



The picturesque quality and almost endless variety of vanes

—from the modest arrow to the richly-gilt and imposing heraldic monster—which meet

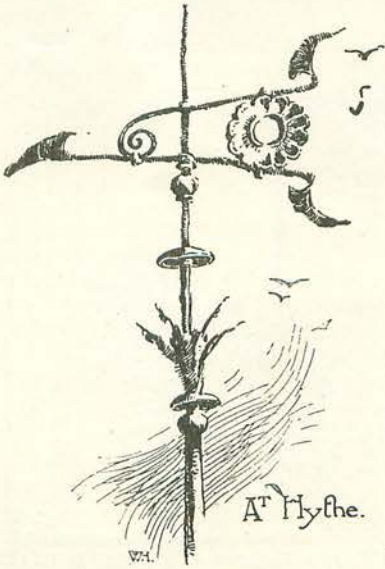
the eye as one wanders through quiet village, busy market town, or sleepy cathedral city, and the traditions which are associated with these distinctly useful, time-honoured, and much consulted adjuncts to church or home, make me hope that the following brief notes and sketches of a few of the many types one sees may not be without interest to some of the numerous readers of THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

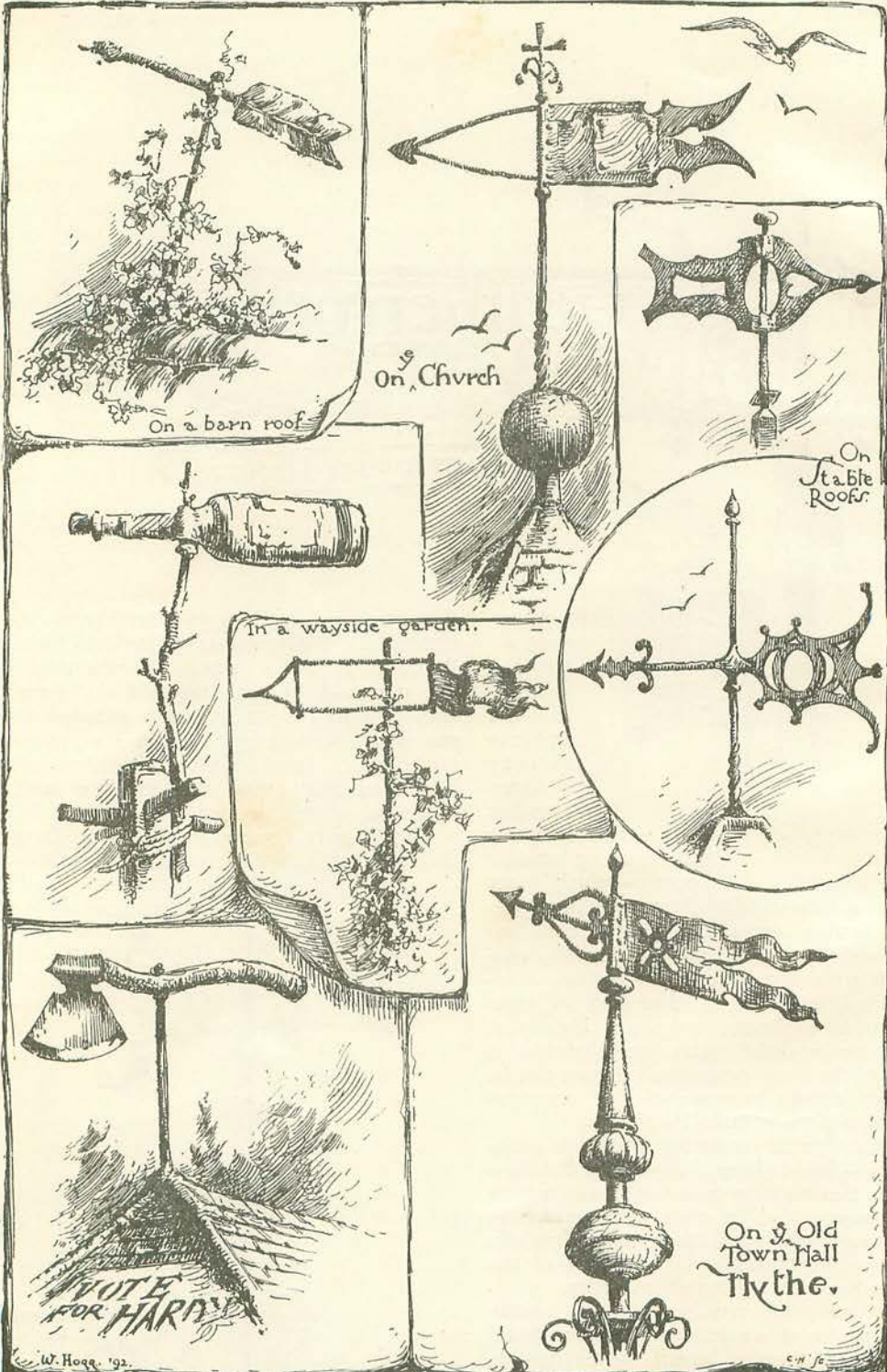
That eminent authority on things architectural—the late John Henry Parker, F.S.A.—tells us that vanes were in use in the time of the Saxons, and in after ages were very extensively employed, there being notable development during the prevalence of the Perpendicular and Elizabethan styles.

