

## Michael Yoakley's Charity

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*Presidential Address by Robert H. Marsh, delivered at  
Devonshire House, 24th May, 1917*

**J**T is one of the ironies of fate that I should be called upon to give a presidential address. Our first presidents, Dr. Thomas Hodgkin and John Stephenson Rowntree, gave none, and it is hard that an unfortunate president who has really nothing to say should have to say it in the absence of further items on the Agenda that might have sheltered him from his doom.

If the worst came to the worst, I must own that I was tempted by the subject of General Nathaniel Greene [1742-1786], the Quaker-born, favourite general of Washington, but the more I thought about it the more I felt that no one who dealt with the story of a life which Quakers may well be proud of, could add anything to Sir George Trevelyan's loving picture of Greene in his volumes on *The American Revolution*. I decided therefore to outline the history of a Charity, with which I was familiar, with a record of usefulness of over two hundred years.

The second largest Quaker charity, other than a school, which appears in the return moved for by Lord Robert Montagu in June, 1875, is Michael Yoakley's Charity, which devotes at least four-fifths of its income to the support of people who have no connection with Friends and is, except in its management, a non-Quaker charity. It has been closely associated with Friends, all the trustees who have administered it from 1709 till now having been Friends by birth.

Michael Yoakley, its founder, was born in 1631 at Margate, the family being a Thanet one, mostly resident in the parish of St. Peter's. William Beck in his booklet, *Ye Yoakley Charity*, says that Michael Yoakley is reputed to have once been a shepherd-boy at Drapers Farm, Margate, a property which he afterwards bought and on part of which the almshouses for the non-Quaker pensioners were subsequently built, in accordance with the terms of his will. It is said that whilst a shepherd-boy he vowed that

if he became a successful man he would buy the place and build almshouses there for poor people. He may have done so, such legends grow very easily. What is certain is that he took to a sea-faring life and prospered. His father probably joined Friends, as a notice of his death is entered in Monthly Meeting records as occurring in London in 1665. We know that Michael Yoakley himself was living in London in 1662, as in that year he bought certain property in Wentworth Street, Spitalfields—some ten minutes walk from here—part of which is still held by his trustees. In the purchase deed he is described as “Michael Yoakley the younger, of the precincts of St. Katharine’s near the Tower of London, Mariner.” Probably Michael Yoakley was one of the Margate sea-captains who had been compelled to remove to London for the sake of their business, Margate Harbour, owing to its unprotected state, having gone very much to decay at this period. We knew nothing of his voyages till last year when an interesting piece of information came to the Charity from Albert Cook Myers, the President of the Friends Historical Society this year. Writing to me on June 30th, 1916, he says :

Robert Marsh,  
Dear Friend,

Referring to our conversation here at my office this morning, I have looked through my gleanings from the contemporary manuscripts, and I find that Michael Yoakley, master of the ship *Hopewell*, was loading his ship at the Port of London in August, 1676, for Maryland ; in July, 1682 (about a month before William Penn’s first departure for Pennsylvania) for Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina, one of the shippers being Penn’s brother-in-law, the well-known Quaker merchant of that day, Daniel Wharley, of George Yard, Lombard Street. A Carolina shipper was John Archdale, the Quaker Governor of that Colony. Again in July, 1683, Yoakley was in London loading goods on the same ship for Maryland and Virginia.

Sincerely yours,

ALBERT COOK MYERS.

It is interesting thus to find Michael Yoakley brought into touch with William Penn, as taking out goods for the new colony of Pennsylvania for him and for a number of Friends interested in that colony. It is a thing of which those connected with the Charity had no knowledge until Albert Cook Myers brought it to their notice last year.

