

# Northern Messenger

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## Meeting Charles Kingsley

(By George Manville Fenn, in 'Youth's Companion.')  
panion.')

It was in 187-- when the bloodless battles of the British Autumn Manoeuvres were raging in Hampshire and over the Surrey Hills, that I went from London to record for a daily paper the doings of the troops, and one day chanced to lose my way when ten miles or so from camp. It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when the last regiment had disappeared, leaving me in about the most wild portion of the country I had seen that autumn. I was upon a far-stretching common, with patches of great fir-trees on one hand, beyond which, with its many windows glittering in the sunshine, stood a great Jacobean mansion, but miles away; otherwise there was not a house to be seen—nothing but heath and gorse.

Not a pleasant position for a weary and hungry man who had started to overtake the troops after a very early breakfast, hurriedly snatched.

At such a time the sight of a roadside inn with its familiar sign, promising refreshment for man and beast, would have been heartily welcomed; but let alone inn, there was no roadside.

Thinking that I must come to a house at last, I started off, laughing to myself at the thought that anyone could be so thoroughly lost in little England.

Soon I saw in the distance the figures of a man and a boy, and stepped out to cut them off, for they were plodding over the rugged ground slowly in a direction at right angles to my own. They had, of course, seen me, the only other human being visible, and as I waved my hand I had the satisfaction of seeing them turn in my direction.

As I neared them, I could see that the man carried that familiar walking-staff known as a 'thistle-spud,' and I immediately said to myself 'farmer,' and began thinking of a snug kitchen, ham fried with eggs, and either tea or a mug of warm new milk—very pleasant thoughts for a half-starved man.

As I drew nearer still, I noted that my welcome friend wore dark tweeds, knickerbockers and black wide-awake hat, and I prefixed an adjective to my former word. 'Gentleman farmer,' I said, and after a few more paces, 'clergyman who farms his glebe.' For I had caught side of a white cravat.

In another minute I was speaking to a pleasant-looking, slightly built, rather delicate man, with a typical English face, one whom an observer would have mentally declared to be a London parson of broad views, with no finical nonsense about him—a thorough lover of outdoor life, perhaps seeking for the vigorous health that he did not seem to possess.

I addressed him at once, stating my position, and asking him if there was any inn near where I could get refreshments.

He laughed and said, with a peculiar, hesitating stammer, that there was nothing of the kind, only some laborers' cottages yonder.

'What house is that?' I asked.

'Bramshill,' he replied. 'Sir John Cope's, one of our finest old Jacobean mansions. Been following the troops, I suppose?'

I replied that I had, and incidentally added what my mission was.

'Oh!' he said. 'On the press? Well, so am I, in a sort of way. My boy and I have been watching the soldiers, too. Come with me; we are going home to lunch.'

I was glad to accept so kind an offer from one who announced himself a fellow member

aware of the fact that the Rev. Charles Kingsley was rector of Eversley, I had not the most remote idea in what county of England Eversley was situated.

'Yes,' he said, 'and there is the church yonder, behind those firs. My fir-trees, I call them. They are some of the finest I know.'



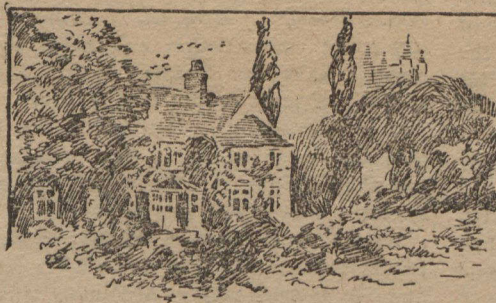
CHARLES KINGSLEY.

of the writing profession, and my new friend began at once to set me at my ease, and show me that he was glad to receive a stranger as a guest.

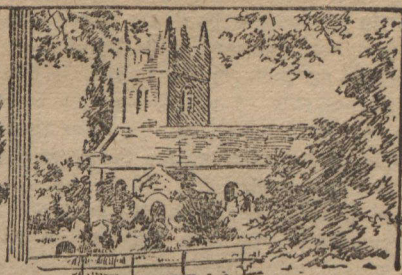
Of course my first natural question was as to whom I was indebted to for the hospitality.

'Oh,' he said, quietly, 'my name is Kingsley.'

I glanced at the church and the great ruddy and gray trunks of the huge fir-trees, which ran up to a considerable height before branching out into quite flat wind-swept tops; but they took up little of my attention, the whole of my interest being in the quiet, pleasant-spoken man walking at my side. I thought of the hours I had passed in the by-gone, pouring over his works and fixing his



EVERSLEY RECTORY.



EVERSLEY CHURCH.

I was so taken aback, so staggered by the unexpected declaration, that I looked at him in blank surprise.

'Not Charles Kingsley?' I cried.

'Yes,' he replied, with a pleasant smile.

'Then this is Eversley,' I said, for in my utter ignorance, although I was perfectly

vigorously cut characters in my mind: 'Westward Ho!' with Amyas Leigh and Sir Richard Grenville; 'Two Years Ago' and the vivid description of the cholera plague at Clovelly; 'Hereward the Wake,' and the wilds of marshy Lincolnshire.

My musings were checked by our coming