To anyone vane-hunting—or health-hunting, for the matter of that—I would recommend them to tramp, sketch or note book in hand, over that stretch of country which occupies the most southerly corner of

Kent, known as Romney Marsh; and beginning, say, at Hythe—one of the old Cinque Ports, and still a place of considerable importance—they will there find several vanes worthy of note, specially perhaps the one which surmounts the Town Hall, in the High Street. It is in excellent condition, and is contemporary with the building itself, which was erected in 1794.

The country between Hythe and Dymchurch has quite a plethora of rustic vanes—





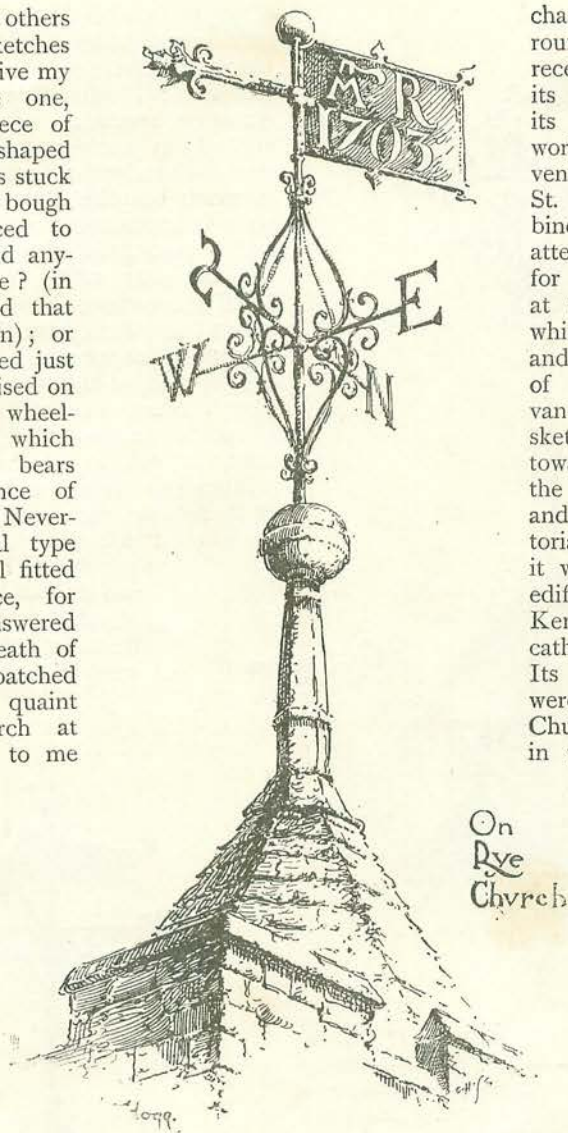
W. Hoag. 192.

VANES • near Dymchurch • Romney Marsh. • Kent. •

many crippled and others almost defunct—sketches of a few of which I give my readers. Note the one, carved out of a piece of wood and rudely shaped like a bottle, which is stuck on an untrimmed bough of a tree and spliced to a clothes-prop: could anything be more naïve? (in justice I would add that this is *not* at the inn); or the one that is noted just below it—an axe poised on the roof of the local wheelwright's workshop, which aforesaid roof still bears unmistakable evidence of election turmoil. Nevertheless, this original type of vane seemed well fitted to do good service, for one noted that it answered to the slightest breath of wind. The old patched one, too, on the quaint little Norman church at Dymchurch seemed to me to be of interest in many ways, specially when I realized that it looked down on a row of graves, kept in beautiful order, of the nameless dead which the angry sea had given into the keeping of these sturdy village folk.

Working westward past Ivychurch, with its fine Perpendicular tower and beacon-turret, Old and New Romney, Lydd (which was attached to the Cinque Port of Romney), with its dignified Perpendicular church, of which Cardinal Wolsey was once vicar, we come to Rye, which is just over the borderland into Sussex, another of the towns annexed to the Cinque Ports, though, sad to say, like Sandwich and Winchelsea, its prosperity departed when the sea deserted it.

At Rye one cannot help but linger, there is so much to interest; its unique position, its ancient standing, the almost incredible



