an unfair prejudice, no doubt, which only a man of more than average capacity could surmount, but the Rev. Douglas Ramsay, who had succeeded to the vicarage on the death of poor Elkington, had neither talent nor ambition to emerge from obscurity.

Ramsay was on the wrong side of fifty. Thirty years ago he had been elected Manx fellow of St. Boniface, and had lived a life of unlearned leisure ever since. He was always extremely regular in his habits. He had imbibed, perhaps a thousand times, a glass of sherry after soup, a stoup of ale with his cheese, three glasses of port after dinner, and a tumbler of toddy at bedtime. For many years these potations did him no harm, and he firmly believed that they did him much good. Latterly his health had been somewhat broken, and the doctor seriously advised him to take less alcohol. He did take less for a time, but found he did not get on so well, and resumed his old habit. The pity of

it was that without being aware of it he had now assumed something of the appearance of one who dined not wisely but too well, and his parishioners, who had learnt to revere an ascetic clergyman, were disposed to do him some injustice. For in truth, Ramsay was at bottom a right-minded, sensible, lovable man, and those who knew him best valued him most. When the time comes for him to make way for his successor, it is not improbable that he may be regretted as much as Mr. Elkington. It is possible, even, that he may live to do as much good in the parish.

But I must proceed with my story.

When I glided into the Vicar's dining room, Mr. Ramsay had just finished his third glass of port. He had not been able to write his sermon during the day because the bells disturbed him, and he thought he would have a quiet time after dinner. Unfortunately he had not been prepared for the practice-night of the Guild, and was now becoming very cross indeed. As he locked up the decanter the "fire" for Oliver greeted his ears.

"Confound those bells!" he muttered, "all day long they have been going, and no one has the grace to ask my leave even! I won't stand it." And he took his hat and walked rapidly to the church. The belfry was on the ground floor, and he had breath enough left to vent his indignation.

"What is the meaning of this? A positive nuisance. I desire that the bells may not be rung again without my permission. Who has charge of the belfry?"

Our friend Ben Dawson took upon himself to answer; he was strong in aspirates when the occasion demanded eloquence.

"Being Secretary of the St. Cuthbert's Guild of ringers, I thought it my dooty to allow the Odd Fellows to have the use of the belfry on their hanniversary, and it is also the practice-night of the Guild. The late Mr. Helkington, who was our President, always wished me to hact for him in his absence, and the office of President is still vacant. I am aware that the Minister, whether Incumbent or curate, can limit the time of ringing, but either or both of the churchwardens may also give permission to ring, provided that the minister do not interfere. That, Sir, is the law, I believe as, no doubt, you are well acquainted. Anyways, the Guild will always treat the wishes of the Vicar with the greatest respect."

"My good fellow," said Ramsay, "I don't want to go to law with you. I daresay it is all right, but you really should have some consideration for people with weak nerves. I am very fond of bells—in moderation—at a distance—but one can have too much of a good thing."

"Say no more, Sir, we shall fall the bells at once, and I shall do myself the honour of taking your horders with regard to the bells, at your leisure."

"Well, good night to you all," said Ramsay, and he returned to the Vicarage to make a second and more successful attempt at the delayed sermon.

As soon as the bells were down the ringers began to discuss the new Vicar.

"Not a bad-hearted chap," said Oliver. "Aye, I remember ten years gone, how Mr. Elkington, as was the new Vicar then, come into the belfry, and blamed us for having been there, and smoking and what not. We was not so particular then. This one may be a little irascible like, but bless ye, it's gone in a moment."

"Mr. Elkington was a right good man, and no mistake," said Peter Snell, but I will say this, he was old Harry himself if he could'nt get his own way. But, begging your pardon, Mr. Dawson, I doubt if you stated the law right, just now, to Mr. Ramsay. In my opinion the President of the Guild is master in the belfry, and no one else."

"You are mistaken, Peter, I have often discussed the question with Mr. Elkington, and you will find that the consent of both churchwardens against the Minister would not justify the ringers. That is Dr. Lushington's decision;" and Ben Dawson beamed with importance.

"Dr. Lushington be blow'd!"

"Tuppence for swearing," interrupted a sharp lad.

"Well I am!"

"Sixpence, for the second time," chimed in the persecutor.

Peter Snell suppressed the rising ejaculation, and resumed wrathfully.

"It is all very well for you to lay down the law, Benjamin

Dawson. You know on which side your bread is buttered, and that's just what poor old Dick Westwood did not know, as was turned off, and took to drink, through fretting, and you stepped into his shoes."

"Come, be gentlemanly," said Oliver, "no one has any call to speak ill of Ben Dawson, and Dick Westwood was pretty nigh done for before he was forced to resign."

"I should take no account of insinuations from any party," said Ben Dawson magniloquently, "much less from a young man without learning or experience, who joined the Guild less than a twelvemonth gone. I should like to see the man as would dare to say that I would not speak up against the Minister when there is occasion to speak. The word minister is Latin, and means servant, and the Vicar is the servant of the congregation. Only the law is the law; no man can go further than that."

"Then why don't you speak up for the congregation when the Minister neglects his duty? There's been no Early Celebration since Mr. Ramsay came. John Jones, don't you miss that?"

This was the suggestion of the young fiend who had already pulled up Peter Snell for swearing.

"Well, I can't say I do," said John Jones. "A poor man with a family can't afford to quarrel with his bread and butter, and though Mr. Elkington would have made no difference to a man, not knowingly, leastways, his missis would; and the washing my wife used to do up at the Vicarage was a help to us with six small children. I say, live and let live, that's my maxim. Otherwise a man, as has been at work all the week has no call to get up for Early Celebration on Sunday, nor yet for any other kind of small and early."

"Now this is a case in point," said Ben Dawson. "If the congregation wished me to speak to the Vicar I would do it."