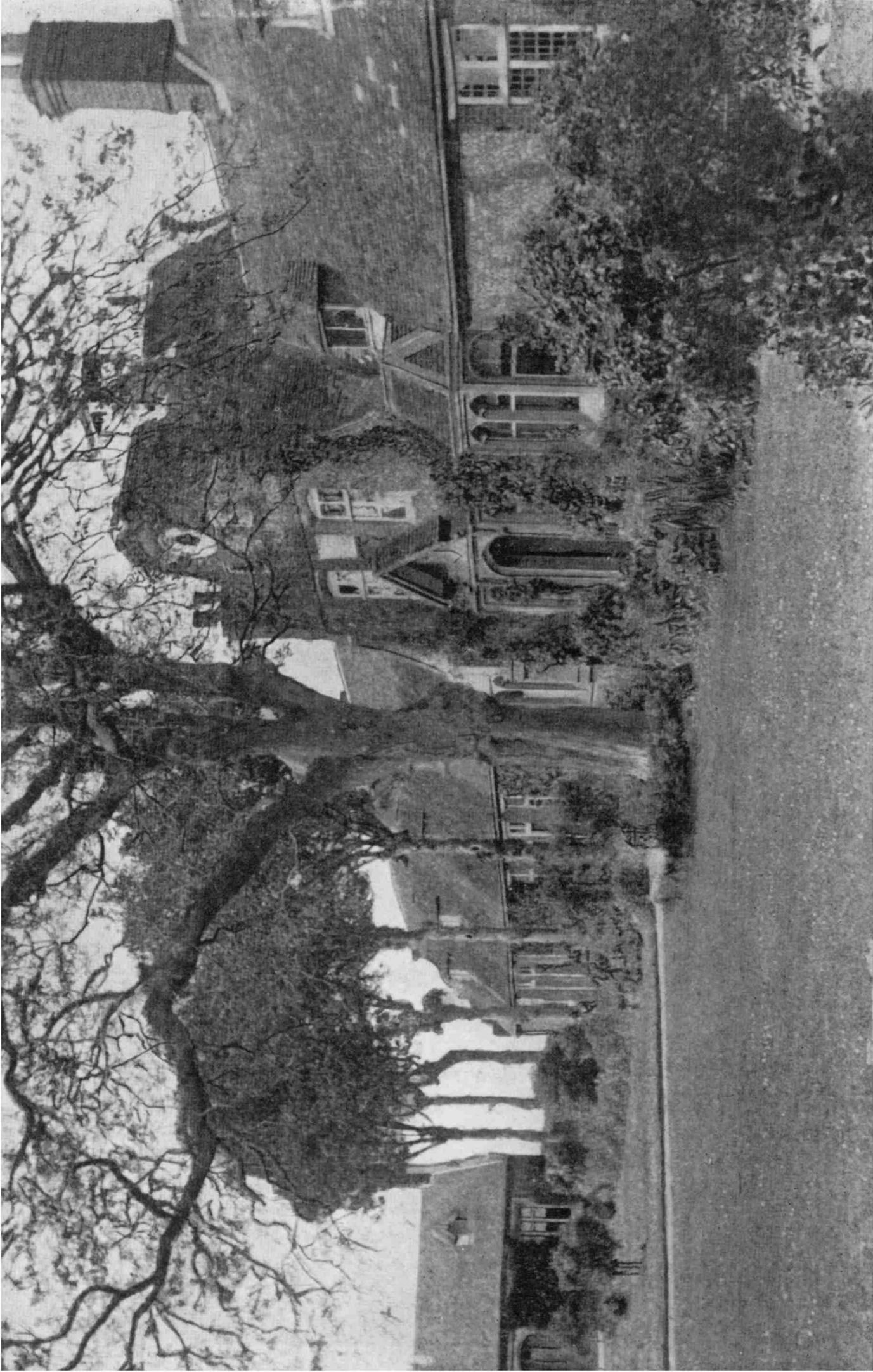
In 1685, two years after the last record of his loading up for Maryland and Virginia, the Ratcliff Monthly Meeting register shows that Michael Yoakley married the widow of a Friend, Henry Munday. In 1701, he bought Drapers Farm; and in 1708, he died and was buried in School House Lane, Ratcliff, in the Friends' Burial Ground there. His estate was estimated at £7,891, a good one for those days. His widow, Mary Yoakley, outlived him for twenty-two years, dying in 1730. Her last surviving child died three years after her, in 1733, without children, and the Whitechapel and Mossford Green property, the bulk of which had been left to Mary Yoakley's children by her first marriage, then fell in to the Charity, rendering it a good deal better off than Michael Yoakley had anticipated.

The name Yoakley, by the way, which was a common one in Thanet at one time, has become absolutely extinct in Kent and in London.

Some years before his death, Michael Yoakley had built or set aside from this property that he bought in Wentworth Street, three houses in Hope Court, Spitalfields, for "aged poor women." He started with eight or nine, but the number varied, sometimes getting as low as six. In 1713, there were six, and in 1717, there were eight. He offered these houses to the Devonshire House Monthly Meeting, telling it that he intended to found Almshouses for nine indigent Friends as the Monthly Meeting should approve. The Monthly Meeting hesitating because of some conditions in his "Paper," as they called it, relating to the Almshouses, he withdrew his offer, informing it that "he had settled the business of the poor to his content with the advice of Walter Miers."

