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HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

IN

SURREY

[Pg ii]

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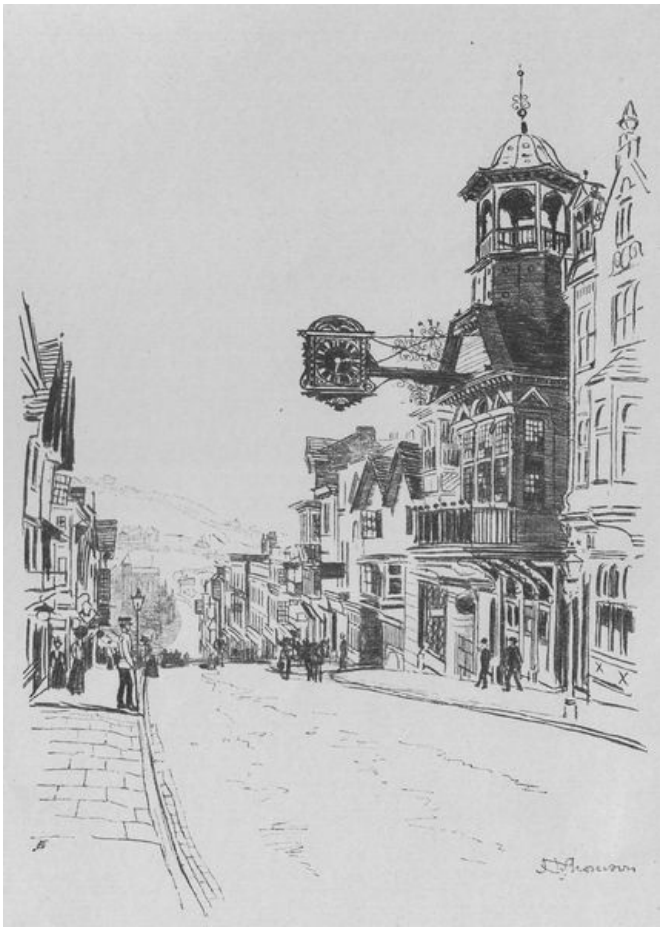
[Pg iii-v]



High Street, Guildford.

Highways and Byways

IN

Surrey

BY ERIC PARKER

WITH · ILLUSTRATIONS · BY

HUGH THOMSON

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1909

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[Pg vii]

PREFACE

A preface ought not to contain an apology. But mine must contain at least an explanation, if only of omissions. The Highways and Byways of Surrey belong not to one county or to one period of time, but to two different ages, and, to-day, to two counties. London has made the difference. What was Surrey country a hundred years ago has been gathered into the network of London streets, and belongs, in the mind and on the map, to London. Almost for ten miles south of the London Thames the old Surrey countryside has disappeared, and the disappearance has left the writer of a book of Surrey Highways a difficult choice. It would have been easy to fill a large part of the book with the Surrey of the past, the Surrey of Southwark, and the great church of St. Mary Overie, and of Lambeth Palace and the Archbishops, of Vauxhall, and the Paris Gardens, and the Bankside where Shakespeare brought out his plays. But it is not easy to write anything new of any part of Surrey, and of that part I could have written nothing new at all. So that it seemed best to leave the Surrey that has disappeared to writers who have dealt with its history far more adequately than I could, and to choose for the Highways and Byways of this book only those which still run through open country and through country villages and towns. That is the Surrey of to-day.

The general plan of the book is simple. I have entered the county from the west at Farnham, with the old Way along the chalk ridge, and I leave it by Titsey on the east. Of course, not all the Surrey villages belong to the ridge, though the chief towns lie along it. Other villages set themselves along the banks of the two Surrey rivers, the Wey and the Mole, and there are separate little groups like the villages of the Fold country, or on the plateaux of the Downs round Epsom, or between Chertsey and Windsor on the Thames. These group themselves in their own chapters. But the main progress of the book is the trend of the great Surrey highway. As to [Pg viii] following the book through its chapters from west to east, Surrey is threaded by such a net of railways that the deliberate choosing of a route, with definite centres and points of departure, is unnecessary. But those who believe that the best way to see any country is to walk through it will find that, as a general rule, the book and its chapters are divided, sometimes naturally, sometimes perhaps a little perversely, into the compass of a day's walking. My own plan has been simple enough: it has been to set out in the morning and walk till it was dark, and then take the train back to where I came from. Others will be able to plan far more comprehensive journeys by motor-car, or by bicycling, or on horseback—though not many, perhaps, ride horses by Surrey roads to-day. But only by walking would it be possible to explore much of the country. You would never, except by walking, come at the meaning or read the story of the ancient Way, or the Pilgrims' Road that follows it; only on foot can you climb the hills as you please, or follow the path where it chooses to take you. It is only by walking that you will get to the best of the Thursley heather, or the Bagshot pines and gorse, or the whortleberries in the wind on Leith Hill, or the primroses of the Fold country, or the birds that call through the quiet of the Wey Canal—though there, too, you may take a boat; it is one of the prettiest of the byways. The walker through Surrey sees the best; the others see not much more than the road and what stands on the road.

The omission, or rather neglect, of Surrey in London is deliberate. There must be many other omissions, I fear, which are not. For pointing out some of them, and for suggesting alterations and additions, I have to thank my friend Mr. Anthony Collett, who has kindly looked through my proofs. I should like also to be the first to thank Mr. Hugh Thomson for the pleasure and the help of his charming sketches.

WEYBRIDGE, *October, 1908* ERIC PARKER.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I have made several additions to the second edition of this book, and, I hope, have corrected some mistakes. I am greatly indebted to reviewers who have pointed out errors and omissions, and to correspondents who have kindly written to me.

June, 1909. E.P.

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MAP OF THE COUNTY OF SURREY

[Pg 1]

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

IN

SURREY

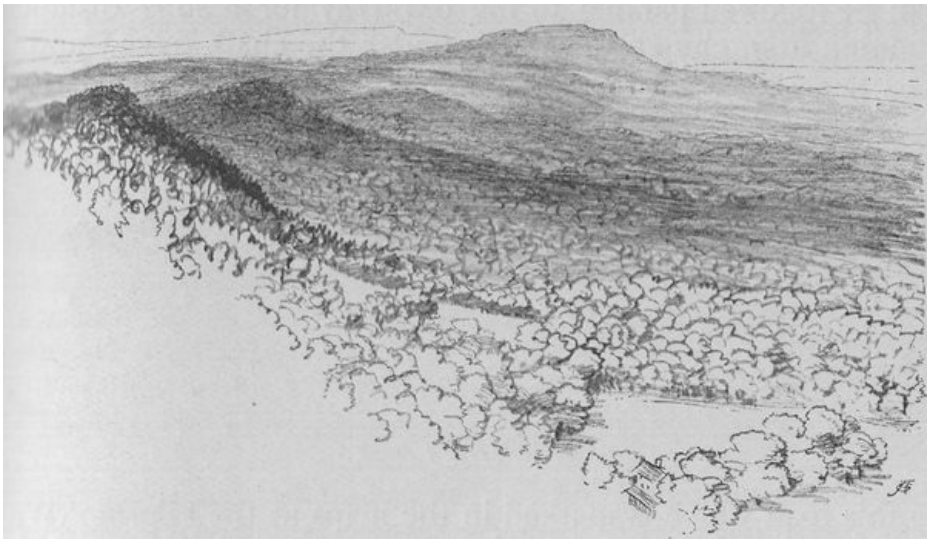
CHAPTER I

THE PILGRIMS' WAY

The Pageant of the Road.—Canterbury Pilgrims.—Henry II. barefoot.—Choosing the Road.—Wind on the Hill.—Wine in the Valley.—*Pilgrim's Progress.*—Shalford Fair.—A doubtful Mile.—Trespassers will be Prosecuted.—With Chaucer from the Tabard.

East and west through the county of Surrey runs the chalk ridge of the North Downs, the great highway of Southern England from the Straits of Dover to Salisbury Plain. Of all English roads, it has carried the longest pageant. It saw the beginnings of English history; for four centuries it was one of the best known highways in Christendom: the vision from its windy heights is one of the widest and most gracious of all visions of woods and fields and hills. By the trackway they made upon the ridge came the worshippers to Stonehenge; Phœnician traders brought bronze to barter for British tin, and the tin was carried in ingots from Devon and Cornwall along the highway to the port of Thanet; Greeks and Gauls came for lead and tin and furs, and the merchants rode by the great Way to bring them. When Cæsar swept through Surrey on his second landing, his legions marched over the Way before he turned north to the Thames. When the Conqueror drove fire and sword through Southern England, he went down to Winchester by [Pg 2] the chalk ridge; and when the great lords under the Conqueror and Rufus, Richard de Tonebrige and William de Warenne, built their rival castles, they built them to command the highway; so did Henry of Blois build his castle at Farnham; and so was Guildford Castle built. Of warfare later than Norman days, the Way saw nearly all that went through Surrey. Simon de Montfort and his barons rode fast by the ridge the year before Lewes; they lay at Reading on the twenty-ninth of June, and on the first of July at Reigate. In the wars of the Parliament, Farnham west of the Way saw the siege of an hour; Lord Holland led his little band from Dorking to Reigate and fled back again. Last of the echoes of Stuart battles, Monmouth, after Sedgmoor, was driven through Farnham to lodge for one night of misery and fear at Abbot's Hospital in Guildford.

But the Way has another meaning and other memories. It is as the Pilgrims' Way that it is best known, and as the Pilgrims' Way that it has been written about and tracked and traced and surrounded with legend and story and the haunting melancholy of an old road once used and now half forgotten. The Pilgrims' Way is more than the old Way, for it runs by more than one road. The old Way took its followers along the ridge or just under it, high in the sun and wind where the traders and fighters could see their route clear above the thick woods of the Weald. The Pilgrims' Way lies as often on the low ground as on the hill. But it follows the line of the chalk ridge, and the parallel roads, though here and there it would be difficult to choose between them as to which was most used by travellers, have become vaguely named the Pilgrims' Way, and as the Pilgrims' Way they remain.



Along the Chalk Ridge.—Leith Hill in the Distance.

The Way became the Pilgrims' Way in 1174, four years after Thomas à Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral. His tomb in the Cathedral became the second shrine in Christendom, and pilgrims came to it along the old trackway through Surrey, from Farnham east of the Hog's Back along the hills to Canterbury in Kent. Henry the Second, one of the earliest pilgrims of all, made his act of repentance a few days after landing at Southampton from France, on February 8, 1174. Or so legend relates, and adds that he swore to walk barefoot; history is less precise. After Henry the stream of devotees multiplied. Pilgrims landed, like Henry, at Southampton, or between [Pg 3] Southampton and Chichester, and came through Winchester or Alton to Farnham; travellers from the West of England joined the foreigners at Winchester, or came to Farnham by the old Harrow Way, another ancient track from Salisbury Plain. Thousands made the journey; more and more followed year by year. At last it was determined to divide the stream. St. Thomas was murdered on December 29, and the great pilgrimage to Canterbury and the return centred round that date. In 1220 pilgrims were given a chance of paying their vows in summer as well as winter. St. Thomas's body, on July 7, was moved from the crypt under the nave to the grand altar in the nave, and from that day forward the Feast of the Translation took its share of the pilgrims' numbers. A constant stream journeyed east and west; travellers with vows unpaid met travellers returning from the shrine, and on and round the peopled highway sprang up booths and shelters to meet the pilgrim's needs. Pedlars and merchants hawked their wares and drove bargains by the road. Fairs were instituted in the villages along the route; strolling musicians earned idle wages; beggars sat by the roadside, at the churchyard corners, at the foot of the hills, and asked for alms. [Pg 4]

The "Hog's Back."

And here, before we follow the pilgrims across the county from Farnham to the lane by which they leave it east of Titsey, I want to make a point clear. The pilgrims did not all travel to Canterbury by the same road, along the selfsame track so many feet wide, as the Ordnance map and some of those who have written on the Pilgrims' Way would argue. There is not one single, separate path along which every pilgrim who set out from Winchester to Canterbury travelled through Surrey. All that the pilgrims did was to journey forward either on, or near, the old Way from west to east and east to west, and it has happened that they used, more than any other track besides the Way itself, one particular road. This road can be followed parallel to the old Way for a long distance, running from church to church under the chalk ridge; and it is this road which is marked in the maps as the Pilgrims' Way. Perhaps that is convenient, but it should be understood that not all the pilgrims went by it. For pilgrims, after all, were as human then as walkers along country roads are to-day. They would not all want to do the same thing in the same way. Some of them would set out to do one thing and some another. Some would prefer to walk alone high up on the ridge; others would choose a bevy of companions and chatter along the road under the hill. Some would be thin, ascetic persons, who liked to stride along and see how far they could go without eating or drinking; some would be pleasant, good-tempered creatures, who would amble by dusty places and be thankful for cool beer; some would eat or drink mechanically, filled with a single thought of prayer and pilgrimage to a shrine. Some would be

always perverse, and because most people travelled by one path, or halted at an easy spot, would choose deliberately another path, and halt where others passed on. Some would determine, come what might of wind or rain or sun, to sleep at a certain village at nightfall; others would let the weather decide for them. The weather would decide much, and it would choose differently for different travellers. One of the writers who has discussed the problems of the Pilgrims' Way suggests that the main route would vary with varying degrees of heat and cold. If the weather were cold and wet, the pilgrims would travel on the chalk ridge; and if it were hot, they would go by the leafy woodland path below. But if I Were a pilgrim and the weather were hot, I should go by the top of the ridge, so as to get the air and the view; probably I would go by the ridge in any case, whatever the weather was. [Pg 5]

If written proof were needed that the journeying pilgrims Were not condemned to a sort of solemn observance of the rules of "Follow-my-leader," or bound by uncomfortable routine like so many Cook's tourists, it would not be difficult to find. From a paper on the Pilgrims' Way, written by Major-General E. Renouard James, you may learn that in 1463, nearly three hundred years after the first pilgrim followed Henry II to Canterbury, St. Martha's chapel by Guildford—St. Martha's being a corruption of "The Martyr's," that is, St. Thomas the Martyr's chapel—was in need of repair. And so, through the Prior of Newark, "forty days' indulgence was granted to such as should resort to this chapel on account of devotion, prayer, pilgrimage, or offering; and should there say Paternoster, the Angel's Salutation, and the Apostles' Creed; or should contribute, bequeath, or otherwise assign anything towards the maintenance, repair, or rebuilding of the same." But what does that mean? It must mean that not all the pilgrims went into St. Martha's to pray, or even went by St. Martha's on their way east. The Prior specially framed the terms of his indulgence to attract more pilgrims.

In Mr. Hilaire Belloc's admirably interesting book *The Old Road*, in which he describes the way in which he, sometimes with one companion and sometimes with two, sought out the exact track of a single Pilgrims' Way from Winchester to Canterbury, I find him writing of the compulsions of the pilgrimage—"The pilgrim set out from Winchester: 'You must pass by that well,' he heard, 'it is sacred.' ... 'You must, of ritual, climb that isolated hill which you see against the sky. The [Pg 6] spirits haunted it and were banished by the faith, and they say that martyrs died there.' ... 'It is at the peril of the pilgrimage that you neglect this stone, whose virtue saved our fathers and the great battle.' ... 'The church you will next see upon your way is entered from the southern porch sunward by all truly devout men; such has been the custom here since custom began.' From step to step the pilgrims were compelled to take the oldest of paths." Well, some of the pilgrims, perhaps most of them, since human nature imitates more often than it contradicts, may have been so compelled. But not all. I should like to set next to Mr. Belloc's passage a passage from the book of another pilgrim. Bunyan, when he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, may not have referred directly to the Way from Winchester to Canterbury, though his 'Vanity Fair' has been guessed to correspond with Shalford Fair, and other details of the progress have been fitted in with other happenings, as we shall see at Shalford. But unquestionably he reproduces the state of mind with which a pilgrim would undertake a journey, wherever his pilgrimage would take him. He was born only ninety years after the last pilgrim had paid his vows; he would have talked to men whose fathers had made the pilgrimage, and as he writes of it the keynote is voluntary choosing of the road. Here is the passage:—

"I beheld, then, that they all went on till they came to the foot of the hill Difficulty, at the bottom of which was a spring. There were also in the same place two other ways, besides that which came straight from the gate: one turned to the left hand, and the other to the right, at the bottom of the hill; but the narrow way lay right up the hill; and the name of that going up the side of the hill, is called Difficulty. Christian now went to the spring and drank thereof to refresh himself, and then began to go up the hill, saying—

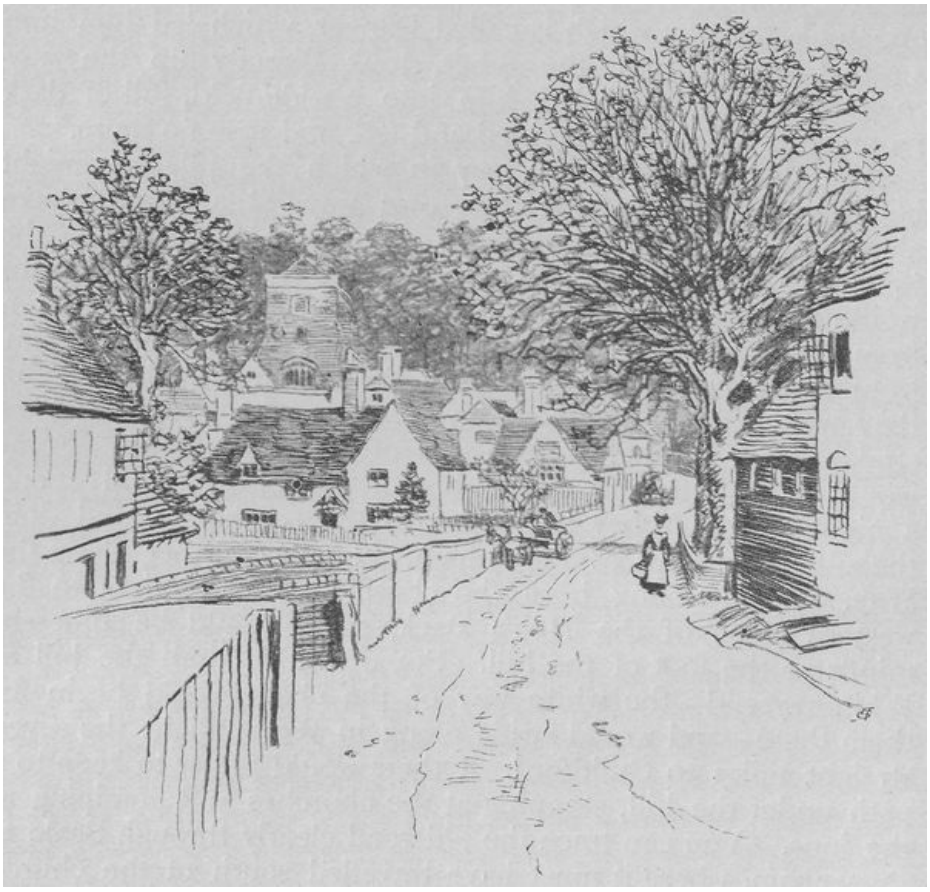
'The hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way to life lies here.
Come, pluck up heart, let's neither faint nor fear,
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe.

[Pg 7]

The other two also came to the foot of the hill. But, when they saw that the hill was steep and high, and that there were two other ways to go; and supposing also that these two ways might meet again with that up which Christian went, on the other side of the hill; therefore, they were resolved to go in those ways. Now the name of one of those ways was Danger, and the name of the other Destruction. So the one took the way which is called Danger, which led him into a great wood; and the other, took directly up the way to Destruction, which led him into a wide field, full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell, and rose no more."

Now that is exactly the way in which the pilgrims might have separated and gone their own ways at a dozen places along the road to Canterbury. Take, to begin with, the joining and the parting of the ways at Farnham. Pilgrims would meet there, as we have seen, coming through Winchester, from Normandy, or by the Harrow Way from Salisbury Plain, from Wales, from Ireland, and all the West of England. But they would not all necessarily leave by the road that runs straight from Farnham to the foot of the Hog's Back. Some would have letters to the Abbot of Waverley, would spend a night at the Abbey two miles to the south-east, and join the others perhaps at Puttenham, six miles further along the Way. Then, among those who chose to travel straight to the western slope of the Hog's Back, there would be different minds at the foot of the

hill. Some would climb the hill at Whitewaysend—the white way of the chalk would begin for them there—and would stride along in the sunlight the seven straight miles to Guildford. Others would prefer to keep to a path under the hill, stopping at the churches and gossiping at the inns. You can trace the old road clearly through Seale to Puttenham, where it must have travelled south of the church door, instead of taking the awkward and unnecessary turn to the north which is taken by the modern road. Then at Puttenham the pilgrims would divide again. Some would journey straight on across Puttenham Heath, heading towards St. Catherine's Hill—you can see the rough track; others would turn aside to the south-east, to visit Compton church; perhaps they would come down into Compton as you may come down into it from the east to-day, by what is evidently an old track cut deep in the woods. They would go up north again from Compton; [Pg 8] perhaps they would be tired of the valley, and would climb the Hog's Back to walk the last mile or so into Guildford in the wind; perhaps they would join the other stream of pilgrims travelling by the sandy lane by which you may walk to-day as slowly as they did towards St. Catherine's Hill. Most of them, I think, would collect on St. Catherine's Hill; St. Catherine's was more popular than the Guildford churches. So General James has discovered, examining ancient records of litigation. The parson of St. Nicholas, Guildford, fearing to lose his profit from the pilgrims who visited the town, purchased from the lord of the manor the freehold of the site of the chapel, and rebuilt it in 1317. Perhaps the attraction of St. Catherine's was that it was on the way to Shalford [Pg 9] Fair. Guildford had two special fairs, on May 4 and November 22, to catch the summer and the winter pilgrims. But Shalford Fair was the great fair, and actually covered 140 acres of ground.



Coming in to Puttenham.

The pilgrims would cross the Wey under St. Catherine's Hill by a ferry or a rough plank bridge. The merchants travelling with their horses, and the ponies driven from Weyhill Fair out towards Salisbury Plain, would come through the water by a ford. But the ferry and the bridge were both of almost immemorial antiquity. In 1736 there was a dispute about the bridge. The lord of the manor of Brabœuf had built a bridge over the Wey for a fair on St. Matthew's Day. The owner of the church lands at Shalford ordered it to be destroyed; he claimed the right of conveying passengers over the river. They went to law, and it was alleged that there had been a bridge there time out of record. Judgment, however, decided "that there had been no bridge except *per unum battellum* (one plank) at the mill belonging to the heirs of Henry de la Poyle (a mile lower), laid for convenience of the pilgrims going to the chapel of St. Katherine at the time of the fair." General James has unearthed the decision of the Court, and incidentally added another bypath to the Pilgrims' Way.

Opposite the ferry under St. Catherine's the line of the Way to St. Martha's is clear enough, a green track in a green field; and once I saw it as the pilgrims may have seen it on a spring morning. It was in May, and there was a haze over the meadowland by the river which blurred shapes and colours. St. Catherine's was no longer a ruin; the buildings on the hill faded into the trees; the clothes of wanderers by the riverside took on mediæval brightnesses, lost modern forms; and into the foreground ran three bare-headed, yellow-haired children, and in their brown arms great bunches of cuckoo-flowers. So might one returning from the Martyr's chapel have seen the path to the ferry in the days when the Clerk told the tale of Griselda.

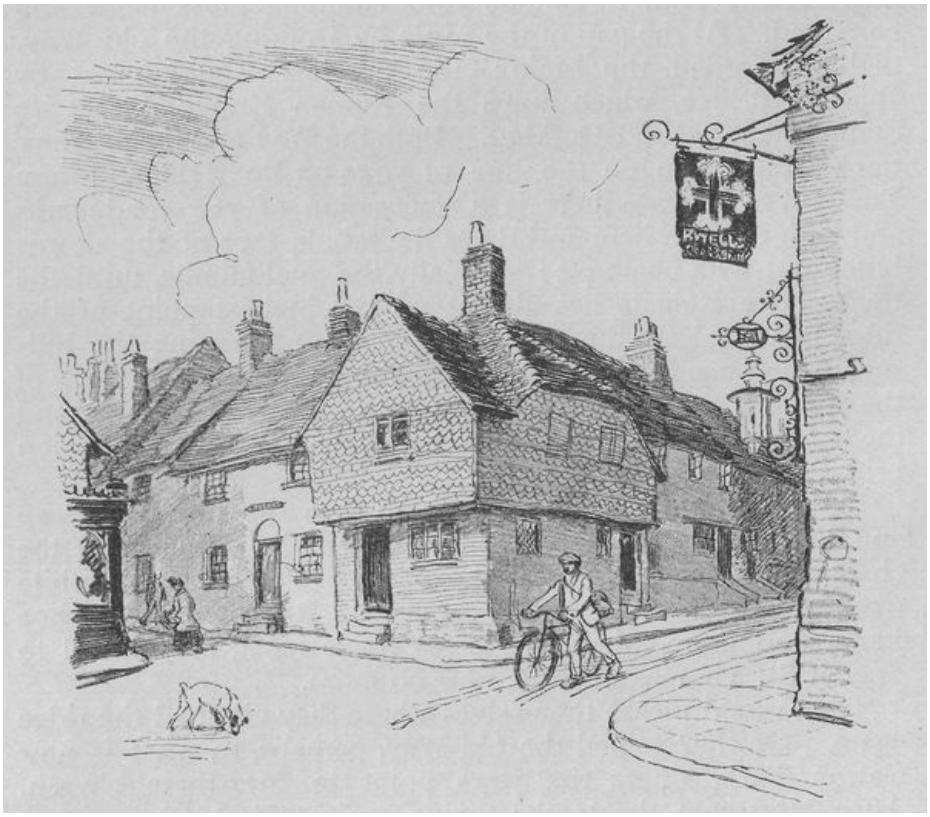
The track crosses the road near the ferry, and by a wood named the Chantries comes up to St.

Martha's, at the foot of the hill a close-cropped aisle of down grass, and nearer the top a loose, sandy path among pines. At the base of the hill the pilgrims who had come by the ferry would be joined by those who had left Guildford by Pewley Hill, to come out through the valley past [Pg 10] Tytings, now a private residence, but once the dwelling of St. Martha's priest. And on the other side of the hill a difficulty waits. Mr. Belloc traces the road from the foot across a ploughed field, to connect with a narrow lane on the other side of the road dropping from Newlands Corner to Albury. Well, it is possible that some of the pilgrims strayed out in that direction, though it means that they would have to descend a bank like the wall of a house by the Newlands Corner road, which is a sunken track; also, Mr. Belloc owns that a little further on this road he chooses has a doubtful section of a mile and a half. May he not be on the wrong road? Why should not the pilgrims drop down the road which leads from the foot of St. Martha's Hill into Albury? The inns would have tempted them; they would be heading straight for the church; and the road leading to inns and church is clearly a road that led from St. Martha's Hill into the valley of the Tillingbourne long before the hill bore a Christian chapel. It is evidently an old British trackway. It runs along a ridge, and yet it is sunk deep between two very high banks. If it was there when the pilgrims came down from the Martyr's chapel, why should they make a fresh track for themselves, especially one which, as Mr. Belloc admits, "raises a difficulty unique in the whole course of the way"? The track he follows goes by the wet, northward side of a hill—"an exception to an otherwise universal rule."

I have no space to follow the way in detail through the country, but this particular section seemed to me to illustrate clearly the need for imagining what the pilgrims would be likely to do, rather than to try to fit in their doings with a particular path or lane through Albury. I do not see why the pilgrims should not have followed the same route as we travel by to-day. Doubtless by what is now Albury Park the road has become confused. May it not have led through Albury Park past the south porch of the ruined church, and so come in a natural way to Shere church by the old inn? All five would then lie in a line—the old track from the Martyr's chapel, Albury Church, the White Horse Inn, the short road to Shere Church, and the track that leads up from Gomshall to the flank of the downs again. But that is only guessing; the line on the maps tempts it. [Pg 11]

East of Gomshall to Oxted almost on the county border the track of the old Way and of the Pilgrims' Ways, sometimes coinciding, sometimes running parallel to each other, runs along the crest and the southern slopes of the chalk ridge. Yews and wind-bent thorn mark the ways, sometimes, as east of Gomshall, by a clear cut ridge in the hill, lined with ancient trees; sometimes, as under Denbies by Dorking, you can only pick out the path by solitary yews studding grass fields and corn-land. At the gap of the Mole by Dorking the old Way, perhaps, forded the Mole; the pilgrims would cross by Burford Bridge, which joins the Roman Ermyn Street to Stane Street beyond Dorking. Both the Way and the pilgrims' track would join on the line of yews on Box Hill, and from Box Hill to Reigate there is a succession of yew road-marks and hedges, with here and there the whole face of the downs bitten out by a chalk pit; gradually the road climbs, until the track above Reigate lies almost on the highest point of the ridge. At Reigate the old Way carries on, crossing the hill-road which was from the town north to London. The slope of the modern road has been eased by cutting into the hill, and the ancient Way now is joined, on Reigate Hill, by a suspension bridge.

But the pilgrims would drop down into the town to sleep and to eat and drink. You may see their tracks on the chalk, streaming down from the ridge like a bunch of white ribands in the wind. They came into Reigate by Slipshoe Lane, and there, where the cross roads meet, they stood to pray at St. Thomas's shrine, now no more.



By Slipshoe Lane to the Red Cross Inn, Reigate.

They would please themselves where they climbed the ridge again. Or they joined the old Way, perhaps, in what is now Gatton Park, where the yews point to Merstham church. After Merstham the tracks divide again. East of an interrupting chalk pit, a thick yew hedge lines the side of the hill, under which I once ate fine blackberries in December, as perhaps the Wife of Bath ate them. But half way along the ridge of yews another path climbs up a plough, and on the crest it joins a narrow lane which is as much the Pilgrims' Way as any road on the downs; it runs by Tollsworth Farm over the summit of White Hill, and is actually marked "The Pilgrims' Way" twice on the sign posts, so sure are the local painters of what they have to point out. East from White Hill you may [Pg 12] follow a single track, sometimes grass, sometimes modern road. There is a puzzle at Godstone Quarry, where the chalk pits have cut the hill to pieces, and the tiny path which perhaps still keeps the line across the pits is a perilous slippery place in the rain. On the far side of to-day's road by the chalk pit you may pick up the green track again, though you will lose it rounding the spur of the hill that lies half way between Godstone and the railway. The old Way probably still kept to the ridge, and Sir Gilbert Scott thought he had traced the Pilgrims' Way through the Hanging Wood north of Tandridge Hill Lane. But I think I found it in a green track which runs westward from a gap in that same lane. It looked like a rough cart-track through a field, and would join the road already traced beyond. In its centre, a foot from the ground, was placed, and [Pg 13] doubtless remains, a blue enamelled notice board, with the brief but usual caution to trespassers.

East of Tandridge Hill Lane, on the far side of a grass field, a curious path, half ditch, half avenue of yews and thorns, leads down through woodland to green trackway again. The green track crosses the railway cutting, and so journeys on into Titsey Park on the level lowland. Under the new Titsey church it runs, as it once ran past the old church in the Park, and from Titsey church eastward, by a country lane through broad and glorious cornfields, it passes out of Surrey into Kent.

By those ways they went, fur-clad Briton, ravaging Dane, Roman eagle, traders of tin and drivers of ponies, along the ridge in the sun and the wind and the rain; by their side and after them, along the ridge and under it, travelled the knight and the clerk and the friar and the summoner, as they travelled from the Tabard Inn to St. Thomas's shrine with Chaucer; and we may follow them, beginning with Surrey's western town, and journeying at the end from the Tabard again, with the pilgrims passing to the east. [Pg 14]

CHAPTER II

FARNHAM

The joining of the ways.—Georgian poke bonnets.—The Castle.—Kings at Farnham.—Poet Soldiers.—A glorious battle.—The Bishop's artillery.—Paradise and the Bull's Eye.—Izaak Walton.—Cobbett's education.—An old alehouse.—Hopgrowers in difficulties.—King Charles's cap.—Elmer's pheasants.

Westernmost of all Surrey towns, Farnham stands at the joining of the ways. Traders from

Cornwall, pilgrims from Winchester, horse-dealers driving their ponies from Weyhill Fair, have met on the roads that run into Farnham from the west and south and north. Farnham Castle, for seven centuries a Bishop's palace, links Surrey to the See of Winchester. The Farnham oasthouses and hop-grounds bridge the crossing from the fertile Hampshire border to the Bagshot sands and the wild and sterile moors of Frensham and Hindhead. The town, set in its cultured plot of vines and flower-beds, with its historic castle, its tranquil church, and the Wey watering the pastures under its walls, stands like a garden between the military rigidity of Aldershot and the wind that blows over the Thursley heather.

No town in Surrey has two such old and orderly main streets as Farnham. Here and there modern taste for a noisy pattern has broken the quiet level; a bank has piled up a huge building of timber, handsome but out of keeping; the new Corn Exchange is out of keeping and hideous; and in 1866 municipal enterprise pulled down the old market house, which stood at the junction of the main streets and was a fascinating little building perched on pillars. But much that is ancient and simple in square red brick remains. The plain, low-roofed houses, with their flat [Pg 15] façades and crumpled, lichened tiles, succeed one another down Castle Street and West Street with a delightful monotony. The elaborate carved and painted doorways, knockers, lunettes, doors and steps are quite a model exhibition. The two streets wear a Georgian air of poke-bonnets and long purse-strings. Or they are Georgian, at all events, once or twice during the day; on a sunny morning before breakfast, perhaps, or when, perhaps in the rain, the endless traffic of wheels quiets for an hour. For Farnham stands on the high road from London, and the motor cars chase the eighteenth century into the side-streets.

Looking towards Farnham from Thursley Common.

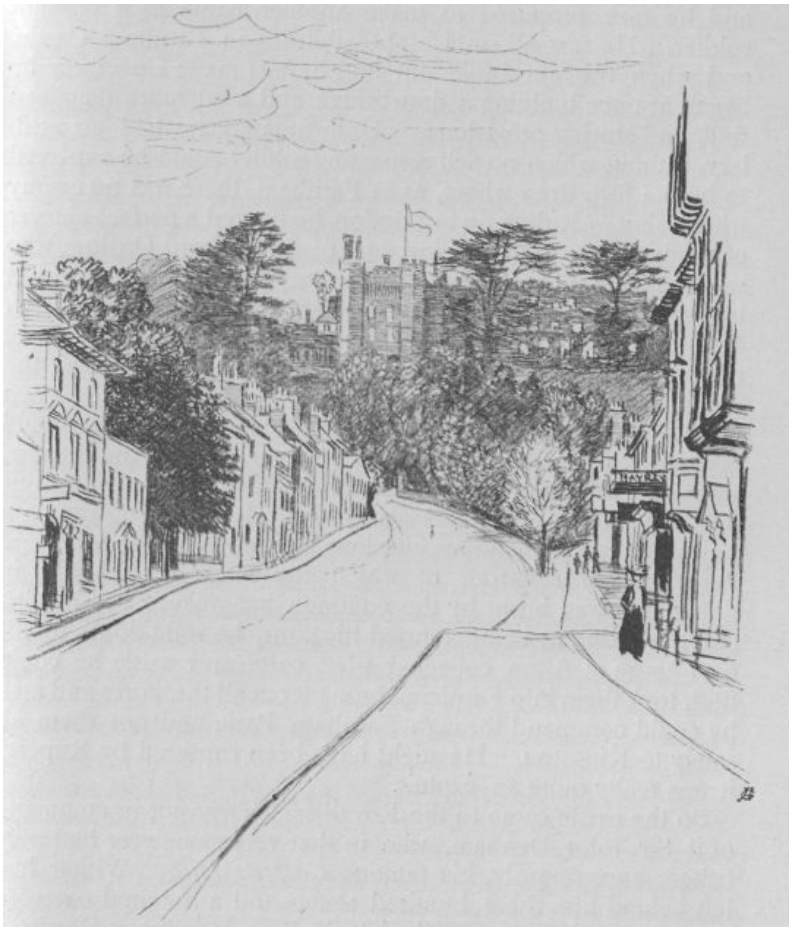
Farnham is mostly of one period, and searchers for very old architecture will be disappointed. One of the oldest buildings in the town is a tiny set of almshouses, whose lowly gables line the road under the castle hill. They were built by Andrew Windsor, of the parish of Bentley in Hampshire, in 1619, and were intended, as an inscription on the wall informs you, "For the Habitation and Relief of eight poor Honest Impotent Old Persons." Even with four epithets, the almoners seem to find life supportable.

The greatest and the oldest building is, of course, the castle. It stands nobly on a hill, towards which the street rises like a carriage drive, ending in a flight of steps. Once it must have dominated the town as a fortress, but since Cromwell broke down the keep, Farnham has looked up at a quieter and more episcopal pile—a fine gateway tower, built by Bishop Fox early in the sixteenth century. Much of the castle stands as he rebuilt it after various misfortunes in baronial and other wars, but the front as it looks down on Farnham is less severe. Two imposing cedar [Pg 16] trees, out of a group of several, break the line of Fox's massive red brick. Local legend has aged them considerably, for two hundred years is suggested as a modest estimate of their antiquity. As a fact, they cannot be much more than one hundred years old. They were planted by Mrs. North, wife of Bishop North, who held the See from 1781 to 1820, and in an engraving of the castle published in 1792 there is not a sign of them. The cedar is a very fast-growing tree—one of the reasons why it is so brittle. The Farnham cedars are as brittle as any others. I was told that when the present Bishop went abroad early in the year 1908, he was hesitating over cutting off some of the larger branches which shaded the castle wall and would not let it dry. The April snow settled the question for him, and broke the branches he had thought of lopping.

Farnham Castle has entertained many Kings, from Edward I to Queen Victoria. One of its earliest bishops was a king's brother, the great Henry of Blois. Elizabeth was often at the castle, and once, bidding the Duke of Norfolk dine with her there, spoke to him of his intrigue to marry Mary Queen of Scots. According to one story she warned him "to be careful on what pillow he laid his head"; according to another, the Duke assured the Queen that the intrigue was none of his making, and that "he meant never to marry with such a person where he could not be sure of his pillow." He was thinking of Darnley, and that dark February morning with the King stretched dead on the garden grass.

James I hunted at Farnham regularly, and actually took a lease from Bishop Bilson of the castle, which he found a convenient centre for hunting in the Surrey bailiwick of Windsor Forest. But James was the last of the kings to hunt from Farnham. George III and Queen Charlotte visited the castle because Bishop Thomas had been the King's tutor, but Farnham's entertaining of royalty was nearly at an end. Once, in the last century, Queen Victoria rode there from Aldershot with the Prince Consort, inspected the Bible on which she had taken her oath at the Coronation,

admired the castle, and rode back again.



Farnham Castle from the High Street.

A castle with a keep and a moat, or rather a deep dry ditch, ought to have memories of fighting, [Pg 17] and Farnham Castle has seen some sharp skirmishing. It has the distinction of having been twice held by a poet, once for the Parliament and once for the King. George Wither was its first commander, and his command did not increase his reputation either as a man of letters or a man of war. Probably the castle was never worth defending. It was isolated, and its possession, as it turned out, would have helped neither side to control the movements of the other. But Wither [Pg 18] thought otherwise. He had made his name as a pastoral poet, author of *Fidelia* and *The Shepherd's Hunting* and he now proposed to make another name as a brilliant soldier. He saw all sorts of possibilities in Farnham Castle and when the war broke out and he was made Governor, he began at once building a drawbridge and a sallyport, digging a well, and storing provisions. Unfortunately he had no artillery, without which no self-respecting soldier could be expected to hold a fort, even where, as at Farnham, there was no enemy within shot. Riding up to London, he poured a perfect shower of requests into the unwilling ears of Sir Richard Onslow, who was the chief pillar of the Parliamentary party in Surrey, and at last he got an order for some demi-culverins from the Tower. But his hopes were still to be dashed. The next day came news that Prince Rupert was already in North Surrey, and the demi-culverins were counter-ordered for fear of capture. Then might he have light guns, drakes or falconets, which he could take along by-roads? Sir Richard's answer was that the fortress, since it could not be held, must be abandoned. For this decision Wither afterwards attacked Sir Richard Onslow as a traitor, in two tremendous effusions entitled *Se Defendendo* and *Justitiarius Justificatus*, of which the latter landed him in prison and was burnt by the common hangman. Meanwhile, still protesting at being refused his guns, he rode down to his own house at Alton, collected what carts and cattle he could find, took them into Farnham, brought out all the stores and men he could command through Farnham Park, and got them all safely to Kingston. He might have been captured by Rupert; it was really quite an exploit.

So the castle came to the Royalists. They put in command of it Sir John Denham, who in that very same year had published, anonymously, his famous *Cooper's Hill*. Wither had left behind him three hundred sheep and a hundred oxen, so that the garrison was well victualled, and the poet-Governor ought to have been able to put up a fight against an enemy who had no artillery. Wither would have shown him how to do it. But Sir John had no idea of what a battle should be. One December morning, a few days after he had taken over the command, Sir William Waller, a Parliament General, rode up at the head of his dragoons and demanded surrender. Of course Sir [Pg 19] John refused, and Sir William proceeded to fix a petard to the gate, to blow it in. A military genius like Wither would have ordered his men to fire their muskets at the enemy; but all the soldiers on both sides escaped that day. The explosive was securely fastened in position, the gate was shattered, the assailants rushed at the breach, and began at once to pull down the barricade of timber erected inside by the garrison. This done, the garrison surrendered, and the glorious day was over.

But Sir John Denham got the best of Wither in the end. Not long afterwards Wither was taken prisoner by the Royalists, and Denham, who had wisely been set at liberty to rejoin the Royalist forces, begged for his rival's life. Mr. Wither, he pleaded, should not be hanged, for while Wither lived he was not himself the worst poet in England.

The castle keep was never to be held by a successor to Wither and Denham. Sir William Waller blew up one of the walls when he took it from Sir John, and the year before Charles was executed Parliament ordered it to be dismantled altogether. The garrison fell to with enthusiasm, stripped the building of all the lead, wood, and glass they could lay their hands on, and sold the wreck to make up their back pay. At the Restoration, when Bishop Duppa came to the See, he found the castle almost uninhabitable. It cost him more than two thousand pounds to make it fit to live in, and his successor, Bishop Morley, spent even more. He actually laid out ten thousand pounds in improvements, only to meet with John Aubrey's criticism that he had repaired the building "without any regard to the rules of architecture." Doctor Peter Mew, who succeeded Morley, set about improving the castle from outside, and planted the top of the keep, into which the old walls had been tumbled, with fruit trees. Bishop Sumner, who held the See for forty-two years from 1827, turned the orchard into a garden.

Bishop Mew had a double record. He was a soldier as well as a prelate, and he took part in the last battle fought on English soil. When King Monmouth's Mendip miners were making their last stand at Sedgmoor, the end of the fight came with the arrival of King James's artillery. The heavy cannon might never have been drawn to the ground where the battle was raging, for the artillery were unprovided with horses, had not the Bishop offered his coach horses and traces. When they [Pg 20] came to Sedgmoor, he himself directed the fire.

The result of the various fortunes and misfortunes of the castle in war, and of the different additions and alterations made by successive Bishops, is naturally rather puzzling. The castle is a medley of the building of eight centuries. Oldest of all is the ruined keep and the framework, or foundations, of the castle buildings; the masonry of the keep is the work of Henry of Blois, and belongs to the twelfth century. Next come three pillars of the old chapel, now used as a servants' hall. I saw it when it was set for a meal, and the severe cleanliness of the white stone above the white tablecloth and glass and cutlery has remained one of the distinctest of my memories of the castle. Next in age is the outer gateway—doubtless the scene of Sir William Waller's explosion—an imposing block of masonry. From each side of the gateway runs the outer wall of the castle, and between the keep and the outer wall what was once a ditch has grown into the Bishop's garden, a sloping stretch of shaven lawn and flower borders, with a fountain and birds bathing in it. The keep itself, almost from the broken parapet to the tumbled stones at the base, is a mixture of wall and rock garden, in which grow all the rock plants worth growing. Perhaps there were wallflowers when Bishop Mew planted his orchard in the keep; but the pasque flower and other rarer blossoms which crowd round the base belong to the gardening of a later day. The level lawn and flower beds of the inner garden of the keep are as serene and shining as those below, and the view to the south over Hindhead and the south downs is finer and freer than from anywhere in the grounds, though there are many fine views from the castle windows. Fanny Burney, who visited Farnham in 1791, only a month released from the trammels of Court life, would certainly have been able, as she tells us she wished, to see the hills above her beloved Norbury. But ladies of the Court were delicate creatures, and she could not climb to the top. "I was ready to fall already, from only ascending the slope to reach the castle," she adds with some humility.

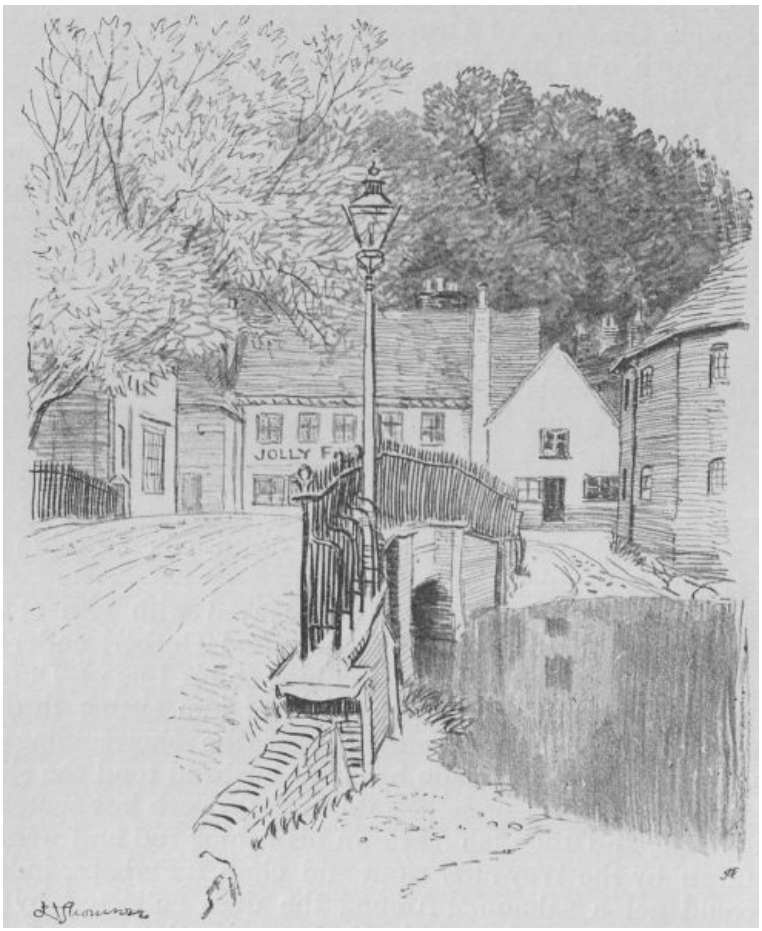
Of all the bishops, Bishop Fox left the most enduring mark on the castle. He built the noble and lofty gateway tower named after him, and certainly altered the look of the castle as Farnham sees it to-day, more than any other Bishop, though what it may have looked like when the boundary [Pg 21] walls were all landing can only be guessed. Within, one of the chief restorers was Bishop Morley. The hall, before he made his alterations, was a good deal larger than the present room; you can see the old doorway in the wall of the wide entrance passage. He added the splendid staircases, with their carved oak newels, the work of Grinling Gibbons; and he built the chapel, which also has some fine carving. A later and most princely Bishop, Anthony Thorold, who held the See from 1891 to 1895, laid down a mile and a hundred yards of stair carpet, and repaired an acre and a fifth of roof. He also fitted up rooms for ordination candidates, each room with a name. St. Francis and other saints preside over the slumbers of some; some sleep in Paradise; a Bishop who is an occasional visitor looks out upon the Castle garden from the Bull's Eye.

Bishop Morley, who spent so much money on the Castle, spent very little on himself. A tiny room, almost a cell, is shown as the chamber in which he spent hours in prayer, and in the extreme corner is a stone couch, on which he slept when he allowed himself sleep. He had but one full meal a day, he never warmed himself at a fire, he never married, he was never ill, and was found dead on his bed one morning, at the ripe age of eighty-seven. Starved to death, you are told; the hint is almost of suicide.

Izaak Walton knew Morley, and stayed with him at the castle. He wrote his Lives of Hooker and Herbert under the Bishop's roof, possibly added something to his Life of Donne; the room is shown. I like to think of him sitting through a sunny morning writing gently about the shortcomings of Mrs. Hooker, how she made her poor husband tend the sheep and rock the cradle; or setting down the superb last sentences of the Life, and then taking down his fishing rod and wandering down by the Wey after trout and chub. Perhaps, indeed, he could get a salmon. Among the dues collected by the Bailiffs of the Borough early in the seventeenth century I find the following——

"Of every fishmonger that selleth ffish at his window in the lent to paye at good ffriday a good lb. of samon or of the beast ffish they have then leaft."

The salmon, presumably, swam with the other "beast ffish" in the Wey. [Pg 22]



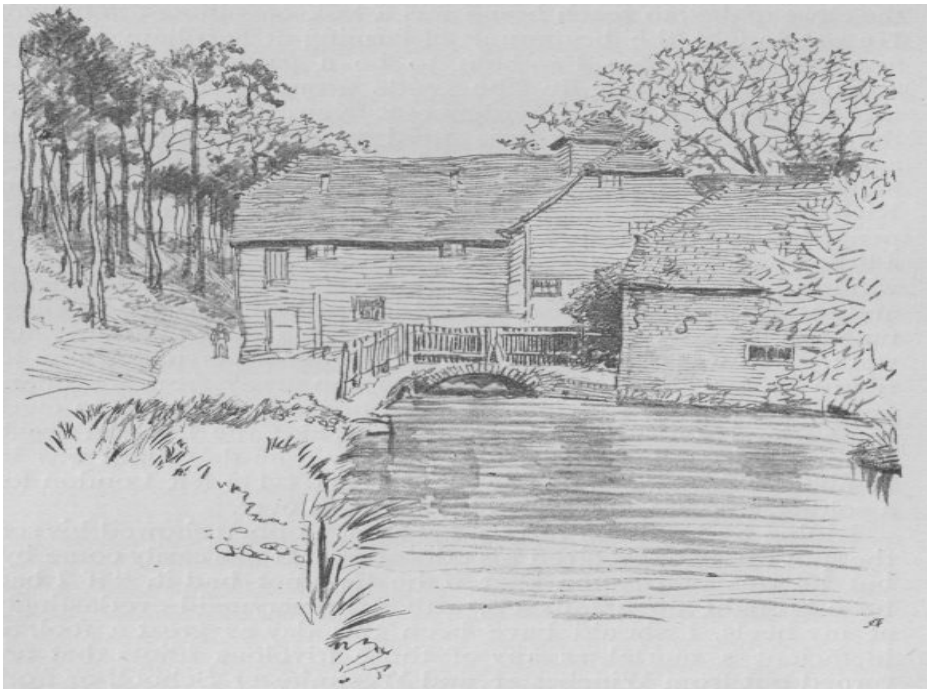
Cobbett's Birthplace at Farnham.

Farnham's greatest man was not an ecclesiastic, but a politician. William Cobbett, soldier, farmer, Radical, editor of *Peter Porcupine* and the *Weekly Political Register*, and author of a diary unequalled of its kind in English writing, was born at Farnham on March 9, 1762. The house in which he was born, once a farmhouse and now the Jolly Farmer inn, stands on the outskirts of the town near the Wey, conspicuous with a white gable. As a boy, he must have been one of the busiest on any farm in the neighbourhood. His father used to boast that he had four [Pg 23] boys, of whom the eldest was only fifteen years old—William Cobbett was the third—and yet that they would do as much work as any three men in Farnham. "When I first trudged a field," you read in the *The Life of William Cobbett, by Himself*, "with my satchel swung over my shoulder, I was hardly able to climb the gates and stiles, and at the close of day, to reach home was a task of infinite difficulty." He was taught the beginnings of farming at Farnham, and he first ran away from Farnham to be a gardener. He was employed as a boy in the castle grounds, and there he met a man who was a gardener at Kew. They talked, and the eleven-year-old boy was fired to see for himself what gardening could be. Next day he started off, with sixpence-halfpenny in his pocket, and walked all day till he came to Richmond. There he should have had supper; he had threepence left to get it with. But threepence was exactly the price of a little book, *The Tale of a Tub*, which he spied in a bookseller's window. He bought it, took it into a field near Kew Gardens, and sat down to read; read on till it was dark, tumbled to sleep under a haystack, and woke to ask the head gardener for work. He was given work, but the gardener persuaded him to return home. Ten years later he ran away from Farnham again, and for the last time. He was out on the road to meet some friends on the way to Guildford Fair; the London coach swung by, he swung up behind, and by nine that night was in London with half-a-crown in his pocket. He left London for a soldier, and his Farnham boyhood was over.

Riding by Farnham forty years after, Cobbett showed his son the spot where he received his education. It was easily come by, but he was of opinion that if he had not had it, "if I had been brought up a milksop, with a nurserymaid everlastingly at my heels, I should have been this day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal, as any of those frivolous idiots that are turned out from Winchester and Westminster School, or from any of those dens of dunces called Colleges and Universities." The spot is a sandy bank above the Bourne, a little stream, dry in summer, which runs a mile south of Farnham, from Holt Forest to the Wey. This is the education, described in *Rural Rides*:—

"There is a little hop-garden in which I used to work when from eight to ten years old; from which I have scores of times run to follow the hounds, leaving the hoe to [Pg 24] do the best that it could to destroy the weeds; but the most interesting thing was a *sand-hill*, which goes from a part of the heath down to the rivulet. As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I, with two brothers, used occasionally to *disport* ourselves,

as the lawyers call it, at this sand-hill. Our diversion was this: we used to go to the top of the hill, which was steeper than the roof of a house; one used to draw his arms out of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself down with his arms by his sides; and then the others, one at head, and the other at feet, sent him rolling down the hill like a barrel or a log of wood. By the time he got to the bottom, his hair, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth were all full of this loose sand; then the others took their turn, and at every roll there was a monstrous spell of laughter."



Weydon Mill, Farnham.

