CHAPTER XI

THE PARISH

WE have seen that, for the sake of convenience and to avoid confusion since the name is so common, Milton was often entered in ancient records under the heading of Collingtree. That part of the manor was also responsible for the name of a Hundred in the time of William the Conqueror, which was no mean honour (see page 31). Mr. Horace Round, M.A., in his article on "Doomsday Book" in the *Victoria County History of Northamptonshire* (Vol. I, p. 296), says that in these ancient pages

" an interesting Hundred makes its appearance, as it would seem, there only. This is the Hundred of Collingtree, (' Colentreu,' ' Colestreu ') to which are assigned the adjoining vills of Collingtree, Milton (Middleton Malsor) Rothersthorpe, Blisworth and Courteenhall, on the west of Wymersley Hundred. In the Northamptonshire survey (12th century) this Hundred disappears."

This seems to point to the fact that Milton in those days was a place of some considerable importance, since it had the distinction of having a Hundred named after a portion of one of its manors. Had the Hundred been called " Milton Hundred," the question would at once arise, " Which Milton ? "

From the *Doomsday* account of the lands of William Peverel and Goisfrid Alselin, there seem to have been at least thirty-five families and the priest at Milton. The names of only the two chief tenants, Ambrose and William, are recorded. The others are unknown to us by name, but they here lived their simple lives near a thousand years ago in their reed-thatched huts of wood and dutifully put out their fires when the curfew sounded from the belfry of the little Saxon church.

From early times there were no definite boundaries between the parishes of Milton and Collingtree. They were apparently interwoven with one another, a state of affairs undoubtedly due to the uneven distribution of the lands of the two manors, and the fact that the two churches were originally in two moieties and so attached to one another. Dr. Bridges hints at this in his observations on Collingtree Church : " It appears to have been for some time united to the church of Middleton, now called Milton. The tythes of these two parishes are still intermixed with each other, in about an equal proportion."

As a rule, up to about the sixteenth century, the parish was simply an ecclesiastical district, the extent of which was decided by that of the manor, and the civil business of which was conducted by the Manorial Courts. From 1535 onwards, the civil parish as we now know it gradually came into existence, the boundary between Milton and Collingtree not being finally settled until 1780.

The following extracts referring to the village

and parish are interesting, as they illustrate the prevalent confusion. The first two are from Wills :

John Wright, Dec. 6th., 1553, " of the towne of Myddelton Malsoure and of the p'rishe of Colentrye, husbandman."

John Stephenson, April 10th., 1610, " of Milton alias Midleton Malsor in the parishe of Colingtrough."

From the Milton parish registers we have :

1603/4. " Robert Nut of North'ton in the p'rishe of All Seyntes and Anne Sare al's Seares of this towne in the p'rishe of Collingtree were married the fourth daye of Marche. Licent' obtent." (i.e. by licence).

The above entries seem to show that those persons lived in some part of Milton regarded as a portion of Collingtree parish, that is, they were probably tenants of part of Mantell's Manor, as it was afterwards called. That portion of Milton belonging to the other manor was considered as being strictly in Milton parish, as we gather from the register :

1606. " Edward Tym'es of Blaxley and Joan Genyans of this parrishe were married the sixt daye of October."

1609. " Walter Greene and Joan Brumley both of this towne and parishe were married the —15 Daye of Oct."

The boundaries of the two parishes of Milton and Collingtree were finally settled by the Enclosure Award in 1780.

Notes descriptive of the parish and village of

Milton were written between the years 1718–21 by William Taylor. Owing to their interest they are given here :

" The farthest extent is from Thorp Brook to Courtenhall Grounds, and is 2 Large Miles : Bounded by Collingtree *alias* Collingtrough, Cortenhall, Blisworth, Thorp and Wootton :— Collingtree East : Thorp West : Wootton North Cortenhall South.

" No of houses is 65 :—Houses for ye Poor, 3 : —all which are now inhabited except 2 Farm Houses.

" Seats : Mr. Dodwell's, Mr. Duncomb's, Mr. Price's.

" Hills : 1, Mill Banks Hill : 2, Capbush Hill : 3, Hanging Hedge Hill : 4, Blandern Hill : 5, Lady Bridge Hill.

" Rocks : 2—1st. of Gravell, called ye Gravell pitts, but has One Course of stone, which is very thick & of a reddish colour, a Durable stone, and not to be rejected for Building : The 2nd. Rock lyes hard by this, which is a very hard stone, of a Brown Colour, impenetrable by Cold or Heat.

" They both lye a little below the Town.