The fiend having winked at his friends, and secured their ready assent in prospect of a lark of some sort, began to pull the leg of the great man.

"I think, Mr. Dawson, the majority of the ringers present would feel obliged if you would go to Mr. Ramsay and request him that he will give them an opportunity of attending Early Celebration, as in the time of Mr. Elkington."

"With all the pleasure in life, if that is the wish of the Guild."

There was nothing which Ben Dawson enjoyed so much as being a deputation. He had forgotten how he was snubbed by Mr. Elkington ten years ago, when he went as spokesman of the old ringers.

By this time Mr. Ramsay was again at work upon the sermon. A tap at the door.

"Mr. Dawson, the clerk, Sir, wishes to speak to you, if you please.

He is admitted.

"Well, Dawson, what is it?"

"I am come to speak on behalf of the St. Cuthbert's Guild of Ringers, Sir. I am desired to say that the Ringers, that is to say the majority of them, would take it very kindly if you would give them an opportunity of attending hearily celebration on the third Sunday of each month, as in the time of the late Vicar."

And Ben cast down his eyes and smoothed his hat as he had done ten years before in the same place when on a different errand.

Mr. Ramsay was taken aback. He had no experience of parish work till he came to Scudamore, and he had several times been made to feel that the parish expected from him a higher standard than had been thought necessary at St. Boniface. But he was surprised to have such a demand from this quarter. He had heard something of belfry reform, but thought it was confined to the hopes of the clergy of the stricter sort. He was prepared to hear that his ringers were poachers, or public-house loafers; not to be reproved by them for deficient zeal.

"Well, Dawson," he said slowly, after thinking a good deal more than he thought fit to utter, "I shall hope to do my duty here so far as my health and strength may permit. But I am not so young as I was, and I find the Sunday services already quite as much as I can get through. Mr. Elkington did much good work in which I cannot attempt to follow him. But this early celebration—is there any occasion for it? The number of communicants has fallen off, I am sorry to say, since I came

here, but I do not find that the discontinuance of Early Celebration has anything to do with it. Why do the ringers want it?"

Ben Dawson had not thought of any reason, except that his vanity had been tickled by the description of himself in his white surplice in "The Scudamore Chimes." The flow of words, however, seldom deserted him.

"You see, Sir, the ringers have been accustomed to it in the time of the late Vicar, and to occupy the seats allotted to the Guild; and I think you will allow, Sir, that when a feeling of that sort exists it is the duty of a member of a congregation to speak to his minister on behalf of those who have confidence in him."

He wished to add something to the effect that minister was a Latin word, and that the minister was the servant of the congregation, but the vicar's eye cowed him, and he proceeded to smooth his hat in silence.

"Very well; you may tell your friends that I shall try to meet their wishes, if I can, when I understand them better than I do at present. Good night! I am busy."

Ben Dawson, on returning to the belfry, was disappointed to find that he had no good account to give of his mission. It was not that Mr. Ramsay had got the better of him in argument, but somehow he had been unable to say all he meant. He was relieved to find that "the majority" of the ringers seemed to care very little about the result of the deputation. They seemed to be taken up with some private joke among themselves.

And now it is time for me to resume my material body, and to make my own reflections while I smoke my last pipe before going to bed. Belfry reform is a good thing in its way, but like most other reforms, it may easily be carried to excess. The smoking, swearing, beer-drinking, nut-cracking ringers of the old school are often no worse than their neighbours. There is a black sheep in most flocks, but as a rule no one wishes to outrage public opinion when it is brought to bear upon him, and if there are abuses in a belfry, they may be corrected by a little timely care and attention as effectually and far more happily than by "getting rid of the old drunken lot," which is too often the parson's remedy when he wakes up to a sense of his duty. All that is wanted is sympathy; and so many clergymen are now ringers, as well as other persons of superior education, that we may look forward to a time when change-ringing will be held in as much honour as it was in the last century, without being discredited by a coarseness of manners which was then thought venial.

C. P.

## REMINISCENCES.

BY AUDITOR TANTUM.

"Hoc Olim Meminisse Juvabit."

A time will come when these memories will be delightful.

A quiet market-town, with an ancient cross in the market-place, beneath which the country people with their baskets of garden produce would take shelter in rainy weather. The market-place itself formed by the gradual widening and then narrowing of the main street of the whole town, which was lined by shops of divers sorts; the shops mostly sleepy institutions, each front door armed with a bell so arranged that when the door was opened, the bell should give warning to the owner of the shop, who ordinarily was bestowed away in some small lair in the back premises. Such is the subject of my earliest recollections.

Chiefly I remember the shop of Mrs. Black, the confectioner, famous for buns and barley-sugar; of Mr. Bydall, the baker of the best biscuits that I ever tasted; and of Mr. Luker, the barber who was appointed to shear my youthful locks and to provide me with the current mental pabulum of the day, such as Jack the Giant Killer, Cinderella, and Puss in Boots, at a penny apiece plain, and twopence coloured. Mr. "Luker's bear's grease" was renowned throughout the country side. He kept a bear in his back yard, and once a month placed in his shop window a placard with the (to me) terrific announcement "another bear killed;" the bear in the back yard however seemed none the worse.

Among other favourite shop windows was that of Mr. Jull, the watchmaker, where was displayed a choice collection of mighty

watches of gigantic proportions, backed up by a brilliant oil painting showing a sea piece with two "billy boys" in full sail, rocking (literally rocking), on the waves, while on the shore, two windmills with real and practicable sails were in full career. Next door was the tiny cell of the gunmaker, below the level of the street, and approached by means of a short flight of steps. Here one beheld a choice selection of ancient pistols (oh! Shakespeare!), with flint locks, probably far more dangerous to the gunner than to the mark, but for all very fascinating to my young eyes.

