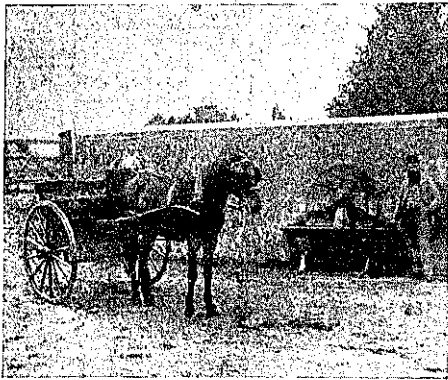


Mr. Read if we might take a few photographs. Both Mr. and Mrs. Read at once joined us, and not only gave the desired permission, but hospitably invited us to take afternoon tea with them in the writer's favourite room, and afterwards showed us about the grounds. The garden is laid out with great taste, and the whole place struck us as an ideal country residence for persons of culture and a taste for rural delights. A fine large room was added to the house by Professor Bell, and was used by him as a library for his books; it is now converted into a very charming drawing room. A portion of White's "Great Parlour" was unfortunately cut off to make an approach to this room; but otherwise the old part of



THE WEBB HEAD.

the house has not been much interfered with. The original bricks, however, are of such a beautifully warm red, and look so clean, that the visitor, inspecting the house from the garden, is at first inclined to think that it must all be of comparatively recent construction. On closer examination, the bricks prove to be smaller than those made nowadays, and the date of an addition made by White himself, is found let into the wall.

Of course we wished to see White's brick walk, which the philosopher laid down to the bottom of the garden to give him a promenade to his famous sundial without paying the penalty of wet feet when the grass was damp. Needless to say, both walk and sundial are religiously preserved. Mr. Read, in fact, is so far imbued with the *genius loci*, that he

has procured a tortoise, but the latter, in deplorable disregard of the distinction of his position as successor of, probably, the most famous tortoise that ever lived, persists in straying away from the garden far and wide, and has cost Mr. Read many a sixpence for its recovery. The Selborne small boy has of course reaped the benefit, and regards the tortoise as an admirable institution.

There is a fence just beyond the sundial, and from a little knoll on the other side we get an incomparably pretty view of the house. Not far away is the famous wych elm so often referred to by White, which, since his day, has been the subject of something like a miracle. About forty years ago it was blown down in a high wind and apparently destroyed. After a time, however, it sprang up again from the roots, and is now a fine spreading tree of lusty habit.

The view from the garden and from the windows of White's "Great Parlour," is charming in the extreme. The Hanger dominates the scene and, nearer at hand, the thatched roofs of the picturesque Selborne cottages are seen peeping through the trees. The year before our visit was the year of the great straw famine. It cost nearly twenty pounds to thatch one of these cottages, and needless to say, had such a prohibitive price continued, the thatched roofs in Selborne, as well as elsewhere, would have given place to more prosaic tiles or slates. Fortunately the threatened calamity has passed away for the present. Already, however, the utilitarians are questioning whether straw thatching, with its expense of removal and liability to fire, is the most economical method of roofing rural dwellings. Artists should make the best use of the straw-thatched cottages of England while they have them, for no man knoweth how soon these may go the way of many other antique institutions, beautiful in themselves, but not in accordance with the economical spirit of the age.

There is one old institution, by the way, the loss of which Mr. and Mrs. Read bitterly deplore, I refer to Gilbert White's toilet service. In its simplicity it accorded well