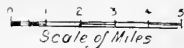




FATHER
THAMES
WALTER HIGGINS

Map of the RIVER THAMES

from its Source to Windsor



Cirencester

Thames Head

Ashton
Keynes

Cricklade
Leigh

Lechlade
Hempford
Castle
Eaton

Clanfield
Radeot
Buscot

Fynsham
Northampton

Wytham
Cunnor
Appleton

Oxford

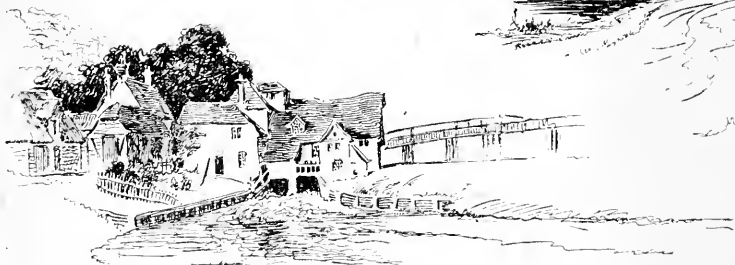
Cowley

Littlemore

Rodley

Abingdon

Culham
Suffon
Courlenay



Strealley Mill



G^r Marlow

Nuneham Courtenay



Goring Church



Cookham Moor



Henley

- Clifton
- Dorchester
- Wittenham
- Shillingford
- Benson
- Wallingford
- Cholsey
- Moulsoford
- Streatley
- Basildon
- Pangbourne



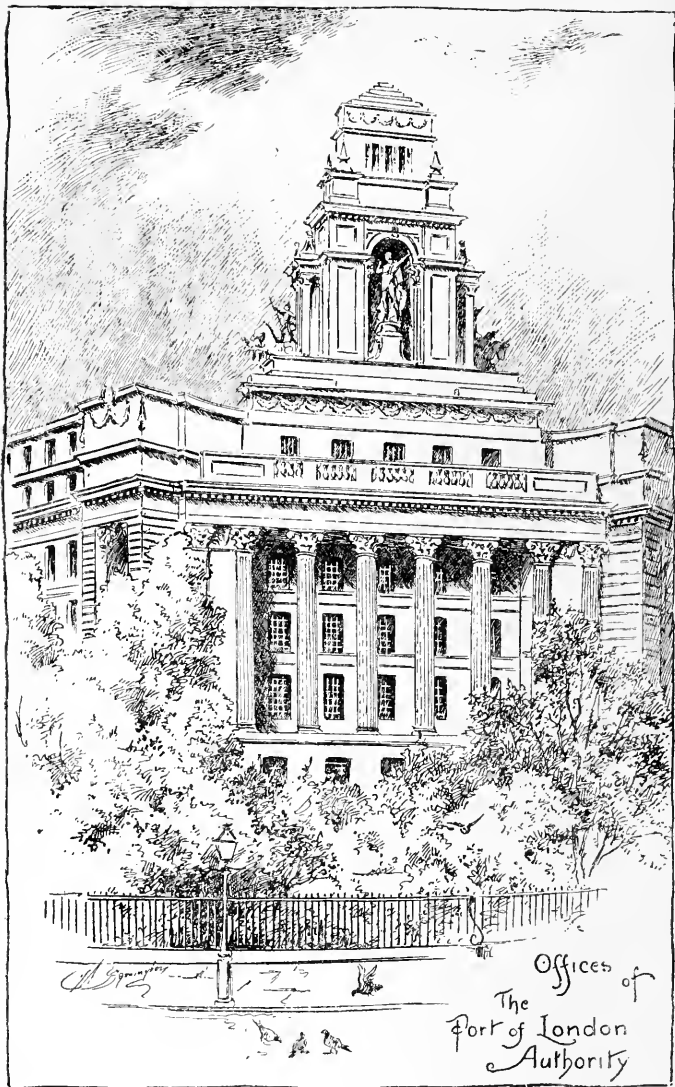
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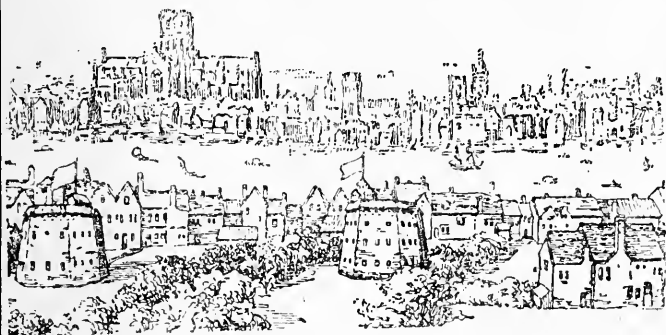
FATHER THAMES



Offices of
The
Port of London
Authority

[Frontispiece

FATHER THAMES



BY

WALTER HIGGINS

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO., LTD.

3 & 4 PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

FATHER THAMES

BOOK I.—LONDON RIVER.

BOOK II.—THE GREAT CITY WHICH THE RIVER MADE.

BOOK III.—THE UPPER RIVER.

This book is also issued in separate parts, as above.

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FATHER THAMES

INTRODUCTION

The River and its Valley

ENGLAND is not a country of great rivers. No mighty Nile winds lazily across desert and fertile plains in its three and a half thousand miles course to the sea; no rushing Brahmaputra plunges headlong down its slopes, falling two or three miles as it crosses half a continent from icy mountain-tops to tropical sea-board. In comparison with such as these England's biggest rivers are but the tiniest, trickling streams. Yet, for all that, our little waterways have always meant much to the land. Tyne, Severn, Humber, Trent, Thames, Mersey, Ouse—all these, with many smaller but no less well-known streams, have played their part in the making of England's history; all these have had much to do with the building up of her commercial prosperity.

FATHER THAMES

One only of these rivers we shall consider in this book, and that is old "Father Thames": as it was and as it is, and what it has meant to England during two thousand years. In our consideration we shall divide the River roughly into three quite natural divisions—first, the section up to the lowest bridge; second, the part just above, the part which gave the River its chief port and city; third, the upper river.

However, before we consider these three parts in detail, there is one question which we might well ponder for a little while, a question which probably has never occurred to more than a few of us; and that is this: Why was there ever a River Thames at all? To answer it we must go back—far, far back into the dim past. As you know, this world of ours is millions of years old, and like most ancient things it has seen changes—tremendous changes. Its surface has altered from time to time in amazing fashion. Whole mountain ranges have disappeared from sight, and valleys have been raised to make fresh highlands. The bed of the ocean has suddenly or slowly been thrust

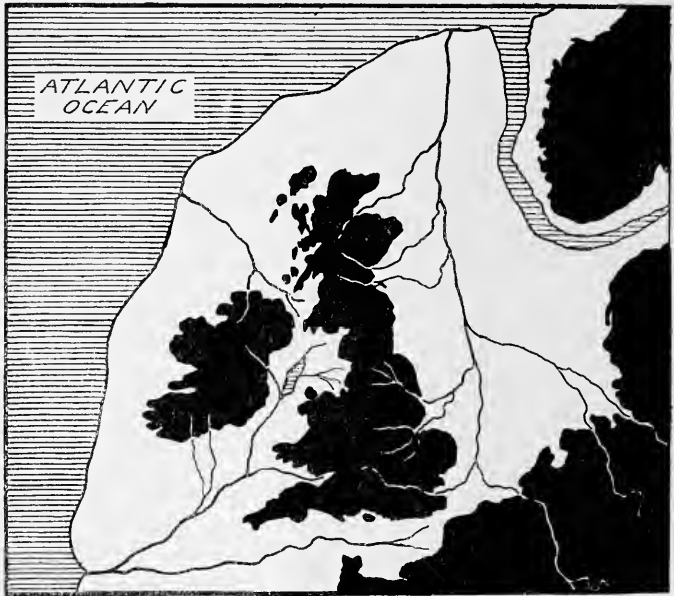
THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

up, yielding entirely new continents, while vast areas of land have sunk deep enough to allow the water to flow in and create new seas. All this we know by the study of the rocks and the fossil remains buried in them—that is, by the science of geology.

Now, among many other strange things, geology teaches us that our own islands were at one time joined on to the mainland of Europe. In those days there was no English Channel, no North Sea, and no Irish Sea. Instead, there was a great piece of land stretching from Denmark and Norway right across to spots miles out beyond the western limits of Ireland and the northern limits of Scotland. This land, which you will best understand by looking carefully at the map, p. 4, was crossed by several rivers, the largest of them one which flowed almost due north right across what is now the North Sea. This river, as you will see from the map, was chiefly produced by glaciers of the Alps, and, in its early stages, took practically the same course as the River Rhine of these days. As it flowed out across the Dogger

FATHER THAMES

district (where now is the famous Dogger Bank of our North Sea fishermen) it was joined by a number of tributary rivers, which flowed down



HOW THE THAMES WAS MADE.

eastwards from what we might call the “backbone of England”—the range of mountains and hills which passes down through the centre of our islands. One of these tributaries was a

THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

river which in its early stages flowed along what is now our own Thames Valley.

In those days everything was on a much grander scale, and this river, though only a small tributary of the great main continental river, was a far wider and deeper stream than the Thames which we know. Here and there along the present-day river valley we can still see in the contours of the land and in the various rocks evidences of the time when this bigger stream was flowing. (Of this we shall read more in Book III.) Thus things were when there came the great surface change which enabled the water to flow across wide tracts of land and so form the British Islands, standing out separately from the mainland of Europe.

All that, of course, happened long, long ago—many thousands of years before the earliest days mentioned in our history books—at a time about which we know nothing at all save what we can read in that wonderful book of Nature whose pages are the rocks and stones of the earth's surface.

FATHER THAMES

By the study of these rocks and the fossil remains in them we can learn just a few things about the life of those days—the strange kinds of trees which covered the earth from sea to sea, the weird monsters which roamed in the forests and over the hills. Of *man* we can learn very little. We can get some rough idea of when he first appeared in Britain, and we can tell by the remains preserved in caves, etc., in some small degree what sort of life he lived. But that is all: the picture of England in those days is a very dim one.

How and when the prehistoric man of these islands grew to some sort of civilization we cannot say. When first he learned to till the soil and grow his crops, to weave rough clothes for himself, to domesticate certain animals to carry his goods, to make roads along which these animals might travel, to barter his goods with strangers—all these are mysteries which we shall probably never solve.

Just this much we can say: prehistoric man probably came to a simple form of civilization a good deal earlier than is commonly supposed.

THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

As a rule our history books start with the year of Cæsar's coming (55 B.C.), and treat everything before that date as belonging to absolute savagery. But there are many evidences which go to show that the Britons of that time were to some considerable extent a civilized people, who traded pretty extensively with Gaul (France, that is), and who knew how to make roads and embankments and, perhaps, even bridges.

As early man grew to be civilized, as he learned to drain the flooded lands by the side of the stream and turn them from desolate fens and marshes to smiling productive fields, and as he learned slowly how to get from the hill-sides and the plain the full value of his labour, so he realized more and more the possibilities of the great river-valley.

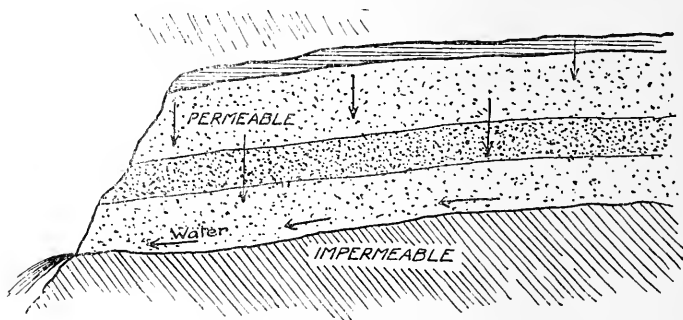
* * * * *

The Thames flows in what may be regarded as an excellent example of a river-basin. A large area, no less than six thousand square miles, is enclosed on practically all sides by ranges of hills, generally chalk hills, which slope down gently into its central plain; and

FATHER THAMES

across this area, from Gloucestershire to the North Sea, for more than two hundred miles the River winds slowly seawards, joined here and there by tributaries, which add their share to the stream as they come down from the encompassing heights.

On the extreme west of the basin lie the Cots-



THE BIRTH OF THE RIVER.

wold Hills of Gloucestershire. Here the Thames is born. The rain which falls on the hill-tops makes its way steadily into the soil, and is retained there. Down and down it sinks through the porous limestone and chalk, till eventually it reaches a layer of impenetrable material—clay, slate, or stone—through which

THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

it can no longer pursue its downward course. Its only way now is along the upper surface of the stratum of impermeable material. Thus it comes in time to the places on the hill-sides where the stratum touches the open air (see diagram on p. 8), and there it gushes forth in the form of springs, which in turn become tiny streams, some falling westwards down the steep Severn valley, others running eastwards down the gentler declivity.

At their northern end the Cotswolds sweep round to join Edge Hill; and then the hill-wall crosses the uplands of that rolling country which we call the Central Tableland, and so comes to the long stretch of the East Anglian Heights, passing almost continuously eastward through Hertfordshire and North Essex to Suffolk. On the south side the ring of hills sweeps round by way of the Marlborough Downs, and so comes to the long scarp of the "North" Downs, which make their way eastwards to the Kentish coast.

Within the limits of this ring of hills the valley lies, not perfectly flat like an alluvial plain, but gently, very gently, undulating,

FATHER THAMES

seldom rising more than two or three hundred feet above sea-level, save where that great ridge of chalk—the Chiltern-Marlborough range—straddles right across the basin at Goring.

Standing on one of the little eminences of the valley we can survey the scene before us: we can watch the River for many miles winding its way seawards, and note in all directions the same fertile, flourishing countryside, with its meadows where the soft-eyed cattle browse on the rich grass; its warm, brown plough-lands; its rich, golden fields of wheat, oats, and barley; its pretty orchards and farms close at hand; its nestling, tidy villages; its little pointed church steeples dotted everywhere. We can see in the distance, maybe, one or two compact little towns, for towns always spring up on wide, well-farmed plains, since the farmers must have proper markets to which to send their supplies of eggs, butter, cheese, and milk, and proper mills where their grain may be ground into flour.

It is a pleasant, satisfying prospect—one which suggests industrious, thrifty farmers reaping the rich reward of their unsparing

THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

labours; and it is an interesting prospect, too, for this same prosperous countryside, very little altered during half a dozen centuries, has done much to establish and maintain the position of the Thames as *the* great river of England.

The usefulness of a river to its country depends on several things. In the first place, it must be able to carry goods—to act as a convenient highway along which the traffic can descend through the valley towards the busy places near the mouth. That is to say, it must be navigable to barges and small boats throughout a considerable portion of its length. In the second place, there must be the goods to carry. That is to say, the river must pass through a countryside which can produce in great quantity things which are needed. In the third place, the chief port of the river must lie in such a position that it is within comparatively easy distance of good foreign markets.

Now let us see how these three conditions apply to the River Thames.

Firstly, with regard to the goods themselves. If we take our map of England, and lay a pencil

FATHER THAMES

across it from Bristol to the Wash, we shall be marking off what has been through the greater part of English history the boundary of the wealthy portion of Britain, for only in modern times, since the development of the iron and coal fields, and the discovery that the damp climate of the north was exactly suited to the manufacture of textiles, has the great industrial North of England come into being. England in the Middle Ages, and on till a century or more ago, was an agricultural country; its wealth lay very largely in what it grew and what it reared; and the south provided the most suitable countryside for this sort of production. The consequence was that the Thames flowed right down through the centre of wealthy England. All round it were the chalk-ranges on which throve the great herds of long-fleeced sheep that provided the wonderful wool for which England was famous, and which was in many respects the main source of her prosperity. In between the hills were the cornfields and the orchards. And dotted all down the course at convenient points were thriving towns, each of

THE RIVER AND ITS VALLEY

which could, as it were, drain off the produce of the area behind it, and so act as a collecting and forwarding station for the traffic of the main stream.

The River, too, was quite capable of dealing with the great output, for it was navigable for barges and small boats as far as Lechlade, a matter of 150 miles from the mouth, and its tributaries were in most cases capable of bearing traffic for quite a few miles into the right and left interior. Moreover, its current at ordinary times was neither too swift nor too sluggish.

So that, with the wealth produced by the land and the means of transport provided by the River, the only things needed to make the Thames one of Europe's foremost rivers were the markets.

Here again the Thames was fortunate in its situation, for its mouth stood in an advantageous position facing the most important harbours of Normandy, Flanders, Holland, and Germany, all within comparatively easy distance, and all of them ready to take our incomparable wool and our excellent corn in exchange

FATHER THAMES

for the things they could bring us. Moreover, the tides served in such a way that the double tides of the Channel and the North Sea made London the most easily reached port of all for ships coming from the south.

Thus, then, favoured as it was by its natural situation and by its character, the Thames became by far the most important highway in our land, and this it remained for several centuries—until the coming of the railways, in fact.

Now the River above London counts for very little in our system of communications. Like all other English waterways, canals and rivers alike, it has given place to the iron road, notwithstanding the fact that goods can be carried by water at a mere fraction of the cost of rail-transport. But our merchants do not seem to realize this; and so in this matter we find ourselves a long way behind our neighbours on the Continent.

LONDON RIVER

CHAPTER ONE

London River

FROM its mouth inwards to London Bridge the Thames is not the Thames, for like many another important commercial stream it takes its name from the Port to which the seamen make their way, and it becomes to most of those who use it—London River.

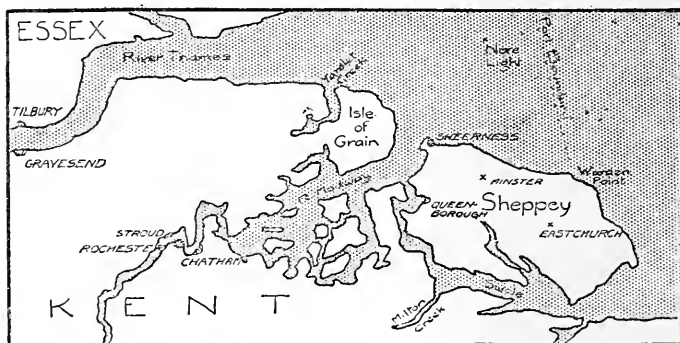
Now where does London River begin at the seaward side? At the Nore. The seaward limit of the Port of London Authority is somewhat to the east of the Nore Light, and consists of an imaginary line stretching from a point at the mouth of Havingore Creek (nearly four miles north-east of Shoeburyness on the Essex coast) to Warden Point on the Kent coast, eight miles or so from Sheerness; and this we may regard quite properly as the beginning of the River. The opening here is about ten miles

FATHER THAMES

wide, but narrows between Shoeburyness and Sheerness, where for more practical purposes the River commences, to about six miles.

Right here at the mouth the River receives its last and most important tributary—the Medway.

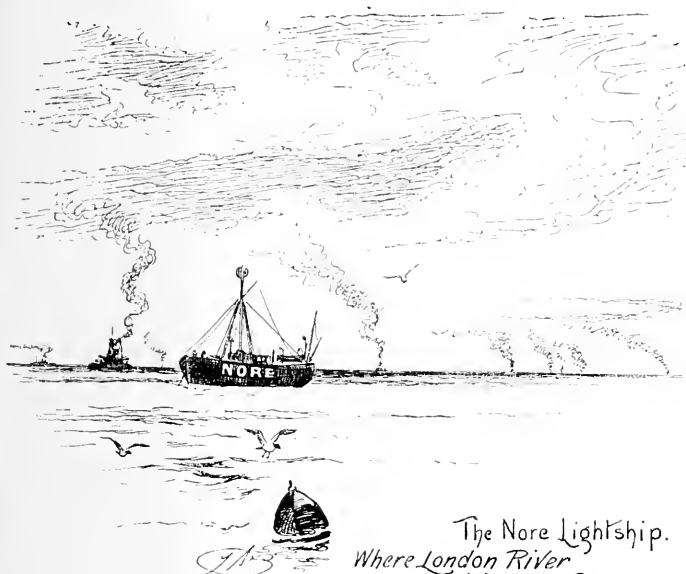
For some miles up the estuary and the



lower reaches the character of the River is such that it is difficult to imagine anything less interesting, less impressive, less suggestive of what the river-approach to the greatest city in the world should be; for there is nothing but flat land on all sides, so flat that were not the great sea-wall in position the whole countryside

LONDON RIVER

would soon revert to its original condition of marsh and fenland. Were we unfamiliar with the nature of the landscape, a glance at the map would convince us at once, for in continuous



*The Nore Lightship.
Where London River
joins the Sea.*

stretch from Sheerness and the Medway we find on the Kentish bank—Grain Marsh (the Isle of Grain), St. Mary's Marshes, Halslow Marshes, Cooling Marshes, Cliffe Marshes, and so on.

FATHER THAMES

Nor is the Essex bank any better once we have left behind the slightly higher ground on which stand Southend, Westcliff, and Leigh, for the low, flat Canvey Island is succeeded by the Mucking and East Tilbury Marshes.

The river-wall, extending right away from the mouth to London on the Essex side, is a wonderful piece of engineering—man's continuously successful effort against the persistence of Nature—a feature strongly reminiscent of the Lowlands on the other side of the narrow seas. Who first made this mighty dyke? No one knows. Probably in many places it is not younger than Roman times, and there are certain things about it which tend to show an even earlier origin.

Indeed, so long ago was it made that the mouth and lower parts of the River must have presented to the various invaders through the centuries very much the same appearance as they present to anyone entering the Thames to-day. The Danes in their long ships, prowling round the Essex and Thanet coasts in search of a way into the fair land, probably saw just

LONDON RIVER

these same dreary flats on each hand, save that when they sailed unhindered up the River they caught in places the glint of waters beyond the less carefully attended embankment. The foreign merchants of the Middle Ages—the men of Genoa and Florence, of Flanders and the Hanseatic Towns—making their way upstream with an easterly wind and a flowing tide; the Elizabethan venturers coming back with their precious cargoes from long and perilous voyages; the Dutch sweeping defiantly into the estuary in the degenerate days of Charles II.—all these must have beheld a spectacle almost identical with that which greets our twentieth-century travellers returning from the East.

Perhaps, at first sight, one of the most striking things in all this stretch of the River is the absence of ancient fortifications. True, we have those at Sheerness, but they were made for the guarding of the dockyard and of the approach to the important military centre at Chatham, which lies a few miles up the River Medway. Surely this great opening into England, the gateway to London, this key to the entire situation,

FATHER THAMES

should have had frowning castles on each shore to call a halt to any venturesome, invading force. Thus we think at once with our twentieth-century conception of warfare—forgetting



that the cannon of early days could never have served to throw a projectile more than a mere fraction of the distance across the stream.

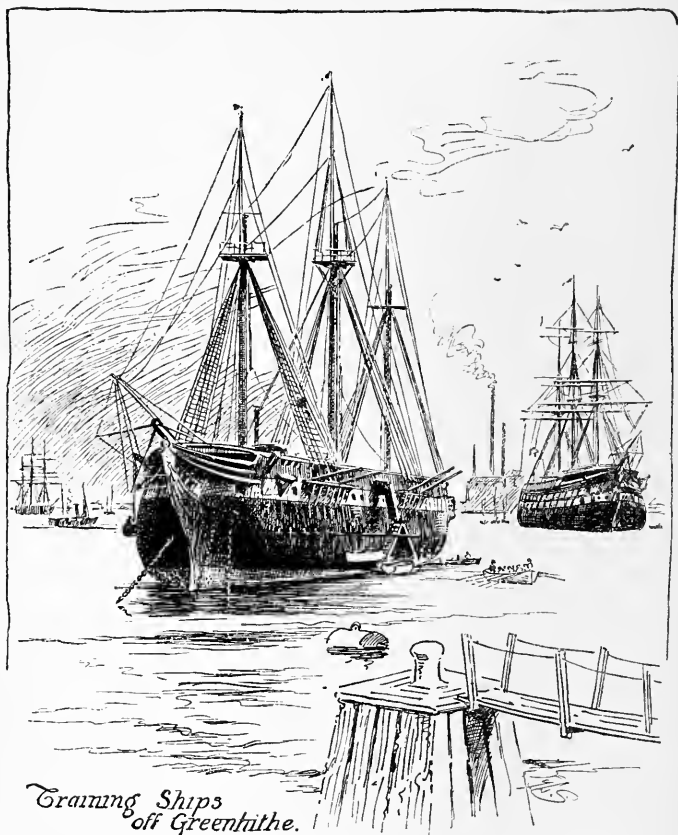
Not till we pass up the Lower Hope and

LONDON RIVER

Gravesend Reaches and come to Tilbury and Gravesend, facing each other on the two banks, do we reach anything like a gateway. Then we find Tilbury Fort on the Essex shore, holding the way upstream. Here, at the ferry between the two towns, the River narrows to less than a mile in width; consequently the artillery of ancient days might have been used with something like effectiveness.

From Gravesend westwards the country still lies very low on each bank, but the monotony is not quite so continuous, for here and there, first at one side and then at the other, there rise from the widespread flats little eminences, and on these small towns generally flourish. At Northfleet and Greenhithe, for instance, where the chalk crops out, and the River flows up against cliffs from 100 to 150 feet high, there is by contrast quite a romantic air about the place, and the same may be said of the little town of Purfleet, which lies four miles up the straight stretch of Long Reach, its wooded chalk bluffs with their white quarries very prominent in the vast plain. But, for the most part, it is marshes,

FATHER THAMES



*Training Ships
off Greenwich.*

"Arethusa"
for Homeless Boys

"Worcester"
Nautical Training
College

LONDON RIVER

marshes all the way, particularly on the Essex shore — marshes where are concocted those poisonously unpleasant mixtures known as “London specials,” the thick fogs which do so much to make the River, and the Port as well, a particularly unpleasant place at certain times in winter. When a “London special” is about — that variety which East Enders refer to as the “pea-soup” variety — the thick, yellow, smoke-laden mist obscures everything, effectively putting an end to all business for the time being.

Passing Erith on the Kent coast, and Dagenham and Barking on the Essex, we come to the point where London really begins on its eastward side. From now onwards on each bank there is one long, winding line of commercial buildings, backed in each case by a vast and densely-populated area. On the southern shore come Plumstead and Woolwich, to be succeeded in continuity by Greenwich, Deptford, Rotherhithe, and Bermondsey; while on the northern side come in unbroken succession North Woolwich, Canning Town, and Silvertown (backed by those tremendous new districts—East and

FATHER THAMES

West Ham, Blackwall and Poplar, Millwall, Limehouse, Shadwell, and Wapping. In all the eleven miles or so from Barking Creek to London Bridge there is nothing to see but shipping and the things appertaining thereto—great cargo-boats moving majestically up or down the stream, little tugs fussing and snorting their way across the waters, wind-jammers of all sorts and sizes dropping down lazily on the tide, small coastal steamers, ugly colliers, dredgers, businesslike Customs motor-boats and River Police launches, vast numbers of barges, some moving beautifully under their own canvas, some being towed along in bunches, others making their way painfully along, propelled slowly by their long sweeps; there is nothing to hear but the noises of shipping—the shrill cry of the syren, the harsh rattling of the donkey-engines, the strident shouts of the seamen and the lightermen. Everything is marine, for this is the Port of London.

Here where the River winds in and out are the Docks, those tremendous basins which have done so much to alter the character of London

LONDON RIVER



London's
Giant Gateway

Chas. Green

FATHER THAMES

River during the last hundred years, that have shifted the Port of London from the vicinity of London Bridge and the Upper Pool, and placed it several miles downstream, that have rendered the bascules of that magnificent structure, the Tower Bridge, comparatively useless things, which now require to be raised only a very few times in the course of a day.

In its course from the mouth inwards to the Port the River is steadily narrowing. At Yantlet Creek the stream is about four and a half miles across; but in the next ten miles it narrows to a width of slightly under 1,300 yards at Coalhouse Point at the upper end of the Lower Hope Reach. At Gravesend the width is 800 yards, at Blackwall under 400, while at London Bridge the width at high tide is a little less than 300 yards.

Just above and just below the Tower Bridge is what is known as the Pool of London. Standing on the bridge, taking in the wonderful picture up and down stream—the wide, filthy London River, with its craft of all descriptions, its banks lined with dirty, dull-looking wharves

LONDON RIVER

and warehouses, we find it hard to think of this as the River which we shall see later slipping past Clevedon Woods and Bablock-hythe or



THE POOL.

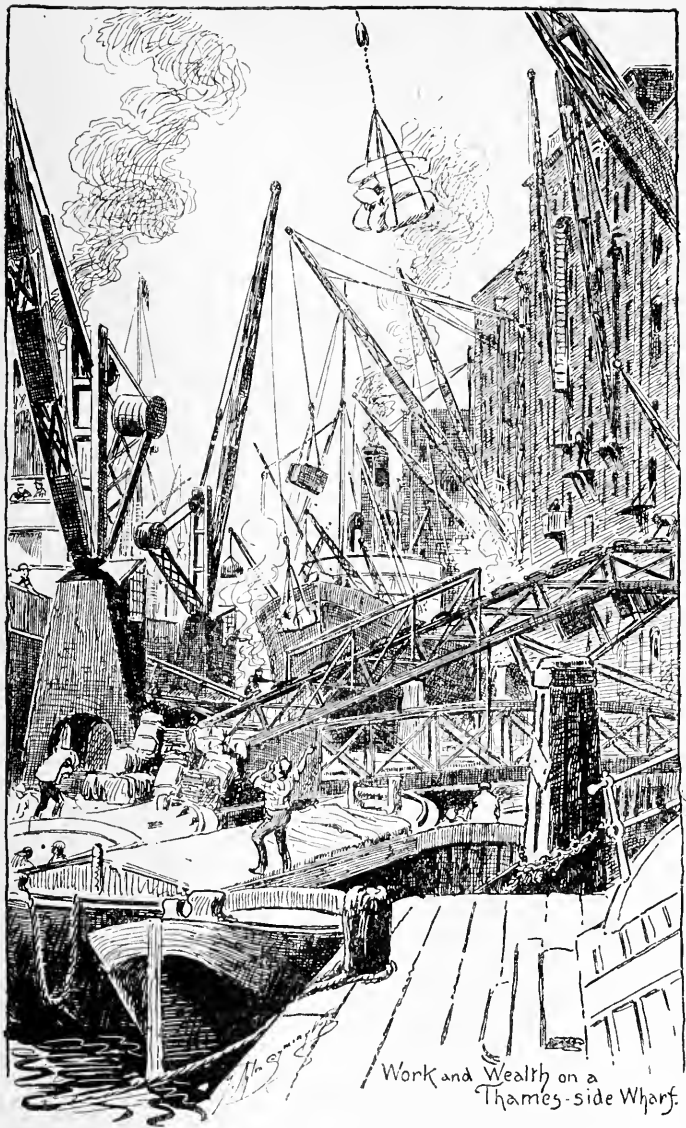
under Folly Bridge at Oxford. Up there all is bright and clean and sunny: here even on the blithest summer day there is usually an overhanging pall of smoke which serves to dim

FATHER THAMES

the brightest sunshine and add to the dreariness of the scene.

Yet, despite its lack of beauty, despite all the drawbacks of its ugliness and its squalor, this is one of the most romantic places in all England: a place to linger in and let the imagination have free rein. What visions these ships call up—visions of the wonderful East with its blaze of colour and its burning sun, visions of Southern seas with palm-clad coral islands, visions of the frozen North with its bleak icefields and its snowy forest lands, visions of crowded cities and visions of the vast, lonely places of the earth. For these ordinary-looking ships have come from afar, bearing in their cavernous holds the wealth of many lands, to be swallowed up by the ravenous maw of the greatest port in the world.

Every minute is precious here. Engines are rattling as the cranes lift up boxes and bales from the interiors of the ships and deposit them in the lighters that cluster round their sides. Inshore the cranes are hoisting the goods from the vessels to the warehouses as fast as they can. Men are shouting and gesticulating; syrens are



Work and Wealth on a
Thames-side Wharf.

FATHER THAMES

wailing out their doleful cry or screaming their warning note. Everything is hurry and bustle, for there are other cargoes waiting to take the place of those now being discharged, and other ships ready to take the berths of those unloading; and there are tides to be thought of, unless precious hours are to be wasted.

It is a fascinating place, is the Pool, and one which never loses its interest for either young or old.

CHAPTER TWO

The Estuary and its Towns

SHEPPEY, on the coast of which is the Warden Point that forms one end of the Port of London boundary line, is an island, separated from the mainland of Kent by the Swale. People frequently speak of it as the "Isle of Sheppey," but this title is not strictly correct, for the name Sheppey really includes the word "island." William Camden, that old writer on geographical subjects, informs us that "this Isle of Sheepe, whereof it feedeth mightie great flocks, was called by our ancestours Shepey—that is, the Isle of Sheepe."

Though it is only eleven miles long and five miles broad, this little island presents within its compass quite a variety of scenery, especially when the general flatness of the whole area round about is borne in mind; for, in addition to its riverside marshes, it has a distinctly hilly ridge, geologically related to the North

FATHER THAMES

Downs, surmounted by a little village rejoicing in the high-sounding name of Minster-in-Sheppey, wherein at one time was the ancient Saxon "minster" or "priory" of St. Saxburga. But the oft-repeated words concerning "prophets" and "honour" apply to this little out-of-the-way corner, for the men of Kent are wont to say that when the world was made Sheppey was never finished.

Naturally, from its situation, right at the entrance to the Thames, Sheppey always played some considerable part in the warfare of the lower river. What happened in these parts in very early days we do not know. We can only conjecture that Celts, coming across from the mainland of Europe in their frail vessels, found this way into Britain, and without hindrance sailed up the River to found the tiny settlement of Llyndin hill: we can only surmise that later some of the Saxons worked their way guardedly up the wide opening while the main body of their comrades found other ways into this fair land. Not till the ninth century do we begin to get any definite record of invasion. Then

THE ESTUARY AND ITS TOWNS

in 832 we find the Vikings, with their long-boats, hovering about the mouth of the River, landing in Sheppey and raiding that little island with its monastery on the hill. They returned in 839; and in 857 they came with a great fleet of their long-boats—350 of them—in order that they might advance up the River and make an attack on the city. In 893 they came yet again, landing either at Milton Creek on the Swale, or at Milton nearly opposite Tilbury (it is uncertain which); but the men of London drove them off. So it went on for many years, invasion after invasion, till the days of Canute, when the River played a very great part in the warfare, now favouring, now hampering the Danish leaders.

From the time of the Norman Conquest onwards there was, of course, nothing in the way of foreign invasions; and the Thames, ceasing to be a gateway by means of which the stranger might enter England, became a barrier impeding the progress of the various factions opposing each other in the national struggles—the War of the Barons, the Wars of the Roses, and the

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great Civil War. In these, however, the Thames below London played no very great part. Not till the days of Charles II., when the Dutch helped to write such a sorry chapter in our history, did the Thames again loom large in our military annals.

Sheerness is, of course, the most famous place on the island, for it has long been a considerable dockyard and port. The spot on which it was built was reclaimed from the marshes in the time of the Stuarts, and was chosen in the days of Charles II. as the situation for a new dockyard. If we turn up the "Diary" of old Samuel Pepys, the Secretary of the Admiralty of those days, we shall find under the date of August 18, 1665: "Walked up and down, laying out the ground to be taken in for a yard to lay provisions for cleaning and repairing of ships, and a most proper place it is for the purpose;" while on February 27, two years later, His Majesty was at Sheerness to lay those fortifications which were destined within less than six months to be destroyed by the Dutch.

The other important town in Sheppey is

THE ESTUARY AND ITS TOWNS

Queenborough, a well-known packet-station. Originally this was Kingborough, but it was rechristened by Edward III. in honour of his Queen, Philippa, at the time when William Wykeham (of whose skill as a builder we shall read in the chapter on Windsor in Book III.) erected a castle on the spot where the railway-station now stands. Eastchurch, towards the other end of the island, developed a splendid flying-ground during the War.

On the other side of the Medway, forming a peninsula between that river and the Thames, lies the Isle of Grain—a place which is not an island and which has nothing whatever to do with grain. It consists of a marshy promontory with a packet-station, Port Victoria, and a seaplane base, Fort Grain, and very little else beside. At its western extremity is the dirty little Yantlet Creek, close to which stands the well-known “London Stone,” an obelisk set up to mark the point where, prior to the Port of London Act, ended the power of the Lord Mayor of London in his capacity as Conservator of the Thames.