" Brooks—1, Thorp Brook. 2, Wootton Brook, which is a mound (boundary)—to this Field (i.e. the open country) for 2 miles. 3, Blysworth Brook. The 1st. of these rises from Gayton Fish pond and joins the River Nyne at Upton Mill :—The 2nd. takes its rise from ye Dykes in Horton, so comes down by Peddington Field, and there join'd with other little waters, then is mett by Quin Bridge, and other waters from Wootton, so composes a Brook, and meets Thorp Brook at Upton Mill aforesaid :—
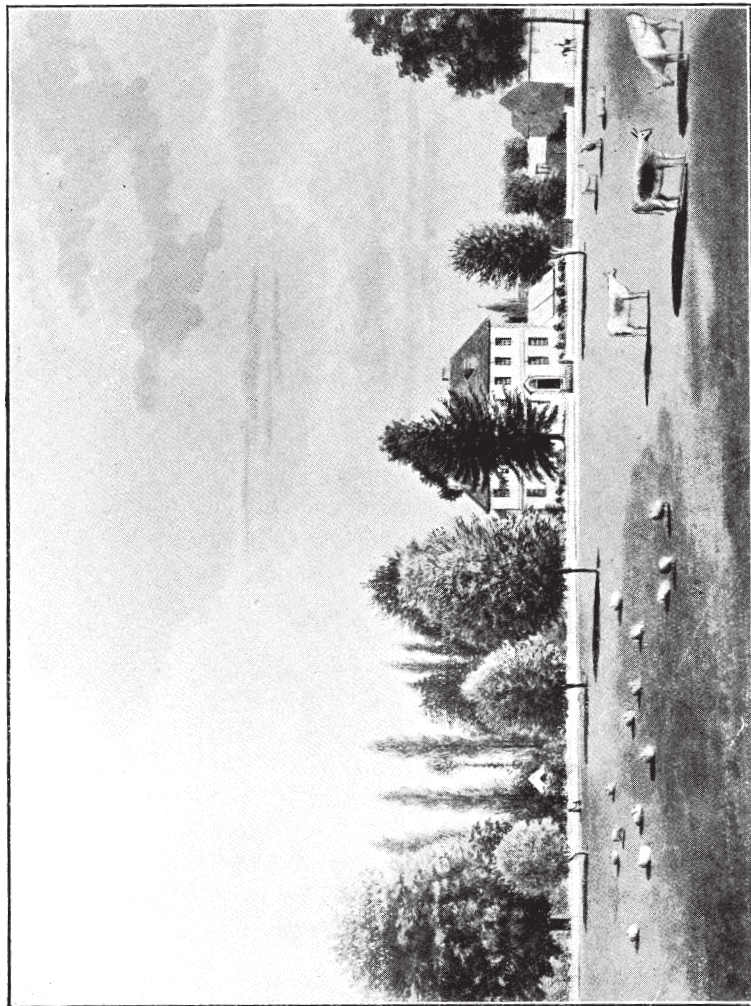
MILTON HOUSE, BEFORE THE ROAD WAS LOWERED.

From a painting in the possession of Mr. E. M. Alexander. The block lent by the Editor of *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries.*

The 3rd. rises from Dykes and small springs in Blisworth field, Drives an Overshott Mill, makes a small Brook on ye West side of this Town, and joins the River Nyne with Wootton Brook at Upton Mill aforesaid.

" Springs—1, Holler's Spring : 2, Clanwell Spring : 3, at Ham Willows : 4, Fishpool Spring : 5, Lady Bridge Spring : 6, Root's Gutter Spring : 7, Long Land Spring :—all simple."

The parish is 1426 acres, 2 roods, 7 perches in extent. In 1923 the gross value was £8,185 6s. 2d., the rateable value of the land was £1,878 5s. 3d., and of buildings £4,463 1s. 6d.

Some of the place-names given by Taylor are now forgotten, but most are still known to the old folk. Mill-banks Hill is a sloping field not far from Stockwell, Hanging Hedge Hill is a field on the left-hand side of the road leading to Collingtree, and Clanwell and Root's Gutter are in the same neighbourhood. Capbush forms part of what was once the glebe farm. Blandern Hill I have not identified, and the same must be said of Holler's and Long Land Springs. Ham Willows, Fishpool and Lady Bridge are names still commonly known.

Other names in the village are of interest. Stockwell, or the " Bottoms," sometimes the " Willows," is the north-east corner of the village. Little Street leads from Stockwell to the corner of the road to the church. " Little Town " is another name for the houses on Little Green, near the War Memorial. Half Craft is the field by the Greyhound. Hobb End

is the corner of the road leading to the Towcester Road, by Milton Manor.