When will *Rural Rides* be added to the cheap editions? No other book of the open air and open politics mixes the two with such a breezy grip as Cobbett's. One rides with the sturdy old man over the road which he thought the prettiest in England—the four miles between Guildford and Godalming—or across "the most villainous spot God ever made," which was Hindhead, and listens to him praising the bean fields and the turnips here, and the oaks and acacias there, cursing the Wen-devils and place-men and pensioners, the reptiles, toad-eaters and tax-eaters, and yet the sheer honesty and affection of the man shine from every page. There never was such a mixture of execration and the scent of bean-blossom. But *Rural Rides* remains a book of the library rather than the bookshelf. [Pg 25]

Farnham has two other authors, one a native and one a friend. Miss Ada Bayly, known to her readers as Edna Lyall, made Farnham her holiday home since she was four years old, and set the scenes of two of her novels in the town. Even better known by his work, if not by his name, is Augustus Toplady, the author of the hymn, "Rock of Ages." Toplady was born in a little house in West Street, now pulled down, in 1740. He wrote much that was bitter; all that is remembered is his hymn.

Every town on the Portsmouth road has its old coaching inn, and Farnham's is the Bush. It stands modestly aloof; you must walk under an arch to finds its oldest walls and its wistaria. It was not always the best inn in Farnham. In 1604, in the account of the Borough, the receipts of the Bailiffs are thus recorded:—

"Dewes which hath bene payed accostomly paied to the Baylleffs of the Borrough and Towne of Farneham, beyond the memory of any man that now liveth as Aniale rents always as followeth:—

For the 4 Inns	28s
That to saye of the Georg	7s
of the Whit Hart	7s
of the Anteolop	7s
of the Crown	7s
Of every alhouse within the Borough	2s
Of every alhouse out of the Borough	12d
Of every alhouse at the chosing of the Bayleffs, called knowledge money	1d
Of every alhouse as will unlisensed or licinsed at every ffayr day every on of them	1d."

The Bush is not mentioned by name; it was a mere alehouse. Soon it became a full-grown inn, and the Georg, the Whit Hart and the Anteolop paled their ineffectual hearths. [Pg 26]

Oasthouses near Farnham.

Farnham was once the greatest market in England for wheat. Now the chief industry is hops. Farnham hops are some of the best grown, and have always fetched long prices. In Cobbett's day, Kentish hops averaged five pounds a hundredweight, and Hampshire hops were about the same price; Farnham hops fetched seven pounds. English hops to-day average perhaps less than five pounds a hundred, and the hopgrower is in distress. Eighty years ago he was being ruined. Cobbett makes up his accounts, writing at Chilworth on Sept. 25, 1822:—

> "The crop of hops has been very fine here, as well as every where else. The crop not only large, but good in quality. They expect to get *six* pounds a hundred for them at Weyhill Fair. That is *one* more than I think they will get. The best Sussex hops were selling in the Borough of Southwark at three pounds a hundred a few days before I left London. The Farnham hops *may* bring double that price; but that, I think, is as much as they will: and this is ruin to the hop-planter. The *tax*, with its attendant inconveniences, amounts to a pound a hundred; the picking, drying, and bagging to 50s. The carrying to market not less than 5s. Here is the sum of £3 10s. of the money. Supposing the crop to be half a ton to the acre, the bare tillage will be 10s. The poles for an acre cannot cost less than £2 a year; that is another 4s. to each hundred of hops. This brings the outgoings to 82s. Then comes the manure, then come the poor-rates, and road-rates, and county-rates; and if these leave one single farthing for *rent* I think it is strange."

[Pg 27]

Hop-buyers and sellers in those days met in the old Market House, and were doubtless familiar with the queer inscription, still remembered by middle-aged Farnham farmers. John Clark built the Market House in 1566, and wrote on it his riddle:—

> "You who don't like me, give money to mend me,
> You who do like me, give money to end me."

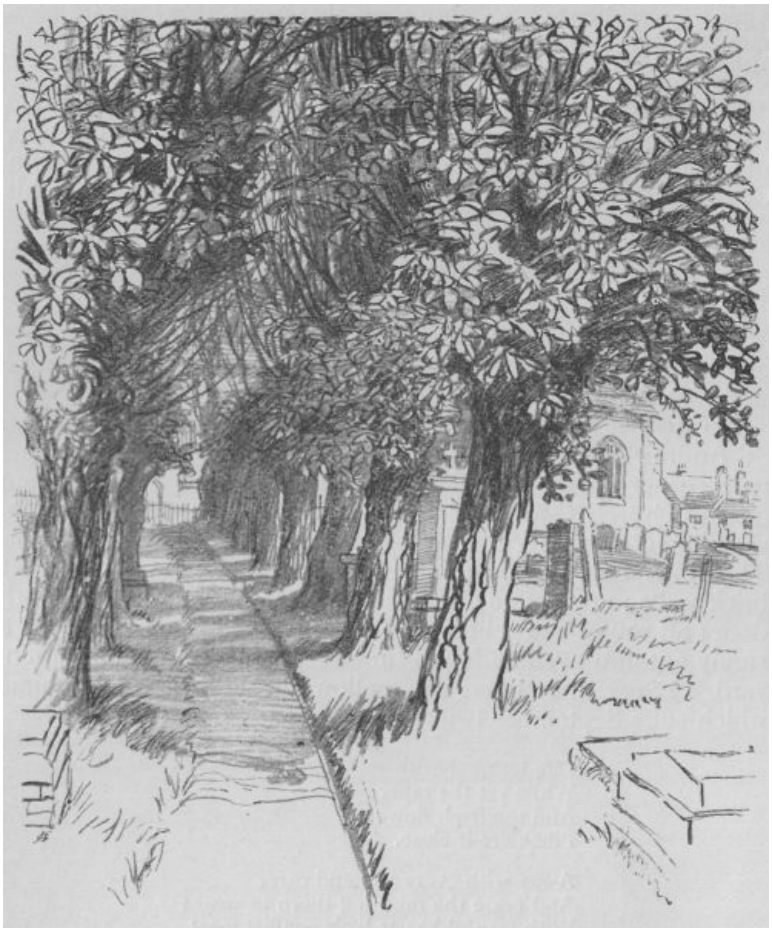
The Local Board of 1866, looking round for some worthy object on which to spend their money, liked the old house so well that they ended its existence on the spot.

No parish church is more difficult to drive up to than St. Andrew's at Farnham. If you know the way you can come to a corner of the churchyard by a side street, but Farnham goes to church chiefly by alleys and footpaths. The churchyard is more striking than the church, much of which is new. The thick turf, shaven and level, runs to the foot of mossy brick walls; an avenue of pollarded elms leads from the south door; all round stand little, old red houses. Six o'clock on a sunny autumn evening is the time to wait in Farnham churchyard. Every three hours the mellow, feeble bells ring a chime which suits September twilight:—

> "Life let us cherish
> While yet the taper glows,
> And the fresh floweret
> Pluck ere it close.

Away with every toil and care,
And cease the rankling thorn to wear;
With manful hearts life's conflict meet,
Till Death sounds the retreat."

Vernon House, a Tudor building changed from its old name, Culver Hall, and altered so as to front on West Street, has an unhappy memory of the Parliament wars. Charles the First lodged [Pg 28] there one December night, a closely guarded prisoner on his way from Hurst Castle to Windsor. A month later he was to leave Windsor for Whitehall. He had little to give his host, and gave him all he had. It was a white morning cap of quilted silk, which Mr. George Vernon, inheriting from his grandfather, left in 1732 to his grandson, "desiring it may always go to the next heir male of my family, as a testimony of our steadfast loyalty and adherence to the Crown, which is the only [Pg 29] bounty my family ever received for all the losses and expenses they sustained for the royal cause, which amounted to several thousands of pounds."



In Farnham Churchyard.

I had nearly forgotten Farnham's painter. He was Stephen Elmer, and a picture of his, "The Last Supper," hangs in the church tower. But his forte was painting fish and game, dead and alive. In a curious old pamphlet, "*The Earwig, or An Old Woman's Remarks on the present Exhibition of Pictures of the Royal Academy—a critical pamphlet published in Fleet Street*, 1781, I find the following entries. Of the painters and subjects, Mr. Elmer and Mrs. Robinson belong to Surrey. The rest supply the setting:—

> "10. Thais—Sir Joshua Reynolds, R.A.—The face was painted from the famous Emily Bertie ... It was a cruel *snouch* in the Painter, a fine Girl having paid him seventy-five guineas for an hour's work, and being unable to pay for the other half of her portrait, to exhibit her with such a sarcastic allusion to her private life—to call her Thais—to put a torch in her hand, and direct her to set flames to the temple of Chastity. Such rigorous punishment seldom is inflicted by a rich man on a pretty woman, merely from her want of money.
>
> 79. Damn'd bad.
>
> 106. Mrs. Mahon in the character of Elvira—J. Roberts.—Painting, painted.
>
> 107. Portrait of Mrs. Robinson—J. Roberts.—At some distance the effect nearly the same as the preceding number; but on closer inspection, the colour not quite so thickly laid on. We must do justice to the Exhibiting Artists by saying that there are no worse *of their size* in the room than these Dulcineas.
>
> 129. Brace of Pheasants—S. Elmer, A.—No artist can come nearer to the object he attempts. His fish, his birds, and fruit are as exquisitely fine as any of the Flemish masters."

The National Gallery lacks an Elmer: private collectors may be luckier. Mr. J.E. Harting, to whom all Surrey naturalists owe a debt, reminds me that many of Elmer's best pictures were engraved to illustrate Daniel's *Rural Sports*, and that it was Elmer who painted the picture of the hybrid between a blackcock and a pheasant which readers of *Selborne* will remember was sent by Lord Stawell to Gilbert White. "It had been found by the spaniels of one of his keepers in a coppice, and shot on the wing." [Pg 30]

Frensham Pond.

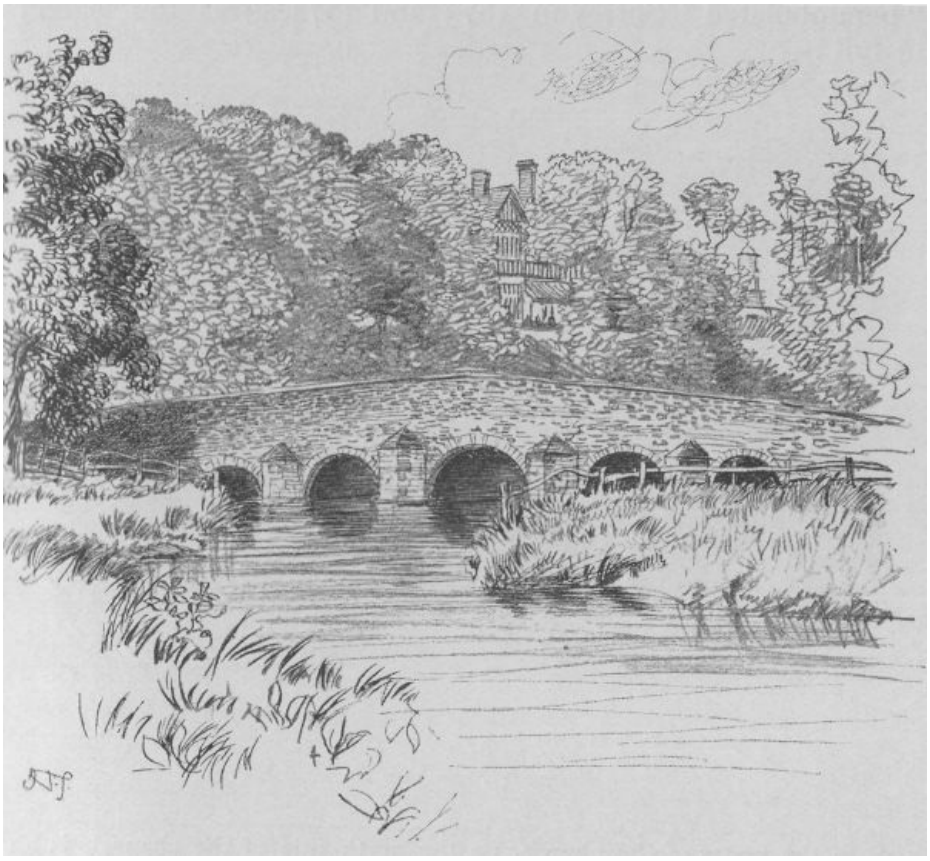
CHAPTER III

FRENSHAM AND TILFORD

A Surrey Labourer.—The Witch's Caldron.—Frensham Ponds.—The Last of the Blackcock.—Herons and Waterlilies.—The Tilford Oak.—Cobbett's Mistake.—Silver Billy.—The heroic age of Cricketers.

Farnham has expanded to the south-east, and not prettily. But it is the key to the great stretch of pine wood, heather and bogland which lies to the south about Frensham, Tilford and Crooksbury Hill; and it is the best centre from which to visit Waverley Abbey and Moor Park, and to take long walks over some of the wildest country in the county. A week would not be long enough to explore the dozen square miles south of the town.

Wrecclesham lies to the south-west, almost on the Hampshire border, and still makes green pottery of patterns which were favourites in the sixteenth century. Further south runs the tiny Bourne, the stream by which Cobbett and his brothers had so good an education, as we have just seen, in the sand. The Bourne, which runs dry in summer, has few associations as a stream; one, perhaps, will remain with it. Readers of *The Bettesworth Book* and *Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer* will perhaps not be very wrong if they fix on this sandy valley as the Surrey which Bettesworth knew best. Than the *Memoirs*, I think, no more discerning study of an old labourer's fight to keep on his own legs, out of the workhouse, earning his own money with his spade and hoe, belongs to any Surrey village. [Pg 31]



Pierrepont House and Bridge.

Deep country begins south of the Bourne, with the first Surrey bridge over the Wey, or rather one of the two Weys that are to join at Tilford. Untouched as yet by any town, the little river runs here over gravel and sand, clear and weedy. Trout lie under the bridge below Pierrepont House, in George III's day a seat of Evelyn Duke of Kingston, who named it after his family. He was the Duke who married the beautiful Countess of Bristol when her lawful husband was still alive: perhaps she used to stare into the Wey at Pierrepont and wonder whether it was worth doing.

Beside Frensham Pond.

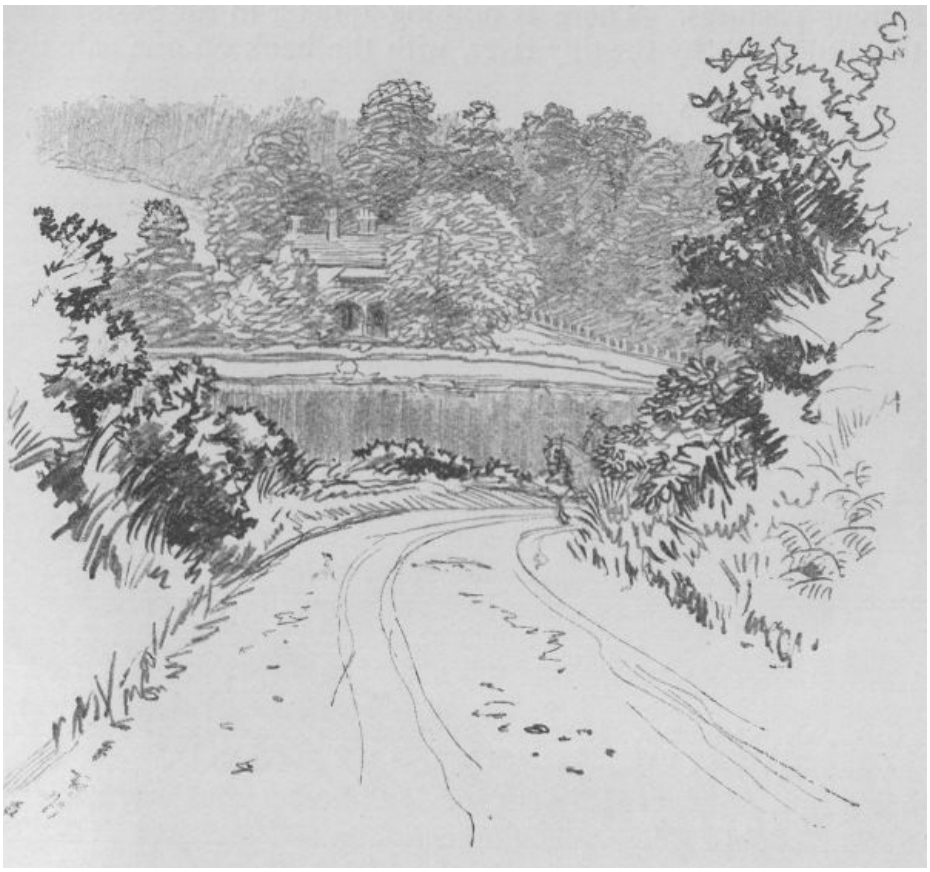
Frensham stands a little distant from the river, just a cottage or two and a church. But the church holds a famous relic—an enormous caldron of beaten copper. Nobody knows its age; everybody has a story about it. It was brought by the fairies, is one tradition; it was nothing of the kind, is another. Mother Ludlam, the witch of Moor Park, four miles away, used it for boilings and philtremakings, according to one story; yet another connects it with a great stone which used to lie in the neighbourhood. John Aubrey, the antiquary, who "perambulated" Surrey in 1673 and 1674, gives the legend in full:— [Pg 32]

> "In the vestry of the church, on the north side of the chancel, is an extraordinary great kettle or caldron, which the inhabitants say, by tradition, was brought hither by the fairies, time out of mind, from Borough hill, about a mile from hence. To this

place, if any one went to borrow a yoke of oxen, money, etc., he might have it for a year or longer so he kept his word to return it. There is a cave where some have fancied to hear music. On this Borough hill (in the Tithing of Cherte, in the parish of Frensham) is a great stone lying along, of the length of about six feet: they went to this Stone, and knocked at it, and declared that they would borrow, and when they would repay, and a Voice would answer when they should come, and that they should find what they desired to borrow at that Stone. This caldron, with the trivet, was borrowed here after the manner aforesaid, but not returned according to promise; and though the caldron was afterwards carried to the stone, it could not be received, and ever since that time no borrowing there....

[Pg 33]

"The people saw a great fire one night (not long since), the next day they went to see if any heath was burnt there, but found nothing."



Frensham Pond Hotel.

"These stories," says Aubrey, "are verily believed by most of the old women of this parish, and by many of their daughters." The daughters ought to have known better. So ought Aubrey, according to Salmon, another Surrey historian, writing in 1736. He cannot understand why there should be anything astonishing about the size of the caldron, "there having been many in England till lately to be seen, as well as very large spits which were given for entertainment of the parish at the wedding of poor maids." It was a notable thing to roast an ox whole. Clearly it would be satisfactory to boil a sheep.

[Pg 34]

Frensham Pond.

From Frensham village a road runs straight across the common to the south-west corner of the Great Pond, but the prettiest road to the water is by the side of the Wey. The Wey runs here deep and clean, edged with forget-me-nots through all the summer, winding and straightening through serene and shining pastures. There is nothing quieter in all Surrey than this little path by the tiny river, with the bank on one side rich with roses and elderflower, and on the other the sunlight gleaming on the chestnut coats of the cattle moving slowly through the sedge. Here is an old oak bridge, solid and lichened; here, facing the stream, a high bank of white sand, bored and tunnelled by sand-martins; a little further, and the brushwood flames with the pink and crimson spires of a thousand foxgloves. The grassy path runs on, until on a sudden bend the ground rises, and over a wooden stile opens out the vista of the great Frensham Pond. Could there be a deeper [Pg 35] contrast? Behind lies green pasture-land, rush and sedge, oak and alder; before you, the shoulder of a hill purple with ling, the long level of grey and silver water, dancing under the wind away to a far strip of yellow sand flecked with patches of white foam; high above that, burnt and blackened ridges of heather-ground and gorse. Frensham Pond has often been painted, but that is the view I should choose, as I saw it first. To one coming up from these green depths of pasture, the air blows across the water with the freshness of the sea.

The Devil's Jumps, beyond Frensham Pond.

Frensham Pond still lies open and wild to the sky, though it may not be long before its shyer visitors leave it for more secluded waters. The motor omnibuses from Farnham have not yet frightened them all away. Coot and moorhens paddle in and out of the reeds, and great grebes float leisurely about its surface. It has always been famous for its fishing. In Aubrey's time it was "well known for its carps to the London fishmongers," and to-day it holds pike, perch and tench. I heard of no carp. Who would eat a carp?

In the bar of the little inn that stands on the edge of Frensham Pond there is an interesting case holding two blackcocks and a grey-hen, whose unhappy lot it was to be shot—perhaps the last of their race seen in this part of Surrey. They were killed nineteen years ago, in 1889. Actually the [Pg 36] last blackcock chronicled in Surrey were a pair seen near Hindhead, I believe in 1906.

The Devil's Jumps, from Frensham Common.

From Frensham Great Pond one may push on to Hindhead, three or four miles to the south-east, or may return to Farnham through Tilford by way of the Little Pond, another broad and shining stretch of water. The way to Farnham is the better, for it means leaving the high road for the natural paths that run over and round the windy ridges of the commonland to the east. From the rising ground between the two Frensham ponds there is a fine panorama of pine and heather. Crooksbury Hill juts up dark and commanding to the north; the level line of the ridge on the left, a few hundred yards away, is broken and humped with barrows; far away to the east lies Charterhouse, grey in the haze by Godalming; behind, to the south-east, the Devil's Jumps, three little squat, conical hills whose very oddity is one of their attractions. They edge the horizon like inverted pudding bowls covered with bracken, and with bell-heather kindling to crimson in the July sunlight. [Pg 37]

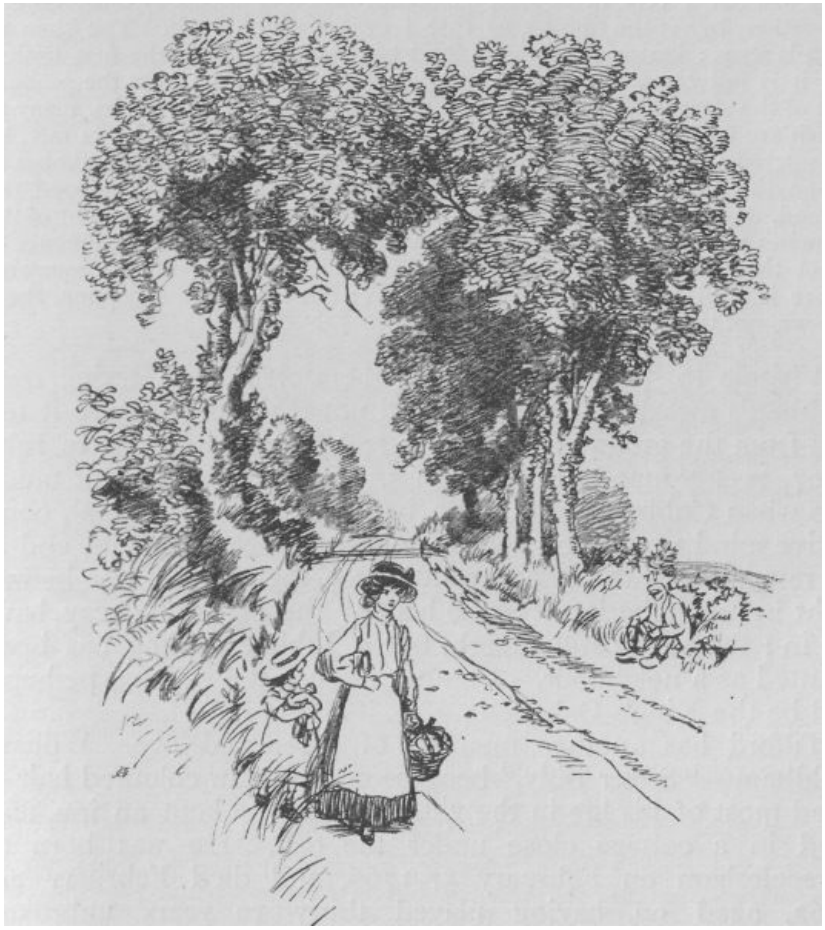
Bridge at Tilford.

July is the month in which to visit Frensham Little Pond. It was an accident which first showed me the pond as it ought to be seen, and as few see it. I had been watching a number of herons through my glasses; one of them eyeing me discontentedly from the reeds on a southern arm of the water, and three more flapping majestically over the trees, apparently dropping suddenly down into the valley of the Wey. Trying to take a short cut to the stream I missed my way among the woodland rides, and suddenly found myself again on the edge of the pond. It was worth making the mistake. The northern corner of the pond by the little boathouse is one sheet of white waterlilies. The corner runs into a rough triangle, with two sides fifty yards in length and a base of perhaps thirty yards. There must be nearly a thousand square yards of lilies, and from five to ten lilies to the yard, green buds, opening blossoms, and great white cups and gold-centred chalices, wet and swaying in the wind. Through all the summer those lilies flower, and there [Pg 38] cannot be as many people see them as there are lilies. Fortunately, it would be difficult to find them unless you were walking: you could not drive a motor-car or ride a bicycle down those

sandy lanes, and nobody on foot would pick the lilies.

To walk from Frensham Little Pond over Tilford Common to Tilford is to traverse some of the wildest and freshest commonland in Surrey. For some distance from the northern corner of the pond the way runs through woodland, crossed and recrossed by so many sandy paths that it is a good deal easier to get lost than to find the high road running into Tilford from the south. It is worth while getting lost, for that matter, if only to realise the wildness of the place; though it would perhaps be better to choose daytime for the business, for there are some awkward-looking, though perhaps not dangerous, bogs on the lower ground near the Wey. This lower ground, by the way, is a wonderful place for rabbits. You come suddenly out from the wood on the border of a reedy field, and see dozens of scampering bodies cleaving paths through the shaking rushes. Now and then a rabbit, puzzled by the silence following the sound of the invader's coming, sits and cocks up a pair of ears above the grass; his head goes a little higher, his timorous eye catches yours, and the greenery closes behind him.

Tilford to-day cannot be very different from the Tilford of the days of Cobbett. It is a straggling little hamlet, lying about the triangle formed by its cricket-green. The Wey runs halfway round the green, and is crossed by two grey and ancient bridges. But the chief glory of Tilford is its mighty oak, one of the greatest of English trees. Its age is unknown, and perhaps would hardly be known if it were felled. It has been claimed as "the oak at Kynghoc," mentioned in the charter given to Waverley Abbey in 1128; but that oak is mentioned as standing on the Abbeyland boundary, and the Tilford oak has never stood on the boundary. These historic oaks make difficult problems. Wherever you find a great tree, local legend gathers round it. Queen Elizabeth dined under it or shot a stag under it; Charles II climbed in it; Wesley preached under it; it is the boundary of the parish; it was the boundary of the Abbeyland eight hundred years ago. But was it always, then, the greatest tree for miles round? Eight hundred years ago, may there not have [Pg 39] stood another tree near where it stands to-day, as large or even larger? Surely the traditions of one great tree pass, when the tree falls, to its nearest great neighbour; but they pass so seldom, and so slowly, that the villagers hardly note the change. Three generations are born and die, and no villager living has seen the older greater oak; the younger, slighter tree succeeds to its glories. Tilford's oak to-day is called by all Tilford the King's Oak. On the old estate maps it is Novel's Oak; Novel, perhaps, was a yeoman farmer.



Between Tilford and Elstead.

Cobbett made a curious mistake about the Tilford Oak. He and his son were riding through [Pg 40] Tilford to Farnham on an autumn day in 1822:—

> "We veered a little to the left after we came to Tilford, at which place on the Green we stopped to look at an *oak tree*, which, when I was a little boy, was but a very little tree, comparatively, and which is now, take it altogether, by far the finest tree that I ever saw in my life. The stem or shaft is short; that is to say, it is short before you come to the first limbs; but it is full *thirty feet round*, at about eight or ten feet from the ground. Out of the stem there come not less than fifteen or sixteen limbs, many of which are from five to ten feet round, and each of which

would, in fact, be considered a decent stick of timber. I am not judge enough of timber to say anything about the quantity in the whole tree, but my son stepped the ground, and, as nearly as we could judge, the diameter of the extent of the branches was upwards of ninety feet, which would make a circumference of about three hundred feet. The tree is in full growth at this moment. There is a little hole in one of the limbs; but with that exception, there appears not the smallest sign of decay."

Visitors to Tilford can amuse themselves with trying over Cobbett's measurements. I could not reach to measure it ten feet from the ground; but at five feet I made its girth, in July, 1907, twenty-four feet nine inches. Probably it was not much less when Cobbett was a little boy. That independent, combative mind would not accept another's measurements, and if he remembered the tree as a little tree, then a little tree he was right in remembering. Since his day the signs of decay have set in; the oak is still superb, but a Jubilee sapling has been planted as a neighbour. Centuries hence the sapling, perhaps, will be the King's Oak again.

Tilford has another memory of green old age. William Beldham—"Silver Billy," because of his straw-coloured hair—lived most of his life in the village, where he kept an inn, and died in a cottage close under the oak. He was born at Wrecclesham on February 5, 1766, and died February 20, 1862, aged 96, having played thirty-five years' unbroken "great" cricket, as Lillywhite calls it—a finer name than first-class. Let John Nyren, most discerning of biographers, describe him:—

"William Beldham was a close-set, active man, standing about five feet eight inches and a-half. He had light-coloured hair, a fair complexion, and handsome as well as intelligent features. We used to call him 'Silver Billy.' No one within my recollection could stop a ball better, or make more brilliant hits all over the ground. Wherever the ball was bowled, there she was hit away, and in the most severe, venomous style. Besides this, he was so remarkably safe a player; he was safer than the Bank, for no mortal ever thought of doubting Beldham's stability. He received his instructions from a gingerbread baker at Farnham, of the name of Harry Hall....

[Pg 41]

"He would get in at the balls, and hit them away in a gallant style; yet, in this single feat, I think I have seen him excelled; but when he could cut them at the point of the bat he was in his glory; and upon my life, their speed was as the speed of thought."

The King's Oak, Tilford.

When were the great days of Surrey cricket? When Surrey could lend All England William Beldham, and still win—which they did twice—a Tilford man might answer. At all events, they were days in which cricketers lived to heroic ages. Abarrow, who lies at Hambledon over the Hampshire border, lived to be 88; James Aylward, "rather a bulky man for a cricketer," was buried close to Lord's ground, aged 86; Barber, who kept the Bat and Ball on Broad Halfpenny

[Pg 42]

Down, was 71; William Fennex, at the age of 75, walked ninety miles in three days, carrying an umbrella, clothes, and three cricket bats (but he died soon after); William Lambert, almost the greatest of Surrey hitters, and the first player who ever made two centuries in the same match, died at 72; Lumpy Stevens, who won £100 for Lord Tankerville by hitting a feather once in four balls, and lies in Walton churchyard, was 84; John Small, who saved his life by playing his violin to a ferocious bull, to the "admiration and perfect satisfaction of the mischievous beast," lived to be 89; Tom Sueter—"I have never seen a handsomer man than Tom Sueter," wrote Nyren—lived to be 77; "Shock" White, with his bat as broad as his stumps, "a short and rather stoutly-made man," was buried at Reigate, aged 91; Yalden of Chertsey,—he jumped over a fence and then on his back caught the ball—was 84; and John Wells, buried at Farnham, died at the age of 76. John Wells shared with "Silver Billy" a curious distinction. He was Beldham's brother-in-law, and an admiring publican at Wrecclesham put up a sign to draw thirsty wayfarers to Wrecclesham's best beer. It was "The Rendezvous of the Celebrated Cricketers, Beldham and Wells." If it were still standing, it would attract a pilgrimage.

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CHAPTER IV

WAVERLEY ABBEY AND MOOR PARK

Jonathan Swift, Secretary.—A new Tale of a Tub.—Sir William Temple, Essayist.—Swift's "Stella."—A heart under a sundial.—Dorothy Osborne.—Mother Ludlam's Cave—Waverley Abbey.—Two tons of wine.—Comfort from Cromwell.—A Surrey Landmark.

Hardly two miles from Farnham, and reached by a road overarched by fine oaks, Moor Park stands on the banks of the Wey. A turn in the lane throws open a view of rich hayfields and pasture, with the river winding in and out under a ridge of oakwoods; much the same view, perhaps, as Swift first had of the fields and the Wey when he came to Moor Park from Ireland to copy out Sir William Temple's essays and to meet the dark-eyed waiting-maid who was to inspire one of the great passions of literary history.

Moor Park was Sir William Temple's new name for an old manor. The name under which he bought the house and land was Compton Hall, and he renamed it after a property in Hertfordshire. "The perfectest figure of a garden I ever saw, either at home or abroad, was that of Moor Park in Hertfordshire, when I knew it about thirty years ago," he wrote in his *Essay on the Gardens of Epicures*: and he laid out his own garden in the Dutch style which he admired. The garden has changed with the changing tastes of later owners; the house has fared a little better, though it was once metamorphosed into a Hydropathic Sanatorium—a new and dismal Tale of a Tub.

Moor Park.

Moor Park, when Sir William Temple had it, saw the writing of many books. Sir William Temple himself, deeply hurt with his sovereign, James II, for striking his name off the Privy Council, had [Pg 44] vowed to give up diplomacy and turn to gardening and writing for the rest of his life. His gardening may have been as good as his writing, and his essay on Gardening is, of all his writings, perhaps the best. But it was in his seclusion at Moor Park that he wrote, also, one of the most ridiculous papers that ever brought the fame of an essayist to a retired politician. His *Essay Upon the Ancient and Modern Learning* remains one of the most astonishing examples of the [Pg 45] admirable writing down of trash in the history of letters. Quite unnecessarily, he had taken up the task of comparing modern writers with ancient, to the disadvantage of the modern, and he cannot be said to have been well equipped for the business. He had never read a word of Greek, and he achieved the distinction of criticising modern writing without a single reference to the works of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, Molière, Racine, Corneille, Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare. The extraordinary thing is that the book was welcomed, and when a quarrel was struck over his claim that the Letters of Phalaris (which he could not read) were the best Letters in the world, he found ready champions. They were hopelessly defeated by Bentley, but Sir William Temple fortunately died before the defeat.

Better books were written at Moor Park by Sir William's secretary. Jonathan Swift, angry and rebellious, hating the authority and restraint of his Irish University, came to England an uncouth, ill-balanced, extravagant creature of twenty-one, and settled, or half-settled, to his work as amanuensis. He threw up his post in a rage, went over to Ireland and was ordained priest, made up his quarrel with his patron and came back to Moor Park to write *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. But the books were almost incidents. The mainspring of his life was his melancholy devotion to the pretty girl who waited on Lady Giffard, Sir William Temple's sister. She was Esther Johnson, daughter of Sir William's steward, but as Swift's Stella she lives in the story of sad and mysterious passions with Héloise and Laura.

Sir William Temple died in 1699, and was buried by his wife's side in Westminster Abbey; all but his heart, and that was laid in a silver box under the sundial in his garden. He left his papers to Swift, who wrote that there had died "with him all that was good and amiable among men," and to prove it quarrelled acrimoniously with the family.

Of another, gentler inmate of Moor Park we hear very little. Her fame was assured her when, as Dorothy Osborne, she had waited seven years to marry William Temple, and had sent to him, without an idea that they would reach an English public, some of the most graceful girlish letters ever written. After her marriage she leaves the scene, or we see her seldom. She corresponded with Queen Mary, but Swift has little to tell us about her. She, at least, could never have enraged [Pg 46] him.

Stella's Cottage.

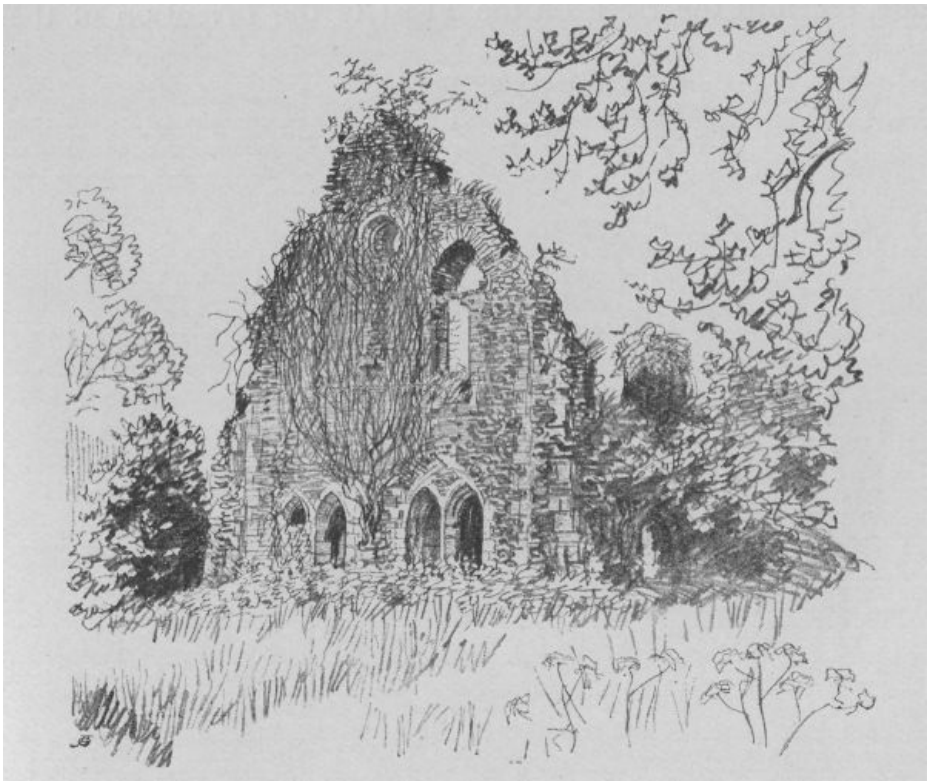
Moor Park lies along the banks of the Wey, and through it runs a drive open to foot passengers, but not to bicycles or dogs. Nearly at the end of the drive going towards Waverley Abbey is a [Pg 47] curious cave, lined and roofed at the entrance with stone, and barred and gated and spiked with iron, evidently a fit habitation, once upon a time, for a very witch-like old woman. The gates, or rather railings which do not open, must have been placed there many years ago, for no initials have been carved, or at least none are visible, on the stone within. The cave runs back, some way from the road, into pleasantly dubious darkness. In this case, according to the tradition of the place, lived the witch, Mother Ludlam, whose caldron lies in the tower of Frensham Church. Another excavation in the ground a few yards away has also its own tradition, or rather two [Pg 48] traditions. One is that it was the regular abode of a hermit named Foote, who starved to death in it; another, that Foote was a lunatic who was found dying in the hole, but actually died in the workhouse. The details are precise. "Foote was a gentleman. He came one day to the Unicorn Inn at Farnham. Next day he hired a man to wheel a heavy portmanteau to Moor Park gate, when he told the man to put it down. Foote was taken very ill, was found by old Hill the keeper and taken to Swift's cottage where Hill lived. The union officials took Foote and his heavy portmanteau to the Union. 'It's only buttons inside,' said they. 'It's gold! gold!' exclaimed Foote with his dying breath." So runs the local version.

In Moor Park.

At the gates of the entrance of Moor Park stands a charming cottage, brick and timber embowered in roses. It has been known at different times as "Dean Swift's Cottage" and "Stella's Cottage." Perhaps neither lived there. Outside the park the Wey broadens out into a wide pool, shaded by magnificent sycamores, and then drops through sluices to a lower level, to twist back to the north-west under the walls of Waverley Abbey.

Waverley Abbey is the greatest of the ruins in a county where ruins are few. Once the Abbey precinct covered sixty acres of ground; to-day nothing remains but tumbled walls and broken gates. It was not the oldest nor the richest of Abbeys in the county, but in some ways it was the noblest foundation of all. It was the earliest house of Cistercian monks in England; it inherited the spirit and the traditions of one of the finest of the monastic orders, the stricter sect of the monks of St. Benedict; its brethren were simple, kindly men with few wants and little money, who yet were generous hosts and the most skilful farmers of their day; it was the elder sister of Tintern Abbey, the mother of the Abbeys of Garendon, Ford, Combe and Thame, and the grandmother of seven others; and its abbots had precedence in the chapters of abbots throughout the order of Cistercians.

The White Monks, as the Cistercians were called, used to choose wild and lonely places for their churches, and Waverley Abbey, which stands in fields even now sometimes flooded, in its early days was more than once in difficulties through rain and bad seasons. It was founded in 1128 by William Giffard, the second Bishop of Winchester after the Conquest, and the buildings were still [Pg 49] unfinished when, in 1201, a great storm inundated the Abbey, almost carried away its walls, and ruined all its crops, wheat, hay, and flax. Two years later, from the failure of the harvest after the flood, corn was so scarce that the monks had to scatter themselves among other Convents till they could thresh another summer's corn. In 1215 the spring from which they got all the water suddenly failed, and the monks were without water for their wine till one of them found a fresh spring and took it by pipes to the admiring Abbey. Eighteen years later came another storm and vast floods; the water rushed through the Abbey grounds, carrying away walls and bridges, and was eight feet deep in the buildings. There were other floods; in 1265 the monks had to sleep where they could out of the water, and it took days to clean away the silted mud. Those were some of the penalties of being so conveniently near to a river.



Waverley Abbey.

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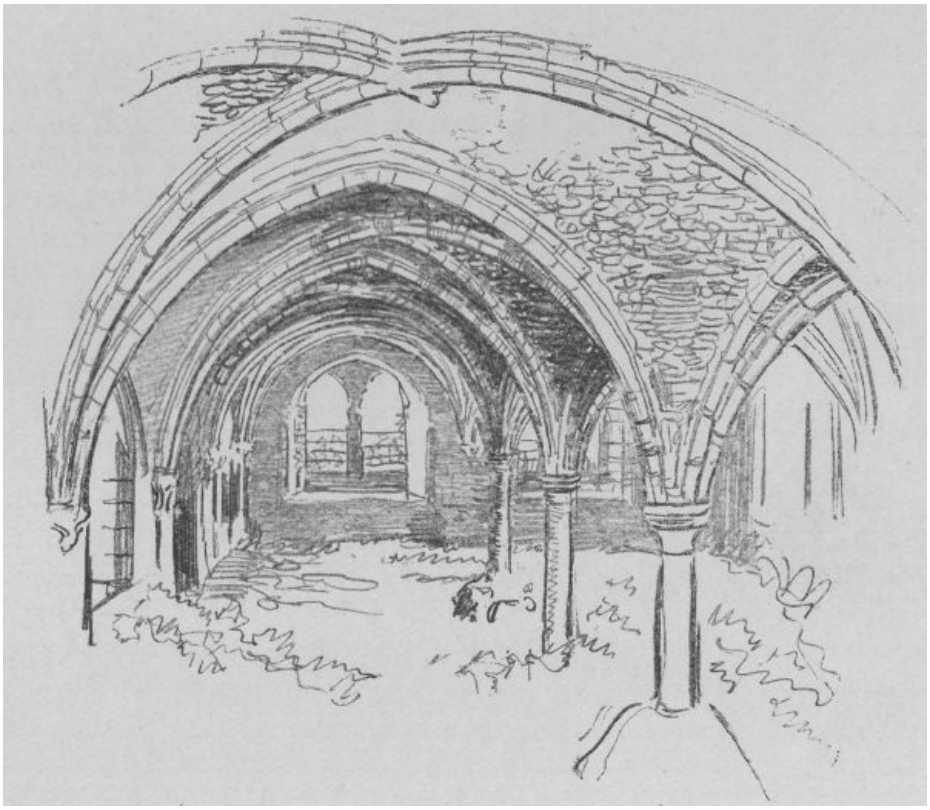


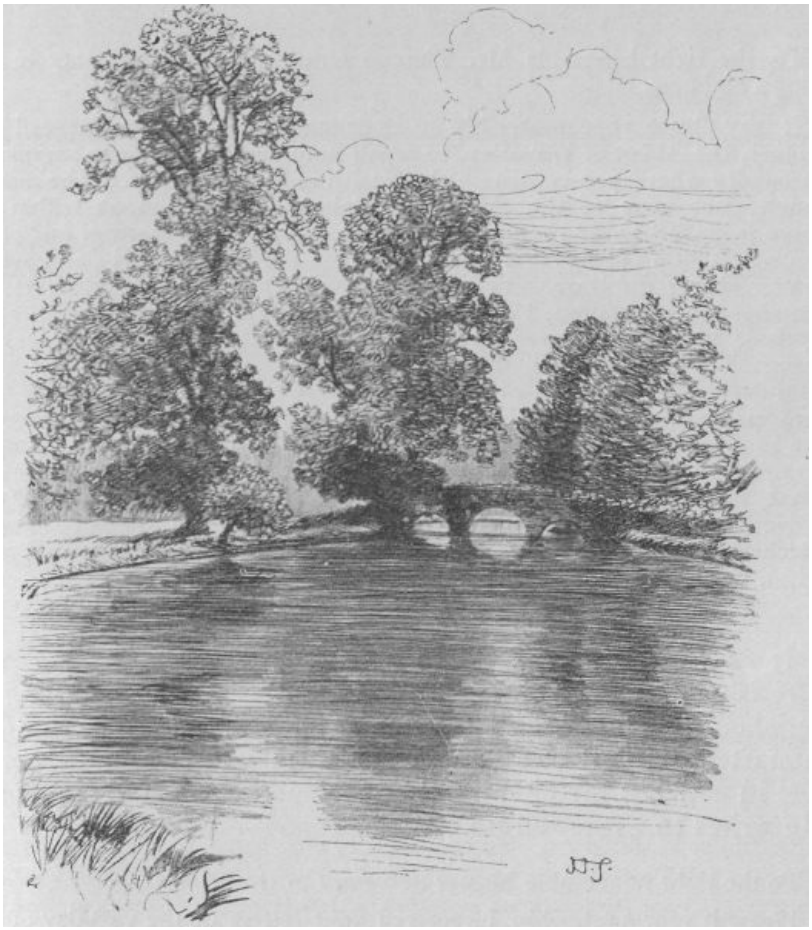
Waverley Abbey.

Round the buildings accumulated the traditional virtues. The Annals of Waverley record that in 1248 a youth fell by accident from the very parapet of the church tower to the ground without receiving the smallest injury. He was stupefied, and was thought to be dead, but after a little while began to speak and to be sensible, and soon completely recovered. On an earlier occasion, Aubrey tells us that "a boy of seven or eight years of age, standing near the Abbey gate, fell into the river, on the Feast of the Invention of the Cross, and by the rapidity of the stream was drove through four of the bridges, and was afterwards found on the surface of the water, dead to all outward appearance; but being taken out and carefully attended, he was brought to life, and came to his post at the gate from whence he had not been missed nor inquired after."

When the church was dedicated in 1278—it had taken seventy-five years to build—there was great rejoicing and a superb banquet. Nicholas de Ely, Bishop of Winchester, to make the occasion splendid, supplied feasting at his own expense for nine days to all who attended; abbots, lords, knights and noble ladies came to the dedication, and on the first day seven thousand and sixty-six guests sat down to meat. That is Waverley's greatest record of hospitality. Another record belongs to a guest. King John spent four days at the Abbey in Holy Week, 1208, and on that occasion one R. de Cornhull was ordered to be paid five marks for "two tons of wine" carried

[Pg 51]

from Pagham.



In the Grounds, Waverley Abbey.

At the Dissolution Waverley's end came quickly. The Abbey was one of the first of the smaller monasteries to fall. The obsequious adventurer whom Thomas Cromwell sent to Waverley to report on the Abbey establishment was Doctor Layton, and evidently he was neither feasted nor bribed by the simple Abbot and his monks. Thus he writes to Cromwell after his visit:— [Pg 52]

> To the right honorable Mr. Thomas Crumwell, chief secretary to the King's highness.
>
> It may please your mastership to understand that I have licenced the bringer, the Abbot of Waverley, to repair unto you for liberty to survey his husbandry whereupon consisteth the wealth of his monastery. The man is honest, but none of the children of Solomon: every monk within his house is his fellow, and every servant his master. Mr. Treasurer and other gentlemen hath put servants unto him whom the poor [fool?] dare neither command nor displease. Yesterday, early in the morning, sitting in my chamber in examination, I could neither get bread nor drink, neither fire of those knaves till I was fretished; and the Abbot durst not speak to them. I called them all before me, and forgot their names, but took from every man the keys of his office, and made new officers for my time here, perchance as stark knaves as the others. It shall be expedient for you to give him a lesson and tell the poor fool what he should do. Among his monks I found corruption of the worst sort, because they dwell in the forest from all company. Thus I pray God preserve you. From Waverley this morning early before day, ready to depart towards Chichester, by the speedy hand of your most assured servant and poor priest,
>
> Richard Layton.

It is satisfactory to learn that the weasely Doctor was "fretished," which must be pretty nearly the same thing as perished with cold and hunger. The Abbot's plea for his monastery—surely one of the honestest letters ever written—sets in contrast the characters of the monastery and its visitor. He writes to Cromwell on June 9, 1536:—

> To the right honourable Master Secretary to the King.
>
> Pleaseth your mastership I received your letters of the vijth day of this present month, and hath endeavoured myself to accomplish the contents of them, and have sent your mastership the true extent, value, and account of our said monastery. Beseeching your good mastership, for the love of Christ's passion, to help to the preservation of this poor monastery, that we your beadsmen may remain in the service of God, with the meanest living that any poor men may live with, in this world. So to continue in the service of Almighty Jesus, and to pray for the estate of

[Pg 53]

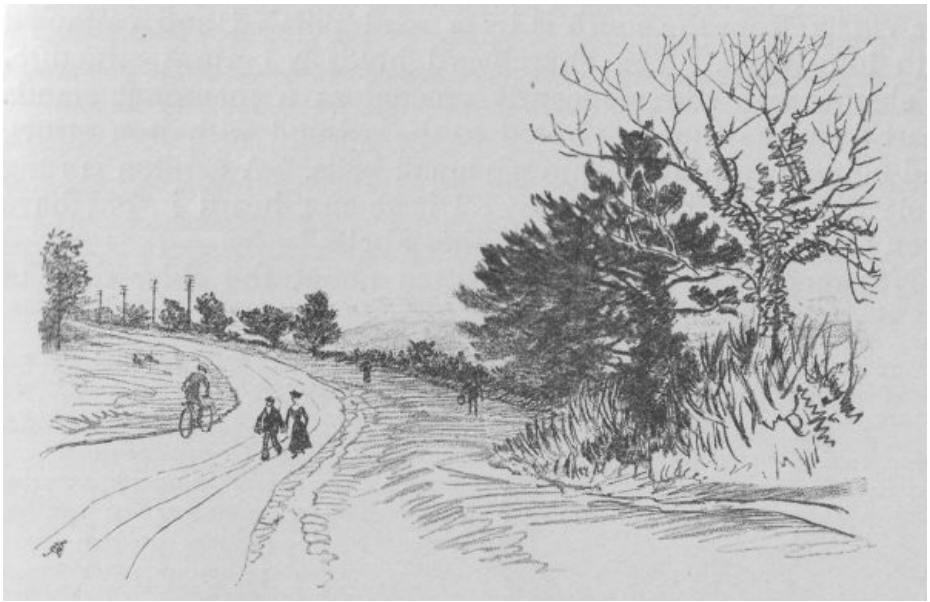
our prince and your mastership. In no vain hope I write this to your mastership, for as much you put me in such boldness full gently, when I was in suit to you the last year at Winchester, saying, 'Repair to me for such business as ye shall have from time to time.' Therefore, instantly praying you, and my poor brethren with weeping yes!—desire you to help them; in this world no creatures in more trouble. And so we remain depending upon the comfort that shall come to us from you—serving God daily at Waverley. From thence the ixth day of June, 1536.

WILLIAM, the poor Abbot there, your chaplain to command.

Crooksbury Hill and Frensham Little Pond, from Frensham Common.

The comfort that came to the White Monks was the dissolution of the Abbey in the month following. After the dissolution the buildings fell gradually to pieces, generously helped by builders of other houses. When Sir William More was giving Loseley near Guildford the shape we see to-day he carted waggon-load after waggon-load of stone from the ruined church, and Sir William More was perhaps not the first and certainly not the last of the spoilers. The neighbourhood quarried from the ruins until only a few years ago. When Aubrey saw the Abbey in 1672 he found the walls of a church, cloisters, a chapel used as a stable, and part of the house with its window-glass intact, and paintings of St. Dunstan and the devil, pincers, crucibles and all. To-day most of the ruins have fallen flat. There is some beautiful vaulting left, and massive heaps of stone show the corners and boundaries of the church and other buildings. Ivy-stems, coils of green gigantic pythons, climb about the walls and broken doorways; pigeons nest on the window-ledges and clatter like frightened genii out over the field. [Pg 54]

Above Moor Park, a landmark for miles round, Crooksbury Hill lifts like a dark pyramid. Crooksbury Hill has a dozen different wardrobes. You may wake to find her grey in the morning, you may leave her behind you grey-green with the sun full on her flank, you may turn at noon to find the sun lighting her deep emerald; she is sunniest and hottest in a shining blue; and in the evening with the setting sun behind her she cloaks herself in purple and black as if her pines belonged to Scotland. She cannot see so far as Chanctonbury Ring, which is the watching comrade of all walkers in the country of the South Downs, and she has not the height of Leith Hill or Hindhead; but she is the grave and constant companion of all travellers for many miles round her, and measures for them the angle of the sun or the slope of the stars, as do all good landmarks for those who love a landmark like a friend. [Pg 55]



A Dip in the Hog's Back.

CHAPTER V

THE HOG'S BACK

Whitewaysend.—Tongham.—A carillon of sheep-bells.—Timber-carting.—Falling on board a transport.—Cottages under the Hog's Back.—Puttenham. The Maypole at Compton.—The two-storied sanctuary.—A great picture.—Bird-baths.—Swarming bees.—The Hog's Back; a noble highway.

If any of the pilgrims from Farnham were drawn aside down the banks of the Wey to the hospitality of Waverley Abbey, they probably rejoined the rest at the foot of the Hog's Back, perhaps near Whitewaysend. That is a name with some meaning, for here first the road from Farnham runs up on to the great chalk ridge which traverses the county from west to east. The break in the colour of the roads under the ridge is from bright yellow sand to staring white, but the full white does not begin until the road is almost at its highest level, at the cross-roads above Tongham.

Tongham is the only village between Farnham and Guildford north of the Hog's Back and near the ridge, and though there is little in it for antiquarians, the pretty little white inn and the oasthouses have often attracted painters, and the approach to the village from the south is by a road pillared and canopied with lofty elms. The churchyard holds a curious structure. A slender oak tower, recently erected as a memorial, stands apart from the church, riveted to the ground with iron struts, and contains a peal of thirteen small bells. A carillon is rung every Sunday and Wednesday; I have not heard it, but have been told that it sounds "like sheep-bells." [Pg 56]

Tongham Church, with Wooden Tower for Bells.