FATHER THAMES

Westwards from Yantlet Creek are great flats out of which rise the batteries of Shornemead and Cliffe, considerable forts designed to serve with that of Coalhouse Point, opposite on the Essex shore, as a defence of the River. They were built in no very remote times, but were practically never anything else than useless against modern artillery, and were destined, so later military engineers said, to do more damage to each other than to any invading foes.

On the Essex coast, opposite Sheerness, are two famous places, Southend and Shoeburyness—the one a famous resort for trippers, the other an important school of artillery.

Not so very long ago Southend was unheard of. Defoe, who covered the ground hereabouts pretty thoroughly, makes no mention of it even as a hamlet; yet to-day it is a flourishing and constantly growing town—not so much a watering-place nowadays as a rather distant suburb of London. For here and in the adjacent district of Westcliff, now by the builders and the trams joined on, and even in Leigh still farther west, live many of London's more suc-

THE ESTUARY AND ITS TOWNS

cessful workers, making the daily journey to and from town. Nor is this surprising, for Southend is an enterprising borough—one that makes the most of its natural advantages, and endeavours to cater equally well for the residents and the casual visitors. Of course, the town will always be associated with day-trippers from London, folk who come down with their families to get a “whiff of the briny,” and a taste of the succulent cockles for which Southend is noted, and to enjoy a ride in one of the numerous boats, or on the tram that runs along the mile and a half length of Southend’s vaunted possession, the longest pier in England. And while we laugh sometimes at these trippers with their ribald enjoyment of strange scenes, we must admit that they choose a most healthy and enjoyable place.

At Shoeburyness, approached by way of the tramcars, things are far more serious. Cockney joviality seldom gets so far from the pier as this. Off the land here is a very extensive bank of shallows, and here the artillerymen carry out their practice, the advantage being that in

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such a spot the costly projectiles fired can be recovered and put in order for future use.

Canvey Island, which lies tucked away in a little corner to the west of Leigh, is yet another example of man's triumph over nature, for it has veritably been stolen from the waters. It was reclaimed as long ago as 1622, by one Joas Cropperburgh, who for his labours received about two thousand of its six thousand acres. And Dutch most assuredly Canvey is—with quaint Dutch cottages, one of them a six-sided affair, dated 1621, and set up by the very Dutchmen who came over to construct the dams, and with Dutch dykes dividing the fields instead of hedges. Robert Buchanan, in his novel "Andromeda," wrote of it in these terms: "Flat as a map, so intermingled with creeks and runlets that it is difficult to say where water ends and land begins, Canvey Island lies, a shapeless octopus, right under the high ground of Benfleet and Hadleigh, and stretches out muddy and slimy feelers to touch and dabble in the deep water of the flowing Thames. Away across the marshes rise the ancient ruins of Hadleigh

THE ESTUARY AND ITS TOWNS

Castle, further eastwards the high spire and square tower of Leigh Church.”

At the village of Benfleet, which he mentions, the Danes landed when in 874 they made one of their characteristic raids on the Thames Estuary; and here they hoarded up the goods filched from the Essex villages till such time as there should come a wind favourable for the journey home.

Like various other places on the Estuary and the lower reaches of the River, Canvey Island has on occasions been proposed as a place for deep-sea wharves, so that unloading might be carried out without the journey up river, but so far nothing definite has come of these suggestions.

CHAPTER THREE

The Medway and its Towns

FROM its position right at the entrance to the River the Medway tributary has always offered a considerable contribution to the defence of London. Going off as it does laterally from the main stream, the Medway estuary has acted the part of a remarkably fine flank retreat. Our forces, driven back at any time to the refuge of the River, could always split up—part proceeding up the main stream towards London, and part taking refuge in the protected network of waterways behind Sheppey and the Isle of Grain. So that the indiscreet enemy, chasing the main portion of the fleet up the estuary of the River, would always be in danger of being caught between two fires. Which fact probably accounts for the tremendous importance with which the Medway has always been regarded in naval and military circles.

Passing between the Isle of Grain and Shep-

THE MEDWAY AND ITS TOWNS

pey, and leaving on our left hand the Swale, in which, so tradition says, St. Augustine baptized King Ethelbert at Whitsun, 596, and on the other bank Port Victoria, the packet-station, we find nothing very striking till we catch sight of Upnor Castle, on the western bank of the river, facing the Chatham Dockyard Extension. This queer old, grey-walled fortress with its cylindrical towers, built in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, is not a very impressive place. It does not flaunt its strength from any impregnable cliff, or even fling defiance from the top of a little hill. Instead, it lies quite low on the river bank. Yet it has had one spell of real life as a fortress, a few days of activity in that inglorious time with which the tributary will ever be associated—the days of “the Dutch in the Medway,” when de Ruyter and van Ghent came with some sixty vessels to the Nore and in about two hours laid level with the ground the magnificent and recently-erected fortifications of Sheerness. This and the happenings of the next few weeks formed, as old John Evelyn says in his “Diary,” “a dreadfull spec-

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tacle as ever Englishman saw, and a dishonour never to be wiped off !”

In the pages of Charles Macfarlane’s story, “The Dutch in the Medway,” is to be found a most interesting account of these calamitous days, from which we cull the following extracts: “On the following morning—the memorable morning of the 12th of June—a very fresh wind from the north-east blew over Sheerness and the Dutch fleet, and a strong spring-tide set the same way as the wind, raising and pouring the waters upward from the broad estuary in a mighty current. And now de Ruyter roused himself from his inactivity, and gave orders to his second in command, Admiral van Ghent, to ascend the river towards Chatham with fire-ships, and fighting ships of various rates. Previously to the appearance of de Ruyter on our coasts, his Grace of Albemarle had sunk a few vessels about Muscle Bank, at the narrowest part of the river, had constructed a boom, and drawn a big iron chain across the river from bank to bank, and within the boom and chain he had stationed three king’s ships; and having

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done these notable things, he had written to Court that all was safe on the Medway, and that the Dutch would never be able to break through his formidable defences. But now van Ghent gave his Grace the lie direct; for, favoured by the heady current and strong wind, the prows of his ships broke through the boom and iron chain as though they had been cobwebs, and fell with an overwhelming force upon the ill-manned and ill-managed ships which had been brought down the river to eke out this wretched line of defence. The three ships, the *Unity*, the *Matthias*, and the *Charles V.*, which had been taken from the Dutch in the course of the preceding year—the *Annus Mirabilis* of Dryden's flattering poem—were presently recaptured and burned under the eyes of the Duke of Albemarle, and of many thousands of Englishmen who were gathered near the banks of the Medway.

“On the following morning (Thursday, the 13th of June) at about ten o'clock, as the tide was rising, and the wind blowing right up the river, van Ghent, who had been lying at anchor

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near the scene of his yesterday's easy triumph, unfurled his top-sails, called his men to their guns, and began to steer through the shallows for Chatham.

“The mid-channel of the Medway is so deep, the bed so soft, and the reaches of the river are so short, that it is the safest harbour in the kingdom. Our great ships were riding as in a wet dock, and being moored to chains fixed to the bottom of the river, they swung up and down with the tide. But all these ships, as well as many others of lower rates, were almost entirely deserted by their crews, or rather by those few men who had been put in them early in the spring, rather as watchmen than as sailors; some were unrigged, some had never been finished, and scarcely one of them had either guns or ammunition on board, although hurried orders had been sent down to equip some of them and to remove others still higher up the river out of the reach of danger.

“It was about the hour of noon when van Ghent let go his anchor just above Upnor Castle. But his fire-ships did not come to anchor. No !

THE MEDWAY AND ITS TOWNS

Still favoured by wind and tide, they proceeded onward, and presently fell among our great but defenceless ships. The two first of these fire-ships burned without any effect, but the rest that went upward grappled the *Great James*, the *Royal Oak*, and the *Loyal London*, and these three proud ships which, under other names, and even under the names they now bore, had so often been plumed with victory, lay a helpless prey to the enemy, and were presently in a blaze.

“ Having burned to the water’s edge the *London*, the *James*, and the *Royal Oak*, and some few other vessels of less note, van Ghent thought it best to take his departure. Yet, great as was the mischief he had done, it was so easy to have done a vast deal more, that the English officers at Chatham could scarcely believe their own eyes when they saw him prepare to drop down the river with the next receding tide, and without making any further effort . . . the trumpeters on their quarter decks playing ‘ Loth to depart ’ and other tunes very insulting and offensive to English pride.”

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What shall we say of Chatham, Rochester, and the associated districts of Stroud and New Brompton? It is difficult, indeed, to find a great deal that is praiseworthy. They may perhaps still be summed up in Mr. Pickwick's words: "The principal productions of these towns appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dockyard men."

Formerly the view from the heights of Chatham Hill must have been a splendid one, with the broad Medway and its vast marshlands stretching away for miles across to the wooded uplands of Hoo. Now it appears almost as if a large chunk of the crowded London streets had been lifted bodily and dropped down to blot out the beauties of the scene, for there is little other to be seen than squalid buildings huddled together in mean streets, with just here and there a great chimney-stack to break the monotony of the countless roofs.

The dockyard at Chatham is much the same as any other dockyard, and calls for no special description. From its slips have been launched many brave battleships, right down from the

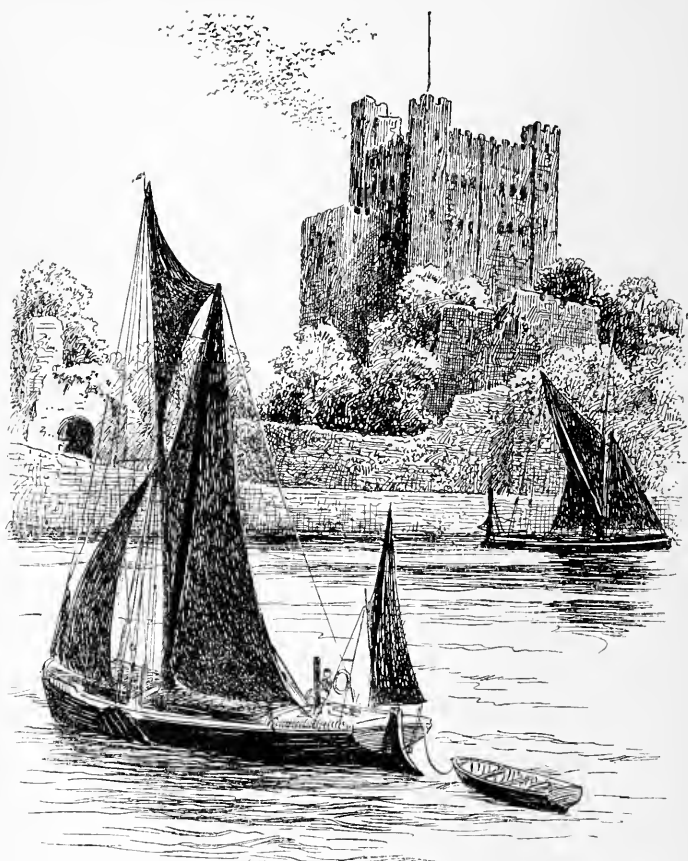
THE MEDWAY AND ITS TOWNS

days of Elizabeth to our own times. Here at all seasons may be seen cruisers, battleships, destroyers, naval craft of all sorts, dry docked for refitting. All day long the air resounds to the noise of the automatic riveter, and the various sounds peculiar to a shipbuilding area.

For many years the dockyard was associated with the name of Pett, a name famous in naval matters, and it was on one member of the family, Peter Pett, commissioner at Chatham, that most of the blame for the unhappy De Ruyter catastrophe most unjustly fell. Somebody had to be the scapegoat for all the higher failures, and poor Pett went to the Tower. But not all people agreed with the choice, as we may see from these satirical lines which were very popular at the time:

“ All our miscarriages on *Pett* must fall;
His name alone seems fit to answer all.
Whose Counsel first did this mad War beget ?
Who would not follow when the Dutch were bet ?
Who to supply with Powder did forget
Languard, Sheerness, Gravesend and Upnor ? *Pett*.
Pett, the Sea Architect, in making Ships
Was the first cause of all these Naval slips;
Had he not built, none of these faults had bin;
If no Creation, there had been no Sin.”

FATHER THAMES



J. H. P. 1851

Rochester Castle.

THE MEDWAY AND ITS TOWNS

The river here is a very busy place, and is under certain circumstances quite picturesque. There is a weird blending of ancient and modern, of the dimly-comprehended past and the blatant, commercial present, along Limehouse Reach, with its tremendous coal-hoists, and its smoking stacks, and its brown-sailed barges and snorting tugs—with the great masses of Rochester Castle and Cathedral looming out behind it all.

Limehouse Reach is, indeed, an appropriate name, for all along this part, especially in the suburbs of Stroud and Frindsbury, the lime and cement-making industries are carried on extensively. Throughout a great deal of its length the Medway Valley is scarred by great quarries cut into the chalk hills; for it is chalk and the river mud, mixed roughly in the proportion of three to one and then burned in a kiln, which give the very valuable Portland cement, an invention now about a century old.

Rochester itself is a quaint old place, standing on the ancient Roman road from Dover to London, and guarding the important crossing of the Medway. It can show numbers of

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Rochester Cathedral

THE MEDWAY AND ITS TOWNS

Roman remains in addition to its fine old Norman castle, and its Cathedral with a tale of eight centuries. The town stands to-day much as it stood when Dickens first described it in his volumes. The Corn Exchange is still there—"oddly garnished with a queer old clock that projects over the pavement out of a grave, red-brick building, as if Time carried on business there, and hung out his sign;" and so are Mr. Pickwick's "Bull Hotel," and the West Gate (Jasper's Gateway), and Eastbury House (Nuns' House) of "Edwin Drood"; also the famous house of the "Seven Poor Travellers."

CHAPTER FOUR

Gravesend and Tilbury

THE dreary fenland district which stretches from the Isle of Grain inland to Gravesend is that so admirably used by Dickens for local colour in his novel, "Great Expectations." Some of his descriptions of the scenery in this place of "mudbank, mist, swamps, and work" cannot be bettered.

Here is Cooling Marsh with its quaint, fourteenth-century relic, Cooling Castle Gatehouse, built at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, when the rich folk of the land found it expedient to do little or nothing to aggravate the peasantry. The builder, Sir John de Cobham, realizing the danger, saw fit to attach to one of the towers of his stronghold a plate, to declare to all and sundry that there was in his mind no thought other than that of protection from some anticipated foreign incursions. This

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

plate is still in position on the ruin, and reads:

“ Knowyth that beth and schul be
That I am mad in help of the cuntre
In knowyng of whyche thyng
Thys is chartre and wytnessynge.”

According to Dr. J. Holland Rose, the authority on Napoleonic subjects, it was at a spot somewhere along this little stretch that Napoleon at the beginning of the last century proposed to land one of his invading columns. Other columns would land at various points on the Essex and Kent coasts, and all would then converge on London, the main objective. In fact, the Thames Estuary was such a vulnerable point that it occupied a considerable position in the scheme of defence drawn up for Pitt by the Frenchman Dumouriez.

Gravesend itself from the River is not by any means an ill-favoured place, despite its rather commercial aspect. Backed by the sloping chalk hills, and with a goodly number of trees breaking up the mass of its buildings, it presents a tolerably picturesque appearance. Particularly is it a welcome sight to those returning to

FATHER THAMES

England after a long voyage, for it is frequently the first English town seen at all closely.

At Gravesend the ships, both those going up



Gravesend

and those going down, take aboard their pilots. The Royal Terrace Pier, which is the most prominent thing on Gravesend river-front, is

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

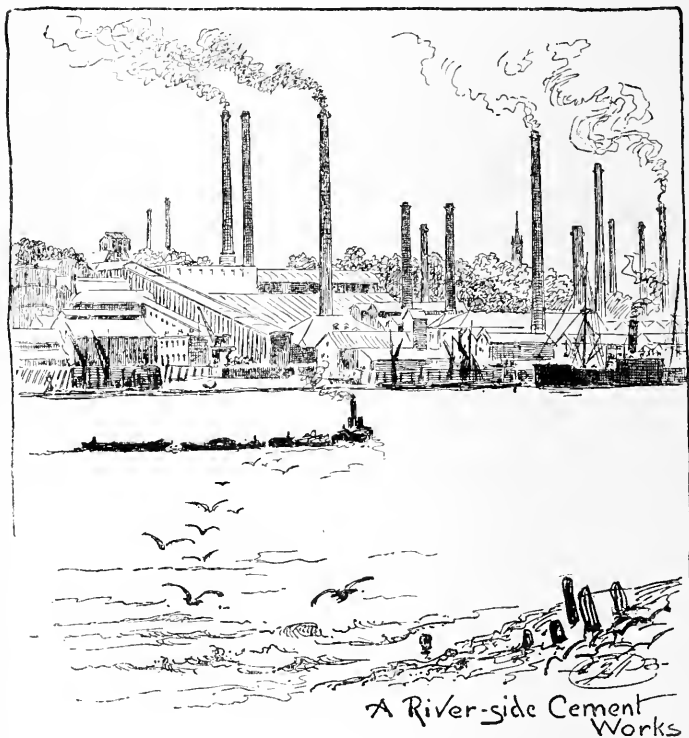
the headquarters of the two or three hundred navigators whose business it is to pilot ships to and from the Port of London, or out to sea as far as Dungeness on the south channel, or Orfordness, off Harwich, on the north channel. These men work under the direction of a "ruler," who is an official of Trinity House, the corporation which was founded at Deptford in the reign of Henry VIII., and which now regulates lighthouses, buoys, etc.

Gravesend is famous for two delicacies, its shrimps and its whitebait, and the town possesses quite a considerable shrimp-fishing fleet.

As in the Medway Valley, the cement works form a conspicuous feature in the district round about. In fact, all this stretch, where the chalk hills crop out towards the River's edge, has been famous through long years for the quarrying of chalk and the making of lime, and afterwards cement. As long ago as Defoe's time we have that author writing: "Thus the barren soil of Kent, for such the chalky grounds are esteemed, make the Essex lands rich and fruitful, and the mixture of earth forms a composition which out

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of two barren extremes makes one prolific medium; the strong clay of Essex and Suffolk



is made fruitful by the soft meliorating melting chalk of Kent which fattens and enriches it."

On the Essex coast opposite Gravesend are

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

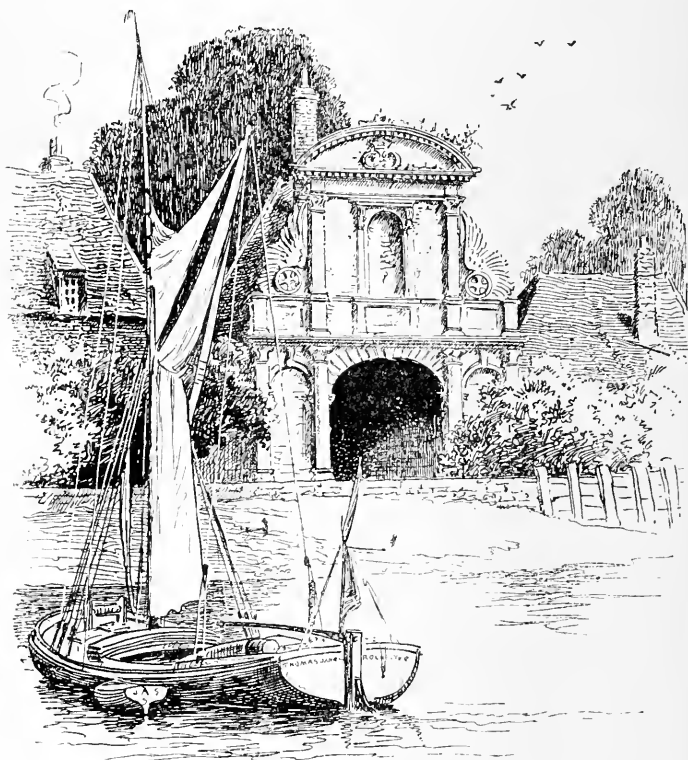
the Tilbury Docks and the Tilbury Fort—eloquent reminders of the present and the past. At the Fort the ancient and the new lie in close proximity, the businesslike but obsolete batteries of modern times keeping company with the quaint old blockhouse, which at one time formed such an important point in the scheme of Thames defence.

This old Tilbury Fort, with its seventeenth-century gateway, has been so frequently painted that many folk who have never seen it are quite familiar with its outline. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the folk of Tilbury, realizing how vulnerable their settlement was, set to work to fortify it, and later Henry VIII. built a blockhouse here, probably on the site of an ancient Roman encampment. This, when the Spanish Armada threatened, was altered and strengthened by Gianibelli, the clever Italian engineer. Hither Elizabeth came, and, so tradition says, made a soul-stirring speech to her soldiers:

“ My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take

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heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. But I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and



THE GATE-HOUSE, TILBURY FORT.

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects. And therefore I am come among you at this time, not as for any recreation or sport, but being resolved, in the midst of the heat and the battle, to live or die amongst you all ; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of England, too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm. To which, rather than any dishonour should grow by me, I myself will take up arms; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field."

She had need to feed them on words, for by reason of her own meanness and procrastination the poor wretches had empty stomachs, or would have had if the citizens of London had

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not loyally come to the assistance of their soldiers. In any case Elizabeth's exertion was quite unnecessary, for the winds and the waves had conspired to do for England what the Queen's niggardliness might easily have prevented our brave fellows from doing.

An earlier and no less interesting drama was enacted at Tilbury and Gravesend in the reign of Richard II. Close in the train of that national calamity, the Black Death, came in not unnatural consequence the outbreak known as the Peasants' Revolt. Just a short way east of Tilbury, at a little village called Fobbing, broke out Jack Straw's rising; and almost simultaneously came the outburst of Wat Tyler, when the Kentish insurgents marched on Canterbury, plundered the Palace, and dragged John Ball from his prison; then moved rapidly across Kent, wrecking and burning. At Tilbury and Gravesend these two insurgent armies met, and thence issued their summons to the King to meet them. He, brave lad of fifteen, entered his barge with sundry counsellors, and made his way downstream. How he met the disreputable rabble,

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

and how the peasants were enraged because he was not permitted to land and come among them, is a well-known story, as is the furious onslaught on London which resulted from the refusal.

Thus far up the River came the Dutch in those terrible days of which we read in our last chapter. They sailed upstream on the day of their arrival, firing guns so that the sound was heard in the streets of London, but they came to a halt slightly below the point where the barricade, running down into the water from the Essex shore, largely closed up the waterway, and where the little Fort frowned down on the intruders. No attempt was made to stay them; indeed, none could have been made, for while the little blockhouse was well provided with guns, it was practically without powder; and the invaders could have proceeded right into the Pool of London without hindrance had they but known it. However, they were content for the time being with merely frightening the countryside with their terrible noise. As Evelyn says in his "Diary" (June 10): "The alarm was so

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great that it put both country and city into a panic, fear and consternation, such as I hope I shall never see more; everybody was flying, none knew why or whither." Having done this, the Dutch passed downstream to Sheerness, where their companions were engaged in destroying the fortifications. How long they stayed in these parts may be judged by this other extract from Evelyn, dated seven weeks after (July 29): "I went to Gravesend, the Dutch fleet still at anchor before the river, where I saw five of His Majesty's men-of-war encounter above twenty of the Dutch, in the bottom of the Hope, chasing them with many broadsides given and returned towards the buoy of the Nore, where the body of their fleet lay, which lasted till about midnight. . . . Having seen this bold action, and their braving us so far up the river, I went home the next day, not without indignation at our negligence, and the Nation's reproach."

In 1904 it was proposed in the House of Commons that there should be made at Gravesend a great barrage or dam, right across the

GRAVESEND AND TILBURY

River Thames, with a view to keeping a good head of water in the stream above Gravesend, much as the half-tide lock (about which we shall read in Book III.) does at Richmond. This, the proposers said, would do away with the cost of so much dredging, and would make the building of riverside quays a much simpler and more satisfactory matter, for by it the whole length of river between Gravesend and London would be to all intents converted into one gigantic dock-basin. It was proposed that the barrage should have in it four huge locks to cope with the large amount of shipping, also a road across the top and a railway tunnel underneath. But many weighty objections were urged, and numerous difficulties were pointed out, so that the scheme fell through; and so far the only semblance of a barrage known to Gravesend has been that which was thrown right across the lower River for defensive purposes during the Great War.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Marshes

THE stretch between Gravesend and the beginnings of the Metropolis can scarcely be regarded as an interesting portion of the River. True, there are one or two places which stand out from the commonplace level, but for the most part there is nothing much to attract; and certainly from the point of view of the navigator of big ships there is much in this stretch to repel, for here are to be found the numerous shoals which tend to make the passage of the River so difficult.

Indeed, the problem of the constant filling of the bed of the River has always been a difficult one with the authorities. The River brings down a tremendous quantity of material (it is estimated that 1,000 tons of carbonate of lime pass beneath Kingston Bridge each day), and the tides bring in immense amounts of sand and gravel. Now, what becomes of all this insoluble

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material? It passes on, carried by the stream or the tidal waters, till it reaches the parts of the River where the downflowing stream and the incoming sea-water are in conflict, and so neutralize each other that there is no great flow of water. Then, no longer impelled, the material sinks to the bottom and forms great banks of sand, etc., which would in time grow to such an extent that navigation would be impeded, were not dredgers constantly engaged in the work of clearing the passage. It was largely this obstacle to efficient navigation that led to the creation of the great deep-sea docks at Tilbury.

Northfleet, formerly a small village straggling up the side of a chalk hill, is now to all intents a suburb of Gravesend, so largely has each grown in recent years. Here, officially at any rate, are situated (about a mile to the west of Gravesend proper) those notorious Rosherville Gardens which in the middle of last century made Gravesend famous, and provided Londoners with a plausible reason for a trip down the River. The gardens were laid out in

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1830 to 1835 by one Jeremiah Rosher, several disused chalk-pits being used for the purpose; and here the jovial Cockney visitors regaled themselves within quaint little harbours with tea and the famous Gravesend shrimps, and later danced to the light of Chinese lanterns till it was time to return citywards from the day's high jinks.

The Dockyard at Northfleet, constructed towards the end of the eighteenth century, was at one time a place of considerable importance, for here were built and launched numbers of fine vessels, both on behalf of the Royal Navy and of the East India Company. Now it has dwindled to comparative insignificance. Indeed, from a shipping point of view, the only interest lies in the numerous and familiar tan-sailed barges of the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers; for Northfleet is one of the main centres of the cement industry so far as the Thames-side is concerned—an industry which is in evidence right along this stretch till the chalk hills end at Greenhithe, the town from which Sir John Franklin set out in 1845 on

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his illfated expedition to the North-West Passage.

At Grays (or Grays Thurrock, as it is more properly called), on the Essex bank, are numbers of those curious subterranean chalk caves which are a feature of most of the chalk uplands on both sides of the River, and which have caused so much discussion among the archæologists. These consist of vertical shafts, 3 or 4 feet in diameter, dug down through anything from 50 to 100 feet of sand into the chalk below, where they widen out into caves 20 or more feet long. As many as seventy-two of them have been counted within a space of 4 acres in the Hangman's Wood at Grays. What they were for no one can tell. All sorts of things have been conjectured, from the fabulous gold-mines of Cunobeline to the smugglers' refuges of comparatively modern times. One thing is certain: they are of tremendous age. Probably they were used by their makers mainly as secret store-houses for grain. They are commonly called Dene-holes or Dane-holes, and are said to have served as hiding-places in that hazardous period

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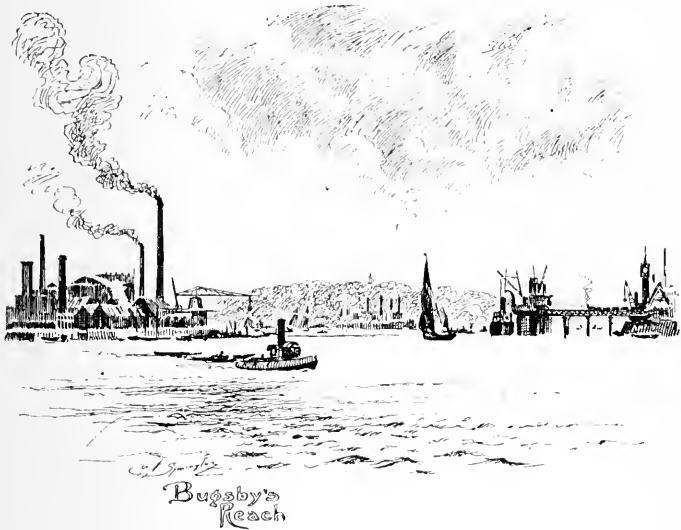
when the Danes made life in the valley anything but pleasant. But this, while it may have been true, in no way solves the mystery of their origin.

Purfleet, especially from a distance, is by no means unattractive, for quite close to the station a wooded knoll, quaintly named Botany, rises from the general flatness, and its greenery, contrasting strongly with the white of the chalk pits, lifts the town out of that dreariness, merging into the positively ugly, which is the keynote of this part of the River beside the Long and Fiddler's Reaches. The Government powder-magazine sets the fashion in beauty along a stretch which includes lime-kilns, rubbish heaps of all sorts, and various small and dingy works. Here at Purfleet (and also at Thames Haven, lower down the River) have in recent years been set down great installations for the storage of petrol and other liquid fuels—a riverside innovation of great and increasing importance.

To the west of Purfleet lies a vast stretch of flats, known as Dagenham Marshes, in many

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places considerably lower than the level of the River at high tide, but protected from its advances by the great river-wall. Apparently the wall at this spot must have been particu-



larly weak, for right through the Middle Ages and onwards we find it recorded that great stretches of the meadows were laid under water owing to the irruption of the tidal waters into the wall. There were serious inundations in 1376, 1380, and 1381, when the landowners

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combined to effect repairs. Again in 1594 and 1595 there was a serious failure of the dyke, with the result that the whole adjacent flats were covered twice a day. Now, this in itself would not have been so extremely serious; but the constant passing in and out of the water caused a deep hole to be washed out just inside the wall, and made the material bank up and form a bar on the opposite side of the stream. For a quarter of a century nothing was done, but eventually the Dutchman Vermuyden was called in, and he repaired the wall successfully. But in the days of Anne came an even more serious irruption, when the famous Dagenham breach was formed. One night in the year 1707, owing to the carelessness of the official in charge, the waters broke the dyke once more, and swamped an area of a thousand acres or more, doing a vast deal of mischief. Once again the danger to navigation occurred, as the gravel, etc., swept out at each tide, formed a shoal half-way across the River, and fully a mile in length. So dangerous, indeed, was it that Parliament stepped in to find the £40,000

THE MARSHES

needed for the repairs—a sum which the owners of the land could not have found. The waters were partially drained off, and the bank repaired; but a very big lake remained behind the wall, and remains to this day, as most anglers are aware.

Towards the end of last century a scheme was set on foot for the construction of an immense dock here, because, it was urged, the excavations already done by the water would render the cost of construction smaller. Parliament agreed to the proposal, and it appeared as if this lonely part of Essex might become a great commercial centre; but the construction of the Tilbury Docks effectively put an end to the scheme. Now there is a Dagenham Dock, but it is merely a fair-sized wharf, engaged for the most part in the coal trade.

Barking stands on the River Roding, a tributary which comes down by way of Ongar from the Hatfield Forest district near Epping, and which, before it joins the main River, widens out to form Barking Creek, which was, before the rise of Grimsby, the great fishing harbour.

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Barking is a place of great antiquity, and of great historic interest, though one would scarcely gather as much from a casual glance at its very ordinary streets with their commonplace shops and rows of drab houses—just as one would scarcely gather any idea of the charm of the Roding at Ongar and above from a glimpse of the slimy Creek. The town, in fact, goes even so far as to challenge the rival claims of Westminster and the City to contain the site of the earliest settlements of prehistoric man along the River valley. And certainly the earthworks discovered on the north side of the town—fortifications more than forty acres in extent and quite probably of Ancient British origin—even if they do not justify the actual claim, at least support the town in its contention that it is a place of great age.

Little or nothing is known, however, till we come to the time of the foundation of its Abbey in the year 670. In that year, perhaps by reason of its solitude out there in the marshes, the place appealed to St. Erkenwald, the Bishop of London, as a good place for a

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monastic institution, and the great Benedictine Abbey of the Blessed Virgin, the first English convent for women, arose from the low-lying fenlands, and started its life under the direction of the founder's sister, St. Ethelburgha.

It was destroyed by the Danes when they ventured up river in the year 870, but was rebuilt by King Edgar, after lying practically desolate for a century. By the time of the Conquest it had become a place of very great importance in the land, and to it came William after the treaty with the citizens of London, and to it he returned when his coronation was over, and there established his Court till such time as the White Tower should be finished by the monk Gundulf and his builders.

Certainly it is a strange commentary on the irony of Time that this present-day desolation of drab streets should once have been the centre of fashion, to which came all the nobles in the south of England, bringing their ladies fair, decked out in gay apparel to appear before the King.

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In 1376 the Abbey met with its first great misfortune. In that year Nature conspired to the undoing of man's great handiwork on the River, and the tide made a great breach at Dagenham, thereby causing the flooding of many acres of the Abbey lands, and driving the nuns from their home to higher ground at Billericay. So much was the prosperity of the Abbey affected by this disaster that the Convent of the Holy Trinity, in London, granted the Abbess the sum of twenty pounds annually (a large sum in those days) to help with the reclaiming of the land.

Now of all the fine buildings of the Abbey practically nothing is left. At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries it passed into the King's hands, and was afterwards sold to Lord Clinton. It has since gone through many ownerships, but no one has seen fit to preserve it. So that now practically all we can find is a sadly disfigured gateway at the entrance to the churchyard. This was at one time referred to as the "Chapel of the Holy Rood Loft atte

THE MARSHES

Gate," but the name was afterwards changed to the more conveniently spoken "Fire-bell Gate." Of the actual Abbey buildings nothing remains.

The London church of All-Hallows, Barking, standing at the eastern end of Tower Street, quite close to Mark Lane Station, bears witness to the privileges and great power of the nunnery in ancient days, for the church was probably founded by the Abbey, and certainly the patronage of the living was in the hands of the Abbess from the end of the fourteenth century to the time of the suppression of the monasteries.

Just to the west of the Creek mouth is the outfall of the northern drainage system of London. Vast quantities of sewage are brought daily, by means of a gigantic concrete outfall sewer, which passes across the flats from Old Ford and West Ham to Barking; and there they are deposited in huge reservoirs covering ten acres of ground. The sewage passes through four great compartments which together hold thirty-nine million gallons; and, having been

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rendered more or less innocuous, is discharged into the Thames at high tide. This arrangement was one of the chief objections urged against the great barrage at Gravesend.

CHAPTER SIX

Woolwich

FOR many years there was a local saying to the effect that "more wealth passes through Woolwich than through any other town in the world," and, though at first sight this may seem a gross exaggeration, yet when we remember that Woolwich is in two parts, one on each side of the River, we can see at once the justice of that claim, for it simply meant that all the vast traffic to and from the Pool of London went along the Thames as it flowed between the two divisions of the town.

To-day as we look at the drab, uninteresting place which occupies the sloping ground extending up Shooter's Hill and the riverside extent from Charlton to Plumstead, we find it difficult to believe that this was ever a place of such great charm that London folk found in it a favourite summer-time resort. Yet we have only to turn up the "Diary" of good old Pepys

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to read (May 28, 1667): " My wife away down with Jane and Mr. Hewer to Woolwich, in order to a little ayre, and to lie there to-night, and so to gather may-dew to-morrow morning, which Mrs. Yarner hath taught her is the only thing in the world to wash her face with; and I am contented with it."

Of course, in those days Woolwich was in the country, surrounded by fields and woods, in the latter of which lurked footpads ever ready to relieve the unwary traveller of his purse. Thus we have Pepys writing in 1662: " To Deptford and Woolwich Yard. At night, I walked by brave moonlight with three or four armed men to guard me, to Rotherhithe, it being a joy to my heart to think of the condition that I was now in, that people should of themselves provide this for me, unspoke to. I hear this walk is dangerous to walk by night, and much robbery committed there "; and again in 1664: " By water to Woolwich, and walked back from Woolwich to Greenwich all alone; saw a man that had a cudgel, and though he told me he laboured in the King's yard, yet, God forgive me! I did

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doubt he might knock me on the head behind with his club.”

Even a hundred years ago Woolwich was a comparatively small place, consisting largely of



Woolwich

the one main street, the High Street, with smaller ways running down to the river-side. Shooter's Hill was then merely wild

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heathland, ill-reputed as the haunt of highwaymen.

