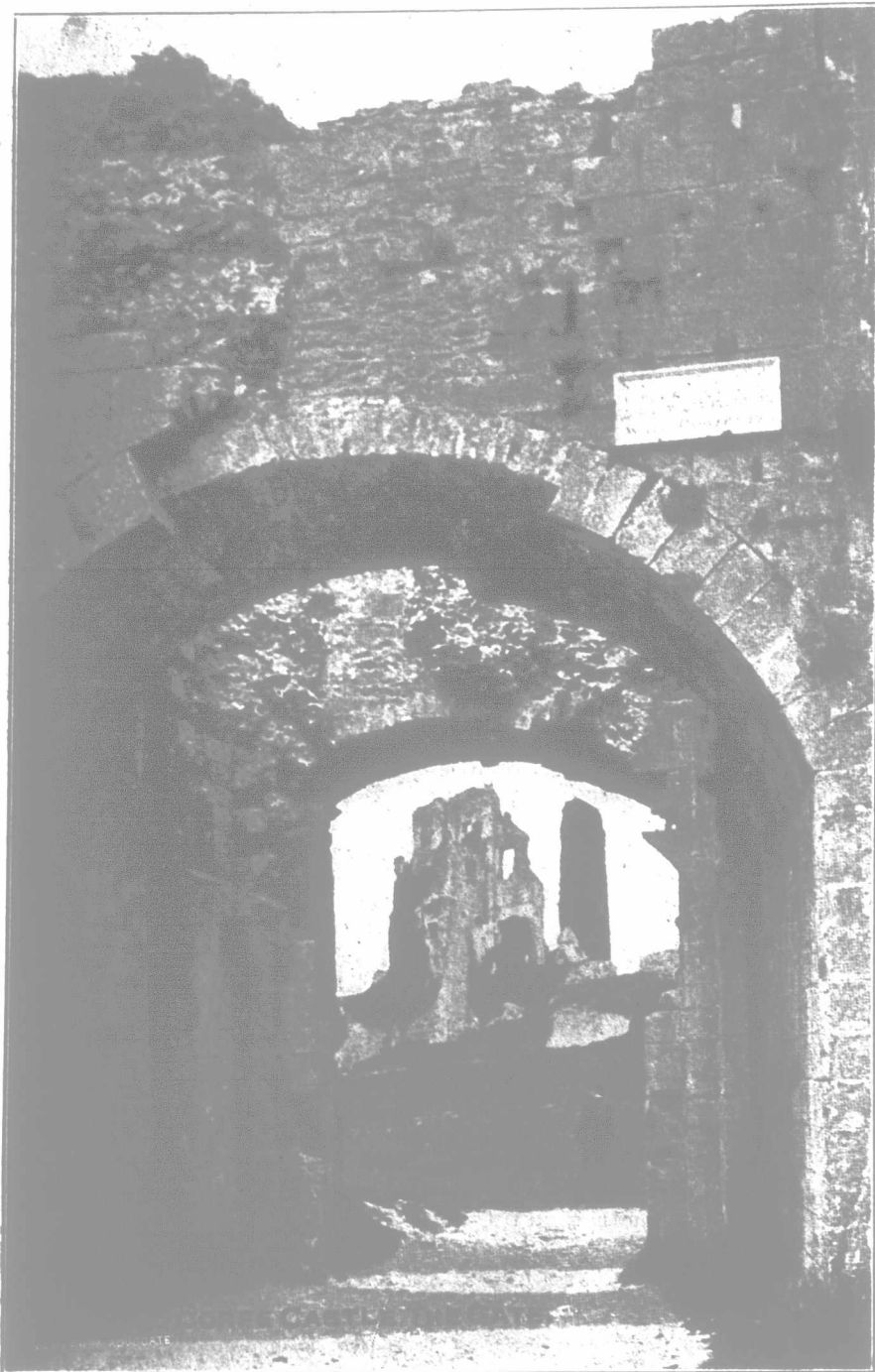




Gate of Corfe Castle.

of a sense of responsibility shows itself in failure to send the child to school. This fact is by no means unknown to Mr. Kelso, Superintendent of the Children's Aid Society, and he has asked us to lay the matter before you, beseeching you—at least, who read our paper—to see that you are not careless in this respect.

It is with pleasure that we accede to his request, realizing, as must everyone who gives unprejudiced thought to the matter, the truth of his words: "If a child is deprived of educational advantages between the ages of eight and fourteen, the loss can never be made good." We leave, then, the suggestion with you. It is important, not only to the young people themselves, but to the country at large, that they should have the necessary training for their life's work. You cannot evade the responsibility with impunity. Think about it.