Not much can have been written about the older days of Tongham, but at least one delightful passage in a modern book belongs to it, and should be read under the great elms by the roadside. In Mr. George Bourne's *Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer*, Bettesworth describes an almost incredible feat of carting timber:—

"I see a carter once," said Bettesworth, "get three big elm-trees up on to a timber-carriage, with only hisself and the hosses. He put the runnin' chains on and all hisself."

"And *that* takes some doing," I said.

"Yes, a man got to understand the way 'tis done ... I never had much hand in timber-cartin' myself; but this man.... 'Twas over there on the Hog's Back, not far from Tongham Station. We all went out for to see 'n do it—'cause 'twas in the dinner-time he come, and we never believed he'd do it single-handed. The farmer says to 'n, 'You'll never get they up by yourself.' 'I dessay I shall,' he says; and so he did, too. Three great elm-trees upon that one carriage.... Well, he had a four-hoss team, so that'll tell ye what 'twas. They *was* some hosses, too. Ordinary farm hosses wouldn't ha' done it. But he only jest had to speak, and you'd see they watchin' him.... When he went forward, after he'd got the trees up, to see what sort of a road he'd got for gettin' out, they stood there with their heads stretched out and their ears for'ard. 'Come on,' he says, and *away* they went, *tearin'* away. [Pg 57]

Left great ruts in the road where the wheels sent in—that'll show ye they got something to pull."

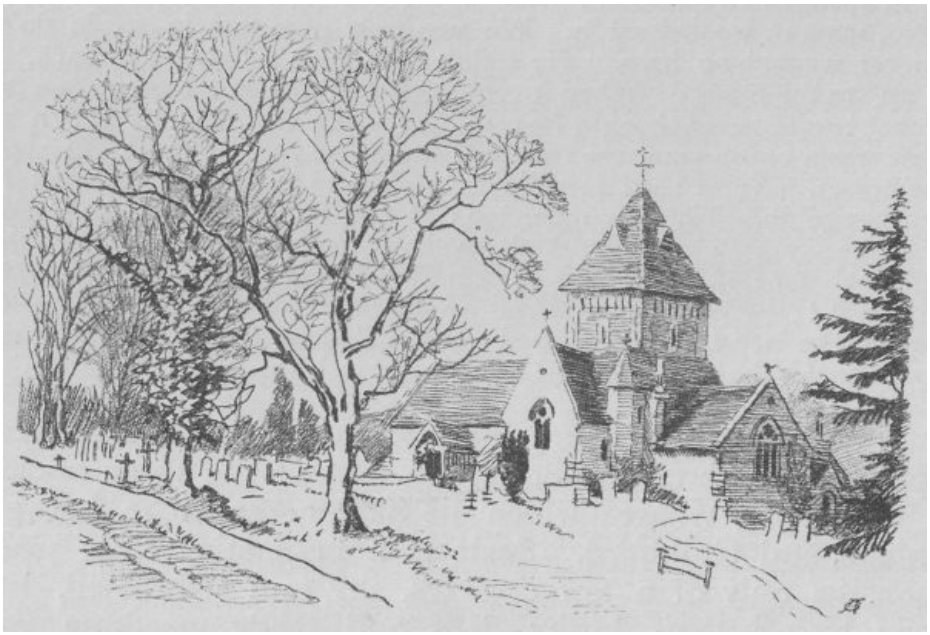
We got one shrub a little further, Bettesworth grunting to a heavy lift; then, in answer to a question:

"No, none o' we helped 'n. We was only gone out to see 'n do it. He never wanted no help. He didn't say much; only 'Git back,' or 'Git up,' to the hosses. When it come to gettin' the last tree up, on top o' t'other two, I never thought he could ha' done it. But he got 'n up. And he was a oldish man, too: sixty, I dessay he was. But he jest spoke to the hosses. Never used no whip 'xcept jest to guide 'em. Didn't the old farmer go on at his own men, too! 'You dam fellers, call yerselves carters,' he says; 'a man like that's worth a dozen o' you.' Well, they couldn' ha' done it. A dozen of 'em 'd ha' scrambled about, an' *then* not done it! Besides, their *hosses* wouldn't. But this feller the old farmer says to 'n, 'I never believed you'd ha' done it.' 'I thought mos likely I should,' he says. But he never had much to say."

A few hundred yards further along the Hog's Back the road drops down south-east to Seale, the first of the three ancient and interesting villages which lie under the ridge between Farnham and Guildford. Seale is a fascinating little place. It consists only of a few cottages, shy and red-roofed, deep among high hedges, bushy dells and reedy meadows, with wheatfields and barleyfields clothing the chalky slopes above. The church has been rebuilt, but has some inscriptions worth looking at. One is an epitaph on a young officer, Edward Noel Long, who was drowned at sea. According to the inscription:—

"On his way to join the British forces in Spain, he, with others of his regiment, perished in the sea near Cape St. Vincent, during the confusion of a fatal accident occasioned by the *Isis* man-of-war falling on board the transport on which he was embarked on the night of the 6th March, 1809."

That was just after Corunna. A carved bas-relief represents the *Isis* under full sail "falling on board" the transport.



Seale.

Here, under the Hog's Back north and south, nearly all the cottages are old and nearly all have [Pg 58] gardens. One perfect little building stands not far from Seale on the road to Puttenham, bowered in vines and quaintly chimneyed, with white-curtained windows opening on a low wall and stonecrop and high box borders, and, when I saw it in July, bunches of pink and white mallows glowing under an old oak door. No cottages count sunnier hours than these that stand about the long strip of green country under the chalk downs. This part of Surrey, perhaps, has changed as little as any part during the last twenty or thirty years, which have added so many miles of brick and slate to Surrey villages and towns; probably the greatest change has been in the roads. Mrs. Henry Ady, for instance, writing of the Pilgrims' Way just fifteen years ago, speaks of the road that runs through Seale, Puttenham, and Compton as being "a grassy lane, not always easy to follow, and little used in places." The road as it runs here may not take the exact line of the Pilgrims' Way, but no one could call it difficult to follow. Here and there it passes through cornfields, and it is by leaving the road to take a footpath through a cornfield that the best view is to be had of Puttenham, whose red roofs and grey church tower are set delightfully among rich elms, with a splash of ploughed chalk blazing white through the trees beyond. Puttenham has [Pg 59] added only a few new cottages to its outskirts; under the church it is still red and mossy and lichened. The cottages are oddly built to suit the sloping ground, for the road to the church rises on a hill, and necessitates different levels for foundations and stone pathways. One of the cottages has an outside staircase to its front door, for what reason there is no guessing.

The next village under the Hog's Back on the way to Guildford is Compton, perhaps the third

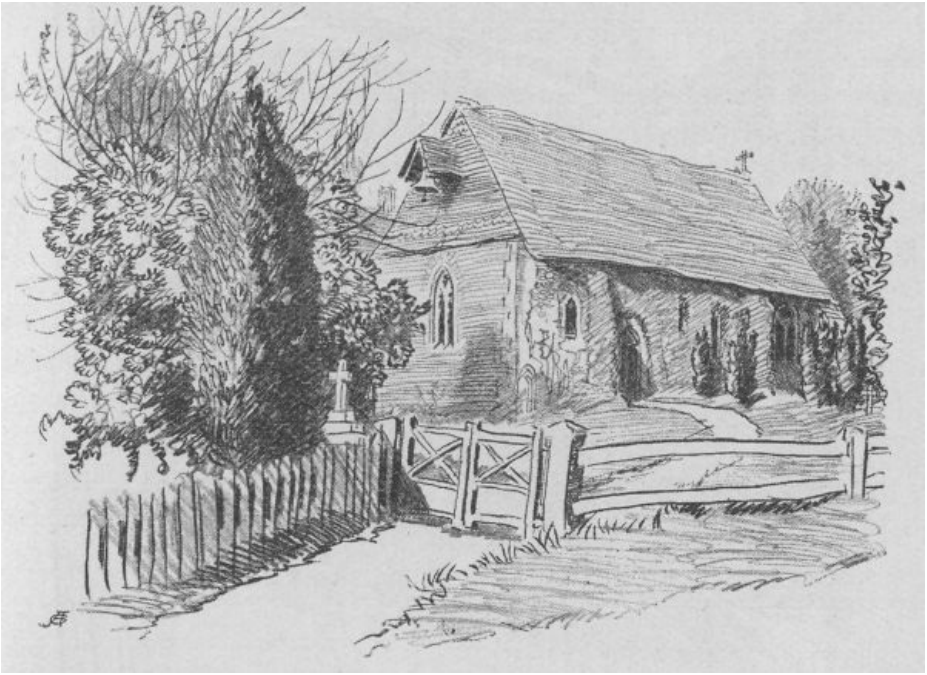
stage of thirsty pilgrims journeying from Whitewaysend. The main road enters Compton from the north, but the prettiest way to find the village is to drop down on it by a woodland footpath from the west. Icehouse Wood is the name of the few acres of trees through which the path runs; an old brick-lined pocket in the side of the hill suggests the name, but there are remains of another brick building higher up the slope which look nothing like an icehouse. Was the name ever Oasthouse wood, perhaps, and did they grow hops here as at Farnham? If any pilgrims left the beaten track from Puttenham which runs north of Compton they may have come to the church and the inn by this footpath. It is centuries old; it is lined, before it enters the wood, by ordered holly which may once have marked a road, and as it drops down the hill it cuts as deep into the sand as the old trackways north of Anstiebury Camp or west of Albury. Great beeches coil their roots about its edge—younger than the road if ever oasthouses stood by it.

Compton looks like a village presided over by a single mind. The cottages which add themselves to whatever is old in neighbouring buildings are designed to fit with a scheme; the cottage gardens are challenges of roses and phloxes, which shall be brightest. The black beams and jutting stories of an ancient timbered house stand above the road, an example and a guardian; the whole aspect of the village is of the quietest country. When I was walking through Compton I was told of a village festival which had been held in the spring, in which children from Bermondsey—Bermondsey once a Thames-side village itself—dressed in the old dresses and danced the old dances. They had a Queen of the May and they twined a maypole with ribands; and as I went out of Compton there were the Compton village children, six or seven of them, [Pg 60] dancing over the dances the Bermondsey children had shown them, in the same field where the festival was held. The first of May would come round again; they would choose their own Queen and twine their own maypole.

Compton church is one of the most interesting in the country. It must be forgiven a hideous organ, whose blue and red pipes block the western arch of the nave; the sanctuary is the beauty of the church. It is the only two-storied sanctuary in England, and the origin of two-storied sanctuaries is unknown. Mr. Lewis André, writing in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, is inclined to think that the dedication of the upper sanctuary may have been to St. Michael; there are several altars dedicated to St. Michael in the galleries of continental churches. Another feature of the church is the wooden Norman screen which fences off the upper sanctuary; it is the oldest known in England, and dates back to 1180, according to the archæologists. Some Jacobean screen work in the pulpit and the altar rails is an interesting contrast.

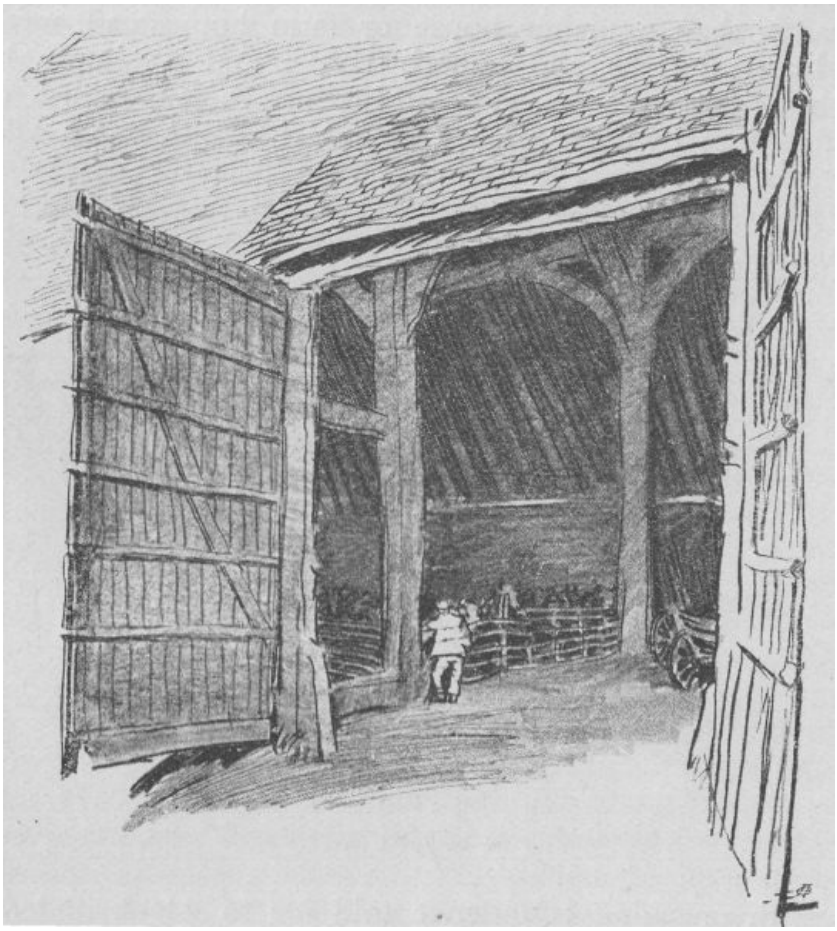
Half a mile north of Compton are a chapel and a cemetery, the joint gift of the late George Frederick Watts and Mrs. Watts; the chapel, designed by Mrs. Watts, strikes a dominant note of terracotta and red brick. There are strengths and splendours which belong to the building and its frescoes, but to me, at all events, it seems to lack the peace and mystery of quieter, duller chapels. A noble memorial of a master mind is the picture gallery in the grounds of the terracotta designing school founded by the late painter's wife. The gallery contains many of his finest pictures, and in particular the last of all which he painted—*Destiny*, a tremendous figure with a shadowed face; masses of filmy light are about it, and power moves in the arm that holds the book; there is a secret hidden which the grey face knows. The gallery is lighted as no London gallery is; the ceiling and walls are washed with old gold, which takes all the hardness from the spaces of sunshine playing through the roof. Mrs. Watts, I believe, added this charm to the gallery. Others besides critics owe her gratitude. Outside the gallery stand rows of pottery, the work of her pupils. Urns, vases, basins, cups, pedestals, fountains await translation to flower gardens. The birds of many Surrey lawns owe a debt to Compton for wide splash-baths of water to bathe in and drink at in the heats of summer. [Pg 61]

Compton can be seen either from Guildford or from Godalming, and the traveller has the choice at Puttenham either of rejoining the Hog's Back immediately above the village, and so dropping down into Wanborough on the other side, or going on to Compton and perhaps climbing up again to the road on the ridge afterwards. Wanborough, a fascinating little hamlet, is worth the extra climbs up the hill. It is little more, in reality, than a manor house or farm homestead, wealthy with huddled ricks and superb barns, and a simple little church, perhaps the tiniest of all in Surrey; it measures only forty-five feet by eighteen. I found it locked, but a village child with engaging confidence told me to "look under the brick" for the key, and under a loose brick in the porch I found it. It may be lying there to-day. There is little in the church itself; but when I saw it there was a fine nest of honeybees in the roof near the bell that hangs on the wall outside. Why do bees so often swarm in churchyards? Country villagers believe that they like the sound of dinning metal; perhaps they are attracted to a church by Sunday's bell.



Wanborough Church.

Wanborough sends a rough but pleasant field-road up again to the Hog's Back, which from here runs another four straight miles along the ridge to Guildford. This is certainly the noblest [Pg 62] highway in Surrey, and, perhaps, the most characteristic of the county. You may often travel along it and yet not see the finest of the view on either side; in the summer, more frequently than not, the whole countryside north and south of the ridge is swimming in a blue haze which dims and muffles the horizon. But there is no other road on which you can walk so far and see so much broad Surrey country open out mile after mile on either side, and from which you can watch so many changes of woodland and common and cultured fields, from the green and golden hops about Farnham to the wheat and oats above Seale and Puttenham, and the long potato drills in the chalk by Wanborough. But the view is not the single beauty of the Hog's Back, though to walk [Pg 63] high in the wind along open spaces is possible only on a few roads in the county. The Hog's Back has a treble charm belonging wholly to the roadway itself; its width, its spacious grassy rides on each side of the broad hard riband of metal that runs white and unswerving east and west, and most gracious of all, its deep and exuberant hedges. All along the road in a light wind you will get the scent of bed-straw and thyme and clover from the green border of the road, and in the short down grass find the plants that love chalk-ground, like the little blue milkwort, which spreads like a film over the higher slopes of the ridge in summer. If the roadside is scented with flowers, so are the hedges. Guelder rose and dog rose and privet blossom side by side with elder and spindle wood; above holly and hazel and buckthorn stand up gnarled and wind-driven yews, bent over the road from the south-west. To the south, it is often only through the gate-gaps in the hedge that you can see out over the flank of the hill; on the northern side the hedge is lower—low enough, indeed, to be broken in summer by tall spikes of mullein, yellow against the grey-blue air over the heaths of Pirbright and Worplesdon. The highest point of the road lies a mile beyond Wanborough on the way to Guildford; here you are over five hundred feet up, and the road drops gradually, ending with a sudden slope almost as soon as Guildford, bricky and cheap-looking from this aspect, comes into view.



Barn at Wanborough.

[Pg 64]

CHAPTER VI

GUILDFORD

The prettiest High Street in the south of England.—Guilou, Wey, and Wye.—The Castle.—A legend of murder.—Looking at St. Christopher.—Royal hunters.—Stephen Langton.—Cloth and how to stretch it.—Aubrey scents a swindle.—King Monmouth after Sedgmoor.—A pike for a baby.—The keeper at Bramshill.—Mysterious windows.—Admirable calm.—The Queen's.—The Regent and the Apse.—St. Mary's Wall-paintings.—An ancient school.—The Angel.—Pepys at the Red Lion.—Sparagus for supper.—A Vanished Heart.—The undaunted clockmaker.

To arrive at Guildford by train is like walking into a garden over a rubbish heap. In the grace of its building, the charm of its colour, the fascination of the prospects of its hillside High Street, no town in Surrey, and perhaps only Oxford in England, is comparable with it. But between the railway station and the High Street it is desolation and blank walls. A few pretty old cottages jut out over a narrow pavement; beyond a huddled roof or two rises the tower of St. Nicholas' Church, umber and solid; nearly all else is tumbled down ugliness, broken brickwork, mud and shaggy grass. A clear space, a level green, a bed of flowers—what an introduction that might be to Guildford. But, doubtless, the rubbish heap is, or some day will be, too valuable as building land.

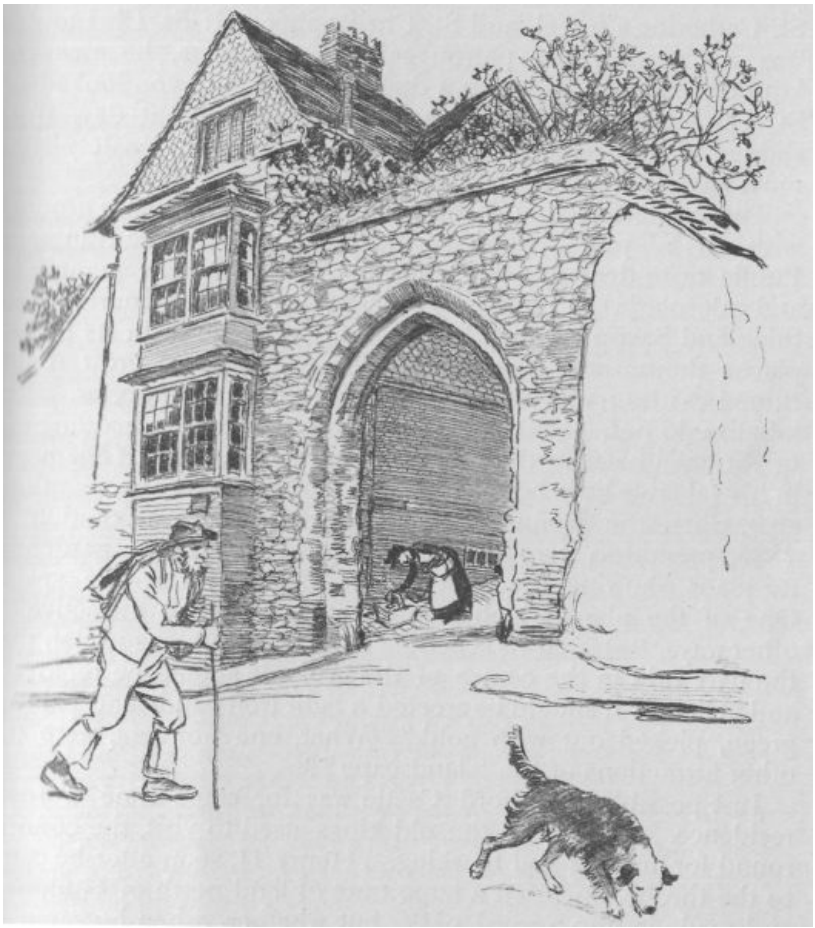
Beyond the turn of the road is the most delightful street in the south of England. It rises from the bridge crossing the Wey steep into blue air over the hill. Each side of it is a stairway of roofs up the slope, a medley of façades, a jumble of architecture astonishing in sheer extravagance and variety. Gabled houses, red-tiled and gay with rough-cast and fresh paint; dull, sad-faced houses with sleepy windows like half-shut eyes; square, solid Georgian houses for doctors with white [Pg 65] chokers and snuff-boxes, and prim old ladies with mittened wrists; low, little dolls'-houses, red brick neatly pointed; tall, slim houses graceful with slender casements and light shafts of wood; casements nobly elaborate in wood-carving and heavy with leaded panes; bay windows which should belong to nurseries and high, square-latticed windows which should light a library, delicately fastened with wrought iron; painted pillars supporting window seats for cats and demure young ladies; broad-stepped entrances to hotel halls, and archways under which barrels roll to bursting cellars; Guildford High Street is a model of what the High Street of an English town should be. Has it a single dominating feature, or is its air of distinction merely compact of the grace and old-worldliness of its shops and houses? Perhaps the single extreme impression left by the High Street is its clock, swung far out over the road. Massive, black and gilt, and fastened to the face of the old Town Hall with an ingenious structure of steel stays, it has told Guildford

the time for two centuries and a quarter.

Guildford High Street has its landmarks of history in its Hospital, its School, and its Town Hall, but its oldest standing record is in one of its churches. The tower of St. Mary's church, indeed, contains the most ancient piece of building in the town, perhaps in the county. Archæologists are to be found who will argue that part of it, at least, belongs to the reign of Alfred, though there is little evidence to show that stone was used for building in Surrey before the eleventh century. Alfred, at all events, mentions Guildford in his will; he spells it "Guldeford," one of the dozen old ways of spelling a name that has always been a puzzle and a pleasure to the etymologists. What does Guildford mean? Naturally "The Ford of the Guild." The town had a guild of merchants, and there was a ford; nothing could be simpler. But the simple explanations are usually wrong; and the most convincing derivation is one which has been suggested by Mr. Ralph Nevill, who discovered a river named Guilou in Asser's *Deeds of Alfred*, and points to several other names along the Wey which may be traced to the same source. There is Willey House, and Willey Mill near Farnham; Wilsham Farm near Alton, and Willey Green on another branch of the river. [Pg 66] Guildford, then, is probably the "ford of the Guilou," which in Welsh is presumably Gwili. Where, then, did the name Wey come from? It may originally have been Wye. The corruption would be easy; indeed, Cockney boating parties very likely get the right pronunciation, by accident, to-day.

Older than St. Mary's tower in associations, if not in stone-work, is Guildford Castle. The Castle stands on a mound, partly natural, perhaps, and almost certainly partly artificial. Originally, perhaps, the mound was used for an early English fortification; it was heightened by scraping up earth from a ditch at its bottom, and round it was built up a palisade of wood; possibly there was a wooden house on the top of it, and then it would have looked precisely like one of the fortified mounds in the Bayeux Tapestry. Later, it was enclosed in a shell keep; later still, a Norman square keep was built inside the shell keep; to-day, except the walls of the square keep, almost all the Castle is gone. It was never a Castle in much more than name. It has no associations of great battles; it never stood a siege; it never even held a royal prisoner. In King John's reign it was already used as a gaol, and a gaol it remained until James I, in 1612, gave it to one Francis Carter of Guildford, who used it as a private residence. Four hundred years before it had seen all its fighting. That was when the French Dauphin, invited by John's angry barons, marched against it and took it from defenders who seem to have cared little whether they kept it or not.

But the Castle still has its legend—a legend only—of cruelty and bloody massacre. In 1036, when Harold Harefoot was king, Alfred the son of Ethelred was travelling from Normandy to join his mother at Winchester. He landed in Kent, and was marching with his Normans along the Way, whether or not with the intention of eventually trying to recover his father's kingdom is uncertain; at all events, at Guildford he was seized and put to death. So much is history; legend supplies a dreadful embellishment. Early in the morning after their capture, Alfred's followers were led out into the street and condemned to death. Nine out of every ten men were butchered, until out of six hundred Normans sixty only were left alive. That was not enough to glut their captors' fury. The sixty were gone through again, and all but six were ferociously tortured to [Pg 67] death. Alfred himself was given to Harold, who put out his eyes, loaded him with chains, and threw him into prison, where he died. Fortunately, nobody need believe the story.



The Castle Gate, Guildford.

An environment of meaner modern buildings has spoiled the setting in which the castle should stand. Seen from certain points, especially from below, the keep is not a very imposing structure; you cannot get far enough away from it. Far the best view is to be had from the rising ground to the south-east, where you can set the castle in outline against the sky. Then it takes on something [Pg 68] of the romance of a Norman ruin, with its tumbling masses of ivy, its broken battlements, and the mixed greys and ochres of its masonry. The interior is uninteresting, except for the sad little carvings left by prisoners on the walls, among them a crucifix, a hermit, St. Catherine's wheel, and St. Christopher. If St. Christopher was not exactly the patron saint of prisoners, he was the kindliest saint to carve on a dungeon wall. If you looked on St. Christopher you were safe, at least for that day, from sudden death. How many thousand days of "safety" he must have brought to the Guildford prisoners!

The castle enceinte is now laid out as a pleasure ground, with all a public garden's advantages and disadvantages. Public taste demands "bedding out," even though geraniums and calceolarias fit unhappily enough with masonry fourteen feet thick and Saxon earthworks. A bowling green is in its proper place; thorns and old rose-trees have a right to grow round ruined castles; wallflowers belong to stones and mortar. But lobelias do not. Still, something even worse than bedding-out might have befallen the Castle grounds. Dr. G.C. Williamson, in his valuable little book *Guildford in the Olden Time*, mentions that, when the grounds were bought for the Corporation in 1886, premiums were offered to various landscape gardeners for plans showing the best means of laying out the space. One of the plans which was rejected, although attractive in other ways, "started its schedule of work with a suggestion that the ugly ruin in the centre of the grounds should be removed, and in lieu of it should be erected a light iron bandstand painted green, picked out with gold." What, one wonders, were the other attractions of the "landscape"?

Just possibly Guildford Castle was for some time a royal residence. Nearly all the old kings used to visit the country round for hunting and hawking. Henry II, soon after he came to the throne, enclosed a large tract of land north of Guildown and made it into a royal park, but whether, when he came to hunt, he stayed at the Castle itself or at the palace which was built in the park, none of the chroniclers say. The palace has long since disappeared, though it is said that the outline can be traced when the land on which it stood is under corn. The corn is supposed to turn a different colour along the lines of the foundations. In later days, the kings certainly stayed at the [Pg 69] palace, and not at the Castle. John was at Guildford nineteen times in eleven years, and kept Christmas there in 1200 "with uncommon splendour and magnificence." Henry III had his wines stored at Guildford, probably in the caverns near the Castle, and once, with a capital eye for business, ordered that no other wines should be sold in the bailiwick of Surrey until his had found a buyer. Edward I, according to an untrustworthy story, brought Adam Gordon, a highway robber, to Guildford after he had fought and beaten him with his own royal hands, and forgiven him afterwards. The next two Edwards were often at the palace; Henry VI and Edward IV lay there; Henry VII made Sir Reginald Bray, ancestor of Surrey's historian, keeper of the Park and Manor; Henry VIII hunted in the park, and Elizabeth travelled about so frequently between the royal residences at Guildford and elsewhere that the county actually framed a remonstrance

against having to pay so much for her carriages and horses. She was probably the last of the sovereigns to ride through the town from north to south, though Charles II was feasted there at the Restoration and presented with a service of plate, a proceeding which swamped the Corporation in debt.

One other distinction Guildford owes to its associations with kings. It has been selected as the scene of a remarkable novel by a remarkable writer. Martin Tupper, in his preface to *Stephan Langton*, takes a devoted public into his confidence as to the manner in which such a book should be, and indeed actually was, completed. He set out to write a historical novel dealing with Guildford in the days of King John, weaving into it various local legends and a love-story of an abbess and an archbishop; he "began the book on November 26, 1857, and finished it in exactly eight weeks, on January 21, 1858, reading for the work included." The list of books which he consulted in Mr. Drummond's library at Albury must be read in full for the mere physical labour of the business to be appreciated; but after such abstruse searchings, to have crammed into ninety thousand words of solid print such a concatenation of murders, arsons, slayings, swoonings, drownings and burnings must always remain a considerable achievement. The story itself is sad stuff.

Apart from palaces, Guildford's history, until comparatively recent times, has been the history of [Pg 70] the wool trade and cloth manufacture. The beginnings of the industry go back to the settlement in the south of England, in the reign of Edward III, of Flemish weavers and dyers. Guildford naturally attracted the trade, for sheep could be successfully farmed on the downs, water-power for the fulling-mills could be had from the Wey, and the best fuller's earth in the country was to be had from Nutfield and elsewhere, only a few miles away. The fuller's teazle, and woad for dyeing, also grew, and still grow, I learn from Dr. Williamson, though I have not found either, in the neighbourhood. Before the end of the fourteenth century the cloth industry had come to the dignity of legislation. Nobody might buy cloth before it had been "fulled and fully performed in its nature"; this was to prevent dishonest people from stretching the cloth and so giving the public short measure. Later, under the Tudors, nobody might manufacture cloth except in a market-town where cloth had been manufactured for ten years past. This was no doubt for the convenience of the ulnagers, officers deputed to measure and seal all cloth brought to market. It was highly illegal to stretch cloth in any way. Thomas West, of Guildford, in 1607, was charged with having used "a certain instrument (a tenter) and other engines wherewith 100 cloths of white wool called kerseys, rough and unwrought and made for sale at Guildford, were stretched and strained in breadth and length." On another occasion five clothiers were summoned to answer a charge of having used "a certaine engine called a rope" to stretch their cloth. So important a part of Guildford's life had clothmaking become under Elizabeth that the Corporation required special acknowledgment of the fact from the innkeepers, doubtless because prosperity in the town meant full tankards emptied at the inns. Every alehouse keeper had to have a signboard hung above his door with a woolsack painted on it, under a fine of six-and-eightpence; he had to buy the sign from the hall warden at the Town Hall, and pay two shillings for it. Woolsacks were added to the borough arms. Yet the prosperity of the trade was short-lived, after all. The pride of Guildford's industry fell. Less than fifty years after the alehouse signs swung woolpacks to guide thirsty clothiers, the business came down with a run. Godalming, Farnham, and Wonersh were other flourishing centres of the trade, and in 1630 one Samuel Vassall, the [Pg 71] merchant who took the Godalming and Wonersh cloth for shipment abroad, failed his customers. He was under arrest, and no one else could be found to take up his contracts. All the Godalming eggs were in one basket, and Guildford and Farnham suffered in sympathy. Three thousand workers were in distress; it was the beginning of the end. It could not have happened, of course, if Samuel Vassall's failure had been the only difficulty. That would have been got over somehow. But there was another agent at work. The real cause of the destruction of the Surrey cloth industry was the fact that for years the Company of Merchant Adventurers and the London Drapers' Company had been working to get the cloth trade into their own hands, and they had practically succeeded. Godalming held on for a time; but Guildford, Wonersh, and Farnham went under.

Aubrey is not content with so simple an explanation. He scents a swindler. The trade of Wonersh, he writes, "chiefly consisted in making blue cloth for the Canary Islands; the decay and indeed ruin of their trade was their avaricious method of stretching their cloth from 18 yards to 22 or 23, which being discovered abroad, they returned their commodity on their hands and it would sell at no market. The same fraudulent practice caused the decay of the Blews at Guildford." He probably muddled up musty scandals with the effect of pure business competition. He is not the last to make mistakes connected with a vanished trade. There still lingers a superstition at Guildford that Rack Close, not far from the Castle, is the place where unfortunate prisoners (perhaps the Jews whom Martin Tupper describes as suffering agonies of enforced dentistry and other tortures) were stretched upon the rack. It is, of course, the plot of ground on which were set up the wooden racks, or frames, on which the Guildford blue cloth was stretched and dried in the wind and sun.

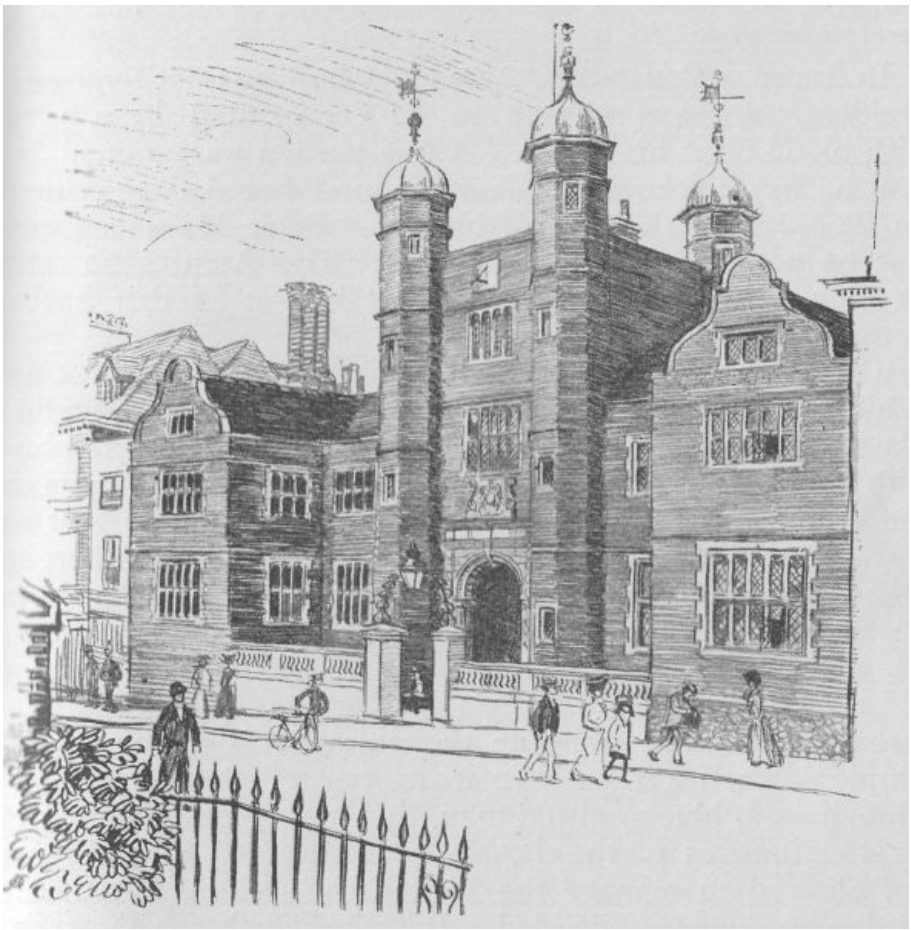
Guildford was singularly happy in its lack of history during the Parliamentary wars. The battles over Farnham Castle we have seen. Guildford Castle was not thought worth holding. Surrey gentlemen and Surrey towns had been as backward as the rest of England in supplying Charles with his ship-money; but during the whole of the war not a shot was fired within hearing of the [Pg 72] county capital. There was a question of safeguarding the powdermills at Chilworth, and these were secured for the Parliamentary Army. Otherwise, Guildford heard nothing more of the war than the rattle of accoutrements; there were a few levies stationed in the town, and a troop or

two of horse rode through it. Perhaps Guildford's unhappiest memory of war is an echo of Sedgmoor, forty years later. The Duke of Monmouth, leaving his colliers and ploughmen to do their best against the King's cannon, had ridden off the field into Hampshire, turned his horse loose at Cranbourne Chase, and tried to hide himself in some rough ground near Ringwood. Lord Lumley and Sir William Portman were after him with the Militia; there was a reward of five thousand pounds on his head, and for a day and a night he was hunted through undergrowth and standing crops. Dogs were run through the high oats and peas, and except oats and peas he had nothing to eat. He was caught in the morning, shivering and grey-bearded, in a ditch; two days later, he was on his way from Ringwood to London, his coach guarded by strong bodies of troops, and sitting opposite him in the coach an officer whose orders were to stab him if there was an attempt at rescue. So they rode into Guildford on a Saturday afternoon, and that night the terrified prisoner lay under the roof of Abbot's Hospital. Perhaps he slept; perhaps he could only stride about the room feverishly scribbling letters of abject entreaty to the King and the great courtiers; staring wild-eyed at the early July sunlight beyond the hospital chimneys, and wondering whether he should see another Sunday dawn. It was his last; on the Wednesday morning his head was hacked from his shoulders.

Abbot's Hospital has pleasanter memories. Foremost must be the memory of its founder, Guildford's greatest citizen, the stern, kindly old Archbishop Abbot, son of a poor clothworker of the town, scholar of Balliol College, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, and predecessor to Laud in the See of Canterbury. It was a great career, and, according to an old family story, it had a curious beginning. Aubrey gives this version:—

> "His mother, when she was with child of him, dreamt, that if she should eat a *Jack* or *Pike*, her son in her womb would be a great man, upon this she was indefatigable to satisfy her longing, as well as her dream: she first enquired out for the fish; but accidentally taking up some of the river water (that runs close by the house) in a pail, she took up the much desired banquet, dress'd it, and devour'd it almost all: This odd affair made no small noise in the neighbourhood, and the curiosity of it made several people of quality offer themselves to be sponsors at the baptismal fount when she was delivered; this their poverty accepted joyfully, and three were chosen, who maintained him at school, and at the university afterwards."

[Pg 73]



Abbot's Hospital, Guildford.

The great archbishop's days ended in gloom. He was shooting deer in Lord Zouch's park at Bramshill, and by an unlucky accident killed a keeper, one Peter Hawkins. Kingsley has pictured the scene:—

> "I went the other day" (he writes in a letter from Eversley) "to Bramshill Park, the home of the *seigneur de pays* here, Sir John Cope. And there I saw the very tree where an ancestor of mine, Archbishop Abbot, in James the First's time, shot the keeper by accident! I sat under the tree, and it all seemed to me like a present reality. I could fancy the noble old man, very different then from his picture as it

[Pg 74]

> hangs in our dining room at Chelsea. I could fancy the deer sweeping by, and the rattle of the cross-bow, and the white splinters sparkling off the fated tree as the bolt glanced and turned—and then the death shriek, and the stagger, and the heavy fall of the sturdy forester—and the bow dropping from the old man's hands, and the blood sinking to his heart in one chilling rush, and his glorious features collapsing into that look of changeless and rigid sorrow, which haunted me in the portrait upon the wall in childhood. He never smiled again!"

In those jealous days, an archbishop was not forgiven an accident. Bishops refused to be consecrated by a prelate with blood upon his hands. A free pardon was granted him; but he never recovered his spirit, and fasted once a month on Tuesday for the rest of his life. Peter Hawkins's widow was by no means so disconsolate. The Archbishop settled an annuity of £20 upon her, and she got another husband at once.

The Archbishop's great legacy is the Hospital. Unlike Whitgift's Hospital at Croydon, it has charming surroundings; like it, it is quiet and old and solid, of good dark red brick, with mullioned windows and latticed panes, four turrets over the entrance gate, and the most graceful chimneys that ever carried up smoke from pensioners' fireplaces. There are many delightful groups of chimneys in Surrey villages and on Surrey mansions, but Guildford's chimneys are best of all.

In summer, the quadrangle is bright with geraniums, and through a passage opposite the entrance is a glimpse of a simple kitchen garden. In it, as one of the pensioners, a white-haired, blue-eyed old man, told me, vegetables are grown for the inmates of the hospital. I gathered that they were not allowed to manage the garden themselves, but that the garden produce was divided. But they cook for themselves. The pride of the hospital, however, is not the garden, but the old oak of the staircases and dining hall and board room, the settle and table, the copper caldron and the windows with their punning legend "Clamamus Abba Pater." I am not sure if my old pensioner could read it, but he pointed it out to me, and when I read it, approved. In the chapel, where there are a number of Latin verses telling the story of the painted windows, it was easier for him; he handed me a written explanation. But the explanation matters very little; the [Pg 75] real thing is the superb colour. The story, which is of Jacob, Esau and Laban, is told on two windows, with nine lights. There are purples and greens in those windows at which you might gaze through a dozen sermons; but there is one robe of burning, translucent orange that would light a cathedral.

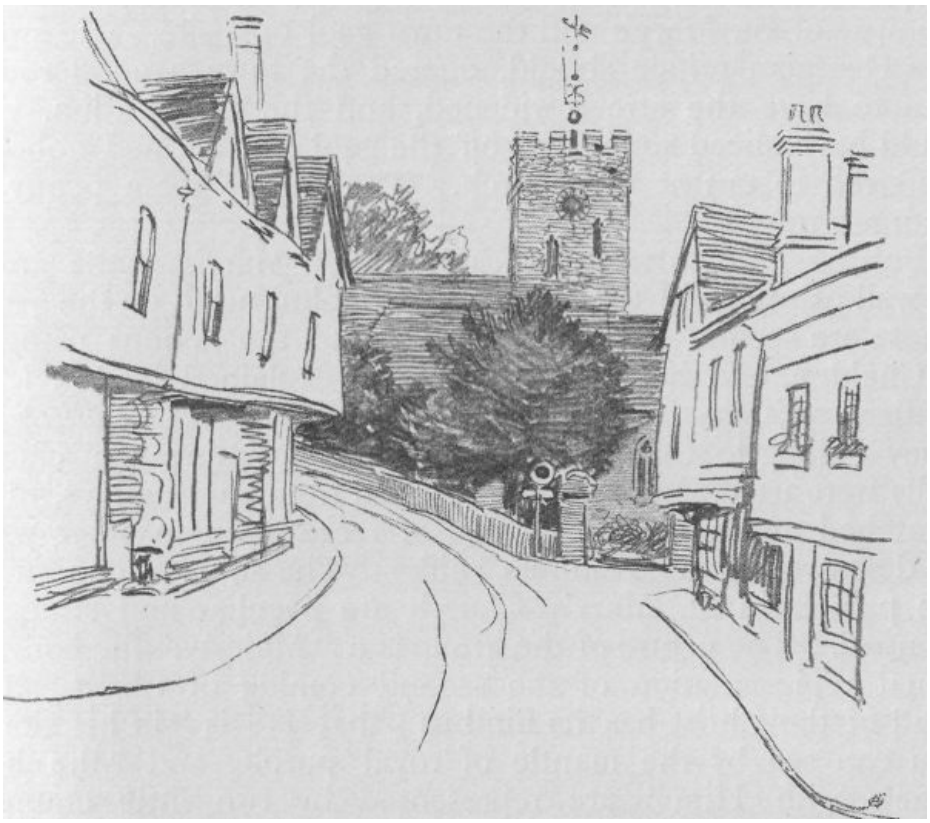
The history of these windows would be worth knowing. They were evidently not wholly made for the tracery, though parts of them may have been. According to one account, they were purchased by Archbishop Abbot from the Dominican Friary which used to stand at the end of Guildford North Street, and which was converted into a Manor House after the dissolution of the monasteries. But the glass belongs to more than one period, and some of it was evidently added by the Archbishop, for among the heraldic devices above the Jacob and Esau lights are the Abbot arms impaling the Canterbury arms. Also—a point which the antiquarians have no doubt noticed, but I can find no reference to it in any book—the initials S.R., which appear in the centre top opening of the north window under the date 1621, are evidently part of another inscription. On the left side of the S is part of a V or U, as if the end of a Latin word ending in "us" had had its tail chopped off. The letters must have been selected from the original inscription for some definite reason; what can it have been?

Archbishop Abbot's bones lie opposite his hospital, in the church of Holy Trinity. Of the three churches which stand on the High Street, Trinity Church is the highest up the hill, and was called the Upper Church in the days when Puritanism preferred not to mention dedications. It is, comparatively speaking, a modern building, red-brick and heavy; it was built after the old church fell down in 1740. An admirable calm must have pervaded the citizens of Guildford on that occasion. Russell, one of Guildford's historians, observes that the inhabitants, "desirous of improving" the church, had recently repaired it at a cost of £750. He then adds, reflectively, that "As the arches and pillars which supported the steeple were then taken away, it was soon after supposed to be in a very ruinous condition." On April 18, 1740, an order was given for the church to be inspected. On the 19th it was inspected, and the steeple was reported to be very unsafe. On [Pg 76] the 20th, therefore, which was Sunday, service was performed for the last time. On the 23rd the steeple fell in and took the roof with it; the workmen had left the church a few minutes before. Even then there was at least one untroubled soul in Guildford. The verger was told that the steeple had fallen. "That cannot be," he replied, "I have the key in my pocket."

The vault in which the archbishop lies was accidentally opened in 1888, when the church was being repaired, and some brickwork fell away. Through the gap, it is said, the coffin could be seen on the floor; the form of the body was distinct, and the beard was still there. The vault was sealed again; it had been unopened for more than two hundred and fifty years. It was during these alterations that the cenotaph standing over the vault was removed further east to where it now stands. It is a typical piece of Renaissance work, florid, intricate, insistent on the ghastliness of death. The effigy of the archbishop, stern and noble, lies on its marble bed supported by stacks of gilt-clasped books; underneath, a grating reveals a medley of human bones, carved with the minutest detail. The artist evidently enjoyed the work. But it is better worth looking at, for all that, than the monument on the other side of the church, where the recumbent form of Sir Arthur Onslow is apparently giving vague directions to an imaginary audience. Wrapped in a Roman toga, he waves a sleeveless right arm; his left is propped by a set of Journals of the House of Commons. It is a relief to pass beyond such tawdry pomposities into the solemn little chapel,

sacred to one of the great regiments of the Army, the Queen's, the old Second of the Line. Their badge, the Lamb and Flag, and their name they get from Katherine of Braganza, Charles the Second's queen. Later, as Kirke's Lambs, they added to a dreadful fame at Sedgmoor; but rebellion breeds brutality, and Kirke was probably no more ferocious than others who have had to deal with insurgents. Since Sedgmoor, the Queen's, or to give them their other and less distinctive name, the Royal West Surrey Regiment, have served in practically every important campaign in which the Army has been engaged. Their tattered banners, with the broken, proud inscriptions of campaigns and battles, droop above long lists of dead.

Of the two other great Guildford churches, the lower, or Church of St. Nicholas, stands at the [Pg 77] bottom of the High Street on the far side of the Wey. Probably it is the fourth church that has stood on this site; there are at all events, records of three previous demolitions, though each demolition has left one feature standing—the Loseley Chapel, belonging to the Mores of Loseley Park. With the exception of this chapel, with its brasses and monuments, dating back to the fourteenth century memorial of Arnold Brocas of Beaurepaire (surely a name of names!), the church is chiefly interesting as being a really satisfying piece of modern architecture. It was built in 1875, and, though the interior, with its modern glass and high colouring, has none of the quiet of age, it dulls to the right tone at dusk.



St. Mary's Church, Guildford.

The Middle Church, St. Mary's, is the most interesting of the three. The tower was built before the Conquest, possibly originally for defence: at all events, there are two windows looking north and south which are doubly splayed, after Saxon fashion, a good deal above the ground level. The [Pg 78] rest of the church has been built at different times, beginning with the chancel, which is pure Norman, and there are actually three levels to the floor, which gives rather an odd effect. The proportions of the church have been spoiled by the cutting off of the apse of the chancel—an entirely unwarrantable piece of destruction. The history of the mutilation is characteristic of the days of the Regency. George, Prince of Wales, used to drive down to Brighton, and perhaps his coach stuck in Quarry Street, which must have been horribly narrow, between the apse of St. Mary's and the town gaol opposite. He swore as a Georgian prince should, offered the town a good round sum to have the street widened, and the Corporation, who could have sliced something off the gaol and harmed nobody, preferred to cut at the church. They never got a penny of George's money.

But the most interesting feature of St. Mary's is the group of wall-paintings in the chapel of St. John, north of the nave. These are second in importance only to the famous painting at Chaldon, and have been admirably explained by Mr. J.G. Waller, writing in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*. They belong to that curious age when paintings on church walls were used as texts and preached from on Sundays, to be scratched and whitewashed out of recognition in later years by destroyers and "restorers" alike. The subjects chosen by the painter in St. Mary's Church are peculiar and strangely grouped. The centre of the group is a "Majesty," the conventional representation of the second coming of Christ. The head of the Christ has its nimbus; that He is "in his glory" you can see by the mantle of royal purple, and "the holy angels with Him" are represented by two little cramped figures, set apart to make room for other drawings. Altogether there are six medallions besides the "Majesty," and there are also designs in the spandrils above the arch, but these are separate from the subjects of the medallions. The medallions, Mr. Waller explains, represent certain scenes in the lives of John the Baptist, and

John the Evangelist, though only two of the stories depicted belong to the Bible. One of them, next to the "Majesty," shows the Evangelist seated in a caldron of boiling oil, in which he is being held by a hideous tormentor with a pitchfork, while a seated figure of Christ confers protection [Pg 79] upon the Saint. In another medallion the Evangelist is seen raising to life the dead Drusiana, a lady of Ephesus who died just before the Apostle came to the city; he is also shown turning sticks and stones into gold and jewels, which he did in illustration of a sermon preached against riches. In a third medallion the Saint drinks harmlessly from a chalice of poison which has just killed two malefactors dead at his feet; and in a fourth the other John, the Baptist, is painted with a rope round his neck, dragged by an executioner before Herod. The executioner next beheads the saint, and evidently sees some terrible portent on doing so, for his hair stands on end, and his hand flies up in horror. The two other medallions are separate subjects. In one, a figure with a rope round his neck is dragged before Christ by demons; other demons, one red and one white, scream and hold out threatening claws; perhaps their question is "Art Thou come hitherto torment us before the time?" The other subject is obscure. A Jew, apparently, is being baptised; and a deed with seals is being examined by another figure, over a stream of water and blood. Mr. Waller thinks that the reference is to a legend of a Jew who desecrated an image of Christ with a spear, in imitation of the story of the crucifixion, when out of the wound there gushed a stream of blood and water. This miracle converted the Jew and his friends, who immediately made over their synagogue to the Christian Church. That would explain the sealed deed.

Other paintings in the spandrils—pictures of Soul-weighing and Punishment—belong to other theologies. St. Michael holds the balance, and a demon tries to press down one of the scales so that the soul being weighed may kick the beam. But the subject of the painting is, of course, older than St. Michael. The doctrine that souls are weighed, and that devils and angels strive for the possession of them, is one of the oldest in the history of the world's religions. It finds a place in all the creeds; it belongs to Brahminism, to Buddhism, to Mahommedanism; it is identical with the Ritual of the Dead of Egyptian mythology, in which the souls of men are weighed before Osiris, and pray for mercy as they are weighed. As at Chaldon, in another part of the painting the condemned souls are being taken away. A demon carries them off, tied up in a bundle, to the fires of hell. Doubtless the Guildford congregations, listening Sunday after Sunday to the [Pg 80] exposition of such potent texts, came to have little taste for theology that was not served up hot and strong.

Guildford has had other teachers besides theologians. The school, a grey, venerable building, which fronts on the High Street above Trinity Church, is the oldest in the county. It was founded in 1509, by one Robert Beckingham, a rich London grocer, who owned property in Guildford. But his benefactions did not permit any great latitude in building, and it was not until Edward VI had given the school a charter and a grant, and other great Guildford men had provided funds for building and endowment, that the school, nearly at the end of the sixteenth century, found itself in full working order. Since then it has educated some famous scholars. Guildford's greatest man, George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury; his brother, Robert Abbot, Bishop of Salisbury; another brother, Sir Maurice Abbot, Lord Mayor of London; John Parkhurst, Bishop of Norwich; Henry Cotton, Bishop of Norwich, and his brother, William Cotton, Bishop of Exeter; Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons; Richard Valpy, author of the Greek grammar; and Sir George Grey, the Colonial statesman, Governor in 1846 of New Zealand and in 1855 of the Cape, are among its distinguished pupils. Of late years, perhaps, Charterhouse has drained away some of the supply of future Abbots and Onslows. But the school still flourishes, and the memory of its "great" headmaster, Dr. Merriman, is kept green by middle-aged Guildfordians.

Guildford's inns have been famous for centuries. Guildford is the only town in Surrey which Camden mentions in his *Britannia*, as having good inns; John Aubrey remarks that they are "the best perhaps in England; the Red Lion particularly can make fifty beds, the White Hart is not so big, but has more noble rooms." John Taylor, the Water Poet, in his *Catalogue of Taverns in Ten Shires near London*, made in 1636, goes out of his way to mention particularly that Guildford "hath very faire Innes and good entertainment at the Tavernes, the Angell, the Crowne, the White hart, and the Lyon"; and Guildford only, of all the towns he mentions, has all its inns either still standing or represented under the same names, wholly or partially rebuilt. The Angel has kept more of what is old than the others, including a panelled hall with a seventeenth century clock, [Pg 81] and some fine timber and brickwork best seen from the inn yard. Under the Angel, too, lies one of a pair of vaulted crypts which have puzzled all the archæologists. The two crypts lie on opposite sides of the street, and are beautiful examples of fourteenth century work in chalk; in one of them, too, there was evidently once some fresco work, but that has nearly all been rubbed away. What were the crypts for? No one knows for certain. Mr. Thackeray Turner thinks they were without doubt the undercrofts of merchants' houses; but there is better reason for supposing that they are remains of some religious foundation, perhaps of White Friars. At one time there stood in the centre of the High Street, between the two crypts, the "Fyshe Crosse," which John Russell, the Guildford historian, tells us carried on its summit a flying angel carved in stone, and was erected by the White Friars in 1345. There is no evidence to prove that this was so, though it may have been; in any case, the "Fyshe Crosse" was demolished in 1595 as being abominably in the way of the street traffic. If the White Friars ever had a convent near the cross, possibly the Angel was originally their guest-house, afterwards turned into an inn.