Yet, for all that, Woolwich has been an important place through long years, for here have existed for centuries various Government factories and storehouses—at first the dockyards, and afterwards the Arsenal.

Just when the dockyards were founded it is difficult to say, but it is generally agreed that it was either at the end of the reign of Henry VII. or at the beginning of that of Henry VIII. Certain it is that from the latter's reign down to the early days of Victoria the dockyard flourished. From its slips were launched many of the most famous of the early old "wooden walls of England"—the *Great Harry* (afterwards called the *Henry Grace de Dieu*), the *Prince Royal*, the *Sovereign Royal*, and also many of those made famous by the glorious victories of Drake and Cavendish, and in the wonderful voyages of Hawkins and Frobisher. The *Sovereign Royal*, which was launched in the time of Charles I., was a fine ship of over 1,600 tons burden, and carried no less than a hundred

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guns. "This royal ship," says old Stow, "was curiously carved, and gilt with gold, so that when she was in the engagement against the Dutch they gave her the name of the 'Golden Devil,' her guns, being whole cannon, making such havoc and slaughter among them."

With the passing away of the "wooden walls" and the advent of those huge masses of steel and iron which have in modern times taken the place of the picturesque old "three-deckers," Woolwich began to decay as a Royal dockyard; for it soon became an unprofitable thing to build at Thames-side, and the shipbuilding industry migrated to towns nearer to the coalfields and the iron-smelting districts.

Yet Woolwich continued, and has continued right down to this very day, its activities as a gun-foundry and explosives factory. Just when this part of the Royal works was founded we do not know. There is a story extant (and for years the story was accepted as gospel) to the effect that the making of the Arsenal was due entirely to a disastrous explosion at Moorfields

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in the year 1716. Apparently much of the Government work in those days was put out to contract, and a certain factory in the Moorfields area took a considerable share in the work. On one occasion a very large crowd had assembled to witness the casting of some new and more up-to-date guns from the metal of those captured by the Duke of Marlborough. Just as everything was ready, a clever young Swiss engineer, named Schalch, noticed that the material in the moulds was wet, and he warned the authorities of the danger. No notice was taken, the molten metal was poured into the castings, and there was a tremendous explosion. According to the story, the authorities were so impressed by the part which Schalch had played in the matter that they appointed him to take charge of a new Government foundry, and gave him the choice of a site on which to build his new place, and he chose the Woolwich Warren, slightly to the east of the Royal Dockyards. This is a most interesting story, and one with an excellent moral, no doubt—such a story, in fact, as would have delighted the heart of

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old Samuel Smiles; but, unfortunately for its veracity, there have been discovered at Woolwich various records which prove the existence of the Arsenal before Schalch was born.

In normal times the Arsenal provides employment for more than eight thousand hands, but, of course, in war-time this number is increased tremendously. During the South African War, for instance, more than twenty thousand were kept on at full time, and the numbers during the Great War, when women were called in to assist and relieve the boys and men, were even greater.

Of course, we cannot see everything at Woolwich Arsenal. There are certain buildings in the immense area where strangers are never permitted to go. In these various experiments are being carried out, various new inventions tested, and for this work secrecy is essential. It would never do for a rival foreign Power to get even small details of a new gun, or explosive, or other warlike device. But still there is much that can be seen (after permission to

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visit has been obtained from the War Office)—remarkable machines which turn out with amazing rapidity the various parts of cartridges and shells; giant rolling machines and steam-hammers that fashion the huge blocks of steel, and tremendous machines that convert them into huge guns; machines by which gun-carriages and ammunition-waggon are turned out by the dozen.

Half a century ago there was a great stir at Woolwich when the Arsenal turned out for the arming of the good ship *Hercules* a new gun known as the "Woolwich Infant." This weapon, which required a fifty-pound charge of powder, could throw a projectile weighing over two hundredweights just about six miles, and could cause a shell to pierce armour more than a foot thick at a distance of a mile. Naturally, folk in those days thought them terrible weapons. But the "infants" were soon superseded, for a few years later Woolwich turned out what were known as "eighty-one-ton guns"—deadly weapons which could fire a shell weighing twelve hundred pounds. Folk lifted their hands in

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surprise at the attainments of those days; but it is difficult to imagine their amazement if they could have seen our present-day guns firing shells thirty miles, or the great "Big Bertha," by means of which the Germans fired shots from a distance of seventy miles into Paris.

The tremendous guns of to-day are built up, not cast in moulds all in one piece, as were those in the early years of the Woolwich foundry. There is an inner tube and an outer, the latter of which is shrunk on to the former. The larger tube is heated, and of course the metal expands. While it is in that condition the other is placed inside, and the whole thing is lowered by tremendous cranes into a big bath of oil. The metal contracts again as it cools, and in that way the outer tube is fixed so tightly against the inner that they become practically one single tube, but with greatly added strength. The tube is then carried to a giant lathe, where it receives the rifling on its inner surface.

When we turn away from Woolwich it is

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perhaps with something like a sigh to think that men will spend all this money, and devote all this time and labour and material, merely in order that they may be able to blow each other to pieces.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Greenwich

THE history of towns no less than the history of men can tell strange tales of failure and success. Some have had their era of intoxicating splendour, have been beloved of kings and commoners alike, have counted for much in the great struggles with which our tale is punctuated, and then, their little day over, have shrunk to the merest vestige of their former glory. Others, unknown and insignificant villages throughout most of the story, have sprung up, mushroom-like, almost in a night, and entered suddenly and confidently into the affairs of the nation.

In the former class must, perhaps, be counted Greenwich. True, it has not had the disastrous fall, the unspeakable humiliation, of some English towns—Rye and Winchelsea on the south coast, for instance—yet over Greenwich now

FATHER THAMES

might well be written that word "Ichabod"—
"The glory is departed." For Greenwich to-
day, apart from its two places of outstanding
interest, the Hospital and the Park with its
Observatory, is largely an affair of mean streets,
a collection of tiny, uninteresting shops and drab
houses. Yet Greenwich was for long a place of



GREENWICH PARK.

great fame, to which came kings and courtiers,
for here was that ancient and glorious Palace of
Placentia, a strong favourite with numbers of
our monarchs.

Really it began its life as a Royal demesne in
the year 1443, when the manor was granted to
Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and permission

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given for the fortification of the building and enclosing of a park of two hundred acres. The Duke interpreted his permission liberally, and erected a new palace, to which he gave the name of Placentia, the House of Pleasance. He formed the park, and at the summit of the little hill, one hundred and fifty feet or more above the River, constructed a tower on the identical spot where the Observatory now stands. On Humphrey's death the Crown once more took charge of the property. Edward IV. spent great sums in beautifying it, so that it was held in the highest esteem by the monarchs that followed. Henry VII. provided it with a splendid brick-work river-front to increase its comeliness.

Here, in 1491, was born Henry VIII., and here he married Katherine of Aragon. Here, too, his daughters, Mary (1515) and Elizabeth (1533), first saw the light. Edward VI., his pious young son, breathed his last within the walls.

In those days the River banks did not present quite the same commercial aspect as in our own times; the atmosphere was not quite so befouled

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by the smoke of innumerable chimneys, the water was not quite so muddy; and in consequence the journey by water from the City to that country place, Greenwich, was a little more pleasant. Indeed, it is said that the view up-river from Greenwich Park rivalled that from Richmond Hill in beauty. In those days all who could went by water, for the River was the great highway. Then was its surface gay with brightly painted and decorated barges, threading their way downstream among the picturesque vessels of that time.

From Placentia the sovereign could watch the ever-changing but never-ending pageant of the River, see the many great ships bringing in the wealth from all known lands, and watch the few journeying forth in search of lands as yet unknown. Thus on one occasion the occupants viewed the departure of three shiploads of brave mariners setting forth to search for a new passage to India by way of the Arctic regions—a scene which old Hakluyt describes for us: “The greater shippes are towed downe with boates and oares, and the mariners being

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all apparelled in watchet or skie-coloured cloth rowed amaine and made with diligence. And being come neare to Greenwiche (where the Court then lay) presently upon the newes thereof the courtiers came running out and the common people flockt together, standing very thicke upon the shoare; the privie counsel they lookt out at the windowes of the court and the rest ran up to the toppes of the towers; and shoot off their pieces after the manner of warre and of the sea, insomuch that the toppes of the hilles sounded therewith, the valleys and the waters gave an echo and the mariners they shouted in such sort that the skie rang againe with the noyse thereof. Then it is up with their sails, and good-bye to the Thames."

Nor in talking of Greenwich must we forget the famous Ministerial fish dinners which were for so many years a great event in the life of the town. This custom arose, it is said, from the coming of the Government Commissioners to examine Dagenham Breach, when they so enjoyed the succulent fare set before them that

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they insisted on an annual repetition, which function was afterwards transferred to the "Ship" at Greenwich.

At the toe of the great horseshoe bend which gives us Millwall and the Isle of Dogs stands that famous group of buildings known as Greenwich Hospital, but more correctly styled the Greenwich Naval College.

This is built on the site of the old Palace. When, following the Revolution, Charles II. came to the throne, he found the old place almost past repair, so he decided to pull it down and erect a more sumptuous one in its place. Plans were accordingly drawn up by the architect, Inigo Jones, and the building commenced; but only a very small portion—the eastern half of the north-western quarter—was completed during his reign.

It was left to William and Mary, those eager builders, to carry on the work, which they did with the assistance of Sir Christopher Wren, to whose powers of architectural design London owes so much. Very little was done during the life of Queen Mary, but as the idea was hers,

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William went on with the work quite gladly, as a sort of memorial to his wife.

Of course, a very large sum of money was needed for the erection of such a place. The King himself provided very liberally—a good deed in which he was followed by courtiers and private citizens. But quite a large amount was found in several very interesting ways. Since the buildings were designed to provide a kind of hospital or asylum for aged and disabled seamen who were no longer able to provide for themselves, it was decided to utilize naval funds to some extent. So money was obtained from unclaimed shares in naval prize-money, from the fines which captured smugglers had to pay, and from a levy of sixpence a month which was deducted from the wages of all seamen. Building went on apace, and (to quote Lord Macaulay) “soon an edifice, surpassing that asylum which the magnificent Lewis had provided for his soldiers, rose on the margin of the Thames. Whoever reads the inscription which runs round the frieze of the hall will observe that William claims no part in the merit of the design,

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and that the praise is ascribed to Mary alone. Had the King's life been prolonged till the work



GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

was completed, a statue of her who was the real founder of the institution would have had a

GREENWICH

conspicuous place in that court which presents two lofty domes and two graceful colonnades to the multitudes who are perpetually passing up and down the imperial River. But that part of the plan was never carried into effect; and few of those who now gaze on the noblest of European hospitals are aware that it is a memorial of the virtues of the good Queen Mary, and the great victory of La Hogue.”

In 1705 the preparations were complete, and the first pensioners were installed in their new home. The place was very successful at the start, and it grew till at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were nearly three thousand men residing within the Hospital walls, and many more boarded out in the town.

Then through half a century the prosperity of the place began to decline. The old pensioners died off, and the new ones, as they came along, for the most part preferred to accept out-pensions and live where they liked. So that in 1869 it was decided to abandon the place as an asylum for seamen and convert it into a Royal Naval College, in which to give training

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to the officers of the various branches of the naval services, and also a Naval Museum and a Sailors' Hospital.

Perhaps one of the most interesting places in the College is the Painted Hall, a part of Wren's edifice, known as King William's Quarter. The ceilings of this double-decked dining-hall—the upper part for officers and the lower for seamen—and the walls of the upper part are decorated most beautifully with paintings which it took Sir James Thornhill nineteen years to complete. Around the walls hang pictures which tell of England's naval glory—pictures of all sizes depicting our most famous sea-fights and portraying the gallant sailors who won them. Naturally Lord Nelson is much in evidence here, and we can see in cases in the upper hall the very clothes he wore when he received that fatal wound in the cockpit of the *Victory*—the scene of which is depicted on a large canvas on the walls; also in cases his pigtail, his sword, medals, and various other relics.

The Museum is a fascinating place, for it contains what is practically a history of our Navy

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set out, not in words in a dry book, but in models of ships; and we can study the progress right from the Vikings' long-boats, with their rows of oars and their shields hanging all round the sides, down to the massive super-dreadnoughts of to-day. Most interesting of all, perhaps, are the great sailing ships—the old “ wooden walls of England ”—which did so much to establish and maintain our position as a maritime nation—the great three-deckers which stood so high out of the water, and which with their tall masts and gigantic sails looked so formidable and yet so graceful. There in a case is the *Great Harry*—named after Henry VIII.—a double-decker of fifteen hundred tons burden, with three masts, and carrying seventy-two guns. She was a fine vessel, launched at Woolwich Dockyard in 1515, and was the first vessel to fire her guns from portholes instead of from the deck. In another case is the first steam vessel ever used in the Navy (1830), and a quaint little craft it is.

This is indeed a splendid collection, and we feel as if we could spend hours studying these fascinating little models.

FATHER THAMES

On the site of Duke Humphrey's tower in Greenwich Park is the world-famous Observa-



THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY.

tory. If you take up your atlas, and look at the map of the British Isles or the map of Europe, you will see that the meridian of longi-

GREENWICH

tude (or the line running north and south) marked 0° passes through the spot where Greenwich is shown. This means that all places in Europe to the right or the left—east or west, that is—are located and marked by their distance from Greenwich; and, if for no other reason, this town is because of this fact a very important place in the world.

The Observatory was founded in the reign of Charles II. This monarch had occasion to consult Flamsteed, the astronomer, concerning the simplifying of navigation, and Flamsteed pointed out to him the need for a correct mapping-out of the heavens. As a result the Observatory was built in 1695 in order that Flamsteed might proceed with the work he had suggested.

The Duke's tower was pulled down, and the new place erected; but it was left to Flamsteed to find his own instruments and pay his own assistants, all out of a salary of one hundred pounds per annum. Consequently, he became so poor that when he died in 1719 his instruments were seized to pay his debts. His

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successor, Dr. Halley, another famous astronomer, refitted the Observatory, and some of his instruments can be seen there now, though no longer in use, of course.

Few people are allowed inside the Observatory to see all the wonderful telescopes and other instruments there; but there are several things to be seen from the outside, notably the time-ball which is placed on the north-east turret, and which descends every day exactly at one o'clock; also the electric clock with its twenty-four-hours dial.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Port and the Docks

ANY person standing on London Bridge a couple of centuries ago would have observed a scene vastly different from that of to-day. Now we see the blackened line of wharves and warehouses on the two banks, and up against them steamers discharging or receiving their cargoes, while out in the stream a few vessels of medium size and one or two clusters of barges lie off, awaiting their turn inshore; otherwise the wide expanse of the stream is bare, save for the occasional craft passing up and down in the centre of the stream. But in days gone by, as we can tell by glancing at the pictures of the period, the River was simply crowded with ships of all kinds, anchored closely together in the Pool, while barges innumerable plied between them and the shore.

In very early days only Billingsgate and Queenhithe possessed accommodation for ships

FATHER THAMES

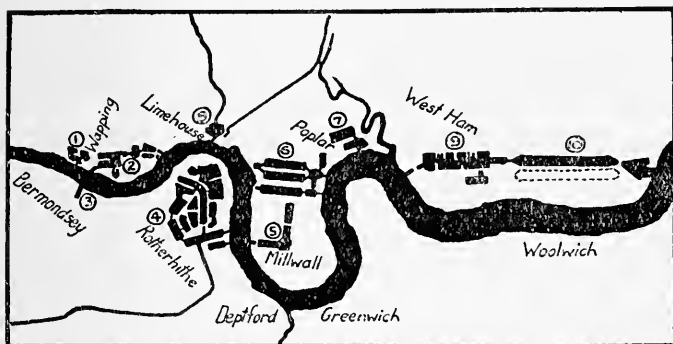
to discharge and receive their cargoes actually alongside the quay; for the most part ships berthed out in the stream, and effected the exchange of goods by means of barges.

Then, as trade increased by leaps and bounds, a number of "legal quays" were instituted between London Bridge and the Tower, and thither came the major part of the merchandise. Gradually little docks or open harbours were cut into the land in order to relieve the congestion of the quays. Billingsgate was the first of these, and for many years the most important. Now the dock has for the most part been filled in, and over it has been erected the famous fish-market, which still carries on one of the main trades of the little ancient dock. Others were St. Katherine's Dock, a tiny basin formed for the landing of the goods of the monastery which stood hard by the Tower; St. Saviour's Dock in Bermondsey on the Surrey side; and Execution Dock close to Wapping Old Stairs.

However, with the tremendous growth of trade following the Great Fire of London, concerning which we shall read in Book II., and with the

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

growth in the size of vessels and the consequent increase in the difficulties of navigation, the facilities for loading and unloading proved totally inadequate, and the merchants were led to protest, on the grounds that the overcrowding led to great confusion and many abuses, and for



1. St. Katherine's. 2. London. 3. St. Saviour's. 4. Surrey Commercial.
5. Millwall. 6. West India. 7. East India. 8. Limehouse Basin
9. Victoria. 10. Royal Albert.

DOCKLAND.

a great number of years they entreated Parliament to take some action.

The coming of the great docks ended the trouble, and also tremendously changed the Port of London. When the West India Docks were opened in 1802, ships concerned with the

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transport of certain articles of commerce were no longer allowed to lie in the Pool for the purpose of discharge: they were compelled to go to the particular dock-quays set aside for their use, and to land there the merchandise they carried. Thus practically at a stroke of the pen the riverside wharves lost their entire traffic in such things as sugar, rum, brandy, spices, and other goods from the West Indies. Similarly, when the East India Docks were opened all the commerce of the East India Company was landed there. Thus, gradually, as the various larger docks were made from time to time, the main business of the Port shifted eastwards to Millwall, Blackwall, etc. Nor did it stop there. With the coming of ships larger even than those already catered for, it became necessary to do something to avoid the passage of the shallow, winding reaches above Gravesend, and, in consequence, tremendous docks were opened at Tilbury. So that now vessels of the very deepest draught enter and leave the docks independent of the tidal conditions, and do not come within many miles of London Bridge.

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

This does not mean that the riverside wharves and warehouses were rendered useless by the shifting of the Port. So great had been the congestion that even with the relief of the new docks there was still—and there always has been—plenty for them to do. To-day there are miles of private wharves in use: from Blackfriars down to Shadwell the River is lined with them on both sides all the way; and they share with the great docks and dock warehouses the vast trade of the Port of London.

Let us take a short trip down through dockland, and see what this romantic place has to show us. We must go by water. That is essential if we are to see anything at all, for so shut in is the River by tall warehouses, etc., that we might wander for hours and hours in the streets quite close to the shore, and yet never catch a glimpse of the water.

Leaving Tower Bridge, we find immediately on our left the St. Katherine's Docks. These get their name from the venerable foundation which formerly stood on the spot. This religious house was created and endowed by Maud

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of Boulogne, Queen of Stephen, and lasted through seven centuries down to about a hundred years ago. It survived even the Dissolution of the Monasteries, which swept away all other London foundations, being regarded as more or less under the protection of the Queen. Yet this wonderful old foundation, with its ancient church, its picturesque cloisters and schools, its quaint churchyard and gardens—one of the finest mediæval relics which London possessed—was completely destroyed to make way for a dock which could have been constructed just as well at another spot. London knows no worse example of needless, stupid, brutal vandalism! St. Katherine's Dock is concerned largely with the import of valuable articles: to it come such things as China tea, bark, india-rubber, gutta-percha, marble, feathers, etc.

London generally is the English port for *tea*: hither is brought practically the whole of the country's consumption. During the War efforts were made to spread the trade more evenly over the different large ports; but the experiment was far from a success. All the vast and intricate

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

organization for blending, marketing, distributing, etc., is concentrated quite close to St. Katherine's Dock, and in consequence the trade cannot be managed so effectively else-



where. The value of the tea entering the Port of London during 1913, the year before the War, and therefore the last reliable year for statistics, was nearly £13,500,000.

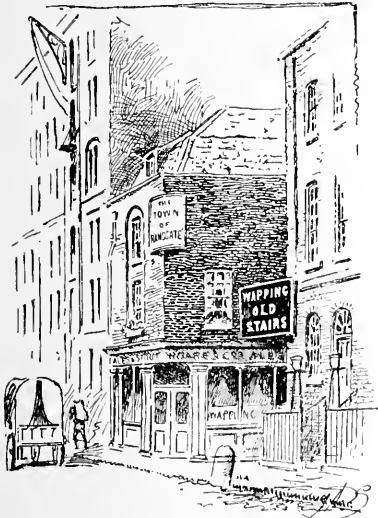
FATHER THAMES

A little below St. Katherine's, on the Surrey shore, is one of the curiosities of dockland—a dock which nobody wants. This is St. Saviour's Dock, Bermondsey—a little basin for the reception of smaller vessels. It is disowned by all—by the Port of London Authority, by the Borough Council, and by the individual firms who have wharves and warehouses in the vicinity. You see, there is at one part of the dock a *free* landing-place, to which goods may be brought without payment of any landing-dues; and no one wants to own a dock without full rights. Shackleton's *Quest* berthed here while fitting out for its long voyage south.

From St. Katherine's onward for several miles the district on the north bank is known as Wapping. This was for many years the most marine of all London's riverside districts. Adjoining the Pool, it became, and remained through several centuries, the sojourning-place of "those who go down to the sea in ships." Here, at famous Wapping Old Stairs or one of the other landing-steps which ran down to the water's edge at the various quay-ends, Jack



LIMEHOUSE
HOLE



ENTRANCE TO
WAPPING
OLD STAIRS.

FATHER THAMES

said good-bye to his sweetheart as he jumped into one of the numerous watermen's boats, and was rowed to his ship lying out in the stream; here, too, there waited for Jack, as he came home with plenty of money, all those crimps and vampires whose purpose it was to make him drunk and rob him of all his worldly goods. Harbours, as it did, numbers of criminals of the worst type, Wapping for many years had a very bad name. Now all that has changed. The shifting of the Port deprived the sharks of their victims, for the seamen no longer congregated in this one area: they came ashore at various points down the River. Moreover, the making of the St. Katherine and later the London Docks cut out two big slices from the territory, with a consequent destruction of mean streets.

Close to Wapping Old Stairs was the famous Execution Dock. This was the spot where pirates, smugglers, and sailors convicted of capital crimes at sea, were hanged, and left on the foreshore for three tides as a warning to all other watermen. Now, with the improvements

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

at Old Gravel Lane, all traces have vanished, and the wrongdoers no longer make that last wretched journey from Newgate to Wapping, no longer stop half-way to consume that bowl of pottage for which provision was made in the will of one of London's aldermen.

The goods which enter London Dock are of great variety—articles of food forming a considerable proportion.

Limehouse follows on the northern shore, and is perhaps, even more than Wapping, the marine district of these days. Here, in a place known as the Causeway, is the celebrated Chinese quarter. Regent's Canal Dock, which includes the well-known Limehouse Basin, a considerable expanse of water, is the place where the Regent's Canal begins its course away to the midlands. The chief goods handled at Limehouse Basin were formerly timber and coal, but since the War this has become the centre for the German trade. Here are frequently to be seen most interesting specimens of the northern "wind-jammers."

Leaving Limehouse, the River sweeps away

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southwards towards Greenwich, and then turns sharply north again to Blackwall. By so doing it forms a large loop in which lies the peninsula known as the Isle of Dogs—a place which has been reclaimed from its original marshy condition, and covered from end to end with docks, factories, and warehouses, save at the southernmost extremity, where the London County Council have made a fine riverside garden. In the Isle are to be found the great West India Docks and the Millwall Docks. The former receive most of the furniture woods—mahogany, walnut, teak, satin-wood, etc.—and also rum, sugar, grain, and frozen meat; while the latter receive largely timber and grain.

On the Surrey side of the River, practically opposite the West India and Millwall Docks, are the Surrey Commercial Docks, occupying the greater portion of a large tongue of land in Rotherhithe. To these docks come immense quantities of timber, grain, cattle, and hides—the latter to be utilized in the great tanning factories for which Bermondsey is famous.

Blackwall, the last riverside district within

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

the London boundary, is famous for its tunnel, which passes beneath the bed of the River to Greenwich. This is but one of a number of tunnels which have been made beneath the stream in recent years. There is another for vehicles and passengers passing across from Rotherhithe to Limehouse, while further upstream are those utilized by the various tube-railways in their passage from north to south.

Blackwall has a number of docks, large and small. Among the latter are several little dry-docks which exist for the overhauling and repairing of vessels. There was a time when ship-building and ship-repairing were considerable industries on the Thames-side, when even battleships were built there, and thousands of hands employed at the work; but the trade has migrated to other dockyard towns, and all that survive now are the one or two repairing docks at Blackwall and Millwall.

The Royal Albert and the Victoria Docks come within the confines of those great new districts, West Ham and East Ham, which have during the last thirty or forty years

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sprung up, mushroom-like, from the dreary flats of East London. Here are such well-known commercial districts as Silvertown and Canning Town. The former will doubtless be remembered through many years for the tremendous explosion which occurred there during the War—an explosion which resulted in serious loss of life and very great damage to property. It is also famous for several great factories, notably Messrs. Knight's soap-works, Messrs. Henley's cable and general electrical works, and Messrs. Lyle's (and Tate's) sugar refineries. These places, which employ thousands of hands, are of national importance.

Canning Town has to some extent lost its prestige, for it was in time past the shipbuilding area. Here were situated the great Thames Ironworks, carrying on a more or less futile endeavour to compete with the Clyde and other shipbuilding districts.

This district is, to a large extent, the coal-importing area. Coal is the largest individual import of the Port of London, as much as eight million tons entering in the course of a year.

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

The chief articles of commerce with which the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks are concerned are: Tobacco, frozen meat, and Japanese productions.

Vast, indeed, have been the revenues drawn from the various docks. You see, goods are not entered or dispatched except on payment of various dues and tolls, and these amount up tremendously. So that the Dock Companies get so much money from the thirty miles of dockside quays and riverside wharves that they scarcely know what to do with it, for the amount they can pay away in dividends to their shareholders is strictly limited by Act of Parliament. In one year, for instance, so large a profit was made by the owners of the East and West India Docks that they used up an enormous sum of money in roofing their warehouses with sheet copper.

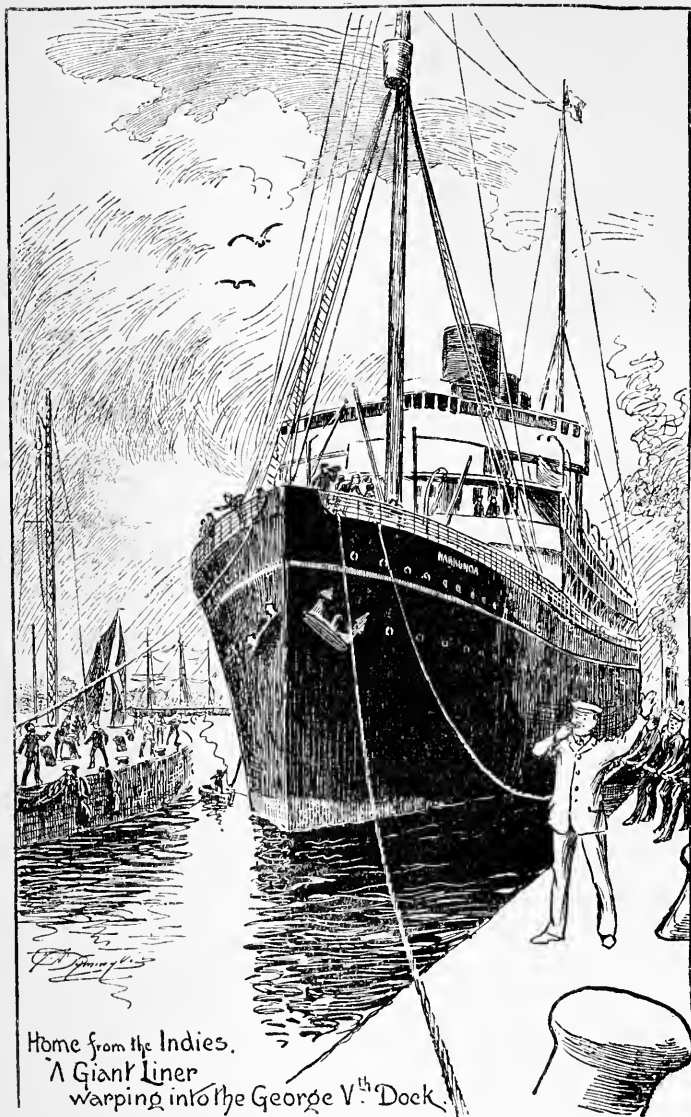
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In concluding our rapid tour through dockland, it is impossible to omit a reference to the Customs Officers—those cheery young men who work in such an atmosphere of unsuspected

FATHER THAMES

romance. To spend a morning on the River with one of them, as he goes his round of inspection of the various vessels berthed out in the stream, is a revelation. To visit first this ship and then the other; to see the amazing variety of the cargoes, the number of different nationalities represented, both in ships and men; to come into close touch with that strange and little-understood section of the community, the lightermen, whose work is the loading of the barges that cluster so thickly round the great hulls—is to move in a world of dreams. But to go back to the Customs Offices and see the huge piles of documents relating to each single ship that enters the port, and to be informed that on an average two hundred ocean-going ships enter each week, is to experience a rude awakening from dreams, and a sharp return to the very real matters of commercial life.

Nor must we forget the River Police, who patrol the River from Dartford Creek up as far as Teddington. As we see them in their launches, passing up and down the stream, we may regard their work as easy; but it is any-



Home from the Indies.
A Giant Liner
warping into the George V.th Dock.

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thing but that—especially at night-time. Then it is that the river-thieves get to work at their nefarious task of plundering the valuable cargoes of improperly attended lighters. The River Police must be ever on the alert, moving about constantly and silently, lurking in the shadows ready to dash out on the unscrupulous and dangerous marauders. The headquarters of the River Police are at Wapping, but there are other stations at Erith, Blackwall, Waterloo, and Barnes.

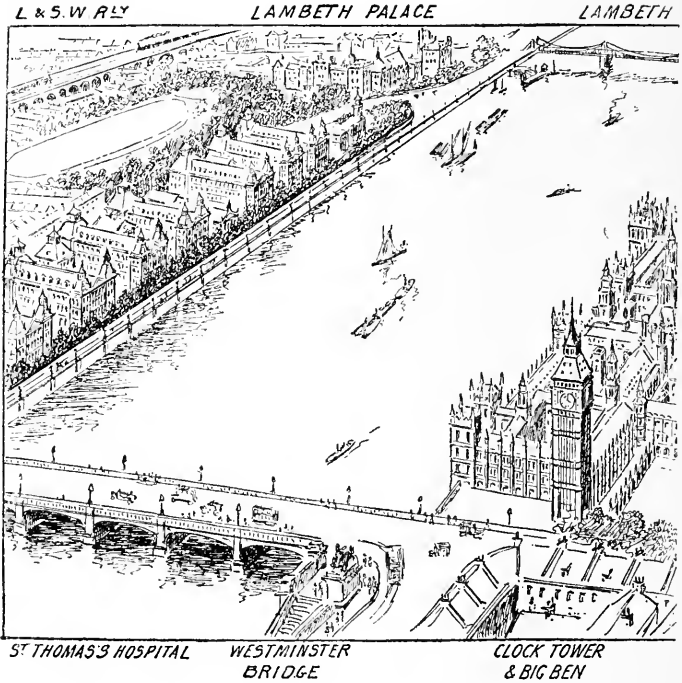
In 1903 the question of establishing one supreme authority to deal with all the difficulties of dockland and take control of practically the whole of the Port of London was discussed in Parliament, and a Bill was introduced, but owing to great opposition was not proceeded with. However, the question recurred from time to time, and in 1908 the Port of London Act was at length passed.

This established the Port of London Authority, for the purpose of administering, preserving, and improving the Port of London. The limits of the Authority's power extend from

THE PORT AND THE DOCKS

Teddington down both sides of the River to a line just east of the Nore lightship. At its inception the Authority took over all the duties, rights, and privileges of the Thames Conservancy in the whole of this area.

BOOK II

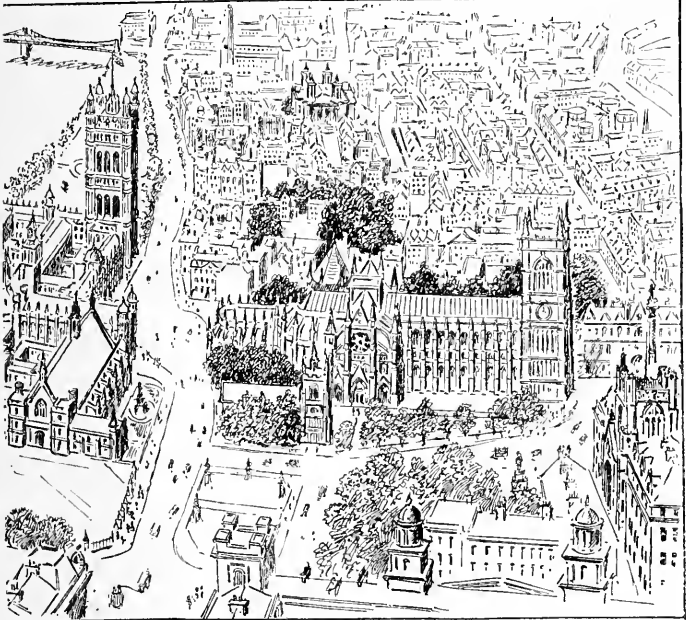


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THE GREAT CITY WHICH THE RIVER MADE

BRIDGE VICTORIA TOWER

ST JOHN'S CHURCH



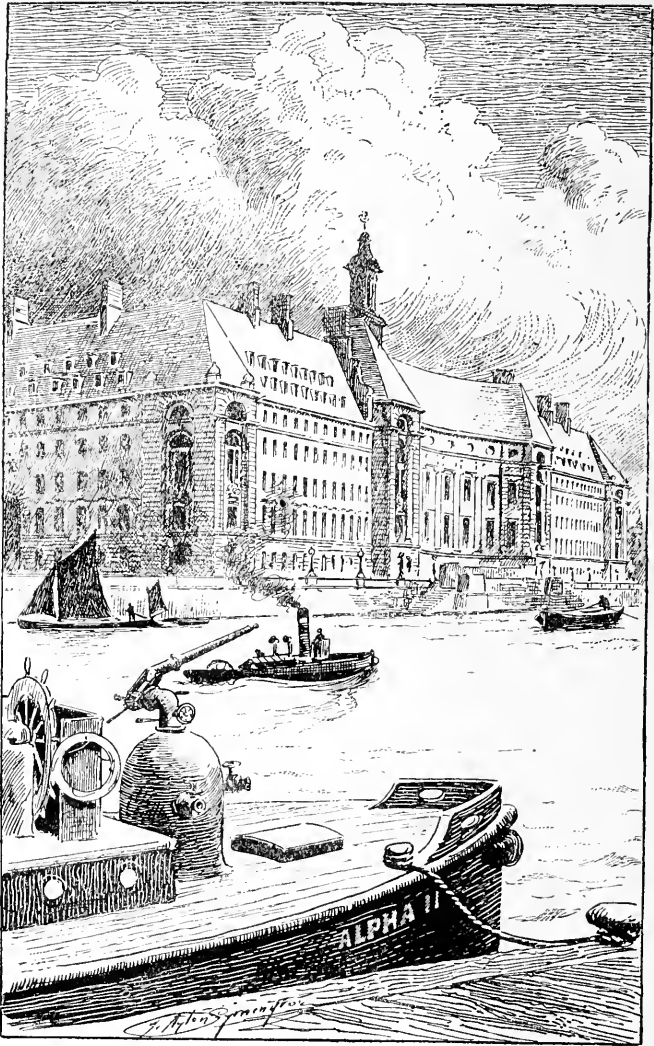
WESTMINSTER
HALL

ST MARGARET'S
CHURCH

WESTMINSTER
ABBAY

MIDDLESEX
GUILDHALL

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THE LONDON COUNTY HALL.