On
Rye
Chvreb

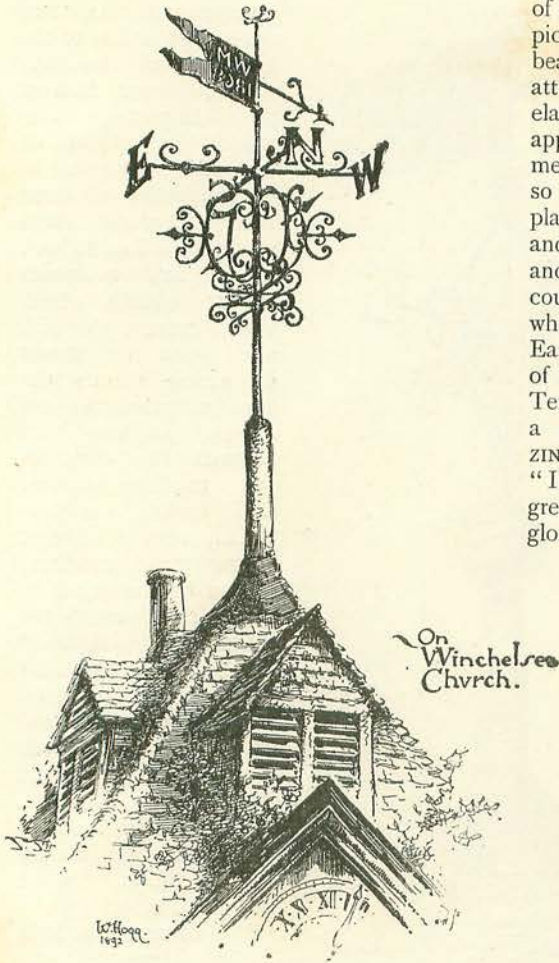
changes in its surroundings owing to the receding of the sea, its chequered history, its delightful, old-world look, and its venerable church of St. Nicholas, all combine to arrest one's attention. Let us look for a few moments at the church itself, which crowns the hill, and upon the tower of which stands the vane depicted in my sketch. It was built towards the close of the twelfth century, and Jeake, the historian, says of it that it was "the goodlies' edifice of the kind in Kent or Sussex, the cathedrals excepted." Its first seven vicars were priests of the Church of Rome, and in the church records

there are some curious entries, which look as though Passion plays were once performed in Rye. Here is one dated 1522:—

"Paid for a coate made when the Resurrection was played at Easter, for him that in play-

ing represented the part of Almighty God, 1s.; ditto for making the stage, 3s. 4d." During the reign of Edward VI. an entry is made, which reads: "Expended for cleaning the church from Popery, £1 13s. 4d."

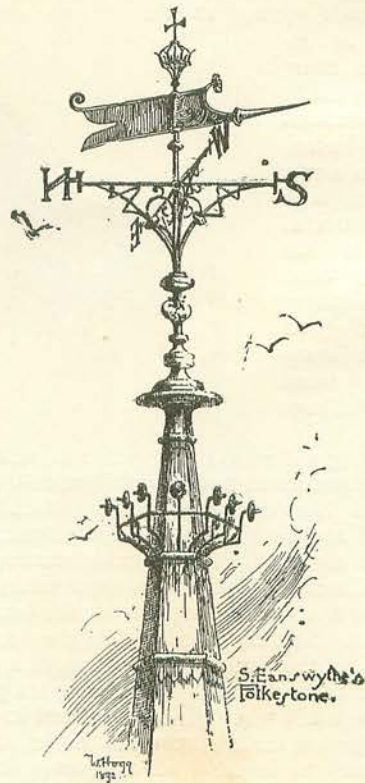
If tradition be true, Queen Elizabeth (who once visited Rye) gave the clock, which is said to be the oldest clock actually going in England. Now for the weather-vane, which I venture to think is worthy of its surroundings: it is simple in form, stately in proportion, and in excellent preservation. Through the metal plate of the vane itself are cut boldly, stencil fashion, the letters

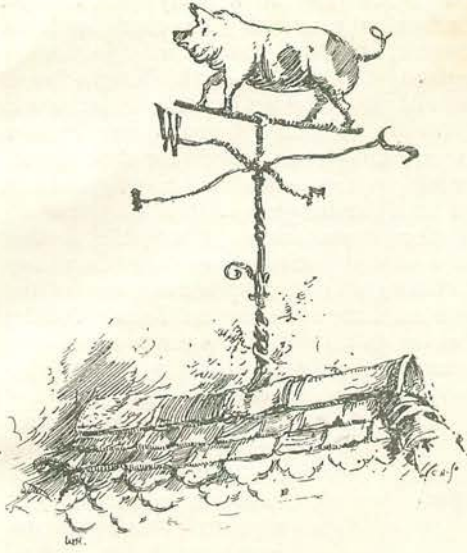


"A. R." (I was unable to find out to whom they referred—presumably a churchwarden), and immediately below them, the date 1703. The pointer is very thick and richly foliated, and the wrought ironwork which supports the arms, which indicate the four cardinal points of the compass, is excellent in design.

Two miles further west we come to dear old Winchelsea. The church (built between 1288–1292), of which only the choir and chancel, with some portions of the transepts, now remain, was originally dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket, but in the present day is called after St. Thomas the Apostle. It possesses an exceptionally fine vane, perched on a curiously squat, barn-like structure, which does duty for a tower. With its creeper-covered dormer windows and a somewhat convivial-looking chimney-pot sticking up out

of one of them on the south side, it looks more picturesque than ecclesiastical; but the beauty of the vane itself at once arrests attention. I think it is one of the most elaborate specimens of wrought ironwork, applied to such a purpose, that I have met with; against a sunny sky it is like so much beautiful filigree—the metal wind-plate is apparently a much later restoration, and is perforated with the letters "W. M." and the date 1868. From the vane you could almost jump into the old tree beneath which John Wesley preached his last sermon. Eastward, but very little beyond the shadow of the vane, is Tower Cottage, Miss Ellen Terry's country retreat. Mr. Harry How, in a recent number of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, has told us in one of his interesting "Interviews" of the quiet home life of the great actress when staying here. What a glorious outlook the old vane has—on the one hand quaint, sleepy Rye and the flat stretches of Romney Marsh; to the north the great Weald of Kent; to the westward beautiful Sussex, and





straight in front the open sea of the English Channel.