Beyond this was the more pretentious shop of the ironmonger where I bought my first pair of skates (but that was several years later than the time of which I have been writing), for half-a-crown. Quite opposite to the ironmonger's at the far end of marketplace stood the principal shop of the town, entitled, "Grocer" Turner [Draper," these words being placed over the door and windows. Inside an attempt was made to keep the groceries and the draperies apart, and this attempt met with a certain amount of success as regarded the extreme right and the extreme left of the shop; but about the centre, confusion reigned supreme while kind-hearted Mr. Turner bustled about serving his customers, and rarely allowed me to depart without pressing into my willing hand a small packet of pudding raisins, deftly rolled up in white paper in the shape of a cone. I must not forget to mention the "King's Arms," whence started on week-days (at 8.30 a.m.) the omnibus which ran to the county town, and whither the same "convenience" (as it was locally called), returned between six and seven p.m., producing twice in the day a brief semblance of life in the midst of the death-like repose of the old place.

All these week-day matters after more than forty years, are still clearly and sharply defined in the camera of my recollection, but clearer than all is the impression of my childish Sundays. The Church stood almost in the centre of the town, and from about the middle of the market-place, one passed down a shallow passage between two houses, and through the iron gates which led to the seclusion of the churchyard. The church itself was a plain edifice only remarkable for its size; but the tower was extraordinary. It stood as usual at the west end of the church, and had originally been square, spacious, and fully one hundred and fifty feet in height. Many years before I was born, a considerable portion of the tower had fallen down, to the great consternation of the townsfolk, and in my time only the eastern wall was in any wise whole, and of that much had either fallen or had been removed from the top for the greater safety of what remained. The western wall had entirely disappeared, but the north and south walls were nearly complete below; above much had fallen, and they both sloped away, becoming narrower as they approached the top of the eastern wall, and at last bulging out a little above they came to an end. In fact, the tower much resembled an old-fashioned settle or arm-chair, and I often imagined that Cormorant and Blunderbore had been in the habit of using the ruin as a chair before they fell victims to ruthless Jack.

But what most interested me in this edifice was the bells. All the other church towers with which I was acquainted jealously guarded their bells from view: of course I had seen churches without towers, with mere turrets containing bells which any passer-by could see; but these were always very small, and in my sight no better than the bell of the National School. My tower, however, favoured me with an entrancing view of its bells. High up on the eastern wall of the ruin had been built a kind of roofed shed, and in this two bells were placed. The two ropes of these could plainly be seen depending from above to within twenty feet of the ground, where they were caught by two beams which projected from the wall, and were thus guided through the wall and so led over pulleys into the interior of the church, where they ended in sallies of every colour of the rainbow. The sexton who used to allow me to catch hold of the end of the rope when he chimed the little bell, conferred on me a pleasure which I believe to have been one of the greatest which I have experienced in a (hitherto *Benedictio* *Benedicatur*) very pleasant life.

The smaller of the two bells hung on the right hand, and was a merry fellow, whose wheel was the visible cause of its swinging when the rope was pulled inside the church. The other bell was much larger and seemed to look down sullenly on the world below and on the gravestones with which God's-Acre was so thickly studded. As far as I could see, she never moved, even when

she gave out her solemn note at funerals: now it seemed to me that when the rope was pulled inside the church, it was the plain duty of the bell to respond by a visible movement, and the big bell's failure in this respect was in my eyes a sad business.

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I left the old market town when I was about five years old, and took up my abode in a village some seven mile away: and in that village I first became acquainted with the appearance of the interior of a church steeple. The old arch in the eastern wall between the tower and the nave of the church had been bricked up, and access to the steeple was obtained through a small lancet shaped door, painted yellow; as soon as this door was opened a gush of smell came forth, indescribable, yet never to be forgotten, composed of the odours of starlings' rotten nests and guano. The most conspicuous object inside was an enormous chest in which the parish registers were kept; the iron-bound lid was so heavy that it could not be opened in the ordinary way, so a sheaf of pulleys was suspended above, and even with this mechanical aid it was a hard task for the clerk, Edmund Carr, though a very strong man, to open the chest.

The tower was lighted by means of a fair-sized window in the western wall, beneath which was a narrow platform, to and from which were short flights of stairs leading to and from the singers' gallery at the west end of the nave of the church. In the north wall of the tower was a low doorway leading to the winding stone staircase which conducted to the upper regions those who desired to go above. Looking up from below one saw signs that there had formerly been two wooden floors between the base and the roof of the tower: of these the upper floor which had been placed immediately beneath the cage of the bells had entirely disappeared, and only two beams remained to indicate its position; while of the lower floor no more remained than the beams and a ragged fringe of rotten boards round the walls. The view from below was therefore almost uninterrupted, one could see beds for three bells, of which two were empty, while the third was occupied by a tenant who had been there for nearly five hundred years. One could also see a very shaky ladder planted on the top of the cage, and sloping up to a small square hole in the roof, through which the bright sunlight streamed.

Of this delicious domain I had the run, and it now seems to me to have been a rather perilous playground for a youngster of five or six summers: for instance, after ascending the winding staircase for some 35 feet, one reached a small landing and doorway. One step through the latter would lead to the cruel stone pavement at the bottom of the tower, for there was nothing worthy of the name of a floor: through this doorway I loved to lean and to glance up at the big bell above. The next doorway, twelve or fifteen feet higher, was less dangerous, for it was partly blocked up by the worm-eaten bell-cage. I used to climb this and gaze at the old, old bell, and peep over and down in an awe-struck mood at the stone floor nearly fifty feet below. Higher than this I did not dare to go, for the ladder which was perched on the top of the cage had its foot in a mass of rotten wood, and was itself crazy to an extraordinary degree: several of its rounds were missing, and of those which remained many seemed to be in the last stage of dry rot.