In 1821 the number of houses had increased to 108 from the 65 in Taylor's day, and now in 1923 they are 143, partly by building and partly by the unfortunate expedient of making several small cottages of one large house. Three houses bear dates respectively of 1638, 1656 and 1701.

Apart from the Church and the Manors, little is known of the life of our particular parish in mediæval days. There is no record of the Wars of the Roses relating to Milton, but doubtless the village must have been stirred by the Battle of Northampton on July 10th, 1460, when King Henry VI was taken prisoner. In the Pipe Rolls and Subsidy Rolls preserved in the Record Office, lists of inhabitants are given who paid taxes at various times. It would be of little interest to publish all, but two are given here as examples:

LAY SUBSIDY ROLL.   155/125.

CO. NORTHANTS.   15 HENRY VIII. (NO HEADING.)

Hundred of Wymersley.   Mylton.

	Assessment.	Tax.
John Wake, in londes.	x Li	x S
William Guner	xx S	iiij D
William Hodgkyn	xx S	iiij D
Rob. Whyte	xx S	iiij D
John Cowper	x Li	v S
Richard Harbard	xl S	xij D
William Harbard	xl S	xij D
Richard Knyght	xx S	iiij D
Thomas Craswell	xx S	iiij D
William Buge	iiij Li	ij S
John Byllyng	x Li	v S

	Assessment.	Tax.
Nicolas Byllyng	iiij Li	ij S
William Byllyng	vj Li	iij S
John Wryght	xx S	iiij D
Richard Park	xx S	iiij D
John Idyll	xx S	iiij D
William Garnytt	iij Li	xviij D
Thomas Horbye	iiij Li	ij S
William Harbard	iiij Li	ij S
William Brokesham	xx S	iiij D
Thomas Mirrell	iij Li	xviij D
Robt. Lyng	iiij Li	ij S
Thomas Rage	viij Li	iiij S
Henry Draycote	xx S	iiij D
(Part of Roll is wanting here.)		
—— Byllyng	: :	: :
Henry Hart	: :	: :
Thomas Cleveden	xx S	: :
Thomas Craswell	xl S	: :
John Heyreke	: :	: :
Thomas Miles	: :	: :
Lawrence Roote	: :	ij S
Lawrence Davye	vij Li	iij S vi D
John Wayte	xx S	iiij D
John Waryn	xx S	iiij D
John Stephyn	xx S	iiij D
Thomas Langford	iij Li	xviij D
Summa	iij Li.	

The Collingtree portion of the above Roll is given on page 283 because one person named therein was very evidently an inhabitant of Milton.

156/266. 3 Edward VI.		1549–1550.
Thomas Houghton	xiv Li	xiv S
Stephen Gilbert	xj Li	xj S
Robert Dunckeley	x Li	x S
Will Leeke	x Li	x S

This assessment was on goods and not on real property.

From Wills made about this time we glean some knowledge of the state of the country in Tudor days. The roads seem to have been chiefly maintained by private benefactions and legacies, which would not be sufficient to keep them in repair. Hence the state of the highways, as would naturally be expected, was very bad, being chiefly distinguished from the broad, hedgeless fields and the unenclosed Commons by the deep ruts made by the ponderous wheels of wagon and cart. Time after time loads of stone would be spread over them to fill up the ruts, but the roads were without foundation of any kind (except the old Roman roads) and so the metal was soon lost in the soft earth. It was long before the time of Telford or Macadam.

To provide for the maintenance of the highways was considered a pious duty and meritorious before God, quite as much as caring for the poor, because men saw in this a real charity for certain unfortunate people who were compelled to travel.

Thomas Rage in his Will (1523) orders that a house should be sold, the money " to be given to churche and to hyeway and to pore people where nede ys as God put them in mynde."

William Garnett, husbandman (1576) : " I geve three stryke of barley, that is one stryke to the repaire of the highe waies in Mylton or Mylton fielde and ij strykes to my sonne in lawe."

In the reign of Edward VI the trustees of the Milton Church charities diverted the rents :

" to the use of the town of Middleton for the relief of the poor, for the repair of the King's highways in that place, or for the payment of a tax of one-fifteenth to the king." [1]

Notwithstanding these and other occasional gifts the roads must have been in a perpetually bad state, veritable quagmires where they led through dense woods, and almost undistinguishable in other places when bordered by ploughed unenclosed land.