Folkestone makes a capital centre from which to go a-hunting vanes, but before we start it is well worth while to glance for a few moments at the modern one on the Parish Church of St. Eanswythe. It was designed,

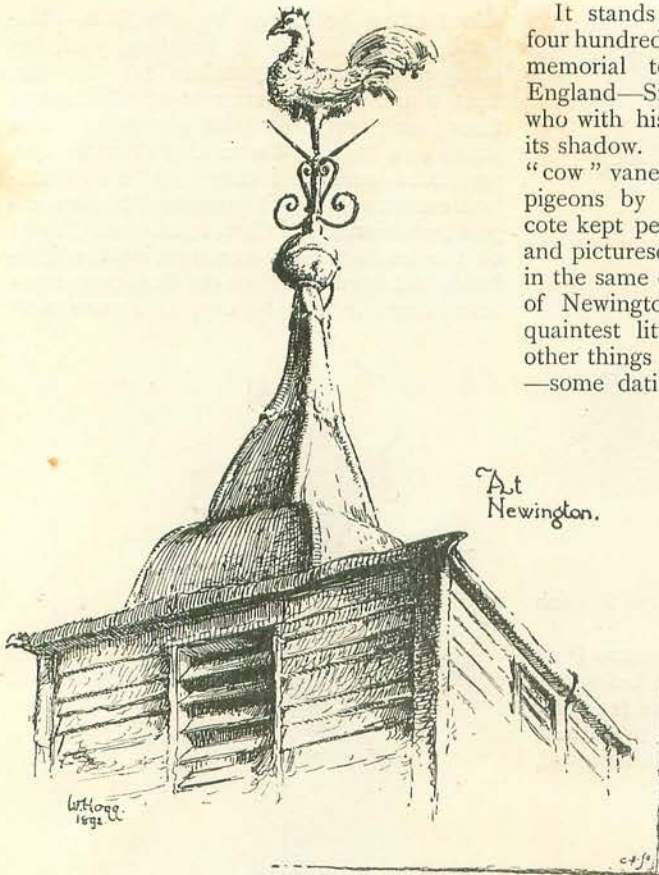


about fifteen years ago, by Mr. S. S. Stallwood, the architect, of Reading, who, by-the-bye, is, too, responsible for the fine west window. The vane is of dark metal throughout, save for the gilt arrow, and stands on a turret to the south-west of the Perpendicular embattled tower. It is in excellent condition, notwithstanding its very exposed position to the Channel storms. Down on the harbour jetty, surmounting the lighthouse and hard by where the Boulogne mail-boats come in day by day, is a vane with



scrolly arms, well worth noting; and, again, on a house out toward Shorncliffe, are a couple of "fox" vanes, one of which blustering Boreas has shorn of its tail; poor Reynard, in consequence, is ever swirling round and round—a ludicrous object—apparently ever seeking and never finding the aforesaid tail.

About a mile inland, near the Old Hall Farm, on an outhouse or piggery, is the subject of the accompanying sketch. It has certainly seen much better days, and is rather a quaint specimen of the genus weather-vane. It will be noted that rude winds have

At
Newington.

It stands close to a finely carved pulpit four hundred years old. The north porch is a memorial to the *first* Lord Justice of England—Sir James Lewis Knight-Bruce, who with his wife lies buried almost within its shadow. On an old house close by is a “cow” vane—when I made the sketch given, pigeons by the score from a neighbouring cote kept perching on it in a very friendly and picturesque fashion. Two miles further in the same direction brings us to the village of Newington, which possesses one of the quaintest little churches in Kent. Among other things it boasts some seventeen brasses—some dating back to the 15th and 16th

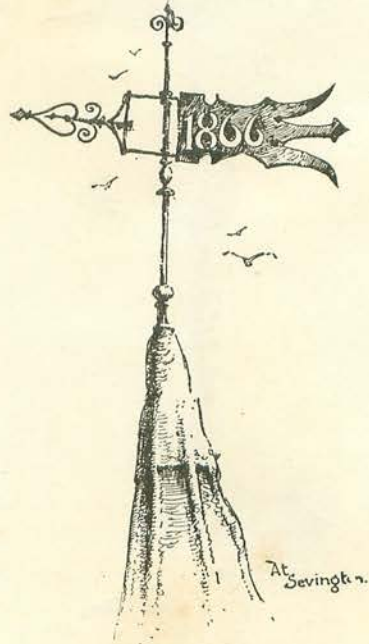
centuries—an ancient dial, on oaken shaft fast mouldering away—and a picturesque wooden belfry surmounted by a vigorously modelled gilt weathercock in capital preservation.

On Sevington spire, near Ashford, is a daintily designed vane, dated 1866. Some storm has given it—as the sailors say—a list to port, but that seems somehow not to take away from but to add to its charm. It

carried away, almost bodily, three out of the four letters which denote the compass-points, but have in mercy spared poor piggy's curly tail.

