

ANNALS
OF
STEEPLE BARTON
AND
WESTCOT BARTON,

IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORD

BY
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TO THE
REV. WILLIAM GREEN M. A.,
VICAR OF STEEPLE BARTON :

TO THE
REV. EDMUND LEOPOLD LOCKYER, M.A.,
RECTOR OF WESTCOT BARTON;

AND TO THE
REV. JOHN HENRY BROOKES, MA.,
RURAL DEAN OF THE DEANERY OF WOODSTOCK

THIS RECORD

OF SOME OF THE PECULIARITIES AND HISTORY OF PLACES
WITHIN THEIR JURISDICTIONS

IS INSCRIBED

BY THEIR GRATEFUL SERVANT,
THE COMPILER

*Steeple Aston,
St. Peter's Day, 1866.*

ANNALS OF STEEPLE BARTON

AND

WESTCOT BARTON,

IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORD.

PART I.-PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD.

SECTION I.

THE parishes of Steeple Barton and Westcot Barton, in the county, diocese, and archdeaconry of Oxford, are so blended together that it would be well nigh impossible to attempt the history of one of the parishes without some details of the other.

Though described as a separate district in the Domesday survey, Westelle or Westcot Barton, appears to have been treated as a member of Steeple Barton, until it became a distinct incumbency and parish upon the consecration of its church in 1273 ; for I feel convinced that the record of the consecration by the Bishop of Cloyne, in Ireland, acting for and as the deputy of the invalided Bishop of Lincoln mentioned in Kennett, refers to Westcot Barton and not to Steeple Barton, and that the prelate was engaged in a direct line of duty when he went on to the consecration on the next day of the church of St. Martin, at Sandford, and to that of the since-demolished chapel of Ledwell, which was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen.

Westcot Barton Church is dedicated to Saint Edward, meaning, I presume, King Edward the Confessor, not Edward King of the West Saxons, who was traitorously stabbed at Corfe Castle in the year 978, and who is commemorated in our Church Calendar on the 18th of March and 20th of June ; and this is I think proved by the fact that the western limits of the district I am writing about recognize the Sunday after October 24th as their village feastday, that is to say King Edward the Confessor's day (old style) or October 13th, with eleven days added.

Churches dedicated to the Confessor are by no means rare ; the magnificence of the ceremony carried out by and in the presence of King Henry III. in 1269, upon the translation of Edward's relics to a new shrine was no doubt a popular theme ; albeit there were no newspapers to convey intelligence from Westminster to Westcot Barton. The Confessor was, if I may use the word, a *popular* saint. Ridgway in his " Gem of Thorney Island"—that is, Westminster Abbey—says, "Not only was the Confessor's shrine visited by a vast concourse of people at his annual commemorations, but at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and any other great holyday, numberless votaries flocked thither to pay their homage, and made their offerings. No shrine in England save that of Thomas a Becket, at Canterbury, received adoration so universal and so intense."

This theory does not exactly coincide with that of Mr. Jordan in his History of Enstone, page 162. He appears to me to have been misled by the fact that until the last few years both Steeple Barton and Westcot Barton kept their feasts as Steeple Barton still does on the Sunday and in the week following Michaelmas day (old style), and yet Steeple Barton Church is unquestionably dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. How is it then that the feast do not follow either of the days in which the Mother of Our Lord is named in the Church Calendar? The following passage from Kennett explains the matter—after telling us of several instances in which the wakes or feast of particular parishes had been changed by episcopal authority for the convenience of the parishioners, he writes, " At last this convenience of Sunday above week-days was the reason of attempting an universal change. For among the injunctions of King Henry viij., anno 1536, it was ordered that the dedication of churches should in all places be celebrated on the first Sunday of the month October for ever. Yet this order was not enforced, or not [generally] obeyed, but, however, most of these jubilees are now celebrated near the time of Michaelmas, when a vacation from the labours of harvest and the plough does afford the best opportunity for visits and sports." [Bishop Kennett flourished long before the adoption of the Reformed Calendar of 1752 ;] he continues " This transposing of the day has left it more difficult to know the saint to whose protection the Church was committed ; there be only these grounds of safe conjecture. Such wakes as are observed on the first or second Sunday after Michaelmas Day, in these we may doubt a translation of time by virtue of the said injunction of Henry viij., or by a prevailing custom of postponing such solemnity to the end of harvest."

Westcot Barton contains 70 inhabited houses, and 920 acres of land, yielding a yearly rateable value of £1490. There are also within its ambit eight pieces of land, measuring together 154 acres, but rated to Steeple Barton, while the former parish has nine pieces of land, making up a total of 123 acres within the reputed limits of Steeple Barton. This part of my subject matter has an area of 2384 acres, with more than 200 inhabited houses, of the yearly rateable value of £4044. so, at least, say the Members of the Assessment Committee of the Woodstock Union, a body of scientific valuers who can exactly fix, as they say, rents and rates without a sight of the hereditaments they operate upon. The three members of which Steeple Barton consists are the Liberties—or, as Skelton, in his Antiquities of Oxfordshire, calls them, the three Manors—of Steeple Barton proper, —chiefly west of the Dorn rivulet ; Sesswells Barton, formerly Barton Odonis, east of the rivulet ; and Middle Barton, northward of these, and south of Westcot Barton. Together, Steeple