THE GREAT CITY WHICH THE RIVER MADE

CHAPTER ONE

How the River founded the City

ENGLAND at the time when London first came into being was a very different place from the well-cultivated country which we know so well. Where now stretch hundreds of square miles of orderly green meadows and ploughed fields, divided from each other by trim hedges, or pretty little copses, or well-kept roads, there was then a vast dense forest, wherein roamed wolves and other wild animals, and into which man scarcely dared to penetrate. This stretched from sea to sea, covering hill and valley alike. Just here and there could be found the tiny settlements of the native Britons, and in some few cases these settlements were joined by rough woodland tracks.

The only real breaks in this widespread

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covering of green occurred where the rivers flowed seawards along the valleys. These rivers for the most part ran their courses in practically the same directions as at present, but in appearance they were very different from the rivers we know to-day. No man-made embankments kept them in place in those days; instead they wandered through great stretches of marsh and fenland, and spread out into wide, shallow pools here and there in their courses, so that to cross them was a matter of the greatest difficulty.

Such was the Thames when the first "Londoners" formed their tiny settlement. From the mouth of the River inland for many miles stretched widespread, impassable marshes; but at one spot—where now stands St. Paul's Cathedral—there was a firm gravel bank and a little hill (or rather two little hills with a stream between), which stood out from the encompassing wastes. In front of this small eminence stretched a great lagoon formed by the overflowing of the River at high tide. This covered the ground on which have since been built

HOW THE RIVER FOUNDED THE CITY

Southwark and Lambeth, and stretched southwards as far as the heights of Sydenham. West of the little hill, running down a deep ravine, where now is the street called Farringdon Street, was a tributary river, afterwards known as the Fleet; and beyond that yet another great marshland stretched away over Westminster, Belgravia, Chelsea, and Fulham. To the north was the pathless forest.

This then appealed to the intelligence of a few Ancient Britons as an ideal spot for a settlement, and so sprang into existence *Llyndin*, the lake-fortress.

But that, of course, did not make LONDON, did not raise London to the position of pre-eminence which it gradually attained, and which it has held almost without contest through so many centuries.

Between the time of the formation of this little collection of huts with its slight protecting stockade and the coming of the Romans much happened. The Ancient Britons learned to make roads—primitive ones, of course—and in all probability they learned to make embank-

FATHER THAMES

ments to the River. Their greatest trade naturally was with Gaul—France, that is—and also, equally naturally, practically all such trade had to come through the one most suitable way, the spot which has always, through all the ages, been the gateway into England—Dover. In the days when sea-going craft had not reached a high stage of perfection it was necessary to choose the shortest passage across the channel, and, though no doubt other ports were used, undoubtedly the bulk of the merchandise came across the narrow Straits. This meant, without a doubt, an important road going north-westwards towards the centre of England.

Now right across the country, from west to east, stretched the great natural barrier, the River, effectively cutting off all intercourse between the south of England and the Midlands and north; and at some place or other this road (afterwards known as Watling Street) had to cross the barrier. It was inevitable that the spot where this crossing was effected should be, both from a military and a commercial point of view, a place of the very greatest importance.

HOW THE RIVER FOUNDED THE CITY

In the earliest days the road skirted the south side of the marshes facing Llyndin, and passed on to the ford (or ferry) at Westminster, and thence on to Tyburn. But Llyndin was growing in strength, and the need of a lower crossing was probably soon felt by the inhabitants of the little hill. Now lower crossings of the River were by no means simple. As we said just now, right from the mouth westwards till we reach the spot where London now stands there was simply a great collection of marshes and fens. Here and there, on both banks, tiny patches of firmer soil jutted out from the impassable wastes—the spots where Purfleet and Grays now stand on the north side, the sites of Gravesend, Greenhithe, Erith, Woolwich, and Greenwich, on the south side; but in each of these cases the little gravel bed or chalky bank was faced on the opposite shore by the dreary flats (an ordinary natural happening caused by the washing away of the banks, to be seen in any little stream that winds in and out), so that never was there any possibility of linking up north and south.

FATHER THAMES

Only when the little hill at the junction of the River Thames with the River Lea, somewhere about sixty miles from the open sea, was reached could any such crossing be made. We said that in the earliest days of London there was, facing the hill, a great flat which at high tide became a wide lagoon, stretching southwards to Sydenham. Now this was quite shallow; moreover, a long tongue of fairly firm gravel ran right out northwards from the firmer ground till it came to a point nearly opposite the Llyndin Hill. This firm bed enabled the Britons to lay down, across the marsh, some sort of a road or causeway joining up with the main Kent road, and so gave them another lower and practicable crossing of the River, which, of course, meant a shorter road to the Midlands and the north.

This crossing—in all probability a ferry—laid the foundation-stone of the prosperity of London town, and the building of the first bridge cemented that foundation.

Why? Simply because such a bridge, in addition to being a passage *across* the River,

HOW THE RIVER FOUNDED THE CITY

became a barrier to any passage up and down the stream. Bridge-building was not at a very advanced stage, and, of necessity, the arches were small and narrow. This effectively stopped traffic passing up from the seaward side. On the other hand, the small arches meant a very great current, and this, with any considerable tide, rendered the "shooting" of the bridge by smaller boats an extremely dangerous affair: thus traffic from the landward side came to a standstill at the bridge.

This meant that ships, bringing goods up the River from the sea, must stop at the bridge and discharge their cargoes: also that goods, coming from inland to go to foreign parts, must of necessity be transhipped at London. It was inevitable, therefore, that once the bridge was in position a commercial centre must arise on the spot, and almost certain that in time a great port would grow into being. So that we may say quite truly that *the Thames founded London*.

CHAPTER TWO

How the City grew (Roman Days)

WHO built the first bridge? We cannot say for certain; but it is fairly safe for us to assume that the Romans shortly after their arrival in Llyndin set to work to make a strong wooden military bridge to link up the town with the important road from Dover. Thousands of Roman coins have been recovered from the bed of the Thames at this spot, and we may quite well suppose that the Roman people dropped these through the cracks as they crossed the roughly constructed bridge.

This bridge established London once and for all. Previously there had been the two ferries—that of Thorney (Westminster) and that of Llyndin Hill, each with its own growing settlement. Either of these rivals might have developed into the foremost city of the valley. But the building of the bridge definitely settled the question and caused the diversion of Wat-

HOW THE CITY GREW (ROMAN DAYS)

ling Street to a course across the bridge, through the settlement, out by way of what was afterwards Newgate, and on to Tyburn, where the old way was rejoined.

Having built the bridge, they set to work to make of London a city, as they understood it. In all probability it was quite a flourishing place when they found it. But the Romans had their own thoughts about building, their own ideas of what a city should be. First, they built a citadel. The original British stockade stood on the western hummock of the twin hill, so the Romans chose the eastern height for their defences. This citadel, or fortress, was a large and powerful one, with massive walls which extended from where Cannon Street Station now is to where Mincing Lane runs. Inside it the Roman soldiers lived in safety.

Gradually, however, the fortress ceased to be necessary, and a fine town spread out beyond its walls, stretching as far eastwards and westwards as Nature permitted; that is, to the marshes on the east and to the Fleet ravine on the west. In this space were laid out fine

FATHER THAMES

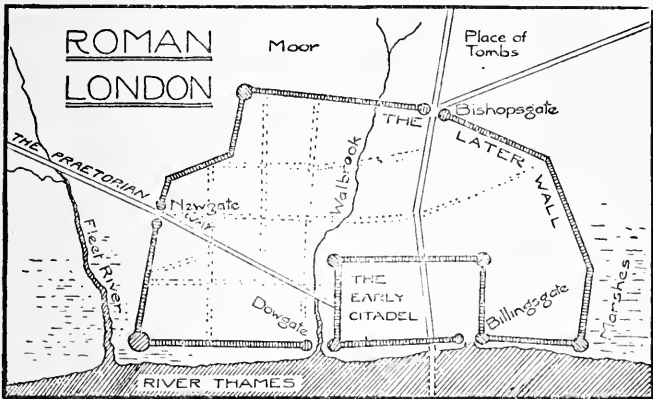
streets and splendid villas and public buildings. Along the banks of the River were built quays and river walls; and trade increased by leaps and bounds.

Nor was this all. The Romans, as you have probably read, made magnificent roads across England, and London was practically the hub of the series, which radiated in all directions. The old British road through Kent became the Prætorian Way (afterwards the diverted Watling Street), and passed through the city to the north and west. Another, afterwards called Ermyrn Street, led off to Norfolk and Suffolk. Yet another important road passed out into Essex, the garden of England in those days.

“How do we know all these things?” you ask. Partly by what Roman writers tell us, and partly by all the different things which have been brought to light during recent excavations. When men have been digging the foundations of various modern buildings in different quarters of London, they have discovered the remains of some of these splendid buildings—all of them more or less ruined (for a reason which we shall

HOW THE CITY GREW (ROMAN DAYS)

see later), but a few in good condition. Fine mosaic pavements have been laid bare in one or two places—Leadenhall Street for one; and all sorts of articles—funeral urns, keys, statues, ornaments, domestic utensils, lamps, etc.—have been brought to light, many of which you can still see if you take the trouble to visit the



Guildhall Museum and the London Museum. In a court off the Strand may still be seen an excellent specimen of a Roman bath.

But perhaps the most interesting of all the Roman remains are the two or three fragments of the great wall, which was not built till somewhere between the years 350 and 365 A.D. At

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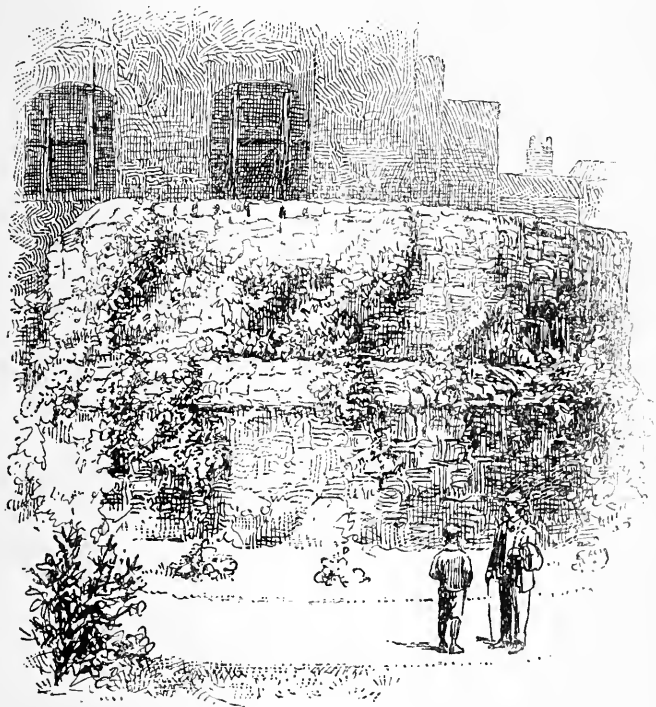
this time the Romans had been in occupation for several hundred years, and the city had spread quite a distance beyond the old citadel walls. The new wall was a splendid one, twenty feet high and about twelve feet thick, stretching for just about three miles. It ran along the river front from the Fleet River to the corner where the Tower stands, inland to Bishopsgate and Aldersgate, then across to Newgate, where it turned south again, and came to the River not far from Blackfriars.

Several fine sections of the ancient structure can still be seen in position. There is a large piece under the General Post Office yard, another fine piece in some wine cellars close to Fenchurch Street Station, a fair piece on Tower Hill, and smaller remnants in Old Bailey and St. Giles' Churchyard, Cripplegate.

What do these fragments teach us? That things were not all they should be in London. Instead of being built with the usual care of Roman masonry, with properly quarried and squared stones, this wall was made up of a medley of materials. Mixed in with the proper

HOW THE CITY GREW (ROMAN DAYS)

blocks were odd pieces of buildings, statues, columns from the temples, and memorials from the burying grounds. Probably the folk of



BASTION OF ROMAN WALL, CRIPPLEGATE CHURCHYARD.

London, feeling that the power of Rome was waning, were stricken with panic, and so set to work hurriedly and with such materials

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as were to hand to put together this great defence.

Nor were they unwise in their preparations, for danger soon began to threaten. From time to time there swooped down on the eastern coasts strange ships filled with fierce warriors—tall, fair-haired men, who took what they could lay their hands on, and killed and burned unsparingly. So long as the Roman soldiers were there to protect the land and its people, nothing more happened than these small raids. The strangers kept to the coasts and seldom attempted to penetrate up the river which led to London.

But these coast raids only heralded the great storm which was approaching, for the daring sea-robbers had set covetous eyes on the fair fields of Britain.

CHAPTER THREE

How the City grew (Saxon Days)

IN the year 410 the Romans were compelled to leave Britain. Troubles had become so great in Rome itself that it was necessary to abandon all the outlying colonies to their fate. From that moment began a century and a half of pitiful history for our country. There was now no properly drilled army to ward off attacks; and the raids of the "sea-robbers" increased in number and intensity. Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, they came in vast numbers, gradually working their way inland from the coast.

And what happened to Londinium, as the Romans called our city? We do not know, for there is a great gap in our history; probably it perished of starvation. We know that little by little the strangers increased their grip—the Jutes in Kent and Hampshire (and later in Surrey), the Saxons in Kent, Essex, and Sussex;

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and that as they did so London was gradually surrounded.

Now London was a comparatively large place, with a considerable population, even after the Romans had gone; and the slow tightening of the Saxon grip must have meant starvation, for everything London wanted for its use came from a distance, owing to the impossibility of growing anything in the surrounding marshy districts. And in the absence of any reliable account we can only assume that in consequence the inhabitants little by little deserted the city, and made their way westwards; that the quays were deserted, the ships rotted at their moorings, the finely constructed streets were befouled with grass and briars, the splendid villas fell to pieces, the great wall in places crumbled to ruins. So that when eventually the Saxons did reach London, after years of struggle and fierce engagements, their victory was a hollow one. And there is much to support this assumption, for we find that in their chronicles the Saxons make practically no mention of the first city of the land, which they most assuredly would have

HOW THE CITY GREW (SAXON DAYS)

done had it been anything other than derelict. Nor did they stay at London when they arrived. Probably such a place of desolation was of no use to them; they were not interested in ruined cities; they wanted open ground with growing crops. So they passed on, and London probably stood silent and dead for years, the empty skeleton of a city, while Time and Nature completed the ruin which savage assaulters might otherwise have carried out. Thus we may conjecture ended the first of London's three lives.

When, after a time, things settled down in Britain, a new London began to rise on the site of the old city. Gradually the folk, mainly the East Saxons, settled on the outskirts of the deserted city, and, little by little, they made their way within the old walls; numbers of the old fugitives crept back to join them; merchants came and patched up the broken, grass-grown quays; houses were built; and life began anew. Steadily the progress continued. At first the houses were rough wattle-and-mud affairs, set down in any fashion on the old sites, but gradually proper rows of small, timbered houses rose

FATHER THAMES

on all sides, with numbers of little churches dotted here and there.

Then at the end of the eighth century the old trouble, invasion, began again. This time it was the Vikings (or Danes), the adventurous spirits of the fiords of Norway and the coasts of Denmark, men who risked the terrors of the hungry North Sea that they might plunder the monasteries and farms of the north and east of England. They, too, found our country a fair place, after their own cold, forbidding coasts; and the raids increased in frequency.

In the year 832 they were at the mouth of the Thames, landing in Sheppey; and in 839 came their first attempt to sail up the Thames. They were beaten off this time, but they had learned of a proper entry to which they might return later. In 851 came their great attempt. With three hundred and fifty of their long-ships they came, sailed right up the River to London Bridge, stormed and plundered the city. But their triumph was short-lived, for their army was well beaten at Ockley in Surrey, as it made its way southward down the Stane Street.

HOW THE CITY GREW (SAXON DAYS)

It seemed as if England and London might be tranquil once more; but the Vikings came in still greater numbers, and began to winter in our land instead of returning as had been their custom. The record of the next twenty years is one of constant harrying, with great armies marching throughout the countryside—plundering, killing, burning, with apparently no object.

When Alfred came to the throne, London was practically a Danish city; but he soon set to work and drove them out. And, though England suffered long and often from these foes, from that time onwards, the fortress being rebuilt, London never again fell to the invaders. When, eventually, Canute did enter London in 1017, after a considerable but entirely unsuccessful siege, it was at the invitation of the citizens, who accepted him as their King.

Under this wise King followed an era of prosperity for the growing city. Danish merchants settled within its walls; the wharves were busy once again; foreign traders sailed up the River to Billingsgate, their boats laden with wine, cloth, and spices from the East; and so rapidly

FATHER THAMES

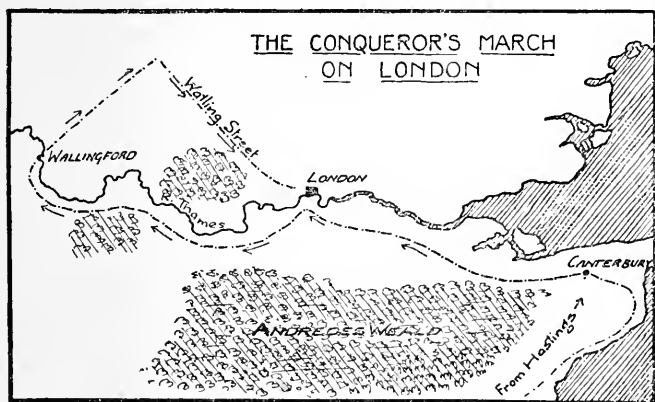
London became once more a great commercial centre. Indeed, such was its size and importance that it paid one-fifth of the whole tax which Canute levied on the kingdom.

From this time onward London progressed steadily; and so, too, did that other city, Westminster, which had sprung into being at another crossing, a few miles higher up the Thames—one more city made by the River, as we shall see later on.

CHAPTER FOUR

How the City grew (Norman Days)

THE year 1066 was yet another fateful year for the people of England and the citizens of London. When William of Normandy defeated Harold at Senlac, near Hastings, many of the English



fled to London, prepared to join the citizens in a stout defence of their great city; but no such defence was necessary.

William skirted the dense forest of Andredeswealde, and, striking the main road at Canter-

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bury, progressed to Southwark, which he destroyed. Now, good soldier and wise man that he was, William saw that a definite attack on London would be a difficult matter, and would profit him nothing. So he set to work to do what others had done before him—to cut off the city from its supplies. Marching westwards, he made his way to the crossing at Wallingford, and there reached the north bank of the River. Striking north-east again, he came soon to Watling Street once more, and thus cut off all the northern trade. London was in this way cut off from practically the bulk of its supplies; and the citizens were glad to make terms before worse things happened.

Probably the surrender occurred sooner than it might otherwise have done, by reason of the exceedingly mixed nature of the population. London counted among its citizens, as we can tell by reference to the documents of the time, merchants from many different parts of France—Caen and Rouen in particular—and from Flanders and Germany.

William kept loyally to the promises which

HOW THE CITY GREW (NORMAN DAYS)

he had made in the treaty, maintaining the rights of the city, and seeing that the thirty or forty thousand citizens had the proper protection he guaranteed. True, he built the great threatening Tower of London, about which we shall read in another chapter, but it is very probable that even in that the citizens saw only a strengthening of the old bastions built in former days for the guarding of the city.

Practically all our knowledge of London life in Norman days comes to us from the writings of one FitzStephen, a faithful clerk in the service of Thomas Becket. FitzStephen, who was present at the Archbishop's murder, wrote a life of his master, and prefaced it with a short account of the city. From his description we learn much of interest. We gather that, besides the great Cathedral, there were thirteen large churches and one hundred and twenty-six smaller parish churches; that the walls protected the city on all sides save the river front, where they had been pulled down to make room for wharves and stores. Says FitzStephen: "Those engaged in the several kinds of business,

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sellers of various things, contractors for various works, are to be found every morning in their different districts and shops. Besides there is in London, on the river bank, among the wines in ships, and in cellars sold by the vintners, a public food shop; there meats may be found every day, according to the season, fried and boiled, great and small fish, coarsest meats for the poor, more dainty for the rich." He also has much to tell us about the sports, which included archery, leaping, wrestling, and football. "In Easter holidays they fight battles on the water. A shield is hung upon a pole in mid-stream, a boat is made ready, and in the forepart thereof standeth a youth, who chargeth the shield with a lance. If so be that he breaketh the lance against the shield, he hath performed a worthy deed; but if he doth not break his lance, down he falleth into the water. . . . To this city, from every nation under heaven, do merchants delight to bring their goods by sea. . . . The only pests of London are the immoderate quaffing of fools and the frequency of fires."

CHAPTER FIVE

The River's First Bridge

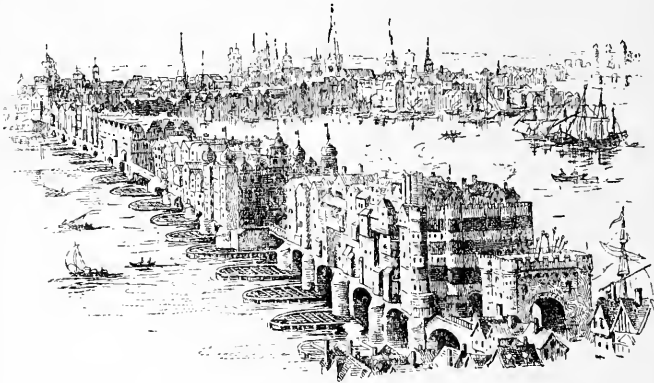
FROM our point of view, engaged as we are in the study of London's River and its influence on the city, perhaps the most interesting thing that happened in Norman days was the building of the first stone London Bridge.

Other bridges there had been from remote times, and these had taken their part in the moulding of the history of London, but they had suffered seriously from flood, fire, and warfare. In the year 1090, for instance, a tremendous storm had burst on the city, and while the wind blew down six hundred houses and several churches, the flood had entirely demolished the bridge. The citizens had built another in its place; but that, too, had narrowly escaped destruction when there occurred one of those dreadful fires which FitzStephen laments. The years 1135-6 again had brought calamity, for yet another fire had practically consumed

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the entire structure. It had been remade, however, and had lasted till 1163, when it had been found to be in such a very bad condition that an entirely new bridge was a necessity.

The new bridge was the conception of one Peter, the priest of a small church, St. Mary



OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

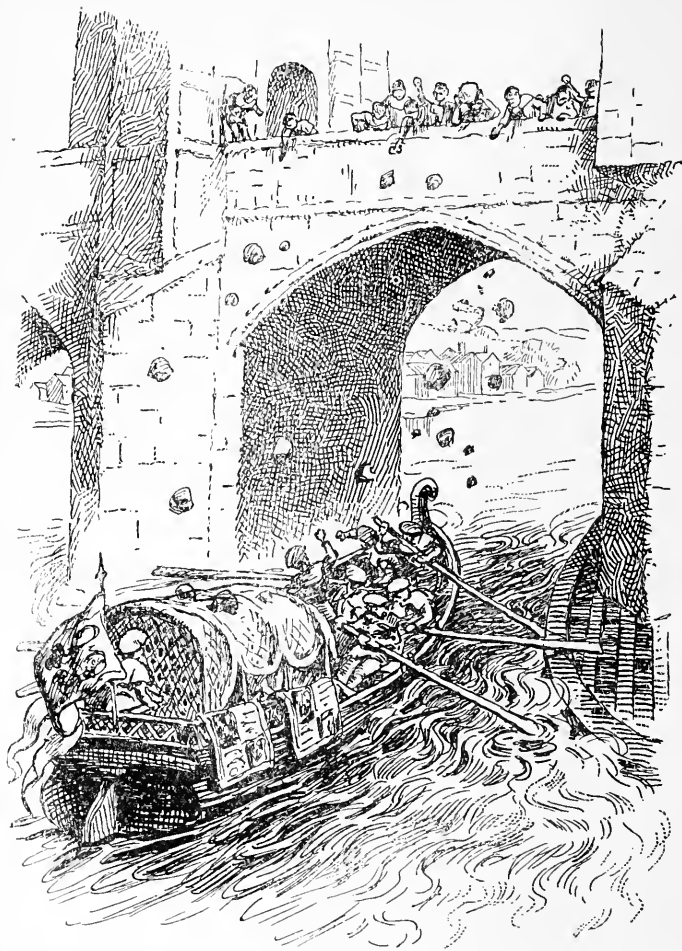
Colechurch, in the Poultry. This clergyman was a member of a religious body whose special interest was the building of bridges, in those times regarded as an act of piety. Skilled in this particular craft, he dreamed of a bridge for London such as his brother craftsmen were building in the great cities of France; and he set

THE RIVER'S FIRST BRIDGE

to work to amass the necessary funds. King, courtiers, common folk, all responded to his call, and at last, in 1176, he was able to commence. Unfortunately, he died before the completion of his project, for it took thirty-three years to build; and another brother, Isenbert, carried on after him.

A strange bridge it was, too, when finished; but good enough to last six and a half centuries. It was in reality a street built across the River, 926 feet in length, 40 feet wide, and some 60 feet above the level of high water. Nineteen pointed arches, varying in width from 10 to 32 feet, upheld its weight over massive piers which measured from 23 to 36 feet in thickness. So massive were these piers that probably only about a third of the whole length of the Bridge was waterway. This, of course, meant that the practice of "shooting" the arches in a boat was a perilous adventure, for with such narrow openings the current was tremendous. So dangerous was it that it was usual for timid folk to disembark just above the Bridge, walk round the end, and re-embark below, rather than

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AN ARCH OF OLD LONDON BRIDGE: QUEEN ELEANOR
BEING STONED IN 1263.

THE RIVER'S FIRST BRIDGE

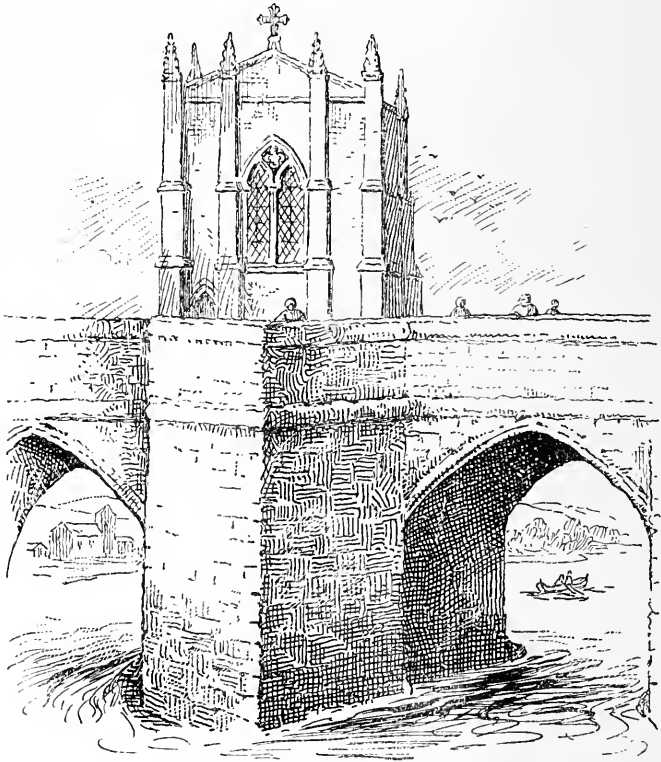
take the risk of being dashed against the stonework. Which wisdom was embodied in a proverb of the time—"London Bridge was made for wise men to go over and fools to go under."

Strangely enough, old London Bridge forestalled the Tower Bridge by having in its centre a drawbridge, which could be raised to allow vessels to sail through, much as the bascules of the modern bridge can be lifted to allow the passage of the great ships of to-day. There were on each side of the roadway ordinary houses, the upper stories of which were used for dwellings, while the ground floors acted as shops. In the middle of the Bridge, over the tenth and largest pier, stood a small chapel dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, the youngest of England's saints.

But, even when a stone bridge was erected, troubles were by no means over. Four years after the completion, in July, 1212, came another disastrous fire, and practically all the houses, which, unlike the Bridge itself, were built of timber, were destroyed. In the year 1282 it was the turn of the River to play havoc.

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As we said just now, only about a third of the length was waterway. This condition of things



CHAPEL OF ST. THOMAS BECKET.

(avoided in all modern bridges) meant a tremendous pressure of the current, both at ebb

THE RIVER'S FIRST BRIDGE

and flow, and an enormous pressure at flood time. When, in the year mentioned, there came great ice-floods, five arches were carried away, and "London Bridge was broken down, my fair lady." From that time onwards there was a considerable series of accidents right down to the time of the Great Fire of London, concerning which we shall read in a later chapter.

Old London Bridge, during its life, saw many strange happenings. In 1263, for instance, a great crowd gathered, wherever the citizens could find a coign of vantage, for the Queen, Eleanor of Provence and wife of Henry III., was passing that way on her journey from the Tower to Windsor. But this was no triumphal passage, for the Queen was strongly opposed to the Barons, who were still working for a final settlement of Magna Charta. Enraged at her action, the people of London waited till her barge approached the Bridge, and then they hurled heavy stones down upon it and assailed the Queen with rough words; so that she was compelled with her attendants to return to the Tower, rather than face the enraged mob.

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The year 1390 saw yet another queer event. Probably most of you understand what is meant by a tournament. Well, at this time, there was much rivalry between the English and Scottish knights, and a tilt was proposed between two champions, Lord Wells of England and Earl Lindsay of Scotland. The Englishman, granted choice of ground, chose by some strange whim London Bridge for the scene of action rather than some well-known tournament ground. On the appointed day the Bridge was thronged with folk who had come to witness this unusual contest in the narrow street. Great was the excitement as the knights charged towards each other. Three times did they meet in the shock of battle, and at the third the Englishman fell vanquished from his charger, to be attended immediately by the gallant Scottish knight.

The Bridge, as the only approach to the city from the south, was the scene of many wonderful pageants and processions, as our victorious Kings came back from their wars with France, or returned to England with their brides

THE RIVER'S FIRST BRIDGE

from overseas. Such a magnificent spectacle was the crossing in state of Henry V. after the great victory of Agincourt in the year 1415.



LONDON BRIDGE IN MODERN TIMES.

The battle, as most of you know, took place in October of that year, and at the end of November the King passed over the Bridge at the head of his most distinguished prisoners

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and his victorious soldiers, amid the tumultuous rejoicing of London's jubilant citizens.

Yet another strange scene was enacted when Wat Tyler, at the head of his tens of thousands, passed over howling and threatening, after being temporarily held back by the gates which stood at the south end of the Bridge.

So the old Bridge lasted on, living through momentous days, till, in the year 1832, it was removed to give place to the new London Bridge which had been erected sixty yards to the westwards.

CHAPTER SIX

How the City grew (in the Middle Ages)

LONDON in that period which we speak of as the Middle Ages was indeed a remarkable city. Dotted about all over it, north and south, west and east, were great monasteries and nunneries and churches, for in those days the Church was a tremendous power in the land; while huddled together within its confines were shops, houses, stores, palaces, all set down in a bewildering confusion. Of palaces there was indeed a profusion; in fact, London might well have been called a City of Palaces. But they were not arranged in long lines along the banks of canals, as were those of Venice, nor round fine stately squares, as in Florence, Genoa, and other famous cities of the Continent. London's palaces nestled in the city's narrow, muddy lanes, between the warehouses of the merchants and the hovels of the poor. They paid

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little or no attention to external beauty, but within they were splendid structures.

Now, what did this mean? That the common people of London constantly came into contact with the great ones of the land. The apprentice, sent on an errand by his master, might at any moment be held up as Warwick the King-maker, let us say, emerged from his gateway, followed by a train of several hundred retainers all decked out in his livery; or the Queen and her ladies might pass in gay procession to view a tournament in the fields just north of the Chepe. In that way the citizens learned right from their earliest day that London was not the only place in England, that there were other folk in the land, and great ones too, who were not London merchants and craftsmen.

This constant reminder that they were simply part and parcel of the great realm of England did this for the people of London: it made them keen on politics, always ready to take sides in any national strife. On the other hand, it gave them great pride. The citizens

HOW THE CITY GREW (MIDDLE AGES)

soon discovered that, though they were not the only folk in the land, they counted for much, for whatever side or cause they supported always won in the end. This, of course, more firmly cemented the position of London as the foremost spot in the kingdom.

Very beautiful indeed were some of the palaces, or inns, as they were quite commonly called. They were in no sense of the word fortresses; their gates opened straight on to the narrow, muddy lanes without either ditch or portcullis. Inside there was usually a wide courtyard, surrounded by the various buildings. Unfortunately the Great Fire and other calamities have not spared us much whereby we can recall such palaces to mind. Staple Inn, whose magnificent timbered front is still one of London's most precious relics, is of a later date, but possesses many of the medieval characters. Crosby Hall, in Bishopsgate Street, was a fine specimen. This was erected in the fifteenth century by a grocer and Lord Mayor, Sir John Crosby, a man of great wealth; and for some time it was the residence of Richard III. For

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many years it remained to show us the exceeding beauty of a medieval dwelling; but, alas, that too has gone the way of all the others! A portion of it, the great Hall, has been re-erected in Chelsea.



BAYNARD'S CASTLE BEFORE THE GREAT FIRE.

Otherwise most of these palaces remain only as a name. Baynard's Castle, one of the most famous of all, which stood close to the western end of the river wall, lasted for 600 years from the Norman Conquest to the time of the Great Fire, but it is only remembered in the name of a wharf and a ward of the city. Coldharbour Palace, which stood in Thames Street with picturesque gables overhanging the River,

HOW THE CITY GREW (MIDDLE AGES)

passed from a great place in history down to oblivion.

So with all the rest of these elaborate, historic palaces, about which we can read in the pages of Stow, that delightful chronicler of London and her ways; they either perished in the flames or were pulled down to make way for hideous commercial buildings.

London in the Middle Ages passed through a period of great prosperity; but, at the same time, it suffered terribly through pestilence, famine, rebellions, and so on. The year 1349 saw a dreadful calamity in the shape of the "Black Death"—a kind of plague which came over from Asia. The narrow, dirty lanes, with their stinking, open ditches, the unsatisfactory water-supply, all caused the dread disease to spread rapidly; and a very large part of London's citizens perished.

Moreover, famine followed in the path of the pestilence which stalked through the land. So great was the toll of human life throughout England that there were but few left to work on the land; and London, which depended for

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practically all its supplies on what was sent from afar, suffered severely. Still, despite all these troubles, the Middle Ages must be regarded as part of the "good old times," when England was "merry England" indeed. True, the citizens had to work hard, and during long hours, but they found plenty of time for pleasure. Those of you who have read anything of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" will know something of the brightness of life in those times, of the holidays, the pageants and processions, the tournaments, the fairs, the general merrymaking.

All of which, of course, was due to good trade. The city which the River had made was growing in strength. London now made practically everything it needed, and within its walls were representatives of practically every calling. As Sir Walter Besant says in his fine book, "London": "There were mills to grind the corn, breweries for making the beer; the linen was spun within the walls, and the cloth made and dressed; the brass pots, tin pots, iron utensils, and wooden platters and basins, were

HOW THE CITY GREW (MIDDLE AGES)

all made in the city; the armour, with its various pieces, was hammered out and fashioned in the streets; all kinds of clothes, from the leathern jerkin of the poorest to the embroidered robes of a princess, were made here. . . .

“ There was no noisier city in the whole world; the roar and the racket of it could be heard afar off, even at the risings of the Surrey hills or the slope of Highgate. From every lane rang out, without ceasing, the tuneful note of the hammer and the anvil; the carpenters, not without noise, drove in their nails, and the coopers hooped their casks; the blacksmith’s fire roared; the harsh grating of the founders set the teeth on edge of those who passed that way; along the river bank, from the Tower to Paul’s Stairs, those who loaded and those who unloaded, those who carried the bales to the warehouses, those who hoisted them up; the ships which came to port and the ships which sailed away, did all with fierce talking, shouting, quarrelling, and racket.”

As we picture the prosperity of those medieval days there comes into our minds that winding

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silver stream which made such prosperity possible, and we seem to see the River Thames crowded with ships from foreign parts, many of them bringing wine from France, Spain, and other lands, for wine was one of the principal imports of the Middle Ages, and filling up the great holds of their empty vessels with England's superior wool; others from Italy, laden with fine weapons and jewels, with spices, drugs, and silks, and all wanting our wool. A few of those ships in the Pool were laden with *coal*, for in the Middle Ages this new fuel—sea-coal, as it was called to distinguish it from the ordinary wood charcoal—made its appearance in London. Nor did London take to it at first. In the reign of Edward I. the citizens sent a petition, praying the King to forbid the use of this “nuisance which corrupteth the air with its stink and smoke, to the great detriment of the health of the people.”