Much has been written about the scanty and Spartan way in which dwellings were furnished in Tudor days, but things had not much improved in this respect during the Stuart period. The following inventory appended to the Will of Roger Gaffield will throw some light on the subject:

" An Invotary of the moovable goods, Cattels & Chattels of Roggar Gaffield husba'd'an late disseased in Milto' take' this 25th. daye of Aparill 1631, the praisers names Richard Wright, Robert Johnson, Thomas Sebrooke.

IN PRIMIS IN THE HAULE.

One Olde Cubbard . . . 4s.
One Old Chear . . . . 1d.
One table and frame ⎫
One forme one bench ⎪
and benchbord ⎬ . . 6s.
One ffalling table ⎭
One salting trof . . . 3s.
4 Stooles w'th other implements . 1d.
3 peeses of putar [2] . . . 2s.–6d.

_____
[1] See pages 255 and 284.
[2] Pewter.

one lethare bottell }
one spit and cobirens [1] } . . 4s.
with all other Implements }
4 Peeses of Bras . . . . 10s.

IN THE OVER PARLAR.

2 Barrels }
One Cimnell [2] }
One Wollan Wheele } . . 6s.–8d.
w'th other Impleme'ts }

IN THE NETHAR PARLER.

One joyned Bed with the bedding
  belonging to it . . . 26s.–8d.
One standing Bed w'th the bedding
  belonging to it . . . 10s.
One pare of sheets 3 Napkins one
  pillowbier [3] . . . . 8s.
2 Coffars one chest one boultingtub[4] 8s.
his waring apparrell . . . 20s.
One cow . . . . . 33s.–4d.
the Crap of a quartere land [5] sold
  for one y'er . . . . £5–2s.–6.
    summ' totali . . Xij li–iiijs–xd

Roger Gaffield was a man of substance, for he not only owned land and houses, which he bequeathed to his eldest son, but made one bequest of £20, five of £10 each, two of 20/–

[1] Cobirens, otherwise " cobirons," were andirons, the irons in ancient kitchens which supported the logs used as fuel, or the spit for roasting.

[2] Cimnell, also Kimnell, is any kind of tub for domestic purposes.

[3] Pillowbier, also " pillowbear," a pillow-case.

[4] A bolting tub was a tub in which to " bolt " or sift meal, to separate the bran from the flour by shaking the mass backwards and forwards in a cloth of loose texture.

[5] A quarter land means a quarter of a Yard land. A Yard land was thirty acres.

each and one of 2/– to his other children and
relatives. Money in those days had a consider-
ably greater purchasing value than it has now,
hence there are frequently found explicit direc-
tions as to the bequest of a few shillings.
Comparing Roger Gaffield's bequests with the
following items, we gather that the inventory
of his belongings must describe the household
effects of a man in very comfortable circum-
stances :

Joan Sare al's Seabrooke. Oct. 16th, 1621,
Wyddow. " To Henrie Seabrooke my sonne the
sume of sixe shillinges of lawfull english money."

Francis Palmer, husbandman, Dec. 31st. 1640.
" I give and bequeath to ye poore of Milton
ffive shillings to be distributed to them by ye
overseers for ye poore within tenne dayes after
my decease."

Stephen Watts, Cottager, Sept. 21st. 1650.
" Item, I give to my sonne Thomas Watts for a
legasie ffive shillings to be payd him by my
hereafter mentyoned executrix uppon his de-
mandinge of it, after my decease."

In 1642 the Great Civil War broke out between
King Charles I and the Parliament, but no
Milton entries refer to it.

Amongst the documents that have been
preserved in the parish chest are three ordering
the appointment of Overseers for the Poor in
the time of the Commonwealth, dated 1649,
1650 and 1656.

" North'ton ss. Wee whose names are heere-
under subscribed Justice of Peace w'thin the
County aforesaid doe Authorise and Allow of

John Bude & John Pell to bee Overseers of
the poore for the p'rishe of Miltone for one
whole yeare next ensueinge, Comandinge them
togeather with the Churchwardens to pr'vide
for the poore of their p'rishe Accordinge to the
Lawe in that case pr'vided, Heereof faile not
att yo'r p'rills, Given under o'r Hands and
Seales the 4th. day of Aprill 1656.
William Ward.   George Benson."

A line scrawled at the bottom of the docu-
ment reads : " The ould ones to paye to the
newe ones the sume of 1£, 2s. 1d."

The following notice that was sent to the
Parish Constable bears on the same subject, and
is signed by William Dry, the Lord of the
" Manor called Mantell's Manor " in Milton.
The first two words stand for Wymersley
Hundred.

" Wim'sley Hundr.   To the Constable of this
towne of Milton.