A mile or so further on is a daintily-designed but very simple vane, which stands on the north-east corner of the tower of the ancient church of St. Martin at Cheriton. Canon Scott Robertson, the well-known antiquarian, pronounces this tower to be of unusual interest. He tells us that it is probably pre-Norman, but certainly was erected before the end of the 11th century. Traces of characteristic, rough, wide-jointed masonry and a small, round-headed doorway should be specially noted. Let us linger in the church itself for a few moments. In the north Chantry (13th century) we shall find an interesting mural tablet thus inscribed:—

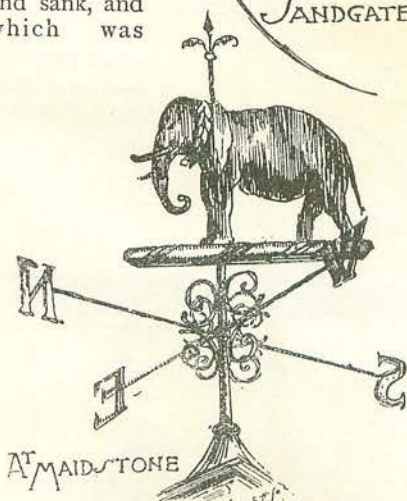
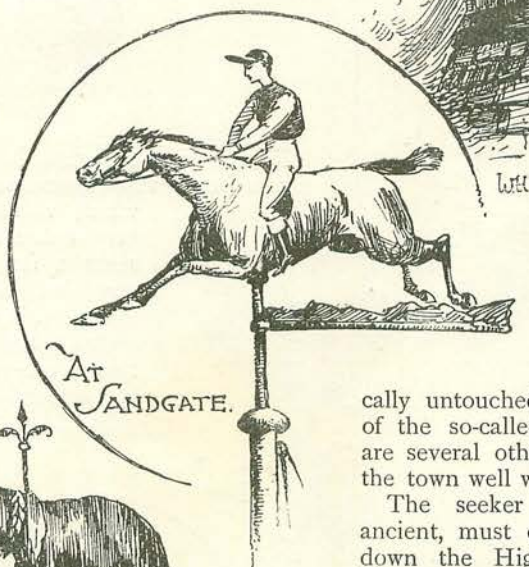
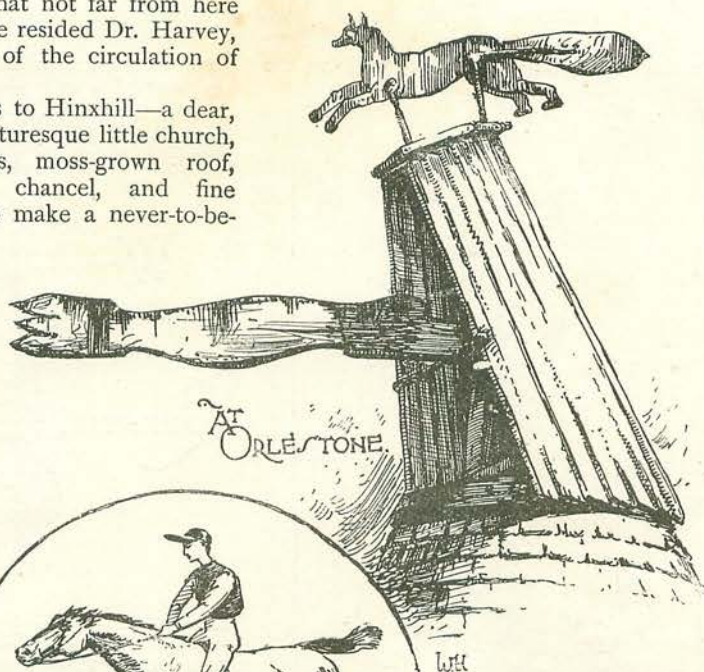
“Here lieth Interred the Body of Mrs. Elizabeth Raleigh, Grand Daughter of the FAMED Sr Walter Raleigh, who died at the Enbrook, 26 day of October, 1716, aged 30 years.”



is interesting to note that not far from here is the house where once resided Dr. Harvey, the famous discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

A mile on brings us to Hinxhill—a dear, old-world place—its picturesque little church, with ivy-covered walls, moss-grown roof, quaint open-timbered chancel, and fine stained-glass, all go to make a never-to-be-forgotten picture. On the little Early English spire is set a vane simple and good in treatment, and thoroughly in accord with its surroundings.

At Sandgate is a well designed “horse and jockey” vane on a flagstaff, in a garden about fifty yards from where the ill-fated sailing ship, the *Benvenue*, went ashore and sank, and which was



to an old lead-covered spire surmounting a decorated Norman tower with rich exterior arcading, practically untouched by the unloving hand of the so-called “restorer”; but there are several others in the older streets of the town well worth noting.

