



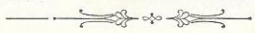


Masonic Relic

IN
NEWPORT, OR BULL STREET, SWINDON,

AND

How I tried to know all about it.



Many a "nook and cranny" in many a back street of some old town or city is rich in interest to the archaeologist and antiquarian, and therefore to the Mason. The most fertile imagination, however, could scarcely conceive of anything of the sort existing in Newcot-street, Swindon. The street had its characteristics, it is true, but they were not drawn on lines of beauty nor of art—modern, mediæval, or ancient. It was a back street, and was generally known to the generation of Swindonians, of which there are but a few remaining representatives, as "Bull" street. The other streets of the town were known as High-street and Wood-street, and these three, with Short-hedge, formed the four sides of the square or block which constituted the town of Old Swindon. It is not very many years since there were quite a number of very poor thatched cottages, occupied by labouring people, in Wood-street; there were no less than two blacksmiths' forges opening right on to the street as they are now occasionally to be seen on the street of some village, and around whose fires the plough-boys and ox-men of the neighbourhood used to congregate in the evening after the work of the fields was done, and, in company with the ostlers and stable-boys of the town, enjoy their jokes and their "backey" whilst their harness or their tools and implements of husbandry were being repaired and put straight by the brawny smiths. But Bull-street never rose even to the dignity of receiving such company; it seemed to be a street too far back for even a smith to look at. The street had, of course, its public-house or inn, which was called "the Bull," and the "Bull" gave the name to the street. To the ordinary inhabitant, or the casual passer-by, there was the "Bull" and there was the street, and the two combined made