Barton and Westcot Barton form a compact area, bounded on the north by Sandford, Over Worton, and Dun's Tew ; on the east by Steeple Aston and Rousham ; on the south by Tackley, Wootton, and Glympton ; and on the west by Kiddington and the hamlet of Gaginwell-in-Enstone. The circumstance of Steeple Barton being divided into three liberties or manors, does not interfere with its parochial administration or ecclesiastical discipline. Both parishes are in the rural deanery, union, and county court district of Woodstock ; in the hundred and highway district of Wootton ; and in the petty sessional division of the county magistrates who transact public business at Deddington. The Rev. Jenner Marshall is Lord of the Manor of Westcot Barton ; the last Court-leet for that manor was held in 1823. The separate manorial privileges of Steeple Barton proper and Middle Barton, if they ever really existed, have been so long in abeyance that they have merged in those of Chas. Cottrell Dormer, of Rousham, Esq. (High Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1828), whose manorial title is Lord of Steeple Barton, Sesswells Barton, Middle Barton, and Ludwell Farm, in the County of Oxford. Ludwell Farm is part of the adjoining parish of Wootton, but is doubtless rightly esteemed parcel of the manor of Steeple Barton, as Mr. Dormer has a court roll, by which it appears that Sir James Dashwood, Bart., great grandfather of the present Sheriff, Sir Henry W. Dashwood, Bart., not only attended a Court Leet as owner of Ludwell Farm, as his great grandson is at this present time, but officiated as foreman of the Leet Jury at a Court held about a century ago by Mr. Dormer's ancestor. The latest Court Leet held in and for this manor by Mr. Dormer's steward, was on the thirteenth of November, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six, if we except one for the appointment of a Hayward held about two years later. The Duke of Marlborough, as Lord Paramount of the Hundred of Wootton, claims and collects some small dues from the parish of Westcot Barton, and the liberty of Sesswells Barton, for both of which he appoints bailiffs at his Hundred Courts, held yearly at Blenheim Park-gate. His claim to thirteen shillings from Sesswells Barton at Lady Day ; to six pounds ten shillings from Middle Barton and Steeple Barton, at Lady Day ; and to six pounds ten shillings and eight pence from the two latter liberties at Michaelmas, seem to have been lost through neglect and disuse in collecting them, as have also five small payments named in the schedule of the Inclosure Award of 1797, formerly payable to him in lieu of Improprate Tithes. It is the more remarkable that these payments should have ceased when we hear in mind that the Statute of Queen Anne, whereby the successive Dukes of Marlborough have become Lords Paramount of the Hundred of Wootton, enjoins the duty upon the grantees of the former rights of the Crown to keep up all its ancient privileges, so that in the event of an extinction of the grant by forfeiture, or by failure of heirs, the reigning Sovereign may receive back all that Anne and her successors granted out to the possessors of Blenheim Palace.

The kindness of a friend of antiquarian taste has placed before me the record of an inquiry into the rights of the (then late) Crown, as to the Hundred of Wootton, made on the 13th of October, 1649, rather more than half a year after the execution of King Charles, under an Act of the Commons of England in Parliament assembled, by four Commissioners, the first of whom was Unton Croke, of Studley, Oxfordshire, whose name will re-appear in these Annals, assisted by a jury of twenty-one men of the neighbourhood, Thomas Gregory, the owner of Hordley Farm, at Wootton, officiating as foreman. This lengthy document does not disclose any copyhold or free copyholdings in either Barton, so that we may fairly presume that this peculiar tenure has been unknown here, though not yet entirely obsolete in several adjoining and neighbouring parishes in the Hundred.

The chief rents claimed by the Lord Paramount cannot, I think, be interpreted in either instance to refer to property formerly copyhold.

The etymology of the word Barton is obvious. *Ton*, the fortified or strengthened place where *Barns* were erected. Middle and Westcot are prefixes suggested by the situations ; Steeple by the tower—the word steeple originally meaning any tall building attached to a church, and not restricted as at present to a spire. Doubtless Steeple Barton proper, when it was Barton Magna, or Great Barton, was the most populous, though now the least so, of the four divisions. The church was of very early erection, probably upon a spot already sacred in the eyes of the pagan inhabitants of Romanized Britain, before the second Christian mission from Rome had reached our island.

Upon removing the north wall of Steeple Barton Church to prepare a trench to receive the new foundation of concrete in 1851, the workmen discovered ashes. stones partially calcined, a middle-brass coin of Vespasian, and another coin of the same size, too much worn to be appropriated. Sesswells has been wrongly thought to mean Sevenwells, as this division contains many perennial natural rills of the purest water. The right meaning will appear further on.

The only Collegiate body possessing real property in the Bartons at present is Magdalen College, Oxford. The estate consists of one small field, reputed to be in two parts, one in each of our two parishes, There are however, besides the Rectorial Glebe at Westcot Barton, and the Vicarial Glebe at Middle Barton, nearly 30 acres of land belonging to the two bodies of trustees governing the Charities established at the Inclosure in 1797, more than 56 acres belonging to the Great Tew Charity estate in the Liberty of Middle Barton, and about nine acres partially rated to each parish belonging to the Charity estates of the neighbouring parish of Sandford; of these institutions I purpose to write more in my second part. My object in citing these matters here is to shew that there is a sufficient quantity of land. held in mortmain to prevent the whole of either parish ever being absorbed into one undivided ownership ; added to which there are forty-four persons on the register of voters for Oxfordshire in respect of property of a *freehold* tenure in the two Bartons.

Both parishes are entirely on the great oolite or corn-brash formation of soil in the district, coloured blue in Arthur Young's map of Oxfordshire, published in 1809, and called by him stonebrash. They are intersected by the rivulet named-before, which has already given motion to one water corn-mill before it enters our limits, has formerly turned another in Westcot Barton, gives motion to one still existing, and enabling its proprietor and occupier to carry on a

prosperous trade in Middle Barton, the water power being, however, in autumn occasionally supplemented by steam, and afterwards propels four hydraulic rams for supplying water to three farmsteads, and a large mansion.

The stream is narrow and rapid, favourable to trout and crayfish, both of which are plentiful and good ; it occupies a course of three miles within our limits, exclusive of an affluent rising in the village of Ledwell, which, after winding more than two miles, joins the Dorn a short distance south of Middle Barton Village.

Fish are not found except rarely at any distance from the mouth of this second stream. The right of fishery in the Dorn was a subject of enquiry by the jury of the Hundred of Wootton in 1274, the second year of Edward the First, when it was decided that John de St. John, of Stanton St. John, not only enjoyed a Charter of Free Warren at Barton, appurtenant to his Manor of Barton, that is, as I understand it, Steeple Barton proper, or Great Barton, but the right of fishery from the bridge of Ranceford, now called Rayford, on the north, to that of Ramford, near the present Rainsford Meadow, near the parish of Wootton, on the south - these bridges were merely foot-bridges of thin flag-stones, resting on others set upright in the water. Rayford Bridge still exists ; Rainsford has disappeared, and so, indeed, has the ford itself by artificial deepening of the bed of the stream in 1864 - the expression in the document I quote from defining John de St. John's right of fishery to extend only "*ad medium fili aquae*," to the middle of the current, tells us that his lordly powers were limited to one side of the stream only.

The meadow-land on each side of the Dorn is alluvial and productive but very narrow, the eastern banks in the southern part of its course being steep, well wooded, romantic, and picturesque. A geological *fault* occurs in these strata of earth and rock between Steeple Barton Church and the rivulet, the strata on the north-east side being upheaved and dislocated, the yellow sand and sandstone occurring much nearer the surface in that direction than in the other. Some of the seven wells before mentioned issue copiously out of the junction between the yellow sands and the upper lias clay, and were formerly the chief supply of a spacious mill-pool as they still are of a small pond ; a formation of clay not entirely free from madreporine and overlying thirty feet of sand and sandstone, has, during the last fifteen years, been wrought for bricks and drainpipes. Lime is manufactured from the upper zone of the oolite in three widely-separated parts of Barton. Lias limestone lies under too many superincumbent strata and zones to be reached and worked with any reasonable chance of profit.