The Red Lion was the best inn, according to Pepys. It was at the Red Lion that he "lay in the room the King lately lay in," which would have pleased Pepys; and it was with the drawers of the inn, one Saturday night, that he and Mr. Creed made merry over the minister of the town, who had a girdle as red as his face, but preached next day a better sermon than Pepys had looked for. The

inn had a garden, out of which on another occasion the gossiping little Admiralty official cut "sparagus for supper—the best that ever I ate but in the house last year." Doubtless the host of the Red Lion liked Pepys's recommendation, but Pepys and his wife must have occasionally been rather noisy guests. It was in the same inn garden that he and Mr. Creed "played the fool a great while, trying who could go best over the edge of an old fountain well; and I won a quart of sack of him." Afterwards, at supper, "my wife and I did talk high, she against and I for Mrs. Pierce (that she was a beauty) till we were both angry." Pepys's journeys to Portsmouth, where his Admiralty business took him, seem generally to have been broken at Guildford, which was the first stopping [Pg 82] place after leaving "Fox Hall" as he calls Vauxhall. The roads must have been pretty bad, for on one occasion the coach lost its way for "three or four miles" about Cobham. However, they ended as usual at the Red Lion, and "dined together, and pretty merry" and so back to Fox Hall.

A gentler traveller through Guildford used to drive along the Hog's Back in the early morning, breakfast at the Lion or the Angel, and reach Sloane Street at half-past six or so in the evening, when she was glad to get to bed early. That was when Jane Austen was writing at Chawton. One of her letters, very typical of her in its regard for the pleasant little minutiæ of a day's business, describes a drive from Chawton up to London. At Guildford she was "very lucky in my gloves—got them at the first shop I went to, though I went into it rather because it was near than because it looked like a shop, and gave only four shillings for them; after which everybody at Chawton will be hoping and predicting that they cannot be good for anything." She was then at work on *Emma*, whom we meet again at Leatherhead.

Guildford High Street has kept its main features for centuries. But the town has lost one of its chief buildings, which only survives in the name of Friary Street, and in one or two other names, such as Walnut Tree Close. This was the old Dominican Friary probably founded by Black Friars in the first half of the thirteenth century. Not a stone of the old Friary remains in its place, but the building saw in its time a good deal of Guildford history. Prince Henry, the eldest son of Edward I and Eleanor of Castile, died there of an illness which not even the skill of the friars could abate, though they tried their utmost and sent messengers riding to London for syrups and candies. The friars had a good deal to do with royalty, and had many presents from the kings. Edward I gave them oak trees for fuel and timber; Edward II gave them eight shillings; Henry IV and his family lodged with them and gave them forty shillings; Henry VII let them gather fallen wood in his park, but never gave them a penny; Henry VIII gave them many presents, of which the largest were two of five pounds, and his daughter, Princess Mary, gave them seven shillings and sixpence. But the friary fell, of course, at the Dissolution and after that, apparently, Henry used the building, which he enlarged, for his own purposes when he came to Guildford to hunt. [Pg 83] Later, probably before the time of James I, the old friary buildings were demolished and another house built which went with the Guildford Park estate through several families. One of its owners was Daniel Colwall, a founder of the Royal Society, who conferred on its annals the dismal distinction of a suicide. He pistolled himself in an armchair, and the chair is still shown, black with blood, in the master's quarters of the Abbot's Hospital. Later still, the house was used as cavalry barracks, and three years after Waterloo, when perhaps barracks seemed less necessary than before, the buildings were pulled to pieces.

Guildford once had nine "gates"; eight have disappeared. They are marked on an old map of the borough, classically described as the "Ichnography or ground plan of Guildford." Of six "gates" or streets south of the High Street, Ratsgate, Bookersgate, Tunsgate, Saddlersgate, Bakersgate, and Shipgate, only Tunsgate remains; and on the north side Swangate, Bull's Head Gate, and Coffeehouse Gate have vanished. The charm of the chief buildings remains, but here and there modern needs have spoiled the smaller houses. In the High Street, for instance, Number 25, not much more than a hundred years ago, must have been a quite perfect little house, with its large casements and their curious iron fastenings, its noble staircase, and its delightful doorway. It was once the private residence of the Martyr family, who were hereditary town clerks of Guildford, but unfortunately it has now been turned into a shop. The proprietor very courteously allows visitors to examine the interior, but much of the fascination of the ground floor, with its panels under the windows and its delicate iron railing, has vanished altogether, and can only be recovered in imagination with the help of an old drawing. This house, by the way, a century ago contained a strange relic, strangely lost. When Peter de Rupibus, the great Bishop of Winchester, died at his castle at Farnham, his body was buried in Winchester Cathedral, but the heart was taken to Waverley Abbey. About 1730 it was accidentally dug up among the Abbey ruins, and brought to Guildford, where Mr. John Martyr kept it at Number 25, safe in its original lead case. A hundred years later the heart disappeared. No one knows how it vanished, or where it lies. [Pg 84]

One building has altered very little. That is the old town hall, whose clock swings out over the road, and has been sketched more often, perhaps, than any clock in Surrey. The original town hall belongs to the time of Elizabeth, and was probably built into the present structure, which dates from 1683. It is in some ways the chief feature of the High Street, with its heavy balcony, supported by monstrous black oak brackets, and its cupola and bell-turret. The clock has a separate history. In the year when the town hall was built, one John Aylward, a clockmaker, came to Guildford and asked leave to set up in business. He was a "foreigner," that is, he came from another part of England, and the Gild-merchant refused permission. Undaunted, he retired and set up his shop outside the borough, made a great clock, presented it to the governing body, and so obtained the freedom of the town. [Pg 85]

CHAPTER VII

GUILDFORD'S ENVIRONS

The prettiest town Cobbett ever saw.—Semaphores and the THING.—The Road on the Ridge.—Newlands Corner.—The Father of the Forest.—Pilgrims to St. Martha's.—A quiet churchyard.—Mr. Allnutt's poem.—St. Catherine's and the Hammer.—Worplesdon.—Sutton Place.—The Weston Rebus.—Lady Susan, the Tame Wild Sow.—The earliest mention of Cricket.

Cobbett's is the most attractive description of Guildford and its environs. "The town of Guildford," he writes in *Rural Rides*, "taken with its environs I, who have seen so many, many towns, think the prettiest, and, taken all together, the most agreeable and most happy-looking that I ever saw in my life. Here are hill and dale in endless variety. Here are the chalk and the sand, vieing with each other in making beautiful scenes. Here is a navigable river and fine meadows. Here are woods and downs. Here is something of everything but *fat marshes* and their skeleton-making *agues*. The vale all the way down to Chilworth from Reigate is very delightful." He has as many praises for the neighbourhood on the other side. "Everybody that has been from Godalming to Guildford knows that there is hardly another such a pretty four miles in all England. The road is good; the soil is good; the houses are neat; the people are neat; the hills, the woods, the meadows, all are beautiful. Nothing wild or bold, to be sure, but exceedingly pretty; and it is almost impossible to ride along these four miles without feelings of pleasure, though you have rain for your companion, as it happened to be with me." Would the scenery have pleased Cobbett better if it had been "wild or bold"? Probably not, since he calls Hindhead "the most villainously ugly spot on God's Earth." Cobbett liked smiling pastures and well grown crops. His prettiness is [Pg 86] good timber and clean farming.

In Cobbett's time, there were no suburbs to Guildford; to-day the suburbs grow. Pewley Hill, south-east of the town, which old pictures of Guildford show you bare downland, is hardly so much spotted as hidden by undistinguished villas and dreary brick. Perhaps it would please Cobbett as well as it pleased him ninety years ago. Pewley Hill in his day stood naked to the wind, except for the semaphore and its buildings, and Cobbett deeply hated the semaphore. To us, who have the telephone and telegram, there seems nothing hateful in it (unless we hate the telephone), but to Cobbett the line of semaphore towers between London and Portsmouth stood for all that was dreadful in war, debt, jobbery and alarums. He could see nothing attractive in the cleverness and despatch of a system which enabled news to be sent from London to Portsmouth in a few seconds. (It took three-quarters of a minute to signal the hour of one o'clock from Greenwich to Portsmouth and back again to Greenwich). All he saw was bloody war and money wrongly spent. Thus, of one of the line:—

"This building is, it seems, called a *Semaphore*, or *Semiphare*, or something of that sort. What this word may have been hatched out of I cannot say; but it means *a job*, I am sure. To call it an *alarm-post* would not have been so convenient; for, people not endued with Scotch *intellect*, might have wondered why the d—— we should have to pay for alarm-posts and might have thought that with all our 'glorious victories' we had 'brought our hogs to a fine market' if our dread of the enemy were such as to induce us to have alarm-posts all over the country!" The semaphore north of the road from Guildford to Farnham urges him to even higher flights:—

"What can this be *for*? Why are these expensive things put up all over the country? Respecting the movements of *whom* is wanted this *alarm system*? Will no member ask this in Parliament? Not one! not a man: and yet it is a thing to ask about. Ah! it is in vain, THING, that you thus are *making your preparations*; in vain that you are setting your trammels! The DEBT, the blessed debt, that best ally of the people, will break them all; will snap them, as the hornet does the cobweb; and even these very 'Semaphores' contribute towards the force of that ever blessed debt." [Pg 87]

Semaphore House still stands upon Pewley Hill, a modern villa; opposite it, which would infuriate the old reformer if he could see it, War Office Ground, marked off with barbed wire and minatory notice-boards. A hundred years hence, perhaps the fort on Pewley Hill will be exhibited as one of the curiosities of nineteenth-century Guildford.

Pewley Hill is dull enough in itself to-day, when the down grass has gone and the bricks are multiplying, but it leads to some of the wildest and oldest and sweetest of all scenes in the county. You must go over Pewley Hill to come to the downs, and the downs between Guildford and Netley, by Newlands Corner, above Albury and Chilworth, are for me, at all events, the loveliest spot in Surrey. There are other heights in Surrey with wider views of scenery; there is Hindhead with its almost complete circle of horizon, from Nettlebed by Henley to the Devil's Dyke above Brighton; there is the road above Reigate, which looks out over a thousand roofs and miles of well farmed fields; and there is Leith Hill, the highest of all hills in south eastern England. But the stretch of downland running from Guildford to Newlands Corner has a charm that belongs to none of these. It is not merely the peace and sunshine of the broad path along the ridge, with its downland flowers and Chalk Hill Blue butterflies; not only the width and extent of the view over the Weald, though it is of all views in Surrey one of the loveliest—unlike the flatter panoramas of Leith Hill and Reigate in that it is a view not only of fields and meadows, but of tree-clad hills, shouldering into fainter greens and greys away to Hampshire and Sussex. The enchantment is something else; the closeness of touch with so much that is dim and old; the

nearness of so much that cannot be reached in changing towns, on modern roads. For this is unchanged, untouched, unsoiled, part of the great Way that brought the merchants of Cornwall riding to the Roman port of Rutupiæ in the Isle of Thanet with tin mined in the Cassiterides. The valley below may have changed from forest to meadow and plough, but the green road along the ridge remains what it was before ever it felt a Roman wheel. No fresher air nor clearer sunlight lies on any Surrey downs than on those broad aisles of shaven turf, lichened whitethorns and wind-bent yews.

Newlands Corner has seen more than one battle. Mr. St. Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, and one of the earliest founders of rifle clubs in the country, has his home on the downs close by, [Pg 88] and Newlands Corner, the centre of the rifle clubs of Surrey, has been the scene of assaults and the counter-attacks made by Volunteer cyclists against defending bands of riflemen. The riflemen have held their own under the severest fire; Ministers and distinguished soldiers have watched them.

On the downs by Newlands Corner, near the great trackway of the trading Britons, stand some of the finest yews in England. To one of a group of trees, a monarch whose descendants count their centuries in a ring about him, belongs a noble poem. Mr. William Watson, under the shade of its branches, wrote *The Father of the Forest*. These are the opening lines:—

Old emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
  Girt with thy guard of dotard kings,—
What ages hast thou seen retire
  Into the dusk of alien things?
What mighty news hath stormed thy shade,
Of armies perished, realms unmade?

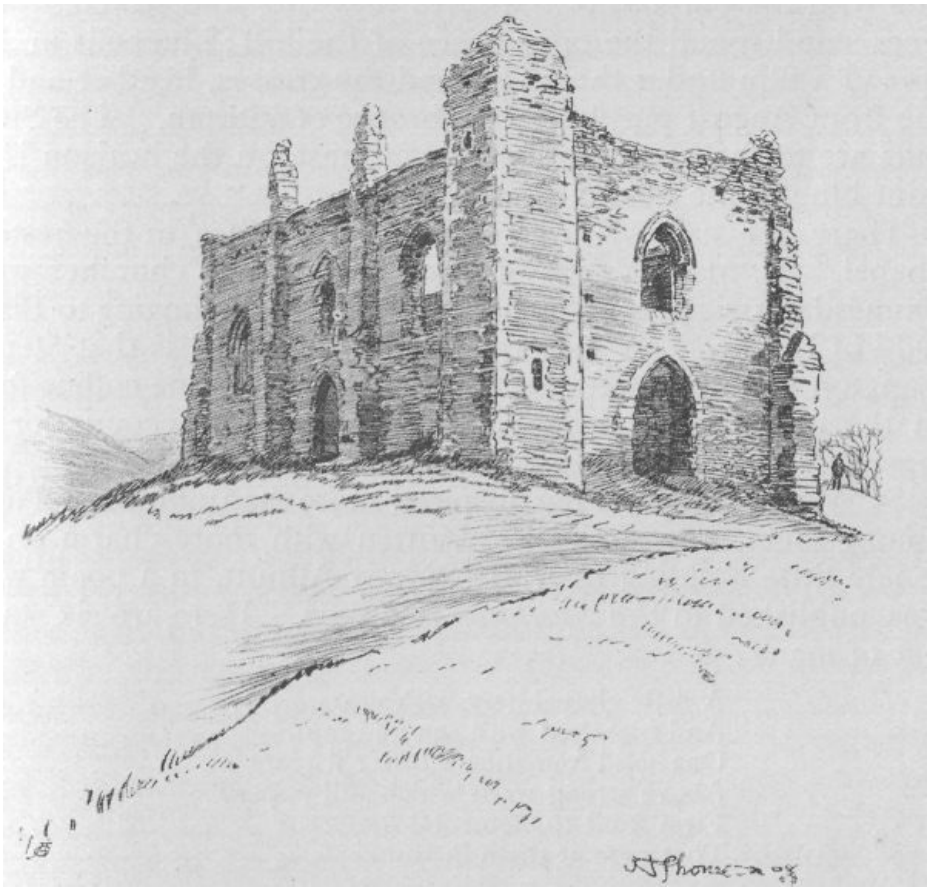
Already wast thou great and wise,
  And solemn with exceeding eld,
On that proud morn when England's rays,
  Wet with tempestuous joy, beheld
Round her rough coasts the thundering main
Strewn with the ruined dream of Spain.

Hardly thou count'st them long ago,
  The warring faiths, the wavering land,
The sanguine sky's delirious glow,
  And Cranmer's scorched, uplifted hand.
Wailed not the woods their task of shame,
Doomed to provide the insensate flame?

Mourned not the rumouring winds, when she,
  The sweet queen of a tragic hour,
Crowned with her snow-white memory
  The crimson legend of the Tower?
Or when a thousand witcheries lay
Felled with one stroke, at Fotheringay?

Ah, thou hast heard the iron tread
  And clang of many an armoured age,
And well recall'st the famous dead,
  Captains or counsellors brave or sage,
Kings that on kings their myriads hurled,
Ladies whose smile embroiled the world.

The pilgrims' road, as I have tried to show elsewhere, separates from the Way again at Guildford. [Pg 89] The old British track probably kept to the northern ridge; the pilgrims who visited Guildford may have left by the same road, but they turned away across the valley to the little chapel of St. Martha, which stands on a hill two miles south-east of the town. The pilgrim's track to the chapel, vanished in parts, becomes plain enough when it crosses the road which now runs from Guildford to Chilworth west of the chapel by perhaps half a mile. Here it is a wide smooth path of the finest down grass, cropped close by rabbits, with which all this breezy hill must be alive by night. Nearly at the top the path breaks into sand, which must have tested the less elastic of the travellers to the shrine pretty severely, but the sand breaks again into an open plateau of as fine grass as the path below. On this plateau stands the little church, alone in the sun and wind.



St. Catherine's Chapel, Guildford.

Sixty years ago St. Martha's was a ruin; as unhappy a little building as St. Catherine's on the hill beyond the Wey. It was restored in 1848, and has taken out of the past a quiet and serenity that set it in the old years, in tranquil sunshine, in the peace of English Sundays. All the winds blow about it; it is alone in its acre of smooth down grass; within its churchyard wall are the graves of country labourers and their children, lowly mounds hardly seen, without the memory of a name, at one with the purpose of the earth they dug and sowed. Pine trees stand round the open space of the hill; bluebells in May spread a film under them; beyond the grasses, heather and ling die from August purples to the bronze of autumn. The Surrey hills are to the south and west; farthest on the horizon is the faint blue of the Sussex downs. [Pg 90]

There are early Norman walls and arches in the restored chapel. St. Martha's may be one of the three churches which Domesday assigns to the manor of Bramley, belonging to Bishop Odo of Bayeux. A less trustworthy tradition is that Stephen Langton is buried there; the lids of the old stone coffins found in the chapel when it was restored probably account for that legend. Martin Tupper accepted the legend as history.

St. Martha's chapel has inspired more than one poet, Tupper among them, but none have written with more charm on the lonely little building than Mr. Sidney Allnutt, in a poem which was published in the *Spectator* last year. Here are six stanzas out of many:—

A little chapel grey with years,
And bleached with sun and rain,
One solid four-square tower it rears
Above strong walls which still oppose
Firm front to elemental foes
That rage at them in vain.

Far southward from St. Martha's Hill,
And to the east and west,
The downs heave up green shoulders, till
The distance with its magic blue
Envelops every other hue,
And crest is lost in crest.

Safe sheltered by the encircling downs
The chequered valleys show
Their tapestry of greens and browns,
Made rich by fields of golden grain,
And threaded by a silver vein [Pg 91]
Where Wey's clear waters flow.

A churchyard bare of shrub or tree,
All open to the sky,
To every wind of heaven free,

Lies round the chapel, carpeted
With soft, sweet turf where happy dead
In dreamless slumber lie.

For, far removed from camp or mart,
Beneath the sacred sod
Of that blest hill they sleep apart:
Forgotten by the world below,
After life's spendthrift toil they know
The rest that comes from God.

And, oh, it must be good to sleep
Within that churchyard bare,
While turn by turn the seasons keep
A bedside watch, and God may see
Safe in St. Martha's nursery
His children pillowed there.

If I had to choose a month and an hour to visit St. Martha's, it would be an evening late in April with the trees in the valley at their freshest and the song of blackbirds about the hill. Others, perhaps, would choose an August day, with the wind scented and the hill purpled with heather; perhaps, too, in August the rabbit-cropped turf is smoothest and greenest. Others may find the chief beauty of the hill in the bronze and yellow of the changing leaves of October; there are no hills where the beech glows with a deeper fire than over Albury and the Tillingbourne. Others even might ask for the vague, wet airs of midwinter, with the shouldering hilltops east and south and west faint and mysterious in the clinging mist, and never a house-roof to be seen. That is an effect of strange loneliness; but the abiding charm of St. Martha's is the peace of clear air, in the enchantment of low spring sunlight on the down turf and the quiet walls.

Once I saw a remarkable sight by St. Martha's. Incongruously enough, the wooded hillsides below the chapel are preserved as game-coverts; indeed, pheasants are shot quite close to the churchyard. There are rides cut through the wood in which broods of young pheasants are fed by their fostermothers' coops; and looking down one of these rides on a day early in August, I watched for some time a curious collection of birds feeding together in front of the coops. There [Pg 92] were the young pheasants, of course, there was quite a crowd of small birds, finches chiefly, but a few thrushes and hedge-sparrows; there were seven or eight turtle-doves, five jays, and, queerest of all companions for doves and pheasants, a carrion crow. I thought at first he must be a rook, but there was no doubt about it. I looked up as I walked away, and over me sailed five herring gulls, high and slow.

St. Martha's Chapel.

St. Catherine's chapel, on the other side of Guildford, has not the same lonely charm as St. Martha's. It has never, like St. Martha's, been restored, and the hill on which it stands is sacred to nobody. Children climb about its walls and windows; cockneys scratch their names, and picnic parties bestrew the grass with paper. Yet St. Catherine's, in the days before pilgrimages ceased and shrines were left to moulder, perhaps heard as many Aves as her sister chapel on the hill beyond the Way. A country legend is common to both chapels. St. Catherine and St. Martha, in the wonderful days of the giants, were sisters who built chapels on neighbouring hills. They had but one hammer between them, and they hurled it high over the valley one to another, St. Martha catching it from St. Catherine, driving in a nail and hurling it back again. [Pg 93]

North of Guildford to the west is Worplesdon Common, a stretch of heathery, rushy ground over which have gone many marches and manœuvres, and north of the common is the home of Mr. Frederick Selous, the African traveller and naturalist. Mr. Selous throws his collection of trophies open to the public for a small sum, and his garden is known to the readers of the *Field* as the home of rare and shy birds. The owner has described, with callous disregard of the feelings of

less fortunate ornithologists, the nesting operations among his bird boxes of half a dozen nuthatches.

To the north-east, a mile from the main road from Guildford to Ripley, is Sutton Place, perhaps the finest piece of domestic architecture in the south of England. Mr. Frederic Harrison has described it at length in his *Annals of an Old Manor House*. It was built by Sir Richard Weston about 1525. The architect is unknown, but the house is peculiarly interesting, partly because it is the best example of the use of terra cotta in the moulding combined with brickwork, and partly because it is one of the earliest houses in England built as a country home rather than a castle. Sir Richard Weston, the founder, was one of the ablest servants and greatest friends of Henry VIII, the more astonishing a friendship in that it was never broken. Henry VIII sent his friend's son to the scaffold, accused as a lover of Anne Boleyn; he went to the block protesting his innocence, and there was nothing to prove him guilty; his last words were a defence of the queen. His son, a baby when his boyish father was executed, married the daughter of Sir Thomas Arundell. Sir Thomas had suffered for treason, so that husband and wife were the children of parents who had been sent to the block. They entertained Elizabeth at Sutton; she would have a child's memory of the founder of the house, and doubtless praised the rebus in the terra cotta moulding, the "R.W.," the grapes and the tun.

Later representatives of the Westons at Sutton were the Salvin family, and it was one of these Salvins, I imagine, to whom Frank Buckland refers in his edition of White's *Selborne*. Captain Salvin lived at Whitmoor House, near Guildford, and was the happy owner of a tame wild sow. Lady Susan was her name, and this is how her master describes her:—

> "My sow originally came from Syria, and was given to me by H.H. the Maharajah Duleep Singh. She is a remarkably fine healthy animal, and her instinct and affection can only be equalled by the dog. She follows me almost daily in my walks like a dog, to the great astonishment of strangers. Of course I only take her out before the crops are up, and too low to injure, during the spring and summer months. I always have her belled, to hear when she is in the wood, etc.; and the bell, which is a good sheep's bell, is fastened round her neck with a strap and a buckle. [Pg 94]
>
> "Her leaping powers are extraordinary, either over water or timber; indeed, only a few weeks since she cleared some palings (between which she had been purposely placed to secure her for a time) three feet ten inches in height. Knowing my pig's excellent temper, even when she has young pigs, and when domestic sows are always most savage, I was once guilty of a practical joke. I got a blacksmith who was quite ignorant of even the existence of my pig, to 'come and ring a pig.' The stye being under a building, he had to enter it at a low door, which was some distance from the sow's yard, where she was feeding. He entered, shutting the door to keep the pig in, and thinking his subject was an ordinary one and that assistants were following him to hold the cord, etc. He had not been gone a minute, before I heard the greatest 'rum-ti-tum' at the door, and cries of 'For goodness' sake, sir, let me out! let me out! I never saw such a beast in all my life!' and out came the poor blacksmith pale with fright, but all the consolation he got was a jolly good laugh at his own expense."

All English cricket owes a debt to Guildford. It is in the annals of Guildford that there occurs the first known mention of the game of "crickett." In 1598 there was a dispute over the rights of a plot of land near the north town ditch, and "John Derrick, gent., one of the Queen's Majestie's coroners of the county of Surrey, aged fifty-nine" was called to give evidence. He stated that he had known the land for fifty years and more, and that when he was a boy at the Free School at Guildford he and his fellows "did runne and plaie there at crickett and other plaies." The evidence is interesting, because he is not asked for an explanation. Everybody at that date evidently knew at once what cricket meant. Besides being a cricket ground, the land was used for baiting bears. [Pg 95]

CHAPTER VIII

SHALFORD AND WONERSH

Shalford and its Stocks.—The Common.—Vanity Fair.—The Court of Dusty-Feet.—Unstead in floodwater.—Dog Smith.—Bramley Mill.—Wonersh, Ignorsh, Ognersh.—A village well cared for.—A Grisly Barometer.—Tangley Manor.

Eight highroads converge on Guildford, and these are fed, of course, by many minor roads. Besides the roads, five lines of railways run into and leave the town, so that it is eminently possible, from Guildford, to do either of two things, to take a walk in a ring and return to the town by another road, or, what is perhaps a little more luxurious, but enables you to cover more country, you can walk in almost any direction, and at the end of the day take a train back to the town. The highroad runs north to Woking and Horsell; north-east the Ripley road goes by Cobham to Kingston and London; eastwards, under Merrow Downs, you can walk by Clandon and the Horsleys to Leatherhead; a smaller road travels south-west by St. Martha's Chapel to Chilworth; almost due south a road runs through Shalford to Wonersh, or breaks off at Shalford

to go east to Dorking; another southern road is to Godalming; the great west road passes over the Hog's Back to Farnham, and north-west lie Worplesdon and Bisley. And the railways can be joined north, east, south, and west.

Godalming, four miles away, is a centre in itself, and has its own chapter. But Guildford is the best centre from which to see some of Godalming's neighbours. A good ring is by Shalford through Bramley and Wonersh, returning by Chilworth under St. Martha's. Shalford lies a mile to the south, and with its old mill, its inn, its white and green cottages, and its stocks, is a charming [Pg 96] survival perilously near the Guildford builder. The stocks stand by the churchyard gates, side by side with a curious little shrubbery. Shrubberies are rare ornaments of a village, but this sets a pretty foreground to the low line of whitened cottages behind it.

Shalford.

Shalford Common is wide and breezy; geese cackle over its grass, and you may see more than one cricket match being played on holiday afternoons. Once, in 1877, eleven Mitchells played eleven Heaths on the common; the Heaths were all of the same family, but the Mitchells, though related, were not. But the greatest tradition of Shalford Common is its connection with a Bedfordshire man, John Bunyan. Bunyan is said to have lived in two houses in Surrey, a cottage on Quarry Hill in Guildford, and at Horn Hatch, now pulled down, on Shalford Common. Probably the tradition would not have grown up without good ground; there is one possible reason, at all events, for connecting Bunyan with this part of Surrey. The idea of *Pilgrim's Progress* is said to have been suggested to him by the very Pilgrims' Way, and Vanity Fair to be the fair held on the meadow between Shalford and Guildford below St. Catherine's Chapel. The Rector of Shalford [Pg 97] had the privilege of holding a fair from the days of King John, and undoubtedly Shalford Fair was one of the largest held on the Way; indeed, it was so popular that the Guildford clergy disputed the Rector's right to exact fees from the Winchester merchants attending it. They wanted the money in Guildford. But the Chief Justice of the King's Bench gave his judgment in the Shalford Rector's favour, and at the height of the fair's prosperity it actually covered a hundred and forty acres of ground. If tradition is right, then, it was in the fields by Shalford Church that Bunyan pictured Christian and Faithful seized and brought before the Court of the fair, and poor Faithful sentenced by Lord Hategood "to be led from the place where he was to the place from whence he came, and there to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented." No doubt Bunyan's description of the trial of the two pilgrims at the fair is an exact picture of the methods of the Court of Pie-powder, or *Pied-puldreaux*, the tribunal which could be summoned at a moment's notice among the merchants of the fair. The Court of Dusty-Feet certainly worked with alarming despatch.

If Bunyan really drew his *Pilgrim's Progress* from his memories of the pilgrims and their fairs on the Way, he may have had other scenes in his mind which suggested other names. The Delectable Mountains may have been the blue line of the Sussex Downs, or the hills by Black Down and Hindhead. The Slough of Despond may have been the marshy pools of Shalford Common, or the ponds under the hill by Chilworth; and Doubting Castle, spelt Dowding Castle, is actually a name to be found on the Surrey map, south of Epsom Downs on Banstead Heath. But whether Bunyan ever saw it there is another matter.

From Shalford Common the road runs almost straight to Bramley. But it is worth while to leave the main road as it crosses the single railway line from Shalford to Bramley and Cranleigh, and to turn to the right down the little road that leads to Unstead Farm, a delightful brick and timber building, with exceptionally graceful chimney-stacks and latticed casements, behind which, in summer, there should surely be the largest bowls of roses. I saw the old house last in a frosty December sunset, surrounded by floodwater, with farm horses splashing up the road, and plovers [Pg 98] crying round the edges of the stream. It looked desolate enough; but three hundred years ago it was a fine house, at one time the property of the Austens of Shalford, and later passing into the

hands of the trustees of Henry Smith, the "Dog Smith" who gave so much to Surrey charities, and about whom Aubrey heard a quaint legend. "He had the nickname of Dog-Smyth, because he kept no house, but dined at friends' houses, and then desired a bit for his dog, which was to refect himself." Was he merely a crochety old gentleman who always went about with his dog, or did he keep the dog's dinner for himself? Another story about him was that once, when he was a poor boy, he was whipped through one of the Surrey parishes—accounts differ as to whether it was Chilworth, Tatsfield, or Wanborough—and that he struck that particular parish out of his will, but left large sums to all the others. He certainly left a large fortune to Surrey parishes, and no bequests have found their way to Chilworth, Tatsfield, or Wanborough, but that is the only foundation for the old story.

A mile south-west of Unstead Farm lies Bramley, which has grown up round the station of the single railway line running to Guildford. The restored church holds some good glass, but the prettiest thing in Bramley is an old mill which, with its medlar tree overhanging the water, its ducks and pigeons, its octagonal brick dovecot and lichened roofs, and its sweet-water grape vine clambering on the old walls, has a rich grace of colour and age setting it, in modern Bramley, a thing apart.

Bramley is almost joined by Wonersh to the east: Wonersh with its quaint other names, Wogheners, which was perhaps the original form, Wonish, Ignorsh, and Ognersh. Wonersh was once a very important village. It was one of the centres of the wool trade in the county, and of Wonersh, as of Guildford, Aubrey has the same sad story to tell of cheating clothiers. But, as we have seen, the real cause of the decay of the Surrey wool industry was something quite different. Perhaps one of Wonersh's rival clothiers started the story of the stretched cloth; perhaps it was never a libel.

One of the features of the village is an enormous wall, built by one of the Lords Grantley who had Wonersh Park, and put up the wall, apparently, to prevent neighbours and passers-by from [Pg 99] gazing with too great enthusiasm at his lordship's grass and trees. It was a brother of the third Lord Grantley, George Norton, Recorder of Guildford, who married the famous Mrs. Norton, one of the three beautiful granddaughters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Besides Lord Grantley's wall, the village holds some charming old cottages, several of them carefully restored, and two or three square-set, solid eighteenth-century houses. There is also a slender brick chimney of elaborate design of which Wonersh residents are justly proud. The village, indeed, conveys the impression of being affectionately cared for, which is not always the case with villages which belong so much to builders long dead; but nothing, perhaps, is a better example of the care with which the past is preserved than the church, which is a perfect piece of restoration and scholarly rebuilding combined. It is the work of a Surrey architect, Sir Charles Nicholson, a neighbour at Chilworth, who carried out his difficult task in 1901, and has since written an interesting little pamphlet on the church's history. Two or three peculiarities distinguish the interior. One is a crypt, paved with fourteenth-century encaustic tiles, which Aubrey describes as "a vault strongly barricaded with iron." Another is a magnificent Flemish chandelier, not a common adornment of a chancel. A third is a high tomb of Sussex marble, which bears no inscription. But the person buried in it must have been of considerable distinction, for the cassia in which the remains Were embalmed still sweats from the marble in wet weather—a grisly barometer. Possibly within may rest the remains of one of the Westons or Carylls, both of which were great families of the neighbourhood. It was John Caryll, buried in this church, on whom was written an epitaph quoted by Aubrey, but not now to be found. The eight lines of rhyme ended with what was perhaps thought appropriately cheerful resignation:—

> "And now, which long before he did desire,
> Caryll sings Carrolls in the Heavenly Choire."

North of Wonersh rises Chinthurst Hill, a knoll conspicuous for miles round, especially in winter, when the bleached grass of its wind-swept, pine-crowned cap gleams strangely white in the sun. North of Chinthurst Hill, again, on the far side of the open stretch of Shalford Common, stands [Pg 100] one of the most perfect timbered houses—perhaps it is the most perfect—in the county. This is the famous Tangley Manor, which according to the legend was one of King John's hunting boxes, and is now as delightfully picturesque a country house as is to be seen in the south of England. Like other old mansions in the county, Crowhurst Place, for instance, the building of it belongs to two periods. It is a house, or rather a hall, within a house. The hall is the older part. It was a feature of English country life previous to the sixteenth century that the labourers and dependants of the great country estates ate, and in the earliest days even slept, in the hall of the mansion. When that system of common hall life ended, it nearly always happened that the great hall was cut in two, by a floor and bedrooms built in the upper part. This is what has happened at Tangley and at Crowhurst Place, and in each case the remains of the hall can be traced in the superb oak tie-beams which cross the bedrooms from side to side of the house. The hall is cased by a more modern building, a rich timber framework with the date 1582 carved sprawling on the wood. The garden has every charm that can belong to lichened brick walls, loop-holed and many-gated, and through the garden round the house runs a moat, in which trout swim, or once swam. John Evelyn of Wotton knew the Tangley manor moat and garden; possibly some of the daffodils which brighten the grass in April are descendants of bulbs he planted. On a pane of glass in one of the bedrooms he has scratched his name and the date "John Euelyn, 1641."

Beyond Tangley Manor to the north the railway runs a loose parallel to the little Tillingbourne, through Chilworth, Albury, Shere and Gomshall. But the villages of the Tillingbourne belong to

another chapter. [Pg 101]

CHAPTER IX

THE VILLAGES OF THE TILLINGBOURNE

Chilworth.—Gunpowder and Banknotes.—Cashier for fifty years.—The Evelyns' Powdermills.—Albury's chimneys.—A Yew hedge quarter of a mile long.—Sherborne ponds: the Silent Pool.—King John and Sabrina drowned.—Trout fed on Sandwiches.—Shere.—The prettiest village of all.—The Tillingbourne.—William Bray, aged 97.—A Yeoman's Will.—Shere Registers.—From Ann to Carbetia.—Gomshall.—Starving a Retainer.

Four villages and a group of powdermills stand on the banks of the Tillingbourne, which runs its short race of clear spring water from the northern slopes of Leith Hill to the Wey by Shalford. There are scarcely a dozen miles of the Tillingbourne altogether, but it runs through the prettiest string of villages in the county. Friday Street is at its source; Abinger Hammer, with two large millponds, is next; Gomshall lies a mile to the west of Abinger Hammer, Shere a mile to the west again, and Albury beyond Shere. Chilworth stands last on the bright little stream, hardly a village; not much more than a station, some powdermills, and reedy ponds.

The quickest road from Guildford to Chilworth is the railway. The best road is over the downs. The road which Cobbett took when he came from Kensington was over Merrow Downs to Newlands Corner, and it is worth while to climb up Newlands Corner to look at the view as Cobbett saw it, with the pale distances of eight counties on his horizon, and the dark, tall chimneys of the powdermills he detested smoking below him. "Here we looked back over Middlesex," he writes, "and into Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, away towards the north-west, into Essex and Kent towards the east, over part of Sussex to the south, and over part of Hampshire to the west south-west." He might have added Oxfordshire. Nothing in Surrey delighted Cobbett more than "the narrow and exquisitely beautiful vale of Chilworth," at which [Pg 102] he used to gaze from these downs. Only Hawkley Hanger, just over the Hampshire border, filled him with greater pleasure. But the Chilworth powdermills goaded him to fury:—

"This valley," he writes, white hot, "which seems to have been created by a bountiful providence, as one of the choicest retreats of man; which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been, by ungrateful man, so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable of purposes; in carrying into execution two of the most damnable inventions that ever sprang from the minds of man under the influence of the devil! namely, the making of *gunpowder* and of *bank-notes*! Here in this tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England; where the first bursting of the bud is seen in spring, where no rigour of seasons can ever be felt; where everything seems formed for precluding the very thought of wickedness; here has the devil fixed on as one of the seats of his grand manufactory; and perverse and ungrateful man not only lends him aid, but lends it cheerfully! As to the gunpowder, indeed, we might get over that. In some cases that may be innocently and, when it sends the lead at the hordes that support a tyrant, meritoriously employed. The alders and the willows, therefore, one can see, without so much regret, turned into powder by the waters of this valley; but, the *Bank-notes*! To think that the springs which God has commanded to flow from the sides of these happy hills for the comfort and the delight of man; to think that these springs should be perverted into means of spreading misery over a whole nation and that, too, under the base and hypocritical pretence of promoting its *credit* and maintaining its *honour* and its *faith*! There was one circumstance, indeed, that served to mitigate the melancholy excited by these reflections; namely, that a part of these springs have, at times, assisted in turning rags into Registers! Somewhat cheered by the thought of this, but, still, in a more melancholy mood than I had been for a long while, I rode on with my friend towards Albury up the valley."

The papermills which called down Cobbett's curses were probably originally powdermills, and were turned to their new uses first in the reign of Queen Anne. The Bank at first issued no notes of smaller value than £20; ten-pound notes were first issued in 1759, and five pound notes in [Pg 103] 1793, and one and two pound notes four years later. Local tradition, for an explanation of the name Newlands Corner, has decided that it must have been called after Abraham Newland, who was chief cashier of the Bank of England for fifty years till 1807, and whose name, therefore, would be as familiar to King George's subjects, as is May or Owen to a later day. But local tradition is mistaken. The name occurs on Bowen's map of the county, dedicated to Richard, third Baron Onslow, in 1749, when Newland was an unknown boy of nineteen.

A much greater Surrey industry than paper-making is the manufacture of gunpowder. Indeed, whenever England was at war, from the days of Elizabeth to those of the Parliament, the control of the Surrey powder works was a vital point in the struggle. The first gunpowder manufactory seems to have been established at Rotherhithe, where Henry Reve had a mill in 1554. We were then getting a considerable quantity of our gunpowder from abroad, and that was a state of affairs which continued till the coming of the Armada. When the Armada came, England was dangerously unprepared for war. It was lucky that Howard's and Drake's fireships ended the fleet

so quickly, for anything like a prolonged sea campaign would have been out of the question. We had not enough powder. Accounts made up in the year 1600 show that up to the day when the Armada sail was sighted, there was never more than twenty or thirty lasts (a last was about a ton) of English powder delivered yearly into the Queen's stores. After the Armada, the Queen's Ministers set to work to put the gunpowder supply on a proper basis, and it was then that Surrey and a great Surrey family became inseparably associated with the making of explosives.

George Evelyn (grandfather of a more famous grandson, John Evelyn of Wotton) and John, his son, were first licensed in 1589 to dig saltpetre in Great Britain and Ireland, and set up their first powdermills on the little Hogsmill River, which joins the Thames at Kingston. Later, George Evelyn retired, and John, having transferred his mills to Godstone, took his brother Robert and three others into partnership and started on a contract by which they supplied the Queen with a hundred lasts of powder yearly at 7d. the pound. In 1604 the firm was practically reduced to John and Robert Evelyn, and a partner named Hardinge, the others being dead or doing no work. The [Pg 104] firm was now employing a thousand hands, and was given twenty-one years' contract to supply 120 lasts yearly at 8d. per pound—nearly £10,000 worth of powder. But James I soon broke this contract, and after three years the contract was given to the Earl of Worcester; though whether the Earl ever made any powder, or what he did with his contract, nobody knows. The progress of the manufacture of gunpowder now becomes very obscure, though probably John Evelyn kept his mills running at Godstone, making reduced quantities. It is not till 1621 that we find John Evelyn making another large contract with the Government, but after that date the contracts were renewed every two or three years, until the Evelyns in 1636 ceased to supply the Government altogether. Their difficulties must have been almost intolerable. John Evelyn and his son, also named John, who succeeded him in 1627, appear to have been always punctual and trustworthy in supplying the powder required, but the King would not or could not pay for it. The history of each contract is always the same; for a few months all goes swimmingly, then comes the Crown's inability to pay up; next stoppage of supplies; eventually, settling up and a new contract. The Evelyn mills made the last pound of powder for the King in 1636, and then under protest. Charles was used to protests.

So far very little powder had been made at Chilworth. The Evelyn mills were at Godstone—possibly near Wotton also. But it was the Chilworth powdermills which broke the Evelyns' business. Immediately on coming to the throne Charles I gave leave to the East India Company to set up powdermills on the skirts of Windsor Park; but the mills frightened the deer and were moved to Chilworth. Here, apparently, Sir Edward Randyll owned or built a large number of mills, which he leased to the Company, and it was the competition of the Company which silenced Evelyn's mills. But the Company was equally unsuccessful in keeping the business. Charles I was struck with the idea of turning shopkeeper himself, and gave the sole Government contract to one Cordwell, from whom he bought powder at 7½d. the pound and sold it to the lieges at eighteenpence. That did not last long. The Long Parliament assembled in 1641, and the monopoly [Pg 105] was abolished. From that date anybody might make gunpowder, and Surrey ceased to be the single centre of the industry. But the Chilworth mills still did a great deal of business—sometimes bad business. Sir Polycarpus Wharton, who had a twenty-one years' lease under Charles II, James II and William III, is said to have lost £24,000 over the mills, simply because he could not get paid by the Government, and actually went to a debtor's prison. Fifty years ago the industry had declined almost to a vanishing point. It revived in 1880, when experiments were made in new powders for heavy guns, and to-day the Chilworth Mills make cordite, without the miserable consequences which befel Sir Polycarpus Wharton.

It seemed worth while, at the risk of spattering the page with dates and facts of gunpowder dryness, to attempt this short sketch of the Surrey gunpowder industry, if only to escape from the confusion of current legends. Chief among the traditions of the Chilworth mills is that which makes them the property of John Evelyn of Wotton. No Evelyn owned a powdermill at Chilworth, and John Evelyn of Wotton, though he may have owned a casual mill or so elsewhere, is not the John Evelyn who owned and worked the Godstone mills. Those mills belonged to the diarist's grandfather, George Evelyn, and to George Evelyn's son and grandson, both named John. The latter was the diarist's cousin. I ought to add that I am indebted, for most of this history of gunpowder, to the admirable article on the subject by Mr. Montague Giuseppi, published in the Victoria History of the County.

Albury is nearly two miles from Chilworth station, and the Tillingbourne runs through and under it. Albury has a number of beautiful chimneys; chimneys that are tall and graceful, of red brick, shaped and moulded in ingenious spirals, with patterned sides and columns, and crowsteps and other ornaments and uses. You would not guess all that a chimney can be, until you have seen Albury. A year or two ago there was another charm in the village. You looked in from the main street at what seemed like half a road, half an entrance to a square of houses, and found yourself in the remains of an old farmyard, of which one side was a row of cottages. The rest was old red brick—I think I remember a great dovecote—and a quiet look of age and disuse. But now new buildings are rising in its place. [Pg 106]

Chimneys, Albury.

Just outside Albury is one of the Duke of Northumberland's houses, in Albury Park. The garden holds a historic yew hedge, but it is not shown to the public and I have not seen it. John Evelyn laid out the gardens; Cobbett has described the yew hedge. In his day it belonged to Mr. Drummond, a banker, and Cobbett, who had heard much of the park and gardens, rode up to the house and asked permission to see them. So he saw the yew hedge, and wrote about it.

"Between the house and the gardens there is a very beautiful run of water, with a sort of little, wild, narrow sedgy meadow. The gardens are separated from this by a hedge, running along from east to west. From this hedge there go up the hill, at right angles, several other hedges, which divide the land here into distinct gardens, or orchards. Along at the top of these there goes a yew hedge, or, rather, a row of small yew trees, the trunks of which are bare for about eight or ten feet high, and the tops of which form one solid head of about ten feet high, while the bottom branches come out on each side of the row about eight feet horizontally. This hedge, or row, is a [Pg 107] *quarter of a mile long*. There is a nice hard sand road under this species of umbrella; and summer and winter, here is a most delightful walk! Between this row of yews, there is a space, or garden (a quarter of a mile long you will observe) about thirty or forty feet wide, as nearly as I can recollect. At the back of this garden, and facing the yew tree row, is a wall probably ten feet high, which forms the breastwork of a terrace; and it is this terrace which is the most beautiful thing that I ever saw in the gardening way. It is a quarter of a mile long, and, I believe, between thirty and forty feet wide; of the finest green sward and as level as a die."

In Albury Park is a ruined church. Its history is not very edifying. Mr. Drummond, the banker, who built the Catholic Apostolic cathedral near by, obtained permission to shut up the old church if he built a new one elsewhere. He built the new church, and the old, with its graves and memories, was abandoned. The footpath leading to it remains open to the public, and runs under the shade of some superb Spanish chestnuts.

Perhaps half a mile from the park, in the depth of a wood of box, are the two Sherborne Farm ponds, one of which has come by the name of the Silent Pool. The Sherborne ponds lie somewhere near the track of the pilgrims, and I like to think that the journeying men knew them and drank their clear water. Legend has grown round the deeper, upper pool. Martin Tupper, in his strange medley *Stephan Langton*, has shaped it into his story. A lovely peasant girl used to bathe in the pool; King John, riding by, saw her and drove his horse at her, and she, trying to escape, fell into deep water and was drowned. That was not enough for Martin Tupper; he decided that her brother should try to rescue her and be drowned also. There they lay, the two of them; "the brother and sister are locked in each other's arms in the tranquil crystal depth of Shirebourne Pond; and the rippled surface is all smooth once more; and you may see the trout shoaling among the still green weeds around that naked raven-haired Sabrina, and her poor drowned brother in his cowskin tunic." So wrote Tupper; a most moving finish of a chapter.

To gain the Silent Pool, if you are in Albury, walk eastwards right through the village and turn to the left over the Tillingbourne. Then to the left again, and you will spy a cottage, the gate of [Pg 108] which bears the legend "Key of the Pool kept here." How should a pool have a key? It turns out to be two keys, one of a padlock shutting an iron gate leading to a grove of box trees; you shut the padlock and find that you have left all who come after you—and on Saturdays at least they are many—to climb the fence. The Silent Pool, when I saw it first, a little disappointed me. I ought to have known that it would, because everybody could tell me where it was, even quite unintelligent people walking about the road two miles away. I think I hoped the pool would be, not only solitary and sequestered, but entirely deserted by human beings; a pool on which you came suddenly, lying hidden in the heart of chalky dells dark green with box trees; it was to be as deep

as a well, and cold with the coldness of a spring; smelling, too, of bitter wet box and sun-warmed chalk. It was to be a pool at the side of which the stranger should seat himself, and discover the air of the place so quiet and enchanted that he could hear no sound of birds or beasts or men; only, perhaps, the melodious drip of the rain-heavy boughs into the clear peacock-green depths of water. And, in fact, the disappointment is that this is precisely what the Silent Pool might be. It is what it used to be, I think; but so many people have heard of it and have come on bicycles and in carriages and motor-cars to see it, that the leaf-strewn paths are trampled into mud round it; and it cannot be called silent, for you will not escape hearing other people, who have quite as much right as you to be there, talk about it and tramp round its margin. Then, too, for the convenience of visitors, there has been built on the edge of the pool a thatched arbour of wood, into which you admit yourself with a very large key, only to be deafened on the spot by ten thousand cockney names scrawled on the white walls round you. Those who have gibbeted themselves on the walls have also thrown the newspapers that held their lunch into the water, and bottles with the paper —a most unhappy spectacle. Had I the right to touch the place, the arbour would be packed up offhand for Rosherville. Only in one particular has the arbour any claim on the wayfarer's gratitude. It enables him to watch the large trout which swim in the clear deep water under him as closely as if they were behind the glass of an aquarium. Trout which leap out of the water every two minutes in a spring afternoon, and yet which are tame enough to come and be fed [Pg 109] under the rail of a wooden arbour by trooping visitors, are a sight for idle fishermen to see. I have fed them with worms, but I suspect them to be better used to sandwiches.

Fireplace in White Horse, Shere.

The road runs eastward a mile from Sherborne ponds to Shere. Who first named the Shirebourne pond the Silent Pool? The old name is the best, and the water of the pond ought to be added to the beauties of Shere. If Shere is to be counted the prettiest Surrey village of all, I think it is the Tillingbourne which decides the choice. Six or seven other villages occur, each with its own [Pg 110] fascination; Alfold, deep among the primroses of the Fold Country; Chiddingfold, with its old inn and the red cottages set round the green; Compton, with its flower gardens and old timber; Thorpe, quiet among the elms; Oxted, lining the hill road under the downs, and the Bell inn at the cross-ways; Betchworth and its cottage roses; Coldharbour dotted over the sandstone; Friday Street, hardly a village, on the banks of the tarn among the pines; but each fails compared with Shere. Friday Street shows the reason plain. Without the water Friday Street would pass unnoticed; it is the water which decides for Shere. The village groups itself with the little brook running through the middle: a low bridge crosses the stream, villagers sit on the bridge, white ducks paddle about the current and stand upside down among the weeds: beyond the brook are the tiny village green and the shade of elms; on one side of the village green is the old inn, the White Horse; and on the other the grey tower and the quiet of the churchyard. But it is the sparkle and the chatter of the Tillingbourne which are the first charm of all.

The White Horse is a pattern of an old village inn, with panelled rooms and dark beams over its ceilings, and a parlour hung with oil paintings, with the air of the Surrey countryside blowing through them. Your host is the artist, and fellow artists come to the White Horse to sketch with him. It is the only inn in Surrey I know which also sells a guide to the neighbourhood, and a good

guide too, so far as directions for finding walks among the hills and woods can make a guide-book. Mr. Marriott Watson has written an introduction to it, of which the sum is that all walks start from the White Horse, and all walkers come back to it.

Shere Church.

Shere church is a medley of alterations; perhaps its most interesting connection is its link with the old Surrey family of Bray. The Brays have lived at Shere for more than four hundred years. The first Sir Robert Bray was a knight of Richard I, and one of his descendants, Sir Reginald, was granted the manor of Shere, in 1497. Sir Reginald was one of the most distinguished of all the long line; he was a Knight of the Garter, and the Bray Chapel in St. George's, Windsor, is his work; his emblem the bray, or seed-crusher, is on the ceiling. But the member of the family who had most to do with the country was William Bray, the second of the two classical writers of the [Pg 111] county history. William Bray was born in 1736, and was a scholar whose learning was only equalled by his astonishing vitality. He began his main work at an age when most men's work is done. When the Rev. Owen Manning, after years of labour at the history of Surrey, went blind [Pg 112] and had to give up the hope of a lifetime, William Bray finished the book. He was untiring. The first volume appeared in 1804, when he was sixty-eight, and when the second volume was published, five years latter, he wrote in his preface "that there was not a parish described in it which he had not visited, and only two churches the insides of which he had not seen, and the monuments in which he had not personally examined, once at least, but to many he made repeated visits." The third volume came out in 1814, and then, at the age of seventy-eight, he edited John Evelyn's *Memoirs* from the original MSS. at Wotton. He was to live nearly twenty years after that, and he died at Shere at the age of ninety-seven; a tablet stands to his memory in the chancel of the church.

Shere.

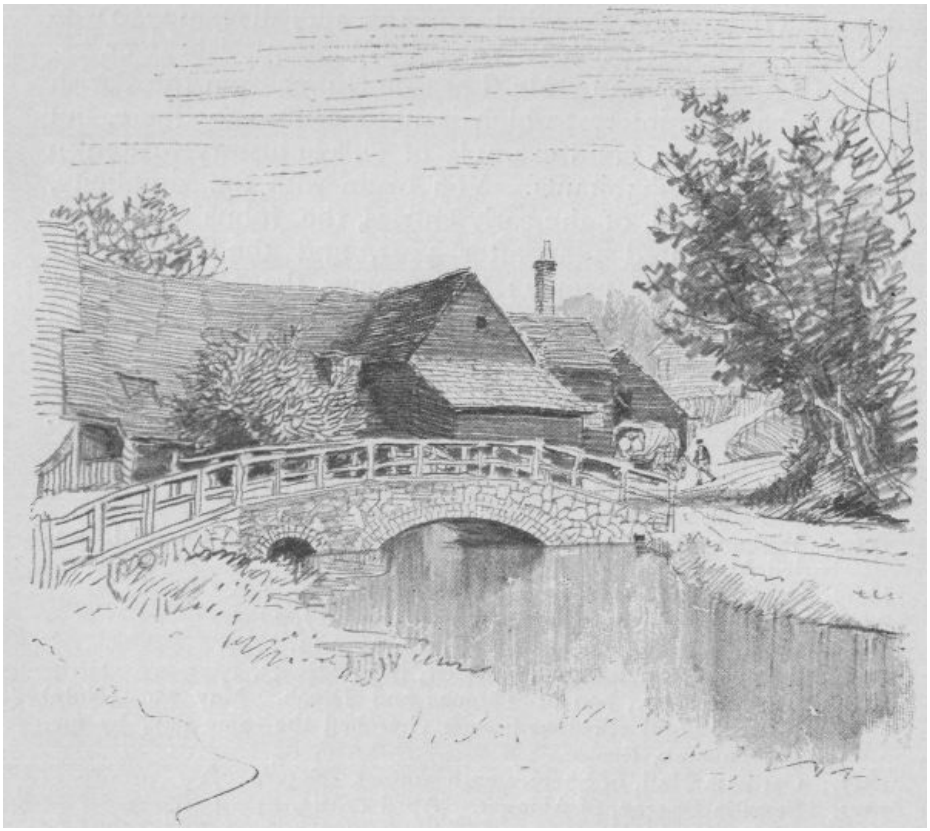
Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower, in a paper on "Shere and its Rectors" in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, gives the items of a will he discovered by accident, interesting as showing the [Pg 113] amount of stock kept upon his farm by a yeoman of the sixteenth century. The will is dated 27th October, 1562, and the testator is John Risbridger—one of the good old Surrey yeoman names, like Evershed and Whapshot and Enticknap. He describes himself as "John Risbridger of Shere, yeoman, sicke of bodie and yet walkinge. His body to be buried in Parish Church of Shere, 'without my seats ende.' 1 calf and 2 shepe, with sufficient breade and drinke thereunto to be bestowed and spent at his burial towards the reliefe of the poore there assembled. To every man and maid servant, 1 ewe shepe; to Alice Stydman his maid, one herfore (i.e. heifer) bullocke, of two years and 15s: to his son William all his lease or terme of years in lands called Stonehill, and to him 4 oxen, 2 steares of 3 yeres, 2 horse beastes, a weane (wagon) yoke, cheynes to draw withal, 2 keyne, half a hundreth of shepe. Children, John, William, and Edward. To daughter Dorothie, £6. 13s. 4d.; all residue to wife Katherine. Proved 3rd May, 1654, by William Risbridger."

