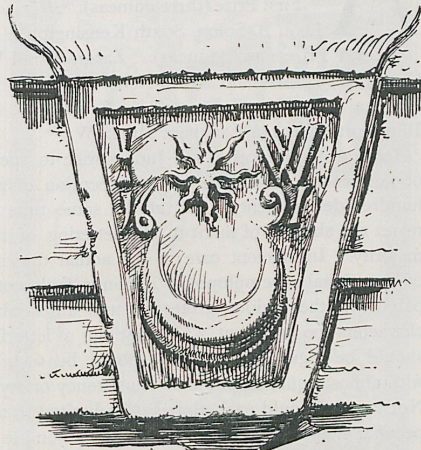


*Some Cottage Tablets*

from examples existing in the original building. There are many surmises as to the exact meaning of the boldly carved inscription, "God's Provi-



AT PORTSMOUTH.

dence is mine inheritance," which runs almost across the full width of the building, probably the perpetuation of some Puritanical shibboleth (for the Puritans were, you will remember, in the ascendant everywhere at the time the place was built); yet there is another local tradition (presumably apocryphal) which one must not forget—namely, that the legend was placed upon the house-front by the pious occupier to record his thankfulness



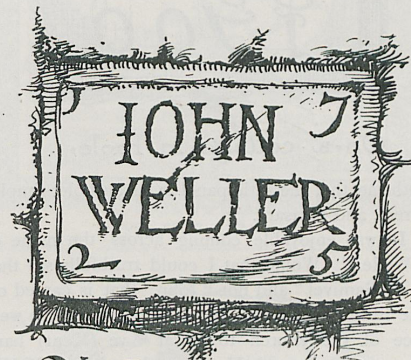
On a Cottage at Minster.  
Thanet.

for escape from the plague. But no matter, let us look at the tablet, or rather what to all intents and purposes is one, and a very picturesque one to boot. On a horizontal beam immediately below the sill of the uppermost window are four panels

carved with the initials W. R. and M. R., and an identical date (1652) in the other two panels.

About the W. R. and M. R. who flourished so long ago, I do not suppose either you or I mind very much, but I think we ought at least to be grateful to them for merging their identities in so pleasant a fashion into such a fine old building.

At Portsmouth, on the key-stone of the west doorway of the old parish church, dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket, is a boldly carved panel with the initials I. W. and a date 1691, disposed on either side of a large crescent moon and a star with eight waving rays. The church itself is a curious place; its chancel and transepts date from 1180-8, and its nave and aisles were rebuilt in 1693—you will notice two years *after* the date on the tableted key-stone; so it is rather puzzling to satisfactorily account for it unless one assumes that



At Wye.

the tablet was really carved during, or after, 1693, the earlier date having some special reference to the life (or death) of the aforesaid "I. W."

Before leaving the old place, it is worth while to glance at the fine copper vane (some seven feet in length), in the form of a ship, which surmounts the cupola on the central tower. It is capital in design and craftsmanship, and was given (as were the five bells, taken from the ancient Pharos at Dover) by Prince George of Denmark, in 1710.

To me the region of Thanet, Kent, is a happy hunting-ground for things curious and out-of-the-way. One comes across chained Bibles and carven chests in the churches, delightfully battered, time-worn dials and shattered tombstones with original letterings in the churchyards, wrought-iron signs and bits of old oak carving on the buildings in the village streets. Moreover, an occasional tablet meets one's eye on the picturesque cottages.