The trustees, of whom I shall speak directly, at once took over the management of the houses on his death. It is doubtful whether the houses at Spitalfields were situated at the best place for their purpose. The trustees, therefore, in 1789, moved the occupants into houses in Raven Row, Whitechapel, belonging to the Charity, but there, apparently, they were not comfortable. It is said that the houses were "not well accommodated for warmth"; they were very expensive to maintain; and





*From photo. by Edward Marsh.]*

**THE ORIGINAL ALMSHOUSES AT DRAPERS.**

as the income of the Charity had largely increased, and as Counsel had advised the trustees that they might not spend any of the increased income on extending the Margate part of the Charity, the trustees decided in 1800 to build "comfortable distinct tenements," ten of which were completed in 1801 at a cost of £1,050. They were pulled down less than twenty years ago.

In 1834, the Trustees, still having more money than they knew what to do with, precluded as they were from spending it in erecting additional houses at Margate, bought land in Park Street, Stoke Newington, on which the present ten Almshouses and the Committee Room, were built. As the Raven Row pensioners were old, they were, with one exception, not removed, so that for the time being, the trustees kept two sets of Quaker pensioners, new pensioners being chosen in 1836 for the new Almshouses at Stoke Newington. In 1840, a legal decision was given that the rents, profits and income of all but the Wentworth Street block of property, the original piece, were applicable only to the support of the Almshouses at Drapers, Margate. That put a stop to any further extension of the Stoke Newington, or Quaker, part of the Charity, and, consequently, from that time the Margate part grew while the London part stood still.

Let us now turn to Margate. On the 22nd March, 1709, the trustees and Mary Yoakley met at Tom's Coffee House. I have here the original Minute Book of the Charity, worn and mildewed, as you see, and it begins in this way :

Met at Tom's Coffee House, according to appointment, the 22nd day of March, 1709, to confer with the carpenter and bricklayer from Margate about building the Almshouses ordered there to be built by Michael Yoakley, deceased.

The widow was there and all the trustees but one. One notices, by the way, in this minute book, that the "heathen" name of the month, as we used to call it when I was a small boy, is always used and never the Quaker phraseology. Nine houses and a superintendent's house were completed at a cost of £875 in 1710. I have here a piece of the original glass and lead work of one of the

(34)

W<sup>ch</sup>. whose names are hereunder writton. being the Surviving  
Executors. and Trustees. either nominated and appointed in and by the  
last will and Testament of Michael Yoakley late of the parish of Litchfield  
County in the County of Middx. Maurice deceased or his son since pur-  
suant to the Directions of the said will do hereby. Elect. choos<sup>e</sup> nominate  
and appoint Anthony Peat of London. Haberdasher of Small wares. to be  
a Trustee. in the room. Head and place of Siranus Gourd deceased, and  
we do hereby. according to the power and Directions given in and by the said  
will. Inw<sup>th</sup> the said Anthony Peat. with full power and Authority. to act  
as Trustee under the said will as fully. to all intents and purposes as  
is named. therein. In Witness. whereof we have hereunto subscribed  
our names. dated. the 26. of May 1719.

W<sup>th</sup> W<sup>th</sup> M<sup>th</sup>  
Richard Diamond  
James Warner

Mary Yoakley: Sain<sup>t</sup>. Adv<sup>o</sup>l<sup>d</sup>  
Walker Miers  
Richard Diamond  
Joseph. Nych.  
James Warner  
Samuel Ansd

windows of these houses, which were put up just about when Marlborough was taking Mons, and the inmates of the Almshouses in which it was fixed looked out through this glass right away from that time down to this present war, when it happened that this window had to be taken away altogether.

William Beck, in the booklet that I have already referred to, gives details of the qualifications for such poor people as are to be admitted into the houses of the Charity, so that I will not take up your time by reading them at length. Among them Michael Yoakley stated that :

The said alms-people are to be such as have been housekeepers, and of an industrious and good life and godly conversation, and reduced to necessity not by sloth, idleness or their own luxury, but by lameness or such like acts of Divine Providence.

He also directed in his will, in order that the qualifications should be "publicly known," that "some few short sentences, according to copy left, were to be cut in fair characters in hard white marble stone and placed in the most convenient place in the front of the building, that all plea of ignorance or excuse may be excluded." He was very careful about it, and these "qualifications," as he calls them, have been cut in white marble stone "according to copy left," as follows :

In much Weakness ye God of Might did blefs  
 With Increase of Store.  
 Not to maintain Pride and Idleness,  
 But to relieve ye Poor.  
 Such industrious poor as truly fear ye Lord  
 Of a Meek,  
     Humble and } according to His Word.  
     Quiet Spirit. }  
 Glory to God alone.