Lignite lying between the yellow sands and sandstone when brought to the surface burns readily, but is so strongly tinctured with sulphur as to be useless if not deleterious. The Stonesfield slate, that is the lower zone of the great oolite, crops out near Westcot Barton Church, but is not worked within the parish, though it is so in a spot distant about a furlong from the north east angle of Sesswells Barton Liberty, where it yields an abundant and profitable supply of flagstones or planks capable of resisting frost, but flying to fragments if exposed to a moderate degree of fire-heat.

Both parishes are as purely agricultural as can be imagined, but good shops supply nearly every want. Gloves are stitched by many females for the glove-makers at Woodstock, Charlbury, and Chipping-Norton. Malt, flour, lime, bricks, and drain tiles are the only products of the Bartons entitled to any portion of the term manufactures. Access to the station of the Great Western Railway Company and Canal Wharf at Heyford by the Enstone and Heyford turnpike road is rendered easy, and coal is brought there abundantly both by rail and canal. Three miles and a half of the above-named turn-pike road, and half a mile of the Deddington and Kidlington one are on Barton land.

The present appears an appropriate time for giving some public notices of the parishes, in one of which the writer has now had an interest more than forty years, and received in the other many acts of kindness, both professionally and personally ; appropriate because the Union Chargeability Act of the last Parliament cannot fail to obliterate the slight remains of old jealousies as to the settlements of paupers ; and again appropriate because day by day, during the last six months, we have seen growing up through the munificence of one of our proprietors and impropiators, a goodly and beautiful school, to be connected with the National system of education, and to be conducted by certificated teachers.

Great have been the changes in municipal and everyday matters as to these parishes within the period of my recollection. Forty years ago neither parish had a parsonage house fit to be so called, nor a resident incumbent. Church services were celebrated once only on Sundays, at the inconvenient hour for the parishioners of 1.30, in each church, the two curates being vicars of adjoining parishes, and having to attend to the Barton churches between their engagements at home. Small opportunities had they to find out the sick and afflicted - small means to aid them with when found ; they received less than £100 a-year for their curacies between the two, the stipend from Steeple Barton being at first £30, afterwards £40, while the offertory funds at their disposal were a mere pittance. The bells and churches were out of repair, the best places in each taken up by ugly, square, boxed-up pews, the open seating rickety. The only embellishments were such as was in Steeple Barton church, on the boarding wherewith the chancel arch was filled, and the communion table kept out of sight, namely, a vile daub of the Royal arms, crested with a lion, gules proper, crowned argent, to represent King James II., in whose reign—namely, in 1686—it was erected by Edward Royton and William Jessiman, churchwardens. It was flanked by two robed figures, intended, says Warton, for Moses and Aaron ; underneath it ran, in black letter —

My son, feare God and the King, and medle not with them that are given to change.

Did Royton and Jessiman, I wonder, concur or acquiesce in the *change* two years later, whereby was deposed the King they had recently and loyally honoured by erecting a new coat of arms?

Forty years ago, there was not a single proprietor of six acres resident in either Barton. The Rector of one resided in the northern part of Northamptonshire, the Vicar of the other in the southern part of Hampshire ; absenteeism was the rule, the " Rounding" system was in full career, a system of employing farm labour unknown to the generation that has grown up since 1835, denounced as degrading and destructive of confidence between employers and employed in almost every charge addressed by the late W. H. Ashhurst, Esq., who was both M. P. for the County and Chairman of

the Quarter Sessions, and not entirely ceasing until the needful but harsh re-modelling of the Poor-laws in the reign of the fourth William.

The "Rounding" system probably began before the Inclosure and sub-division of the common fields, because the labourers used the phrase "*going round by the yard-land*," and it was this : as soon as the harvest was ended and the crops secured, the demand for farm-labour slackened, whereupon the tenant farmer discharged all his men except a few he could not possibly do without, such as his shepherd, carter, herdman, and tasker, or flailman, working by measure ; the discharged labourers upon application to the overseers of the poor received each a ticket billeting them upon one or other of the farmers for a number of days, fixed according to a pre-arranged tariff of time determined by the size of the several holdings, originally no doubt by the number of yard-lands comprised in each farm ; two days to one, five to another, and so on. At the expiration of the stipulated number of days, the farmer gave the labourer a ticket or certificate entitling him to receive his pay at the hands of one of the overseers, out of the funds raised by the poor-rates, which were thus enhanced out of all fair proportion, and, as the acting overseer, was usually a shopkeeper, the evils of the truck systems were added to the other bad features of "rounding," yet, strange to say, a majority of farmers liked it, arguing that the rents would be kept down by the landowners exactly in proportion as the rates were kept up. A still worse system, prevailed at King's Sutton, Deddington, and some other places, at the same period of the reign of George the Fourth, namely, congregating the unemployed in the centre of a village or parish during the winter days for a stipulated number of hours, and paying them from the poor-rate for thus standing unemployed.

Neither the "Rounding system" nor the "All the day idle system" ever flourished in those parishes where absenteeism was unknown ; and landowners admitted that ownership of the soil means something in the way of duty, as well as investment of capital and collection of rent.

What wonder is it that when the Established Church and the State both failed in the due performance of their functions at Barton energetic Wesleyan teachers and zealous Romanist priests, backed in the latter case by the purse of a wealthy lady in an adjoining parish, found listeners and followers ? Differing from both in Church membership, I should, as a Barton landowner, be guilty of ingratitude did I not remember with thankfulness how one class planted a place of Christian worship in a spot convenient for the Bartonians ; and how the other introduced a Clothing Club, and did other acts of benevolence in parishes previously to a great extent neglected.

If any of these yet survive may they in the winter of their lives realise the words of the Christian Poet who has lately left us for a brighter world

" How quiet shows the woodland scene !
Each flower and tree its duty done,
Reposing in decay serene,
Like weary men when age is won,
Such calm old age as conscience pure
And self-commanding hearts ensure,
waiting their summons to the sky -
Content to live, but not afraid to die."

PART I. - PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD.

SECTION 2.

BARTON is not rich in remains of British, Roman, or Saxon times. According to Warton's History of Kiddington, the Maiden Bower Covert, near the Deddington and Kiddington turnpike road, in the Liberty of Sesswells Barton, is a British earthwork ; the name being compounded of two Celtic words, " Madian," strong, and "Beorgh," fortress.--It is now closely adjoined by a quarry and lime works. The Hoar-stone in the same division of Barton, was formerly a large block, but was severed into three pieces about 50 years ago by the agency of blasting powder. It appears to be of a variety of stone, differing in quality from that of the locality, and was therefore imported from a distance ;--in 1842 it was broken into smaller fragments by a Goth of a farmer, who regarded a memorial of Druidical worship as simply so much road material :-

A primrose on the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

The better taste of his landlord caused the fragments to be collected and preserved in their original situation ; two other similar monuments existed in the parish within living memory.