By vertue of a Warrant to me directed from
Willm. Ward & Georg Benson Esqrs. Justices of
the Peace &c : Theis are to will & require you to
geve warning to the Churchw : & Overseers of
the Poore of this p'rish p'rsonally to appeare
before them at the signe of the Crowne in
North'ton upon wensday in Easter weeke next,
& that they bring with them their sev'rall
Accounts fairely written in severall books, what
money they have disbursed & what remaines
in their hands, with 4 of the most substantiall
mens hands in this p'rish to their severall
Accounts. And you are likewise to geve notice
to the Inhabitants of this p'rish to make choyse
of. 2. or. 4 honest & able Inhabitants to be Over-
seers of the Poore, & also : two to be Church-

wardens for the ensuing yeare & that you returne
the names of them in writing at the time & place
aforesd., And hereof faile not at yo'r p'rill.
      Dated Aprill 8 : 1658.   William Dry."

Another interesting document preserved from
the seventeenth century is of a military nature :

" Recd. the 18 of May 1660 of ⎫
Thomas Geese of Milton the sume of � lb. s. d.
ij lb–4s–9d. wch is for one mounthes ⎬ ij – 4 – 9
tax for the militia. I say recd.   ⎭
              By me John Billing."

In those days all owners of property had to
furnish horses, men and weapons for the militia
according to the value of their property. Thomas
Geese probably had neither horse to spare nor
arms to lend, and to avoid serving in the militia
himself he paid the equivalent for another man
and horse.

From the register we see it was customary
to bury a body very soon after death. It was
carried to church in a coffin kept for funerals,
taken out at the grave and buried in its shroud.
Hence the rubric in the Burial Office: "while
the corpse is made ready to be laid into the
earth."

" Anne the daughter of Richard and Mary
Wells dyed the 26th. of June in the morning
and buryed the 27th. of June 1696."

It is occasionally found of some value when
the occupation is appended to any name
entered in the old register, but this only too
rarely occurs. Fortunately there is one such
entry preserved which is of great interest
because it relates to an old-time parish officer.

" 1728. John Blunt, the Haward of the Town, was buried March 28th."

Haward is clearly a variant of Hayward, though *Cowell's Law Dictionary* gives it as " Haward *alias* Hayward." The word is probably derived from hay, a hedge, and -ward, the custodian. In early days a horn was always worn by the Hayward, who used to blow it to warn off people from straying in the crops. *Jacob's New Law Dictionary* gives the following meaning :

" Hayward is one that keeps the common herd of cattle of a town and the reason of his being called Hayward may be, because one part of his office is to see that they neither break nor crop the hedges of enclosed grounds, or for that he keeps the Grass from hurt and destruction. He is an officer appointed in the Lord's Court, and is to look to the fields and impound cattle that trespass therein, to inspect that no Pound Breaches be made, and if any be, to present them at the Leet. There may be a Custom in a Manor to have a Surveyor of the Fields or Hayward and for him to distrain Cattle Damage seasant, but he must avow in the name of him who hath the Freehold."

We find references to this officer in early poems :

" Claryce of Cockeslane, the clerk of the church,
  An haywarde and an heremyte, the hangeman
      of Tyborne."
              Langland. *Piers the Plowman* (*c.* 1350).

" The shepheards and haywards assemblies and meetings, when they kept their cattel and heards."
              Puttenham. *Art of English Poesie* (1589).

The entry in the register of John Blunt's burial provides the only reference we have to the ancient and interesting office of Hayward in our village. As there is no other record extant, it is impossible now to know whether this ancient office did or did not survive until the Enclosure of the Commons, but in all probability it did.

The other parish officers at this time were the Pinnier (see page 207), the Headborough and the Parish Constable. The last named is still with us, but the other officers were discontinued about the middle of last century.

The duties of the Headborough had become little more than that of the constable. *Jacob's New Law Dictionary* gives us the following explanation of the title :

" Headborow. Him that is Head of the Frankpledge in Boroughs. and had the principal Government within his own Pledge—also called Thirdborow and Tithingman in different places. These Headborows were the chief of the ten Pledges. Headborows are now a kind of Constables."

Several appointments to this office are recorded in the Parish Vestry Minute Books. The earliest preserved is that for 1815 when, on Easter Monday, Thomas Cockerill was appointed to the office of Headborough as well as Overseer.

" 1826. Thursday, March 30th. William Marriott to serve the office of Constable and Thomas Cockerill, Headborough, for the ensuing year."

" 1826. June 1st. Thomas Lever was nomi-