Some extracts made by Mr. Leveson-Gower from the Parish Registers have an interest which is not peculiar to Shere, but the Registers are a good example of village history written in the names of its inhabitants. You begin with the simplicity, almost the affection, of the early entries, the Johns and Anns and Marys repeated year after year, and the few words describing the older people; then comes the Georgian day when Fielding and Richardson were on the bookshelves, and children were named after the heroines of the novels. Here are a dozen entries out of hundreds:—

Elizabeth Gatton (widow), neer 100 yeeres old, was Buryed 13 of July, 1691.
Widow Rowland (old and poor). May 18, 1701.
Elizabeth Nye, an ancient widow. Buried 23 Mar., 1715.
1732. Old Edward Stone, yeoman. Dec. y^{e} 30th.
1739. William Wood, a poor unfortunate lad, being drown'd, was buried Ap. 27.
Mary, daughter of Thomas Evershed, bap. Ap. 30, 1729.
Ann, daughter of Thomas Evershed, bap. Aug. 17, 1733.
Mary, daughter of Thomas Evershed, bap. May 14, 1736.
Ann, daughter of Mr. Robert Parkhurst, bap. Feb. 23, 1741-2.
1779. Gosling, Tho., son of Thomas and Dinah. May 25. (Note)
—married, child christened, wife churched the same day, by me, Tho^{s} Duncumb, Rector.
1817. Carbetia Hall, of Shere, gentlewoman. Sep. 2, 68.
1821. Servilla Briscoe, of Abinger. April 17, 23.

One of the later entries in the Registers is interesting to historians. Harriet Grote, widow of [Pg 114] George Grote, died at Shere in 1878, aged 86. Her grave is south of the church: Grote lies in Westminster Abbey.

Shere and Gomshall are only divided by an avenue of elms—half a mile of the pleasantest and shadiest of roads. Gomshall is a village scattered round many lanes; it has a Black Horse inn near the station, but the prettiest Gomshall cottages are away from the Black Horse, down the lanes off the main road. Gomshall Manor, now a boarding-house, has traditions of the Middle Ages. There is a story of a door leading to a secret chamber which ought to be somewhere in Martin Tupper's books, but I cannot find it. King John was annoyed with a retainer, shut him in this room and turned the key in the door, and there the miserable retainer starved to death. It was just like King John to do it, but what he did at Gomshall only tradition knows.



Gomshall.

[Pg 115]

CHAPTER X

GUILDFORD TO LEATHERHEAD

Merrow.—The Horse and Groom.—Mr. Kipling on Surrey downs.—Clandon Park.—The village mole-catcher.—A fearful battle.—February sunshine.—Wide Ploughs.—Thomas Goffe and Thomas Thimble.—Locked churches.—An atmosphere of war.—Effingham and its admirals.—Little Bookham.—General d'Arblay in his garden.—Mistletoe.

Of the two roads which run parallel to the downs east of Guildford, doubtless the road south of the ridge runs through the prettiest villages. Albury, Shere and Gomshall are a more charming trio than any three that lie on the northern road, if only because of the woods about them and the clear trout stream that runs under their walls and bridges. The villages north of the ridge hardly have a good-sized pond between them. But the walk from Guildford to Leatherhead, which can be shortened at any railway station you please from Clandon to Bookham, is for all that a walk through delightful country and villages of unchanging quiet.

Merrow is the first of the little hamlets that dot the Leatherhead road, and though the Guildford villas are stretching out their gardens further and further to the polite east, Merrow is still a mere group of downside cottages. The church might have been better restored; but the chief feature of the village is the old Horse and Groom Inn, with its gabled front and its noble stack of chimneys, three sister shafts of peculiar grace and mellow colour. The date, 1615, which records the age of the inn above one of its bay windows, reads a reproach to the aggressively modern porch and doors; and the white rough-cast with which the walls are covered apparently conceals [Pg 116] admirable timber and herringbone brickwork. But the roof and the gables and windows still belong to an inn and not a public-house, and the Horse and Groom too, swings a good sign, vigorously drawn, of a prancing steed. Most of the signs of the many White Horse and Black Horse inns are more like rocking-horses than racers.

Merrow.

Above Merrow stretches some of the most perfect downland in England. If the Sussex downs by Rottingdean inspired Mr. Kipling to his finest poetry, the Surrey downs by Merrow taught him some of the most haunting lines of all. I quote from eleven stanzas that ought not to be separated:— [Pg 117]

MERROW DOWN

There runs a road by Merrow Down—
  A grassy track to-day it is
An hour out of Guildford town,
  Above the river Wey it is.

Here, when they heard the horse-bells ring,
  The ancient Britons dressed and rode
To watch the dark Phœnicians bring
  Their goods along the Western Road.

But long and long before that time
  (When bison used to roam on it)
Did Taffy and her Daddy climb
  That down, and had their home on it.

The Wey, that Taffy called Wagai,
  Was more than six times bigger then;
And all the Tribe of Tegumai
  They cut a noble figure then!

Of all the Tribe of Tegumai
  Who cut that figure, none remain—
On Merrow Down the cuckoos cry—
  The silence and the sun remain.

But as the faithful years return
  And hearts unwounded sing again,
Comes Taffy dancing through the fern
  To lead the Surrey spring again.

In mocassins and deer-skin cloak
  Unfearing, free and fair she flits,
And lights her little damp-wood smoke
  To show her Daddy where she flits.

For far—oh, very far behind,
  So far she cannot call to him,
Comes Tegumai alone to find
  The daughter that was all to him.

Merrow to the east edges on Clandon Park, the seat of one of the great Surrey families, the Onslows. It is a notable space, perhaps a mile square of grass dotted with superb groups of elms. "Capability" Brown laid out the park, and he certainly saw what the capabilities of that sunny sward could be. The house, which stands on the south-east corner, is an imposing cube of red brick, patched here and there with ivy, and as square and formal as the ornamental water and the park below it is formal and serpentine. Leoni built it, and Rysbrach designed two of its chimney-pieces. [Pg 118]

In the park you may chance to meet the mole-catcher of the place—an upholder of right traditions of an old English village. I met him searching disconsolately for a couple of his traps, which he had set too near the pathway and which had been carried off by thieving passers-by, on whom may malisons light. "I've got forty traps about here," he told me with some pride, adding with resignation to a persistent fate that "they" would not let him set a trap near the path. "They" always took it if he did.

West Clandon church stands in the corner of the park, and is chiefly remarkable for a very curious old sundial, belonging perhaps to the days of Henry II, and built upside down by "restorers" into a buttress of the south wall. Time has dealt hardly with the church, and time, perhaps, may still restore its own dial. Under the dial, when I was last in the carefully tended little churchyard, the level turf was studded with snowdrops.

In a field close by the village once took place a remarkable battle. A correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1796 gives the following account of it, which he had verbatim from an old inhabitant. "A serpent once infested a back lane in the parish of West Clandon for a long time. The inhabitants were much disturbed and afraid to pass that way. A soldier who had been condemned for desertion promised, if his life was spared, he would destroy this serpent. Accordingly he took his dog with him. A fierce battle ensued, the dog fastened him and the soldier killed it with his bayonet in a field belonging to the glebe called Deadacre." According to the magazine's correspondent, an "ancient piece of carving in wood" representing this frightful struggle, had been "preserved for many years in the parsonage house."

Between the two Clandons, West and East, the road runs by what is surely the finest ploughland in the county. A single field of over a hundred acres stretches up the side of the down to a belt of firs—a field for Cincinnatus himself to plough. I remember standing to stare at that great reach of shining stubble and furrow when first I saw it from the road on a day of marvellous February sunlight. Farm labourers were topping and tailing turnips two hundred yards away; partridges newly paired whirred up from the roadside; beyond the white stubbleland lay the pines of Netley Heath, a thin line of palest blue; a hundred larks filled the sky with singing, and I heard suddenly [Pg 119] behind me the impetuous thrill of a chaffinch, that most summery of carols. The ploughland is Lord Onslow's, and it must need a Minister of Agriculture to look after it.

East Clandon lies under that broad ploughland, a mile from Clandon Park. Everything in East Clandon is what it ought to be, and everybody does what he ought to do. The timbered cottages are old and quiet; the barn roofs by the churchyard are long and lichened; the churchyard is bordered by a thick holly hedge, and about its graves, little clipped yew-trees stand like chessmen, perhaps meant to suggest a text; the cottage gardens are full of simple flowers and fruit-trees, and the cottagers work in them as if it were the best work to do, which doubtless it is. There could not be a happier looking village. One building only in the village knows, or shows, much suffering. At East Clandon is the country branch of the Queen Alexandra Nursing Home for children with hip disease. In fine weather the children lie in their cots on the verandah, like broken toys, and wave happily from their red blankets to passers-by.

In the days of Charles I East Clandon boasted a poet. He was Thomas Goffe, a writer of tragedies, and most unhappily married. Aubrey tells the story:—

> "His wife pretended to fall in love with him, by hearing of him preach: upon which, said one Thomas Thimble (one of the Squire Bedell's in Oxford, and his Confident) to him: '*Do not marry her: if thou dost, she will break thy heart*.' He was not obsequious to his friend's sober advice, but for her sake altered his condition, and cast anchor here. One time some of his Oxford friends made a visit to him she looked upon them with an ill eye, as if they had come *to eat her out of house and home* (as they say), she provided a dish of milk, and some eggs for supper, and no more: They perceived her niggardliness, and that her husband was inwardly troubled at it (she wearing the breeches) so they were resolved to be merry at supper, and talk all in Latin, and laughed exceedingly. She was so vexed at their speaking Latin that she could not hold, but fell out a weeping, and rose from the table. The next day, Mr. Goffe ordered a better dinner for them, and sent for some wine: they were merry, and his friends took their final leave of him. 'Twas no long time before this Xanthippe made Mr. Thimble's prediction good; and when he died, the last words he spake were: '*Oracle, Oracle, Tom Thimble*,' and so he gave up the ghost."

Halfway from East Clandon to West Horsley is Hatchlands, a fine country house and park with

noble beeches; and next to Hatchlands one of the prettiest and completest farmsteads in the county. The building in the neighbourhood is, indeed, some of the best to be seen. West Horsley itself is a fascinating collection of old cottages, vine-bowered and fronted with clipped yews. One such yew, standing by the door of what the picture postcards vaguely designate "old cottage, West Horsley," is an extraordinarily elaborate piece of rustic topiary. Another feature of the village is the now disused workhouse, a solid old brick building overlooking a horsepond: another, the bole of a superb elm, quite rightly stationed in the carpenter's sawyard. Of West Horsley church it is more difficult to speak. It is possible to see from outside that there is a beautiful three lancet east window, but the rest of the church, with its chapel and fine monuments, is a sealed book. The door is locked, and the keys are kept at the rectory a mile away: the sexton, next door to the church, is not allowed a key. It is not easy to write soberly of an authority which compels for one who should be allowed to see the church, four journeys of a mile to ask for and to return the keys. From West Horsley to Leatherhead is a pilgrimage by locked churches: East Horsley is locked, though you can get the key; Effingham and Little Bookham are locked, but I had no time to search for more keys when I was there; possibly they are easily found. Great Bookham is open, but Fetcham is locked; Leatherhead is more hospitable. [Pg 120]

The great families of West Horsley are those of Berners and Nicholas. The effigy of Sir James Berners, of West Horsley Place, is in the church: he was one of the followers of Richard II, and was beheaded on Tower Hill, in 1388. His daughter, according to tradition, was the famous Dame Juliana Berners, Prioress of Sopwell, and author—or part author—of the *Boke of St. Albans*, a "Treatyse perteynynge to Hawkynge, Huntynge, Fysshynge, and Coote Armiris." Probably she wrote no more than the hunting, but it is pleasant to think that she may have watched her greyhounds "headed like a snake, and necked like a drake" on the downs above Horsley. Another Berners, the second Baron of the name, translated Froissart. Of the Nicholas family, Sir Edward was a Royalist and Secretary of State under both the Charleses. Of other owners of West Horsley Place, its mistress, Geraldine Browne, wife of Sir Anthony Browne, is claimed to be the "Fair Geraldine" of Surrey's poem; but any other Geraldine would suit as well, if, indeed, Geraldine ever existed. Another doubtful tradition of West Horsley is that the head of Sir Walter Raleigh is buried in the church with his son Carew. Certainly no one knows that it was buried anywhere else. [Pg 121]

Leaving West Horsley, you are immediately in an atmosphere of war. At East Horsley, the Duke of Wellington guards the cross-roads and dispenses excellent bread and cheese and beer; at Effingham Prince Blücher used to stand on the main road, quite correctly placed to the east of the Duke; he has now marched down into the village and billeted himself as comfortably as before. The atmosphere of swords and sharpness has even entered ecclesiastical precincts. In East Horsley church there is a curious fresco, painted, I am told, by the late Lady Lovelace. It shows St. Martin dressed as a soldier in high boots, cloak and hat, cutting off the skirt of his cloak with his sword, to clothe a naked beggar kneeling before him. It is curious that a second legend of a cloak should belong to a neighbourhood connected with Sir Walter Raleigh.

Horsley Towers, on the left of the road to Effingham, is a large, grey, castellated building; its entrances might be fortifications. The park holds some superb beeches. But the grey coldness of Horsley Towers is a little exotic among these stretches of southern English parkland. Good Jacobean or Georgian red-brick much better suits oaks and beeches than the chateau-like towers of a Scottish castle.

Effingham, although so small a village, has a name that will last with the history of the English Navy. It gave his title to the first Lord Howard of Effingham, the illustrious father of a still more illustrious son. The first Lord of Effingham was William Howard, son of the second Duke of Norfolk, and one of the great men of the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. He was with Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; he was Lord High Admiral; at Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion he shut Ludgate in Wyatt's face, and more than any Englishman he helped Elizabeth to her throne. But his son is an even greater figure. Like his father, he was Lord High Admiral, but the father never had the son's opportunity. For the second Lord Howard of Effingham commanded the English Navy against the Spanish Armada, and as the victor of that tremendous fleet and the captor of Cadiz he was made Earl of Nottingham, and held the office of Lord High Admiral until the green old age of eighty-three, when "he retired," we are told, "from public life, and the rest of his life was peace and prayer." He lies with his father at Reigate, which with the churches of Lingfield and Great Bookham holds the dust of many generations of the Surrey Howards. Fourteen Howards have been buried at Reigate, twelve at Lingfield, and thirty at Great Bookham; but so far as I can find, none, curiously enough, at Effingham itself. [Pg 122]

Scarcely half a mile separates the churches of Effingham and Little Bookham, the latter a tiny building considerably altered by various restorations, but containing some interesting remains of Norman work. Almost touching the church stands, and has stood since days before Domesday book was written, a great yew, dark and shining, with another thousand years' life in it, if its vigorous branches tell the truth. The village itself is not much more than a cottage or two, but Little Bookham must always be a place of interest, at all events for those who read and write newspapers, for the Manor House is the home of one of the doyens of English journalism, Mr. Meredith Townsend, for forty-four years joint-editor of the *Spectator*.

"Master and friend, whose ardent soul
Burns brighter as it nears the goal,
Whose indefatigable pen
Stirs envy in us younger men——"

So has Mr. Charles Graves addressed him, and so might others feel a noble envy.

Great Bookham, less than a mile away, was once the home of another writer. Fanny Burney lived there for four years after she had married General d'Arblay, and the two of them with their baby, and an income of £125, were superlatively happy. Here she wrote *Camilla*, which was to build and to christen the house she lived in later, and it was from Bookham that she set out to take the first bound copies to King George and the Queen at Windsor. "About how much time did you give to it?" asked the good-natured King, and "Are you much frightened? As much frightened as you were before?" The Queen asked M. and Madame d'Arblay to dine the next day, and in the interval the General, having been introduced to the Queen's gardener at Frogmore, "a skilful and famous botanist," consulted him seriously about the Bookham cabbages. M. d'Arblay was a gardener of [Pg 123] greater courage than science. His wife sends her father a picture of the work done among the Bookham fruits and flowers.

"Our garden," she writes, "is not yet quite the most profitable thing in the world; but M. d'A. assures me it is to be the staff of our table and existence." But M. d'Arblay had very little luck. He planted strawberries hoping to gather fruit within three months, and was disappointed:—

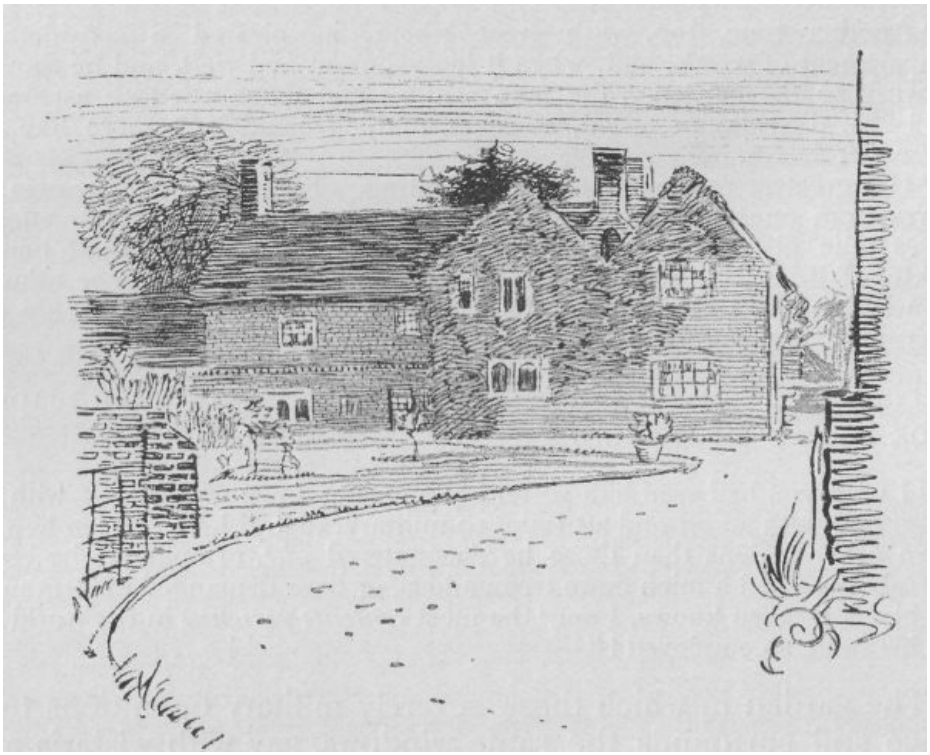
> "Another time, too, with great labour, he cleared a considerable compartment of weeds, and, when it looked clean and well, and he showed his work to the gardener, the man said he had demolished an asparagus bed! M. d'Arblay protested, however, nothing could look more like *des mauvaises herbes*.
>
> "His greatest passion is for transplanting. Everything we possess he moves from one end of the garden to another, to produce better effects. Roses take place of jessamines, jessamines of honeysuckles, and honeysuckles of lilies, till they have all danced round as far as the space allows; but whether the effect may not be a general mortality, summer only can determine."

The picture of the General turning his sword into a reaping hook is even more alluring:—

> "I wish you had seen him yesterday, mowing down our hedge—with his sabre, and with an air and attitudes so military, that, if he had been hewing down other legions than those he encountered—*i.e.* of spiders—he could scarcely have had a mien more tremendous, or have demanded an arm more mighty. Heaven knows, I am 'the most *contente personne* in the world' to see his sabre so employed!"

The garden in which these severely military operations took place still surrounds the same windows, gay with wistaria and roses. Possibly the gnarled apple trees which fringe the lawn are actual survivors of the general's sabre.

Great Bookham has grown a good deal since the d'Arblays knew it. But the splendid shell of an ancient elm still shades the churchyard gate; the flint-walled church, with ivy bunched over its buttressed tower, and lichens glowing on the Horsham slabs of its chapel roof, can have changed but little. Two or three of its monuments are interesting. One is a brass plate recounting the virtues and the pedigree of Edmund Slyfield and his wife Elizabeth. They were of Slyfield Place; he was "a stoute Esquire who alwaies set God's feare before his Eyes"; she was a model of all the graces, and descended from the Paulets, Capells, Sydneys, Gainsfords, Finches, Arundels, [Pg 124] Whites, and Lamberts—a good long list to bring into an epitaph, but there are twenty-eight lines of honest doggerel to do it in. Another monument is quite as striking, which represents Colonel Thomas Moore in the full uniform of the commanding officer of a regiment of foot in the reign of Queen Anne, which the sculptor's convention has idealised into a mixture of a bathing costume, a kilt, and a plaid. The church, indeed, is a museum of records of different times and tastes to a degree uncommon in far more important buildings. In the east wall of the chancel is a slab commemorating in three Latin hexameters the founding of the building by John de Rutherwyk, the great Abbot whom we meet at Chertsey; and the east window of the Slyfield chapel is dedicated, in a long, biographical inscription in brass, to the memory of Lord Raglan, who as Fitzroy James Henry Somerset, military secretary to the Duke of Wellington, lost an arm at the Duke's side at Waterloo, and forty years later commanded the British army in the East before Sebastopol, where he died. Lord Raglan's connection with Great Bookham is slight: but his niece, [Pg 125] Lady Mary Farquhar, who put up the window, lived at Polesden, a mile or two away.



Slyfield Place.

Last of the villages on the road from Guildford to Leatherhead is Fetcham. A park, a road bordered by cottages and a pretty house or two, and a battlemented church-tower deep among yews, and hollies, and ivy-trees—Fetcham is as pleasantly small and quiet as her western neighbours. But what a string of churches it is, along these twelve miles of Surrey roadway; nine villages, each with its grey-walled building and the cool whiteness of the arches, aisles, and chancels. No pilgrim of the old centuries could tire on such a journey. To-day he might. Only four of the church doors give him a welcome.

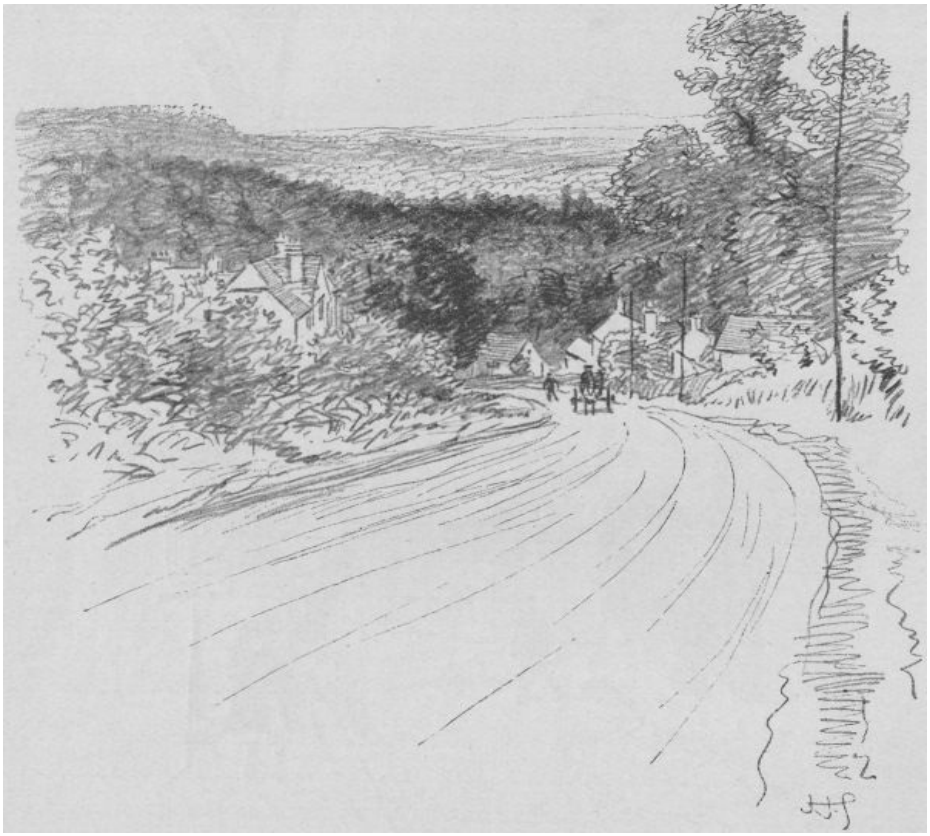
Above Fetcham's church, which, like Stoke D'Abernon and one or two others, fronts on the flowers and lawns of a private garden, great bunches of mistletoe darken the winter tree-tops. Fetcham is on the border of the mistletoe country, which stretches from Leatherhead to Dorking and Boxhill. [Pg 126]

CHAPTER XI

GODALMING

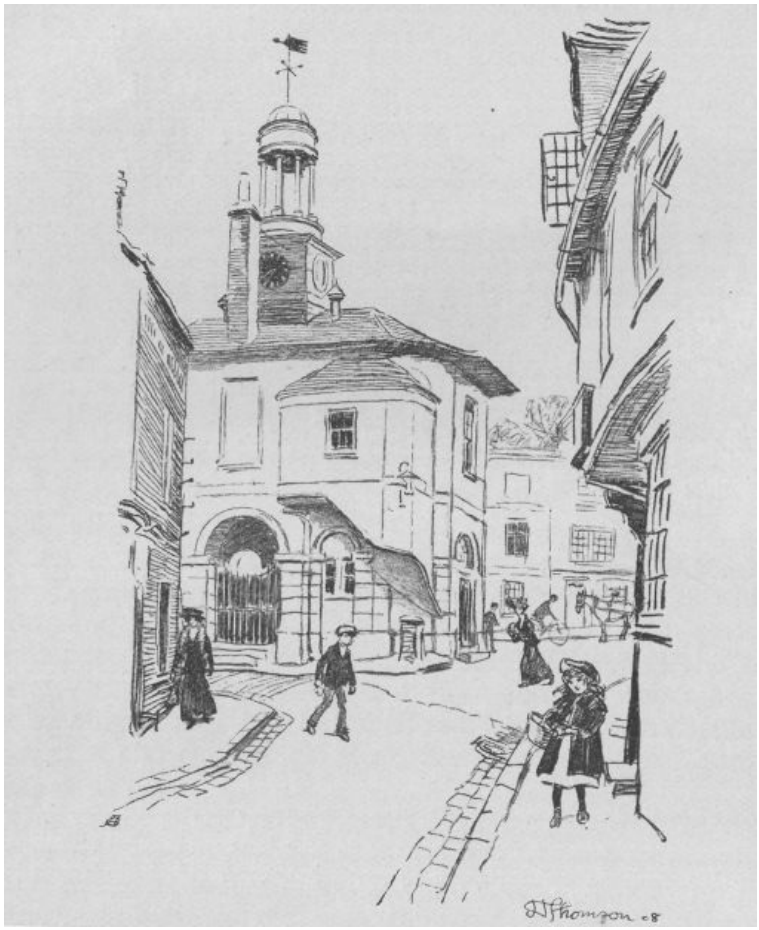
A country town.—Peter the Great's breakfast.—Pykes in the Wey.—Dogs and fish-carts.—Off to Botany Bay.—Owen Manning.—A most malignant priest.—Eashing Bridges.—Peperharow deer.—Loseley from a distance.—Charterhouse in the future.

The best view of Godalming is from the hill roads above Farncombe. Not many towns group themselves so well against hills and woods; few have so spacious and quiet a foreground. The church stands on the Wey; the churchyard runs down to the very banks, and the noble leaded spire lifts its chanticleer higher, I think, from the tower than any other church in Surrey. Between the foot of the hill and the Wey spreads wide meadowland; the Wey flows tranquilly by willow-herb and alder; beyond the Wey are the red roofs of Godalming clustered in the trees. It is the completest little country town; the green fields in front and the woods beyond set it compact together, clustered as a country town should be about its church and its High Street, with the river running clear at its side.



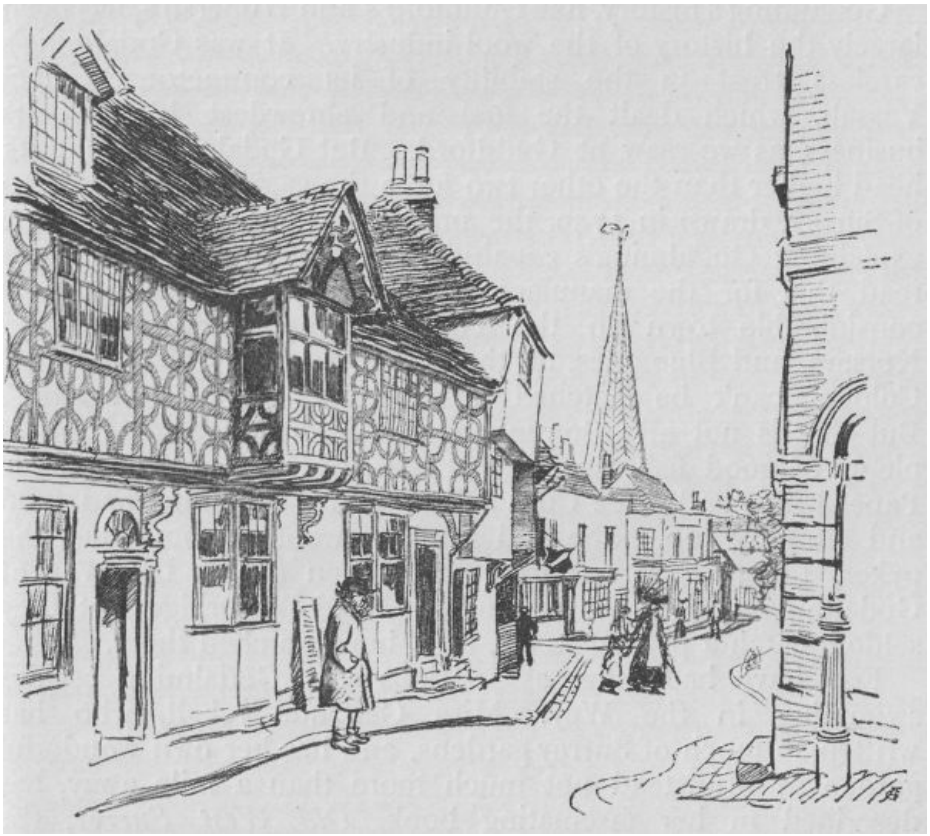
On the Way to Godalming from Haslemere.

Godalming High Street has not kept the grace of Guildford, nor had it ever the width and the air of Epsom or Farnham, but it has more than one building of distinction, and its links with the past are in old inns, timbered stories and forgotten courts. The White Hart still juts its wooden beams over the pavement; the King's Arms, a later building, has a square-set front which has watched many coaches jangle off to Portsmouth. The King's Arms has had more than one king as a guest. The Emperor Alexander I of Russia and King Frederick William of Prussia dined there in the year before Waterloo; a more famous and a more greedy monarch who knew the King's Arms was [Pg 127] Peter the Great in the days of Queen Anne. He had a suite of twenty with him, and the record of his bill of fare for the day is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. I have not seen it, but the historians who have supply abounding details. Peter and his twenty had for breakfast besides side-dishes, half a sheep, half a lamb, ten pullets, a dozen chickens, seven dozen eggs and something over a quart apiece of mulled wine, with a gallon or so of brandy. Dinner was a better meal; three stone of ribs of beef was the main dish, with a sheep, a lamb, and a couple of joints of veal to help it out; capons and rabbits tempted the jaded, and four dozen of sack and wine made up for what was lacking at breakfast. [Pg 128]



The Town Hall, Godalming.

Besides the inns, two old houses in particular set their mark on the High Street. One is dated 1663; both are of rich brickwork, almost extravagantly ornate with ledges, patterned courses, elaborate parapets and casements. The unhappy addition is the paint. If they had never been painted, or if the paint could be done away with, the pattern would take on twice its charm. But that is the main regret for all Godalming. If the High Street could have its false fronts pulled down, and all its old timber and brick shown to the road, it would fascinate as Guildford does. It [Pg 129] would be worth the town's while to spend money to show what it possesses of older centuries. But that is a frequent reflection in other towns.



Timbered House in the Market Place, Godalming.

One memory of the past has survived the attacks of Godalming's newest and noisiest citizens. The little Town Hall, built squarely in the middle of the road at the west end of the High Street on the

site of an older building, has been threatened by a section (I am told) of Godalming tradesmen for many years, and would tremble still, if it were not so solidly built of good Georgian brick. It is said to be awkward for motor traffic, to be not handsome, and generally to be out of date and in the way. As to its looks, it belongs to 1814, and is plain and simple enough, but it carries a graceful clock tower and a copper cupola, and its destruction is not to be thought of. The day has gone for wanton throwing into the past what the past has left, and the little Town Hall will [Pg 130] continue to slow down the traffic and draw visitors to the High Street, it is to be hoped, for many years to come. The town corporation have done better for themselves than to pull down the old Town Hall. They have set up some modern buildings for town business, which for good work in good material are as excellent a modern addition as could have been made to any old town.

Godalming's history, like Guildford's and Wonersh's, has been largely the history of the wool industry. It was Godalming's careless trust in the stability of its contractor, Samuel Vassall, which dealt the first and shrewdest blow at its business, as we saw at Guildford. But Godalming kept its head higher than the other two for a time. In Bowen's map of Surrey, drawn in 1749, the printer has put a little side-note explaining Godalming's capabilities to the curious, and you read that for the manufacture of clothing, "it is the most considerable town in the county. The sorts are mixed Kerseys, and Blue ones, for the Canary Islands, which for their Colours, can't be matched in any other Part of England." But that is not all; Bowen adds an afterthought—"Here is plenty of good fish, especially Pykes. Here are two or three Paper Mills, and three Corn Mills." So Godalming had food and clothing too. She still markets woollen goods, but the pykes, I fear, gave out long ago. Men fish in the Wey at Godalming as they fish at Guildford and Weybridge, but they seldom catch a pyke, I know, for I have watched them.

Fish have had other associations with Godalming besides swimming in the Wey. Miss Gertrude Jekyll, who has written so much of Surrey gardens, and has her own wonderful garden at Munstead not much more than a mile away, has described in her fascinating book, *Old West Surrey*, the carrying of fish for the London market from the seaport towns through Godalming. It was taken in special fish-vans. "They were painted yellow and had four horses. But some of it, as well as supplies for other inland places, was carried in little carts drawn by dogs. The dogs were big, strong Newfoundlands. Teams of two or four were harnessed together. The team of four would carry three to four hundredweight of fish, besides the driver. The man would 'cock his legs up along the sharves,' as an old friend describes it, and away they would go at a great rate. They not only went as fast as the coaches, but they gained time when the coach stopped to change [Pg 131] horses, and so got the pick of the market. A dog-drawn cart used to bring fish from Littlehampton to Godalming, where oysters were often to be bought for three a penny." Three a penny, fresh oysters! Fourpence a dozen all alive! The street cries must have been most encouraging.

Other memories of old Godalming Miss Jekyll has preserved, one of them her own, of a carrier-cart plying between Bramley and Guildford drawn by dogs. Then there were the coaches that stopped at the King's Arms and the Red Lion and other inns; Godalming, on the road to Portsmouth, saw traffic which was merry and miserable. Sometimes a coach would swing into the town carrying sixteen sailors, four inside and twelve out, paid off from a man-of-war and going to London to spend their money. They would walk back. Sometimes a midnight coach would bring unhappier passengers; gangs of convicts in chains would be given something to eat at the Red Lion; or the yard gates of the King's Arms would be closed, and armed warders would let out their prisoners for a little rest on the way to Botany Bay. But the sailors were the merry folk. They would brandish their bottles and cheer, and sometimes, when the coach swayed, would swing with it as sailors should on a sloping deck; then the coach turned over.

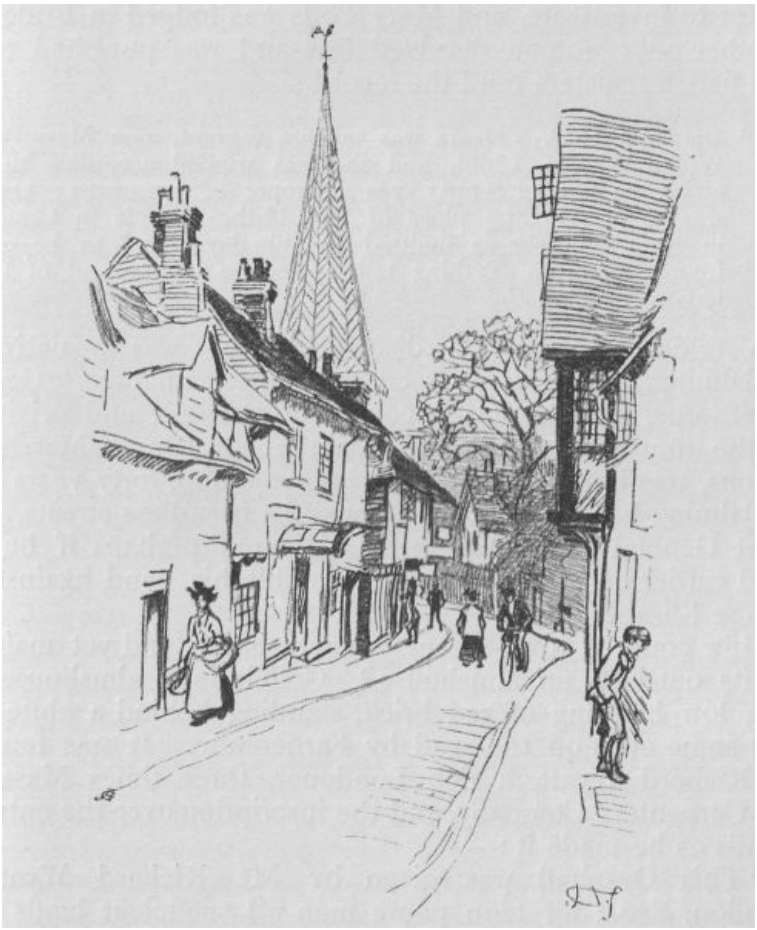
Restorers in 1840, that unhappy age for beautiful old buildings, did what they could to spoil Godalming's parish church. They packed it from floor to roof with pews and galleries, knocked off a porch here, a chantry there, doubled its accommodation and quartered its charm. Thirty-nine years later Sir Gilbert Scott and Mr. Ralph Nevill did their best to repair the injury and show the Norman pillars as they should be, but some of the injury done was final. Still, the church within and without is a noble building, and the leaden spire which soars up from the tower is the finest in the county. The church has had at least three famous vicars. One was Owen Manning, famous perhaps against his will, for he asked that no monument for him should be added to the church. His epitaph should be *Si monumentum requiris*, *perlege*, for he was the originator and part author of the history of the county which was finished, as we saw at Shere, by William Bray. Owen Manning's was a great mind, but he had a great heart as well; for the work he did for his book sent him blind at seventy-five, and he bore five more years of life knowing that he had not [Pg 132] been suffered to finish what he had begun. He died in 1801; and there is a curious story that he was nearly buried alive when he was a boy. He had had the small-pox and was actually laid out for dead. His father went in to see him, raised him in his arms saying, "I will give my dear boy another chance," and as he did so, saw signs of returning life.

Another vicar was Samuel Speed, grandson of the John Speed who made the maps, and at one time he was chaplain of the fleet when Lord Ossory fought the Dutch. Sir John Birkenhead immortalised him in a ballad on the fight:—

> His chaplain, he plyed his wonted work,
> He prayed like a Christian, and fought like a Turk,
> Crying now for the King, and the Duke of York,
> With a thump, a thump, thump!

Another of Godalming's clergy was the Reverend Nicholas Andrewes, who came into severe

collisions with his parishioners. They petitioned Parliament against being compelled to bear with him any longer. They charged him among other offences with "preachinge but seldom, and then alsoe but in a verie fruytlesse and unprofitable mann^{r}." They urged that he was "a Haunter, and frequenter of tiplinge in Innes, and tavernes, and useth gameinge both at cards and Table as well uppon the Lords dayes as others." They accused him of having declined to church one Mrs. Buckley "when she came to church and sate there all the tyme of dyvine service, because she was not attyred with an hanginge kerchief." They said that he kept a curious crucifix "in a Boxe with foldinge windowes." Finally, John Monger and John Tichborne alleged "that the said vicar and M^{r}. Wayferar, Parson of Compton, in the said Countie of Surry, roade to Southampton, to eate Fishe and to make merrie togeather, and there (dyverse tymes) drank healthes to the Pope calling him that honest olde man." So much, and more, the parishioners had to say against him. He was decided to be a Malignant Priest; White, in his *First Century of Scandalous and Malignant Ministers*, arraigns him, among other offences, for having "expressed himself to be an enemy to frequent preaching, inveighing in his sermons against long Sermons, saying that Peters sword cut off but one eare, but long Sermons like long swords cut off both at once, and that the Surfeit [Pg 133] of the Word is of all most dangerous, and that the silliest creatures have longest eares, and that preaching was the worst part of God's worship, and that if he left out anything he would leave out that." And that, for Mr. Andrewes, was the end; a man who lost his living because he would rather pray than preach.



Church Street, Godalming.

Two women have left records behind them, one strange and the other cruel, in the parish annals. One was a remarkable person named Mary Tofts, wife of a clothworker, who in 1726 professed to have had a lamentable misadventure. She asserted that while she was weeding in a field she was [Pg 134] startled by a rabbit jumping up near her, and that subsequently, she presented her husband, instead of a fine boy, with quantities of rabbits. The effect of the announcement was prodigious. More than one well-known physician believed her implicitly; pamphlets were published on clinics, Hogarth printed a cut of the Wise Men of Godlyman; nobody would eat a rabbit; at last Queen Caroline ended the business by sending her own doctor to investigate, and Mary Tofts was lodged in Bridewell. Another poor woman deceived less and was punished more. The parish registers hold the record.

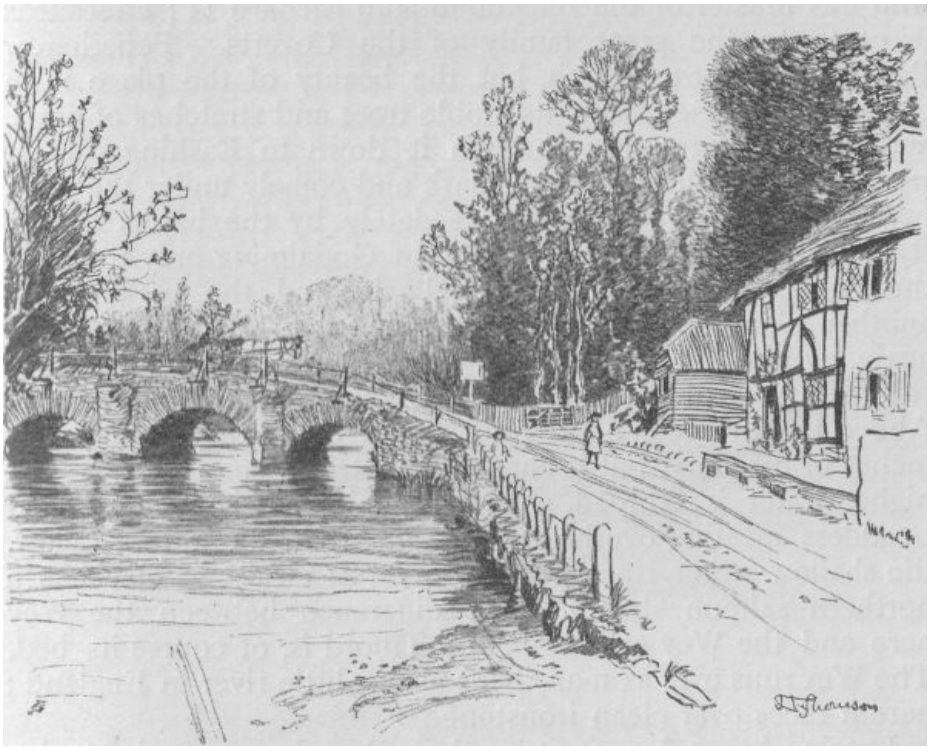
> Aprill the 26th 1658. Heare was taken a vagrant, one Mary Parker, Widow with a Child, and she was wipped according to law, about the age of Thirty years, proper of personage; and she was to goo to the place of her birth, that is in Grauesend in Kent, and she is limitted to iiij days, and to be carried from Tithing to Tything tell she comes to the end of the s^{d} jerney.

A reformer of prison discipline, who was a native of Godalming, would have read the entry with rage. General Oglethorpe, founder of the colony of Georgia, and originator of the inquiry into the state of the Fleet and Marshalsea prisons, was born at Westbrook in Godalming forty years after Godalming beat the woman through its friendless streets. We meet General Oglethorpe at

Haslemere; perhaps if he had lived earlier he would have dared to lift his hand against the savage Elizabethan law.

How could a town assent to such shame, and yet maintain on its outskirts an almshouse? Godalming's almshouse is a long low building of red brick, standing behind a white gate and some elms on the road by Farncombe. It was founded by Richard Wyatt, a rich Londoner, three times Master of the Carpenters' Company, and the inscription over the entrance stands as he made it:—

> "This Oyspitall was given by M^{r}. Richard Wyatt of London, Esq.: for tenn poore men wth sueficient lands to it for y^{ier} mayntenance for eve^{r}, 1622."



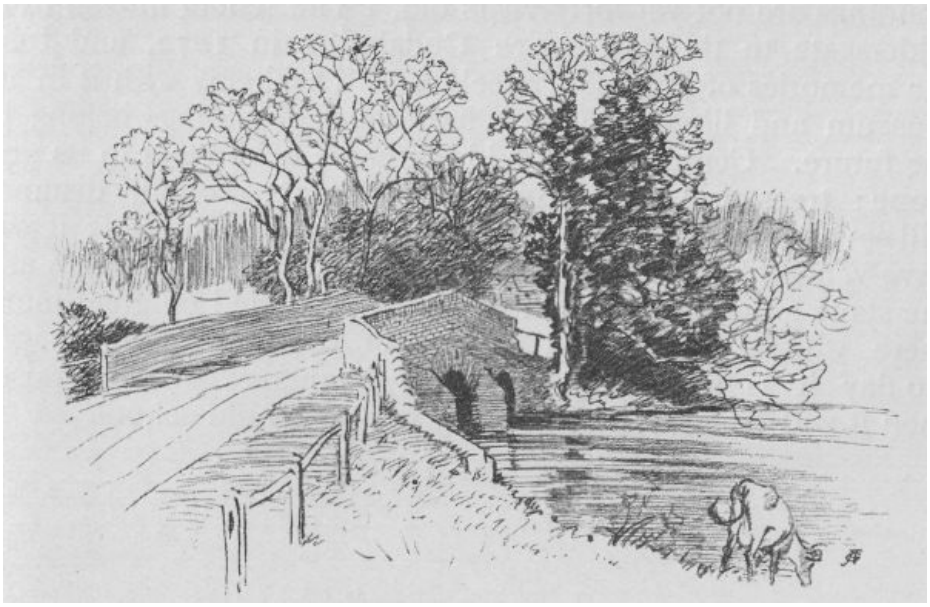
Eashing.

Farncombe is Godalming's suburb, and from above its hilly streets can be had a strangely romantic view of the valley by Guildford, with St. Martha's chapel crowning the hill. From Farncombe, too, you may take one of the prettiest walks of all by the Wey, through rich fields of [Pg 135] grass ennobled with bordering elms, and with the Wey running here level with you through meadowsweet and iris, and here below the footpath, seen through the trees. If you push up stream, you will come to Eashing Bridge, one of the oldest and strongest of Surrey bridges, and now a national possession, secured from attacks of brick and iron by the Society for Preserving Places of Historic Interest—an admirable Society. Eashing Bridge, or rather Bridges, for it crosses the Wey twice, and has more than five buttresses standing in the water, has stood over the Wey for more than seven centuries. The old engineers perhaps built over a stronger Wey than to-day's, for they made the buttresses that point up stream to divide the water; on the other side they are round and blunt. The time to stand on Eashing Bridge is when it is quietest, on a Sunday morning. Up stream is the mill, humming out one of the best of all songs of water; to the left is a row of timbered cottages, cream-painted brick and black beams, and gay when I saw them on a [Pg 136] blue August morning with sweet peas and dahlias; a villager and his wife gathered fruit in a garden banked above the road, and white-frocked, black-stockinged children sat demurely in the cottage doorways. But there is a patch of corrugated iron by the Eashing cottages and bridge which calls for a Society of Destroyers.

Godalming has two fine parks for neighbours, Peperharow and Loseley. Peperharow, which became the first Lord Midleton's in 1712, once belonged to Sir Bernard Brocas, who was Master of the Buckhounds to Richard II; afterwards it came to the great family of the Coverts. Peperharow Park has its own church, but the beauty of the place is in the parkland itself, with its noble trees and stretches of grass, and the Wey running through it down to Eashing. Deer wander in the sunshine there, dark and comely under the great cedars, or grazing slowly and sedately by the banks of the stream. One might walk out from Godalming only to watch the Peperharow deer; but a walk beyond the park brings another pleasure. Above Peperharow the Wey is bridged again, by stone as old, I think, as at Eashing: the buttress of the main part of the bridge is the same shape as Eashing's. Above the bridge is a fall built across the stream: only a few inches of masonry, but it changes the stream completely. The higher water is a broad, shadowy pool, cooled and darkened by alders meeting overhead and dipping in the water; below, the shallow water ripples over stones, as clear and black as a northern salmon stream. The difference between the Wey here and the Wey at Eashing or Tilford is, of course its bed. The Wey runs over as many beds as any little river in England; here it races over clean ironstone.

Loseley has a longer story than Peperharow, and Loseley House is a very fine old Tudor building, the best, perhaps, in Surrey, after Sutton. Sir William More built most of it, and took much of the

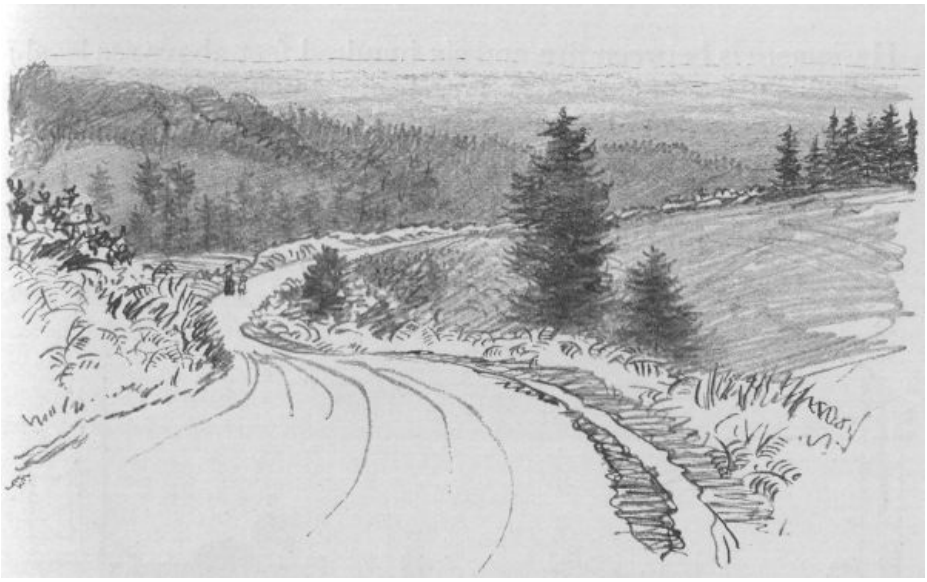
stone from Waverley Abbey, for which it would be difficult to forgive him if he had made a less beautiful house. Sir William More was son of Sir Christopher, Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex under Henry VIII. Sir Christopher first had the estate in 1515; at the Domesday Survey the Earl of Arundel had it. The family history of the Mores is too long for a chapter; so would be a detailed list of the furniture and pictures of the house, some of which are catalogued in the guide-books, [Pg 137] though the general public may see them but seldom. The house has had royal visitors; Queen Elizabeth came to see Sir William More there, and King James and his son were both guests of Sir George More, Sir William's son. It was Sir George More who was so furious with his daughter for marrying John Donne, though he lived to be good enough to forgive her.



The Wey above Peperharow.

I like to look at these great houses from a distance. When one enters a house that has been used by an historic family for generations, the first thing that demands attention is far more often than not something new, an alteration, an adaptation of old means to new methods. The mark set on the house is of the living, and the fascination of it belongs to other years gone. But distance blots out all the innovations; the haze of half a mile sets it in the landscape as it has stood for centuries. I like to look at Loseley from the dusty, forgotten places of the old pilgrims' road passing at the boundary of the park; not that the pilgrims ever saw Loseley, but the old countrymen still using the road would have seen it first, perhaps, from that ancient trackway, and have wondered what manner of man its master might be, and how much he paid for the building of it, and whether the King or the Queen would be coming to Loseley again soon. That is the [Pg 138] Loseley they would have seen; a noble dwelling of grey gables and spacious windows, looking over broad parkland and wide water with red cattle standing in it, flicking at the flies with their tails. So, perhaps, would Henry Wriothesley, second Earl of Southampton, have looked at Loseley from a distance, when Elizabeth sent him there, the Papist prisoner of Sir William More. He would have glanced doubtfully up and down the old road and wondered over the hopelessness of escape.

Godalming's nearest, and in point of size, its greatest neighbour is Charterhouse. Charterhouse is the name; the buildings are not yet forty years old. The school moved from Aldersgate to the hill above Godalming in 1872, and took the memories of Addison, Steele, and Thackeray with it in its museum and library. The Charterhouse buildings belong to the future. Centuries will add the grace of dulness to its new stone; trees will grow round its cricket ground, distance will set a haze round the names of its Surrey schoolboys; it will have venerable wood, there will be legends of the passages and the stairs; the doors will have been darkened by great men; there will be a film and a glory of years about its chapel. To-day it is admirably arranged, hygienic beyond praise: then it will be an old building as well as an old school. [Pg 139]



View from Hindhead.