But the advantages of the sea-coal rapidly outweighed the disadvantages with the citizens, and the various proclamations issued by sovereigns came to nought. Before long several

HOW THE CITY GREW (MIDDLE AGES)

officials were appointed to act as inspectors of the new article of commerce as it came into the wharves. The famous Dick Whittington and various other prominent citizens of London made large fortunes from their coal-boats.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Tower of London

LONDON has many treasures to show us, if we take the trouble to look for them, but it has no relic of the past so perfect as its Tower—a place which every Briton, especially every Londoner, ought to see and try to understand.

If only the Tower's silent old stones could suddenly gain the power of speech, what strange tales they would have to tell of the things which have occurred during their centuries of history—tales of things glorious and tales of things unspeakably tragic. Though the latter would easily outweigh the former in number, I am afraid; for this grim stronghold is a monument to evil rather than to good.

The Tower has often been spoken of as the *key* to London, and there is truth in the saying, for its position is certainly an excellent one. When William of Normandy descended on England with his great company of knights

THE TOWER OF LONDON

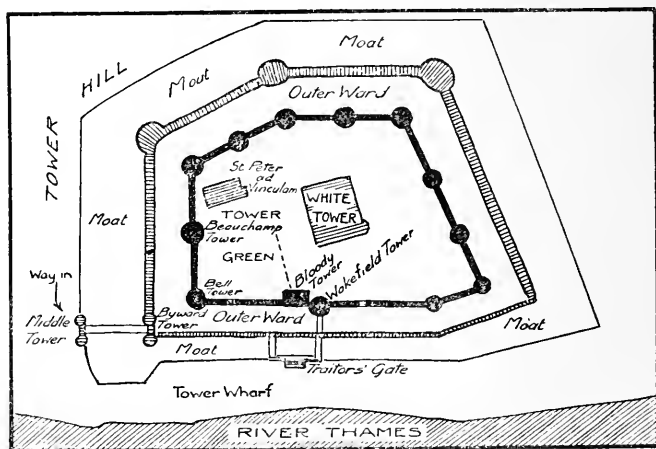
and their retainers, he professed to have every consideration for the people of London, and certainly he treated the citizens quite fairly according to the terms of the treaty. But, at the same time, he apparently did not feel any too sure of them, and so he called in the monk, Gundulf, to erect a fortress, which to all appearances was merely a strengthening of the fortifications already there, but which in reality was intended to serve as a constant reminder of the power and authority of the conquering king.

The spot chosen was the angle at the eastern corner, just where the wall turns sharply inland from the River, and no position round London could have been better chosen. In the first place it guarded London from the river approach, ready to hold off any enemy venturesome enough to sail up the Thames to attack the city. But also, and this undoubtedly was what was in the mind of the Conqueror, it frowned down on the city.

A formidable Norman Keep was erected, with walls 15 feet thick, so strongly built that

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they stand to-day practically as they stood 900 years ago, save that stone-faced windows were put in a couple of centuries ago to take the place of the narrow slits or loopholes which served for light and ventilation in a fortress of this sort.



GROUND PLAN OF THE TOWER.

To understand the Tower of London properly (and we really want some idea of it before any visit, otherwise it is merely a confusion of towers and open spaces without any meaning) we must realize that it consists of three separate

THE TOWER OF LONDON

lines of defences, all erected at different times. The innermost, the Keep or White Tower, we have touched upon. Beyond that, and separated from it by an open space known as the Inner Ward, is the first wall, with its twelve towers, among them the Beauchamp Tower, the Bell Tower, the Bloody Tower, and the Wakefield Tower. Then, beyond that again, and separated by another open space known as the Outer Ward, is yet another wall; and still beyond is the Moat, outside everything. So that any attacking army, having successfully negotiated the Moat, would find itself with the outer wall to scale and break, and within that another inner wall, 46 feet high. The garrison, driven back from these two, could even then retire to the innermost keep, with its walls 15 feet thick, and there hold out for a great length of time against the fiercest attacks. So that, you will readily see, the Tower was a fortress of tremendous strength in days before the use of heavy artillery.

The outer defences were added to William's White Tower from time to time by various

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monarchs. The first or inner wall, 8 feet thick, begun in the Conqueror's days, was added to and strengthened by Stephen, Henry II., and John. The outer wall and the Moat were completed by Henry III.; and the Tower thus took its present shape.

Most of our Sovereigns, from the Conqueror's time right down to the Restoration, used the Tower of London. Kings and Queens who were powerful used it as a prison for their enemies; those who were weak and feared the people used it as a fortress for themselves. This latter use of the Tower was particularly instanced in the reign of Stephen—an illuminating chapter in the story of London.

Stephen, following the death of Henry I., was elected King by the Great Council, and duly crowned in London; but the barons soon saw that he was unfitted for the task of ruling, and they took sides with the Empress Matilda, hoping thereby to get nearer the independence they desired. Stephen for a time held his own with the aid of a number of trusty barons, but in 1139 he offended the Church by his rough

THE TOWER OF LONDON

treatment of the Bishops of Lincoln and Salisbury, and his supporters fell away. Consequently he was compelled in the following year to seek safety in the Tower, close to his loyal followers, the citizens of London.

Now the constable of the Tower in those days was one Geoffrey de Mandeville, about as unscrupulous and cruel a rascal as could be imagined. Stephen, to ensure his support, made him Earl of Essex, and for a time all went well. But when, following Stephen's defeat and capture in 1141, the Empress Matilda moved to London to be crowned, Geoffrey de Mandeville had not the slightest compunction in taking sides with her, for which he was rewarded by the gift of castles, revenues, and the office of Sheriff of Essex. But Matilda offended the citizens of London to such an extent that they drove her from the city and attacked Mandeville in the Tower. Whereupon Mandeville, without any hesitation, transferred his allegiance to Maud of Boulogne, Stephen's wife, who was rallying his scattered forces—which allegiance was purchased by

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making Mandeville the Sheriff of Hertfordshire, Middlesex, and London, as well. Nothing, however, could serve to make this treacherous man act straightly, and when later Stephen found him planning yet another revolt in favour of Matilda, he attacked him suddenly, took him prisoner, and removed him from all public affairs.

This chapter in English history is far from showing the English nobles in a good light, but it is exceedingly interesting as revealing the extent to which London was beginning to count in the kingdom.

To-day we enter from the city side by what is known as the Middle Tower—a renovated and modernized gateway, with a big, stone-carved Royal Arms above its arch. The name “Middle” strikes us as curious, seeing that it is the first protection on the landward side, until we remember or learn that originally there was another Tower, the Lion Tower, nearer the city (approximately where the refreshment room now stands) and separated from the Middle Tower by a drawbridge. But the Lion Tower

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disappeared many many years ago, and only two of the three outer defences remain, the Middle Tower and the Byward Tower, the latter reached by a permanent bridge over the Moat.

Once through the Byward Gateway and we are between the inner and outer defences. Leaving on our left the Bell Tower, a strong, irregular, octagonal tower, which gets its name from the turret whence curfew bell rings each night, we walk along parallel to the River, past the frowning gateway of the Bloody Tower on our left, with its low arch which originally gave the only entrance to the Inner Ward, and on our right, and exactly opposite, the Traitor's Gate, the riverside passage through the outer walls. Skirting the Wakefield Tower, we pass through a comparatively modern opening, and so come upon the amazing Norman Keep of William the Conqueror.

This Keep is not quite square, though it appears to be, and no one of its four sides corresponds to any other. Its greatest measurements are from north to south 116 feet, and

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from east to west 96 feet. Inside, three cross walls, from 6 to 8 feet thick, divide each floor into three separate apartments of unequal sizes. It is a building complete in itself, with everything required for a fortress, a Royal dwelling, and a prison. Probably, as you walk about the cold, gloomy chambers, you will say to yourselves that you can understand the fortress and the prison parts, but that you could never imagine it as a dwelling. But you must remember that with coverings on the floor and with the bare walls hung with beautiful tapestries, as was the custom in early days, and with furniture in position, the apartments must have presented a much more comfortable appearance.

The first story, or main floor, was the place where abode the garrison—the men-at-arms and their officers; and above on the other two floors were the State apartments—St. John's Chapel and the Banqueting Hall on the second story, and the great Council Chamber of the Sovereign on the third floor. Beneath were great dungeons, terrible places without light or ventila-

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tion, having in those days no entrance from the level ground, but reached only by that central staircase which rose from them to the roof.

In these days the Keep is largely used as an armoury; and we can gain a fine idea of the different kinds of armour worn in different periods, and of the weapons used and of the cruel implements of torture. It also contains several good models of the Tower at different times, and a short study of these will do much to get rid of the confusion which most folk feel as they hurry from tower to tower without any general idea of the place.

Leaving the ancient Keep, we cross the only wide open space of the fortress, a paved quadrangle which keeps its antique and now inappropriate name of Tower Green, where in bygone days some of the Tower's most famous prisoners have paraded in solitude on the grass. Here, marked by a tablet, is the site of the scaffold where died Lady Jane Grey, Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, and other famous prisoners of State. It is a quiet, moody spot, where the black ravens of the Tower, as they

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stand sentinel beneath the sycamore trees, at times seem the only things in keeping with the sadness of the place.

To our right is the little Church of St. Peter ad Vinculam, which will be shown to us by one of the quaintly garbed "Beef-eaters" (if one can be spared from other duties), the famous Yeomen of the Guard who still wear the uniform designed in Henry the Eighth's days. Concerning this little sanctuary Lord Macaulay wrote: "There is no sadder spot on earth. . . . Death is there associated with whatever is darkest in human nature and in human destiny, with the savage triumph of implacable enemies, with the inconstancy, the ingratitude, the cowardice of friends, with all the miseries of fallen greatness and of blighted fame. Thither have been carried through successive ages, by the rude hands of gaolers, without one mourner following, the bleeding relics of men who had been the captains of armies, the leaders of parties, the oracles of senates, and the ornaments of courts."

Close together in a small space before the

THE TOWER OF LONDON

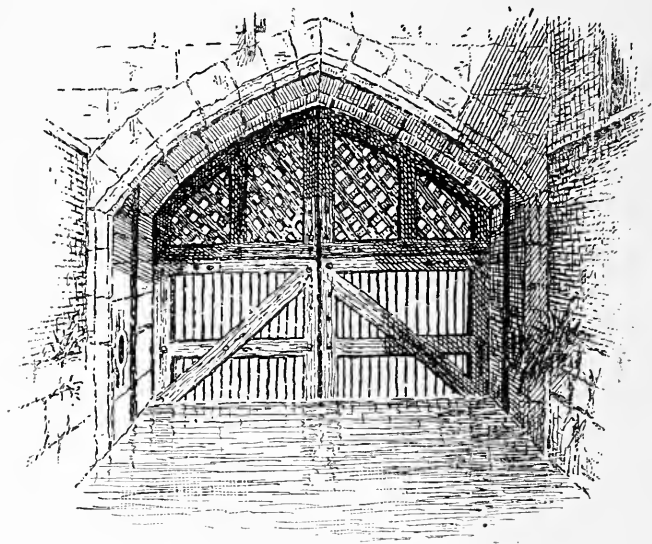
Altar, raised slightly above the level of the floor, lie the mortal remains of two Queens, Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard, Margaret of Salisbury, last of the proud Plantagenets, Lord and Lady Rochford, the Dukes of Somerset, Northumberland, Monmouth, Suffolk, and Norfolk, the Earl of Essex, Lady Jane Grey, Lord Guilford Dudley, and Sir Thomas Overbury.

As we pass on and come to the Beauchamp Tower, and later to the Bloody Tower, we see the tiny prisons where these unfortunates, and many others, languished in confinement, waiting their tragic end, whiling away the weary hours by carving quaint inscriptions on the stone walls; and, in the latter, we are shown the tiny apartment where perished the little Princes at the instigation of their uncle, Richard III.

From our point of view there remains just one more thing to consider, and that is the Tower's connection with the River. Probably few of us, as we try to think back through the centuries, realize how important the Thames was even as a highway. We know from our

FATHER THAMES

reading that London's streets were narrow, crooked, and of very little use for a big amount of traffic; yet we do not see in our mind's eye the great waterway which everybody, rich and



TRAITOR'S GATE.

poor, used in those days, alike for business and pleasure. And, of course, the Tower contributed very largely to this water traffic, for the King, his nobles, and all who had business at Westminster, travelled constantly to and fro

THE TOWER OF LONDON

in the great painted barges which made the River a gayer and brighter place than it is in our days. For the purpose of such travellers there was provided the Queen's Steps at the Tower Wharf, in order to avoid the use of the sinister Traitor's Gate—that low, frowning archway, which gave entrance from the River, and through which very many famous persons, innocent and guilty alike, passed to their doom, brought thither by water at the behest of the Sovereign.

According to John Stow, who wrote in Elizabeth's reign, the Tower was then "a citadel to defend or command the city; a royal palace for assemblies or treaties; a prison of state for the most dangerous offenders; the only place of coinage for all England at this time; the armoury for warlike provision; the treasury of the ornaments and jewels of the Crown; and general conservator of most records of the King's courts of justice at Westminster." All that is changed now. The Tower has long since ceased to be a Royal residence. As a defence of the city it would not last more than

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a few minutes against modern artillery. Save for the period of the great war, when it held the bodies of numerous spies and traitors and saw the execution of several, it has for many years given up its claim to be a prison. The records which filled the little Chapel of St. John have now been moved to the Record Office, and the making of money goes on at the Mint just across the road. The Crown Jewels still find a home here, in the Wakefield Tower, the prison where Henry VI. came to his violent end. Yet, despite all these changes, the fortress is still the Tower of London—perhaps the city's most fascinating relic.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How Fire destroyed what the River had made

LEAVING the Tower by the Byward Gate, and passing along Great Tower Street and Eastcheap, we come to the spot

“Where London’s column pointing to the skies,
Like a tall bully, lifts its head and lies.”

This is, of course, the Monument, which for many years indicated to all and sundry that the Great Fire of 1666 was the work of the Roman Catholics. Till the year 1831 the inscription, added in 1681 at the time of the Titus Oates affair, perpetuated the lie in stone, but in that year it was removed by the City Council. Now the gilt urn with its flames, which we can see well if we ascend the 345 steps to the iron cage at the top, merely commemorates the Fire itself, without any reference to its cause, as in the original structure. From the top of the Monument we can get perhaps

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THE MONUMENT.

FIRE AND THE RIVER

the very finest of all views of London and its River.

But there is one thing which should preface our account of the Great Fire, and that is an account of the Great Plague which visited and afflicted London in the previous year. Of course, the Fire was in one sense a terrible disaster for London, yet the destruction which it wrought was in reality a great blessing to the plague-ridden city.

The Plague, by no means the first to visit London, came over from the Continent, where for years it had been decimating the large cities. It broke out with terrible power in the summer of the year 1665—a dry, scorching summer which made the flushing of the open street drains an impossible thing, and gave every help to the dread pestilence. If we want to read a thrilling description of London at this time we have only to turn to the “Journal of the Plague Year,” by Defoe, the author of “Robinson Crusoe.” This was not actually a journal, for Defoe was only four years old in 1665, but it was a faithful account based on first-hand

FATHER THAMES

information. In its simply written pages (to quote from Sir Walter Besant) "we see the horror of the empty streets; we hear the cries and lamentations of those who are seized and those who are bereaved. The cart comes slowly along the streets with the man ringing a bell and crying, 'Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!' We think of the great holes into which the dead were thrown in heaps and covered with a little earth; we think of the grass growing in the streets; the churches deserted; the roads black with fugitives hurrying from the abode of Death; we hear the frantic mirth of revellers snatching to-night a doubtful rapture, for to-morrow they die. The City is filled with despair." As we can well imagine, the King and his courtiers fled from Whitehall and the Tower away into the country; the Law Courts were shifted up river to Oxford. Naturally all business stopped, and trade was at a standstill. Ships in hundreds lay idle in the Pool, waiting for the cargoes which came not, because the wharves and warehouses were deserted; laden ships that sailed up the Thames

FIRE AND THE RIVER

speedily turned about and made for the Continental ports. So it went on, the visitation increasing in fury, till in September there were nearly 900 fell each day. Then it abated slightly, but continued through the winter, on into the following summer, and in the end more than 97,000 people perished out of a population of 460,000.

Then, on September 2, came that other catastrophe, the Great Fire. Starting in a baker's shop in Pudding Lane, near the Monument, it was driven westwards by a strong east wind.

The London of Stuart days gave the Fire every possible help. Not much survives to-day to show us what things were like, but the quaint, timber-fronted houses of Staple Inn (Holborn) and No. 17, Fleet Street, and the pictures painted at the time, give us a fair idea of the inflammable nature of the buildings; and when we remember that these wooden houses, old, dry, and coated with pitch, were in some streets so close to those opposite that it was possible to shake hands from the overhanging upper

FATHER THAMES

stories, we are not surprised at the rapidity with which the Fire spread.

The diaries of two gentlemen — Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn, the former one of the King's Ministers, the latter a wealthy and learned gentleman of the Court—bring home to us plainly the terror of the seven days' visitation. To begin with, very few took any special notice of the outbreak: fires were too common to cause great consternation. Even Pepys himself tells us that he returned to bed; but when the morning came and it was still burning, he was disturbed. Says he: "By and by Jane tells me that she hears that above 800 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower; and there got up upon one of the high places; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side of the end of the bridge."

London Bridge, as you will remember from a

FIRE AND THE RIVER

former chapter, was very narrow, and the houses projected out over the River, held in place by enormous timber struts; and these, with the wooden frames of the three-storied houses, gave the fire a good hold. Moreover the burning buildings, falling on the Bridge, blocked the way to any who would have fought the flames. After about a third of the buildings had been destroyed the fire was stopped by the pulling down of houses and the open space; but not before it had done great damage to the stone structure itself. The heat was so intense that arches and piers which had remained firm for centuries now began to show signs of falling to pieces, and it was found necessary to spend £1,500, an enormous sum in those days, on repairs before any rebuilding could be attempted.

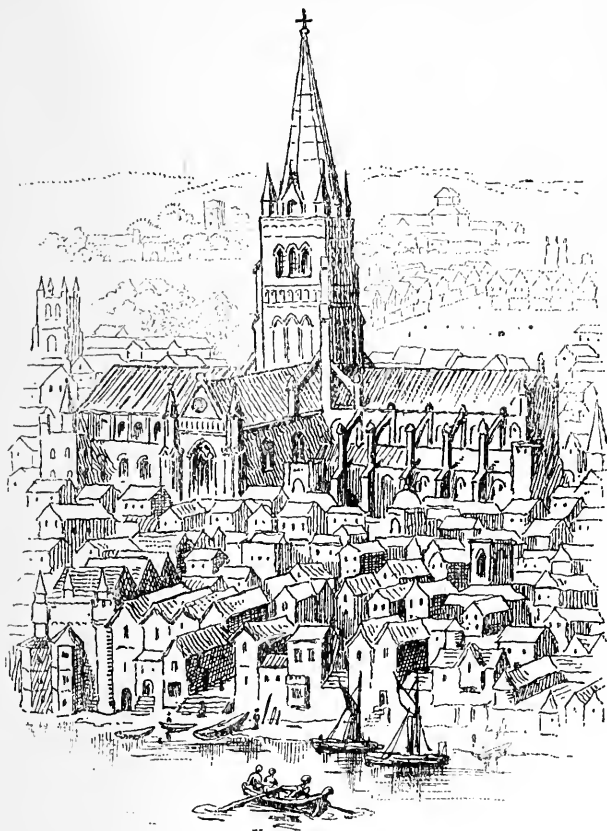
Day after day the Fire continued. Says Evelyn: "It burned both in breadth and length, the churches, public halls, Exchange, hospitals, monuments, and ornaments, leaping after a prodigious manner from house to house and street to street, at great distances one from the other. . . .

FATHER THAMES

“ Here we saw the Thames covered with goods floating, all the barges and boats laden with what some had time and courage to save, as, on the other, the carts, etc., carrying out to the fields, which for many miles were strewed with movables of all sorts, and tents erected to shelter both people and what goods they could get away. . . .

“ (Sept. 7) At my return I was infinitely concerned to find that goodly Church (cathedral), St. Paul’s, now a sad ruin. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heat had in a manner calcined, so that all the ornaments, columns, friezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland stone flew off, even to the very roof, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six acres by measure) was totally melted; the ruins of the vaulted roof falling broke into St. Faith’s, which being filled with the magazines of books belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consumed, burning for a week following. . . . Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most ancient pieces of

FIRE AND THE RIVER



OLD ST. PAUL'S (A.D. 1500).

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early piety in the Christian world, besides near 100 more. The exquisitely wrought Mercers' Chapel, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabric of Christchurch, all the rest of the Companies' Halls, splendid buildings, arches, entries, all in dust. . . .

“The people who now walked about the ruins appeared like men in some dismal desert, or rather in some great city laid waste by a cruel enemy. . . . The by-lanes and narrower streets were quite filled up with rubbish, nor could one have possibly known where he was, but by the ruins of some Church or Hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining. . . .”

Just as the Plague was by no means the first plague which had visited the city, so there had been other serious outbreaks of fire, but those two visitations were by far the worst in the history of London. We can gather some idea of the scene of desolation which resulted when we read that the ruins covered an area of 436 acres—387 acres, or five-sixths of the entire city, within the walls and 73 acres without; that the Fire wiped out four city gates, one cathedral,

FIRE AND THE RIVER

eighty-nine parish churches, the Royal Exchange, Sion College, and all sorts of hospitals, schools, etc.

Yet gradually, not within three or four years, as is commonly stated in history books, but slowly, as the ruined citizens found money for the purpose, there rose from the débris another London—a London with broader, cleaner streets, with larger and better-built houses of stone and brick; with fine public buildings and a new Cathedral—a London more like the city which we know. So *modern* London began its life.

The River did not make a new London as it had made the old city. Shops, markets, quays, public buildings, did not spring up naturally in places where the trade of the time demanded them, as they had done in the old days, otherwise much would have changed. Instead, the new city very largely rebuilt itself on the foundations of the old, quite regardless of comfort or utility.

Its supremacy as a Port was never in doubt. With the tremendous break in London's com-

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merce, caused first by the Plague and then by the devastation of the Fire, it would have seemed possible for the shipping to decrease permanently; but it never did. So firmly was London Port established in the past that it lived on strongly into modern times, despite many excellent reasons why it should lose its great place.

CHAPTER NINE

The Riverside and its Palaces

TO-DAY, when we stand upon Waterloo Bridge and let our gaze rest upon the Embankment, as it sweeps round in the large arc of a circle from Blackfriars past Charing Cross to Westminster, it is hard indeed to picture the time when these massive buildings—hotels, public buildings, suites of offices, etc.—were not there, when the green grass grew right down to the water's edge on the left *strand* or bank of the River, when a walk from the one city to the other was a walk through country lanes and fields. It is hard indeed to brush away all the ugly, grey reminders of the present, and see a little of the past in its beauty—for beautiful the River undoubtedly was in Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart times.

We have spoken of the growth of the city, and what the River meant to it; of the wharves and warehouses which extended from the Tower to

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the Fleet River. That was the commercial London of those days. Westwards from the Fleet, along the side of the Thames, spread the more picturesque signs of London's prosperity



THE FLEET RIVER AT BLACKFRIARS (A.D. 1760).

—the dwellings of some of the wealthy and influential.

From the western end of the city—Ludgate and Newgate—spread out westwards the

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

suburbs, part of the city, though not actually within its walls, until an outer limit was reached at Temple Bar, situated at the western extremity of one of London's most famous thoroughfares, Fleet Street, named after the little river which flowed down where Farringdon and New Bridge Streets are, and which emptied itself, and still empties itself, in the shape of a main drain, into the Thames beneath Blackfriars Bridge.

Between Fleet Street and the River stood the Convent of the White Friars, and that most famous of places the Temple.

In the Middle Ages the Church was far more intimately concerned with the everyday life of the people than it is to-day, for the simple reason that the clergy attended to the care of the sick and aged, to the teaching of the young, and other charitable works. Now it must be understood that there were in this country two classes of clergy—the monks, who were known as “regular clergy” (who lived by a *regulus* or rule), and the ordinary clergy, much as we have them to-day, in charge of our cathedrals, parish

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churches, etc., these last being known as "secular clergy." For the upkeep of the Church folk paid what were known as "tithes." To begin with, this "tithe," or tax, was handed over to the bishop, who divided it out into four parts—one for the building itself, one for the poor, one for the priest, and one for himself. Gradually, however, the "regulars" obtained control of affairs, receiving the tithes, and, instead of giving the full quarters to the "seculars," they simply paid them what they thought fit, and appropriated the remainder for themselves. This led to two things: the monasteries became enormously wealthy, and the seculars became exceedingly poor and dissatisfied; so that there was constant strife between the two branches. Many nobles, ignorant of the true condition of affairs, and wishing the excellent charitable work of the Church to be continued, made great gifts to the Church. Unfortunately these very great gifts were sometimes apt to do the very opposite to what their donors intended. Instead of the monks devoting themselves more and more earnestly to the care of the needy,

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

they began to think more of their own comfort and position. They erected for themselves extensive and comfortable dwellings, with their own breweries, mills, and farms, and they lived on the fat of the land. They indulged themselves until their luxury became a byword with the common people. Then arose two great teachers, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic, who were led to protest against the abuses. They founded new Orders of religious men—called the Friars—who went from place to place with no money and only such clothes as covered them. These men believed in and taught the blessedness of poverty.

Many of them came over from the Continent and settled in various parts of the city. If you pick up a map of London, even one of to-day, you will see such names as Blackfriars, Whitefriars, Crutched Friars, Austin Friars—showing where they made their homes. Some, the Black Friars, took up a position and eventually built for themselves a fine monastery and church just outside the city walls at the mouth of the Fleet River. Others, the White Friars or Car-

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melite Monks, made themselves secure just to the west of the Fleet.

Whitefriars was one of London's sanctuaries; within its precincts wrong-doers were safe from the arm of the Law. Now, in certain periods of our history, such things as sanctuaries were good; they frequently prevented innocent men and women suffering at the hands of tyrants and unscrupulous enemies. So that the right of sanctuary was always most jealously guarded. But, as time went on, this led to abuses, and when the monasteries were closed by Henry VIII., the Lord Mayor of London asked the King to abolish the sanctuary rights of Blackfriars; but he would not do so. The consequence was that Blackfriars and Whitefriars, particularly the latter, became sinks of iniquity. In the latter, which was nicknamed *Alsatia*, congregated criminals of all sorts—thieves, coiners, forgers, debtors, cut-throats, burglars—as we can read in Scott's novel, "The Fortunes of Nigel." For years it held its evil associations, but it became so bad that in 1697 there was passed a Bill

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

abolishing for ever the sanctuary rights of Whitefriars.

West of Whitefriars is the Temple, which, with its quiet old courtyards, its beautiful church, and its restful gardens stretching down to the Embankment, is one of London's most fascinating places.

It gets its name from its founders, the Knights Templars—a great Order of men who lived in the time of the Crusades, and whose white mantles with a red cross have been famous ever since. These knights, who took vows to remain unmarried and poor, set themselves the great task of guarding the pilgrims' roads to the Holy Land.

In 1184 the Red Cross Knights settled on the banks of the River Thames, and made their home there in what was called the New Temple. For 130 years they abode there, gradually increasing in wealth and power, till in the end their very strength defeated them. Princes and nobles who had given them great gifts of money for their worthy work saw that money used, not for charitable purposes, but to keep

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up the pomp and luxury of the place, and soon various folk in high places coveted the Templars' wealth and power, and determined to defeat them.

So well did these folk work that in 1313 the Order was broken up, and the property came into the King's hands. A few years later the Temple was leased by the Crown to those men who were studying the Law in London, and in their hands it has been ever since, becoming their own property in the reign of King James I.

Originally the Temple was divided into three parts—the Inner Temple, the Outer Temple, and the Middle Temple. The Outer Temple, which stood west of Temple Bar, and therefore outside the city, was pulled down years ago, and now only the two remain.

Here in their chambers congregate the barristers who conduct the cases in the Law Courts just across the road; and here are still to be found the students, all of whom must spend a certain time in the Temple (or in one of the other Inns of Court—Gray's Inn or Lincoln's Inn) before being allowed to practise as a barrister.

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

The Temple Church, which belongs to both Inns of Court, is one of the few pieces of Norman



OLD TEMPLE BAR, FLEET STREET (NOW AT
THEOBALD'S PARK).

architecture which survive to us in London. It is round in shape, now a rare thing. On the

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Castle Hill Eating



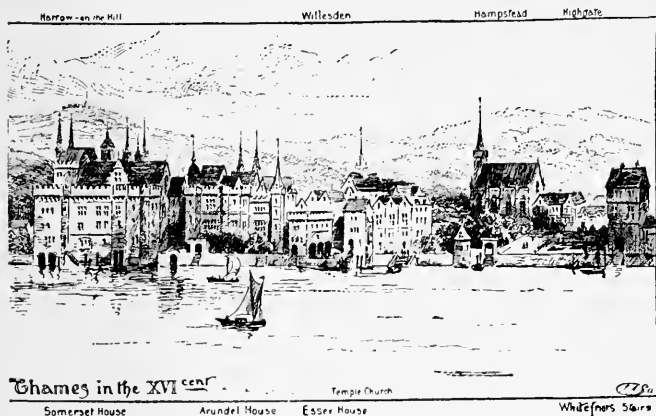
The Strand from the

York House. Durham House Bedford House

floor, and in many other places, may be seen the Templars' emblem—the red cross on a white ground with the Paschal Lamb in the centre. Figures of departed knights keep watch over this strange church, their legs crossed to signify (so it is said) that they had fought in one or other of the Crusades.

The Temple Gardens, which still run down to the Embankment, were one time famous for their roses, and, according to Shakespeare, were the scene of that famous argument which led to the bitter struggle known as the War of the Roses. You probably remember the famous passage, ending with the lines—

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES



“ And here I prophesy—this brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the Temple Garden,
Shall send between the red rose and the white
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.”

First Part of King Henry VI., Act II., Sc. 4.

Westwards from the Temple as far as Westminster stretched a practically unbroken line of palaces, each standing in beautiful grounds which sloped down in terraces to the water's edge. There was Somerset House, which for long was a Royal residence. Lord Protector Somerset began the building of it in 1549, pulling down a large part of St. Paul's cloisters and also the churches of St. John's, Clerkenwell,

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and St. Mary's le Strand to provide the materials for his builders; but long before its completion Somerset was executed for treason, and the property went to the Crown.

Here Elizabeth lived occasionally while her sister Mary was reigning. The old palace was pulled down in 1756, and the present fine building erected on the site. This modern structure, with its fine river front, so well combines strength and elegance that it seems a pity it does not stand clear of other buildings.

The rest of the palaces, westwards, survive for the most part only as names. Where now rises the great mass of the Savoy Hotel once stood the ancient Palace of the Savoy, rising, like some of the city houses, straight out of the River, with a splendid water-gate in the centre. It was the oldest of the Strand palaces, being built by Peter of Savoy as early as 1245. After various ownerships, it passed into the hands of John of Gaunt, and was his when it was plundered and almost entirely burnt down by the followers of Wat Tyler in 1381. From that time onwards it had a

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

chequered existence, being in turn prison and hospital, till at last in 1805 it was swept away when the approach to Waterloo Bridge was made. There is still in the street leading down to the Embankment the tiny Chapel Royal of the Savoy, but it has been too often restored to have much more interest than a name.

Where now comes the Cecil Hotel stood originally the famous palace or inn of the Cecils, the Earls of Salisbury. York House, the town palace of the Archbishops of York, stood where now is Charing Cross Station. This at one time belonged to the famous Steenie, Duke of Buckingham and favourite of James I. Buckingham pulled down the old house in order that another and more glorious might rise in its place; but this was never done. Only the water-gate was built, and this lovely relic still stands in the Embankment Gardens, and from its position, some distance behind the river wall, shows us how skilful engineers have saved quite a wide strip of the foreshore.

In all probability each of these Strand palaces had its water-gate, from which the nobles and

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their ladies set out in their gay barges when about to attend the Court at Westminster or go shopping in London.



THE WATER-GATE OF YORK HOUSE.

Just beyond York House came Hungerford House, which has given its name to the railway bridge crossing from the station; and then came

THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS PALACES

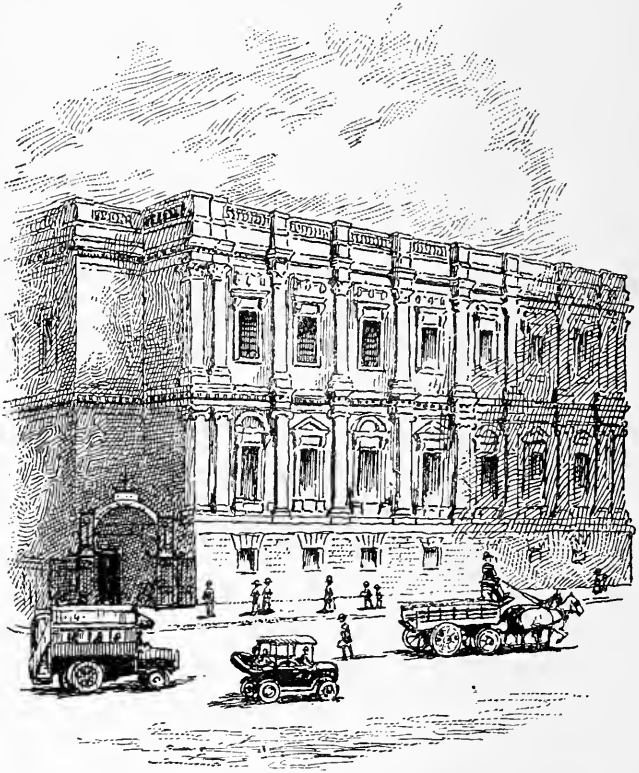
Northumberland House, which was the last of the great historic riverside palaces to be demolished, being pulled down in comparatively modern times to make way for Northumberland Avenue. Other famous palaces are remembered in the names of Durham Street and Scotland Yard.

When in 1529 Wolsey fell from his high estate, Henry VIII., his unscrupulous master, at once took possession of his palace at Whitehall, and made it the principal Royal residence. To give it suitable surroundings he formed (for his own sport and pleasure) the park which we now call St. James's Park. When later he dissolved the monasteries he seized a small hospital, known as St. James-in-the-Fields, standing on the far side of the estate, and converted it into a hunting lodge. This afterwards became the famous Palace of St. James's.

Of Whitehall Palace all that now remains is the Banqueting Hall (now used to house the exhibits of the United Service Institution), built in the reign of James I. by the famous architect Inigo Jones; the rest perished by fire soon after the revolution of 1688. For some

FATHER THAMES

time afterwards St. James's Palace was the only Royal residence in London, but the



THE BANQUETING HALL, WHITEHALL PALACE.

Sovereigns soon provided themselves with the famous Kensington and Buckingham Palaces.

CHAPTER TEN

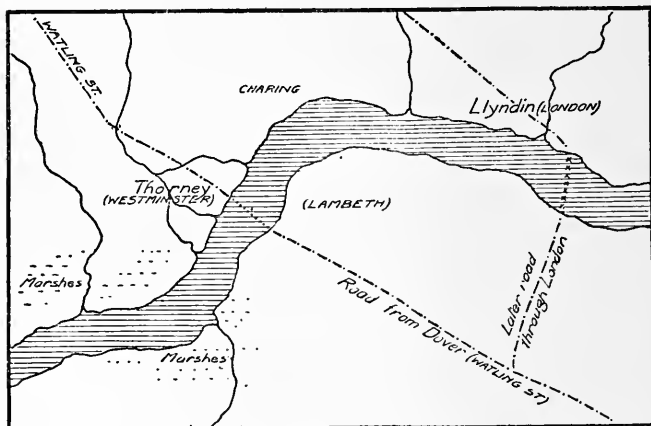
Royal Westminster—The Abbey

THE story of Westminster is nearly as old as that of London itself.

In our first chapter we spoke of the position of London being fixed to a large extent by the Kent road passing from Dover to the Midlands. That road, heading from Rochester, originally passed over—and still passes over—the Darent at Dartford, the Cray at Crayford, the Ravensbourne at Deptford; and then made its way, not to the crossing at Billingsgate, but to a still older ford or ferry which existed in very early days at the spot where Westminster now stands. If you look at the map of London, you will see that the Edgware Road, passing in a south-easterly direction from St. Albans, comes down, with but a slight curve, as if to meet this north-westerly Kent road. That they did so meet there is but little doubt, and this meeting gave us the Royal City of Westminster.