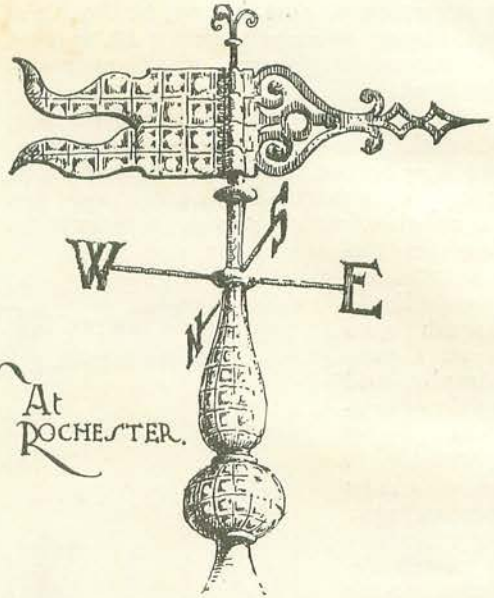
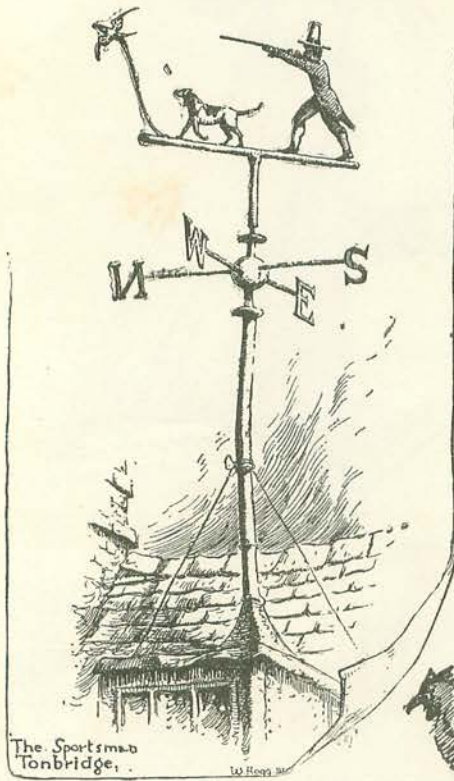
The seeker for vanes, quaint and ancient, must on no account miss going down the High Street of Tonbridge. There are three within a stone’s throw of each other which must be noted, specially the one locally known as “The Sportsman”—he stands over a dormer window in the red-tiled roof of an old house of the Sheraton period, immediately opposite the famous “Chequers Inn.” The house itself is very interesting; it has evidently been, in its early days, of considerable pretension, but has been an ironmonger’s shop since 1804. On going within to make inquiries about the vane, I gathered that it is at least 120 years old, probably much more, the oldest part of the house being contemporary with the “Chequers.” The vane is cut out of thick sheet copper and strengthened with stout wire in several places to keep it rigid, and the whole is painted in colours (a very unusual feature), in imita-

tion of the original. It is a very interesting feature, and is well worth a visit to see. The vane is cut out of thick sheet copper and strengthened with stout wire in several places to keep it rigid, and the whole is painted in colours (a very unusual feature), in imita-

blown up by order of the Admiralty only last autumn.

Dover, too, has its share of interesting vanes; perhaps the one belonging to St. Mary the Virgin is the best. It is attached

tion of the costume of the period; and I was shown a curious old print of Tonbridge in the time when the well-to-do