One day when I was peeping over the cage and admiring the old bell, I was seized round the waist from behind by a strapping young agriculturist, who had always been most kind to me: he now insisted that I should go with him up the crazy ladder and through the lead-covered trap-door, and have the outline of my foot cut on the leads with my name and the date inscribed within. This notion was highly attractive to me, but the ladder and the horrible gulf below were too alarming, and I refused to go. The young giant, however, caught me in his arms, and in spite of my struggles began to ascend the ladder; I had the sense to lie still and shut my eyes tight, until I was placed on all fours on the leads, where I was glad to find myself protected from falling by a tall parapet towards which I eagerly crept, having a very lively dread of the trap-door and all that was below it.

The trap-door however was now closed by my companion, John Spink, who placed over it a massive lid, and I gradually gained sufficient courage and composure to admire the numerous "footings" cut in the lead, and even allowed John Spink to lift me up that I might enjoy the fine view which was to be seen by

those who were tall enough to look over the parapets. I was delighted to have my own small footing added to the collection and then my companion proposed that we should descend.

But here a difficulty arose; the hole in the roof was so small that a big man could hardly get through, hence it was necessary that my friend John Spink should first descend five or six steps of the ladder, and that I should creep backwards feet first and get on the ladder between his arms; but my horror of the hole and ladder was such that my courage was quite unable to overcome it, and had John Spink relied only on his powers of persuasion, I should probably have remained on the top of Weston church steeple for a very long period. After many useless efforts to induce me to approach the hole, he suddenly changed his plans, and by some means (was it by the promise to show me the works of his big round watch?) tempted me to come within the reach of his long arms, and so caught me and took me by force down the ladder. This adventure ended safely, but the memory of that descent remains to the present day, with the view of the stony floor sixty feet below, intersected by the timbers of the bell-cage, and with the scent of the starlings' musty nests; and this scene often forms a part of my dreams when I am feverish or under the influence of dyspepsia.

It must have been four or five years after this that I became witness of an affair which might be truly named "a narrow escape." Certain distant relations of mine lived in a village about eight miles from my home, and I was often invited to stay for a week or two with them at Thwaite Manor. Glad was I to accept, for the place was a Paradise for boys: the house was a rambling old building with a vast number of passages and low rooms, with old fashioned casements, through which peeped ivy and roses, and creepers trained up the old walls; in front there was a spacious flower garden, and beyond the garden, a wilderness with endless paths winding through a forest of lilacs and laburnums. At the back of the house was a large kitchen garden abounding with all kinds of delicious fruit, from the early strawberry to the late bullace plum, which ripens not without a touch of frost. Beyond the garden was the great farmyard, bounded on one side by the vast barn, which through the most part of the year resounded with the rhythmical thud of the alternative flail, while two sturdy threshers with their now almost forgotten instruments slowly extracted the golden grain from the ears of wheat, or barley, or oats. A quarter of a mile away was the brewery, with its huge vats and coppers; and about a mile beyond, a fine old water-mill, built all across a picturesque river, fringed with willows drooping over the deep cool pools below the lower mill-race; where the kingfisher would often plunge into the bright water and emerge, like a flash of ruby and sapphire, with a minnow struggling in his strong bill.

The mill provided a succession of sports only too delightful; did a waggon laden with sacks of corn draw up on the bridge in front of the mill and under the dormer window which projected above on the third story, I hurried up to help, and was allowed to pull the rope which (when the waggoner had fastened the bright shining slippery chain round the neck of the sack), caused the seventeen or eighteen stone of wheat to rise majestically through the air, up and up, till it had forced open the double trap-door at my feet; when the trap-door, raised by the sack, fell with a sharp clatter, I let go the rope and the sack would come down on the closed door and be swiftly wheeled away on a barrow. Was an order given to stop one or both of the mighty water wheels, I would beg to be allowed to do the needful, and a blow with a crow-bar, which I could hardly lift, would knock off the catch, and cause the great sluice gates to fall and cut off the stream which had been flowing under the floats of the enormous wheel. As a treat, the miller would sometimes open a mysterious door, and permit me to see the monster wheel in full career, with streams of water dripping from his floats and emitting an odour in its way as distinctive and as indescribable as that of an uncared-for belfry. Then we would have tandem races the whole length of the top floor of the mill, each team consisting of three boys and two sack barrows; the smallest boy would sit on the front barrow and had nothing to do save to fall cleverly in case of a capsize: a middle-sized boy sat on the hinder barrow and held the handles of the barrow in front, while the biggest boy ran and pushed the whole. Then when the day's work at the mill was done, there was the pleasant task of stopping the two water wheels, and

opening the sluice at the side of the mill, which prevented the river from overflowing its banks when the mill was not working.

Add to all the above the delights of boating and fishing and bathing, and (in the winter) skating, and say whether I have not justified my saying that Thwaite Manor was a Paradise for boys.