M.Y.

It was remarked in a local Guide Book that evidently though the founder of the Charity was a philanthropist he was not a poet.

The Margate Charity was far away, while the London Charity was close at hand and already established. Travelling was difficult in those days, but in 1710 Mary Yoakley and Robert Diamond went down "to settle the

poor people in their houses," which had been finished in 1709. No other visit was paid to this far-away place till 1738, twenty-eight years after. The third visit by four trustees took place in 1753, and the fourth visit in 1765, when "Mark Beaufoy and Jacob Hagen set out on the 24th of 8th Month 1765, in 'the Machine,' to Canterbury, and from thence in a postchaise to Margate that evening. Daniel Mildred took the opportunity of going by water in one of his ships bound for Philadelphia, and got there on First-day morning." "There" evidently means Margate and not Philadelphia, although it might be read differently.

There is an interesting point here that I should like to mention. There were six original trustees, and as any one of them resigned or died his place was taken by another, chosen by the remaining trustees, so that, following down, there is a regular succession of trustees; and Mark Beaufoy, who went to Margate in 1765, was sixth in succession to the original trustee of his series, Joseph Grove. It is specially interesting that, at our meeting this afternoon, a resolution should have been moved by one who is also sixth in succession to an original trustee. Our friend, John Morland, to whom I refer, is sixth in succession to an original trustee, Samuel Waldenfield. His trusteeship dates back to forty-nine years ago, and he is a "contemporary" in 1917, in the Charity history, with Mark Beaufoy who paid this visit to Margate in 1765, when Daniel Mildred's ship sailed to Philadelphia "in the colony of Pennsylvania."

At the fourteenth visit in 1834, it is noted that the trustees arrived by steamer. Hitherto they had always gone by coach as far as Canterbury. The sixteenth visit was paid in 1841, and thenceforward up to 1853, the visits were made about every two years, but since that date annually. In the minute book it is stated that they came by the *City of Canterbury* in 1850, and that is the last time it is mentioned that they went down by steamer. The name of the *City of Canterbury* seemed strangely familiar to me, and it flashed across my mind that in an old scrap book of about 1859, the first picture was a view of Herne Bay, with the *City of Canterbury* with a long funnel

and an awning on the deck, arriving at the pier. We can imagine the trustees, all probably in broad-brimmed hats, travelling down in the boat shown here in this old scrap-book. In 1853, they travelled by rail to Margate for the first time, and the *City of Canterbury* steamer saw them no more. In 1911, a trustee arrived by motor for the first time, and in 1914 all the trustees came on from Aylesford by motor. It is highly probable that in the future they may arrive by aeroplane, and if they do all I can say is that the present steward is not likely to go with them, if he is a free agent.

If the trustees who visited Drapers in 1738 could have revisited it after one hundred years they would have found practically no change in the buildings, but ten years later the first additions to the original almshouses were completed, the first four houses of two new wings being finished in 1848 and 1850 respectively. There had been times in the first hundred years of the Charity when, owing to lack of adequate income, the number of pensioners was as low as six, but the increased income from the London property, now available for the Margate endowment, enabled the number of houses to be increased, step by step, till by 1882 there were homes for 38 pensioners as well as the "Clock House" in the centre of the original block, for the superintendent. There is still room for additional houses whenever the needful funds for building and endowing them are forthcoming.

