

CHAPTER I.

'POSTLE FARM had gained its name, generations back, from the row of elm-trees that shadowed its thatched buildings. There were twelve of these elms, and in the neighbourhood they went by the name of the "Twelve Apostles."

When the walls of the farm were reared under their shelter, the place was called "Apostle Farm"; and later the *A* was dropped, and "Postle Farm" was its name, and few people knew or cared about its origin.

These old time-honoured elms had stood the blast of many a winter wind, and blossomed when the springtime came, and spread out their green leaves to shelter the mating rooks. Some of the branches had grown and spread till they formed a second roof over the thatch one that sheltered the main building.

There was something, on the whole, a wee bit bleak and forbidding in the place—though homely enough, doubtless, to any but Devonians. But to them it had a scant look, the fields being divided