We first find mention of Barton in the survey made in the 16th year of William the Conqueror, 1082, called the Domesday Survey. This inspection of the real property of the realm was made by five Norman Commissioners, upon the oaths of the Sheriffs, the Lords of each Manor, the Presbyters of every Church, the Reeves of every Hundred, and six villeins of every village, who had to return exact particulars of ownership, quantity, and value, both in Edward the Confessor's reign and at the time of the survey, which occupied four years in completion, Oxfordshire being finished in or about the second year of the period. In the orthography of the names, the Norman scribes were oft mistaken, says Kennett, not taking it from other writings, but from Saxon informers, whose pronunciation could not be fit to dictate to foreigners. The following is an attempt to render in the vernacular that portion which relates to Barton : —Land of the Bishop of Baieux [that is Odo, half-brother of the King] : —

"Wadard holds, in Berton, one hide and a half, with six acres of land ; there are three carucates [each carucate being as much arable land as could be tilled with one plough, computed by some authorities at 60 acres.] Now, in his legal power [dominio] two carucates, with one servus, four villeins [rustic inhabitants], and [a view of] Frankpledge - one bordar [a person who had to supply his superior lord with poultry and eggs for his board] has two carucates of lvj. s. There is a mill there of ij. s., with five acres of meadow. It is now worth xl. s. in the time of King Edward lx. s." So that this estate was diminished one-third in yearly value by the effects of the Norman invasion. To resume my attempt at translation :-

" Ada has one hide of land in the same vill ; now in her power four carucates and nine servi, eighteen villeins, and five bordars have fourteen carucates there. She has two mills worth x. s. and nine acres of meadow. It is now worth £12, formerly £20." The Bishop of Lincoln is also recorded as having an estate at Barton, occupied by Lenar as tenant at will, his rent being £7. Roger de Ivery appears as a proprietor in Barton and Rousham ; he also held an estate in Wistelle [i. e. Westcote Barton], having one carucate in his power, one servus, and three villeins. This property had also decreased in value from xxv. s. to xx. s.

In 1149 the phrase Barton Odonis, or Odo's Barton, is met with, when half a hide of land situate in Sesswells Barton and Rousham belonged to Oseney Abbey, among the benefactors and founders of which occurs the name of Robert de Oilgi as well as Roger de Ivery.

The great charter of Oseney recites among the possessions of the religious of that Abbey, one hide and a half of land in Barton Odonis and Rousham.

In 1218, the second year of Pope Honorius the Third and of our Henry the Third, a grant was made to the canons of Oseney of the church of Great Barton, including of course the great tithes, with the chapels of Sandford and Ledwell, in the presence of John de Constantis, Archdeacon of Oxford, and the grant was confirmed by Guado, the Pope's Legate. Thus early were the greater portions of the ecclesiastical revenues of Steeple Barton and Sandford diverted into wrong channels - the churches being served by priests deputed from time to time from Oseney, till the incumbencies were made presentative and perpetual as vicarages, and endowed with a scanty portion of the tithes and yearly emoluments. It is remarkable that, in the early days of vicarages, the diocesan had a power, long since disused, to augment the portion of the vicar out of the great tithes, if the vicar complained that he was too poorly endowed ; the keeping of the vicar's horse too, and his own diet, were commonly allowed him by the canons when they or any of them resided at the manse or rectory house, as they frequently did, for business, health, or recreation.

The wall with a stone coping and lofty arched gateway, still existing in front of a dwelling house exactly eastward of the churchyard at Steeple Barton, points it out as the rectory house of that parish. For many years immediately anterior to 1851 it was inhabited as a farmhouse by the late Mr. William Faulkner and his ancestors. That gentleman, whose colleague as churchwarden I became about nine months before his death, told me that before the inclosure of 1797 he had frequently gone to tithe-cart in Middle Barton field - that is, had collected in waggons the bough-crowned tenth shocks of wheat, cocks of barley, oats, &c., set out by the proper officer and marked by a branch of ash, and so left by the various farmers for the impropiator of Steeple Barton proper, or his tenant of the tithe in kind. The large tithe-barn stood near the house in question until an exchange of land was effected between the late Viscount Clifden and the late Henry Hall, Esq., by which the latter acquired the ancient rectory, and demolished the farm buildings, including the tithe-barn, as useless.

In 1274 Roger de St. John, Lord of Staunton, confirmed to the canons of Oseney the grant of the church of Great Barton with the chapels of Sandford and Ledwell. Roger appears to have succeeded his father in the possession of Steeple Barton very shortly before he gave this confirmation charter. From the family of St. John it appears to have

passed to that of Wodeham, for in 1360 Simon, son of Walter de Wodeham, released to Nicholas de Loveyn, Knight, and Mary his wife, all his right in the manor of Barton, from which family of Loveyn, says Kennett, the possessions passed to that of St. Clare.

The long-subsisting connection between Barton and the important Abbey of Oseney gives the Bartonians an interest in that wealthy and important institution standing near one of the Oxford cemeteries, where the air now resounds with the puffings and shrieks of railway engines, more frequently than it did of old with the chantings of monastics and the music of a glorious peal of bells. It is no part of my purpose to dilate on the magnificence of Oseney, or on its abbey church being made a cathedral by King Henry VIII., and then pulled to pieces, but I will note an assertion by a writer in *Notes and Queries*, that at Oseney alone in the olden time was metropolitan authority conferred in England upon a newly-appointed Archbishop by placing on him the vestment called a pallium. This was woven of wool, not flax, and worn about the neck, to signify that sheep which, when found, the Good Shepherd brought back upon his shoulders to the fold, or to admonish the prelate to conduct himself in such wise.

"As the Good Shepherd tends his fleecy care,
" Seeks freshest pasture and the purest air;
"Reclaims the lost, the wandering sheep directs,
" By day o'ersees them and by night protects."