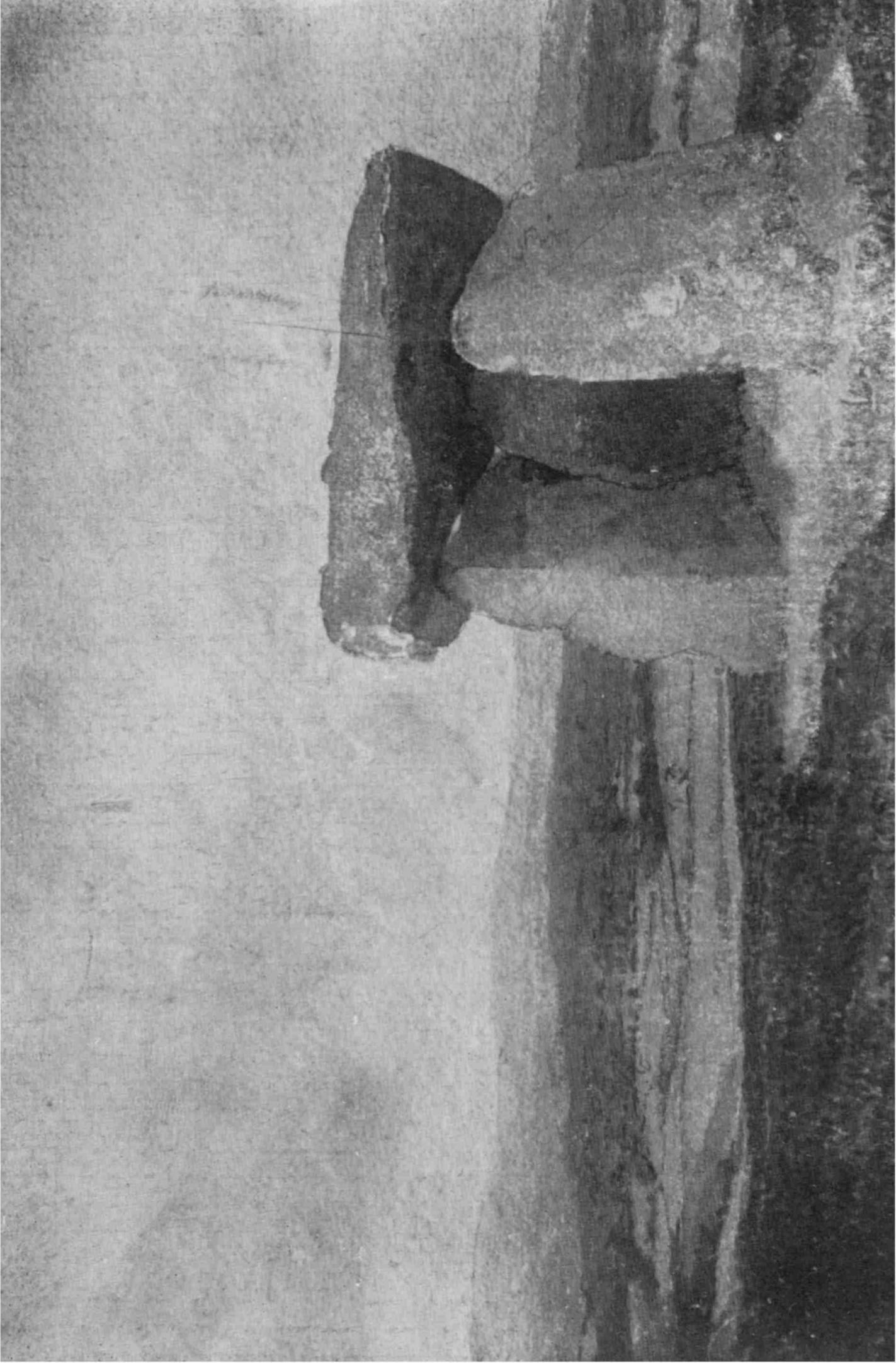
Then you may possibly ask, What do these good people get in these Almshouses? Till 1789 the allowance was something like 2s. 6d. a week in London, rising to 3s. a week in 1795 as the price of food got higher. It was raised again in 1800 to 4s. a week, and in 1823 to 5s. a week, with an allowance of coal, and there it stood until 1889, when John Horniman handed over funds to increase the allowance to the Stoke Newington pensioners to 7s. per week. At Margate they began in 1710, with 30s. a quarter; in 1795 the allowance was put on a weekly basis, 3s. a week being given; in 1800 this was increased to 4s. a week, and in 1823 to 5s. a week. In 1874, the allowance was made 6s. 6d. a week, which is the present allowance, each inmate also receiving an additional 51s. a year and a ton and a half of coal, but in view of the prices

of food now obtaining I am not sure whether it may not again be necessary to increase the allowance.

The property of the Charity has altered a good deal in the last fifty years. The Mossford Green portion, in Essex, has been sold and most of the proceeds used for the purchase of land adjoining Drapers Farm. More than half the Whitechapel-Road property having been taken compulsorily, piece by piece, by the Post Office authorities, the trustees finally invested the proceeds of these sales in the purchase of land at Aylesford, Kent, where they now own nearly 400 acres, together with Kit's Coty House—the famous cromlech overlooking the Medway valley—and the Lordship of the Manor of Tottington. Only a portion of the Aylesford property had been bought at the time of the death of Arthur Lister, F.R.S., who for many years was the treasurer of the Charity, to whom the addition of Kit's Coty House to the Charity's property would have been a source of great pleasure. The picture of it, which I have here, is from a sketch of his made in 1871, nearly forty years before the Charity became its owner.