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In pre-Roman days Lambeth and Westminster, Belgravia and Chelsea, were simply reedy marshes. Out of them rose a number of gravelly islands of various sizes, and one of these, larger and more solid than the rest—



THE RIVER AT THORNEY ISLAND.

Thorney or Bramble Island—became in due course the site of the city which for centuries was second only to London itself; for though the building of the Bridge and the rapid growth of the Port meant the diversion of the Kentish Watling Street to a new route through London,

ROYAL WESTMINSTER—THE ABBEY

the Thorney Island settlement grew just as steadily as that of the bluff lower down the stream, till eventually it held England's most celebrated Abbey and Royal Palace, and its Houses of Parliament.

As so often happened in early days, the settlement developed round a religious house. Probably it originated in a British fortress. Certainly it comprised a considerable Roman station and market. But all that lies in the misty past. The legend remains that in the year 604 Sebert, King of the East Saxons, there founded a minster of the west (St. Peter's) to rival the minster of the east (St. Paul's) which was being erected within the City of London; and indeed we are still shown in the Abbey the tomb of this traditional founder.

When we come to the reign of Edward the Confessor we begin to get to actual definite things. Edward, as we know from our history books, was a very religious man, almost as much a monk as a King; and he took special delight in rebuilding ruined churches. While he was in exile in Normandy he made a vow

FATHER THAMES

to St. Peter that he would go on pilgrimage to Rome if ever he came into his kingdom. When, in the passage of time, he became King, and proposed to carry out his vows, his counsellors would not hear of such a journey; and, in the end, the Pope of Rome released him from his vow on condition that he agreed to build an Abbey to the glory of St. Peter.

This Edward did. His own particular friend, Edwin, presided over the small monastery of Thorney, so Edward determined to make this the site of his new Abbey. Pulling down the old place, he devoted a tenth part of his income to the raising of the new "Collegiate Church of St. Peter of Westminster." Commenced in the year 1049, it became the King's life-work, and was consecrated only eight days before his death.

In order that he might see the builders at work on his favourite project, he built himself a palace between the Abbey and the River, and for fifteen years he watched the rising into being of such an Abbey as England had never known. He endowed it lavishly with estates,

ROYAL WESTMINSTER—THE ABBEY

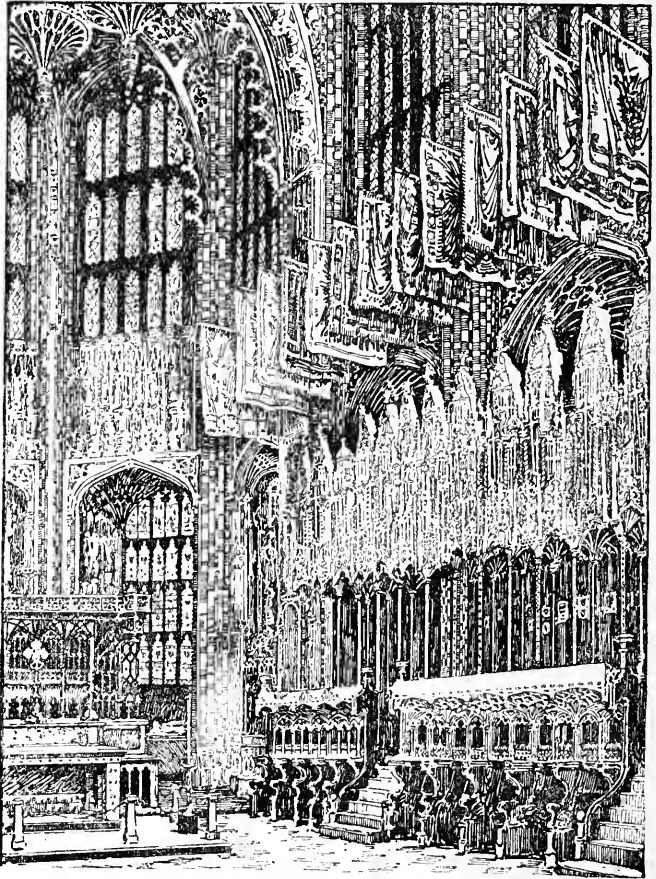
and gave it the right of sanctuary, whereby all men should be safe within its walls.

Of course, the fine structure we see as we stand in the open space known as Broad Sanctuary is not the Confessor's building. Of that, all that now remains is the Chapel of the Pyx, the great schoolroom of Westminster School, which was the old monks' dormitory, and portions of the walls of the south cloister. The rest has been added from time to time by the various Sovereigns. Henry III., in 1245, pulled down large portions of the old structure, and erected a beautiful chapel to contain the remains of the Abbey's founder, and this chapel we can visit to-day. In it lies the sainted Confessor, borne thither on the shoulders of the Plantagenet nobles whose humbler tombs surround the shrine; also his Queen, Eleanor; Edward III., and that Queen who saved the lives of the burghers of Calais; also the luckless Richard II.

Other Sovereigns also took a share; but it was left to Henry VII. to give us the body of the Abbey mainly in the shape we know. At

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enormous expense he erected the famous Perpendicular chapel, called by his name—one of



HENRY VII.'s CHAPEL, WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

ROYAL WESTMINSTER—THE ABBEY

the most beautiful and magnificent chapels in the whole world.

When we stand in the subdued light in this exquisite building, and examine the beautifully fretted stonework of its amazing roof—a “dream in stone,” its “walls wrought into universal ornament,” the richly carved, dark-oak stalls of the Knights of the Bath with the banners of their Order drooping overhead—we find it hard to recall that this miserly man was one of the least popular of England’s Kings.

In this spot lie, in addition to the remains of Henry himself, those of most of our later Kings and Queens. Here side by side the sisters Mary and Elizabeth “are at one; the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and the daughter of Anne Boleyn repose in peace at last.” Here, too, rests that tragic figure of history, Mary Queen of Scots; and James I., Charles I., William III., Queen Anne, and George II.

For numbers of us one of the most interesting parts of the Abbey will always be “Poets’ Corner,” in the south transept. Here rest all

FATHER THAMES

that remains of many of our mightiest wielders of the pen, from Chaucer, the father of English poetry, down to Tennyson and Browning. Many of the names on the monuments which cluster so closely together are forgotten now, just as their works are never read; but the



WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

tablets to the memory of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Dickens, Tennyson, and Browning, will always serve to remind us of the mighty dead. The north transept is devoted largely to the monuments to our great statesmen and our great warriors.

ROYAL WESTMINSTER—THE ABBEY

In the Choir we come upon the Coronation Chairs. The Confessor in building his church had in mind that the Abbey should be the place of coronation of England's Sovereigns; and down through the centuries this custom has been observed. Indeed, certain parts of the regalia worn by the King or Queen on Coronation Day are actually the identical articles presented to the Abbey by Edward himself. The old and battered chair is that of Edward I., the "hammer of the Scots," who lies buried with his fellow Plantagenets in the Confessor's Chapel. Just under the seat of the chair is the famous "stone of destiny," brought from Scone by Edward, to mark the completeness of the defeat. Its removal to Westminster sorely troubled our northern neighbours, for they believed that the Supreme Power travelled with that stone. Since those days every English Sovereign has been crowned in this chair. Its companion was made for Mary, wife of William III.

In the Nave lies one of the most frequently visited of all the tombs—the last resting-place

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of the Unknown Warrior, who, brought over from France and buried with all the grandeur and solemnity of a Royal funeral, typifies for us the thousands of brave lads who made the great sacrifice—who died that we might live.

What most of us forget is that the place which we call Westminster Abbey was only the Chapel belonging to the Abbey, the place where the monks worshipped. In addition there was a whole collection of buildings where the monks ate, slept, studied, worked, etc. Of these most have been swept away. If we pass out through the door of the South Aisle we can see the ancient cloisters where the monks washed themselves, took their exercise and such little recreation as they were allowed, and where they buried their brothers. There was also the Abbot's House, which afterwards became the Deanery, and there was the Chapter House, a building which fortunately has been preserved to us almost in its original condition. This was the place where the business of the Abbey was conducted, where the monks came together each day after Matins in order that the tasks

ROYAL WESTMINSTER—THE ABBEY

of the day might be allotted and God's blessing asked, where afterwards offenders were tried and penances imposed. Till the end of the reign of Henry VIII. the House of Commons met in this chamber when the monks were not using it; and afterwards it was set aside as an office for the keeping of records. When in 1540 came the dissolution of the Abbey, the Chapter House became Royal property, and that is why we now see a policeman in charge of it instead of one of the Abbey vergers.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Royal Westminster—The Houses of Parliament

WHEN in the eleventh century Edward the Confessor built the palace from which to survey the erection of his beloved Abbey, he little dreamed that upon the very spot would meet the Parliament of an Empire greater even than Rome; nor did he realize that through several centuries Westminster Palace would be the favourite home of the Kings and Queens of England.

William Rufus added to the Confessor's edifice, and also partially built the walls of the Great Hall, which is the sole thing that remains of the ancient fabric. Other Kings enlarged the palace from time to time. Stephen erected the Chapel of St. Stephen, in which met the Commons from the time of Edward VI. till the year 1834, when a terrible fire wiped out practically the whole of the ancient Palace of Westminster.



THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

FATHER THAMES

To-day, when we stand on Westminster Bridge or Lambeth Bridge, and survey the huge building which provides London with one of its greatest landmarks, we are looking at a new Palace: from the River not a stone of the old structure is visible. A magnificent Palace it is too! Its towers, one at each end, rise high into the air, one of them 320 feet high, the other 20 feet more; and its buildings cover a matter of 8 acres. From Westminster Bridge we see the whole of the river front, 900 feet long, with the famous "terrace" in front, where in summer the members of Parliament stroll and take tea with their friends.

Westminster Hall, which fortunately survived the disastrous fire of 1834, is on the side farthest from the River: it runs parallel with the House of Commons, and projects from the main building just opposite the end of the Henry VII. Chapel in the Abbey.

If we enter the Parliament buildings we shall very possibly do so by the famous hall known as St. Stephen's Hall—built on the site of the ancient House of Commons. Westminster Hall

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

then lies to our left, as we enter, down a flight of steps.

Let us descend for a few moments, for the Hall is perhaps the finest of its kind in all our land. Its vast emptiness silences the words which rise to our lips: we feel instinctively that this is a place of wonderful memories. Our eyes travel along the mighty, carved-oak roof which spans the great width of the building, and we can scarcely believe that this roof was built so long ago as the time of Richard II., or even earlier, and that it is still the actual timbers we see in places.

What stories could these ancient stones beneath our feet tell us, had they but the power! What tales of joy and what tales of terrible tragedy! Here were held many of the festivities which followed the coronation ceremonies in the Abbey. Henry III. here showed to the citizens his bride, Eleanor of Provence, when "there were assembled such a multitude of the nobility of both sexes, such numbers of the religious, and such a variety of stage-players, that the City of London could scarcely

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contain them. . . . Whatever the world pours forth of pleasure and glory was there specially displayed." And yet a few years later saw that same Henry taking part in a vastly different spectacle—when, in the presence of a gathering equally distinguished, he was compelled to watch the Archbishop of Canterbury as he threw to the stone floor of the Hall a lighted torch, with these words: "Thus be extinguished and stink and smoke in hell all those who dare to violate the charters of the Kingdom."

A plate let into the floor tells us that on that spot stood Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, strong Minister of a weak King, when he was tried for his life; while upon the stairs which we have descended is another tablet to mark the spot whence that weak King himself, Charles I., heard his death sentence. Here, too, were tried William Wallace, Thomas More, and Warren Hastings, while just outside in Old Palace Yard the half-demented Guido Fawkes and the proud, scholarly Sir Walter Raleigh met their deaths.

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Returning to St. Stephen's Hall, which is lined with the statues of the great statesmen who were famous in the older chamber, and passing up another flight of steps, we find ourselves in the octagonal Central Hall, or, as it is more usually called, the Lobby. Here we are practically in the middle of the great pile of buildings. To our right, as we enter, stretches the House of Lords and all the apartments that pertain to it—the Audience Chamber, the Royal Robing Room, the Peers' Robing Room, the House of Lords Library—ending in the stately square tower, known as the Victoria Tower. To our left lies the House of Commons and all its committee, dining, smoking, reading rooms, etc., ending in the famous "Big Ben" tower. "Big Ben" is, of course, known to everybody. Countless thousands have heard his 13½ tons of metal boom out the hour of the day, and have set their watches right by the 14-foot minute-hands of the four clock-faces, which each measure 23 feet across.

The House of Lords itself is a fine building,

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90 feet long and 45 feet wide, its walls and ceiling beautifully decorated with paintings representing famous scenes from our history. At one end is the King's gorgeous throne, and beside it, slightly lower, those of the Queen and the Prince of Wales. Just in front is the famous "Woolsack," an ugly red seat, stuffed with wool, as a reminder of the days when wool was the chief source of the nation's wealth. On this, when the House is in session, sits the Lord Chancellor of England, who presides over the assembly.

The House of Commons is not quite so ornate: here the benches are upholstered in a quiet green. At the far end is the Speaker's Chair. The Speaker, as you probably know, is the chairman of the House of Commons, the member who has been chosen by his fellows to control the debates and keep order in the House. In front of the Speaker's Chair is a table, at which sit three men in wigs and gowns, the Clerks of the House. On the table lies the Mace—the heavy staff which is the emblem of authority.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Riverside of To-day

THE Riverside of to-day is noticeable for many things, but for nothing more so than the very great difference between the two banks. On the one hand we have a magnificent Embankment sweeping round through almost the entire length of the River's passage through London, with large and important buildings surmounting the thoroughfare; while on the other hand we have nothing but a huddled collection of commercial buildings, right on the water's edge—unimposing, dingy, and dismal, save in the one spot where the new County Hall breaks the ugly monotony and gives promise of better things in future for the Surrey shore.

The Embankment on the Middlesex side may perhaps be said to be one of the outcomes of the Great Fire, for, though its construction was not undertaken till 1870, it was one of the main improvements suggested by Sir Christopher

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Wren in his scheme for the rebuilding of London. The Victoria Embankment, which sweeps round from Blackfriars to Westminster, is a mile and a quarter long. Its river face consists of a great granite wall, 8 feet in thickness, with tunnels inside it for the carrying of sewers, water-mains, gas-pipes, etc., all of which can be reached without interfering with that splendid wide road beneath which the Underground Railway runs. There is a continuation of the Embankment on the south side from Westminster to Vauxhall, known as the Albert Embankment, while on the north it runs, with some interruptions, as far as Chelsea.

One of the most interesting sights of the Embankment is Cleopatra's Needle—a tall stone obelisk, which stands by the water's edge. This stone, one of the oldest monuments in the world, stood originally in the ancient city of On, in Egypt, and formed part of an enormous temple to the sun-god. Later it was shifted with a similar stone to Alexandria, there to take a place in the Cæsarium—the temple erected in honour of the Roman Emperors.

THE RIVERSIDE OF TO-DAY

Centuries passed: the Cæsarium fell into ruins, and Cleopatra's obelisk lay forgotten in the sand. Eventually it was offered to this country by the Khedive of Egypt, but the task of transporting it was so difficult that nothing was done till 1877-8, when Sir Erasmus Wilson undertook the enormous cost of the removal. It has nothing to do with Cleopatra.

Of the bridges over the River we have already dealt with the most famous—the remarkable old London Bridge which stood for so many centuries and only came to an end in 1832. Westminster Bridge, built in 1750, was the first rival to the ancient structure, and though it was but a poor affair it made the City Council very dissatisfied with their possession. Nor was this surprising, for the old bridge had got into a very bad state, so that in 1756 the City Fathers decided to demolish all the buildings on the bridge, and to make a parapet and proper footwalks.

Up to the time of King George II. there was at Westminster merely a jetty or landing-stage used in connection with the ferry that was

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used in place of the ancient ford; but during this King's reign Westminster, and, shortly afterwards, Blackfriars Bridge, came into being. Battersea and Vauxhall, Waterloo (built two years after the battle), Southwark, Chelsea, and Lambeth followed in fairly rapid succession. Of these, Westminster, Blackfriars, Battersea, Vauxhall, and Southwark have already been rebuilt.

Old Vauxhall Bridge was the first cast-iron bridge ever built; Wandsworth was the first lattice bridge; Waterloo Bridge the first ever made with a perfectly level roadway. Hungerford Bridge, which stretched where now that atrociously ugly iron structure, the Charing Cross Railway bridge, defiles the River, was originally designed by Brunel, the eminent engineer, to span the gorge over the Avon at Clifton, but it was eventually placed in position across the Thames. When the atrocity was built the suspension bridge was taken back to Clifton, where it now hangs like a spider's web over the mighty gap in the hills.

Until the close of the nineteenth century



ST. PAUL'S FROM THE SOUTH END OF SOUTHWARK
BRIDGE.

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London Bridge enjoyed the distinction of being the lowest bridge on the River's course; but in 1894 the wonderful Tower Bridge was opened. This mighty structure, which was commenced in 1886, cost no less than £830,000. In its construction 235,000 cubic feet of granite and other stone, 20,000 tons of cement, 10,000 yards of concrete, 31,000,000 bricks, and 14,000 tons of steel were used. In its centre are two bascules, each weighing 1,200 tons, which swing upwards to allow big ships to pass into the Pool. Although these enormous bascules, the largest in the world, weigh so much, they work by hydraulic force as smoothly and easily as a door opens and shuts.

Of the buildings on the south side of the River practically none are worthy of notice save the Shot Tower—where lead-shot is made by dropping the molten metal from the top of the shaft—the new County Hall, and St. Thomas's Hospital at Westminster. The County Hall is a splendid structure, one of the finest of its kind in the whole world. It possesses miles of corridors, hundreds of rooms, and what is more,

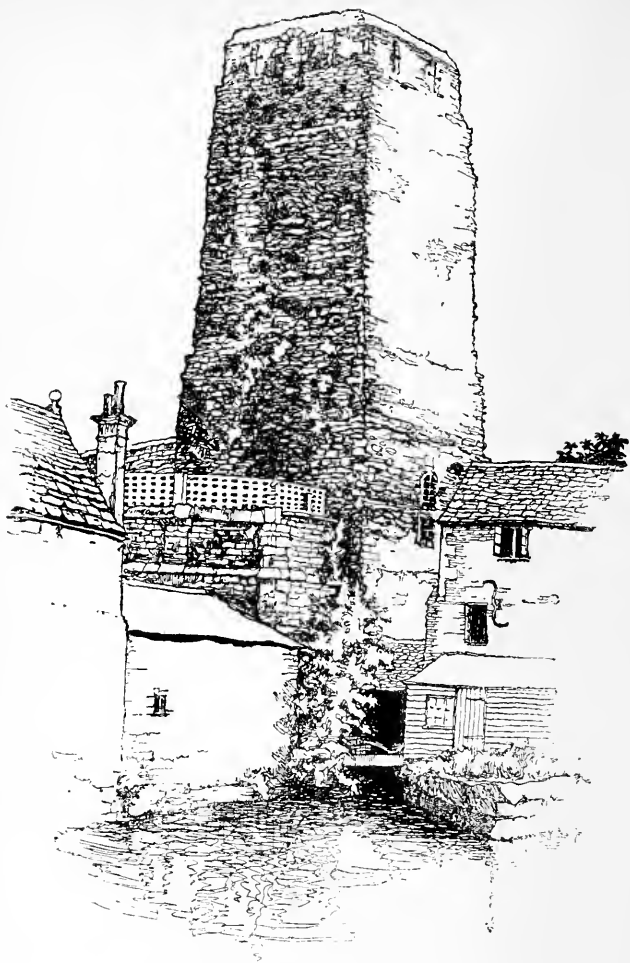
THE RIVERSIDE OF TO-DAY

a magnificent water frontage. The architect is Mr. Ralph Knott. St. Thomas's Hospital, which stands close to it, is one of a number of excellent hospitals in various parts of London. When in 1539 the monasteries were closed, London was left without anything in the way of hospitals, or alms-houses, or schools; for the care of the sick, the infirm, and the young had always been the work of the monks and the nuns. In consequence, London suffered terribly. Matters became so extremely serious that the City Fathers approached the King with a view to the return of some of these institutions. Their petition was granted, and King Henry gave back St. Bartholomew's, Christ's Hospital, and the Bethlehem Hospital. Later King Edward VI. allowed the people to purchase St. Thomas's Hospital—the hospital of the old Abbey of Bermondsey. When in 1871 the South-Eastern Railway Company purchased the ground on which the old structure stood, a new and more convenient building was erected on the Albert Embankment opposite the Houses of Parliament.

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As we stand once more on Westminster Bridge and see the two great places, one on each side, where our lawmakers sit—those of the Nation and those of the great City—our glance falls on the dirty water of old Father Thames slipping by; and we think to ourselves that great statesmen may spring to fame and then die and leave England the poorer, governments good and bad may rise and fall, changes of all sorts may happen within these two stately buildings, the very stones may crumble to dust, but still the River flows on—silent, irresistible.

BOOK III
THE UPPER RIVER



THE CASTLE KEEP, OXFORD.

THE UPPER RIVER

CHAPTER ONE

Stripling Thames

JUST where the Thames starts has always been a matter of argument, for several places have laid claim to the honour of holding the source of this great national possession.

About three miles south-west of Cirencester, and quite close to that ancient and famous highway the Ackman Street (or Bath fosseway), there is a meadow known as Trewsbury Mead, lying in a low part of the western Cotswolds, just where Wiltshire and Gloucestershire meet; and in this is situated what is commonly known as "Thames Head"—a spring which in winter bubbles forth from a hollow, but which in summer is so completely dried by the action of the Thames Head Pump, which drains the water from this and all other springs in the neighbourhood, that the cradle of the infant

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Thames is usually bone-dry for a couple of miles or more of its course. This spot is usually recognized as the beginning of the River.

If, however, we consider that the source of a river is the point at greatest distance from the



THAMES HEAD.

mouth we shall have to look elsewhere; for the famous "Seven Streams" at the foot of Leckhampton Hill, from which comes the brook later known as the River Churn, can claim the distinction of being a few more miles from the North Sea; and this distinction has frequently

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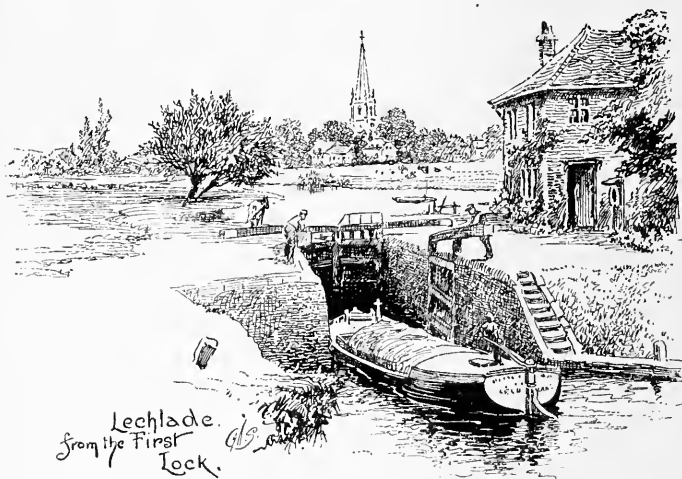
been recognized as sufficient to grant the claim to be the true commencement.

But the Churn has always been the Churn (indeed, the Romans named the neighbouring settlement from the stream—Churn-chester or Cirencester); and no one has ever thought of calling it the Thames. Whereas the stream beginning in Trewsbury Mead has from time immemorial been known as the Thames (Isis is only an alternative name, not greatly used in early days); and so the verdict of history seems to be on its side, whatever geography may have to say.

Nevertheless it matters little which can most successfully support its claim. What does matter is that Churn, and Isis, and Leach, and Ray, and Windrush, and the various other feeders, give of their waters in sufficient quantity to ensure a considerable river later on. From the point of view of their usefulness both the main stream and the tributaries are negligible till we come to Lechlade, for only there does navigation and consequently trade begin. But if the stream is not very useful, it is exceedingly

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pretty, with quaint rustic bridges spanning its narrow channel, and fine old-world mills and mansions and cottages and numbers of ancient churches on its banks.



The first place of any size is the little town of Cricklade, which can even boast of two churches. Here the little brooks of infant Thames (or Isis) and Churn join forces, and yield quite a flowing stream. At Lechlade the rivulet is joined by the Colne, and its real life as a river commences. From now on to London there is a towing-path

STRIPLING THAMES

beside the river practically the whole of the way, for navigation by barges thus early becomes possible.

From Lechlade onwards to Old Windsor, a matter of about a hundred miles, the upper Thames has on its right bank the county of Berkshire, with its beautiful Vale of the White Horse, remembered, of course, by all readers of "Tom Brown's Schooldays." On the left bank is Oxfordshire as far as Henley, and Buckinghamshire afterwards.

In and out the "stripling Thames" winds its way, clear as crystal as it slips past green meadows and little copses. There is very little to note as we pass between Lechlade and Oxford, a matter of forty miles or so. Owing to the clay bed, not a town of any sort finds a place on or near the banks. Such villages as there are stand few and far between.

Just past Lechlade there is Kelmscott, where William Morris dwelt for some time in the Manor House; and the village will always be famous for that. There in the old-world place he wrote the fine poems and tales which later

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he printed in some of the most beautiful books ever made, and there he thought out his beautiful designs for wall-papers, carpets, curtains, etc. He was a wonderful man, was William Morris, a day-dreamer who was not



KELMSCOTT MANOR.

content with his dreams until they had taken actual shape.

On we go past New Bridge, which is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, of the many bridges which cross the River. Close at hand the Windrush joins forces, and the River swells

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and grows wider as it sweeps off to the north. Away on the hill on the Berkshire side is a little village known as Cumnor, which is not of any importance in itself, but which is interesting because there once stood the famous Cumnor Hall, where the beautiful Amy Robsart met with her untimely death, as possibly some of you have read in Sir Walter Scott's novel "Kenilworth." Receiving the Evenlode, the River bends south again, and a little later we pass Godstow Lock, not far from which are the ruins of Godstow Nunnery, where Fair Rosamund lived and was afterwards buried. Between Godstow and Oxford is a huge, flat piece of meadowland, known as Port Meadow: this during the War formed one of our most important flying-grounds.

Henceforward the upper Thames is interrupted at fairly frequent intervals by those man-made contrivances known as *locks*—ingenious affairs which in recent years have taken the place of or rather supplemented the old-fashioned weirs. For any river which boasts of serious water traffic the chief difficulty,

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especially in summer-time, has always been that of holding back sufficient water to enable the boats to keep afloat. Naturally with a sloping bed the water runs rapidly seawards, and if the supply is not plentiful the river soon tends to become shallow or even dry. In very early days man noticed this, and, copying the beaver, he erected dams or weirs to hold back the water, and keep it at a reasonable depth. And down through the centuries until comparatively recent years these dams or weirs sufficed. As man progressed he fashioned his weirs with a number of "paddles" which lifted up and down to allow a boat to pass through. When the craft was moving downstream just one or two paddles were raised, and the boat shot through the narrow opening on the crest of the rapids thus formed; but when the boat was making its way upstream more paddles were raised so that the rush of water was not so great, and the boat was with difficulty hauled through the opening in face of the strong current. This very picturesque but primitive method lasted until comparatively

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recent years. Now the old paddle-locks have gone the way of all ancient and delightful things, and in their places we have the thoroughly effective “pound-locks” — affairs with double gates and a pool or dock in between — which in reality convert the river into a long series of water-terraces or steps, dropping lower and lower the nearer we approach the mouth.

CHAPTER TWO

Oxford

ONE hundred and twelve miles above London Bridge there is the second most celebrated city on the banks of the Thames—Oxford, the “city of spires,” as it has been called. By no means a big place, it is famous as the home of our oldest University.

Seen from a distance, Oxford is a place of great beauty, especially when the meadows round about are flooded. Then it seems to rise from the water like some English Venice. Nor does the beauty grow less as we approach closer, or when we view the city from some other point. Always we see the delicate spires of the Cathedral and the churches, the beautiful towers of the various colleges, the great dome of the Radcliffe Camera, all of them nestling among glorious gardens and fine old trees.

The question at once comes into our minds, Why is it that there is a famous city here?

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Why should such a place as this, right out in the country, away from what might be called the main arteries of the life of England, be one of the most important seats of learning ?

To understand this we must go back a long way, and we must ask ourselves the question, Why was there ever anything—even a village—here at all ? If we think a little we shall see that in the early days, when there were not very many good roads, and when there were still fewer bridges, the most important spots along a river were the places where people could cross: that is to say, the fords. To these spots came the merchants with their waggons and their trains of pack-horses, the generals with their armies, the drovers with their cattle, the pilgrims with their staves. All and sundry, journeying from place to place, made for the fords, while the long stretches of river-bank between these places were never visited and seldom heard of.

Now, what made a ford ? Shallow water, you say. Yes, that is true. But shallow water was not enough. It was necessary besides that the bed of the stream should be firm and hard,

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so that those who wished might find a safe crossing. And places where such a bottom could be found were few and far between along the course of the Thames. Practically everywhere it was soft clay in which the feet of the men and the animals and the wheels of the waggons sank deep if they tried to get from bank to bank.

But, just at the point where the Thames bends southwards, just before the Cherwell flows into it, there is a stretch of gravel which in years gone by made an excellent ford and provided a suitable spot on which some sort of a settlement might grow.

How old that settlement is no one knows. Legend tells us that a Mercian saint by the name of Frideswide, together with a dozen companions, founded a nunnery here somewhere about the year 700. Certainly the village is mentioned under the name of Oxenford (that is, the ford of the oxen) in the Saxon Chronicle, a book of ancient history written about a thousand years ago; and we know that Edward the Elder took possession of it, and, building

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a castle and walls, made a royal residence. So that it is a place of great antiquity.

Another question that comes into our minds is this, When did Oxford become the great home of learning which it has so long been? Here again the truth is difficult to ascertain. Legend tells us that King Alfred founded the schools, but that is rather more than doubtful. We do know that during the twelfth century there was a great growth in learning. Right throughout Europe great schools sprang into existence, one of the most important being that in Paris. Thither went numbers of Englishmen to learn, and they, returning to their own land, founded schools in different parts, usually in connection with the monasteries and the cathedrals. Such a school was one which grew into being at St. Frideswide's monastery at Oxford. Also King Henry I. (Beauclerc—the fine scholar—as he was called) built a palace at Oxford, and there he gathered together many learned men, and from that time people gradually began to flock to Oxford for education. They tramped weary miles through the forest, across the hills

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and dales, and so came to the little town, only to find it crowded out with countless others as poor as themselves; but they were not disheartened. There being no proper places for teaching, they gathered with their masters, also equally poor, wherever they could find a quiet spot, in a porch, or a loft, or a stable; and so the torch was handed on. Gradually lecture-rooms, or schools as they were called, and lodging-houses or halls, were built, and life became more bearable. Then in 1229 came an accident which yet further established Oxford in its position. This accident took the form of a riot in the streets of Paris, during the course of which several scholars of Paris University were killed by the city archers. Serious trouble between the University folk and the Provost of Paris came of this; and, in the end, there was a very great migration of students from Paris to Oxford; and, a few years after, England could boast of Oxford as a famous centre of learning.

But it was not till the reign of Henry III. that a real college, as we understand it, came into

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being. Then, in the year 1264, one Walter de Merton gathered together in one house a number of students, and there they lived and were taught; and thus Merton, the oldest of the colleges, began. Others soon followed—Balliol, watched over by the royal Dervorguilla; University College, founded by William of Durham, who was one to come over after the Paris town and gown quarrel; New College; and so on, college after college, until now, as we wander about the streets of this charming old city, it seems almost as if every other building is a college. And magnificent buildings they are too, with their glorious towers and gateways, their beautiful stained-glass windows, their panelled walls. To wander round the city of Oxford is to step back seemingly into a forgotten age, so worn and ancient-looking are these piles of masonry. Modern clothes seem utterly out of place in such an antique spot.

Different folk, of course, will regard different colleges as holding pride of place; but, I am sure, all will agree that one of the finest is Magdalen College, a beautiful building standing amid

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cool, green meadows. Very fine indeed is the great tower, built in 1492, from the top of which every May morning the College choir sings a glad hymn of praise; and very fine too are the cloisters below, and the lovely leafy walks in whose shade many famous men have walked in their youthful days.

If we grant to Magdalen its claim to be the most beautiful of the colleges, we must undoubtedly recognize Christ Church as the most magnificent. We shall see something of the splendour of Cardinal Wolsey's ideas with regard to building when we talk about his palace at Hampton Court, and we need feel no surprise at the grandeur of Christ Church. Unfortunately, Wolsey's ideas were never carried out: his fall from favour put an end to the work when but three sides of the Great Quadrangle had been completed; and then for just on a century the fabric stood in its unfinished state—a monument to o'erleaping ambition. Nevertheless it was completed, and though it is not all that Wolsey intended it to be, it is still one of the glories of the city.

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Built round about the old Cathedral, it stands upon the site of the ancient St. Frideswide's priory.

The famous "Tom Tower" which stands in the centre of the front of the building was not a part of the original idea: it was added in 1682 by Dr. Fell, according to the design of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral. "Tom Tower" is so called because of its great bell, brought from Osney Abbey. "Great Tom," which weighs no less than six tons, peals forth each night at nine o'clock a hundred and one strokes, and by the time of the last stroke all the College gates are supposed to be shut and all the undergraduates safely within the College buildings.

The most wonderful possession of Christ Church is its glorious "Early English" hall, in which the members of the College dine daily: 115 feet long, 40 feet broad, and 50 feet high, it is unrivalled in all England, with perhaps the exception of Westminster Hall. Here at the tables have sat many of England's most famous men—courtiers, writers, politicians, soldiers,

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artists—and the portraits of a number of them, painted by famous painters, look down from the ancient walls.

But these are only two of the colleges. At every turn some other architectural beauty, some dream in stone, discloses itself, for the colleges are dotted about all over the centre of the town, and at every other corner there is some spot of great interest. To describe them all briefly would more than fill the pages of this book.

Nor are colleges the only delightful buildings in this city of beautiful places. There is the famous Sheldonian Theatre, built from Wren's plans: this follows the model of an ancient Roman theatre, and will seat four thousand people. There is the celebrated Bodleian Library, founded as early as 1602, and containing a rich collection of rare Eastern and Greek and Latin books and manuscripts. The Bodleian, like the British Museum, has the right to call for a copy of every book published in the United Kingdom.

But Oxford has known a life other than that

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of a university town: it has been in its time a military centre of some importance. As we sweep round northwards in the train from London, just before we enter the city, the great square tower of the Castle stands out, one of the most prominent objects in the town. And it is really one of the most interesting too, though few find time to visit it. So absorbed are most folk in the churches and chapels, the libraries and college halls, with their exquisite carvings and ornamentations and their lovely gardens, that they forget this frowning relic of the Conqueror's day—the most lasting monument of the city. Built in 1071 by Robert d'Oilly, boon companion of the Conqueror, it has stood the test of time through all these centuries. Like Windsor, that other Norman stronghold, it has seen little enough of actual fighting: in Oxford the pen has nearly always been mightier than the sword.

One brief episode of war it had when Stephen shut up his cousin, the Empress Maud, within its walls in the autumn of 1142. Then Oxford tasted siege if not assault, and the castle was

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locked up for three months. However, the River and the weather contrived to save Maud, for, just as provisions were giving out and surrender was only a matter of days, there came a severe frost and the waters were thickly covered. Then it was that the Empress with but two or three white-clad attendants escaped across the ice and made her way to Wallingford, while her opponents closely guarded the roads and bridges.

Nor in our consideration of the glories of this beloved old city must we forget the River—
—for no one in the place forgets it. Perhaps we should not speak of *the* River, for Oxford is the fortunate possessor of two, standing as it does in the fork created by the flowing together of the Thames and the Cherwell. The Thames, as we have already seen, flows thither from the west, while the Cherwell makes its way southwards from Edgehill; and, though we are accustomed to think of the Thames as the main stream, the geologists, whose business it is to make a close study of the earth's surface, tell us that the Cherwell is in reality the more

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important of the two; that down its valley in the far-away past flowed a great river which with the Kennet was the ancestor of the present-day River; that the tributary Thames has grown so much that it has been able to capture and take over as its own the valley of the Cherwell from Oxford onwards to Reading. But that, of course, is a story of the very dim past, long before the days of history.