It was doubtlessly under the impression that the site of the present beautiful mansion at Sesswells Barton, restored and enlarged about ten years ago, was a cell to Oseney, and the occasional residence of a detachment of the Religious, that it received the designation of Barton Abbey, a title appropriate to the architecture and situation yet scarcely correct. Skelton, in his "Antiquities of Oxfordshire," called it Barton Manor, and it appears that it was the manor house of Sesswells Barton, or Barton Odonis, once the property of William de Sharesall, although the estate and the manorial privileges have since become severed; the stone coffins exhumed, but not preserved, in 1855, indicate that a manorial chapel and burial ground were once appurtenant to the mansion which was built by John Dormer, about 1524. His motto, "Nec temere, nec timide" - "Neither rashly nor fearfully" - was discovered during the recent repairs, and adopted by the father of the present proprietor; it is also still used by the Lord of the Manor. The family of Sheldon (subsequently settled here) placed over a door leading to the house and stables, "'Thinke and Thanke - Anno 1570." This family adhering to the Roman Catholic faith had a long attic in the mansion, adorned with frescoes, and fitted with an altar, altar rails, vesting chamber, and other peculiarities of that mode of Christian worship. When I saw this chamber, 30 years ago, enough remained to give a vivid idea of its former splendour. It was approached by an easily winding staircase, composed of solid blocks of polished oak. In an account of the ecclesiastical and architectural topography of the diocese of Oxford, published in 1850, by Mr. J. H. Parker, occurs the following line as to this mansion as it was before its recent restoration-

"The remains of the Manor-house are good Elizabethan."

The site of the mansions of the St. John's, Wodeham's, and Loveyn's, was, I think, the moated space about two furlongs north of the Abbey, sometimes called Barton Castle. In a pasture field called Barton Park, where foundation stones, bricks, and other indications of a strong and important dwelling, are obtained occasionally. This is, and I believe always has been, the property of a different owner to that of the Abbey; and though east of the Dorn part of Steeple Barton proper. We may note that there are only two proprietorships in the Liberty of Sesswells Barton, one of them not much exceeding fifty, the other comprising nearly nine hundred and fifty acres of land, exclusive of vicarial tithes. The ownership of the great tithes in Sesswells Barton runs with but has *not* been merged in the land.

Near the moated mansion stood the one water corn mill of "overshot" construction, that was independent of the Dorn and in existence little more than a century ago. The burial register records the interment of Edward Parker, miller, in Steeple Barton, December 19th, 1718. Improved means of transit and better roads have rendered the importance of a mill to every manor much less than it was of old. Every survey of parishes anterior to the Reformation disclose the mills as erections of prime necessity, and that it was unlawful to send grain to be ground at any other mill than that of the lord of the manor, who generally reserved to himself "*multura libera*," that is, free grinding without paying toll. Each of the four divisions of Barton had once its own mill propelled by water, and the term Windmill-bank favours the supposition that one driven by a different motive power once existed as well. In the fourteenth century we gather from Chaucer that the miller was an important member of rural society, and that grain was conveyed to, and flour brought home from the mills on the backs of horses, mules, and donkeys, a custom that did not entirely disappear before the days of George the Third.

With better roads these hindrances to good farming and management in our best alluvial meadows will eventually disappear altogether, as steam-mills arise in suitable localities. The occupiers of large farms have already learnt to convert grain into meal for cattle by steam power on their own holdings. In 1229 an *Inspeximus* Charter recited that Roger de St. John, as his father had previously done, released and quitted his claim to the mill at Barton Odonis in favour of the Abbey of Oseney. An *Inspeximus* Charter means one that recites an inspection of previous charters.

The rolls of the Hundred of Wootton tell us that in 1274 another John de St. John held in the manor of Barton Magna (Steeple Barton), a knight's fee, said by some authorities to be 480 acres, as 24 acres make a virgate, four virgates one hide, and five hides one knight's fee, but it is more likely that the dimension was uncertain, and varying in different localities. He had a charter of freewarren, that is, a liberty granted by the Crown, that within a fixed limit he should keep, preserve, and take to his own use fish, fowl, and other game, which no other person might hunt or destroy without leave of the grantee, and the fishery already named. Among the names of his servi, or tenants, of whom there were twenty-three, are Richard Oppenhall, Roger Coton, William atte Grene, Richard Bassett, Isabell de Cumbe, that is, of Combe, and Roger Atte Mull (at the mill); all these had to pay wardesilver, one farthing each, and the twenty-three

together as many shillings, called heavedselver, and to attend the court of the Hundred at Wootton as often as once in three weeks, if duly summoned by the hundredarius or chief constable.

At the same period John de Neweman held one virgate of land at Barton as tenant of the Prior of St. Frideswide, in Oxford, at a yearly rent of six shillings.

The survey of ecclesiastical property, made in 1291, by order of Pope Nicholas the Fourth, discloses that the Abbot of Oseney had then at Barton in lands their appurtenances, and in mills a yearly revenue of £1 15s. 0d., and tithes of grain, wool, and animals, yielding him 10s. 0d.

In 1327 a lay subsidy (the word "lay" accounting for the small number of taxpayers at Steeple Barton proper, compared with the other members of the parishes), was granted to King Edward the Third, and collected in the Hundred of Wootton by Richard de Eadbusburg and John le Mire. The following were the taxpayers and the amounts paid :—

BARTHONE EDE. [ODONIS.]				s.	d.
William de Sharshalle (of Sharehill, Staffordshire)				5	2
William de Conpo ...				0	6
John Colynes				0	6
William Thommes				1	6
William Robyn				0	10
Agn' le Smyht				0	6
Henry Atte Grene				20	0
William le Symple				0	16
Elena la Clerke				0	10
William Genes				0	6
John Brannke				0	12
Richard atte Mull (at the Mill) ...				0	12
Total				32	8

This document shows that William of Sharehill, paying nearly a sixth of the whole sum, was the most important person in the Liberty ; that his name superseded that of the Norman Bishop Odo, and survives to our own times in the corrupted form of Sesswells. In 1523 we find this part of our subject matter styled Barton Sharshill.

MAGNA BARTHONE. [STEEPLE BARTON.]				s.	d.
Walter de Burncestr' (Bicester)				60	0
Mariote atte Putte (at the pit or quarry) ...				2	10
Nichelas le Calne				4	4
John le Neweman				2	6
Total				69	8

MIDDLE BARTHONE.				s.	d.
John le F'nckeleign (the Franklin)...				2	8
William atte Greene				4	0
Henry Puncke ...				0	22
William Molden				0	16
Henry Alemayn				4	1
William Kendas				0	16
Brico atte Nussch				3	4
Walter de Combe				3	6
William Basset				0	16
Thomas le Calne				2	0
John Basset				0	19
Thomas de Rokesby				0	9
John o' the Hull (on the hill)				0	16
Ada atte Mulle...				4	4
Total				33	5

WEST BARTONE.

				s.	d.
Sibillias de Barton				0	18
Robert de Barton ...				4	0
John de Aula (Hall)				2	6
William ad Molend (a Miller)				0	8
William Westward ...				0	8
Nicholas le Mayster				0	12
Alexander Glanville				0	8
John Lye				0	8
John Annste				4	0
John Person				0	16
Robert le G'nt	...	...	...	0	7
John le Cooke	...	...	...	1	6
Robert G'nt	...	...	...	2	0
Total				21	1

No jealousy appears to have existed between the religious and lay proprietors of Barton in 1350, when Richard de Steale and Milicent, his wife, of Great Barton, surrendered to the Abbot and Convent of Oseney, to hold for ever, the advowson of Bucknell, near Bicester, now appurtenant to New College, Oxford. William del Peches (clerk) concurred with the Steaks in this surrender, doing so, according to the document I quote from, " in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all saints, for the health of his own soul, and of the souls of his father, mother, brothers, sisters, parishioners, chaplains, clerks, servants, all his benefactors, and all faithful Christians departed."