Speaking of the march of the Jutes from Thanet towards London, Green, in his *Making of England*, says :

The country through which it led them was full of memories of a past which had even then faded from the minds of men ; for the hill-slopes which they traversed were the grave-ground of a vanished race, and scattered among the boulders which strewed the soil rose cromlechs and huge barrows of the dead. One mighty relic survives in the monument called Kit's Coty House, a cromlech that had been linked in old days by an avenue of huge stones to a burial-ground some few miles off near the village of Addington. It was from a steep knoll, on which the grey, weather-beaten stones of this monument are reared, that the view of their first battle-ground would break on Hengest's warriors ; and a lane which still leads down from it through peaceful homesteads would guide them across the river-valley to a ford which has left its name in the village of Aylesford that overhangs it. At this point, which is still the lowest ford across the Medway, and where an ancient trackway crossed the river, the British leaders must have taken post for the defence of West Kent ; but the chronicle of the conquering people tells nothing of the rush that may have carried the ford or of the fight that went struggling up through the village. We hear only that Horsa fell in the moment of victory : and the flint heap of Horsted, which has long preserved his name, and was held in after-time to mark his grave, is thus the earliest of those monuments of English valour of which Westminster is the last and noblest shrine.



*From a sketch by Arthur Lister.]*

**KIT'S COTY HOUSE AND MEDWAY VALLEY.**

**[See p. 154.]**



The Aylesford property extends from just above Kit's Coty House down to the Medway, though not quite so far west as the site of the old ford. The Margate property, which at one time comprised over eighty-seven acres, is now some seventy-seven acres only, owing to sales.

The Charity is managed by six trustees. Since its foundation sixty-seven have been appointed and three of the present ones have served for thirty-three years or more. Henry Tuke Mennell, the treasurer, has attended forty-five consecutive annual meetings at Margate making a record. Joseph Jackson Lister had no chance of equalling it in his long trusteeship as annual visits to Margate were not instituted till he had been a trustee for over forty-two years.

Of the surnames of the trustees of two hundred years ago, only one is current now: Simeon Warner (trustee 1716 to 1754), Charles Heath Warner (trustee 1869 to 1879) and Metford Warner, elected in 1879, being the three of that name on the list. Some families have had an almost hereditary trusteeship, whilst they certainly have had a very real hereditary interest in the welfare of the Charity. Especially true is this of the Listers; Joseph Jackson Lister, F.R.S., appointed a Trustee in January, 1811, held office till his death in the autumn of 1869; his son, Arthur Lister, F.R.S., elected in 1867, was for forty-one years a trustee: whilst two of J. J. Lister's grandsons now hold office, Joseph Lister Godlee—who succeeded his uncle Smith Harrison (a son-in-law of J. J. Lister) in 1883, and Arthur Lister Harrison, who followed his uncle Arthur Lister in 1908. Conrad Beck succeeded his uncle William Beck on his retirement in 1896, whilst Charles Heath Clark continues the connection of his uncle Charles Heath Warner with the Charity. John Morland's father, John Morland, later John Morland himself and afterwards his brother Charles C. Morland, were similarly connected with the Charity as trustees. Going further back, Simeon Warner, appointed a Trustee in 1716, was followed by his son-in-law, Jacob Hagen, who was followed by two Jacob Hagens in immediate succession, so that the trusteeship continued in that family for 127 years in unbroken line. The connection of Simeon Warners'

descendants with Yoakley's Charity was resumed in an indirect way when I was appointed steward in 1887, my wife being a great-great-great-great-grand-daughter of Simeon Warner. I am almost ashamed to say that I have held the stewardship for the second longest period of any steward of the Charity, but am not likely to reach the forty-two years of my immediate predecessor, James Bowden, to whose researches I am largely indebted for the facts that I have so hurriedly placed before you this afternoon.

In conclusion, no one who can visit Kit's Coty House should miss the pleasure of doing so. At Margate, nothing, except the Thanet skies which Turner so admired, is so restfully beautiful as Drapers—a veritable "Harbour of Refuge" for many whose declining years have been peacefully spent there, thanks to the bounty of the old Quaker mariner who founded it, and to the generations of trustees who have given so much time and thought to the management of this interesting Charity.



YOAKLEY ALMSHOUSES, DRAPERS

*From an old print*