Our English Letter.

XIX.

SOME WANDERINGS IN THE ISLE OF PURBECK.

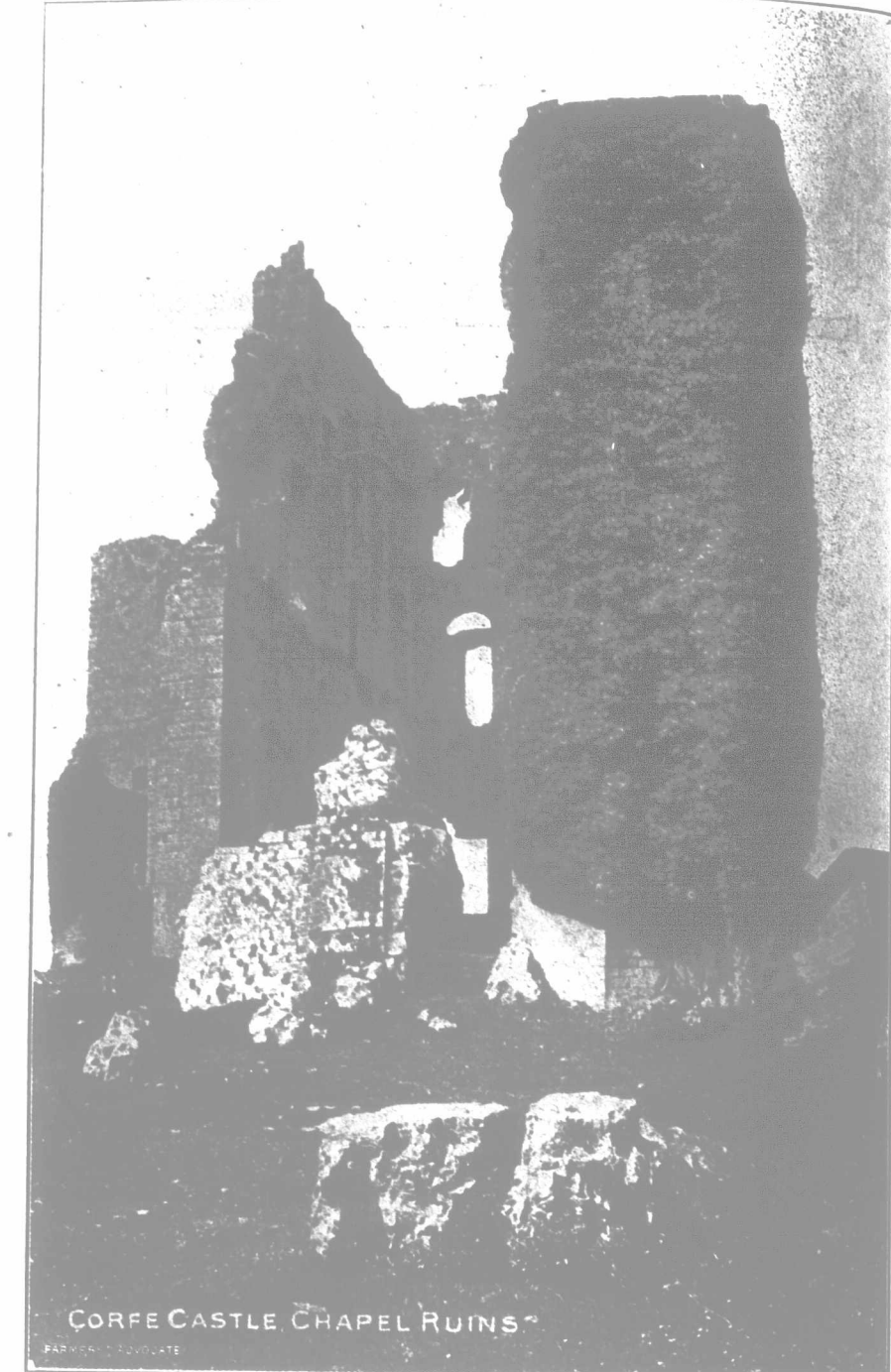
II.