Among the judges who sanctioned this surrender we find the ancestor of an Oxfordshire nobleman, John de Stonore, and another inhabitant of this county, Thomas, de Fencote ; these and their judicial brethren are styled "*venerable witnesses.*"

The estate of the St. John's having passed to Walter de Wodeham, were by him released and made over in 1339 (34th Edward 3rd) to Nicholas de Loveyn ; this document relates I believe to Steeple Barton proper only, for we find in an Inquisitio post mortem, or enquiry as to the real property of deceased landowners, made eleven years before, that Henry, son and heir of Richard le Yonge, of Rousham, held land and messuages at Barton Odonis as well as at Rousham and Curtlynton (Kirtlington), and again in 1452 (30th Henry 6th), Johanna Legh held the manor of Rousham, the manor of Barton Odonis, and that of Dornford, all in the county of Oxford, as of the honour of Wallingford.

To return to the reign of Edward 1st and the Hundred Rolls. The jurors presented Richard de Morton as owner of certain tenements in the vill of Barton Roede (qv., Road Barton or Middle Barton), of the honour of St. Walery, that he ought to do suit and service to our Lord the king at his Hundred Court at Wootton, every three weeks ; that Richard (Earl of Cornwall) was then enfeoffed of the land, having duly appointed Peter de Asrigg (of Ashridge) his bailiff ; that the said Richard had failed to do such suit and service ; and that his dues to the king had been withheld for twenty-five years. The same document enumerates several cottagers and small occupiers, John le Taylor who held a cottage and two acres of land at a rent of 2s., and labour to be done at pleasure of his superior Gilbert le Stedman, at a rent of 2s. yearly in full acquittance. Hugh, the cornmonger, on precisely similar terms ; these and several other villeins were presented as holding their tenures by ancient usage of the Crown, and that they and their ancestors had never held otherwise from a period quite out of mind; there were also certain free tenants such as were Isabell de Franklen, who held one and a-half vergates [yard lands] for 6s. yearly, and wardescler a farthing, owing suit and service to the Hundred Court at Wootton, Hugh Faber, William Espen, William Camerar (the builder or chamber maker), Hugh Camerar holding on the same terms as Isabel Franklen and John Mareschalles (Marshall) who held two acres of land upon the service of rendering yearly one white chirograph (I suppose it means a clean membrane of parchment), but the meaning is obscure, doing suit and service, and paying wardescler, and John Niveman who held in the village of Barton one yard land of the Prior of St. Frideswide in Oxford, at a rent of 6s. in acquittance of all services except attending twice yearly at the Hundred Court at Wootton.

At a later period of Edward the First's reign, William Foliot held one carucate of land here and half a water-mill at Rousham, with a free fishery in the Cherwell from the bridge of Heyford to the bridge of Gattesham, having these possessions under the Earl of Cornwall, and the Earl holding under the King, as of the Honor of Wallingford.

William Foliot also held one yard land (virgate) at Barton Ede (Odonis), appurtenant to the Manor of Rousham, and it is clear that the Abbot of Oseney had two and a mill, for which he paid Foliot a rent-charge of 2s. 4d. and scutage 18s. 6d. ; the term scutage implies that all tenants who held from the King by military service were bound to attend personally upon him in wars and expeditions, and payments of this tax were commutations of this service ; the Barone and Knights when they paid a scutage to the King having power to levy the same tax of those tenants who held of them on military service. The tax was not a fixed one, for it varied from one mark in the 13th of Henry the Second to 40s. in the 6th Edward First. After personal attendance, a Baron or Knight sometimes obtained a discharge from this burden for the rest of his life. The Abbot of Oseney could not, of course, as a Churchman, don military armour. Richard the Clerk, son of John Warmig, paid for his land 8s. and for scutage 10s., but he had, in addition, to provide in Autumn two men to mow corn and to go before them himself while they were thus employed. There were at the same period Richard le Simple holding one yard land, Robert le Grey holding land as of the Ward of Dover, paying 25s. yearly,

Gilbert le Banc, Hugh in the corner (in angalo), Wismark le P'che, John Young (juvenis), Richard de Morton, who held two yard lands, paying 6d. to the Prioress of Studley, and William the Miller, who held two cottages and one acre of land of the Abbot of Oseney, subject to a yearly charge of 6d., payable to Simple, and also other lands, subject to payment to the Honor of Dover.

In 1283, 13th Edward First, on the morrow of St. Hilary, a court was held at Oxford by the following judges itinerant—Solomon de Roff (Rochester), Richard de Boyland, Robert son of Fulco, Geoffrey de Pickefourde, and Roger Loveday, before whom Richard de Moreton was cited for not rendering suit and service to the Hundred Court at Wootton. His reply attributed his neglect to his being a minor and a ward of the Earl of Cornwall, but that having now attained full age and possession of his land, he would in future be as careful as his ancestors, he said, always had been, to render such suit and service as should be required in respect of his property in Barton, whereupon the justices itinerant referred the matter to the Crown, if I rightly translate the formula of judgment, " Predicta secta extendatur ad Coronam." Though the record is silent on the point, I doubt not that heavy fines and fees were exacted of Moreton upon the occasion, as few officers of the Crown have at any time overlooked the potentiality of the phrase "*Inland Revenue*," though they may not have used the precise words which now

" Inflict the smart

" Of yielding Government a part

" Of all we gain, possess, inherit

" By industry, skill, chance, or merit."

PART I.--PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD.

SECTION 3.

The inquisitions after death of the 15th year of Henry the Sixth describe John de Aston as owner at his death of the manor of Barton St. John, otherwise called Great Barton. Steeple Barton proper must have acquired the suffix of St. John from a former family of owners, not from any connexion in the dedication of its church with the Holy Baptist or the Evangelist ; whether the estate passed by descent or purchase from the family of Nicholas de Loveyn to John de Aston, or whether any other families intervened in the ownership, are matters I have been unable to discover ; only two years later Henry Wilforde and John Franke (a priest) are described as owners of precisely the same part of our district; probably they were trustees or guardians of a minor.