One of our favourite games was hide-and-seek, and the height of the ambition of each was to baffle the rest until after hours of unsuccessful search they fairly gave up. One winter's afternoon it seemed likely that Sam Glover would gain this triumph over us all, for immediately after our early dinner at one o'clock he had gone to hide, and although we had sought him high and low till nearly dusk, not a trace of him could we find. The mill was too far away, and it was understood that the brewery on one side, and the church on the other side were bounds, beyond which it was not allowed to hide. We had commenced with the brewery, and after searching every intermediate nook had just finished with the church. Churches in those days were not so well cared for as now, and it did not strike our elders (much less ourselves), that we were doing wrong in using God's House as our playground. The church was a fine building with one of those grand towers so common on the east coast, and in old days so useful to sailors and fishermen. This tower was of smaller dimensions than some, but it was fully 120 feet high, and being somewhat slender seemed higher than it really was. In one corner was a winding staircase which led to the top of the tower, and did not, as in most cases, come to an end at the belfry. The most striking feature of the church was a lofty and graceful arch between the tower and the nave, the height of which was quite unusual; there was a small gallery which sloped into the church from under the west window, and was raised only ten or twelve feet from the floor. The ropes of the four bells hung down in this gallery, and the "length of pull" was excessive: each rope, however, was steadied by being made to pass through a hole in a wooden frame fixed some twelve feet above the floor of the gallery. After looking into the three-decker and behind the fine oak stalls in the chancel, and even peeping through the magnificent tabernacle which hung over the font, we dashed up the tower stair: on reaching the very lofty floor which we had seen from below we found at a glance that it was quite empty, and we hurried to the next floor where the four bells hung in a row. Here a surprise awaited us, the three bells nearest to us were hanging as usual with their mouths downwards: but the fourth, the furthest away from us and the biggest of the four, was standing mouth uppermost and apparently likely to fall over if touched. We looked closely enough in the pits of the three bells nearest to us, but thought it prudent not to go near the raised bell. Lastly we went up to the roof above, and, finding no trace of Sam, descended again to terra firma. Here we met the Vicar who was near the font just in front of the great arch; he asked us if we were all down; on hearing that we were he called to the sexton who was busy with a brush and dustpan in the aisle: "Cease the bell, John Dow!" John Dow mounted the steps into the gallery, and pulled at one of the ropes, rising on tip-toes to reach the loop, which hung above his head. As the rope came down, and before the bell spoke, a piercing scream from above caused John Dow to drop the rope, while we boys fled as the bell striking more and more rapidly at length became silent. Then the vicar and John Dow, and two others went up in fear and trembling, and after a while came down carrying Sam Glover senseless, and white as a sheet but apparently unhurt. The Vicar caused him to be laid at full length in the church-porch, and sharply dashed cold water in his pale face: and soon the boy recovered and told us what had occurred. It seems that in his eagerness to gain a hiding-place which we should fear to invade, he had been so incredibly reckless as to lie down on the floor below the old tenor bell which had been left "up" after having been knolled for a death in the early morning of the same day. His scheme was crowned with complete success, and he had the satisfaction of seeing us approach his lair without the courage to look in and discover him, but being unwilling to break cover until we had left the church, he lay still in his dangerous position. Before long he heard our footsteps on the stone floor below, and was eagerly thinking how soon he might withdraw when suddenly he heard the sonorous voice of the Vicar "Cease the bell, John Dow." For all he knew John Dow might have been close to the rope, and Sam saw

that if the bell were pulled off before he could climb out of the pit he must be killed. His only chance seemed to be to lie flat on his back, and hope that the bell might swing clear over his shrinking body; he judged that the lip of the bell would clear him by two or three inches, but he dreaded that the old fashioned clapper with its long flight would strike him in its swing. These thoughts had scarcely flitted through his excited brain when the rope was pulled, and with a groan the great bell began to roll over; the strain was too great for human endurance, and with the piercing scream which we all heard poor Sam fainted away, and was mercifully spared from further knowledge of his fearful situation. After this Sam would have nothing more to do with bells.

And now I will conclude with heartily wishing all the single, gentle, and simple

"A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR."

### THUMPER'S DATE TOUCH.

[A SEQUEL TO THE "LOST PEAL BOOK."]

MOST of the readers of "THE BELL NEWS" will remember the story of "The Lost Peal Book," in the Christmas number of 1884. We will now take another look at the Slowborough Abbey Society of change-ringers some few weeks later on.

It was the second of February (Candlemas Day). The festivities of Christmas were over; the company met for practice on the evening of that day. They had got the bells up and were resting for a short time. Mr. Snapper had just proposed that they should go for a date touch of 1868 Grandsire Triples, on some evening during the following week. The recovery of the lost peal book had so stimulated their energies that they frequently rang touches of over a thousand now, both in Grandsire and Treble Bob; and they hoped to do a peal before the year ended.

"Talking of date touches, I suppose none of you recollect Andrew Thumper, do you?" said old Mr. Colt, who was still alive and thriving. None of the present company did remember that gentleman, although some had heard of him.

"Well, I remember him," said Colt, "He died in this very belfry on the last night in the old year, just before midnight. It was in the year 1826. This man composed two date touches, one for 1826 and one for 1868. He said he was not likely to live to ring the last one, and as it was he never rang the first; but if we could only find these touches, we might do the 1868 next week. As far as I can remember he never kept any record of them on paper, but merely wrote the course-ends down on the back of the door of the clock case, in the chamber above us."

"Well, I've never seen anything written on that door except the names of one or two men that have cleaned or repaired the clock at different times," said Mr. Trippels.

"Ah, that door was repaired and altered some years after Andrew's death," said Colt. "Yes, I remember, it was done when they put the quarter jacks on. The clock only used to strike the hour before."

"I say," said Moldsworth, "you said just now that the old chap died in the belfry; how did it happen? We should like to hear that story."

"Bother it, we've no time for stories now, let's get to work and do some ringing, and then I daresay Mr. Colt will oblige us with it over at the "Crown" when we've done," said Trippels.

"Hear, hear!" on all sides. The company then got to their bells and rang a touch of 960 Oxford Treble Bob.

"Well, I think we've done enough for to-night," said Trippels, as soon as they had finished. "We may as well fall the bells and adjourn; and then we can hear Mr. Colt's story."

They accordingly falled the bells in peal, and adjourned to their meeting room at the "Crown and Mitre."