Whilst without doubt the chief glory of Corfe is its castle, and the great attraction which brings so many visitors from all the world over to that quaint old town, yet, were it not for the records kept, with only such intermissions as the cruel exigencies of those troublesome times occasioned by the "presentments" of the churchwardens of the fine old "Church of St. Edward, King and Martyr," much of historical interest and importance would have passed from the memory of man. Before telling more of the evident relationship existing between the church and

the castle, let me add from my notebook a few more of the items culled from the old Register, which may throw a little glimmering light upon the homely conditions of village life some centuries ago. For instance, it is interesting to note that hospitality was dispensed, although, perhaps, with some caution and an eye to economy, for those old records assert that, by order of the Mayor, two pence were given to "two Travellers"; "two pounds and two pence paid for relieving 76 sailors"; "six pence to three poor men out of work"; the same modest dole to "a Traveller that came from Norfolk," and to "a woman whose husband was in slavery"; two shillings to "two seamen that were drove ashore at Chapman's Pool," and one shilling to "a soldier with one arm." Also that "three shillings per Sunday was paid for bread," and one pound sixteen shillings for "36 dozen of bread for the poor on Good Friday."

That Corfe was loyal, is proved by the payments in 1686 to "the ringers for the King's birthday," and in 1786 to the ringers of that date for the return of (another) "King from Flanders," the sum of two shillings. Then we have £1 2s. 6d., given in beer and gunpowder when peace was proclaimed in 1747. On the news of Nelson's victory, one pound one shilling was paid to the ringers and gunners, and £10 6s. on the news of Lord Wellington's entry into Paris."

To show that there must have been much simplicity in the ceremonial of ordinary funerals, we note that, "In 1695, Mary Webber was buried in wollen," "in 1697, Nicholas Gibbon, Rector of this Parish, was buried in wollen" and also, at other dates, were Ann Burt, widow; Robert Culford, a strange woman; Jno. Hill, a travelling tailor; and Ann, wife of



CORFE CASTLE CHAPEL RUINS.

Corfe Castle: Chapel Ruins.

John Togen, a travelling tinker from Salisbury."

In the old porch, the pillars and capitals of which are of most delicate Norman work, there stands an old churchwarden's chest, "made by Harry Paulett in 1672, at the cost of only 8s." but a surplice was a costly item in those old days, for an entry in the "Accounts" charges £3 18s. for one which had required 15 yards, at 4s. 6d. a yard of material, and 10s. 6d. for the making thereof.

That a church which had survived so many vicissitudes should only have a few remnants remaining of its original self, is very evident, but that fact makes those relics all the more precious. A very complete restoration—one which, as far as possible, should be an exact copy of the church of the past—composed of the fine old Purbeck stone and polished marble, was an absolute necessity, and, as a result of the recognition of that necessity, there stands to-day the gray-walled, square-towered structure, dedicated to the memory of the youthful king, who, as long ago as A. D. 978, was treacherously killed by his cruel and ambitious step-mother, the lovely Elfridd of Devon, widow of King Edgar, who coveted the throne for her own son, Aethelred.

THE TRAGEDY OF CORFE CASTLE

The story is told in most of the "history books" of our schools, but this is much as the old records have it: Before the Normans came, there was a mere hunting-lodge upon the Guardian Hill of Corfe, a wall of which, standing amongst the massive, ghost-like ruins, is considered to be part of Elfrida's home. Edward, the son of Edgar, by a former wife, was the then-reigning king. He was a mere lad, and, whilst hunting in the forest around Corfe, got some-

rated from his followers, and, being tired of his sport, bethought him of the hunting-lodge and of the drinking of a wine cup there. The chronicle has it that his coming was at eventide, and, on hearing of his arrival, his treacherous stepmother met him in the dim light at the gate. Opportunity sometimes makes the sinner, and the wicked queen was quick to see what she had long waited for—the opportunity to get rid of the one obstacle which blocked the path of her own son to the throne of his father, King Edgar. She handed him the goblet, and as the thirsty boy drank, "her white hand was raised aloft, and with a cry of terror she stabbed the rider in the back. The goblet clattered on the stones, the frightened horse leapt down the hill, and at its foot, where the stream still runs, the King dropped from the saddle dead." Other records have it that the young King was murdered by her orders, and not by her own hand, but, whether or no the latter was the case, it will be Elfrida herself who will have to answer for the crime at Heaven's own Court of Justice. The story goes on to relate that, on the body being found, it was, by Elfrida's orders, "dragged into a cottage near-by, and covered over with 'mean cloaths.'" The woman of the cottage was poor and blind, and, as it was now near night, she was left alone with the terrible heap of "mean cloaths" on the floor. Before morning dawned, a wonder happened: The squalid room became filled with light; sight came back to the sightless eyes, and the watcher knew that beneath the poor rags lay the body of her King."

Standing, as I did, at the foot of the hill crowned by the massive ruins of almost indestructible masonry, and looking downwards into the moat below, I seemed to be read-