During the greater part of a century of English history, while rival families claimed and alternately possessed the regal power, public records became rarer, or have been less carefully preserved ; much of man's industry perished, and many powerful families were ruined and forgotten till the land had rest in the time of Henry VII., except from excessive taxation, mitigated however in the early part of the reign of his son and successor, a period of national prosperity and architectural grandeur, while yet he remained in conjugal fidelity and felicity. "In the 15th year of Henry VIII. (1523), Edward Chamberleyne, Knygthe Edmund Nowers and John Raynsford were the King's Commissioners devyde to the Hundred of Wootton, in the Countie of Oxford, and John Secolle, of Southgate, was Hygh Collectioner, under the Acte of Parliament made by the Kyng and his Lords, Spirituall and Temporall and the Comyns assembled, of a Subsidy, according to the trewe value and rate of ev'y Temporall person inhabityng within the same hundred ; the date of this document is the first day of Decemb', the XVth yere of the reign of Kyng Henry VIIIth, and a playne declaration and payment had to be rendered unto the Kyng's Highnes at his Courte of his Exchequer and Receipt at Westm' before the Feste of the Purrificacion of our Lady next comyng." It will be observed that this Subsidy was levied on temporal persons only, the first English Monarch who had been dubbed Defender of the Faith being as yet tender of his Monastic and Clerical subjects, although he confiscated their possessions wholesale a few years later ; there is however one obscure item (de Pixe de Eccleie), which seems to imply that some of the revenues of Steeple Barton Church were taxed upon this occasion ; unfortunately, the original Rolls in the Record Office, in Chancery Lane, London, are so obliterated as to Westcot Barton, that I was unable to obtain a transcript, as to the levy on the parishioners of that division. The other portions are decipherable, and show that it was a tax on personal property (bonis) not real estate.

Stepall Barton, and }

Middle Barton.

Richard Colens, John Hanwell, Thomas Marshe,

Sub-Collectors.

	£	s.	d.
Henry Raynford, gentleman	0	0	18
Robert Fryesly ...	0	2	0
Thomas Barker, laborer	0	0	4
Robert Horne ...	0	0	18
Giles Fuller	0	0	12
Thomas Marshe	0	20	0
Richard Colens	0	6	0
John Gilbert, servant	0	0	4
Richard Hanwell, laborer	0	0	4
Roger Taylor ...	0	0	4
John Jugge	0	0	4
John Hanwell	0	26	0
Robert Crowder, laborer ...	0	0	4
The Servant of Richard Busby ..	0	0	4
John Temple	0	0	18
Thomas Ingram...	0	0	18
The Pix of the Church	0	9	0
Total ...	£3	13	4

The style of another division of the parish had now become changed from Barton Odonis and Barton Ede to an approach to its present orthography of Sesswells ; but it appears by a record of the interment of John Hanwell, August 29th, 1700, that it passed from Sharshill in 1523 into Sherswell in 1700.

These were the taxpayers in 1523 in Barton Sharshill, where Robert Mise and John Hanwell officiated as Sub-Collectors :

	s.	d.
Robert Mise	42	0
(Evidently the Squire, by the large Sum he paid)		
John Hanwell	7	0
John Ivetoo	2	0

	s.	d.
John Drynckwater	0	18
Michel Ivet	0	18
William Hanwell, laborer	0	4
William Ivytoo ...	0	4
Nicholas Taylor ...	0	4
Total ...	55	0

The reader can hardly fail to be struck with the frequent occurrence of the name of Hanwell, and of the important personages some of that name appear to have been during several generations, but the name is now extinct throughout the Bartons.

In the early part of Henry the VIII.'s reign, Barton probably had occasional visits from the Abbots of Oseney, with some attendant Monks viewing with delight the comely Church of St. Mary the Virgin at Steeple Barton, -comely, I mean, according to the ideas of Church furniture then prevailing, with its high altar and five smaller altars, and admiring the monumental brass, removed a century or more ago, but placed very early in the sixteenth century with the following inscription in black letter beneath the representations of Foxe and his two wives:—

Pray for the soules of William Foxe and Alice and
Mabell, his wives, on whose soules JHU have
mercy. Amen.

Dr. Richard Rawlinson, of St. John's College, Oxford, left a copy of the above inscription among his MS. He died in 1755.

We can imagine the Religious enjoying their progress to their Rectory-house at Steeple Barton, inspecting their tithe barn, "*wide enough to turn a waggon in,*" so substantially constructed that its walls were with difficulty knocked to pieces in 1853, when it was 500 or more years old ; interchanging visits with Squire Mise, on the other side of the rivulet, and commenting upon his beautiful pond (afterwards reduced to a half-drained swamp, but now again containing a fine sheet of water), and comforting [Sir] Giles Bylhede, their Vicar, or his predecessor, with substantial gifts from their amply garnished Abbey, rich in the possession of a yearly income of eight hundred pounds, and so by their presence and benevolence, warming up the heart of Robert Mise; or Mysse, that he devoted substantial marks of his affection to his parish Church, in the directions of the will which he executed June 19th, 1535, and by which he gave his body to be buried in the Church-yard of our Lady of the said Barton, —for the maintenance of the bells 3s. 4d., also to the five aultars in equal proportions, 5s. 0d. ; to the high aultar, 3s. 4d. ; also he bequeathed to the images our Lady, Seynt Kateryne, Seynt Anne, Seynt Margaret, Seynt Sythe, Seynt John the Baptist, Seynt Anthony, Seynt Peter, Seynt Michael the Archangel, Seynt Nicholas, our Lady of Pitye, Seynt Clement, to every of them 4d. ; also he bequeaths to the said Church of Barton, to buy a vestment, 3s. 4d.