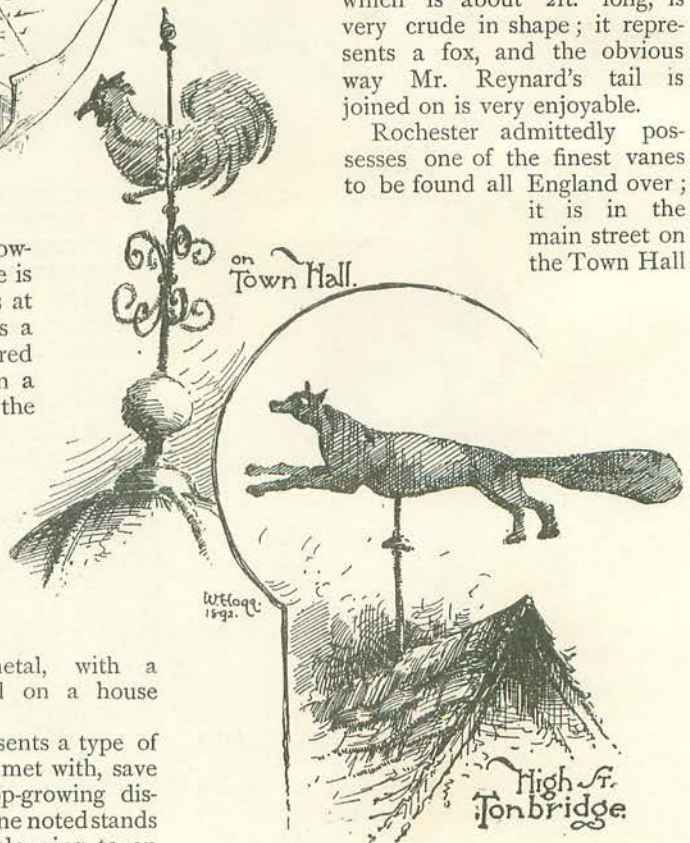


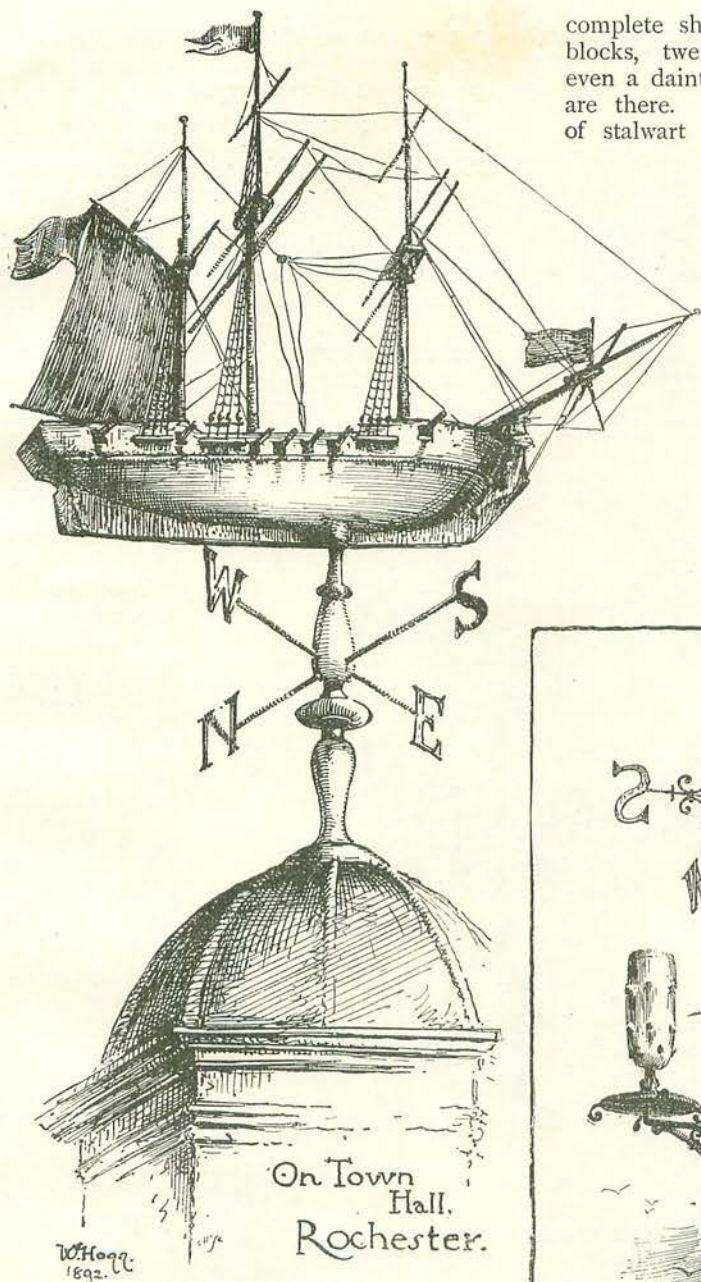
Elizabethan timbered house hard by the church. It will be remarked that the animal, which is about 2ft. long, is very crude in shape; it represents a fox, and the obvious way Mr. Reynard's tail is joined on is very enjoyable.

Rochester admittedly possesses one of the finest vanes to be found all England over; it is in the main street on the Town Hall

farmers wore top-hats and swallow-tailed coats, in which the vane is represented just as it appears at present. Vane number two is a much weathered and discoloured one, almost within touch, on a wooden turret surmounting the Town Hall—a typical Georgian building, lately threatened with demolition, and for the further life of which I noted a vigorous pleading in the pages of *The Graphic* of November 4th, 1892. Number three is a fox, rudely cut out of flat metal, with a "ryghte bushie taylor," fixed on a house gable overlooking the street.

The Orlestone sketch represents a type of vane practically never to be met with, save on the oast-houses in the hop-growing districts of Kent. The particular one noted stands at the bottom of a garden belonging to an



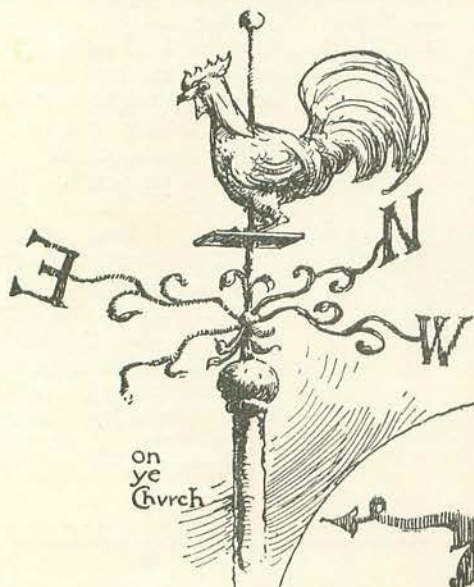


complete ship in miniature — cordage, blocks, twenty-six cannon, small spars, even a daintily-modelled figurehead: all are there. With the aid of a couple of stalwart constables I clambered up on to the leaden roof, so that I might examine more closely and carefully this splendid example of vane-craft. The ship itself, from the bottom of keel to the top of mainmast, measures over 6ft., and from jib to spanker boom the total length is 9ft. It is 18in. in width, weighs $7\frac{1}{2}$ cwt., and revolves quite easily pivoted on a large bull's-eye of glass. It may be interesting to note that