Each of the company having lit his pipe, and got supplied with what he wanted in the shape of refreshment, Mr. Colt began as follows:—

"When I was a lad, gentlemen (it would be about the year 1815, I might be about nineteen or twenty at the time), a ringer came to live here named Andrew Thumper. He was a young man when he came (about five or six and twenty, may be). He came from somewhere in the south (I can't tell you where). He

was a good change-ringer, and a bit of a composer, but a very silent and reserved sort of man. When he first came he seemed to be in trouble about something. Some said he had been disappointed in love, others, that he had once been rich and had lost all his property. I don't think the last supposition was very likely, for he was, as I said only a young man, and could not have been in possession of much property for very long, and he appeared to be only a working man. Anyway we never knew what his trouble was, as he said very little to any of us. Being a good ringer, and fond of the art, he soon joined our company. He was a pattern-maker by trade, and worked at Bot and Skimmer's Foundry, that is now, and I've heard many of the old moulders say they never knew patterns to draw so well and leave the sand so easy as his. You know those four cast-iron brackets that hold up the gallery at the Town Hall? Well, he made the patterns for them, and old Dick Sleeker, that works at the foundry now, he moulded 'em and cast 'em. And those cast-iron columns at our theatre, they're some more of his work. But there, I am wandering from my story; you must forgive an old man's imperfections, gentlemen. Well, Thumper, when he'd been here some time, got appointed steeplekeeper, and used to do the service bells, the same as our friend, Mr. Trippels, here, does now. He was a crabby sort of chap, as I said, and he was never known to be on very intimate terms with anybody. He spent a lot of time over composing touches and I have no doubt that many of his compositions were false; but I believe the two date touches were all right, because we had two London men over here at the time, who were considered good authorities, and they proved them and said they were true. Now Andrew was anxious to call the 1826 on this very day forty-two years ago. Our party was not always very regular in their attendance at that time, so in the afternoon I made a point of going round and looking them up for the evening meeting. I got round soon after three o'clock, and all the men we wanted had promised to be there punctually at seven in the evening. I just turned into the foundry to see Andrew and tell him it was all right. He seemed more morose and gloomy than ever that afternoon, and when I got there he said he had done work for that day, and should soon be off to do the chiming for the four o'clock service. His governor was churchwarden then, and he always let him off when he was wanted at the church. We just went down into the foundry before we left, to see them cast a big fly-wheel for Jupp's mill, that was ready that afternoon. Now when we came in, Clinker, the cupola man, had just tapped out, and got the two-ton ladle full of metal. He was stopping the cupola, when his 'bot' missed, and he had to stick another on the rod before he could stop the metal. Andrew made some nasty remark about his awkwardness, and Clinker said something about 'pattern-makers thinking they knew more about foundry work than the moulders themselves.' This made Andrew savage, and he and I left the foundry at once and went to the Abbey steeple. It wanted twenty minutes to four when we got there. Now at that time we had a lad in the choristers school named Horace Littenhaugh, He was a lively young scamp, and often used to come up into the belfry when we were ringing, although 'twas against the rules of the school. Now just as we got into the belfry up comes young Master Horace, full of his fun as usual, and he takes and slaps Andrew on the back and says 'Now then, old Grandsire Stedman Treble Bob' (those were the words as near as I can recollect), what makes you look so glum this afternoon?" Andrew looked daggers at him, and I, at that moment, was just off up to the bell-chamber to let down a rope that had run up a bit with the damp weather. I had hardly gone up a dozen steps when I heard something go bump on the floor, and on turning back I found Master Horace lying between the seventh and tenor boxes, with a gash in his head, from which the blood was flowing copiously. Andrew was bending over him, and when we two lifted him up he was as dead as this glass, here."

Here Colt held up his glass which was empty. "Come, fill the old man's glass, and then he'll get on with his yarn," said Trippels. This was done and Colt proceeded. "Well, you know, gentlemen, we none of us saw how it was done, and Andrew always said that the boy caught his foot against the tenor box, and fell and hit his head against the corner of the seventh box, and this story satisfied the coroner's jury at the inquest. Well, this affair seemed to throw a gloom over everything; we didn't ring at all that evening. I shall never forget

carrying the poor boy down, with the blood streaming all over his fair young face and his white collar. No, gentlemen, I hope I may never see such a sight again. But to return to my story. After that day Andrew was more surly and morose than ever, and hardly spoke to any of us. But for all his disagreeable ways he was determined to have that date touch before the year was out. So on the last night of the old year we met as usual soon after eleven, to ring the old year out and the new one in. We intended to do the eighteen twenty-six, although it would have lasted into the new year, from the time we started, had we accomplished it. I shall never forget that night. Andrew rang the seventh, and conducted, and I rang the sixth. We had'nt gone above four or five hundred, when Andrew drops his rope and calls out 'Oh! the boy, the boy! I killed him, I knocked him over. There he is staring at me! Don't you see him? There, there against the clock weights!' We all set our bells as soon as we could, and I ran and caught the seventh rope and pulled her up and set her in a few strokes. 'What on earth's the matter, Andrew,' said I as soon as I had set the bell. 'Oh, the boy, the boy!' says he. 'Dont you see him there? Now he's gone over against the fourth, in the other corner. O-oh! He's pointing at me know; Oh God, forgive me, O-oh!' And then Andrew fell down flat on the floor, and we looked up and could see nothing, so we went to Andrew and found him dead."

"What a horrible story," said Trippels, "Dash it, Colt, you'll make us all nervous directly."

"Ah, mind you don't go to far with some of those young cubs at the choir school, Trippels, you're precious fond of knocking them about," said Snapper.

It will be remembered that Mr. Trippels was employed as mathematical master at the choristers' school on certain days in each week, and was not a good manager of boys; and hence this remark.

"Look here," said Trippels, "when I don't know how to manage boys I'll ask our head master, Dr. Swishem; not you. The boys are nothing to me. I've seen plenty in and out of the school in my time. They come here fresh from the nursery at about nine or ten years old, and we have to break them in a bit. Dr. Swishem understands that sort of thing better than I, or you either, and we keep them here and start 'em with some means of getting a living when they're about fifteen, and what more can be done for them?"

"But look here," said Moldsworth, "to return to the subject of the Date Touch, do you think those course-ends for the eighteen-sixty-eight could be found?"