Transient were these prosperous days of the monasteries of Oseney and St. Frideswide, and of the Benedictine nunnery of Studley, the last prioress of which, Dame Johanna Williams, and probably several of her predecessors, had a yearly rent of 5s. from Steeple Barton. The storm fell upon all the religious establishments of the land sooner or later. One of the averments of the statute for dissolving the smaller monasteries was that they were the abodes of " manyfest synne," but that in the larger and more wealthy establishments religion was right well kept and observed, as though grandeur and wealth were less likely to lead possessors of them into neglect of their vows than more straitened means. The more important abbies survived the smaller ones only two years, and the distribution of the plunder raised up a new aristocracy from a lower rank. An aristocracy, as the Americans would say "*of dollars,*" an example of such appears in John Blundell, who from 1546, for about twenty years, was one of the principal men in Steeple Barton after he, in conjunction with Leonard Chamberlayne and Dorothy his wife, had purchased of the Crown the rectory of Steeple Barton for £1760 and twelve pence, by an indenture of 38th Henry vij., October 20th, 1546. At the Tithe Commutation of 1847, it transpired that each of the four impropiators commenced their titles to the great tithes and the advowson of the vicarage with this indenture of the year 1546. The rectory was at first, after the suppression of Oseney, granted to Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk, (whose name yet survives in that of a farm in Sandford), but upon his execution had reverted to the Crown. In the Valor Ecclesiasticus, prepared by royal authority on the eve of the Reformation, I found the following entry as to Steeple Barton with which Westcot Barton appears unaccountably blended :—

Barton Odonis, Barton Magna, Medyll Barton, and Westcote.	£	s.	d.
Revenue of Oseney Abbey, thence Out of which they paid—	xxviij.	x.	v.
To the poor ..		xs.	
Tenths to the Abbot of Col- chester		ixs.	
To Eton College ...		xs.	
And so there remains clear ...	xxiiij.	v.	v.

There is, however, a separate return as to Westcot Barton, describing the living as a rectory of the yearly value of £vii. xs. vijd., the name of the rector being D. Fever.

Blundell is described as of the city of London, merchant (or mercer) he probably had the rectory house as a country seat ; he had the undivided patronage of the vicarage, for upon the death of Bylhed, who appears to have conformed to the new order of things ecclesiastical and the prayer book, he in 1551 presented James Pollarde, M.A. ; he, however, being of the *new learning* resigned in the reign of Mary, and on May 16th, 1555, made way for William Hardwicke, a second presentee of Blundell's, but who died in less than two years from his induction, making way, about half a year before the accession of Elizabeth, for Hugh Shepley, Blundell's third presentee, who being priest of Steeple Barton only a year was succeeded by Thomas Bromelle for about the same period, and William Browne for another year, Blundell's fourth and fifth presentees, who eventually, upon the establishment of the reformed mode of worship, under Queen Elizabeth, made room, by resignation, for the presentation by Alice, widow of John Blundell, on March 12th, 1560, of John Balldwin. Less than three years before, in the reign of Mary, William Webb was on August 13th, 1557, presented to the rectory of Westcot Barton by William Raynsford, of Wylcott. It will be noted that John Raynsford was a tax commissioner in 1523, and that Henry Raynsford was a taxpayer at Steeple Barton at the same period, so that the family being of some importance in Oxfordshire it is reasonable to suppose that this patron of the rectory of Westcot Barton was a relative of the others, notwithstanding a slight variation in spelling the name. Webb must have conformed to the restoration of King Edward's prayer book by Elizabeth, as he held office till his death in the middle of the year 1566. A large monument of white freestone stood against the north wall of Steeple Barton Chancel (where it had been erected in memory of Blundell) till 1850. There was in its middle a black marble tablet, inscribed with names and dates, but defaced.

It is much to be regretted that the late Viscount Clifden and his advisers in rebuilding the chancel in 1850 were reckless as to the monuments and monumental slabs then displaced, a pair of kneeling figures representing Michael Dormer, who died 1584, and Elizabeth his wife, nee Goddard, with a desk and book between them were removed to Rousham Church ; these figures gave good examples of the costume of the period when the husband died, namely, May 3rd, 1584. A large altartomb attached to the north wall of the chancel had a blue marble top highly polished, now forming part of the floor of the nave of the church, incised with the names one at each end, Justine Dormer, Jone Humfrey. All the monumental slabs now remaining in Steeple Barton Church are of the next or of the last century, but are none of them in their original sites, and it is difficult to decide which were in the chancel and which in the nave and aisle. The ancient coped tombs in the churchyard of Steeple Barton, the steps and base of a stone cross and the half of a stone coffin in Westcot Barton, are all of pre-Reformation date. The coped tombs had been broken to pieces in the iconoclastic mania of the Great Rebellion, but some far-seeing parishioner had carefully concealed the fragments under a shallow depth of soil and his secret had died with him. The lowering of the soil in 1851 brought them again to light, they were matched, rejoined with cement and placed where they are, and though no longer memorials of individuals, they are monuments of the good taste and piety of our pre-Reformation forefathers.

But my tale is now nearly told of the Bartons as they were before the exciting religious and political changes of the Sixteenth Century.

Before 1548, Oseney had fallen, but Steeple Barton did not regain the alienated Rectorial tithes ; these we have seen passed into lay hands, and in lay hands they yet remain, although as a Prior of one of dissolved establishments, wrote to his brother, reflecting herein a very general feeling, these were "dedicate to Allmyghte Gode, for service to be done to hys honoure continuallye with other good deeds off daylie charity to Christen neybons." Much as we may rejoice in the freedom of thought and worship derived from the Reformation, it is impossible to think charitably of the capricious and cruel act; of the tyrannical eighth Henry ; as we know not, says the proverb, what the well is worth till it is dry, so was it found after the dissolution, that with all their faults, the monasteries had been the refuge for the destitute, who were now driven to frightful extremities throughout the country, the effect of the suppression being, with respect to them the same as would now follow from the sudden abolition of the poor laws ; they had been the almshouses where the aged dependants of more opulent families, the decrepid servant, the decayed artificer, retired as to a house, neither uncomfortable nor humiliating ; they had been the county infirmaries and dispensaries ; a knowledge of medicine and of the virtue of herbs being a department of monkish learning, and a hospital, and perhaps a laboratory, being component parts of the establishment ; and the monastic system made provision for many of these wants of society, which public institutions now meet perhaps more effectually.¹ According to Lord Herbert, it was enacted that to prevent the poorer classes of society from becoming sufferers by the dissolution of religious houses, and the consequent failure of that entertainment, they were accustomed to receive at the tables of the convents, hospitality should be kept up by the farmers of the land [and tithes] belonging to the late monasteries, under the penalty of paying every month six pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence ; yet the penalty not being often required, hospitality was neglected, so that the forfeitures being great, they were abolished in the twenty-first year of King James the First. While then we are grateful for the advanced knowledge we enjoy, we will think charitably of those who played their parts in more dimly enlightened times. We will believe too in all charity that they, or many of them, practised up to their convictions, and that the forbearance and mercy of God may yet enable us, in the words of Charles Wesley, penned more than a century ago, to be of the same company.

One family we dwell in Him,
 One Church above, beneath,
 Though now divided by the stream,
 The narrow stream of death.
 One army of the living God,

¹ Bluat's History of the reformation : p. 242 : edition 1851.

To His command we bow;
Part of His host hath cross'd the flood,
And part is crossing now.