(temp. James I.), and surmounts a wooden bell-tower perched on the roof. On the south-west side of the building facing into the street is a tablet, which tells us that "This building was erected in the year 1687. John Bryan, Esquire, then Mayor"; and in quaint numerals the same date is repeated just below the tablet base. The vane is in the form of a ship, in gilt metal: a

my sketch was made from one of the uppermost windows of the "Bull Inn" (the



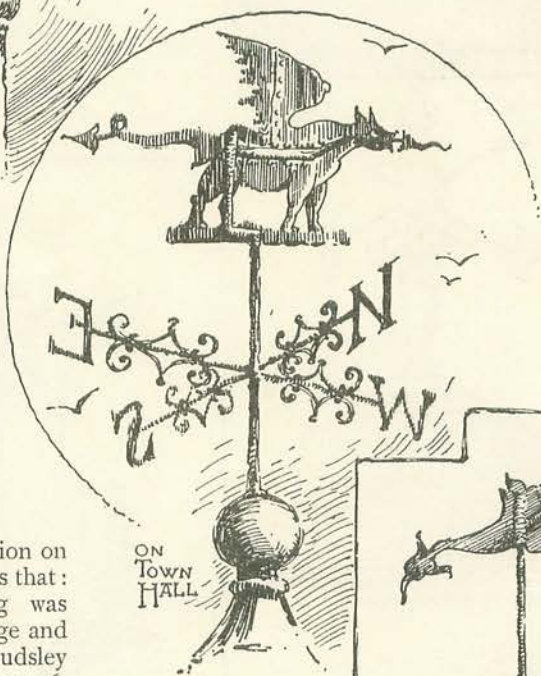
place where Charles Dickens once lived, and which he has immortalized in the pages of "Pickwick"), which is immediately opposite. A little higher up the street is a large vane, richly decorated in red and gold, on the Corn Exchange. An inscription on its south-west face tells us that: "This present building was erected at the sole charge and expense of Sir Cloudsley Shovel, Knight, A.D. 1706. He represented this city in three Parliaments in the reign of King William the Third, and in one Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne."

Maidstone, too, is rich in vanes. There is one specially you can see from all parts of the town. It is on the Medway Brewery, and represents an old brown jug and glass; its dimensions, to say the least of it, are somewhat startling. The jug alone (which is made of beaten copper plate) is 3ft. 6in. in height, and in its fullest part 3ft. in diameter, with a holding capacity of 108 gallons, or three barrels. The glass—also made of copper—is capable of holding some eight gallons. The vane revolves on ball bearings,

its height above the roof is 12ft., its arms extend nearly 7ft., the whole, I am told, standing 80ft. from the ground.

On the observatory connected with the Maidstone Museum (which latter was once Chillington Manor House) is a modern vane, much discoloured by damp, but very apt in design; note the perforated sun, moon and stars, and the three wavy-looking pointers, which I take to represent rays of light. Mr. Frederick James, the courteous curator, called my attention to a singularly fine wrought-iron vane, now preserved in the Museum, about which but little is known, but which may possibly have surmounted the place in the olden days—when Chillington Manor was the seat of the great Cobham family.

Space forbids my more than just calling attention to the nondescript gilt monster, with its riveted wings and forked tongue and tail,



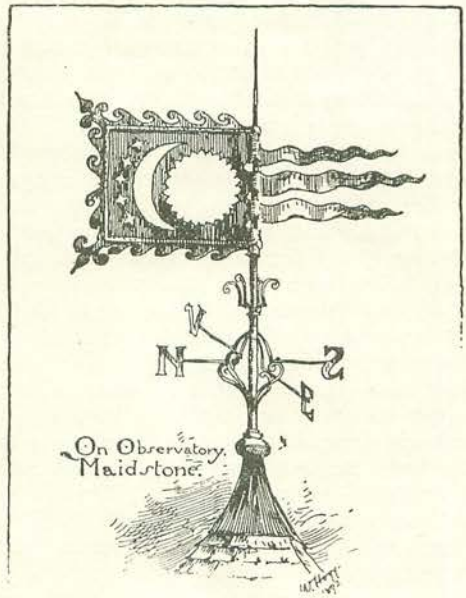


In Museum.
Maidstone.

which glares down on us from its perch above the Town Hall, in the High Street; or to a "cigar" vane (over 2ft. long and as thick as a bludgeon), large enough to give Verdant Green's famous "smoke" many points, hoisted over an enterprising tobacconist's a little lower down; or to the skewered and unhappy-looking weathercock on the Parish Church; or the blackened griffin in Earl Street, all head and tail, which does duty on an old dismantled Gothic building, once called "The Brotherhood Hall" (it belonged to

the fraternity of Corpus Christi, about 1422, and was suppressed in 1547), then afterwards used as a grammar school, and now—tell it not in Gath!—a hop store; or, lastly, the ponderous-looking elephant, painted a sickly blue, if I remember rightly, on a great building on the banks of the Medway.

These rambling notes but touch the fringe—as it were—of a wide and ever-widening subject. A lengthy paper might be written on the different types (and some of great interest) of vanes in and around London alone; but I trust I may be allowed to express the hope that what has been said may haply enlist further interest in these silent, faithful, but somewhat neglected friends of ours, who, "courted by all the winds that hold them play," look down from their "coigne of vantage" upon the hurrying world below.



On Observatory.
Maidstone.