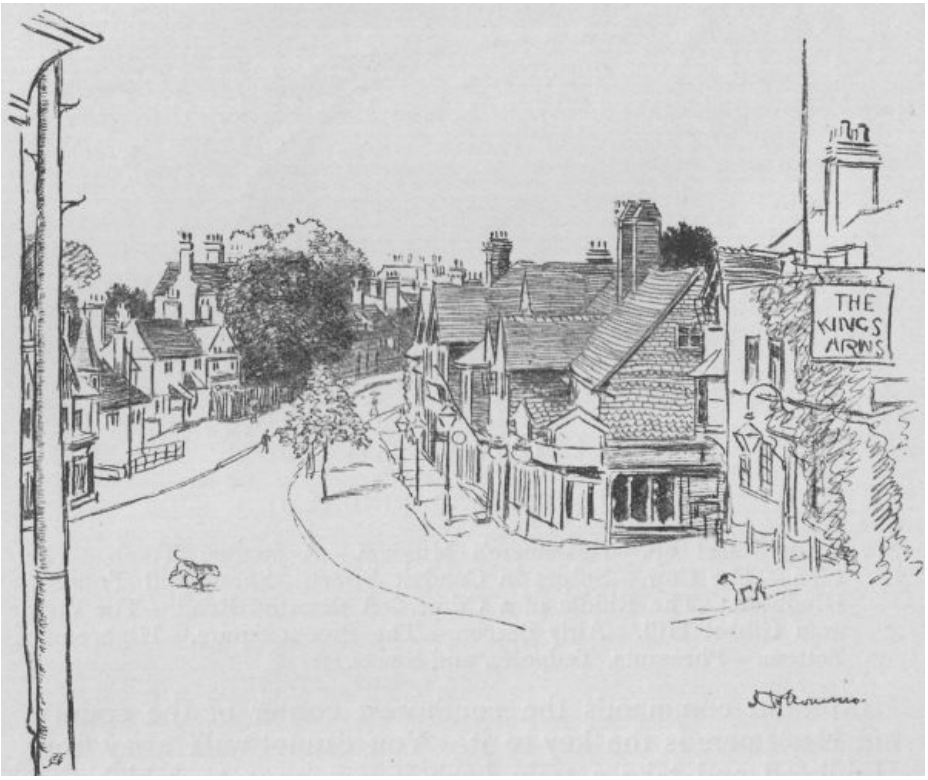
CHAPTER XII

HASLEMERE AND HINDHEAD

Six hundred feet up.—Haslemere's Museum.—A strange Tomb.—The Lion.—The Cow.—Snipes in Conduit Street.—Shottermill Trout.—Hindhead.—The Riddle of a Crime.—A deserted Road.—The View from Gibbet Hill.—Airly Beacon.—The Broom Squire.—Highcombe Bottom.—Pheasants, Tadpoles, and Swifts.

Hindhead commands the south-west corner of the county, but Haslemere is the key to it. You cannot walk away from Hindhead and take a train back if you want to, which you ought always to be able to do from a centre. Besides, to return to Hindhead is to end with a steep hill to climb; coming back to Haslemere, you can either drop down the hill from Hindhead, or the railway will carry you uphill to the little town from Milford or Witley down the line.

It is really uphill, for Haslemere lies higher than any town in the south of England—or is said to do so; I have not measured them all. I think Tatsfield and Woldingham in the east of the county lie higher; but they are villages, not towns. Haslemere is between five and six hundred feet above sea level; as high as Newlands Corner and nearly three times the height of St. George's or St. Anne's Hill. If Hindhead were sliced away, Haslemere's view to the north would be superb. [Pg 140]



Haslemere.

Haslemere has strayed higher and higher on the slopes above the old town. The core lies round a

broad street in which the White Horse faces the Swan, and the town hall stands between them, a rather dull little building, in the middle of the road. The town has kept less of the past than Farnham; perhaps it had less to keep; but it has some good red seventeenth-century houses, weather-tiled gables, and tall brick chimneys. Toadflax and arabis climb over the old garden walls: one little house looks as if its walls were held together by coils of wistaria. In another, a square, comfortable building with an elaborate doorway, lived the water-colour painter and wood engraver, Josiah Wood Whymper, father of the Whymper whom a later generation knows best as a painter of animals and game birds. [Pg 141]

The most interesting interior in Haslemere is the museum. It was presented to the town by Dr. Jonathan Hutchinson, and teaches history, geology, botany and everything to do with Haslemere's (and other) birds, beasts, and reptiles. You may study the development of the world from the birth of life perhaps thirty-one million years ago—that is the age Haslemere teaches—down to the present day. Skulls of elephants, antelopes, hippopotamuses, rhinoceroses, gorillas and giraffes instruct the zoologist; local vipers and grass snakes curl in spirits of wine; stuffed quadrupeds, including a large kangaroo, illustrate climates foreign to Haslemere; local ornithologists contribute cases of the birds of the neighbourhood. Witley sends a case of crossbills; twenty years ago a pair of hen harriers—or are they Montagu's harriers?—were killed on Hindhead; a blackcock guards his grey hen, and was shot not far away. Are blackcock extinct in Surrey? The last Lord Midleton wrote to *The Times* some years ago to state his belief that they were. At Frensham I was told that the last pair were shot in 1889. But Mr. E.D. Swanton, the curator of the Haslemere Museum, learned in everything that a museum should hold, from Celtic pottery to caterpillars, told me when I was at Haslemere that he had seen a pair (I write in 1908) only two years ago. He was not at all certain that there were no more blackcocks in the county. But I fear the villas have been too much for them.

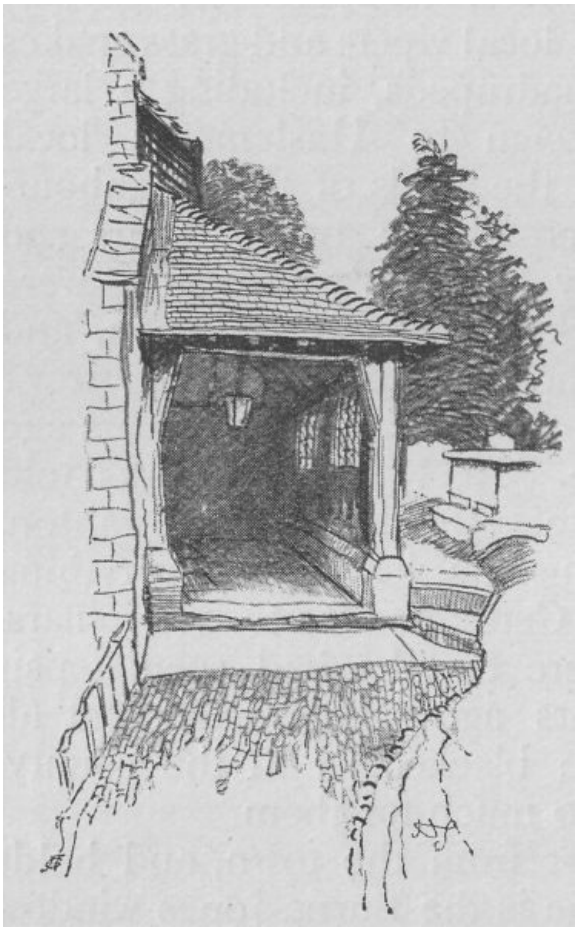
The church stands a little apart from the town, and holds two very different memorials. One is the Burne-Jones window to the memory of Tennyson, who lived at Aldworth on Black Down over the border; the other is a strange, rough heap of peat and heather, piled inside the gate of the churchyard. Under it lies John Tyndall. He was one of the discoverers of Hindhead as a place to live in instead of merely a hill to climb; the tragedy of his death is a recent memory. It was his wish that his grave should be no more than a mound of heather, but such wishes can end unhappily. If the grave is neglected, perhaps that is what he hoped it would be; but neglect, can grow into something worse. When I last saw the grave—perhaps on an unfortunate day—the heather had somehow collected newspapers and empty jampots; it looked like soon becoming a rubbish heap. [Pg 142]

A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* visited Haslemere in 1801 and described the painted glass in the windows. One of them he catalogued thus:

> "Offering of the Wise Men. Among the numerous presents, I distinguished some fine hams, poultry, and mutton."

A recent inspection fails to distinguish among the numerous presents either fine hams or mutton.

Years ago Haslemere had a lion. It was an old beech tree, twenty feet in girth, and the late Louis Jennings, in his *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, tells us that since Murray's *Handbook* spoke of a lion, he searched for it for long, and when he found it he was disappointed. To-day it is a stump, or is said to be, but nobody could show it me; I am sure I looked for it longer than Louis Jennings, but I never found it. All I found was what will perhaps some day grow into another lion—a beech tree and a holly apparently growing from the same root.



A Porch at Haslemere Church.

Haslemere's history is mostly political, and not always very respectable. Elizabeth, perhaps, made the village a borough; at all events, two members sat for Haslemere first in the Parliament of 1584, and two members represented the borough until it was unkindly abolished by the reforms of 1832. Some of its members came of old Surrey families—Carews, Mores, Oglethorpes, Onslows, Evelyns; and some of its elections were highly irregular. One of the most successful pieces of jobbery stands to the credit of the year 1754, when the Tory sitting members, General Oglethorpe and Peter Burrell, were opposed by two Whigs, James More Molyneux and Philip Carteret Webb, a London lawyer. Molyneux and Webb were elected by 73 votes to 45, but some [Pg 143] at least of the 73 (perhaps also some of the 45) would not have borne strict investigation. Eight of the winning votes were faggot votes manufactured out of the Cow Inn, of Haslemere, which inspired Dr. William King, Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, to a ballad of forty-two verses, entitled *The Cow of Haslemere, or The Conjurer's Secretary at Oxford*. Dr. King liked politics in poetry to be hot and strong, thus:—

"No Man could hear,
But he must fear
Her loud infernal Roar,
Such horrid Lies,
And Blasphemies
She bellow'd out and swore.

But what must make
The stoutest quake,
And all with Horror gape,
At one strange Birth,
This Cow cast forth
Eight Calves in human Shape.

For in this Cow
Each did somehow
A Tenement possess,
How big this Beast
Must be at least
From hence, Sirs, ye may guess.

The Crew march'd out,
An horrid Rout,
No Bear's Cubs could be bolder!
Each calf did vote,
And swear by Rote
He was a good Freeholder."

One, at least, of Haslemere's members was more than a mere party politician. General James Edward Oglethorpe, who was defeated on the occasion of the Cow's remarkable parturition, was the son of a former member, Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe, and sat for Haslemere from 1722 till he was beaten at the poll. He was the great philanthropist of his day; he was the generous and active friend of imprisoned debtors; he was the founder of the colony of Georgia, and a general who held a position with 650 men against 5,000 Spaniards. It was General Oglethorpe who obtained an inquiry by Parliament into the management of the Fleet and Marshalsea prisons. A friend of his named Castell had been thrown into the Fleet for debt, and because he could not pay [Pg 144] the warder's dues had been shut in a house where the small-pox was raging: he took the disease and died. Oglethorpe was thoroughly roused, and the inquiry held into the gaol system of the country was the beginning of his work for debtors and prisoners. Later, he got Parliamentary sanction and large sums of money to found a colony of emigrant debtors in the New World, made friends with the Creek and the Choctaw Indians, fought the Spaniards, and planted the roots of his little settlement so firmly that he lived to see Georgia acknowledged by the Mother Country as a sovereign independent State.

Some years ago there was an exhibition of Old Haslemere held at the Museum, of which Mr. Swanton very kindly gave me particulars. One of the pictures lent by Mr. J.W. Penfold, an old, if not the oldest, inhabitant, shows General Oglethorpe with the accompanying note:-"General James Oglethorpe. Died 30th June, 1785, Aged 102, said to be the oldest General in Europe. Sketched from life at the sale of Dr. Johnson's books, February 18, 1785, where the General was reading a book he had purchased without spectacles. In 1706 he had an Ensign Commission in the Guards, and remember'd to have shot snipes in Conduit Mead, where Conduit Street now stands." The compiler of the note may have been right about the snipes, but he was wrong about the General's age, for he was no more than 96. But the admirable caution of the phrase "said to be" remains on record.

When Haslemere was finally deprived of its two members, the local reformers were jubilant. One of them, in *The Burial of the Boroughs*, printed at Petersfield in 1832, burst into verse:—

"Old Borough-bridge is broken down,
  In spite of its proud pier;
And Seaford, too, is just dry'd up,
  And so is Hasle-mere.

It is not strange they've damn'd Newport,
  It is such cursed trash;
And where's the gourmand would complain
  For kicking out Salt-ash.

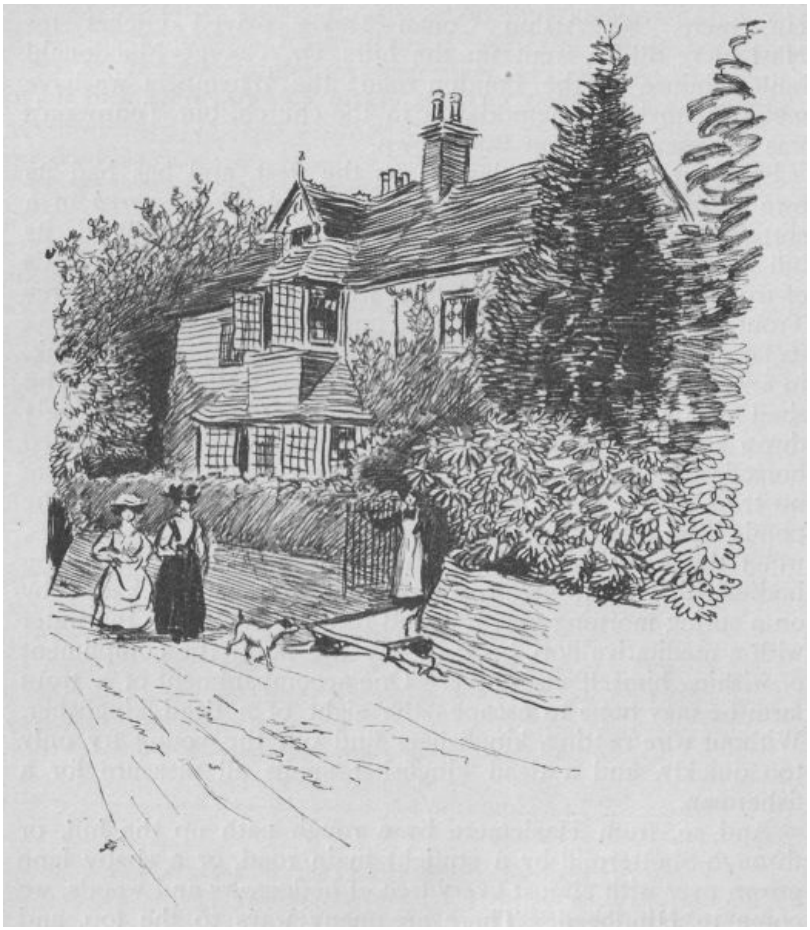
Toll, toll: these Boroughs ne'er will be
  By us through life forgotten;
Nor will their patrons when they lie,
  Just like their Boroughs, rotten."

[Pg 145]

After the burial of the rotten boroughs came the railway, and a long time after the railway the artists and authors. Most of them climbed further, up to Hindhead, but Haslemere kept a few. Mrs. Allingham painted the Haslemere fish-shop and other village scenes, though she lived nearer Witley than Haslemere. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle played cricket for Haslemere till he went up the hill: Dr. George Macdonald built a house on the London road: the Whympers we have met. Tennyson's memorial is in the church, but Tennyson's was a Sussex home, on Blackdown.

Shottermill joins Haslemere on the west, and has had its own author. George Eliot wrote much of *Middlemarch* in a cottage near the church. Fishermen know Shottermill, for its hillsides are ladders of small ponds, in which tens of thousands of trout have been bred for other, wilder streams. The Surrey Trout Farm began its existence in one of these chains of ponds; its farmers breed their Loch Levens and rainbows now, I think, in another chain. What is the *métier* of a trout farm? Who shall decide? There are fishermen who would never knowingly throw a fly over a trout that had been hand-fed with chopped horseflesh; and there are other fishermen who, if there were no trout farms, would never have anything to fish for. The ponds have their own fascination; not, perhaps, at meal-times, when the water is lashed to froth by the darting, gleaming bodies—that is too greedy a business. But when a passer-by on a spring morning sees a pound fish fall back into the water with a meditative flop, he may pay the pond the compliment of wishing himself elsewhere. One accompaniment of a trout farm he may hope to escape—the sight of a dead kingfisher. Without wire netting, kingfishers find out the young fry only too quickly, and a dead kingfisher spoils all pleasure for a fisherman.

And so, from Haslemere by a rough path up the hill, or through Shottermill by a straight main road, or a shady lane grown over with almost every tree of hedgerows and woods, we come to Hindhead. There are many ways to the top, and these, though in some ways the most convenient, are not the best. But the best, which is to reach it by the old Portsmouth road from Thursley, can be kept for later in the day. The worst way to see Hindhead is to follow the motor-cars up the main road. The motor-cars see the road, but never Hindhead at all. [Pg 146]



Brookbank Cottage, Shottermill, where George Eliot lived for a time.

Hindhead is the most superb and the most disappointing thing in Surrey. A quarter of a century ago it was wild moorland; then Professor Tyndall proclaimed that since he could not go to the Bel Alp, he would go to the next best place, and from that day the hill has changed to streets, villas, and hotels. London arrives every Saturday: London swarms on Sunday. But you can still see, or can guess, something of the grandeur and loneliness of the place; best, perhaps, on the east and [Pg 147] the northern slopes towards Thursley; most fully, alone on the highest point, Gibbet Hill.

Hindhead, before the town came there, had a grisly sound in the name. The Hindhead murder has grown from a sordid case of robbery and killing into one of the great crimes of English local history. Nothing would have seemed less likely to the murderers. Probably not one of them could read or write; perhaps any sensible calculation of the chances of escape was beyond them; possibly they never planned the murder at all. Their crime, in a sense, was paltry; if it had never been discovered, there would have been no further consequences; no one but the murdered man, so far as can be told, was injured; the man was never missed nor owned by a friend. The murder of a king reshapes history; an assassinated Minister may change a Constitution; the killing of this man, apparently, mattered to no single living soul. Yet his murderers, in all their clumsiness and ignorance, contrived a crime which should be talked of daily for a century, and should have its separate, distinct record in stone when a thousand plots and passions of regicides and usurpers should be as clean forgotten as if their record had never stained blank paper.

Where is the permanent quality? Perhaps it is murder isolated, set exactly in the light which means and belongs to murder, in the atmosphere in which all imagination of murderers moves and hides. It was at night, it was in a wild place, with the horror of a great height about it; the corpse was stripped, the man was nameless. He was a sailor, walking from London to Portsmouth on September 23rd, 1786, to look for a job. He had money in his pocket; at Esher he fell in with three men, also on the road to Portsmouth, but without money; he paid for food and drink and lodging for them, and he was last seen alive with them at the Red Lion near Thursley. Perhaps the men were followed—one account says they were watched—perhaps the finding of the body was by chance. Two cottagers, coming after them over the highest stretch of the hill, saw below them, white in the dim light, on the slope of the Punch Bowl round which the road runs, the dead body as they thought of a sheep. One climbed down and saw what it was. Pursuers rushed down the road at Sheet, near Petersfield, the three were caught, trying to sell the dead man's clothes. [Pg 148] They were tried at Kingston, and hanged in chains on the highest point of Hindhead; and there their bodies swung in the wind over every coach that drove from London to Portsmouth.

The old Portsmouth road ran over the summit of the hill. The new road, cut in 1826, winds lower down, and on the lower road the stone stands to commemorate the crime. It was moved by the Ordnance Survey from the higher ground, heedless of the warning engraved on it. On one side runs the inscription:—

ERECTED

In Detestation of a barbarous Murder
Committed here on an unknown Sailor,
On Sep^{r}. 24th, 1786,
By Edw^{d}. Lonegan, Michael Casey, and Ja^{s}. Marshall,
Who were all taken the same day,
And hung in Chains near this place.

The back of the stone informs us that it was erected by order and at the cost of James Stillwell, of Cosford, 1786, and that he lays a curse on "the man who injureth or removeth this stone." However, that had no effect on the Ordnance Surveyors.

The gibbet stood for years. Gilbert White writes to Thomas Barker from Selborne on New Year's Day, 1791:—

> The thunder storm on Dec. 23 in the morning before day was very aweful: but, I thank God, it did not do us the least harm. Two millers, in a wind-mill on the Sussex downs near Good-wood, were struck dead by lightning that morning; and part of the gibbet on Hind-head, on which two murderers were suspended, was beaten down.

Local art has depicted the scene; four original oil-paintings grace the walls of the Huts Hotel. Than the drawing of the stage-coach in full gallop up to the gibbet in the dead of night, nothing could be well more frightful.

Louis Jennings's description, in *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, of the Portsmouth road as he saw it in 1876, is worth reading at Hindhead on a summer day:—

> It is with surprise that in this lonely waste one sees, between the Devil's Punch Bowl and the top of the hill, a fine, broad, and well-kept road; nor is that surprise diminished when you come upon it, and find that it is as hard and smooth as any road in a private park can possibly be. There are very few marks of wheels to be found upon it, but abundant traces of sheep. This is the main Portsmouth road, and to any one who knows what the roads are in country places, and even in large towns, throughout the United States, this splendid thoroughfare must seem one of the greatest curiosities in England; for the traffic of London Bridge might be driven along it, and even in this steep and wild country it is kept in the most perfect order. I declare that I stood looking at that road in amazement for pretty nearly quarter of an hour, and I am inclined to think that if I had stayed there till now I should not have seen anybody or anything coming along it in either direction. Will the tide of English summer travel ever again turn towards England itself?

[Pg 149]

The tide turns every Saturday and Sunday. But besides the tide, for which policemen set traps along the level road, Hindhead maintains a colony of its own. The western side of the hill and Grayshott on the Hampshire slope are almost a town. Grayshott lies actually in Hampshire, but geographically it belongs to Hindhead; so do Waggoner's Wells, a string of ponds rather like the Shottermill trout hatchery, but set much more prettily among trees.

Of Hindhead it is as true as of other places with magnificent views, that you must live on the spot to be sure of getting them. It is only the greatest good luck that allows a casual visitor full measure of the splendour of clear air all round him, north, south, east, and west. Even if it is clear to the south it may well be misty to the north, and, of course, the angle of the sunlight makes all the difference to the sharpness with which this or that detail of scenery stands out from its surroundings. In one respect the view from the highest point of Hindhead is never perfect. To the south-east, on a neighbouring slope, the pine trees that crest the ridge block out the downs over Brighton and Newhaven. It is a pity, for only from the tower on Leith Hill, not on Leith Hill itself, is there another view in the south-east of England with so wonderful an expanse of country seen clear away to the horizon. St. George's Hill is blocked with trees, so is St. Anne's; Leith Hill is almost clear, but from Hindhead, until those unlucky pines grew up, you could see pretty nearly thirty miles on any side. Not that the Devil's Dyke and the downs beyond cannot any longer be seen from Hindhead; you can get a fine view of them a mile away to the north, from the old Portsmouth road, on the other side of the new road, but from that point the view is not nearly so fine on the other sides. The hill is not so high. On Gibbet Hill you are 895 feet above sea level according to the ordnance map; if you have no map, you can consult a brass disc which has been erected on the plateau, which gives you also other interesting information. All the distances to the neighbouring towns are marked, for instance, with the direction in which they lie as the crow flies—an admirable idea, due to the generosity of Mr. T.W. Erle of Bramshott Grange, brother of the Sir William Erle who put up the granite cross which stands close by. It will be safer, in future, perhaps, to trust to the ordnance map rather than the disc for the exact figures, for some of them have already been nearly rubbed out, and Cockney names have been scratched on the brass. There they remain, the only gibbet on Gibbet Hill.

[Pg 150]

Prose-writers have had much to say about Hindhead, among them the late Grant Allen, who pleased a not very exacting public with the not always accurate natural history of "Moorland Idylls," and shocked it with Hill-top novels. But I think no poet has written of the hill, unless it is Charles Kingsley, who surely had climbed Hindhead and looked out on the view from its bracken and heather when he wrote *Airly Beacon*. It was one of the first poems he made after coming to

Eversley, and it breathes the scent of June fern in the air and sun:—

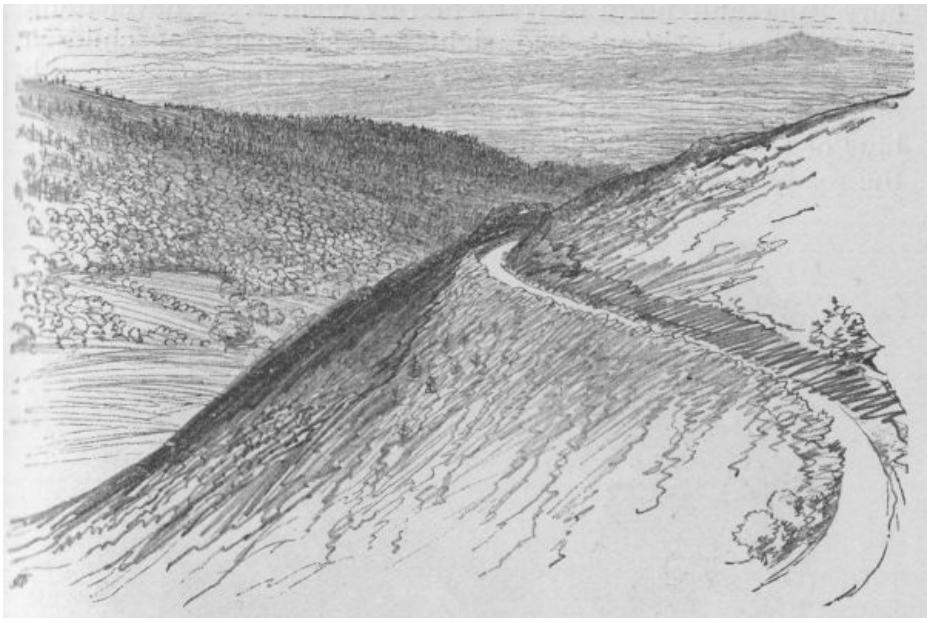
Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the pleasant sight to see
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,
  While my love climbed up to me!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the happy hours we lay
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,
  Courting through the summer's day!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the weary haunt for me,
All alone on Airly Beacon,
  With his baby on my knee!

Of other writers, Mr. Baring-Gould has come nearest to catching the spirit of the moorlands and the breeze that sometimes drifts up over Hindhead from the great glen which local myth has named the Devil's Punch Bowl. The *Broom Squire* is strangely unsatisfactory as a novel, or I find it so, with its entire needlessness and inconsequence of plot. But it has something in it of the heather and the wind, of the sand of Thursley and the steam of the Punch Bowl on a wet day; and you may still meet broom squires if you like to wander down into the deep of the glen. The best broom squire is, I think, Kingsley's, in *My Winter Garden*:— [Pg 151]

> "The clod of these parts is the descendant of many generations of broom squires and deer stealers; the instinct of sport is strong within him still, though no more of the Queen's deer are to be shot in the winter turnip fields, or worse, caught by an apple-baited hook hung from an orchard bough. He now limits his aspirations to hares and pheasants, and too probably once in his life 'hits the keeper into the river,' and reconsiders himself for a while over a crank in Winchester gaol. Well, he has his faults, and I have mine. But he is a thoroughly good fellow nevertheless. Civil, contented, industrious, and often very handsome; a far shrewder fellow too—owing to his dash of wild forest blood from gipsy, highwayman, and what not—than his bullet-headed and flaxen-polled cousin, the pure South Saxon of the chalk downs. Dark-haired he is, ruddy, and tall of bone; swaggering in his youth: but when he grows old a thorough gentleman, reserved, stately, and courteous as a prince...."



The Devil's Punch Bowl, from Gibbet Hill.

Perhaps broom squires belong more properly to Thursley and the moors. They are a disappearing race, and I have met few of them. But their cottages, some of then mantled with ivy, some of them broken and tumbling, some empty altogether, stand along the slopes of Highcombe Bottom, which is the glen of the Punch Bowl, and dot themselves here and there by the sandy lanes to the north. Compared with the loneliness of some of these lanes, the wildest tract of Hindhead is a garden. The flowerless, silent shade of a lane by Highcombe Bottom in August, when no birds are singing, is the most solitary thing in the countryside. But on Hindhead there is always wild life [Pg 152] moving. I have seen strange visitors there; as strange as any were a brood of pheasants, almost on the highest ridge. Or perhaps even odder hill-dwellers are the tadpoles which swarm in the summer in the little pools on the highest ridge itself. What should frogs be doing on Hindhead? Perhaps they are toads. But the happiest and the most graceful of all living things on Hindhead are the swifts. To me, indeed, they are a part of the place; they belong to that hot clear air over the height of the downs, to the sense of immense distance of green fields spread south to Chanctonbury Ring and north to Nettlebed by Henley. I never think of Hindhead without two

sights of summer; of children wandering over the hillside with their lips stained with bilberries; and the swifts sailing in royal circles high in the blue or screaming in pursuing companies, close and low over the roadway down the hill.

The Post Office, Churt.

[Pg 153]

The Red Lion, Thursley.

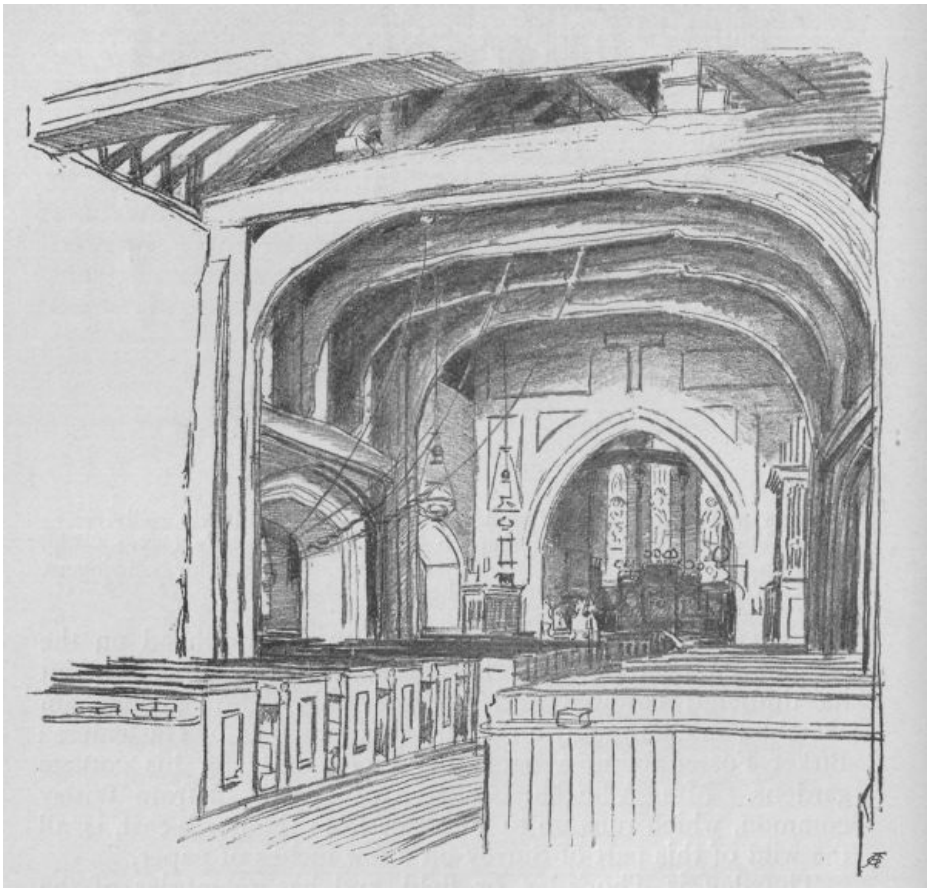
CHAPTER XIII

THURSLEY AND THE MOORS

Painters among heather.—The Devil's Jumps.—The Devil redivivus.—Cobbett at Thursley.—A superb belfry.—The Sailor's Grave.—Pig-iron and hammers.—The natterjack at eve.—A plank for bellringers.—Witley fifty years hence.—Mehetabel in the church.

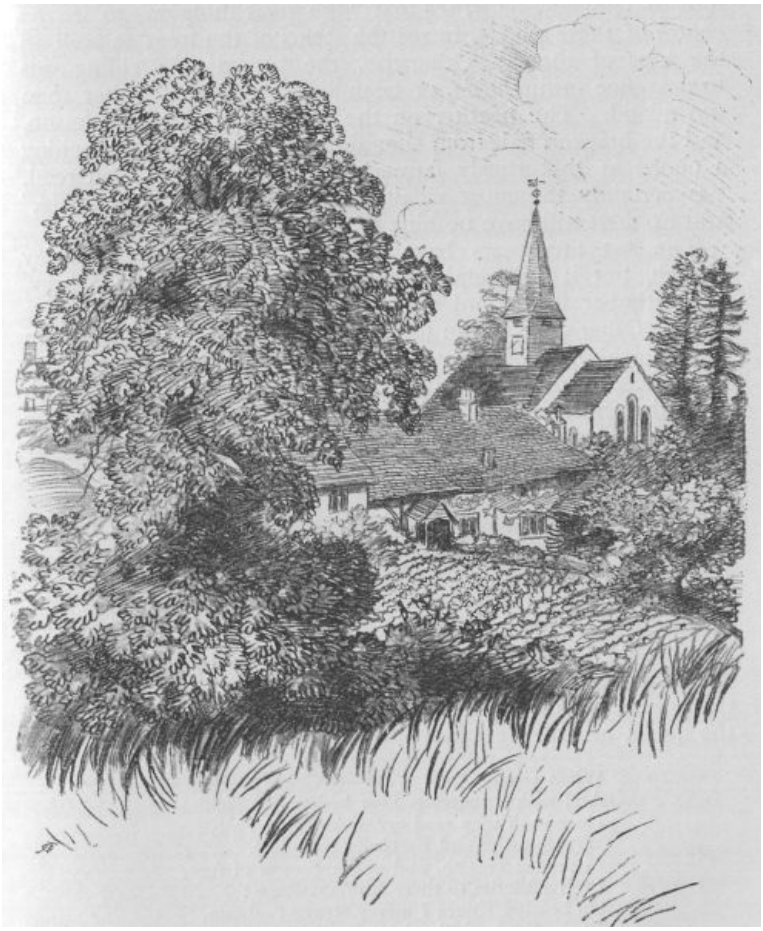
Thursley lies nearly three miles north of Hindhead on the edge of the heather, and brings artists all the summer to paint its timbered cottages and glowing hills. Mrs. Allingham sketched as charmingly on Thursley common as by Haslemere; Birket Foster found a background of purple for his cottage gardens. Mrs. Allingham's sketch of Hindhead from Witley common, which runs up to Thursley from the north-east, is all the wild of this part of Surrey on a few inches of paper.

Thursley is Thor's ley or field, and has memories of the Danes. They left other names near: Tuesley, or Tuesco's field, lies towards Godalming, and Thunder Hill, near Elstead, is Thor's or Thunor's. Thor lives in local legends. Three strange conical hills, lying close together two miles or so west of Thursley, have been known since his day as the Devil's Jumps. Tradition draws a frightful picture of the Devil, horns and tail and all, jumping from hill to hill to amuse himself, [Pg 154] until one day Thor caught him at it and knocked him over with an enormous stone. You can see the stone on the Devil's Jumps to-day.



Interior of Thursley Church.

The Devil jumped up again when I was last looking at the Jumps. I had climbed to the top of Kettlebury Hill, a mile away, and was looking out over those strange little lumps of rock and crimson heather, which puzzled Cobbett to the end of his days, when suddenly at my feet there started up a rabbit as black as a cinder, leapt wildly about the heather, and disappeared. There [Pg 155] could have been very little doubt what that meant long after Thor's time.



Thursley.

Cobbett, riding in from Hampshire or Sussex, used to make Thursley his first stopping-place. But one thing he would not do, and that was to come into Thursley over Hindhead. He detested [Pg 156] turnpike roads, and he detested Hindhead. He liked to ride through woods, or along lanes with trees meeting overhead. When he rides from Chiddingford to Thursley, he writes that "the great thing was to see the centre of these woods, to see the stems of the trees as well as the tops of them." Otherwise, the pleasure in riding was to pass fine turnip-fields, or bean-fields; anything rather than waste land. The heather on the hills might glow to crimson, and the bracken fade from emerald to bronze, without touching a chord in that sturdy farmer's heart. Hindhead, you read, "is certainly the most villainous spot that God ever made," and Cobbett will have nothing to do with it.

The last fifty years have altered and enlarged Thursley church, but it still retains the distinction, unique in Surrey, of its timber tower and steeple rising from the centre of the nave. Other churches in the county—Dunsfold and Alfold in the neighbourhood—carry their bell-turrets on ingenious constructions of timber, but there is no such collection in any other Surrey church of such superb beams as are to be seen at Thursley. The effect of these dark and majestic pillars of oak, some of them thirty inches square, with their great crossbeams, and their arches springing from the pillars across the nave, is one of astonishing splendour and power. Outside, the shingled turret tells the time with, instead of a clock, a fine old sundial.

To the north of the church stands a thing of terror. The full story of the murder of the "unknown sailor" belongs to Hindhead; but Thursley has his grave. It lies apart, in the centre of a stretch of green grass; above it, a stone too tall for quietness; no other grave shares that lonely lawn. Here is the queer, mis-spelt epitaph:—

> When pitying Eyes to see my Grave shall come,
> And with a generous Tear bedew my Tomb;
> Here shall they read my melancholy Fate,
> With Murder and Barbarity complete.
> In perfect Health, and in the Flower of Age,
> I fell a Victim to three Ruffians Rage;
> On bended Knees I mercy strove t' obtain,
> Their Thirst of Blood made all Entreaties vain.
> No dear Relation, or still dearer Friend,
> Weeps my hard Lot, or miserable End;
> Yet o'er my sad Remains, (my Name unknown,)
> A generous Public have inscrib'd this Stone.

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Above the epitaph a rough carving shows the sailor kneeling to his murderers. Mr. Baring-Gould, in the *Broom Squire* makes Iver Verstage, the artist, laugh at the crudely drawn figures. But the horror of this grave, from which all the other quieter graves are gathered apart, has very little laughter in it.

Thursley Common once rang with the picks and hammers of an iron mine; it was one of the centres of a great industry of the Weald. The surface of the common is scarred with the pits from which the ironstone was dug; the hammer ponds lie in a string along a tiny tributary of the Wey. John Ray, in his *Collection of English Words not generally Used*, published in 1672, and printed in the *Sussex Archæological Collections*, gives an account of the methods of the old iron smelters. A stream, or a pond with a stream running through it, would be dammed, and the fall of water at the lower end would then work two pairs of bellows for the blast for the furnace and a wheel which raised and let fall a hammer. The fuel used was charcoal. Before the ironstone was put into the furnace it was "mollified" or broken up into small pieces by being burnt between layers of charcoal. Then it was put into the furnace, and when melted drawn off in long lumps, called pigs or sows. Then the sows were taken to the forge or hammer, and beaten into square "blooms," two feet long; then the blooms were beaten into "anconies," three feet long; then the "anconies" had their ends nicely shaped, and the iron was ready for market.

A very extensive "collection of English words not generally used" is contained in an inventory of tools supplied to William Yalden, when he took over the Thursley ironworks. Perhaps an ironmaster of to-day might recognise some of those I have chosen:—

> Twoe fargons. A beame way anckrues. One turnsowe. One hurdgier. One twewer trole; one twewer hook. Two hursts and brights to them. 2 eyron rackes. A hamer and ane bill and helfe and armes redy placed. Twoe boyghts about the Chafery. One quas to stopp the fyer. A neew locke.

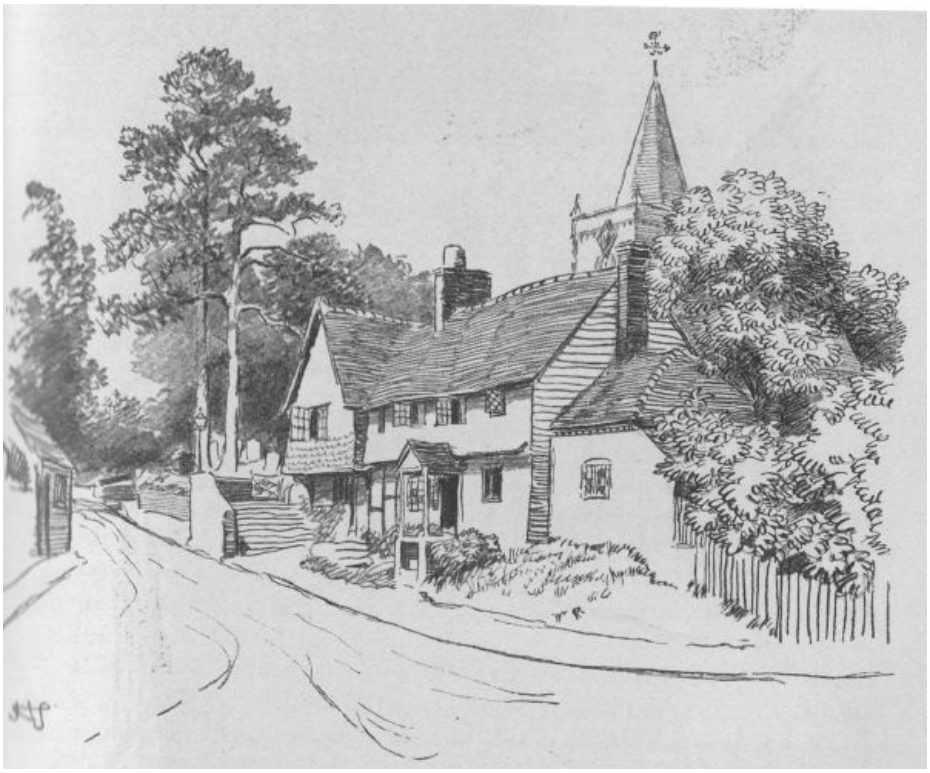
Mr. Baring-Gould has described one of the natives of Thursley Common in the *Broom Squire*:—

> "The natterjack, so rare elsewhere, differing from a toad in that it has a yellow band down its back, has here a paradise. It may be seen at eve perched on a stalk of willow herb or running—it does not hop—round the sundew, clearing the glutinous stamens of the flies that have been caught by them, and calling in a tone like the warning note of the nightingale." [Pg 158]

Elstead.

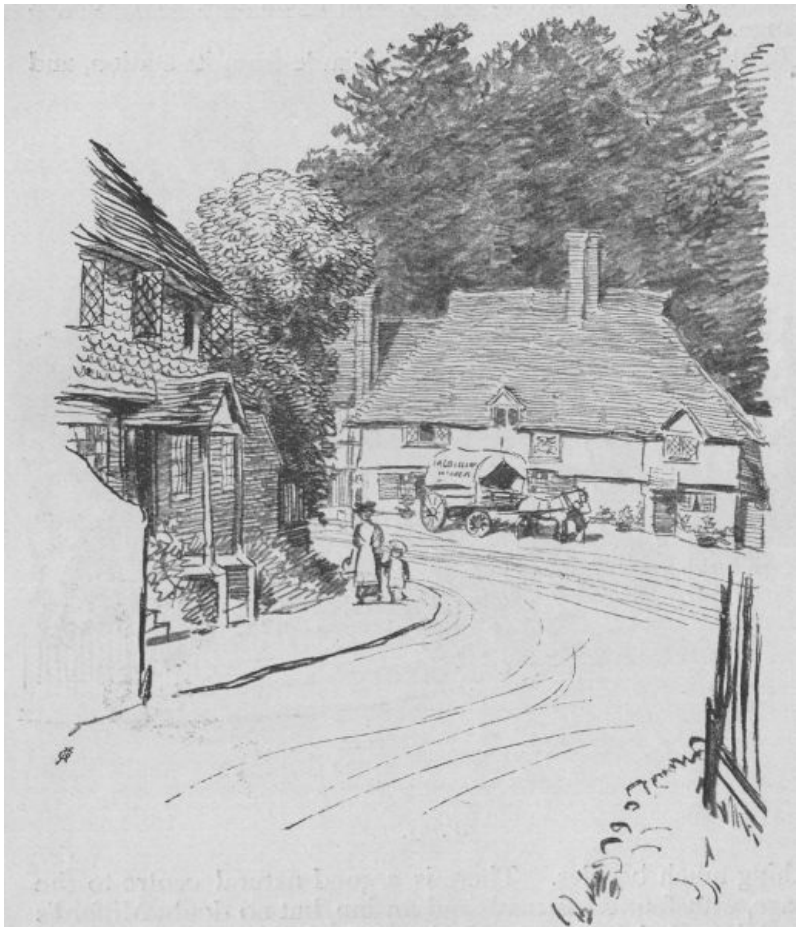
I looked for the natterjack at eve, but did not find him. At Farnham, I am told, he is called a jar-bob. Thursley children like to catch a natterjack to sell.

Elstead is three miles away, on the northern edge of the belt of heather; a happy little village standing round a green, with a mill, a bridge, and a church with a wonderful ladder up to the belfry. This is actually a single vast plank of oak, black and immoveable, sloped up from a crossbeam and notched for steps. There are many magnificent beams in Surrey churches, but this is the finest ladder of all of them. It does not tempt ascent in days of more elaborate staircases; but it would not break under the heaviest set of bellringers that ever rung a change. [Pg 159]



Witley.

To the east is Milford, a good half mile from its station, and nothing much besides. There is a good natural centre to the village, with four cross roads and an inn, but no doubt Milford's future is to belong to Godalming. A few half-timbered and weather-tiled cottages, which have served as models for newer neighbours, some pollarded elms, a broad smooth road and dusty jasmine—Milford is the first village on the highway running south from Godalming, and on a summer Saturday is less a village than a road. [Pg 160]



The White Hart, Witley.

One of the four roads which branch off from Milford to the south runs to Witley. Witley will look more tranquil and more seasoned fifty years hence. To come into the village in the gathering dusk of a summer evening, as I saw it first, is an enchantment; nothing could throw a quieter spell than the brick and timber and tar and whitewash of the cottages, the flowers climbing up the old inn, and the familiar noises of a neighbouring game of cricket finishing in half darkness. But only part of Witley will stand the full glare of sunlight. The new cottages are finely designed, [Pg 161]

but they are too black-and-white and painty to group easily with the older, mossier buildings and the White Hart Inn, with its nobly ugly sign.

The church, bowered in ivy and roses, has some quaint inscriptions. One commemorates a forgotten office:—

> "Off yo^{r} charite pray for the soull^{e} of Thomas Jonys and his wyfe Jane, which Thomas was one of the Sewers of the Chamber to oure Soverayne lorde Kynge Henry VIII."

A Sewer of the Chamber waited at the table and brought water for the hands of the guests—an office which suggests an obvious rhyme for poets writing of water-jugs. Another epitaph is a shining example of the proper manner of attributing to the dead an almost crushing superfluity of virtues. Sara Holney, first in Latin, and then in English, thus is lamented and extolled:—

> "A better woman than here sleeps, there's none,
> Sara, Rebecca, Rahel, three in one:
> Religious, pious, thrifty, wise, fayre, and chast:
> Soe many goods in one, who finds in hast?"

One more name attracts. Mehetabel, daughter of John Leech of Lea, died in 1816. She was doubtless a friend of Cobbett, who often rode by Lea, and greatly admired her father's trees. The first Mehetabel was the wife of the king of Edom, and the last, possibly, is the heroine of the *Broom Squire*.

Witley has perhaps been a little overshadowed by the tragedy of a late owner of Lea Park. I have heard descriptions of the new features of Lea Park, the lakes and fountains and a billiard-room, I believe, under water, but I have not seen them.

Before Hindhead drew authors and artists up the hill, Witley had its own settlement of workers living deep in Surrey country. George Eliot was at Witley Heights; J.C. Hook, who could not bear to be watched while he was painting, sketched Witley gorse and heather; Birket Foster long lived among the Witley pines; and Mrs. Allingham, who was at Sandhills, a house near by, has painted few more interesting pictures than her *Lessons*, *Pat-a-cake*, and *The Children's Tea*. At Witley she painted most of her studies of children indoors, in the nursery and the schoolroom; after she left Witley, she liked to set her cottage girls and boys among bluebells and apple-blossom out of doors. [Pg 162]

A corner in the White Hart, Witley, known as George Eliot's corner.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE FOLD COUNTRY

The Wild Garden of Surrey.—Birds and their valentines.—Nightingales at Dunsfold.—Alfold Stocks.—Three yews in a line.—The King's Evil.—Alfold industries.—A dry canal.—Chiddingfold.—Red brick and Madonna lilies.—The Enticknaps.—Hungry scholars.—The Crown Inn.—On Highdown Ball.—A green ride in the woods.—The Chiddingfold Foxhounds.

The "Fold Country" is the wild garden of the Surrey weald, and the month to walk in it is May. Alfold, Ifold, Durfold, Dunsfold, Chiddingfold, and other "folds" lie among oakwoods and ploughlands that once were oakwoods; the railway runs nowhere nearer than seven miles from the heart of the woods, and in the woods the timbered cottages stand apart, old and tranquil. To me, the associations of the "Fold Country" centre round the memory of a First of May hotter and more glorious with flowers than any I can remember. I had started to walk from Baynards Station west among the woods, with the recollection of four days of north-east winds and heavy snow that had brought April to a close. The change was incredible. There, in the roads that ran through the oakwoods and hazel copses, it was the heat of summer. The birds had drawn new valentines. A cock chaffinch, gayest of suitors, danced round his demure hen in the roadway, careless of any pedestrian in that deep country; wrens crept like mice among the stubs of the hedge; the grass by the roadside and the ditch was lighted with primroses. A narrow copse of cut hazel, bordering the road on the Sussex boundary, was a carpet of primroses, anemones, milkmaids, and dog violets; spires of purple orchids stood above shining celandines; there could have been nothing [Pg 164] more brilliant in a garden. On the hedge-bank a hen pheasant rustled through the undergrowth, caught sight of me, crept to a rabbit-scratch and crouched on the brown earth within a yard of my hand; for the birds are tamer in the Fold Country than beyond it. Above other hedge-banks, in other copses, the cuckoos called all that morning, from Sussex to Surrey, over the border road.

Two of the Fold Country farmhouses by that road, framed in that sunny setting, belong to the memories of a Surrey May. One is a timbered house twenty yards in Sussex, with white curtains and flower-pots behind its diamond-paned lattices, and clumps of primroses growing about stone causeways up to the very door. The other is Pallinghurst farm, a mile further on the road, whose long, lichened roofs shelter red-tiled walls and masses of ivy round a white doorway; the garden is a cluster of gnarled apple-trees, and over it and about the tall farm chimneys, when I saw it that morning, flew the first swallows of the year. But it was not the swallows that made summer that May-day. Beyond Alfold, on the road that runs out of Sidney Wood up to Dunsfold Common, there are coppices of thick undergrowth, set about orchards of grey-lichened fruit-trees and stretches of low cut hazel sheeted with primroses. There I heard the first nightingale of the year, a single jet of song as the brown tail flickered in the covert; a hundred yards further down the road there were three singing together; Dunsfold Common came in a burst of yellow gorse, and the song of a nightingale thrilled up from the gorse; another bird, beyond Dunsfold, sang high in the hedgerow in full sunlight. That is a Dunsfold lane, for me; a wild plum-tree branching out of the hedge dressed with the whitest of delicate blossom, and in the white blossom, with the hot blue of a May sky beyond and between, a nightingale's throat throbbing with singing.

Alfold almost touches the Sussex boundary, and is perhaps the most out-of-the-way little village in Surrey. I find Mr. Ralph Nevill, writing in 1889, lamenting that it was once charmingly rural, but that "the breath of the pestilence has passed over and vulgarised it." There are new houses in it, and new generally means hideous; but the pestilence has left some old work worth looking at. At the eastern end of the village stands Alfold House, a sixteenth-century timbered building; at [Pg 165] the western end is the church, grey with its shingled spire, built like Thursley and Elstead on massive oak beams. A broad stone causeway leads to the door; in May, the springing grass shines with daffodils.

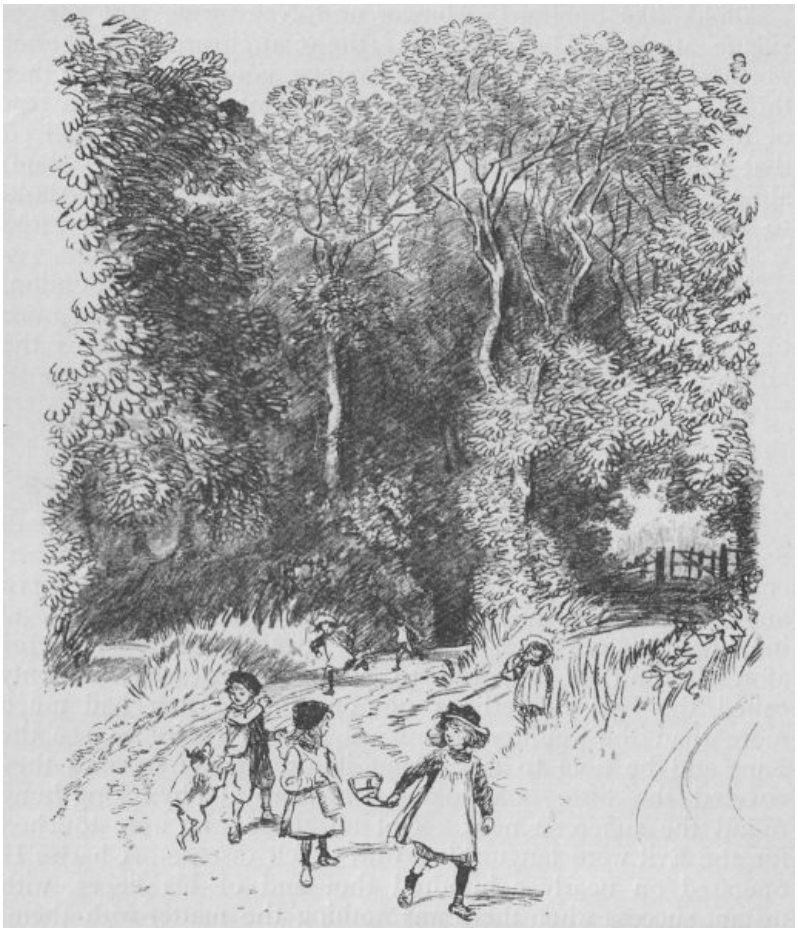
Alfold, like Shalford, Abinger and Newdigate, still has its village stocks. They stand at the churchyard gate, better worth sitting in, so far as appearance goes, than the other three. Alfold, too, has a great old yew-tree, one of a row of three in the Fold churchyards. Has it ever been noticed that the Alfold, Dunsfold, and Hambledon yews stand almost in a mathematically straight line? From Alfold to Hambledon is five miles as the crow flies, and Dunsfold is almost exactly half way between the two.