"I doubt it," said Trippels, "but all the same I'll have a good look round that clock-chamber before long."

The company then separated and went home for the night.

On the day following, shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon, several of the choristers were sauntering about the playground at the choir school, among whom were Montague Raye (the senior boy), Alec Langdale, and two young Greeks, named Xerxes and Alethes Hellenicos respectively. The latter two were the only boys in the school who did not stand in awe of Mr. Trippels. They seemed to have a sort of way of getting over him which none of the other boys could understand, and somehow he never seemed to be really angry with them.

At that moment Mr. Trippels was observed coming across the churchyard with a bunch of keys in his hand.

"He's going to wind up the clock, Montie, let's ask him to let us go up with him," said Alec.

"It would be no go, if we were to, he would'nt let us," said Montague.

By this time Trippels had unlocked the door at the bottom of the stairs and gone inside. He soon came out again, however, and walked away, leaving the door open.

"He's forgotten the key of the clock case," said Xerxes, "let's go up while he's gone."

"I would'nt have old Trip catch us up there for a trifle, and there would'nt be time before he comes back," said Alec.

"What awful muffs you English fellows are, we don't care if he does catch us, come along," said Alethes.

"Well I shan't risk it," said Alec. "No more shall I," said Montague, "I wonder you fellows are'nt afraid."

"Afraid, indeed! who ever saw a Greek in a funk, I should like to know, Eh Xerk?" said Alethes.

"Aye, I should like to know," said Xerxes. "Here, come

along, Leethie, and we'll leave those muffs behind." So saying the two young Greeks made their way to the tower and ascended to the clock-chamber. Their next move was to climb up on to the top of the clock-case, and they then proceeded to cut their names on the wall in neat Greek characters, among a lot of other names. They had not been there long before they heard Trippels coming upstairs. They squatted down on the top of the clock-case so that he could not see them. It wanted one minute to the half-hour when Trippels arrived, and not wishing to wind on the warning he waited till the clock struck. "Tang, ting, tung, tong; tung, tang, ting, tung" went the clock, and Trippels proceeded to wind up the three trains. He was just shutting the door of the case when Xerxes threw a little square piece of board down, which made him look up. "Now then, what are you boys doing up there? Come down immediately," said Trippels.

"Oh yes, likely thing; We're very comfortable where we are, thank you, Mr. Trippels," said Xerxes.

Now then, let's have no nonsense, come down at once," said Trippels angrily. "Why what on earth have you been doing? How dare you disfigure the wall like that, cutting your names on the stone!"

"Oh, there's plenty more up there, and I doubt whether they are any of them as artistic as ours," said Alethes, "Mural decorations you know, Mr. Trippels."

"Yes, I'll give you mural—," what Trippels was going to say we cannot tell; for just at that moment Xerxes slid down a rope behind him and jumping upon his back and flinging one arm round his neck and over his mouth he buried his smooth young face in Trippels' whiskers and checked further utterance. Meanwhile Alethes followed his brothers example and hung on to that gentleman on the other side.

"Oh, Trippels, old boy, what a nice man you do—be was," said Xerxes somewhat releasing his hold.

"Get off you cheeky young hounds," said Trippels, as soon as he could find breath.

"I say, Trippels, you shall carry us down stairs like this and into the Doctor's study, and tell him all about it if you like," said Alethes.

"Your young dogs, I can't be angry with you when I would," said Trippels to the boys who had now released him from their embraces. His eye now lighted upon the piece of board which one of the boys had thrown down. It had some figures on it and it seemed to him that this might be the missing date touch. Certainly it was only a small piece of wood about five or six inches square at most and looked almost too new to have formed part of the old clockcase door. Nevertheless Trippels pocketed it intending to examine it when he got home.

"Now then, youngsters, come on down with me, and don't let me catch you up here again, that's all," said he, and all three went down. The boys went to tell of their exploit to their schoolfellows, and Trippels went home.

When Trippels got home he examined the piece of board and found that it certainly bore the course ends of a date touch for 1868, and he had no doubt but what it was the one Colt mentioned as being Andrew Thumper's. So he planned a little surprise for the company. He intended to call this on the next meeting night as somebody else's, and then when it was done, to tell the rest of the men all about it. Accordingly on the following Thursday evening, when the company were assembled in the belfry, Trippels regretted that he had not had time to look for Thumper's touch, and announced his intention of calling another, comprising the same number of changes, which he said was composed by a friend of his in Yorkshire.

So they rung it, and it came out without a hitch.

When they had set their bells the door opened and in walked Mr. Haulemthrow, the conductor of the Didlington company, a first class ringer and composer. He was accompanied by Mr. Sluggerridge, another of his company.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the new comers.

"Where did you get that date touch you've just rung?" added Haulemthrow.

"It's a composition of a friend of Mr. Trippels," said Snapper.

"Then, I am afraid your friend has been so unlucky as to produce a false touch," said the former, turning to Trippels, who was smiling facetiously. "I don't think my ears have deceived me as to a repetition having occurred about the middle. Have you the course ends?" added he.

Trippels produced the piece of board and handed it to Haulemthrow, and then stood by smiling and rubbing his hands and waiting for the verdict.

Mr. Haulemthrow sat down and pulled out his pocket book, and after doing a bit of figuring he pronounced the touch to be *false*, and shewed the company where the repetition occurred.

"Pardon me for deceiving you, gentlemen, but that is Andrew Thumper's Date Touch, I found it in the clock-chamber yesterday," said Trippels.

"I thought you said you knew it was all right, old man," said several of the company, turning to Colt.