The Cherwell is a very pretty little stream, shaded by overhanging willows and other trees, so that it is usually the haunt of pleasure, the place where the undergraduate takes his own or somebody else's sister for an afternoon's excursion, or where he makes his craft fast in the shade in order that he may enjoy an afternoon's quiet reading. A walk through the meadows on its banks is, indeed, something very pleasant, with the stream on one side of us and that most beautiful of colleges, Magdalen, on the other. Here as we proceed down the famous avenue of pollard willows, winding between two branches of the stream, we can hear almost continuously the singing of in-

OXFORD

numerable birds, for the Oxford gardens and meadows form a veritable sanctuary in which live feathered friends of every sort.

But the Thames (or Isis as it is invariably called in Oxford) is the place of more serious matters. To the rowing man "the River" means only one thing, and really only a very short space of that: he is accustomed to speak of "the River" and "the Cher," and with him the latter does not count at all. Everybody in the valley, certainly every boy and girl, knows about the Oxford and Cambridge Boatrace, which is held annually on the Thames at Putney, when two selected crews from the rival universities race each other over a distance. Probably quite a few of us have witnessed the exciting event. Well, "Boatrace Day" is merely the final act of a long drama, nearly all the scenes of which take place, not at Putney, but on the river at the University town. For the Varsity "eight" are only chosen from the various college crews after long months of arduous preparation. Each of the colleges has its own rowing club, and the college crews race

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against each other in the summer term. A fine sight it is, too, to see the long thin "eights" passing at a great pace in front of the beautifully decorated "Barges," which are to the college rowing clubs what pavilions are to the cricket clubs.

These "barges," which stretch along the river-front for some considerable distance, resemble nothing so much as the magnificent houseboats which we see lower down the river at Henley, Maidenhead, Molesey, etc. They are fitted up inside with bathrooms and dressing-rooms, and comfortable lounges and reading-rooms, while their flat tops are utilised by the rowing men for sitting at ease and chatting to their friends. Each college has its own "barge," and it is a point of honour to make it and keep it a credit to the college. The long string of "barges" form a very beautiful picture, particularly when the river is quiet, and the finely decorated vessels with their background of green trees are reflected in the smooth waters.

May is the great time for the River at Oxford,

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for then are held the races of the senior " crews " or " eights." Then for a week the place, both shore and stream, is gay with pretty dresses and merry laughter, for mothers and sisters, cousins and friends, flock to Oxford in their hundreds to see the fun. But to the rowing man it is a time of hard work—with more in prospect if he is lucky; for, just as the " eights " of this week have been selected from the crews of the February " torpids " or junior races, so from those doing well during " eights week " may be chosen the University crew—the " blues."

Many have been the voices which have sung the praises of the " city of spires," for many have loved her. None more so perhaps than Matthew Arnold, whose poem " The Scholar Gypsy "—the tale of a University lad who was by poverty forced to leave his studies and join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies, from whom he gained a knowledge beyond that of the scholars—is so well known. Says Arnold of the city: " And yet as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle

FATHER THAMES

Ages, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection—to beauty, in a word ?”

There are many interesting places within walking distance of Oxford, but perhaps few more delightful to the eye than old Iffley Church. This ancient building with its fine old Norman tower is a landmark of the countryside and well deserves the attention given to it.

CHAPTER THREE

Abingdon, Wallingford, and the Goring Gap

BETWEEN Oxford and Reading lies a land of shadows—a district dotted with towns which have shrunk to a mere vestige of their former greatness. To mention three names only—Abingdon, Dorchester, and Wallingford—is to conjure up a picture of departed glory.

At Abingdon, centuries ago, was one of those great abbeys which stretched in a chain eastwards, and helped to ensure the prosperity of the valley; and the town sprang up and prospered, as was so often the case, under the shadow of the great ecclesiastical foundation. Unfortunately the monks and the citizens were constantly at loggerheads. The wealthy dwellers in the abbey, where the Conqueror's own son, Henry Beauclerc, had been educated, and where the greatest in the land were wont to come, did not approve of tradesmen and other

FATHER THAMES

common folk congregating so near the sacred edifice. Thus in 1327 the proud mitred Abbot refused to allow the citizens to hold a market in the town, and a riot ensued, in which the folk of Abingdon were backed up by the Mayor of



ABINGDON.

Oxford and a considerable crowd of the University students. A great part of the Abbey was burned down, many of its records were destroyed, and the monks were driven out. But the tradesmen's triumph was shortlived, for the Abbot returned with powerful support,

ABINGDON AND WALLINGFORD

and certain of the ringleaders were hanged for their share in the disturbance.

However, the town grew despite the frowns of the Church, and it soon became a considerable centre for the cloth trade. Not only did it make cloth itself, but much of the traffic which there was between London and the western cloth-towns—Gloucester, Stroud, Cirencester, etc.—passed through Abingdon, particularly when its bridge had been built by John Huchyns and Geoffrey Barbur in 1416.

When, in 1538, the abbey was suppressed, the townsfolk rejoiced at the downfall of the rich and arrogant monks, and sought pleasure and revenge in the destruction of the former home of their enemies. So that in these days there is not a great deal remaining of the ancient fabric.

A few miles below Abingdon is Dorchester (not to be confused with the Dorset town of the same name), not exactly on the River, but about a mile up the tributary river, the Thame, which here comes wandering through the meadows to join the main stream. Like

FATHER THAMES

Abingdon, Dorchester has had its day, but its abbey church remains, built on the site of the ancient and extremely important Saxon cathedral; and, one must confess, it seems strangely out of place in such a sleepy little village.

Wallingford, even more than these, has lost its ancient prestige, for it was through several centuries a great stronghold and a royal residence. We have only to look at the map of the Thames Valley, and note how the various roads converge on this particularly useful ford, to see immediately Wallingford's importance from a military and a commercial point of view. A powerful castle to guard such a valuable key to the midlands, or the south-west, was inevitable.

William the Conqueror, passing that way in order that he might discover a suitable crossing, and so get round to the north of London (p. 143), was shown the ford by one Wygod, the ruling thane of the district; and naturally William realized at once the possibilities of the place. A powerful castle soon arose in place of the old earthworks, and this

ABINGDON AND WALLINGFORD

castle lasted on till the Civil War, figuring frequently in the many struggles that occurred during the next three or four hundred years.

It played an important part in that prolonged and bitter struggle between Stephen and the Empress Maud, and suffered a very long siege. Again, in 1646, at the time of the Civil War, it was beset for sixty-five days by the Parliamentary armies; and, after a gallant stand by the Royalist garrison, was practically destroyed by Fairfax, who saw fit to blow it up. So that now very little stands: just a few crumbling walls and one window incorporated in the fabric of a private residence.

Between Wallingford and Reading lies what is, from the geographical point of view, one of the most interesting places in the whole length of the Thames Valley—Goring Gap.

You will see from a contour map that the Thames Basin, generally speaking, is a hill-encircled valley with gently undulating ground, except in the one place where the Marlborough-Chiltern range of chalk hills sweep right across the valley.

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By the time the River reaches Goring Gap it has fallen from a height of about six hundred feet above sea-level to a height of about one hundred feet above sea-level; and there rises from the river on each side a steep slope four or five hundred feet high—Streatley Hill on the Berkshire side and Goring Heath on the Oxfordshire side.

The question arises, Why should these two ranges of hills, the Marlborough Downs and the Chiltern Hills, meet just at this point? Is it simply an accident of geography that their two ends stand exactly face to face on opposite sides of the Thames?

Now the geologists tell us that it is no coincidence. They have studied the strata—that is, the different layers of the materials forming the hills—and they find that the strata of the range on the Berkshire side compare exactly with the strata of the other; so that at some remote period the two must have been joined to form one unbroken range. How then did the gap come? Was it due to a cracking of the hill—a double crack with the

GORING GAP

earth slipping down in between, as has sometimes happened in the past? Here again the geologists tells us, No. Moreover they tell us that undoubtedly the River has *cut its way* right through the chalk hills.

“But how can that be possible?” someone says. “Here we have the Thames down in a low-lying plain on the north-west side of the hills, and down in the valley on the south-east side. How could a river flowing across a plain get up to the heights to commence the wearing away at the tops?” Here again the geologists must come to our aid. They tell us that back in that dim past, so interesting to picture yet so difficult to grasp, when the ancient, mighty River flowed (see Book I., Intro.), the chalklands extended from the Chilterns westwards, that there was no valley where now Oxford, Abingdon, and Lechlade lie, but that the River flowed across the top of a tableland of chalk from its sources in the higher grounds of the west to the brink at or near the eastern slope of the Chilterns; and that from this lofty position the River was able to wear its way down, and

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so make a V-shaped cutting in the end of the table-land. Afterwards there came an alteration in the surface. Some tremendous internal movement caused the land gradually to fold up, as it were; so that the tableland sagged down in the middle, leaving the Marlborough-Chiltern hills on the one side and the Cotswold-Edgehill range on the other, with the Oxford valley in between. But by this time the V-shaped gap had been cut sufficiently low to allow the River to flow through the hills, and to go on cutting its way still lower and lower.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reading

READING is without doubt the most disappointing town in the whole of the Thames Valley. It has had such a full share of history, far more than other equally famous towns; has been favoured by the reigning monarch of the land through many centuries; has taken sides in internal strife and felt the tide of war surging round its gates; it has counted for so much in the life of England that one feels almost a sense of loss in finding it just a commonplace manufacturing town, with not a semblance of any of its former glory.

Like many other towns in England, it sprang up round a religious house—one of the string of important abbeys which stretched from Abingdon to Westminster. But before that it had been recognized as an important position.

We have seen that Oxford, Wallingford, and other places came into existence by reason of

FATHER THAMES

their important fords across the River. Reading arose into being because the long and narrow peninsula formed by the junction of the Kennet with the Thames was such a splendid spot for defensive purposes that right from early days there had been some sort of a stronghold there.

Here in this very safe place, then, the Conqueror's son established his great foundation, the Cluniac Abbey of Reading, for the support of two hundred monks and for the refreshment of travellers. It was granted ample revenues, and given many valuable privileges, among them that of coining money. Its Abbot was a mitred Abbot, and had the right to sit with the lords spiritual in Parliament. From its very foundation it prospered, rising rapidly into a position of eminence; and, like the other abbeys, it did much towards the growth of the agricultural prosperity of the valley, encouraging the countryfolk to drain and cultivate their lands properly.

Though we first hear of it as a fortified place, and though at different times in history it felt the shock of war, Reading was never an im-

READING

portant military centre, for the simple reason that it did not guard a main road across or beside the River. Consequently the interruptions in its steady progress were few and far



between, and the place was left to develop its civilian and religious strength. This it did so well that during the four hundred years of the life of the Abbey it always counted for much with the Sovereigns, who went there to be

FATHER THAMES

entertained, and even in time of pestilence brought thither their parliaments, whose bodies were in the end buried there. By the thirteenth century the Abbey had risen to such a position that only Westminster could vie with it in wealth and magnificence.

And now what remains of it all? Almost nothing. There is what is called the old Abbey gateway, but it is merely a reconstruction with some of the ancient materials. In the Forbury Gardens lie all that is left, just one or two ivy-grown fragments of massive masonry, outlining perhaps the Chapter House, in which the parliaments were held, and the great Abbey Church, dedicated to St. Thomas Becket, where were the royal tombs and where in 1339 John of Gaunt was married. For the rest, the ruins have served all and sundry as a quarry for ready-prepared building stone during several centuries. Much of it was used to make St. Mary's Church and the Hospital of the Poor Knights of Windsor; while still more was commandeered by General Conway for the construction of the bridge between Henley and Wargrave.

READING

How did the Abbey come to such a state of dilapidation? Largely as a result of the Civil War. The Abbey was dissolved in 1539, and the Abbot actually hung, drawn, and quartered, because of his defiance. The royal tombs, where were buried Henry I., the Empress Maud, and others, were destroyed and the bones scattered; and from that time onwards things went from bad to worse. Henry VII. converted parts of it into a palace for himself and used it for a time, but in Elizabethan days it had got into such a very bad state that the Queen, who stayed there half-a-dozen times, gave permission for the rotting timbers and many cart-loads of stone to be removed. But it remained a dwelling till the eventual destruction during the Rebellion.

During the war which proved so disastrous for the great Abbey, Reading was decidedly Royalist, but the fortunes of war brought several changes for it. It withstood for some time during 1643 a severe siege by the Earl of Essex, and, just as relief was at hand, it surrendered. Then Royalists and Parliamentarians

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in turn held the town; and naturally with these changes and the fighting involved the place suffered greatly, especially the outstanding building, the Abbey. St. Giles' Church, which escaped destruction, still bears the marks of the bombardment.

But the town refused to die with the Abbey. The Abbey had done much to establish and vitalize the town. In its encouragement of the agriculture of the districts it had created the necessity for a central market-town, and Reading had grown and flourished accordingly. Thus, when the Abbey came to an end, the town was so firmly established that it was enabled to live on and prosper exceedingly.

Now Reading passes its days independent, almost unconscious, of the past, with its glory and its tragedy. Nor does the River any more enter into its calculations. To Reading has come the railway; and the railway has made the modern town what it is—an increasingly important manufacturing town and railway junction, and a ready centre for the rich agricultural land round about it; a hive of industry,

READING

with foundries, workshops, big commercial buildings, and a University College; with churches, chapels, picture-palaces, and fast-moving electric-tramcars, clanging their way along streets thronged with busy, hurrying people—in short, a typical, clean, modern industrial town, with nothing very attractive about it, but on the other hand nothing to repel or disgust.

Reading's most famous industries are biscuit-making and seed-growing. Messrs. Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, in the making of which four or five thousand people are employed, are known the world over; and so are Messrs. Sutton's seeds, grown in, and advertised by, many acres of beautiful gardens.

The Kennet, on which the town really stands, is a river which has lost its ancient power, for the geologists tell us that along its valley the real mighty river once ran, receiving the considerable Cherwell-Thames tributary at this point. Now, whereas the tributary has grown in importance if not in size, the main stream has shrunk to such an enormous extent that the

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tributary has become the river, and the river the tributary. Of course, passing through Reading the little river loses its beauty, but the Kennet which comes down from the western end of the Marlborough Downs and flows through the Berkshire meadows is a delightful little stream.

CHAPTER FIVE

Holiday Thames—Henley to Maidenhead

THE western half of that portion of the River which has for its bank the county of Buckinghamshire might well be spoken of as "holiday Thames," for it is on this lovely stretch that a great part of the more important river pleasure-making is done. Certainly we get boating at Richmond, Kingston, Molesey, etc., nearer the metropolis, but it is of the Saturday or Sunday afternoon sort, where Londoners, weary from the week's labours, find rest and solace in a few brief hours of leisurely punting or rowing. But, between Maidenhead and Henley, at places like Sonning, Pangbourne, and Cookham, folk live on or by the River, either in houseboats or waterside cottages, and the River is not just a diversion, but is for the time being the all-important thing.

Nor is this difficult to understand, for the River here is extraordinarily beautiful—a place to

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linger in and dream away the hours. Henley, which commences the stretch, lies just within the borders of Oxfordshire, and here is celebrated what is, next to the Boatrace at Putney,

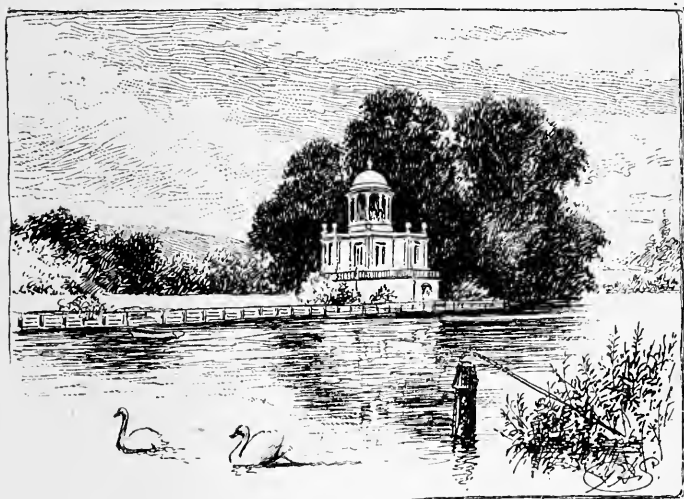


SONNING.

the most famous of all Thames festivals—for Henley Regatta draws rowing men (and women) from all parts, and crews come from both the Old World and the New to compete in the open races. The River then is almost covered with

HENLEY TO MAIDENHEAD

craft of all sorts moored closely together, with just a narrow water-lane down the centre for the passage of the competing boats; and the bright dresses and gay parasols of the ladies, with the background of green trees, all reflected



HENLEY.

in the water, make a brilliant and pleasing spectacle.

A few miles below Henley is Great Marlow, a clean and compact little riverside town, whose chief interest lies, perhaps, in the fact

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that here the poet Shelley lived for a time, writing some of his wonderful poems. Shelley spent much of his time on the River, and learned to love it very much, so that in after years we find him writing from Italy: "My thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest and the copses of Marlow."

The seven miles between Marlow and Maidenhead contain the most glorious scenery in the whole valley, for the River here for a considerable distance flows between gently rising hills whose slopes are richly wooded, the trees in many places coming right down to the water's edge. Alike in spring, when the fresh young green is spreading over the hillsides, and in autumn, when the woods are afire with every tint of gold and brown, the Cliveden Woods and the Quarry Woods of Marlow, with their mirrored reflections in the placid waters below, are indescribably beautiful. Above the woods, high on the Buckingham bank, stands Cliveden House, magnificently situated. In the old mansion which formerly stood on the spot was first performed Thomson's masque "Alfred."

HENLEY TO MAIDENHEAD

This is very interesting, for the masque contained "Rule, Britannia," composed by Dr. Arne; so here the tune was sung in public for the first time.

At various spots along the stretch we can see quite clearly the terraces which indicate the alteration in the position of the river-bed. High up towards the tops, sometimes actually at the tops of the hillsides, are the shallow, widespread gravel beds which show where in the dim past the original great Thames flowed (see Book I., Intro.). Then lower down come other terraces, with more gravel beds, to show a second position of the River, when, after centuries, it had cut its way lower and diminished in volume. Thus:



DIAGRAM OF THE THAMES VALLEY TERRACES.

Well-marked terraces can be found on the Berkshire side of the River between Maidenhead and Cookham, also at Remenham not far

FATHER THAMES

from Henley. They are visible on both sides of the River at Reading. Above Reading similar terraces, with their beds of river gravel, may be seen at Culham and Cholsey, between Radley and Abingdon, and also at Oxford.

CHAPTER SIX

Windsor

WINDSOR CASTLE, seen from the River at Clewer as we make our way downstream, provides us with one of the most magnificent views in the whole valley. Standing there, high on its solitary chalk hill, with the glowing red roofs of the town beneath and the rich green of the numerous trees clustering all round its base, the whole bathed in summer sunshine, it is a superb illustration of what a castle should be—ever-present, magnificent, defiant.

Yet, despite its wonderful situation, the finest without doubt in all the south of England, Windsor has had little or no history, has rarely beaten off marauding foes, and seldom taken any part in great national struggles. Built for a fortress, it has been through the centuries nothing more than a palace.

Erected by the builder of the Tower, William of Normandy, and probably for the same

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purpose, it has passed in many ways through a parallel existence, has been just what the Tower



WINDSOR CASTLE.

has been — an intended stronghold, a prison, and a royal residence. Yet, whereas the Tower

WINDSOR

has been intimately bound up with the life of England through many centuries, Windsor has, with just one or two brief exceptions, been a thing apart, something living its life in the quiet backwaters of history.

The Windsor district was always a favourite one with the rulers of the land even before the existence of the Castle. Tradition speaks of a hunting-lodge, deep in the glades of the Old Windsor Forest, close by the river, as belonging to the redoubtable King Arthur, and declares that here he and his Knights of the Round Table stayed when they hunted in the greenwood or sallied forth on those quests of adventure with which we are all familiar. What is more certain, owing to the bringing to light of actual remains, is that Old Windsor was a Roman station. Certainly it was a favourite haunt of the Saxon kings, who in all probability had a palace of some sort there, close to the Roman road which passed by way of Staines to the camp at Silchester; and its value must have been thoroughly recognized. Edward the Confessor in particular was especially fond of the place, and when he

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founded and suitably endowed his wonderful Abbey at Westminster he included "Windsor and Staines and all that thereto belongs" among his valuable grants to the foundation over which his friend Edwin presided.

In those days the Castle Hill was not even named. True, its possibilities as a strategic point were recognized, by Harold if by no other, for we read in the ancient records that Harold held on that spot four-and-a-half hides of land for defensive purposes.

But it remained for William the Conqueror, that splendid soldier and mighty hunter, to recognize the double possibilities of Windsor. Naturally, following his victory, he made himself familiar with Harold's possessions, and, coming shortly to Windsor, saw therein the means of gratifying two of his main interests. He inspected the ancient Saxon royal dwelling and saw at once its suitability as a retiring place for the King, surrounded by the great forest and quite close to that most convenient of highways, the River. And at the same time, warrior as he was, he understood the value of

WINDSOR

the little chalk hill which stood out from the encompassing clay.

Certainly it belonged to the Abbey as a "perpetual inheritance," but to such as William that was not likely to matter much. All England was his: he could offer what he liked. So he chose for exchange two fat manors in Essex—Wokendune and Feringes—fine, prosperous agricultural places, totally different from the unproductive wastelands of Windsor Hill; and the Abbot, wise man that he was, jumped at the exchange. Thus the Church was satisfied, no violence was done, and William secured both the Forest and the magnificent little hill commanding then, as it does now, many miles of the Thames Valley.

Why did he want it? For two reasons. In the first place, he wanted an impregnable fortress within striking distance of London. True, under his orders Gundulf had built the Tower, frowning down on the city of London; but a fortress which is almost a part of the city, even though it be built with the one idea of striking awe into the citizens, is really too

FATHER THAMES

close at hand to be secure. A fortress slightly aloof, and therefore not quite so liable to sudden surprise, yet within a threatening distance, had vastly greater possibilities.

William's other great passion was "the chase." Listen to what the ancient chronicler said about him: "He made many deer-parks; and he established laws therewith; so that whosoever slew a hart or a hind should be deprived of his eyesight. He loved the tall deer as if he were their father. Hares he decreed should go free. His rich men bemoaned it; and the poor men shuddered at it. But he was so stern, that he recked not the hatred of them all; for they must follow withal the King's will if they would live, or have land, or possessions, or even his peace." For this the surrounding forests rendered the position of Windsor a delightful one.

Thus came into existence the Norman Keep of Windsor Hill, and beneath it shortly after the little settlement of New Windsor. When Domesday Book was prepared the little place had reached the number of one hundred houses, and thenceforward its progress was steady.

WINDSOR

By the time of Edward I. it had developed to such an extent that it was granted a charter—which document may still be seen in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

With the Kings that came after the Conqueror Windsor soon became a favourite residence. Henry I., marrying a Saxon Princess, Edith, niece of the Confessor, lived there and built a fine dwelling-place with a Chapel dedicated to the Confessor and a wall surrounding everything.

During the reign of John, Windsor was besieged on more than one occasion, and it was from its fastness that the most wretched King who ever ruled—or misruled—England crept out to meet the Barons near Runnymede, just over the Surrey border.

Henry III., finding the old fabric seriously damaged by the sieges, determined to rebuild on a grander scale, and he restored the walls, raised the first Round Tower, the Lower and Middle Wards, and a Chapel; but, save one or two fragments, all these have perished.

However, it is to Edward of Windsor—the third King of that name—that we must look as

FATHER THAMES

the real founder of the Windsor of to-day. He rebuilt the Chapel and practically all the structures of Henry III., and added the Upper Ward.

In connection with this last a very interesting story is told. Edward had on the spot two very distinguished prisoners—King David of Scotland and King John of France—rather more like unwilling guests than prisoners, since they had plenty of liberty and shared in the amusements of the Court. One day the two were strolling with Edward in the Lower Ward, taking stock of the new erections, when King John made some such remark as this: “Your Grace’s castle would be better on the higher ground up yonder. You yourself would be able to see more, and the castle would be visible a greater way off.” In which opinion he was backed by the King of Scotland. Edward’s reply must have surprised the pair of them, for he said: “It shall be as you say. I will enlarge the Castle by adding another ward, and your ransoms shall pay the bill.” But Edward’s threat was never carried out. King David’s ransom was paid in 1337, but it only amounted

WINDSOR

to 100,000 marks; while that of King John, a matter of a million and a half of our money, was never paid, and John returned to England to die in the year 1363 in the Palace of the Savoy.

In the building of Windsor, Edward had for his architect, or superintendent, a very famous man, William Wykeham, the founder and builder of Winchester School and New College, Oxford. Wykeham's salary was fixed at one shilling a day while at Windsor, and two shillings while travelling on business connected with the Castle. Wykeham's chief work was the erection of the Great Quadrangle, a task which took him ten years to complete. While there at work, he had a stone engraved with the Latin words, *Hoc fecit Wykeham*, which translated means "Wykeham made this." Edward was enraged when he saw this inscription, for he wanted no man to share with him the glory of rebuilding Windsor; and he called his servant to account for his unwise action. Wykeham's reply was very ingenious, for he declared that he had meant the motto to read: "This made Wyke-

FATHER THAMES

ham ” (for the words can be translated thus).
The ready answer appeased the King's wrath.

The method by which the building was done was that of forced labour—a mild form of slavery. Edward, instead of engaging workmen in the ordinary way, demanded from each county in England so many masons, so many carpenters, so many tilers, after the fashion of the feudal method of obtaining an army. There were 360 of them, and they did not all come willingly, for certain of them were thrown into prison in London for running away. Slowly the work proceeded, but in 1361 the plague carried off many of the craftsmen, and new demands were made on Yorkshire, Shropshire, and Devon, to provide sixty more stone-workers each. When at length the structure was completed in 1369, it included most of the best parts of Windsor Castle—the Great Quadrangle, the Round Tower, St. George's Hall and Chapel, and the outer walls with their gates and turrets.

The Chapel was repaired later on, under the direction of another distinguished Englishman, Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry,

WINDSOR

who for over a year was "master of the King's works" at Windsor. In 1473 the Chapel had become so dilapidated that it was necessary to pull it down, and Edward IV. erected in its place an exceedingly beautiful St. George's Chapel, as an act of atonement for all the shed blood through which he had wallowed his way to the throne.

Queen Elizabeth was very fond indeed of Windsor, and frequently came thither in her great barge. She built a banqueting hall and a gallery, and formed the fine terrace which bears her name. This terrace, on the north side, above the steep, tree-planted scarp which falls away to the river valley, is an ideal place. Behind rise the State Apartments: in front stretches a magnificent panorama across Eton and the plain. On this terrace the two Charleses loved to stroll; and George III. was accustomed to walk every day with his family, just an ordinary country gentleman rubbing shoulders with his neighbours.

It is a wonderful place, is Windsor Castle—very impressive and in places very beautiful; but there is so much to write about that one scarcely knows where to begin. Going up

FATHER THAMES

Castle Hill, we turn sharp to the left, and, passing through the Gateway of Henry VIII., we are in the Lower Ward, with St. George's Chapel facing us in all its beauty.

This fine perpendicular Chapel is, indeed, worthy of the illustrious order, the Knights of the Garter, for whom it is a place both of worship and of ceremonial.

The Order of the Knights of the Garter was founded by Edward III. in the year 1349, and there were great doings at Windsor on the appointed day—St. George's Day. Splendid pageants, grand tournaments, and magnificent feasts, with knights in bright armour and their ladies in the gayest of colours, were by no means uncommon in those days; but on this occasion the spectacle was without parallel for brilliance, for Edward had summoned to the great tournament all the bravest and most famous knights in Christendom, and all had come save those of Spain, forbidden by their suspicious King. From their number twenty-six were chosen to found the Order, with the King at their head.

St. George's Chapel has some very beautiful

WINDSOR

stained-glass windows, some fine tracery in its roof, and a number of very interesting monuments. The carved stalls in the choir, with the banners of the knights drooping overhead, remind us certainly of the Henry VII. Chapel at Westminster. Within the Chapel walls have been enacted some wonderful scenes—scenes pleasing, and scenes memorable for their sorrow. Here have been brought, at the close of their busy lives, many of England's sovereigns, and here some of them—Henry VI. and Edward IV. among them—rest from their labours. Queen Victoria, who loved Windsor, lies with her husband in the Royal Tomb at Frogmore, not far away.

The Round Tower, which stands practically in the centre of the clustered buildings and surmounts everything, is always one of the most interesting places. From its battlements may be seen on a clear day no less than twelve counties. We can trace the River for miles and miles as it comes winding down the valley from Clewer and Boveney, to pass away into the distance where we can just faintly discern the dome of St. Paul's.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Eton College

STANDING on the north terrace, or on the hundred steps which ascend from Thames Street, with behind us the fabric which William Wykeham did so much to fashion, we gaze out to yet another place which Wykeham made possible—the famous College of Eton.

True, he had nothing whatever to do with the building of Eton itself, but he founded Winchester School, which is commonly spoken of as England's oldest public school; and this served the boy-king, Henry VI., as a model for his new foundation, so that Eton is in many respects, both as regards buildings and management, a copy of the older place.

The first charter is dated 1441. Henry was then only nineteen years old, yet he says that "from the very foundation of his riper age" he dreamed of "a solemn school at Eton

ETON COLLEGE

where a great number of children should be freely taught the rules of grammar." The school was to be called "The Kynges College of oure Ladye of Eton, beside Wyndesore."

Henry, in order that he might be certain he and his assistants were following the excellent



Winchester model, paid a number of visits to that school, and made a close study of its ways. There he was brought much into contact with William Waynflete, who had become master of Winchester in 1429 and done much to keep the school at its high level; and the result was that

FATHER THAMES

in 1442 Henry persuaded him to become the first master of Eton, whither he came, bringing with him from the older foundation half a dozen favourite scholars to be a model for all newcomers. Eton began with "twenty-five poor scholars" to be educated at the King's cost, but this number was soon increased to seventy.

Henry did not live to see his splendid scheme in being. In fact, the beautiful chapel which he had designed was never completed at all; moreover, the fabric itself, which he had desired to be made of "the hard stone of Kent," was very largely built of brick. Nor did the College as a whole rise into being in one great effort. Like most historic buildings, it grew little by little into its present self, with just a bit added here and a bit renovated there, so that the whole thing is a medley of styles.

In these days Eton, like most of the big public schools, is far from being what its founder intended it to be—a school for the instruction of deserving poor boys. Instead it has become a very exclusive college for the education of the sons of the rich.

ETON COLLEGE

There are usually just over eleven hundred boys in residence, seventy of whom are known as "collegers," while the other thousand odd are called "oppidans." For the old statute which decided on the number of "collegers" as seventy is still obeyed, and Henry's wish is kept in the letter, if not in the spirit. The "collegers" live in the actual College buildings, have their meals in the College Hall; and they wear cloth gowns to distinguish them from the rest of the scholars. These other thousand odd boys, the sons of gentlemen and other folk who can afford to pay the great sum of money necessary, live in the various masters' houses, which are built close at hand.

The "collegers," who win their positions as the result of a stiff examination, are practically the holders of very valuable scholarships, for they pay only small sums towards their expenses. And, generally speaking, they have a better time of it, even though they may be looked down on and called "tugs" by some of the more snobbish "oppidans"; for the College buildings are better than most of the houses. Moreover,

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the "collegers" have two large playing fields of their own, so that they can avoid the crush in the school fields.

Just when the "oppidans" began to take their place is by no means certain; but it could not have been very long after the foundation, for there is actually in existence the letter of an "oppidan" written in the year 1467, forty years after the opening. It is a very interesting letter, written to the boy's elder brother, and enclosing for his inspection a specimen of the writer's Latin verses (the making of Latin verse has always been a speciality at Eton). The letter also suggests the forwarding of "12 lbs. of figs and 8 lbs. of raisins," so, you see, boys were boys even in those far-off days.

Many of Eton's most picturesque customs have either died out or been suppressed by the authorities. One of the more famous of these was "Montem," given up in 1847. On a certain day, once every three years, the scholars marched in procession to Salt Hill—that is, to "the mountain" (*ad montem* means "to the mountain"); and there certain of their number

ETON COLLEGE

made a collection of money from all and sundry, giving little pieces of salt in exchange. Usually royalty from Windsor met them there, and contributed generously to the fund. "Montem" was a gay festival, for fancy-dress was the order of the day, and there was plenty of noise and colour as the merry procession made its way up the hill to the music of several bands, followed by a crowd of visitors. In 1846 the authorities decided to put an end to the celebration, because with the coming of the railway to Windsor an unwelcome crowd of excursionists presented itself each year, and the picturesque gathering degenerated into a vulgar rabble. One old custom which still survives is "Three-penny Day." On the 27th day of February each year, the anniversary of the death of a Provost named Lupton, builder of the picturesque gateway, each of the "collegers" receives a bright new threepenny-bit, provision for which is made in a sum of money left by Lupton and another Provost.

Eton, like that other and older seat of learning to which many Etonians make the journey

FATHER THAMES

up the valley, gains much from its nearness to the River, for swimming and rowing are two favourite pastimes with the boys of this school. The latter pastime reaches its zenith on the "fourth of June"—the great day which Eton keeps in honour of George III.'s birthday. Then the College is besieged by hundreds of relatives and friends, and there is a fine water-carnival on the River.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hampton Court

NEARLY twenty miles below Windsor we come upon the ancient palace of Hampton, better known in these days as Hampton Court, beautifully situated among tall trees not far from the river bank. It is a wonderful old place—one of the nation's priceless possessions—and once inside we are loth to leave it, for there is something attractive about its quaint old court-yards and its restful, bird-haunted gardens.

Certainly it is the largest royal palace in England, and in some respects it is the finest. Yet, strangely enough, it was not built for a King, nor has any sovereign lived in it since the days of George II. Wolsey, the proud Cardinal of Henry VIII.'s days, erected it for his own private mansion, and it is still the Cardinal's fabric which we look upon as we pass through the older portions of the great pile of buildings.

Wolsey was, as you probably know, the son

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of a comparatively poor man, yet he was possessed of great gifts, and when he left Oxford he soon rose to a position of eminence. The Kings, first of all Henry VII., then “bluff



HAMPTON COURT, GARDEN FRONT.

King Hal,” showered honours and gifts on him. The Pope created him a Cardinal, and Henry VIII. gave him the powerful position of Lord Chancellor of England. Wolsey, as befitted his high station, lived a life of great

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splendour, the pomp and show of his household rivalling even that of the King. Naturally such a man would have the best, even of palaces.

As we pass through the wonderful old courts of the Cardinal's dwelling we can imagine the vast amount of money which it must have cost to build, for it was magnificent in those days quite beyond parallel; and we cannot wonder that King Henry thought that such a building ought to be nothing less than a royal residence.

Little differences soon arose. Wolsey, indeed, had not lived long at Hampton Court when there came an open breach between the King and himself. The trouble increased, and he fell from his high place very rapidly. When in 1526 he presented Hampton Court Palace to the King something other than generosity must have prompted the gift.

Henry VIII. at once proceeded to make the palace more magnificent still. He pulled down the Cardinal's banqueting hall and erected a more sumptuous one in its place; and this we can see to-day. Built in the style known to architects as Tudor, it is one of the finest halls

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in the whole of our land. Many huge beams of oak, beautifully fitted, carved, and ornamented, support a magnificent panelled and decorated roof, while glorious stained-glass windows (copies of the original ones fitted under Henry VIII.'s directions) fill the place with subdued light. The Great Gatehouse also belongs to Henry's additions, and, with its octagonal towers and great pointed arch, has a very royal and imposing appearance.

Though no sovereign has dwelt in the palace for a century or more, it was for nearly two hundred years a favourite residence of our Kings and Queens, and many famous events have taken place within its walls. Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth were both very partial to the palace and its delightful gardens, and they spent much time there. Indeed, it is said that the latter was dining at Hampton when the glorious news of Drake's defeat of the Spanish Armada was carried to her. James I. resided at the palace after his succession to the throne, and there, in addition to selling quite openly any number of knight-hoods and peerages in

HAMPTON COURT

order that he might add to his scanty means, he held the famous conference which decided that a uniform and authorized translation of the Bible should be made. In the great hall countless plays and masques were performed, and probably the mighty Shakespeare himself visited the place. King Charles I. spent many days at the Court, some of them as a prisoner of the Parliamentary soldiers; and here too Cromwell made a home until shortly before the time of his death. After the Restoration Charles II. and his Court settled at the palace, and in the surrounding parks indulged their fondness for the chase.