Three Alfold villagers, perhaps, made the journey to London, or to some halting-place in the royal progress, to seek the grace of King James II. The parish register-book contains the entry of their names on the title-page:—

2 May
4 —
19 July } 1687 { I gave certificates to Jane Puttock, Henry Manfield, Elizabeth Saker, to be touched for the [King's] Evil.

Whether Jane Puttock, Henry Manfield and Elizabeth Saker were cured of the scrofula by the highly medicinal contact of the royal hands does not appear; but in 1710 another patient, James Napper, was certified to be "a legal inhabitant of our parish of Alfold in the county of Surrey aforesaid and is supposed to have the disease commonly called the Evil." Perhaps not one of the four had much more than the country bumpkin's natural desire to see the King and be able to talk about it afterwards; perhaps they coveted the little gold tokens which royal physicking hung round the sufferer's neck. Not all those who were touched for the Evil were languishing with a fell disease. Charles II operated on nearly a hundred thousand of his lieges, with instant success when there was nothing the matter with them. But Anne, the divines held, did not succeed directly to the throne, and therefore did not succeed to the miraculous powers of the Jameses and

Charleses. It was very little good for James Napper to go to London, for, practically speaking, the queen could cure nobody.



A Surrey Byway.

Alfold, which in Aubrey's day was Awfold—variant spellings of "old fold"—was not always purely [Pg 166] rustic and agricultural. There is a slab of Sussex marble in the churchyard which is declared to cover the remains of the last of the Surrey glass manufacturers—the "French glass men" who are supposed to have carried on an illicit factory in the depths of Sidney Wood. Another Alfold industry was smuggling, or assistant-smuggling. "The gentlemen" ran their tobacco and brandy by way of some of the Alfold farmhouses; the farmer left out "bread and beef" for the gentlemen, [Pg 167] and the gentlemen left kegs behind for the farmer.

Sidney Wood lies between Alfold and Dunsfold, and grows hazel and oak for various industries, besides acres of the purest and palest primroses. Through it runs a curious trackway, marked "disused" on the Ordnance maps. It is a section of the Wey and Arun Junction Canal, now a dry bed studded with hazel stubs and clumps of flowers. Dunsfold Common joins the wood, and beyond it, round a wide green, stand the Dunsfold cottages, seventeenth century mixed with twentieth. In the churchyard, when I was there in May, I once saw a curious sight. From inside the church the great yew seemed to be alive with bees; the noise was of twenty swarms. I went out to find that they were not bees, but flies. The western wall of the tower was black with them; so were the gravestones and the gravel. There must have been millions, hatched, no doubt, in the heat of the wooden belfry.

Dunsfold is too far from the railway to be crowded, but it is building busily. The twentieth century is not as frightened of deep country as Manning and Bray, who remark that "the common before coming to the church is wide, and over it a road has been thrown up in a regular way, and is tolerable, and a part near to Hascombe Hill has been done in the same manner, but between them is a dreadful gulph." Dunsfold would probably be thankful if to-day the "gulph" were wider.

From Dunsfold one may push on through Hascombe to rejoin the railway at Milford or Godalming, or one may turn west to Chiddingfold. But Hascombe is better seen from Godalming, and the natural way is to group Chiddingfold with the other "fold" villages.

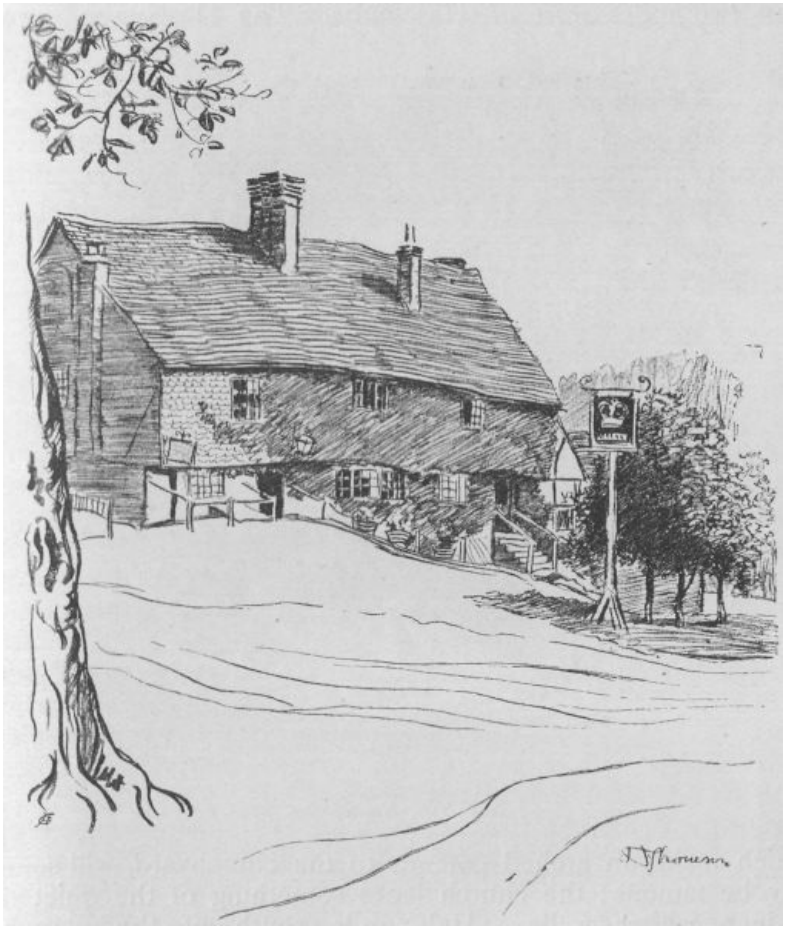
Of the three, Alfold has hardly begun to grow, Dunsfold straggles, and Chiddingfold sits compact about its sunny green. Red-roofed, tranquil, and uneven the little cottages stand behind their glowing flower gardens. Here a long low brick wall edges the road, mellow and lichened; here a double-gabled, weather-tiled building stands next to a patch of old brick painted the newest possible yellow. Somehow the effect is not hideous, and fits with the haphazard, sunlit tiles and [Pg 168] whitewash. Chiddingfold is at its best and sleepiest in high summer—a village of weatherworn red brick and Madonna lilies.

In the church, which stands among trees, with an air of large solidity a little graver than the small, shingle-spired churches of the other two villages, are tablets to the memory of a number of Enticknaps, described sturdily as "yeomen," of Upper Dunce, Pockford, and Gorbage Green,

which appears on the maps in the plainer form of Garbage Green. Enticknap is a good Surrey name to-day, and there were Enticknaps in Chiddingfold at the Conquest. The parish registers are full of Enticknaps; in one century there were fifty burials in the family in Chiddingfold churchyard.

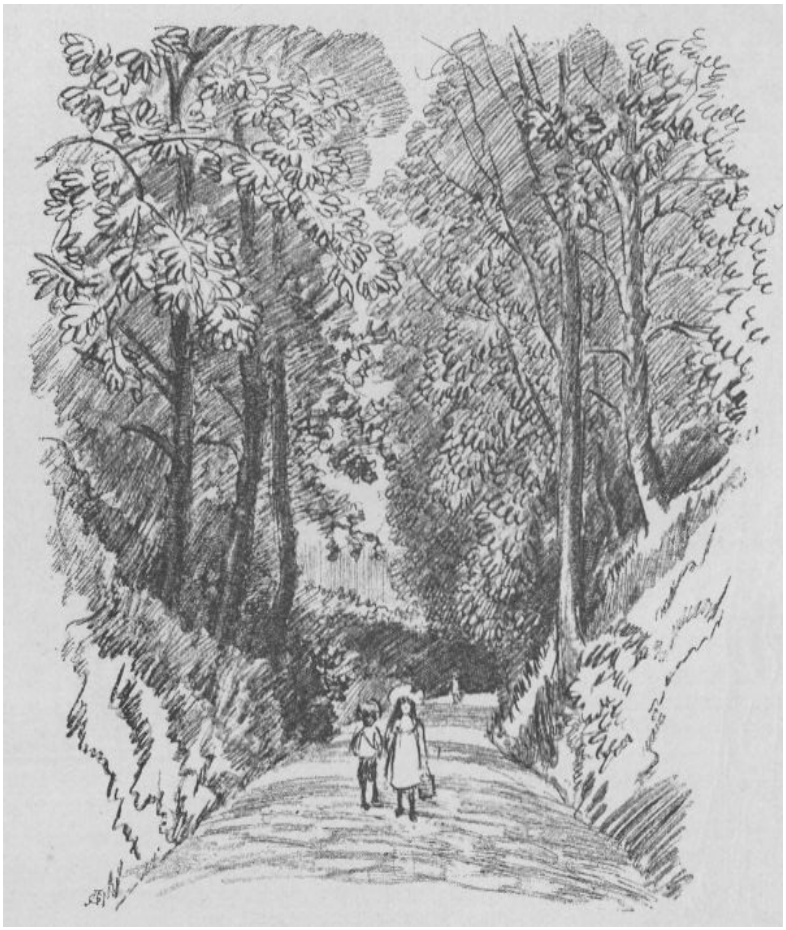
It was by Chiddingfold churchyard that Cobbett made a discovery in the peerage. He was riding through the village with his son Richard on a fine frosty November morning, and saw a carriage and pair conveying an old gentleman and some ladies to the churchyard steps. "Upon inquiry we found that this was Lord Winterton, whose name, they told us, was Turnour. I thought I had heard of all the Lords, first or last; but, if ever I had heard of this one before, I had forgotten him." A little further on, he came across some less wealthy churchgoers, a school of poor boys in uniform:—

> "There were about twenty of them, without one single tinge of red in their whole twenty faces. In short, I never saw more deplorable objects since I was born. And can it be of any use to expend money in this sort of way upon poor creatures that have not half a bellyful of food? We had not breakfasted when we passed them. We felt, at that moment, what hunger was. We had some bits of bread and meat in our pockets, however; and these, which were merely intended as stay-stomachs, amounted, I dare say, to the allowance of any half dozen of these poor boys for the day. I could, with all my heart, have pulled the victuals out of my pocket and given it to them: but I did not like to do that which would have interrupted the march, and might have been construed into a sort of insult. To quiet my conscience, however, I gave a poor man that I met soon afterwards sixpence, under pretence of rewarding him for telling me the way to Thursley, which I knew as well as he, and which I had determined, in my own mind, not to follow."



The Crown Inn, Chiddingfold.

Chiddingfold's old inn is the Crown, which claims to have been standing for more than five centuries. According to a copy of a deed dated March 22, 1383, which hangs in the coffee-room, Peter Pokeford, of the parish of Chudyngfold, gave and granted to Richard Gofayre, "the said tenement, namely, the Hall and the Chamber with a solar, and also the kitchen with a small [Pg 169] house with their appurtenances for the term of fifty years for four shillings of yearly rent payable to the said Peter." The inn is pleasant and solid, and dark with enormous wooden beams. Above a fine old open hearth hang three engaging pictures—or used to hang—of actresses of days gone by. Madame Vestris, in a feather hat and a red cloak, plays Don Giovanni; Miss Paton, spangled, trousered and red-slippered, would appeal to any Turk as Mandane; Belvidera, in a sober grey [Pg 170] gown, is an actress who knew Surrey well, Fanny Kemble.



Rock Hill, Hambledon.

To the Fold Country belong two other villages, Hascombe, two miles north of Dunsfold, and Hambledon, a little more than two miles west of Hascombe. The Hascombe yews, which make an arched gateway to the churchyard, will some day be famous; the church lacks something of the quiet of plainer, whiter walls. Half-a-mile south of the church, Hascombe Hill once lit a beacon, and looks out over many miles of the Fold Country. At the White Horse in the village I was told of a great old beech-tree standing on the hill, and learned that if you went up the hill it was impossible to miss it; however, I followed all the directions and achieved the impossible. Once Hascombe was the home of a divine whom the biographers briefly describe as "controversialist." [Pg 171] He was Doctor Conyers Middleton, the author of a famous *Life of Cicero*, for which he stole the materials from a Scottish professor's work, *De Tribus Luminibus Romanorum*, and for some time was not found out. His controversies were chiefly with Bentley, who perhaps was as arrogant as Middleton was greedy.

Hascombe Hill is the eastern of three hills which stand in a triangle round the north of the Fold Country. Highdown Ball is the centre of the three, fifty feet lower than Hascombe Hill, which is 644 feet; but Highdown Ball somehow seems the higher of the two. A strange little rhyme, or riddle, belongs to the hill:—

> "On Hydon's top there is a cup,
> And in that cup there is a drop:
> Take up the cup and drink the drop,
> And place the cup on Hydon's top."

The third hill is Hambledon's. The village is dotted over the hill and at its foot; the church is perched on the very top, and it is worth climbing the hill to look at the pair of yew trees in the churchyard. One of them cannot be much smaller than the Crowhurst yew itself. Like that monarch of trees, it is hollow; unlike it, it has not yet been damaged by man in order to protect it from the weather.

Hambledon is best approached from Chiddingfold through Hambledon Hurst, a stretch of cool woodland. A tiny path leaves the main road over a strip of grass and brambles, dives into an oakwood and emerges at the end of a long straight open ride of grass, edged and shaded by oak trees, green, smooth and silent. Into such open glades dark fallow deer should come, and roedeer dancing out from the shadows to listen and snuff. If bearded men with jewelled feathers and crimson cloaks rode across the patches of sunlight, it would be nothing strange in that deep wood. The illusion of virgin solitude is perfect. Yet the green ride was once the main road south from Godalming through Hambledon to Chichester.

I ought not to leave the Fold Country without mentioning the Chiddingfold foxhounds, a pack which hunts the country south of Guildford to the borders of Lord Leconfield's Hunt in Sussex. It is poor riding, for there is too much woodland, and on the heather there is hardly any jumping. [Pg 172] "The prettier the country the poorer the hunting," Mr. Charles Richardson quotes in writing of the Chiddingfold foxhounds: perhaps one might add that in a poor country there can be some

pretty hunting.

Black Down, from Hambledon.

[Pg 173]

CHAPTER XV

CRANLEIGH AND EWHURST

A coffee-pot yew—Vachery Pond—The osprey as a guest—Baynards and its ghost—Ewhurst—A pet lamb—Children and a gipsy—Bilberries on Pitch Hill—Lost in Hurst Wood—Farley Heath—Mr. Watson's poem—Blackheath well named.

Cranleigh lies on the edge of the Fold country, neither in it nor of it. In the Fold country the villages are set deep in woodlands and grass fields, and the railway runs too far away to bring the slate for the villas. But the railway runs through Cranleigh and stops there, and so does the builder. The fields and woods are being "developed." But in the heart of the village there is a touch of what is old and quiet. A strange, towering figure of a clipped yew stands up in the middle of a small garden, whether most like a peacock on a pillar, or a colossal coffee-pot, I cannot determine. A wheelwright's yard is near by—one of the best of all sights of any country village. Farm carts and their wheels, and big spokes and shavings of white wood give as full a notion of solid, strong outdoor work as the forge and the rickyard, and no village is quite a country village without the three.

Two manors, Vachery and Knowle, have chapels in the church, which is cruciform; but the Vachery chapel is seated for ordinary churchgoers. The Knowle chapel is separated off by a fine fifteenth-century screen. But the chief beauty of Cranleigh Church is the great sense of breadth and light which you get from the size of the nave and the chancel arch. The broad spaces and the massive Norman pillars set an air of strength and quiet in the place that belongs alone to noble churches.

[Pg 174]

Of Vachery Manor one may hear little; of Vachery Pond every troutfisher knows something. The maps mark a superb sheet of water, nearly a mile long, and, two or three times, travelling from Guildford or Horsham, I have tried to catch a glimpse of the water from the railway, but in vain. When at last I stood on the edge of the water, the reason was clear enough; the pond is surrounded by banks covered with trees. A right of way runs from the road near Cranleigh round the south of the pond to Baynards beyond, and the pond lies near the right of way, a grass-edged road alive with rabbits. I saw the pond first on a July morning; the drying leaves showed that earlier in the year the road to it ran between carpets of primroses. The water lay without a ripple in the sun; at the far side, two crested grebes swam low, like submarines, diving for fish to feed their young, who asked for food without weariness and without ceasing, and received it with excited splashings. Under the bank danced a cotillon of tiny dragon-flies, needles of turquoise stuck suddenly on a reed, flitting aimlessly over the clear, shadowed water. Just in such sunlight, though later in the year, those two glorious guests visited Vachery Pond in September, 1904. A pair of ospreys, on their journey south for the winter, made the water their home for a few days, to the consternation of the wildfowl and the delight of the other troutfishers. One of them, writing to the *Field* at the time, described the way in which the bird he saw fished the water. It would sail up and down over the lake and then drop into the water with a resounding crash, rising always

with a trout in its talons. But the visit did not last long. A keeper shot the male bird, and its mate —ospreys pair for life—went on to the south alone.

On the other side of Vachery Pond is Baynards, one of the historic Surrey houses, and a fine relic of Tudor days. Baynards once was the home of Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More, and the story goes that after her father's execution she brought his head to Baynards. Perhaps that started the Baynards' ghost. Legend plays with the aura of Baynards as of Loseley. Once a year the two ghosts meet: the Baynards ghost dines at Loseley, and the Loseley ghost pays back the visit next year at Baynards.

At Ewhurst.

North-east of Baynards an old Roman road runs from Rowhook on the Stane Street in Sussex towards Farley Heath, where there was a Roman camp. The Roman road, now hardly traceable, [Pg 175] cuts the road from Cranleigh near Ewhurst. Ewhurst lives comfortably fifty years behind [Pg 176] Cranleigh, and is still, happily, what the late Louis Jennings called it in *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, "a one-horse place." When Mr. Jennings was at Ewhurst everybody was half-asleep. "At the post-office a woman and a girl turned out in some consternation to look at me, thinking, perhaps, that I had a letter concealed about me, and was about to post it, and thus overwhelm them with work." Such a village would be desirable anywhere. But Ewhurst, although it can be sleepy in the sunshine, as everything in the country ought to be, has an eye for country business. At the door of the post-office, when I was there on a hot day in July, a long-tailed sheep, fat and woolly, cropped the grass. It was a pet lamb grown up, apparently, and pleased to be patted. A cart drove up, and there was a conversation which might have come out of *Edgeworth's Parent's Assistant* when Simple Susan's pet lamb was in the same evil case. From the cart descended a butcher, who shook his head when questioned by the lamb's caretaker, or keeper, who looked after its owner's interests from a neighbouring dwelling. Wasn't he worth three pounds? Not three pounds; no. Fifty-five shillings, perhaps, would be a fair price in a week's time. A fair price in a week's time—it was impossible to listen to the careful bargaining over the creature feeding in the sun. I went into the shop to buy something, and within a few minutes was asked, as an obvious admirer of the lamb, whether I would like him for fifty shillings.

Miss Edgeworth should have stayed at Ewhurst, and have seen the best of an English village as I did that July afternoon. Opposite the church—a church which, with its stainless glass windows, its white walls, and its green carpet and curtains, gives you the feeling of entering a drawing-room—are the village schools. Out of the schools as I watched them the village children came tumbling. Half of them made for a passage by the churchyard, where a small boy, gipsy or pedlar's child, sat in the shadow of the wall. He was dusty and hot, and by him lay a large bundle wrapped in a spotted blue handkerchief. One of the schoolchildren stopped after passing him, and whispered to another. Then four little boys went back and each dropped a penny or a halfpenny into the child's hand. Then they ran off through the churchyard.

The Ordnance Maps mark a hill north of Ewhurst of which the country children have never heard. [Pg 177] Coneyhurst Hill, the map assures you, is 844 feet high, only 50 feet less than Hindhead. People who like bell-heather, bilberries, and a magnificent view should climb it, but it is no use asking

the children the way to Coneyhurst Hill. Pitch Hill they know, and only Pitch Hill. Nor will they recognise bilberries or whortleberries so called; "hurts" is the name. Another point on which the traveller wandering in these wilds should assure himself is that he has plenty of time, or has a compass with him, or can find his way by the sun. The woods—Hurt Wood is the general name for miles—north and west of Pitch Hill are the loneliest places. Here and there a forest fire has cleared openings in the trees, but where the pines have fallen or have been cut the bracken still grows breast high, and birches have seeded themselves into thick, thwarting plantations. The wood runs in ridges, so that whichever way you want to go you cannot keep an objective in sight. Missel thrushes clatter up from the open spaces; jays bark in the birches, angry at an intrusion. Except for them the silence, in a silent month like July or August, is profound.

When I was in Hurt Wood I wanted to walk from the windmill to Farley Heath, two and a-half miles as the crow flies, nearer five miles as I walked it. The perplexing thing is the number of disused rides and paths in the wood. They cross each other perpetually at right angles, like lines on a chessboard, and if you are walking diagonally across them the temptation is to a succession of knights' moves which end in wrong places. I followed one of these rides a long way, and the wood grew thicker and thicker; suddenly it ended, and I found myself in a clearing, with the loneliest little cottage in the corner, guarded by a huge black retriever in an iron kennel; a woman was drawing water by the door. Where was I, could she tell me? Where did I want to go to? she asked in reply—probably the right answer.

Farley Heath is one of the few well-defined stations of a Roman camp in the county. Mr. William Watson, writing in the shade of the Emperor Yew by Newlands Corner, thought of the Roman legionaries encamped on Farley Heath below the downs, and one of the finest passages in the poem he made there belongs half to the yew and half to Farley:— [Pg 178]

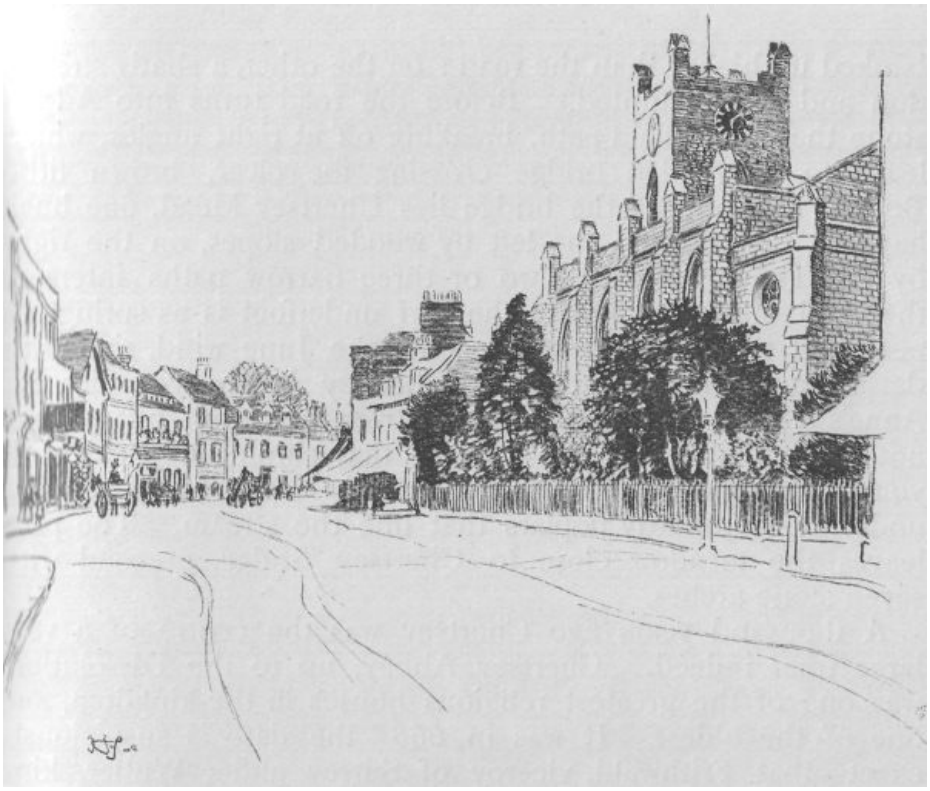
Nay, hid by thee from Summer's gaze
  That seeks in vain this couch of loam,
I should behold, without amaze,
  Camped on yon down the hosts of Rome,
Nor start though English woodlands heard
The selfsame mandatory word

As by the Cataracts of the Nile
  Marshalled the legions long ago,
Or where the lakes are one blue smile
  'Neath pageants of Helvetian snow,
Or 'mid the Syrian sands that lie
Sick of the day's great tearless eye,

Or on barbaric plains afar,
  Where, under Asia's fevering ray,
The long lines of imperial war
  O'er Tigris passed, and with dismay
In fanged and iron deserts found
Embattled Persia closing round,

And 'mid their eagles watched on high
  The vultures gathering for a feast,
Till, from the quivers of the sky,
  The gorgeous star-flight of the East
Flamed, and the bow of darkness bent
O'er Julian dying in his tent.

Between Farley Heath and Chilworth Station, which is the chosen end of the walk from Cranleigh, is Blackheath, well named. In winter the flowerless heather darkens the whole moorland; and through it the roads, the rough roads the Roman legionaries knew well, run ribands of white sand. [Pg 179]



Chertsey.

CHAPTER XVI

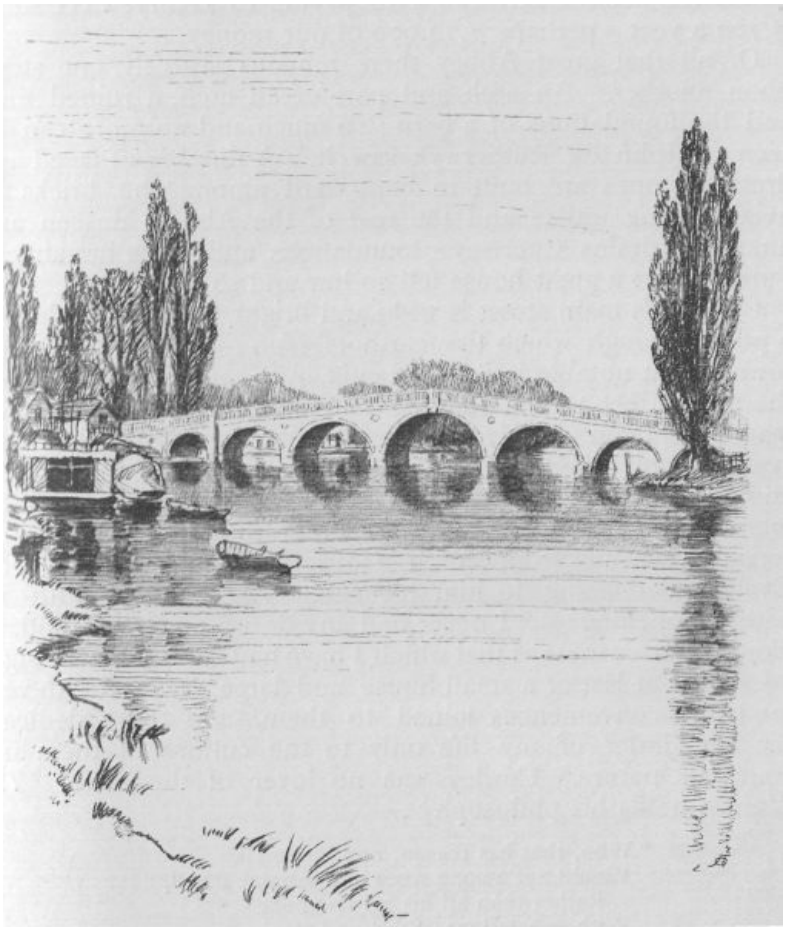
CHERTSEY

Through the hayfields.—The Abbey.—John de Rutherwyk.—Cowley in his garden.—Bill Sikes at Chertsey.—The curfew.—A duel of hearts.—The Chertsey legend.—St. Anne's Hill.—Digging for treasure.—St. Paul's like a mushroom.—Charles James Fox.—Sunshine and turnips.—Triumphant rooks.

Chertsey might well be taken as the centre from which to explore north-west Surrey, but it is less generally convenient as regards the railway than Weybridge, which allows exploration north, east, south and west, whereas Chertsey lies on a branch line. Besides, there is the walk from Weybridge to Chertsey to be taken, and there are few more delightful near the Surrey Thames. The high road from the bridge over the Wey runs between double ribands of water; on one side lies the sunny, slow canal, edged with iris and forget-me-nots, and banked up higher than the [Pg 180] road; on the other, a shady stream, dun and bleak-haunted. Before the road turns into Addlestone there is a field-path, breaking off at right angles, which leads to a wooden bridge crossing the clear, brown little Bourne, and beyond the bridge lies Chertsey Mead, one huge hayfield, bounded on the left by wooded slopes, on the right by the Thames itself. Two or three narrow paths intersect the level of waving grass; the turf underfoot is as springy as peat, and the standing crop scents the June wind, rich with daisies and clover. Beyond Chertsey before you lies St. Anne's Hill, dark and incumbent over the town; but you do not guess that the Thames edges that shining hayfield until you catch sight of a boat-sail, leisurely dipping and nodding under the Lombardy poplars that line the stream. The path leaves the meadow close to Chertsey Bridge, graceful with seven stone arches.

A thousand years ago Chertsey was the centre of a very large tract indeed. Chertsey Abbey, up to the Dissolution, was one of the greatest religious houses in the kingdom, and one of the oldest. It was in 666—the date is suspiciously exact—that Frithwald, viceroy of Surrey under Wulfer, king of the Mercians, gave the land on which the building was to stand, and he and Erkenwald, its first abbot, duly founded the Abbey. Frithwald, since he could not write, made the sign of the Cross in delivering the deed. But Frithwald's Abbey was short-lived. Perhaps it was then not much more than a little wooden church, with buildings for its journeying priests; at all events, the Danes had no trouble in sacking it two hundred years later, when they made their foray brutally complete by murdering the Abbot and his ninety monks.

But Chertsey's Abbey was to rise again. Edgar rebuilt it, and his building was rebuilt again by the Abbot Hugh of Winchester, early in the twelfth century, and from that date began the great days. The Abbot and convent were in high favour with the king, and lived as well as good monks should. They had rights of warren and liberty of the chase, they had the right to keep dogs, and they might take hares and foxes, the neighbouring manor of Egham sent them fifty fat hogs a year, Chobham sent them a hundred and thirty, Byfleet sent them 325 eels, and Petersham contributed 1,000 eels and 1,000 lampreys. [Pg 181]



Chertsey Bridge.

Other manors swelled the noble list. Such good living should produce a good man, and Chertsey's great Abbot has left an abiding name. He was John de Rutherwyk, an ardent and admirable landlord and a prelate of enduring energy and wisdom. No squire of modern days ever did more to improve his property. He built chapels and rebuilt churches; he laid out roads and had pathways raised from the level of flooded meadows; he set up mills and threw bridges over streams; he sowed oak plantations and taught forestry; he planned barns and granges for corn, [Pg 182] and dug stews and ponds for fish, and he was as enthusiastic a churchman as he was energetic as a farmer. He died in 1347, and two hundred years later, chiefly owing to his energy and foresight, the manors which had once been Chertsey's were paying to Henry VIII some £700 a year—perhaps £14,000 of our money.

Of all that great Abbey there remains scarcely one stone upon another. An arch and part of an arch, a ruined wall, and the foundations of a barn; so much and no more can be seen as John de Rutherwyk saw it. A number of faced and dressed stones are built in haphazard among the bricks of neighbouring walls; and the rest of the Abbey, unseen and unknown, drains Chertsey's foundations and paves her streets. Surely never a great house fell so low and so far.

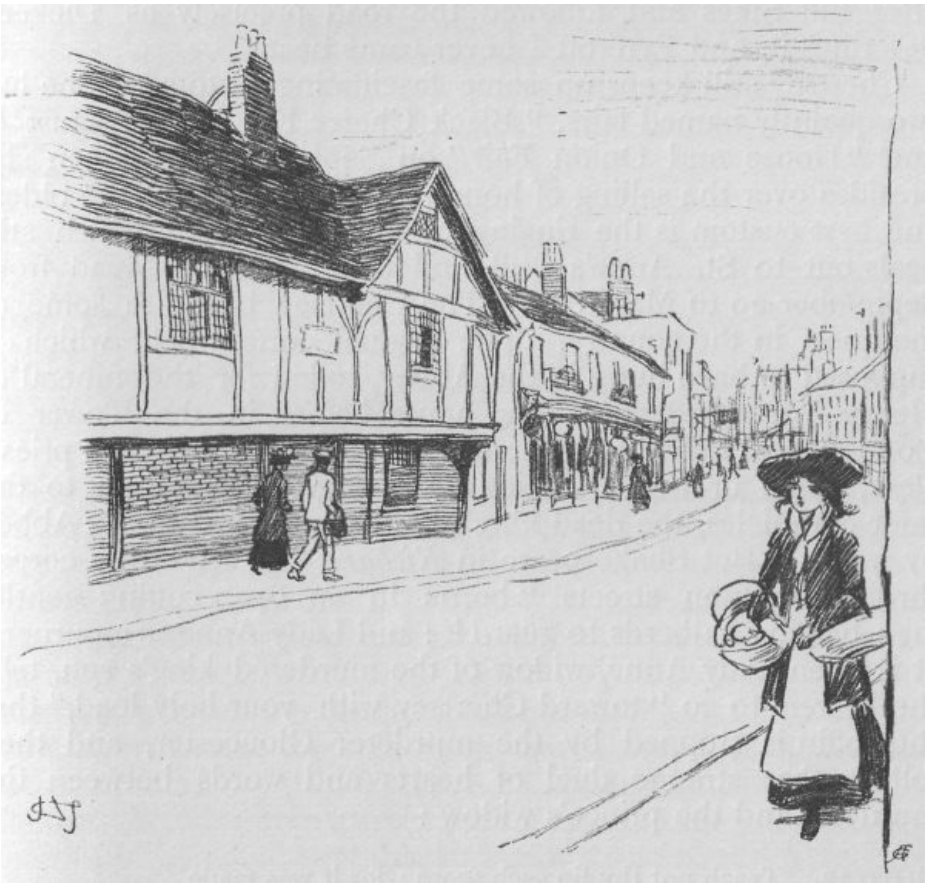
Chertsey's main street is wide and bright, and at its side lies a pond through which the carthorses go plunging. But the town's most notable building stands in the narrower road from the main street to the south. This is the old Porch House, where Abraham Cowley, the poet laureate, spent the last two years of his life, seeking in the solitudes of his garden and the fields of his farm the rest and freedom which the ingratitude of Charles II had forgotten to find for a faithful servant. It was from Porch House that he wrote to John Evelyn, dedicating to him his essay *The Garden* with its pathetic opening:—"I never had any desire so strong, and so like to covetousness as that which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of them and study of nature." Cowley was no lover of the town. *The Garden* holds his philosophy:—

"Who, that has reason, and his smell,
Would not among roses and jasmine dwell,
  Rather than all his spirits choke
With exhalations of dirt and smoke
  And all the uncleanness which does drown
In pestilential clouds a populous town?"

His simpler pleasures were of the orchard and the farm. The husbandman of fruit and flowers is king:—

"He bids the ill-natured crab produce
The gentler apple's winy juice;
The golden fruit that worthy is [Pg 183]
Of Galatea's purple kiss;

He does the savage hawthorn teach
To bear the medlar and the pear.
He bids the rustic plum to rear
A noble trunk, and be a peach.
Even Daphne's coyness he does mock,
And weds the cherry to her stock,
Though she refused Apollo's suit,
Even she, that chaste and virgin tree,
Now wonders at herself, to see
That she's a mother made, and blushes in her fruit."



Cowley's Cottage, Chertsey.

Poor Cowley! The country was too much for him after all. Late on a July evening, after helping his haymakers to get in their last loads, he was soaked with a heavy summer dew. He caught cold and died, on July 28, 1667, and the Thames bore his coffin to burial in Westminster Abbey. [Pg 184]

Less easy to find, if in some ways more familiar, than Porch House, is the very house into which the unwilling Oliver Twist was thrust by Bill Sikes mounted upon the stooping Toby Crackit. You can see the window through which Mr. Sikes pointed the pistol, and the door from which burst the valiant Mr. Giles and Mr. Brittles in pursuit. Or, at least, the more devout of Dickens students are thus privileged; I have been less fortunate. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, I believe, has identified the house to the satisfaction of many with Pyrcroft, a dwelling north-west of the station. But I have gone burgling after Bill Sikes and followed the road precisely as Dickens describes it, and Pyrcroft I never came near.

Chertsey still keeps up some fascinating customs. She has two quaintly named fairs, "Black Cherry Fair" on August 6, and "Goose and Onion Fair" on September 26, when she presides over the selling of horses and poultry. But the oldest and best custom is the ringing of the curfew bell, which still peals out to St. Anne's Hill and over Chertsey Mead from September 29 to March 25. The Chertsey bells are some of the finest in the country. The original curfew bell, which is supposed to have hung in the Abbey, tolled for the funeral of Henry VI, murdered a few hours before in the Tower of London, and hurried to Chertsey to be buried "without priest, clerk, torch or taper, singing or saying." According to the safer chronicles, the dead king's body was ferried to the Abbey by water. But Shakespeare in *Richard III* sends the corpse through London streets "borne in an open coffin; gentlemen bearing halberds to guard it; and Lady Anne as mourner." It is when Lady Anne, widow of the murdered king's son, tells the bearers to go "toward Chertsey with your holy load," that the coffin is stopped by the murderer Gloucester, and then follows that strange duel of hearts and words between the murderer and the prince's widow:

GLOSTER. Teach not thy lip such scorn; for it was made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.
If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword;
Which, if thou please to hide in this true breast,
And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,

I lay it open to the deadly stroke,
And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

[*He lays his breast open. She offers at it with his sword.* [Pg 185]

Nay, do not pause; for I did kill King Henry,—
But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.
Nay, now despatch; 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward,—

[*She again offers at his breast.*

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

[*She lets fall the sword.*

Take up the sword again or take up me.

ANNE. Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner.

GLO. Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.

ANNE. I have already.

GLO.That was in thy rage;
Speak it again, and, even with the word,
This hand, which for thy love, did kill thy love,
Shall, for thy love, kill a far truer love:
To both their deaths shalt thou be necessary.

ANNE. I would I knew thy heart.

GLO. 'Tis figur'd in my tongue.

ANNE. I fear me both are false.

GLO. Then never man was true.

ANNE. Well, well, put up your sword.

GLO. Say, then, my peace is made.

ANNE. That shalt thou know hereafter.

GLO. But shall I live in hope?

ANNE. All men, I hope, live so.

GLO. Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE. To take, is not to give.

[*She puts on the ring.*

King Henry's funeral is history; another tale of the Chertsey curfew bell is legend. It was first put into the form of a story and dramatised by a now almost forgotten novelist-poet, Albert Smith, who was born at Chertsey himself, and wrote books which were illustrated by Leech. He called his story *Blanche Heriot: a Legend of the Chertsey Church*, and the play in its outline follows the legend. Blanche's lover, Neville, the nephew of Warwick the Kingmaker, had been captured by the Yorkists and condemned to die on Chertsey Mead within twenty-four hours. There was a hope of reprieve if he could send his ring as a token to the king. He sent it, but the messenger returning with the pardon was late, and the twenty-four hours were up while the reprieve was being carried over Laleham Ferry. But the knell for the death-stroke never sounded; Blanche had climbed the curfew tower and held the clapper of the great bell. The story has always been popular locally, but it first reached a really wide audience, perhaps, when Mr. Clifford Harrison embodied it in his poem *The Legend of Chertsey*. Since then, reciters' audiences have had their [Pg 186] fill.

About a mile outside the town lies St. Anne's Hill, chiefly notable, perhaps, to-day because on its southern slope stands a house which was at one time the residence of Charles James Fox. Its older title to fame was the magnificence of its view. On the highest point stood St. Anne's Chapel, of which the half-buried ruin of but a single wall remains. It is, Aubrey remarks, "a most romancy place, from whence you have the Prospect over Middlesex and Surrey, London, to Hertfordshire and St. Albans, Berks, Bucks, Oxfordshire, to Windsor Castle, St. Martha's Chapel, Hampton Court, Kingston, Hampshire, etc." Eight counties is a noble stretch of England. But to-day the view has lost most of its grandeur. The hill has been thickly planted with trees, conifers for the most part, and the view can only be had in peeps and patches. Forty or fifty years ago, before the pines were planted, there stood on the hill three sister elms, a proud mark for all the country

round. One alone remains, fenced in with iron and hollow, and still a splendid tree; but her shade falls on altered ground. Before the middle of the last century the level stretch of soil to the south was ploughland: it is now a level mead of green, glowing with bordering rhododendrons in June, and bitten close and smooth by rabbits. It is amusing to notice the fineness of the turf within three or four yards of the rhododendrons all round the green; the rabbits are "poor men," like Chuchundra, and afraid to come out into the middle of the room.

Besides the ruins of St. Anne's Chapel, which is not very much to look at, and at which very few look, there are two other relics on the hill. One is a spring, welling up under an arch. It is still what Aubrey describes it to be, "a fine clear spring dressed with squared stones," and up to within recent years the country folk round about have been used to fetch away water from it, in the belief that it has virtues as an eye lotion. It has a strong taste of iron; would that be good for the eyes? Another curiosity is the so-called Devil's Stone, or Treasure Stone. Aubrey calls this "a conglobation of gravel and sand," and says that the inhabitants know it as "the Devil's Stone, and believe it cannot be mov'd, and that treasure is hid underneath." There have been many searchers after the treasure. One of them once dug down ten feet or more, hoping to come to the [Pg 187] base of the huge mass, but his task grew unkinder as he got deeper, and he gave it up. He might well do so, for what is pretty certain is that he was trying to dig up St. Anne's Hill. All over the face of the hill there are masses of this hard pebbly sandstone cropping up, though they are not so noticeable as the so-called Devil's Stone because they are flat and occasionally crumbling, and have not had their sides laid bare by energetic treasure-seekers.

The view from the hill has not, of course, been wholly lost. To the south the trees shut it out almost entirely, so that part of Hampshire and all Sussex disappear. Looking to the west you can see the pines on Chobham Common, and perhaps Bagshot Heath beyond, but you can no longer get a sight of Windsor Castle, for the trees have grown up on Cooper's Hill, which lies between. To the north the church spire on the hill at Harrow stands beautifully up from the horizon; the Wembley Tower, which used to scar the distance, has gone. Eastward lie two familiar towers; and you are reminded of Mr. Max Beerbohm's reflective observation that "the great danger of travelling on the South Eastern Railway is that you might put your head out of the window and catch sight of the Crystal Palace." So much the greater by contrast is the loss of Windsor Castle to the north-west. I have never yet, by the way, had the good fortune to get to the top of St. Anne's Hill on a really clear day. I have been informed by the lodge-keeper that the best time to get a view is in the summer immediately the sun is up and before the London fires are lighted. You can then see all the big London buildings, the Clock Tower, and the Houses of Parliament, and "the dome of St. Paul's as plain as a mushroom in the field."

Fox lived at the house at St. Anne's Hill in his quieter old age. Samuel Rogers in his *Table Talk* draws a pleasant picture of his life among his books and farm buildings:—

> "When I became acquainted with Fox, he had given up that kind of life (gambling, etc.) entirely, and resided in the most perfect sobriety and regularity at St. Anne's Hill. There he was very happy, delighting in study, in rural occupations and rural prospects. He would break from a criticism on Porson's *Euripides* to look for the little pigs. I remember his calling out to the Chertsey hills, when a thick mist, which had for some time concealed them, rolled away: 'Good morning to you! I am glad to see you again.' There was a walk in his grounds which led to a lane through which the farmers used to pass; and he would stop them, and talk to them, with [Pg 188] great interest, about the price of turnips, etc. I was one day with him in the Louvre, when he suddenly turned from the pictures, and, looking out at the window, exclaimed, 'This hot sun will burn up my turnips at St. Anne's Hill.'"

In his later life, Fox's chief delight was almost wholly in his garden, and in country sights and sounds. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could be dragged to London. On one occasion, in the throes of a political crisis, he was induced to leave St. Anne's Hill on the understanding that he would have to remain only two nights in town. When he heard that the debate was postponed owing to Pitt's indisposition, he was, Lord Holland relates, "silent and overcome, as if the intelligence of some great calamity had reached his ears. I saw tears steal down his cheeks; so vexed was he at being detained from his garden, his books, and his cheerful life in the country." On another occasion, begged to go to town, Fox answered that he would do so if he thought his going would be serviceable to the public, but the idea greatly troubled him. "Never did a letter," he wrote, "arrive at a worse time than yours this morning. A sweet westerly wind, a beautiful sun, all the thorns and elms just budding, and the nightingales just beginning to sing; though the blackbirds and thrushes would have been quite sufficient to have refuted any arguments in your letter. Seriously speaking, I cannot conceive what you mean by everybody agreeing that something may be now done. I beg, at least, not to be included in the holders of that opinion."

Fox's favourite bird was the nightingale; and he used to sit for hours on a particular seat listening to its song. The St. Anne's Hill garden is still very much as he left it; the Temple of Peace, in which Ariosto was his most intimate companion, stands undisturbed, a quaint testimony to the love of summerhouses in the form of temples which Fox inherited from his father. Another summerhouse, lined with shells and quartz, is so like the monstrosity built by the Duke of Newcastle in Oatlands Park at Weybridge that probably Fox copied it, on a smaller scale; and near by stands the inscription, carved on stone, of Fox's favourite verses from Dryden:

> "The painted birds, companions of the Spring,

Hopping from spray to spray were heard to sing.
Both eyes and ears received a like delight,
Enchanting music, and a charming sight.

On Philomel I fixed my whole desire,
And listened for the queen of all the quire.
Fain would I hear her heavenly voice to sing,
And wanted yet an omen to the Spring.
* * * * *
So sweet, so shrill, so variously she sung
That the grove echoed, and the valleys rung."

It must remain a problem to discover why such verse should be associated with the singing of nightingales. Perhaps the nightingales dislike the association; at all events, I am told that they have deserted St. Anne's Hill. If they have, it is a strange conclusion to the years of close protection which a former owner of St. Anne's Hill extended to her birds. The late Lady Holland would never have a singing bird killed nor a nest touched in all her grounds, and if one of them was found dead in any of the shrubberies, her orders were that it was to be given a prompt and respectable burial. Jays and magpies, however, she could not abide, nor crows and rooks, and a curious story is told of a rookery which these birds tried to establish near the house. Every year they decided to build in a particular tree, and every year they were shot or otherwise driven away. At last Lady Holland died, and the gardeners gladly laid aside their guns. The very next spring the rookery was firmly established, and has cawed its pæans ever since. [Pg 189] [Pg 190]

A Byway near Weybridge.

CHAPTER XVII

WEYBRIDGE

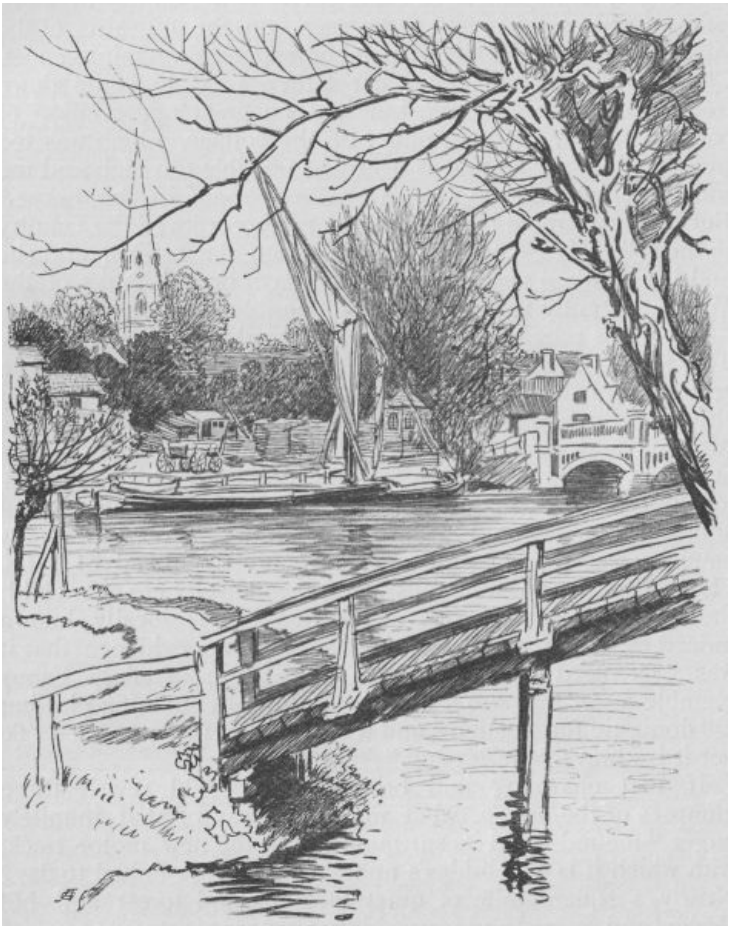
A Georgian village.—The Kembles.—A prophetic lament.—Wey no more.—The Brooklands bucket.—Exiles.—Riddles of spelling.—A royal palace.—The Duchess's Monkeys.—Oatlands cedars.—Portmore Park.—St. George's Hill.—The Leveller's Beanfields.

There is a pleasant melancholy in trying to imagine a Georgian Weybridge. Fanny Kemble describes the village as she saw it as a girl, before the railway came. Then, in the twenties, it was "a rural, rather deserted-looking, and most picturesque village, with the desolate domain of Portmore Park, its mansion falling to ruin, on one side of it, and on the other the empty house and fine park of Oatlands, the former residence of the Duke of York." Eighty years have gone, and the deserted-looking village has spread into a town and suburbs covering more than a square mile of ground; Portmore Park has vanished; Oatlands is a hotel. The railway has created one more residential neighbourhood. [Pg 191]

Fanny Kemble first came to Weybridge as a fifteen-year-old school-girl, and spent three summers with her family at Eastlands, a little cottage, still to be seen, on the outskirts of the village, of which she has written some amusing reminiscences. Charles Kemble, the actor, her father, used

to come down from Saturday to Monday, but had no great appreciation of country life, or, perhaps, rather of the cottage, which was too small for him; "he was as nearly as possible too high and too wide, too long and too large, for every room in the house." But Fanny Kemble herself and her mother enjoyed the country to the full. Mrs. Kemble had a passion for fishing, and she and her children used to spend her days on the banks of the Wey, apparently with the slightest possible success.

A curious relic remains of the Kembles' Weybridge holidays. This is to be seen in the Eastlands' cottage garden, and is a semi-circular heap of earth or sand planted with trees and shrubs. Once, when it was much larger and higher, it was "the Mound," and was the favourite playground of the Kemble girls and boys. It grew out of a huge heap of sand which the landlord refused to move, and which Mrs. Kemble therefore planted and cut into shape with a walk round the top. Naturally enough, tradition has grown up round this heap of sand. Fanny Kemble was a famous actress, and lived here as a child; therefore this mound was a theatre. It is locally known indeed as "the theatre." But I can find no evidence that it was ever used as anything of the kind; certainly Fanny Kemble never refers to it as a theatre, nor as anything else but a "domestic fortification" and a "delightful playground." To her it is always "the Mound."



Weybridge.

If that charming and brilliant lady could revisit these glimpses of the moon, what would she say of that infinitely larger "mound" and its surroundings in the new motor track, with which it is Weybridge's unhappy fate to be linked to-day? Nearly a square mile of quiet meadow and forest and hill slashed and scarred and scarped into a saucer of cement; acres of pine and cedar and oak and rhododendron smashed and sawn to fragments; the roar of thundering Napiers and Hotchkisses, where once the reed-warblers climbed the meadowsweet and cuckoos called from the willows—how would she have addressed the originator of that staring blatant racecourse? [Pg 192] Strangely enough, she saw something of the kind befall her beloved Weybridge pinewoods sixty-seven years ago, and wrote of it in her diary. She was staying as a guest at Oatlands, and found one of her favourite walks among the Brooklands trees destroyed. Her outcry is prophetic:— [Pg 193]

> "O Lord King, Lord King (we were riding through the property of the Earl of Lovelace, then Lord King), if I was one of those bishops whom you do not love, I would curse, excommunicate and anathematize you for cutting down all those splendid trees and laying bare those deep, leafy nooks, the haunts of a thousand *Midsummer Nights' Dreams*, to the common air and the staring sun. The sight of the dear old familiar paths brought the tears to my eyes, for, stripped and thinned of their trees and robbed of their beauty, my memory restored all their former loveliness. On we went down to Byefleet to the mill, to Langton's through the sweet, turfy meadows, by hawthorn hedges musical as sweet...."

Well, she could not do that now. Let an ornithologist poet lament the change:—

> By Brooklands hill but since a year
> Untrod the meadows lay,

Unspanned through musk and meadowsweet
  Ran olive-bright the Wey.

Blackbirds about that wind and wild
  Carolled a roguish choir,
From willow green to willow grey
  Kingfishers shot sapphire!

There gay and far the Surrey sun
  Spread cowslips far and gay,
Lit wide the orchid's purple flame,
  The white fire of the May;

And thither stole a happy boat
  To hear the ringdoves coo,
To mark again the drumming snipe
  Zigzag the April blue:

To watch the darting dragon-flies
  Live pine-needles awing—
O Brooklands meadow, there we knew
  You first knew all the spring!

And then—the change! Spade, engine, pick,
  The gangers' myriad Hun,
A thousand branches' banished shade,
  Flat glare of sand and sun.

From pine and stream to steam and stone,
  From peace to din and pain,
From old unused to new unuse,
  But never Wey again!

The motor course led to at least one interesting discovery. When the picks were hard at work in the sand, and day and night were enlivened by steam-engines and casual labourers sleeping off their wages in other people's summerhouses, there went about a word of a great find. A pot of copper had been found, some said; of coppers, said others; of Roman gold coins, there was a rumour, and all the coins exchanged for beer. Perhaps some coins were found; what certainly was found was a beautifully made bronze bucket, buried deep below clay and sand in a bed of gravel. It has been classified by the experts as belonging to a Venetian workshop of the seventh century B.C.—actually the early days of the Tarquins. Prehistoric traffic between Britain and Italy may not be an entirely new idea, but the bucket opens a new chapter. [Pg 194]

A few years after the Kembles had given up their cottage Weybridge had other brilliant visitors. The French Revolution of 1848 drove abroad thinkers and writers and a royal family, and Weybridge saw most of them. John Austin, author of *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, settled with his wife at a sober, red brick building near the church, and there they were visited by Lavergne, and Victor Cousin and de Rémusat and Guizot: Barthélemy St. Hilaire wrote to Mrs. Austin in 1854—"I assure you that Weybridge is the place in England I love best." There were royal exiles at Claremont near Esher, then, and they came to mass at the Roman Catholic chapel which fronts the common; Louis Philippe and Queen Amélie, and the Duchess of Orleans and the Comte de Paris; there is a monument in the chapel to the Duchess of Nemours, who died at Claremont in 1857. *Tot luctuosis domus Aurelianensis addita funeribus* is the inscription, and the glorious beauty of the white marble lights the chapel; she was only thirty-four.