Before Colt could reply, a young ringer, named Fisher, stepped forward and said "I am sorry to have been the cause of so much trouble, gentlemen, but that is not Thumper's date touch at all. If Mr. Trippels had shewn me that piece of wood before, I could have told him all about it. The fact is a few weeks ago I tried to do a little bit of composing myself, and being up in the clock chamber one day, I pricked out what you see on that board. I had a good mind to shew it to some good authority, and then I thought it was almost sure to be false and I should only get laughed at, so I threw it up on to the top of the clock case out of the way, and Trippels, it appears, has fished it out, under the impression that it was Thumper's."

There was a general murmur of disapproval among the company against Trippels.

Trippels himself seemed rather ashamed, and he did not remain very long with the rest of the company at the "Crown and Mitre," that night. He just drank one glass of ale at the bar and went home.

The rest of the company discussed the matter over and they seemed to think that there was a possibility of finding the real touch yet.

Now it happened that one day during the following week, as the bells were ringing, the clapper of the sixth flew out and broke through the bell-chamber floor. The clapper was replaced next day, and the day following one of the ringers named Batten, who was a carpenter by trade, was employed to repair the hole in the floor. Now the floor was a double one, and as he was wrenching up some of the broken pieces of the board which had been smashed, he spied the end of a piece of seven-inch deal, which seemed to be lying loose between the floors. He pulled it out and found that it was about two feet long, and was covered with figures. He immediately thought of Thumper's date touch, and when he had done his job, he put the piece of board in his tool-bag and took it home, resolved to know more about it before he mentioned the matter to anyone else. It happened that on the next day Haulemthrow came over to Slowborough for the evening. There was no ringing on that night, and Batten met him in the street and confided to him all about what he had found. Mr. Haulemthrow accompanied Batten to his home and examined the board and pronounced it to be a true touch of 1868 changes, whether it was Andrew Thumper's composition or not. On turning the board over they found nothing whatever on the back, but on the same side as the figuring was the top half of the letters "A.T." The board had been sawn in two when the old door was demolished; but this left no doubt as to the composer.

Now Batten was rather annoyed at what had occurred before, and resolved, if possible, to get this touch rung without the aid of Trippels at all.

A favourable opportunity soon presented itself.

The season of Lent was now drawing near, and on the Thursday before Quinquagesima Sunday, Mr. Trippels went up to London on business for a couple of days. Some maliciously observed that he had gone on a kid-napping expedition to try and prevail upon some shabby-genteel parents to entrust their boys to the care of the Rev. Dr. Swishem, at the Slowborough choir school for a few years, which after all would not have been a bad thing for either boys or parents, if such was the case. But be that as it may, he was gone and not expected home until Saturday. So on the Thursday evening Batten got Haulemthrow to come over and call the date touch after a good deal of persuasion (the latter looking upon the matter more in the light of an intrusion than otherwise). Nevertheless the touch was rung, and the members of the company rather congratulated themselves upon having accomplished it without the aid of Mr. Trippels.

When Mr. Trippels arrived home about mid-day on Saturday (bringing with him two gentlemanly, but half-starved looking boys; one the orphan of a deceased organist, and the other the son of a poor curate, their admission to the school had been arranged some months previously, by the bye), he was rather astounded to hear of what had been done, but he took it all in good part, and said "A date touch was no'wt to make a fuss about after all."

#### A FEW MORE FACTS GENERALLY KNOWN.

The supposition that the Messrs. Day, bell-hangers, of Eye, are the principals in the firm of Day and Martin, is a long way from the mark.

When speaking of "The Shades," of Greenwich, the phrase should not be taken to mean the sign of a house of entertainment.

Mr. W. Cecil, of Bethnal Green, does not we, believe, claim the slightest relationship with the present Prime Minister.

The notice in this paper announcing the publication of two stories in the present number, was not a covert allusion, as has been erroneously supposed, to two distinguished members of the Durham and Newcastle Association.

The very best Carpenter in England is to be found at Croydon.

Recent criticisms on the "London Societies" have been brought to a close in a very Strange manner.

The relationship of Mr. W. D. Smith, of Hackney, to the Secretary of State for War, is of the most remote and illusory character.

Mr. May, of Wantage, has not any connection, so far as is known, with the firm of Bryant and May.

The College Youths have both French and English among their metropolitan members.

The Earl of Warwick does not belong to the Bedfordshire Association.

The contrast between Prussian Blue and York Green is, as may be supposed, very decided.

On the Death of the late Mr. JOHN GOOSE,  
Formerly Parish Clerk of Swaffham, who died on Sunday,  
the 23rd of August, 1795, aged 78 years.

Years *sixty-five* did honest John  
His office fill with merit;  
But now to realms above he's gone,  
So peace be with his spirit!

To *chant a stave*, or chevy-chace,  
To none scarce was he second;  
Could make *responses* with a grace,  
And was a toper reckon'd.

A *holiday* he thought divine,  
A *holy feast* loved dearly;  
Would oft partake of *holy wine*,  
Of *holy water*, rarely.

Tho' rack'd and crippled to an inch,  
And to the gout a martyr,  
Ne'er from his bottle would he flinch,  
Or ever cry for quarter.

*Fest days* he kept throughout the year  
And even to his last day;  
But *Abstinence* he deem'd severe,  
Nor could endure a *Fast-day*.

The *Liturgy* he had by heart,  
And could repeat the *Psalter*;  
At *Christ'nings* too could play his part,  
Nor e'er was known to faulter.

The merry *peal* he lov'd full well,  
*Bob Major* was his glory;  
But now the melancholy *knell*  
Proclaims the mournful story!

Whatever faults were to his lot,  
What boots it to reveal them?  
No, rather let them be forgot,  
Or Charity conceal them.

Let no rude jest profane his name;  
'Twere impious,—not witty;  
His age, our Reverence should claim;  
His Sufferings, our Pity.

He moistened many a time his clay,  
But from him Death the cup now dashes;  
His *courage out*,—he drooped away,  
And here in peace repose his ashes. G. W. L.