Immediately Mary and her husband, William of Orange, came to the throne they commenced the alterations which have largely given us the palace of to-day. The old State apartments were pulled down and, under the direction of Sir Christopher Wren, larger and more magnificent ones were erected, something on the lines of the famous French royal palace at Versailles. At the same time William ordered the grounds to be laid out in the style of the famous Dutch gardens. The next three sovereigns, Anne, and

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the first and second Georges, all lived at the Court; but from that time onwards it ceased to be a royal residence. George III. would not go near the place. The story is told that on one occasion at Hampton Court his grandfather boxed his ears soundly, and he vowed never again to live on the scene of such an indignity. At any rate, he divided up its thousand rooms into private suites of apartments, which were given as residences to persons of high social position whose incomes were not large enough to keep them. And to this day a very considerable portion of the palace is shut off from public view for the same purpose.

However, the parts which we can visit are extremely interesting. Entering at the main gate by Molesey Bridge, we cross the outer Green Court and come to the Moat. In Wolsey's time this was crossed by a drawbridge of the sort in use when palaces were fortresses as well as dwelling-places. We now pass into the buildings over a fine old battlemented Tudor bridge.

This was built by Henry VIII. in honour of Anne Boleyn; but for centuries it lay buried and

HAMPTON COURT

forgotten. Then one day, just before the War, workmen came upon it quite accidentally as they were cleaning out the old Moat.

Once through the gateway we come straight into the first of the old-world courtyards—the Base Court—and we feel almost as if we had stepped back several hundred years into a by-gone age. The deep red brickwork of the battlements and the walls, the quaint chimneys, doorways, windows, and turrets, all belong to the distant past; they make on us an impression which not even the splendour of Wren's additions can remove. Passing through another gateway—Anne Boleyn's—we come into the Clock Court, so called because of the curious old timepiece above the archway. This clock was specially constructed for Henry VIII., and for centuries it has gone on telling the minute of the hour, the hour of the day, the day of the month, and the month of the year.

The Great Hall, which we may approach by a stairway leading up from Anne Boleyn's Gateway is, as we have already said, a magnificent apartment. The glory of its elaborate roof can

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never be forgotten. Hanging on its walls are some very famous tapestries which have been at Hampton Court since the days of Henry VIII. Among these are "tenne pieces of new arras of the Historie of Abraham," made in Brussels—some of the richest and most beautiful examples of the art of weaving ever produced. From the Great Hall we pass into what is known as the Watching Chamber or the Great Guard Room—the apartment in which the guards assembled when the monarch was at dinner, and through which passed all who desired audience of their sovereign. On its walls are wonderful old Flemish tapestries which once belonged to Wolsey himself. From the Watching Chamber we pass to another chamber through which the dishes were taken to the tables which stood on the dais at the end of the Hall.

Returning once more to the ground floor we go through a hall and find ourselves in Fountain Court. Here we enter another world entirely. Behind us are the quaint, old-fashioned courtyards, and the beautiful, restful Tudor buildings. The sudden change to Wren's architecture has

HAMPTON COURT

an effect almost startling. Yet when once we have forgotten the older buildings and become used to the very different style we see that Wren's work has a beauty of its own. The newer buildings are very extensive, and the State apartments are filled with pictures and furniture of great interest. Entrance is obtained by what is called the King's Great Staircase. The first room, entered by a fine doorway, is the Guard Room, a fine, lofty chamber with the upper part of its wall decorated with thousands of old weapons—guns, bayonets, pistols, swords, etc. From thence we pass to the round of the magnificent royal apartments—King's rooms, Queen's rooms, and so on, some thirty or more of them—all filled with priceless treasures—beautiful and rare paintings, delightful carvings from the master hand of Grinling Gibbons, so delicate and natural that it is difficult to believe they are made of wood, furniture of great historical interest and beauty. Here are the famous pictures—the “Triumph of Julius Cæsar,” nine large canvases showing the Roman emperor returning in triumph from one of his

FATHER THAMES

many wars. These were painted by Mantegna, the celebrated Italian artist, and originally formed part of the great collection brought together at Hampton Court by Charles I. They are a priceless possession. Here, too, are the famous "Hampton Court Beauties" and "Windsor Beauties," the first painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, the second by Sir Peter Lely, each portraying a number of famous beauties of the Court. Walking leisurely round these apartments we can obtain an excellent idea of the elaborate style of furnishing which was fashionable two or three centuries ago.

Yet, despite all these most valuable relics of the past, which many people come half across the world to view, for some folk the supreme attraction of Hampton Court will always be the gardens. Very beautiful they are too—the result of centuries of loving care by those, Kings and commoners, who had time and inclination to think of garden making. Perhaps to William of Orange must be given greatest credit in the matter, for it was he who ordered the setting-out of the long, shady avenues and alleys, and

HAMPTON COURT

the velvety lawns and orderly paths. But we must not forget our debt of gratitude to Henry for the wonderful little sunken garden on the south side of the palace, perhaps one of the finest little old English gardens still in existence; and to Charles I. for the Canal, over a mile long, with its shady walk, and its birds and fishes, and its air of dreamy contentment.

Tens of thousands visit these grounds in the summer months, and the old grape-vine is always one of the chief attractions. Planted as long ago as 1768, it still flourishes and bears an abundant crop each year, sometimes as many as 2,500 bunches, all of fine quality. Its main stem is now over four feet in circumference, and its longest branch about one hundred and twenty feet in length. On the east front, stretching in one unbroken line across the Home Park for three-quarters of a mile towards Kingston, is the Long Water, an ornamental lake made by Charles II. North of the buildings is another garden, known as the Wilderness, and here we may find the celebrated Maze, constructed in the time of William and Mary. This consists of a great number of

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winding and zig-zag paths, hedged on each side with yew and other shrubs; and the puzzle is to find the way into the little open space in the centre. On almost any day in the summer can be heard the merry laughter of visitors who have lost their way in the labyrinth of paths.

Still farther north lies Bushey Park, with its famous Chestnut Avenue, stretching over a mile in the direction of Teddington. Here are more than a thousand acres of the finest English parkland; and this, together with the large riverside stretch known as the Home Park, formed the royal demesne in which the monarchs and their followers hunted the deer.

As was said at the beginning of the chapter, only with reluctance do we leave Hampton Court, partly because of its very great beauty, partly because of its enthralling historical associations. As we turn our backs on the great Chancellor's memorial, we think perhaps a trifle sadly of all that the place must have meant to Wolsey, and there come to mind those resounding words which Shakespeare put into his mouth—"Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness."

CHAPTER NINE

Kingston

ALREADY we have seen that in many cases, if not in most, the River has founded the towns on its banks. These have sprung up originally to guard either an important crossing or the junction of a tributary with the main stream or a "gate" where the River has found a way through the hills; and then, outliving the period of their military usefulness, they have developed later into centres of some commercial importance. Thus it has been with Kingston-upon-Thames, a place of ancient fame, for, according to the geology of the district, there must have been at this spot one of the lowest fords of the River.

That there was on Kingston Hill a Roman station guarding that ford there can be very little doubt; and there are evidences that a considerable Roman town was situated here, for the Roman remains brought to light have been fairly abundant.

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Workmen digging or ploughing on the hill-side up towards Coombe Warren have, at various times in the past, discovered the foundations of Roman villas, with gold, silver, and bronze coins of the fourth century, and numerous household goods, and in one place a cemetery full of funeral urns.

But it was not till Saxon times that Kingston came to the heyday of its existence. Then it was a place of the greatest possible importance, for here England was united into one country under one King. Prior to the union England was divided off into a number of states, which found amusement in fighting each other when they were not fighting the ancient Britons in their western fastnesses. These states were Northumbria, in the north; Mercia in the Midlands; Wessex in the south-west; and, in addition, the smaller areas of East Anglia, Essex, and Kent. When any one chieftain or king was sufficiently strong to defeat the others, and make them do his will, he became for the time being the "bretwalda," or overlord; but it was a very precarious honour. The kings in turn

KINGSTON

won the distinction, but the greater ones emerged from the struggle, and in the end Egbert, king of Wessex, by subduing the Mercians, became so powerful that all the other kings submitted to him. Thus Egbert became the first king or overlord of all the English (827), and picked on Kingston as the place for his great council or witenagemot.

Then followed the terrible years of the Danish invasions, and England was once more split up into sections; but the trouble passed, and Edward the Elder, elected and crowned king of Wessex at Kingston, eventually became the real King of England, the first to be addressed in those terms by the Pope of Rome.

Thence onward Kingston was the recognized place of coronation for the English Kings, till Edward the Confessor allotted that distinction to his new Abbey at Westminster. In addition, it was one of the royal residences and the home of the Bishops of Winchester, whose palace was situated where now a narrow street, called Bishop's Hall, runs down from Thames Street to the River. So that Kingston's position as

FATHER THAMES

one of the chief towns of Wessex was acknowledged.

The stone on which the Saxon Kings were crowned stands now quite close to the market-place, jealously guarded by proper railings, as such a treasure should be. Originally it was housed in a little chapel, called the Chapel of St. Mary, close to the Parish Church, and with it were preserved effigies of the sovereigns crowned; but unfortunately in the year 1730 the chapel collapsed, killing the foolish sexton who had been digging too close to the foundations. Then for years the stone was left out in the market-place, unhonoured and almost unrecognized, till in the year 1850 it was rescued and mounted in its present position. According to the inscription round the base, the English Kings crowned at Kingston included Edward the Elder (902), Athelstan (924), Edmund I. (940), Edred (946), Edwy the Fair (955), Edward the Martyr (975), and Ethelred II. (979).

That most wretched of monarchs, King John, gave the town its first charter, and for a time

KINGSTON

at least resided here. In the High Street there is now shown a quaint old building to which the title of " King John's Dairy " has been given, and this possibly marks the situation of the King's dwelling-place.

There was a castle here from quite early days, for we read that in 1263, when Henry III. was fighting against his barons, Kingston Castle fell into the hands of de Montfort's colleagues, who captured and held the young Prince Edward; and that Henry returned in the following year and won the castle back again. At the spot where Eden Street joins the London Road were found the remains of walls of great thickness, and these, which are still to be seen in the cellars of houses there, are commonly supposed to be the foundations of a castle held by the Earls of Warwick at the time of the Wars of the Roses, and possibly of an even earlier structure.

Right down through history Kingston, probably by reason of its important river crossing, has had its peaceful life disturbed at intervals by the various national struggles. Armies have descended on it suddenly, stayed the night,

FATHER THAMES

taken their fill, and gone on their way; a few have come and stayed. Monarchs have broken their journeys at this convenient spot, or have dined here in state to show their favour. For Kingston, as the King's "tun" or town should, has always been a distinctly Royalist town,



KINGSTON.

has invariably declared for the sovereign—right or wrong.

Thus in 1554, when young Sir Thomas Wyatt raised his army of ten thousand to attack London, and found the Bridge too strong to force, he made his way westwards to the convenient crossing at Kingston; but the in-

KINGSTON

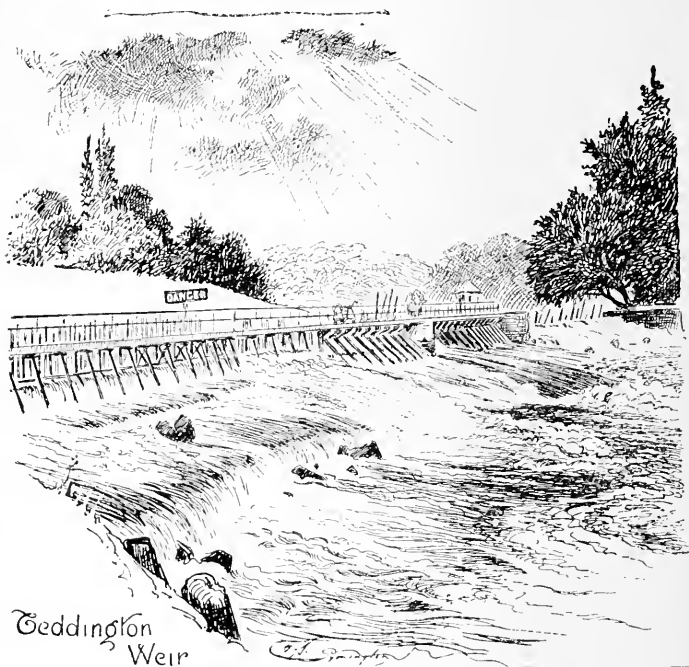
habitants broke down their bridge to delay his progress, and so enabled Mary to get together a force; for which act of devotion the citizens were rewarded with a free charter by Queen Mary.

Similarly, in the Civil War the town stood firmly by Charles, despite the fact that the town was occupied by cavaliers and roundheads in turn. Thus in October, 1642, the Earl of Essex settled down with several thousand men; while in November Sir Richard Onslow came to defend the crossing. But the inhabitants showed themselves extremely "malignant"; though when, just after, the King came to the town with his army he was greeted with every sign of joyous welcome.

Also at Kingston occurred one of the numerous risings which happened during the year 1648. All over the land the Royalists gathered men and raised the King's standard, hoping that Parliament would not be able to cope with so many simultaneous insurrections. In July the Earl of Holland, High Steward of Kingston, the Duke of Buckingham, and his brother

FATHER THAMES

Lord Francis Villiers, got together a force of several hundred horsemen, but they were heavily defeated by a force of Parliamentarians, and Lord Villiers was killed.



Nowadays, despite the fact that the town has held its own through a thousand years, neither losing in fame a great deal nor gaining, Kingston

KINGSTON

does not give one any impression of age. True, it has some ancient dwellings here and there, but for the most part they are hidden away behind unsightly commercial frontages.

Between Kingston and Richmond the River sweeps round in an inverted **S**-bend, passing on the way Teddington and Twickenham, formerly two very pretty riverside villages. The former possess the lowest pound-lock on the River (with the exception of that of the half-tide lock at Richmond), and also a considerable weir. It is the point at which the tide reaches its limit, and thereby gets its name Teddington, or Tide-ending-town.

CHAPTER TEN

Richmond

RICHMOND is an old place with a new name, for though its history goes back to Saxon times, it did not get its present name till the reign of Henry VII., when "Harry of Richmond" re-christened it in allusion to the title which he received from the Yorkshire town. Prior to that it had always been called Sheen, and the name still survives in an outlying part of the town.

Sheen Manor House had been right from Saxon days a hunting lodge and an occasional dwelling for the Sovereigns, but Edward III. built a substantial palace, and, absolutely deserted by all his friends, died in it in the year 1377. He was succeeded by his young grandson, the Black Prince's child Richard, who spent most of his childhood with his mother Joan at Kingston Castle, just a mile or two higher upstream. Richard's wife, Queen Anne of

RICHMOND

Bohemia, died in Sheen Palace in the year 1394, and Richard was so upset that he had the palace pulled down, and never visited Sheen again.



This, however, by no means ended the life of Sheen as a royal residence, for Henry V. built a new house, and when, in 1498, this was burned down, Henry VII. built a new palace on a much grander scale, and at the same time gave it the name which it still bears. With the

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Tudor kings and queens Richmond was a very great favourite. "Bluff King Hal" loved to hunt in its woodland, and here, in 1603, "good Queen Bess" died, after forty-five years of a troublous but prosperous and progressive reign. Charles I. spent much of his time here, and he it was who added Richmond Park to the royal domain in the year 1637.

After the Civil War the palace was set aside for the use of the widowed Queen Henrietta Maria, but by that time it had got into a very dilapidated condition; and little or nothing was done to improve it. So that before long this once stately palace fell to pieces and was removed piecemeal. Now all that remains of it is a gateway by Richmond Green.

Richmond to-day is merely a suburb of London, one of the pleasure grounds of the city's countless workers, who come hither on Saturdays and Sundays either to find exercise and enjoyment on the River, or to breathe the pure air of the park. This New Park, so called to distinguish it from the Old Deer Park, which lies at the other end of the town, is a very fine

RICHMOND

place indeed. Surrounded by a wall about eleven miles long, it covers 2,250 acres of splendid park and woodland, with glorious views in all directions. In it are to be found numerous deer which spend their young days here, and later are transferred to Windsor Park. The Old Deer Park, of which about a hundred acres are open to the public for football, golf, tennis, and other pastimes, lies by the riverside between the town and Kew Gardens.

The view of the River Thames from the Terrace on Richmond Hill is world-famous. Countless artists have painted it, and many writers have described it; and probably it has deserved all the good things said about it, for even now, spoiled as it is by odd factory chimneys and unsightly buildings dotted about, it still remains one of the most delightful vistas of the silvery, winding River. Those of you who have read Scott's "Heart of Midlothian" will probably remember the passage (chapter xxxvi.) which describes it: "The equipage stopped on a commanding eminence, where the beauty of English landscape was displayed in its utmost

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luxuriance. Here the Duke alighted and desired Jeanie to follow him. They paused for a moment on the brow of a hill, to gaze on the unrivalled landscape which it presented. A



huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves, was tenanted by numberless flocks and herds, which seemed to wander unrestrained and unbounded through the rich pastures. The Thames, here turreted with villas and there

RICHMOND

garlanded with forests, moved on slowly and placidly, like the mighty monarch of the scene, to whom all its other beauties were but accessories, and bore on its bosom a hundred barks and skiffs, whose white sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole. The Duke was, of course, familiar with this scene; but to a man of taste it must be always new."

Nor have the poets been behindhand with their appreciation, as the following extract from James Thomson's "Seasons" shows:

"Heavens ! what a goodly prospect spreads around,
Of hills, and dales, and woods, and lawns, and spires,
And glittering towers, and gilded streams, till all
The stretching landscape into smoke decays."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Richmond to Westminster

JUST below Richmond, on the borders of the Middlesex village of Isleworth, there is a foot-passenger toll-bridge, with what is known as a half-tide lock. The arches of this bridge are open to river traffic during the first half of the ebb-tide and the second half of the flow, but the River is dammed for the remainder of the day in order that sufficient water may be kept in the stretch immediately above. This, for the present, is the last obstruction on the journey seawards.

Isleworth, with its riverside church, its ancient inn, "The London Apprentice," and its great flour-mill, is a typical riverside village which has lived on out of the past. Between it and Brentford lies the magnificent seat of the Dukes of Northumberland—Sion House—a fine dwelling situated in a delightful expanse of parkland facing Kew Gardens on the Surrey shore.

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

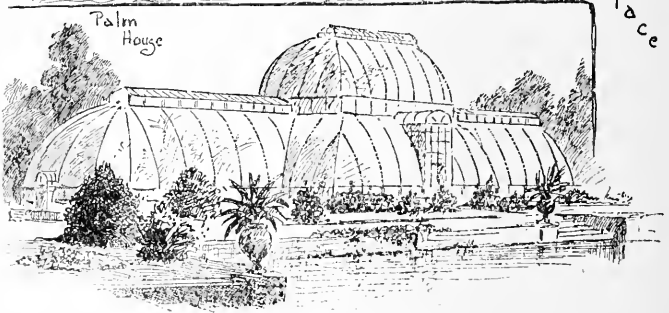
Of Kew Gardens, which stretch beside the River from the Old Deer Park almost to Kew Bridge, it is difficult for one who loves nature to speak in moderate terms, for it is one of the most delightful places in the whole of our land. At every season of the year, almost every day, there is some fresh enchantment, some glory of tree or flower unfolding itself, so that one can go there year after year, week in and week out, without exhausting its treasure-house of wonders, even though there is only a matter of 350 acres to explore.

The Royal Botanical Gardens, as their proper name is, were first laid out by George III. in the year 1760, and were presented to the nation by Queen Victoria in the year 1840. Since then the authorities have planned and worked assiduously and wisely to bring together a botanical collection of such scope and admirable arrangement that it is practically without rival in the world. Here may be seen, flourishing in various huge glasshouses, the most beautiful of tropical and semi-tropical plants—palms, ferns, cacti, orchids, giant lilies, etc.;

FATHER THAMES



Kew Palace



Palm House

KEW GARDENS.

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

while in the magnificently laid out grounds are to be found flowers, trees, and shrubs of all kinds growing in a delightful profusion. There is not a dull spot anywhere; while the rhododendron dell, the azalea garden, the rock garden, and the rose walks are indescribably beautiful. Nor is beauty the only consideration, for the carefully planned gardens, with their splendid museum, are of untold value to the gardener and the botanist.

Nor must we forget that Kew had its palace. Frederick, Prince of Wales, father of George III. and great patron of Surrey cricket, resided at Kew House, as did his son after him. The son pulled down the mansion in 1803 and erected another in its place; and, not to be outdone, George IV. in turn demolished this. The smaller dwelling-house—dignified now by the title of palace—a homely red-brick building, known in Queen Anne's time as the "Dutch House," was built in the reign of James I. In it died Queen Charlotte.

If we speak with unstinting praise of Kew, what shall we say of Brentford, opposite it on

FATHER THAMES

the Middlesex side of the stream? Surely no county in England has a more untidy and squalid little county town. Its long main street is narrow to the point of danger, so that it has been necessary to construct at great cost a new arterial road which will avoid Brentford altogether; while many of its byways can be dignified by no better word than slums. Yet Brentford in the past was a place of some note in Middlesex, and had its share of history. Indeed, in recent times it has laid claim to be the "ford" where Julius Cæsar crossed on his way to Verulam, a claim which for years was held undisputedly by Cowey Stakes, near Walton.

Now the Great Western Railway Company's extensive docks, where numerous barges discharge and receive their cargoes, and the incidental sidings and warehouses, the gas-works, the various factories and commercial buildings, make riverside Brentford a thing of positive ugliness.

On the bank above the ferry, close to the spot where the little Brent River joins the main

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

stream, the inhabitants, proud of their share in the nation's struggles, have erected a granite pillar with the following brief recital of the town's claims to notoriety:

54 B.C.—At this ancient fortified ford the British tribesmen, under Cassivelaunus, bravely opposed Julius Cæsar on his march to Verulamium.

A.D. 780-1.—Near by Offa, King of Mercia, with his Queen, the bishops, and principal officers, held a Council of the Church.

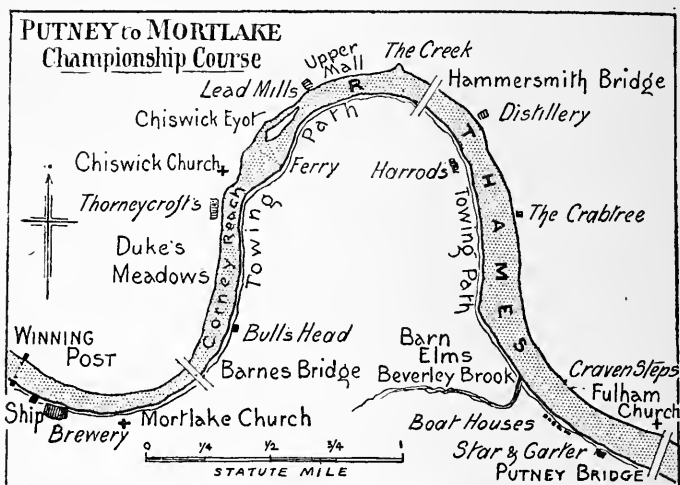
A.D. 1016.—Here Edmund Ironside, King of England, drove Cnut and his defeated Danes across the Thames.

A.D. 1640.—Close by was fought the Battle of Brentford between the forces of King Charles I. and the Parliament.

From Kew Bridge onwards the River loses steadily in charm if it gains somewhat in importance. The beauty which has clung to it practically all the way from the Cotswolds now almost entirely disappears, giving place to a generally depressing aspect, relieved here and there with just faint suggestions of the receding charm.

FATHER THAMES

A short distance downstream is Mortlake, once a pretty little riverside village, now almost a suburb of London, and quite uninteresting save that it marks the finish of the University Boatrace. This, as all folk in the Thames



Valley (and many out of it) are aware, is rowed each year upstream from Putney to Mortlake, usually on the flood-tide.

Barnes, on the Surrey shore, is a very ancient place. The Manor of Barn Elms was presented by Athelstan (925-940) to the canons of St.

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

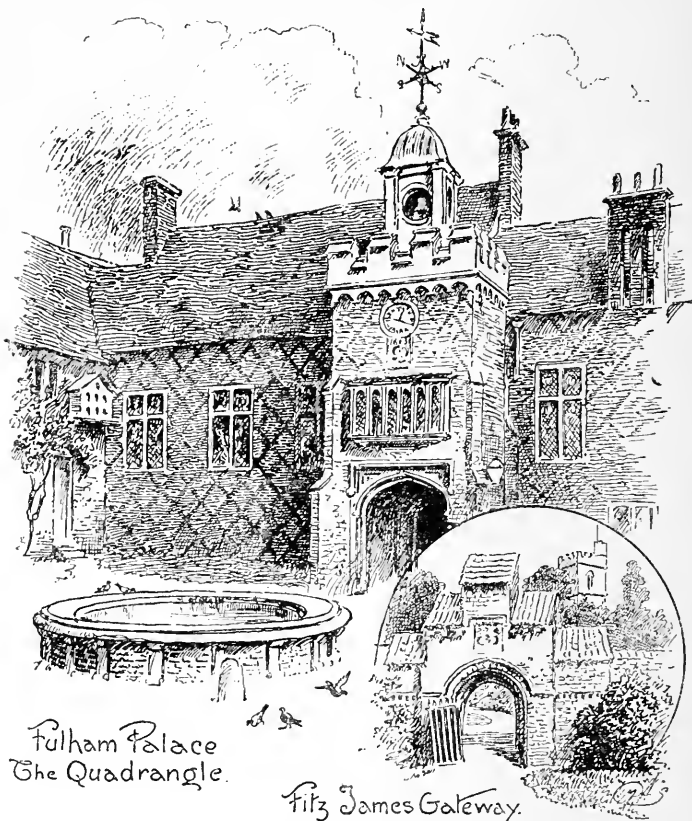
Paul's, and by them it has been held ever since. The name possibly came from the great barn or spicarium, which the canons had on the spot. The place is now the home of the Ranelagh Club—a famous club for outdoor pursuits, notably polo, golf, and tennis.

Fulham Palace, on the Middlesex bank, not far from Putney Bridge, is the "country residence" of the Bishops of London. For nine centuries the Bishops have held the manor of Fulham, and during most of the time have had their domicile in the village. In these days, when Fulham is one of the utterly dreary districts of London, with acres and acres of dull, commonplace streets, it is hard indeed to think of it as a fresh riverside village with fine old mansions and a wide expanse of market-gardens and a moat-surrounded palace hidden among the tall trees.

The River now begins to run through London proper, and from its banks rise wharves, warehouses, factories, and numerous other indications of its manifold commercial activities. Thus it continues on past Wandsworth, where the tiny

FATHER THAMES

river Wandle joins forces and where there is talk of erecting another half-tide lock, past



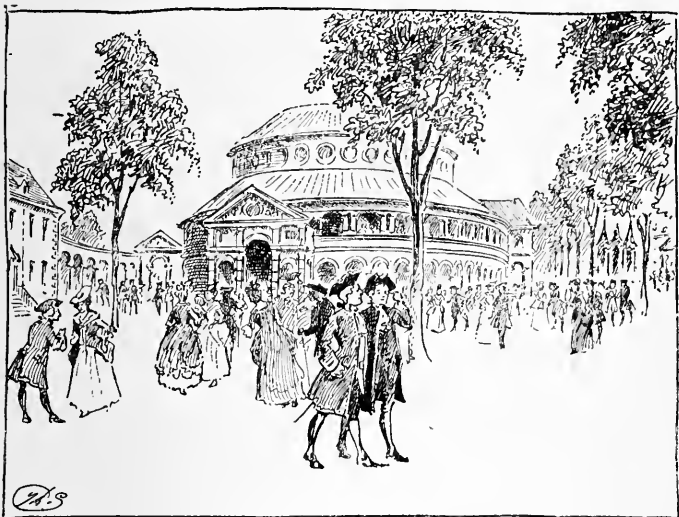
Fulham Palace
The Quadrangle.

Fitz James Gateway.

Fulham, Chelsea, Battersea, Pimlico, Vauxhall,
and Lambeth, on to Westminster.

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

At Chelsea and Vauxhall were situated those famous pleasure-gardens—the Ranelagh and Cremorne Gardens at the former, and the Spring Gardens at the latter—which during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided London



RANELAGH.

with so much in the way of entertainment. Vauxhall Gardens were opened to the public some time after the Restoration, and at once became popular, so that folk of all sorts, rich and poor alike, came to pass a pleasant evening.

FATHER THAMES

An account written in 1751 speaks of the gardens as "laid out in so grand a taste that they are frequented in the three summer months by most of the nobility and gentry then in or near London." The following passage from Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker" aptly describes the dazzling scene: "A spacious garden, part laid out in delightful walks, bounded with high hedges and trees, and paved with gravel; part exhibiting a wonderful assemblage of the most picturesque and striking objects, pavilions, lodges, graves, grottos, lawns, temples, and cascades; porticoes, colonnades, rotundas; adorned with pillars, statues, and paintings; the whole illuminated with an infinite number of lamps, disposed in different figures of suns, stars, and constellations; the place crowded with the gayest company, ranging through those blissful shades, and supping in different lodges on cold collations, enlivened with mirth, freedom, and good humour, and animated by an excellent band of music."

In the early days most of the folk came by water, and the river was gay with boatloads of revellers. Barges and boats waited each

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

evening at Westminster and Whitehall Stairs in readiness for passengers; and similarly at various places along the city front craft plied for hire to convey the citizens, their wives and daughters, and even their apprentices.

Ranelagh was not quite so ancient, and it encouraged a slightly better class of visitor: otherwise it was the counterpart of Vauxhall, as was Cremorne. It was famous, among other things, for its regatta. In 1775 this was a tremendous water-carnival. The River from London Bridge westwards was covered with boats of all sorts, and stands were erected on the banks for the convenience of spectators.

Ranelagh was demolished in 1805, but Vauxhall persisted right on till 1859, when it too came under the auctioneer's hammer. Where Cremorne once stood is now the huge power-station so prominent in this stretch of the river; and the famous coffee-house kept by "Don Saltero" in the early eighteenth century was in Cheyne Walk.

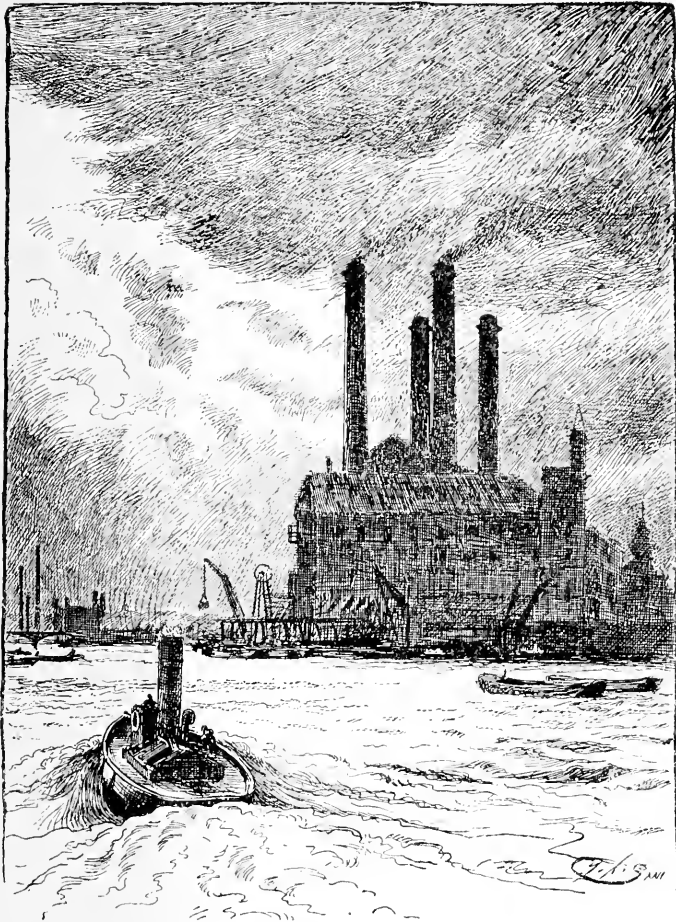
Chelsea in its day has achieved fame in quite a variety of ways. Apart from its pleasure gardens it has come to be well-known for its

FATHER THAMES

beautiful old physic-garden; its hospital for aged soldiers, part of the gardens of which were included in Ranelagh; its bun-house; its pottery; and last, but by no means least, for its association with literary celebrities. Here have lived, and worked, and, in some cases, died, writers of such different types as Sir Thomas More, whose headless body was buried in the church, John Locke, Addison, Swift, Smollett, Carlyle—the “sage of Chelsea”—Leigh Hunt, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Kingsley. Artists, too, have congregated in these quiet streets, and the names of Turner and Whistler will never be forgotten.

At Lambeth may still be seen the famous palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury, a beautiful building of red-brick and stone, standing in an old-world garden. Some parts of it are very old: one, the Lollards' Tower, is an exceedingly fine relic of medieval building. Close at hand stands the huge pile of buildings which house the pottery works of Messrs. Doulton. For some reason or other Lambeth has long been associated with this industry.

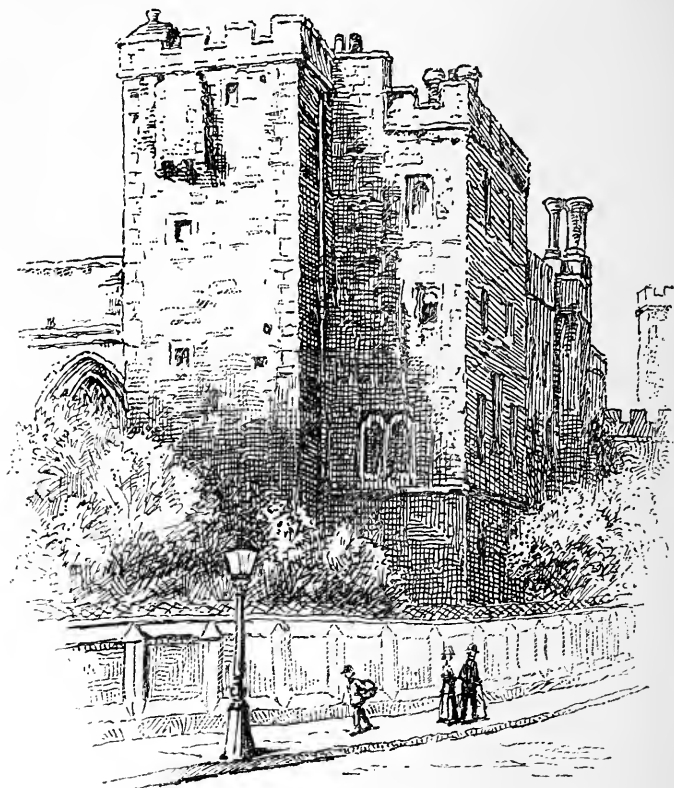
RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER



THE POWER-STATION, CHELSEA.

FATHER THAMES

As early as 1670 one Edward Warner sold potters' clay here, and exported it in huge



THE LOLLARDS' TOWER, LAMBETH PALACE.

quantities to Holland and other countries, and various potters, some Dutch, settled in the

RICHMOND TO WESTMINSTER

district. All this stretch of the River seems to have been famous for its china-works in the past, for there were celebrated potteries at Fulham, Chelsea, and Battersea as well. Of these Battersea has passed away, and its productions are eagerly sought after by collectors, but Fulham and Lambeth remain, while Chelsea, after a long interval, is reviving this ancient craft.

Thus we have traversed in fancy the whole of this wonderful River—so fascinating to both young and old, to both studious and pleasure-seeking. The more we learn of it the more we are enthralled by its story, by the immense share it has had in the shaping of England's destinies.

We started with a consideration of what those wonderful people the geologists could tell us of the River in dim, prehistoric days; and we feel inclined to turn once more to them in conclusion. For they tell us now that the Thames is growing less; that, just as in times past it captured the waters of other streams and reduced them to trickling nothings, so in turn it is succumbing

FATHER THAMES

day by day to the depredations of the River Ouse, which is slowly cutting off its head. Some day, perhaps, the Thames will be just a tiny rivulet, and the Port of London will be no more; but I think the tides will ebb and flow under London Bridge many times before it comes to pass.

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