Weybridge's church is modern, but the registers and churchwarden's accounts are old and amusing. The following items, taken at random from the lengthy and exact copy made by Miss Eleanor Lloyd in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, are pleasant riddles of spelling:— [Pg 195]

		£	*s.*	*d.*
1622.	Pd for a gally slabs seate for y^{e}parson	00	01	00
1623.	Pd for drinke for the Ringgers upon the Prince came out of Spain and at other tymes	00	02	08
	Pd for 23 Bushells of Lyme and five Bushells of hare	00	11	08
1655.	Paid for an hower glass	00	00	06
1658.	Rec^{d} of John Durling for breach of y^{e} Saboth	00	05	0
	Rec^{d} of several bargemen for breach of y^{e} Saboth	14	08	6
1659.	Rec^{d} of Adlms Barg for Breach of the Saboth	04	00	0
	Rec^{d} for the Church grass being praised: besides X^{s} worth taken	07		

	away	00	0	
	Edward Ginger Junior carried away the gras worth X^{s}			
1667.	Item given to the ringers one gunpowder treson day	0	1	0
	Item for expenses in going twice to the Justices wth the fanattick	0	2	0
	Item for Inditing Robert Hone for takinge in an Inmate and Rich for not cuminge to Church for the space of that month for y^{e} fes for the same	0	9	4
1669.	paid for buring a pore man that dyed brocklands farm	0	2	6
1671.	Rest due to the parrish for the grass this yeare	1	2	9
	Mils Bucklands bill not being holy aloud			
1697.	gave to John Born for a foxes hed	00 04	03	
	Sept. ye 16 gave ye ringers for Joy of ye pees	00 00	04	
	for a botel of wine	00 02	03	
1701.	payd for 3 botells of winde	00 03	08	

The political events which brought the ringers joy and shillings seem to have been the peace of Ryswick and the return of Charles I, then Prince of Wales, from his journey to Spain in search of a princess. Weybridge would have always followed royal doings with interest, for Weybridge history, bound up with its oldest and greatest mansion, goes back to the kings almost of the middle ages. On the ground, or near it, which now belongs to the Oatlands Park Hotel, Henry VIII built one of his finest palaces: Elizabeth followed her father and hunted deer in the park; James I added to the palace a silkworm room for Anne of Denmark, planted mulberry trees to feed the silkworms, and bred pheasants to please himself; Charles I killed his stags and encroached on private ground to kill more; his youngest son, Prince Henry of Oatlands, was born in the palace. But Charles was the last English king to hunt at Oatlands. After the Civil wars the land was disparked, and the palace fell into ruins. To-day hardly a vestige remains. Old drawings show it to have been a large, straggling building with one great court and a number of smaller yards and quadrangles, turreted and gabled and quaint with tall and delicate chimneys. The oddest neighbour for Weybridge of to-day! It is not always difficult to re-people an old house, even if it has been greatly altered, with the ghosts of great men who have walked its passages and worked in its rooms. But among the newness and smallness of modern building plots there is nothing so [Pg 196] hard as to conjure the ghost of a great palace, vibrating with the energy and the obsequiousness, the simplicities and the intrigues of a hunting King and his Court.

Georgian days brought another being as a visitor. Oatlands came to the seventh Earl of Lincoln in 1716, and he built himself a house on the higher ground overlooking a fine stretch of water and many miles of Thameside country. From his son, who had inherited the dukedom of Newcastle, this house was bought by the Duke of York in 1794, but was burnt down the same year, and the royal Duke rebuilt it. He and his duchess lived there until 1820, when she died. It must have been a curious household. George III brought Queen Charlotte there, and the Court with her; Georgian wits and beauties gathered in the duke's dining-rooms and played cards in his grottoes. Charles Greville was often at Oatlands, and Sheridan and Beau Brummell and Horace Walpole; Mrs. Gwyn came there, and Mrs. Bunbury, Oliver Goldsmith's "Jessamy bride" and "Little Comedy." Both were buried in Weybridge old church. Samuel Rogers, in his *Table-talk*, gives a quaint picture of the household:—

> "I have several times stayed at Oatlands with the Duke and Duchess of York—both of them most amiable and agreeable persons. We were generally a company of about fifteen; and our being invited to remain there 'another day' sometimes depended on the ability of our royal host and hostess to raise sufficient money for our entertainment. We used to have all sorts of ridiculous 'fun' as we roamed about the grounds. The Duchess kept (besides a number of dogs, for which there was a regular burial-place) a collection of monkeys, each of which had its own pole with a house at top. One of the visitors (whose name I forget) would single out a particular monkey, and play to it on the fiddle with such fury and perseverance that the poor animal, half distracted, would at last take refuge in the arms of Lord Alvanley.—Monk Lewis was a great favourite at Oatlands. One day after dinner, as the Duchess was leaving the room, she whispered something into Lewis's ear. He was much affected, his eyes filling with tears. We asked what was the matter. 'Oh,' replied Lewis, 'the Duchess spoke so *very* kindly to me!'—'My dear fellow,' said Colonel Armstrong, 'pray don't cry; I daresay she didn't mean it.'"

The Duke of York died in 1827, and thirty years later Oatlands became a hotel. The building was greatly altered, but the grounds still keep some untouched memorials of the past. One is an extraordinary grotto, built by the Duke of Newcastle, and used by the Duke of York and his [Pg 197] friends, according to local tradition, as a card-room, plentifully supplied with wine bottles. It is lined with a profusion of crystal spar and sea shells; it contains a deep bath, bashfully presided over by a statue of Venus, and the steps leading up to the door are paved with horses' teeth picked up on the battlefield of Waterloo. How the Duke of Newcastle accomplished this feat it is

difficult to imagine, for he died in 1794. Perhaps they belonged to other horses, or perhaps the gallant Duke of York made the addition. He was Commander-in-chief, and the grisly relics may have been sent him as a present.

Another relic of the dead is the cemetery in which the Duchess of York used to bury her cats and dogs and monkeys. There may be, perhaps, thirty or forty little tombstones, each with a name.

Oatlands Park preserves a not very trustworthy legend. In the grounds stand a number of magnificent cedars, and one of them bears a notice by which you are informed that it was one of the first cedars of Lebanon planted in England and was placed where it stands by Prince Henry of Otelands. Neither statement quite fits the facts. If Prince Henry of Oatlands planted the cedar, he must have done so either before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 (in which case he would have been hardly three years old, for he was born in 1639), or else in the summer of 1660, the year of the Restoration, and the year in which he died. As a matter of fact, cedars were hardly known at the time, for John Evelyn in his *Sylva*, published in 1664, only mentions them as unsatisfactory seedlings, difficult to grow; and the earliest cedar planted in England is probably the Enfield cedar, which may have been set in the ground by Dr. Uvedale, master of the Grammar-School, about that date. There are, in any case, much finer cedars than the Oatlands Park trees in adjoining private gardens. Probably all of them were planted by the Earl of Lincoln or the Duke of Newcastle early in the eighteenth century.

Another of Weybridge's links with royalty is not quite so reputable. Portmore Park is the name for a large slice of the town which lies near the river, thickly built over with villas and cut up into new roads. Once there stood in it Ham House, which with its park was given by James II to his mistress Catherine Sedley, notorious at least as much for her wit as her features. She herself, [Pg 198] even with the brilliant eyes which were pretty nearly all she had of good looks, could not understand the king's infatuation. "It cannot be my beauty," she said; "for he must see that I have none; and it cannot be my wit; for he has not enough to know that I have any." Whatever the attraction may have been, he made her Countess of Dorchester and gave her Ham House, and she very prudently married David Colyear, first Lord Portmore. The gates of her park survive her; the house has disappeared.

One great estate still remains, and on its hill the oldest settlement of the neighbourhood. The generosity of the Egerton family throws open to the public, in the woods of St. George's Hill, some hundreds of acres of pine forest and heather. On the summit of the hill stands a large prehistoric camp, where neolithic Wey-siders in Wey beaver-fur and buckskin entrenched their wives and their cattle. There are fifteen or sixteen of these ancient British camps in Surrey or just over the border; this is the largest, and the height and strength of its earthworks are admirable. It is more than three-quarters of a mile in circumference, and since it is obviously a camp, has naturally been set down as Cæsar's. But that is the fate of anything old which looks like a fortification—part of the traditional method of assigning otherwise inexplicable phenomena to their proper agents. Camps are all Cæsar's, Cromwell made all the ruins, and all geological wonders belong to the devil.

St. George's Hill, or rather the low-lying ground on the Cobham side of it, was once the scene of a curious agricultural experiment. In the late days of the Parliamentary wars the Levellers sent some thirty men, under leaders named Everard and Winstanley, to seize part of the common land and plant roots and beans. Fairfax sent two troops of horse after them, and the captured Everard made him a speech, in which he claimed that he had had a vision instructing him to dig and plough the earth for the benefit of the poor, and that his mission was to help his oppressed fellow-Israelites back to their rights over all landed and other property. The Digger-Socialist did not give Fairfax much more trouble, for the irate commoners, refusing to be delivered from bondage, drove the Levellers from their common and pulled up the roots and beans. [Pg 199]

The Levellers have their poet, and he made them a song with a fine lilt. Here are the first three stanzas:

You noble Diggers all, stand up now, stand up now,
You noble Diggers all, stand up now,
The wast land to maintain, seeing Cavaliers by name
Your digging does disdaine, and persons all defame.
Stand up now, stand up now.

Your houses they pull down, stand up now, stand up now,
Your houses they pull down, stand up now.
Your houses they pull down to fright poor men in town,
But the gentry must come down, and the poor shall wear the crown.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

With spades and hoes and plows, stand up now, stand up now,
With spades and hoes and plows, stand up now,
Your freedom to withhold, seeing Cavaliers are bold
To kill you if they could, and rights from you to hold.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

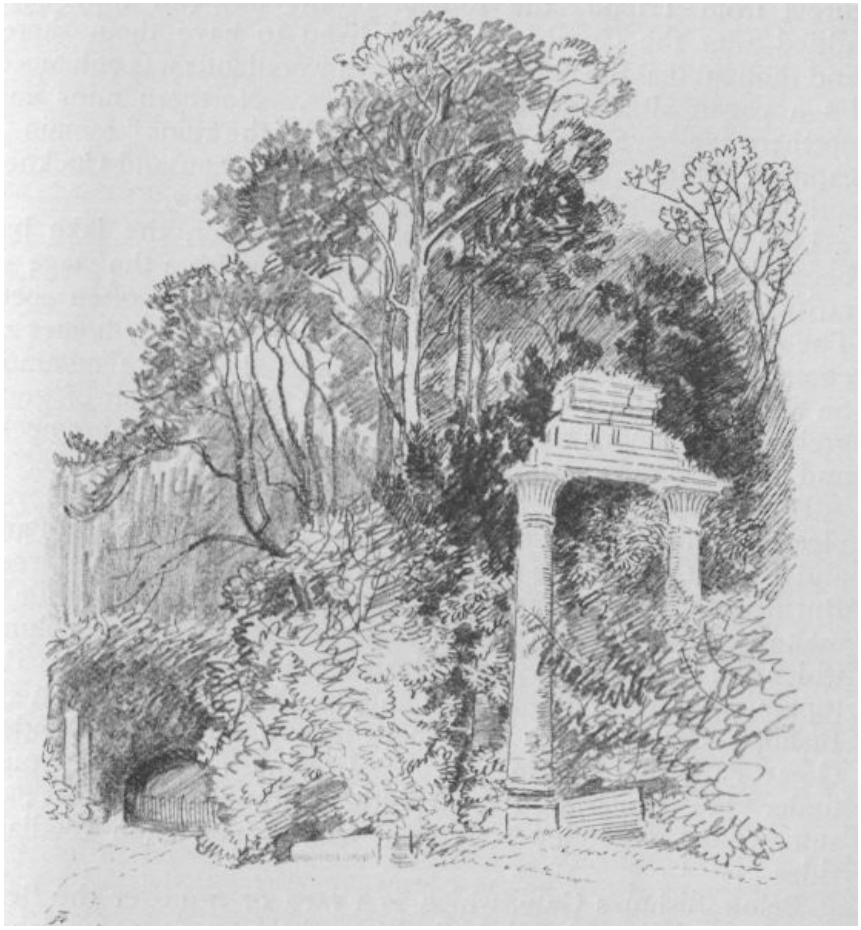
Although not one of the highest of Surrey hills, St. George's Hill provides a series of delightful glimpses of distant scenery through the trees. Windsor Castle stands up like a battleship on the horizon to the north-west, twelve miles away: west lie the rolling open spaces of Chobham

Common and Bagshot Heath; south-west Guildford and Godalming stand over the shining valley of the Wey; Ranmer Church spire marks Dorking to the south: Leatherhead, Epsom, and the Crystal Palace almost complete the ring. I have never seen St. Paul's. But the abiding charm of St. George's Hill is not the view, which is surpassed by a dozen others. It is the deep quiet of the place; the sound of the wind in the trees, even on windless days, like the sound of the sea in a shell; the scented pine-needle carpet, crinkling in the sun; the bracken and bluebells of May, and the crimsons and purples of June's profuse rhododendrons. [Pg 200]

CHAPTER XVIII

NORTH TO RUNEMEDE

Virginia Water.—Ruined Temples.—Grebes and Pheasants.—Bishop's Gate.—Shelley's "Alastor."—"Perdita" at Englefield Green.—Mrs. Oliphant's Neighbours.—Runemede rolled.—Egham's Almshouses.—Sir John Denham.—Frightful Monuments.—King Charles and the grateful stag.—The quiet of Thorpe.—The Crouch Oak.—Love Philtres.



Ruins at Virginia Water.

There is no better way of roaming through north-west Surrey than to take the train to Virginia Water station, which is as near as you can get to the county boundary by the railway, and then to set out almost along the boundary northwards till the Thames turns the road south again at Runemede. Virginia Water itself lies more than a mile from the station, and is not at its best on Saturdays and Sundays. On quieter week days there is no lovelier stretch of woodland lake-water. It is, of course, not a natural sheet, but its designer had skill enough to know what would not look unnatural. He was Thomas Sandby, Royal Academician and Deputy-Ranger of Windsor Park, and one of the great landscape gardeners of Georgian days. He planned the lake for the Duke of Cumberland, Ranger of Windsor Park after Culloden, and he made it by choking back a number of small streams that trickled through a reedy marsh, and so spreading a single floor of shining water over the whole valley. The trees, or most of them, that stand about the banks have grown since the Duke saw the water. There are old oaks on the northern shore, but the southern and eastern sides were planted with spruce and other conifers at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth, when all that remained of the victor of Culloden was his horrible nickname and his obelisk above the lake. The trees are glorious in December or June, when the [Pg 201] green leaf is high on the beeches or the copper leaf strewn below them, and in any month of the year the thick, deep moss of the open glades is a carpet to delight to walk upon. But not all Sandby's landscape gardening has an equal charm. The cascade which drains the outflow of the water is a pretentious pile which no doubt filled the eye of the royal Ranger, and perhaps would [Pg 202] have pleased John Evelyn, but it suits a simpler taste very little. But "the ruins"—it is their vague

and proper name—are worse. Once, on the southern shore, stood a classical temple. It was the genuine article; the pillars were brought direct from Tripoli; the Ranger of the day (for they were added after the Cumberland era) liked to have them there, and thought that the beauty of English woodlands was enhanced by a pagan altar and Greek porticoes. Northern rains and northern ivy have done their work, and "the ruins" remain—capitals, columns, and pedestals shouting a thousand Cockney scribbles, tumbled headlong under laurel and yew.

Like other large stretches of Surrey water, the lake has become the home of wildfowl once passing from the stage of rarity to extinction, but now increasing and more often seen. The reeds that line parts of the shore are the happy homes of coots and water hens, but mallards and ducks are common on the water, and I have watched more than one pair of great grebes, conspicuous on the level lake with their gleaming necks and chestnut ruffs, swimming and diving close in the shore.

Padlocked gates prevent you from walking precisely as you please from the north-east of the lake through Windsor Park, and it is not impossible to miss the right path through the trees. But if you are walking north from the lake it is worth while to make your way to the Cumberland obelisk—a gaunt column which the clustering ivy and shrubs at its base will some day topple down among the grass and heather—and to reach the Bishop's Gate through the single narrow stretch of Windsor Great Park that lies in Surrey. In winter, pheasants crouch under the brushwood or splutter through the trees; in summer the rhododendrons scent and empurple the woodland rides.

Below Bishop's Gate, which is a yard or two over the Berkshire border, lies the little hamlet of the same name where Shelley, the year before his marriage to Mary Godwin, spent a happy summer and wrote "Alastor." He was supposed to be dying of consumption, and was to live as much as he could in the open air; and from Bishop's Gate he began an expedition up the Thames, which took a fortnight of the warm July of 1815. He began "Alastor" in the glades of Windsor Park in the summer, and that strange and brooding poem is full of the splendour of the Windsor forest. The poet, "led by love, or dream, or God," sought the "dearest haunt" of Nature:— [Pg 203]

"More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful."

This is a corner of Surrey, indeed, which is full of links with writers and poets. Hardly a mile to the east of Bishop's Gate is Englefield Green, a high and breezy common surrounded by delightful old houses. Poor "Perdita," Mrs. Robinson, died in one of them, deserted and forgotten by the Prince for whom she had thought her name well lost.

To a later generation Englefield became familiar, if unvisited, through Mrs. Oliphant's *Neighbours on the Green*. Two of her friends in real life who lived there were Richard Holt Hutton, essayist and theologian, and one of the greatest of English journalists; and Sir George Chesney, author of *The Battle of Dorking*, whom we are to meet on the scene of one of his hitherto bloodless battlefields. Other neighbours, perhaps even better known, survive in the half-fiction of Mrs. Oliphant's pages.

But the most enthusiastic admirer of the neighbourhood was a poet, Sir John Denham. What would the author of the poem in praise of Cooper's Hill say to some of the buildings which crown that "airy mountain" to-day? For Englefield Green stands on Cooper's Hill as Sir John saw it, and to him the common must have been part of the hill itself. To us Cooper's Hill has become less a [Pg 204] hill than a college, and will become a hill again. The buildings of the College, started with the brightest hopes to provide a special education for the Indian Civil Service in 1870, and closed as a failure in 1905, stand untenanted and unhappy, fenced about with placards. There is no building quite so depressing as an empty school.

On a day of light mists one may see the view from the hill as Denham knew it, and as it was seen and known by Surrey nobles long before his day. For below the hill lies Runemede, and it needs the filmy gauze of mist to spread the meadows and trees of the Thames banks into a green

carpet, untouched with the mark of the builder and the roadmaker. But Runemede is not seen best from the hill. Best, I think, you can measure that broad green floor by coming on it as King John might have come had he ridden or rowed from Windsor. Then it stretches suddenly before you, a level plain of springing grass, a single rich hayfield in June, as perhaps John looked out over it on the day he sealed the Charter. The meadow and the river can have changed little in seven hundred years, and perhaps the farming of the meadow is not wholly different. But I shall always remember the shock with which once I came upon Runemede on an open day in March, when the farmers' men were out over all the fields with the horses and the farm machinery. Runemede was being rolled.

South of that great meadow, Egham stands opposite Staines, separated by the river and a mile of dull road. Egham may have once had attractions, but they have nearly all disappeared. Nothing old or quiet could live near the Holloway College. A building of such appalling pretensions sears its neighbourhood like a hot iron. The town takes colour from its flamboyant arrogance; the local builder studs his rough-cast with glass, red and green and blue. Two old almshouses stand by the main street of the town; one, a lowly set of cottage rooms, built by Sir John Denham in 1624, crouches quietly apart; the other, two hundred years younger, but still good Georgian brick, stands behind a gateway in grounds which, when I saw them last, were a miracle of untidiness. The almshouses, were rebuilt in 1828, when perhaps the grass round them was mown also.

Epitaphs and monuments can be dull enough, but no one could call the monuments dull which [Pg 205] family piety has erected in Egham church to the memory of Sir John Denham, father of the poet. Sir John, clothed in a shroud, quits his tomb at the Last Trump; below him, among skeletons and skulls, two grisly corpses writhe to the light. It is edifying to conceive the satisfaction with which Sir John's descendants must have feasted on such horrors every Sunday. A gentler memory lives on a stone erected "to the most dutiful, engaging, and tender child of seven years old. Miss Sarah Honywood"; and a finer epitaph is Garrick's, written to the memory of Thomas Beighton, a former vicar:—

"He had no foe, and CAMDEN was his friend."

Entering Egham.

Sir John Denham, the poet and unsuccessful defender of Farnham Castle in the Parliamentary Wars, lived at the house which is now the vicarage, and from its windows looked out on the long rising slope of Cooper's Hill. He has been laughed at for his description of the hill as an "airy mountain," but three hundred years ago, before the hill was cut up with hedges and ditches, and when he could look across open grass to its foot, Cooper's Hill may well have seemed higher than [Pg 206] to-day. It is higher than St. Anne's Hill, after all, and can make an imposing break on the horizon.

Here is Runemede as Sir John Denham saw it from Cooper's Hill:—

"There lies a spatious and a fertile Greene,
Where from the woods, the *Dryades* oft meet
The Nayades, and with their nimble feet,
Soft dances lead, although their airie shape
All but a quicke Poeticke sight escape,
There *Faunus* and *Sylvanus* keepe their Courts,
And thither all the horrid hoast resorts,
When like the Elixar, with his evening beames,
The sunne has turn'd to gold the silver streames.

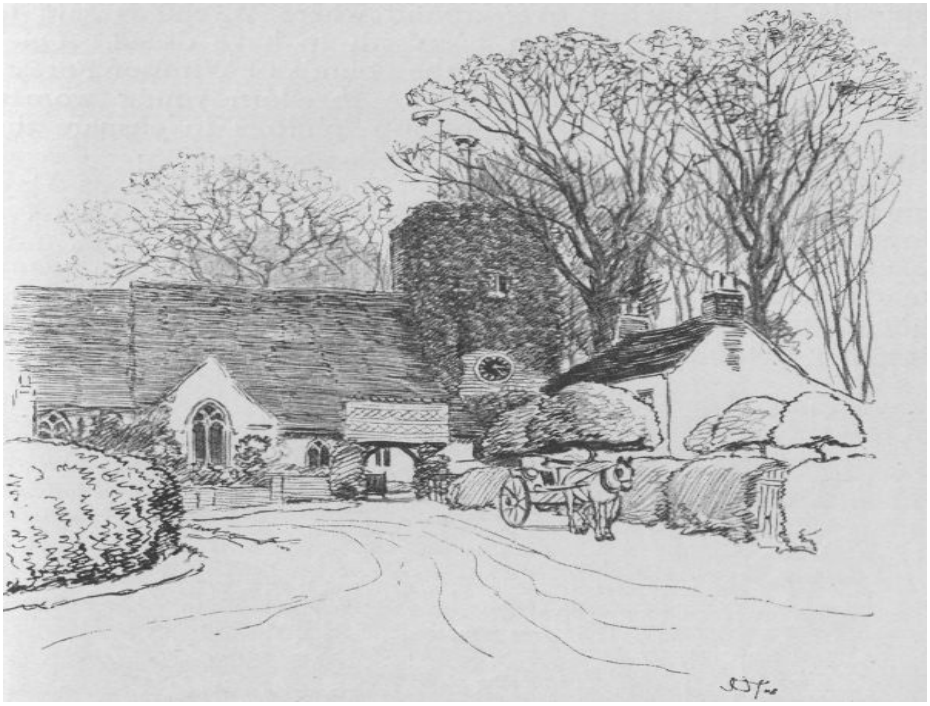
Here have I seene our *Charles*, when great affaires

Give leave to slacken, and unbend his cares,
Chacing the royall Stagge, the gallant beast,
Rowz'd with the noyse 'twixt hope and feare distrest,
Resolv's 'tis better to avoyd, than meet
His danger, trusting to his winged feet."

Which he does, a most moving business, until at last the gallant animal turns. He stands at bay—

"Till *Charles* from his unerring hand lets flie
A mortall shaft, then glad, and proud to dye
By such a wound he fals, the Chrystall flood
Dying he dyes, and purples with his blood."

Between Egham and Thorpe to the south is one of the few fine Elizabethan houses in the county, pleasantly named Great Fosters. But even Great Fosters, with all the charm of its gables, its chimneys and its mullioned windows, does not stand in quite such sharp contrast to the garishness of the Holloway buildings as the little village of Thorpe itself. Thorpe has been little written about. It lacks its sacred bard. But neither Shere, nor Gomshall, nor Thursley, nor Chiddingfold, which have been compared and criticised as the most beautiful of all Surrey villages, can surpass Thorpe for richness of peace of ancient homes and quiet brooding over the past. Enter Thorpe from the north by the fields, and you will walk by lanes over which a hundred years have passed without adding a tile or a tree to cottages or cottage gardens; and in Thorpe itself you can sit near the church on the edge of a stone stile, and look round at walls and roofs [Pg 207] which might surely have sheltered Sir John Denham himself, walking by Thorpe to Chertsey. The stile stands across an ancient right of way, which crosses the fields; a straight line from the churchyard to Chertsey. John de Rutherwyk, doubtless, often walked or rode that lonely byway; perhaps it was he who raised the level path dry and well-drained out of the swampy, snipe-haunted meadows that lay between the little church and the great Abbey.



Thorpe.

South of Chertsey to the Wey is rather uninteresting country. Addlestone lies between Chertsey and Weybridge, though not in a direct line, and was the home for years of two octogenarian authors, each of whom had a pension from the State, and who between them wrote or edited over [Pg 208] five hundred books—Samuel Carter Hall and his wife Anna Maria Fielding. Both are buried at Addlestone; so is Fanny Kemble's mother, Mrs. Charles Kemble, who as Mademoiselle Decamp had delighted French theatres. But Addlestone's great possession is still living, the huge Crouch Oak which spreads vast branches over ground where Wycliff is said to have preached, and Queen Elizabeth to have dined. Once the Crouch Oak stood to mark the bounds of Windsor Forest; and up to years not long gone by love-lorn young women gathered its bark to boil down into philtres to ensnare the hearts of unwilling swains.

The Crouch Oak, Addlestone.

At Anningsley Park, two miles away, lived Thomas Day, author of *Sandford and Merton*; Thomas Day, who took a foundling child of thirteen and named her Sabrina, and educated her to be his wife—a position which she, at an age to marry, refused. His fate was perverse to the end. He taught himself to dance, wooing another lady who spurned him; and, teaching himself to ride, he was thrown and killed. [Pg 209]

CHAPTER XIX

CHOBHAM AND BISLEY

Euclid in Surrey.—Chobham.—Bagshot Rhododendrons.—Vultures of the Road.—The Golden Farmer.—Catching the Small-pox.—A contented Family.—The Queen's Bon-graces.—A Gentle Hermit.—Prize fights.—Bisley.—Donkeytown.—A wilful brook.

Half of north-west Surrey belongs to the soldiers. Chobham Common, Bagshot Heath, Chobham Ridges, Bisley, Pirbright, York Town, and Camberley contain among them pretty nearly all the camps, colleges, training grounds, and rifle-ranges that do not belong to Aldershot over the Hampshire border. The whole aspect of the country is military; rural outlandishness has been drilled into rigidity and pattern. The roads run as straight as if the Romans had driven them—and, indeed, some of them in the neighbourhood are Roman roads; the face of the hills and heather commons is scored with roads like figures of Euclid, triangles, oblongs, radii, rhomboids, every kind of road which enables you to go from one place to another in the shortest space of time possible; which, for that matter, is a thing you frequently wish to do. Nobody wants to linger on a road as straight as a gunshot.

Camberley, perhaps, is as good a centre as any for exploring this part of Surrey; but the border of the county is intersected with such a network of railways that it is easy to get to Bagshot or Camberley or Frimley from almost anywhere and to join the railway again where you please. One of the best walks is from Chertsey over Chobham Common to Windlesham and Bagshot, and then over Chobham Ridges down into Frimley. Bisley is most easily visited from the railway, as thousands visit it—or rather the rifle range—every July. [Pg 210]

Chobham Common is at its best in July, when the heather is out. But it has a day in May, under a hot sun, which is, in some ways, more distinct. The scent and the glow of the heather belong to other Surrey hills; but Chobham Common has its own features of sandy hillocks topped by clumps of pines, which set an austere gauntness on the place unlike the rolling flanks and ridges by Frensham and Hindhead. In May the heather is dark and dry; there are sparse patches of gorse scattered about the slopes, and looking across at a group of pines edging the horizon you sometimes get a setting of black, yellow, and blue, which belongs peculiarly to this corner of Surrey. Chobham Common and its heather have often been compared to Scotland, and I can never catch the likeness. The heather is there, and the scattered pines like some of the Lowlands; but the wind is a southern wind, and never blows like Stevenson's wind on the moors "as it blows in a ship's rigging, hard and cold and pure." Beyond all, there is nowhere the Scottish horizon of hills.

Windlesham lies on the western edge of the Common, and straggles over a dozen short, crooked roads—an oasis among parallelograms. Once it had a reputation for growing bog-myrtle, as you may learn from Aubrey:—

> "In this Parish, at Light-Water-Moor, grows great store of a plant, about a foot and a half high, called by the inhabitants Gole, but the true Name is Gale; it has a very grateful smell, like a Mixture of Bays and Myrtle, and in Latin it is called Myrtus Brabantica; it grows also in several places of this healthy Country, and is used to be put in their Chests among their Linnen."

Perhaps it may still be put there. Such a plant must have been a favourite with an excellent housewife buried in the churchyard, whose epitaph attracts wandering readers:—

> She was, but words are wanting to say "What,"
> Think what a wife should be, and she was "That."

If Aubrey were making another perambulation of Surrey to-day, he would forget the Windlesham bog-myrtle when he had seen the Bagshot rhododendrons. To imagine Bagshot without rhododendrons is to think of Mitcham without lavender, Epsom without salts, Farnham without hops. The other name that goes naturally with rhododendrons is Waterer, and the Waterer nurseries have the magic of gardens of fairy tales. Even in winter, on a sunny day, an Italian air [Pg 211] blows through those tall thuias and cypresses, down those dark aisles of shining green. But in May and June, when the rhododendrons glow from pearl to crimson, and the azaleas light long stretches of flaming chrome and orange, the gardens take a glory that belongs to no other flowers.

In the days of the stage-coach Bagshot was a thriving village with an inn, perhaps the King's Arms of to-day, where thirty coaches a day changed horses. That rich traffic drew the vultures of the road, and Bagshot Heath was one of the most dreaded stretches of highway in England. Dick Turpin is said to have used the King's Arms and the Golden Farmer further down the road; it was the Golden Farmer in his day, and an unimaginative age has turned the farmer from Golden into Jolly. It is a pity, for "Jolly Farmer" means no more than White Lion or a dozen other names, but to "Golden Farmer" there belongs a story. There was a highwayman of Bagshot Heath who never would rob a purse of banknotes; he would touch nothing but gold. At Frimley at the same time lived a farmer, who never paid his debts in anything but gold. The golden farmer one day was recognised as the golden highwayman, and the inn stands close by the spot where they hanged him in chains.

Bagshot has had dealings with Stuart and other princes hunting the deer and putting up at the inns. Both the Charleses used to hunt in Bagshot Park. Once there was a pretty princes' quarrel. It was at one of the Bagshot inns that the Duke of Buckingham, at the height of his wild career, had the coolness to turn Prince Rupert's horses out of the stables and put in his own. Rupert complained to the King, and the Duke of York backed him; but Charles decided for Buckingham. Twenty years or so later, John Evelyn was at a Bagshot inn with Pepys, and went to call on a Mrs. Graham at her house in Bagshot Park. It was "very commodious and well-furnished, as she was an excellent housewife, a prudent and virtuous lady." She begged him to stay to dinner and sleep the night; she told him all about her children—how the eldest was ill with the small-pox but going on pretty well, and the others running about among infected people so as to catch the disease and get it over while they were young. Evelyn quite approved; he had had small-pox in his own family, and knew something about it. [Pg 212]

The house in Bagshot Park was made even more commodious some forty years ago, as a residence for the Duke of Connaught.

In the Ordnance Maps, Bagshot Heath is placed south of Bagshot; in the old maps of the county, the Heath lies to the north and north-east, and would merge into what is now Chobham Common. It must have covered many more miles than the maps allow it to-day. Chobham Ridges stretch from its south-west corner, a long, sandy scar of three miles, overlooking the Bisley rifle ranges and the desert ground behind them. You are sure to be invited to admire Chobham Ridges, and no doubt twenty years ago it was fine wild country. But frequent notice-boards observing that when the red flag is flying it is dangerous to walk any further, barbed wire, excavations of gravel, and sand trampled by cavalry horses into a paste like wet coaldust may temper the warmest enthusiasm. A hideous foreground can do something to spoil even a fine view, and the view from the Ridges is certainly wide and wild. The finest view I have had from Chobham Ridges was a thunderstorm driving down over Brookwood. It was a gusty, rainy day, and the rolling white and grey clouds and the lines of driven hail rode down the sky like a charge.

I once met, on Chobham Ridges, a pleasantly contented family. In front of a sort of bivouac of bent poles covered with cloths sat an old, weatherbeaten man, tailor-fashion, making a straw beehive. Another beehive, finished, with a straw handle, lay at his side. A wood fire smoked and sputtered a yard or two away; on a flat wooden barrow near were rough cooking utensils and a dark tabby cat; two small boys, one of them with not much more on him than a large pair of trousers, brought wood and bracken for the fire. It was raining, but I was wished good afternoon with the utmost cheerfulness. Were those his boys? They were; they generally went with him. Was there a good sale for beehives round there? There was a pretty good sale; this one, with a handle, he should try to sell for two shillings; he might have to take less; a farmer let him have the straw. Yes, he was known about there. That was the boys' cat; it generally went with them. What was that noise in the tent? That was a pair of kittens; yes, the boys liked to have them; they

generally had kittens. One of them picked up the cat, upside down, with obvious affection. [Pg 213]

Chobham itself lies five or six miles away from Chobham Ridges, south by a mile even from Chobham Common. Long before you come into the village you catch sight of the church spire, with its lead covering washed by the rain to a brilliant whiteness. Rising above the red tiles of the village into a blue sky it looks as if it had been painted yesterday. The church has been largely rebuilt, but has some fine Norman pillars, and contains besides the tomb of the great Nicholas Heath, once Archbishop of York. He was Lord Chancellor of England under Queen Mary, and a sound Papist. When Elizabeth came to the throne he resigned, but remained "so much in the Queen's Bon-graces," as an old writer puts it, "that she visited him once a Year through his Life, believing his mistaken Piety sincere."

Two miles behind the Ridges is Frimley, with an old inn and a church to which Americans come often. Bret Harte lived his last years at a house on the hillside near, and is buried in the churchyard. But the Bret Harte of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *The Heathen Chinee* does not, of course, belong to Frimley; those were earlier successes which he never equalled later.

The village politician ought to flourish at Frimley. On a board near the church I found a warning against a crime which must be becoming rarer. "Notice is hereby given that any person or persons found damaging the parish pump will be prosecuted," it ran, but the pump I did not find.

In Aubrey's day, Frimley had the gentlest of hermits. He fled from the changes and chances of the Parliamentary wars, and led the simplest possible life in the wilds. Aubrey describes his cottage:

> "At the end of this Hundred, I must not forget my noble friend, Mr. Charles Howard's Cottage of Retirement (which he called his Castle), which lay in the middle of a vast Heathy Country, far from any Road or Village in the *Hope* of a healthy Mountain, where, in the troublesome Times, he withdrew from the wicked World, and enjoyed himself here, where he had only one Floor, his little Dining Room, a Kitchen, a Chapel, and a Laboratory. His utensils were all of Wood or Earth; near him were about half a Dozen Cottages more, on whom he shew'd much compassion and Charity."

Frimley is a convenient stopping-place at which to join the railway. A walk for another two miles or so would bring the curious in the history of the prize ring, if any still remain, to a classic spot on the Hampshire border. It was in a meadow half a mile from Farnborough station, selected [Pg 214] because it would be easy to step out of one county into the next and so avoid the police, that Tom Sayers fought the huge American-Irishman Heenan, in almost the last great prize-fight fought in England. The fight came off on April 17, 1860; the most extraordinary care had been taken to keep the secret of the place of meeting, and the accounts of the proceedings, when one remembers that it all took place in the mid-Victorian quiet which was producing the *Idylls of the King* and *Adam Bede* are nearly unbelievable. Two monster trains carried twelve hundred spectators, peers, members of Parliament, magistrates, officers, clergymen, and gentlemen from London Bridge at dawn. Three pounds each was the price of the tickets. Nobody except two or three in the secret knew till that morning where the fight would be; the police, mounted and on foot, lined the railway from London Bridge for sixteen miles, all armed with cutlasses. The trains "turned off," as the account in *Bell's Life in London* puts it, at Reigate, took water near Guildford, and ran into Farnborough station "after a most pleasant journey through one of the prettiest countries in England, which, illumined by a glorious sun, and shooting forth in vernal beauty, must have inspired all with intense gratification." Thus *Bell's* eloquent reporter. Thirty-seven rounds were fought, in most of which Sayers was knocked down; his right arm was bruised and useless; Heenan could only see out of one eye. They were stopped at last, and in a few minutes Heenan was blind. *Bell's Life* next morning came out with a special eight-page edition, the two centre pages twelve columns of tiny print—nearly 30,000 words—describing every detail of the fight, the men, and the history of boxing in general. There were some protests by sentimental people against the brutality of the thing, and *Bell*, professing a vigorous belief in this particular form of "muscular Christianity," remarks reflectively that "the whole country is not yet converted to the right way on the subject of pugilism."

Bisley, which lies on the other side of Chobham Ridges, opposite to Frimley, is, as I have said, best reached by rail; indeed, there is little inducement to any one to reach it in any other way. Twenty years ago Bisley was a tiny village. It is now a vast rifle range. The name has become shifted from the little group of cottages and the quaint church standing among the cornfields half [Pg 215] a mile away to the huge common enclosed by the National Rifle Association, where every year in July the great shooting prizes are won and lost. Bisley is in many ways unique. It carries on the traditions of Wimbledon, which were greater than any other rifle meeting. It can show more targets and better ranges than any other range; it attracts rifle-shots from every British possession on the face of the globe, and for a week the rain of bullets sent into the sandy banks behind the targets is almost ceaseless. Perhaps the most remarkable sight of the "Bisley week" is the second stage of the shooting for the King's Prize, when three hundred competitors are "down" at the same time opposite a hundred targets in a row, and when the shooting is not over until 6,300 separate shots have been fired, signalled, and chalked on the blackboards by the range-markers. But the great occasion is, of course, the final stage; when the winner is chaired and cheered, and asked the usual ridiculous questions about smoking and drinking. Through all the week of the meeting the camp is a gay sight, with its white tents and flaring bunting, and the pennons blowing all down the long ranges to measure the wind for prone riflemen. "Lying prone

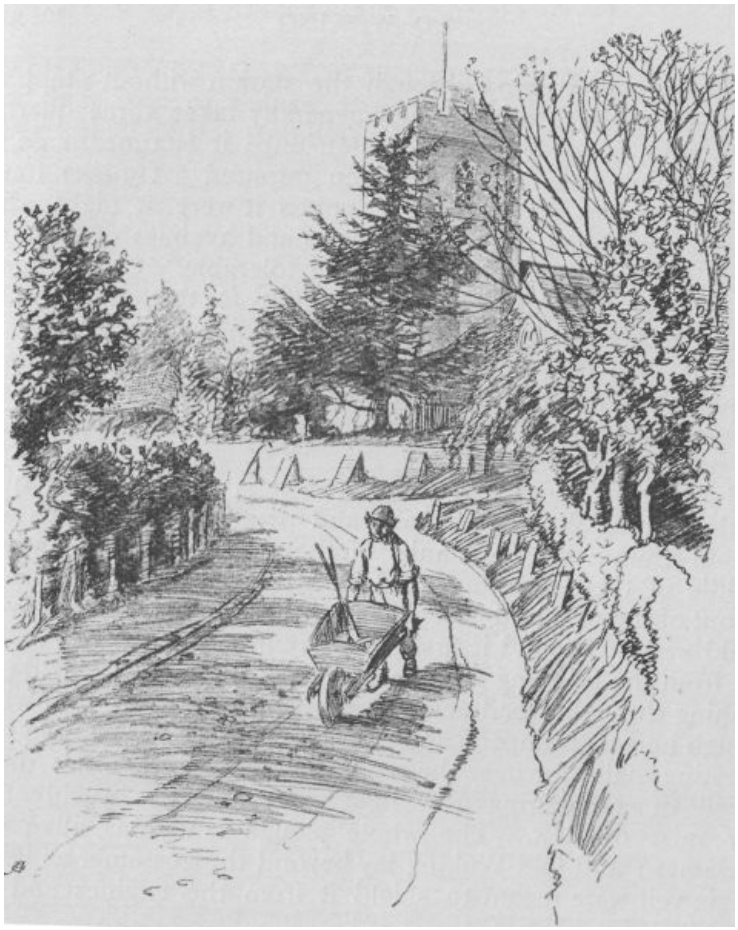
on the back," by the way, is a phrase which creeps into many newspapers during Bisley week. It would clearly not do to speak of a "supine" rifle-shot.

One would think that the noise of a rifle-range would make the neighbourhood intolerable. But even with the wind blowing to you from the range, a few hundred yards almost silences the sound of the range. I have walked on the common between Bisley itself and the range, when firing for the King's Prize was in full progress, and was merely conscious of an echo chattering uneasily in the trees.

There have been plenty of ways of spelling Bisley. Busele, Buselagh, Bushley, Busheley, Busley, Bussley, Busly, and Bisleigh are a few of them; there are probably variations. The church has a fine old wooden porch, with an old yew opposite it; but the door is locked, and visitors are not allowed to look over the church unaccompanied. My guide was courteous and obliging; but why should any one be given all this trouble? There is a famous well near, named after St. John the Baptist, the water of which was once used for all the christenings. It is not very easily found, and the local harvesters could tell me nothing about it; but I discovered it near a farmhouse a few [Pg 216] hundred yards south-west of the churchyard. Aubrey says that the dedication of the well made him curious to try it with oak-galls, which turned the water purple. Why should the name have impelled him to this particular curiosity? Aubrey was always testing wells with oak-galls, presumably for iron. Like many other famous wells, the water of this spring has always been said to be "colder in summer and warmer in winter" than any other spring in the neighbourhood.

Some of the names in this part of Surrey are curious. Cuckoo Hill, on the borders of Bagshot Heath, is pretty enough, and so is Gracious Pond, north-west of Chobham, though the Pond, which was once "great" and "stocked with excellent carp," is probably much smaller than it was. Brock Hill, near Cuckoo Hill, is of course the hill of badgers, and Penny Pot ought to be, if it is not, a memory of good ale. But Donkeytown! Who would live at Donkeytown? It is, however, quite a flourishing little community, though probably it will be eventually embraced by its larger neighbour, West End, which is the nearest village to Bisley to the north, and the largest. Looking at the map, it is a little difficult to understand why the cheaper forms of village building should spread in this part of the county, which, so to speak, leads nowhere: but possibly the presence of the Gordon Boys' Home has created fresh needs which must be supplied locally. The large buildings, which cost some £24,000, were set up here in 1885, and are a home for 200 boys.

Between Bisley and Chobham runs a road with rather an odd feature. For a short distance near Chobham village the little Hale Bourne, into which the Windle Brook has here grown, runs beside it, dark and full, but almost invisible under its overarching alders and dog-roses. Just as it leaves the roadside it is joined by a strange companion. Another little stream, coming down from the north, runs into the Hale Bourne after travelling the last hundred yards of its course over the whole breadth of a road. The road, which is of gravel, and regularly used, is hard and level, and the stream turns it into a bed, perhaps eight or nine feet across. The natural course would seem to be to dig the stream a bed of its own by the side of the road; but local ingenuity has preferred to send the traveller dryshod over a stile through the field at the side of the stream, which duly proceeds in the Ordnance map down the road it has chosen. [Pg 217]



CHAPTER XX

THE WEY VILLAGES

Old Woking.—Behind the Veil.—A Royal Palace.—Necropolis.—When not to dig a grave.—"Lumpy" Stevens.—The Ripley Road.—The Anchor and the Talbot Dog.—An Open Box.—Teal by Twilight.—Ockham.—Seven Streams.—Newark.—Jackdaws two shillings the Dozen.—The Wisley Garden.—Byfleet.—A Ghost in Velvet.

In whatever way you may choose to travel through Surrey, it is difficult to avoid making Woking a centre and a rendezvous. All the trains stop there; at least, I cannot remember ever passing through the station without stopping, either to change trains, which generally takes three quarters of an hour, or to wait in the station until it is time to go on again, which usually takes eleven minutes. I never found anything else to do at Woking, unless it were at night, when the railway lights up wonderful vistas and avenues of coloured lamps. Then the platform can be tolerable. Once when I had a long time to wait I walked out to the church which stands rather finely on the ridge north of the railway. I thought then it was Woking church: it belongs to Horsell. It was that Woking, the Woking of the station, which for many years I imagined to be the only Woking in Surrey. One did not wish for another.

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But there is another Woking, and it is as pretty and quiet as the railway Woking is noisy and tiresome. It stands with its old church on the banks of the Wey two miles away, a huddle of tiled roofs and old shops and poky little corners, as out-of-the-way and sleepy and ill-served by rail as anyone could wish. I found it first on a day in October, and walked out from the grinding machinery of the station by a field-path running through broad acres of purple-brown loam, over which plough-horses tramped and turned. It was a strange and arresting sight, for over the dark rich mould there was drawn a veil of shimmering grey light wider and less earthly than any mist or dew. The whole plough land was alive with gossamer; and Old Woking lay beyond the gossamer as if that magic veil were meant to shield it from the engines and the smoke.

Old Woking, indeed, lies in country deep enough to forget the railway altogether, and to take to the water as the highway. The Wey wanders in and out by the village, and half-a-mile away at Send the Navigation canal joins the Wey proper, as the little river has come to be called to distinguish it from the canal. The canal cuts businesslike corners and straight lines when the Wey, having plenty of time to spare, wants to wander an extra two or three miles about a field. From Send to Weybridge or to Guildford, down stream or up, by the canal towing-path or by boat, is a delightful journey in spring or summer. As good a round as can be taken walking is from Woking through Send by Newark Priory, Pyrford and Wisley to Byfleet, where the railway can be joined or the journey continued to Weybridge or back to Woking. But there are, of course, twenty ways of seeing the little villages that cluster round the Wey so closely in this corner of Surrey, either on foot or by boat, or rowing and walking both.

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But Woking has not always been quiet and old-fashioned and sleepy. Once it was a royal manor, and contained a royal residence. William the Conqueror held Woking in demesne himself, and it passed through the hands of every king until James I, who gave it to one of his foresters, Sir Edward Zouch. Sir Edward had to pay something for his privilege. He held the manor on condition that he was to bring to the king's table, on the Feast of St. James each year, the first dish at dinner, and with the dish the satisfactorily large rent of a hundred pounds in coined gold of the realm. Perhaps he still made something out of his tenants; at all events, a further token of gratitude, he was to wind a call in Woking Forest on Coronation Day. He may have liked the rental, but he could not have liked the old palace, for he knocked down every brick of it. The strangest and most melancholy fate seems to wait on every palace in Surrey built or lived in by an English king,—even by the friend of a king. Of Oatlands, Guildford, Woking, Nonsuch, Sheen, each a king's palace, scarcely a stone remains; Wolsey's palace by the Mole is nothing but a gateway; the Archbishops' palace at Croydon has sunk as low as a wash-house. Kingston owns the stone on which English kings have been crowned; but elsewhere in Surrey the royal hand has touched only to destroy.

A persistent association hangs to the name of the town by the station, undeserved but traditional. Woking, like the Duke of Plaza-toro, "likes an interment." Much of the land near the town is owned by a company which, while it builds villas for the living, especially those who find advantages in a fast train service, has named itself Necropolis, which is grim enough for anybody living or dead. But the Necropolis Company, whether it knows it or not, did not found the tradition. That stands to the record of an old grave-digger interviewed by Aubrey. He conversed grimly and with authority on the places and seasons for the proper digging of graves. He "had a rule from his father to know when not to dig a grave." That was "when he found a certain plant about the bigness of the middle of a tobacco-pipe, which came near the surface of the earth, but never above it. It is very tough, and about a yard long; the rind of it is almost black, and tender, so that when you pluck it, it slips off and underneath is red; it hath a small button at the top, not much unlike the top of an asparagus; of these he sometimes finds two or three in a grave." He was "sure it was not a fern-root" and had with diligence traced to its root; and since he had

[Pg 220]

satisfied himself of its grisly origin, he knew better than to dig a grave near where the root grew.

View from the Bridge, Woking.

On the maps Send looks like a single tiny village, south of Woking by half a mile. It is in reality a large parish, and since the name is corrupted simply from Sand, it is natural enough to find it [Pg 221] dotted all round the neighbourhood with other names tacked on to it—Sendholme, Sendgrove, Sendhurst, Send Heath, and Sendmarsh. The names are scattered only less widely than the parish itself. The church stands a mile from the little hamlet of Send, on the banks of the Wey, like the churches of Pyrford and Woking, and the ruins of the great Priory of Newark, to which Send Church and her chapel at Ripley both belonged. The three villages with their churches are still, perhaps, not much larger than they were two or three hundred years ago; the Priory is shattered; only the village with the chapel has grown.

By Send churchyard stands the bole of a mighty elm, riven and iron-bound. I like to imagine that it may have been climbed by one of the great Surrey cricketers of the old days of the Hambledon Club. Edward Stevens, the famous "Lumpy," was born at Send, and spent his boyhood there till he went to Chertsey and became, as John Nyren describes him, one of the two greatest bowlers he ever saw. "Lumpy" got his queer name either because he was, in Nyren's words, "a short man, round-shouldered and stout" or, according to another tradition, because at one of the dinners of the Hambledon Club he ate an apple-pie whole. Surely he must have been "Lumpy" before, besides after, that achievement. Yet another story has it that he was given his name because of some trick in his bowling. Certainly his methods were not what we should call exactly orthodox to-day. It was the privilege of visiting elevens in his day to choose the pitch on which the match should be played, and that was "Lumpy's" opportunity. Nyren explains his plan:—

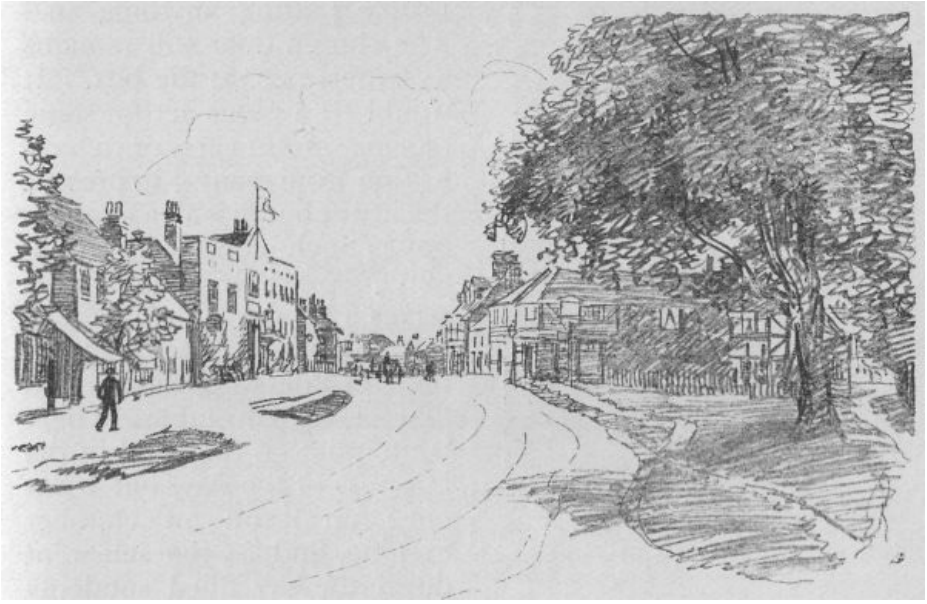
> "He would invariably choose the ground where his balls would *shoot*, instead of selecting a rising spot to bowl against, which would materially have increased the difficulty to the hitter, seeing that so many more would be caught out by the mounting of the ball. As, however, nothing delighted the old man like bowling the wicket down with a shooting ball, he would sacrifice the other chances to the glory of that achievement. Many a time have I seen our General twig this prejudice in the old man when matched against us, and chuckle at it. But I believe it was almost the only mistake he ever made, professional or even moral, for he was a most simple and amiable creature."

There is an unkind legend which speaks of "Lumpy" as a bit of a smuggler in his young days, but Nyren, at all events, never believed it, for he ends by declaring handsomely that "he had no trick [Pg 222] about him, but was as plain as a pike-staff in all his dealings." "Lumpy," whether he smuggled or not, certainly has his niche in cricket history. It was to him that the wicket owes its third stump. In a match played in 1775 on the Portsmouth Artillery Ground, between five of the Hambledon Club and five of All England, "Lumpy" three times sent the ball between the last Hambledon man's stumps without bowling him, and after the match, which Hambledon won in consequence, the number of the stumps was increased from two to three.

Send lies deep among the fields, counting itself fortunate, perhaps, that it is not on the Ripley road, a mile away. Ripley itself, perhaps, owes its fortune, even if it owes more besides, to the road which it has named. The story belongs to all the villages of a great highway. The coaches brought their heyday, the railway spoiled it, the bicycle re-made it, and now the village is being re-decorated by the motor-car.

The Ripley road, for the two days in the week when it is most used, is a place to avoid. Yet it can be beautiful, and there is an approach to it hardly equalled near any other highway in the county. The late Mrs. Buxton, of Foxwarren Park, above Wisley Common, for years permitted the public to walk and drive through her private grounds away from the high road, and that generous lady's permission has been continued by her successor. The carriage drive runs by oaks and bracken through which pheasants rustle, past a strange, tall column of black wood—a totem-pole brought from Queen Charlotte's Islands; then it rises to the edge of a ridge overlooking a wide and level stretch of pinewood and heather. In August, when the ling is out with the bell-heather, and the pines stand deep in fern and rushes, no lovelier carpet spreads under any Surrey hill. The road runs a white thread through it—a road best viewed from afar. The weight of wheels has ground the surface to powder.

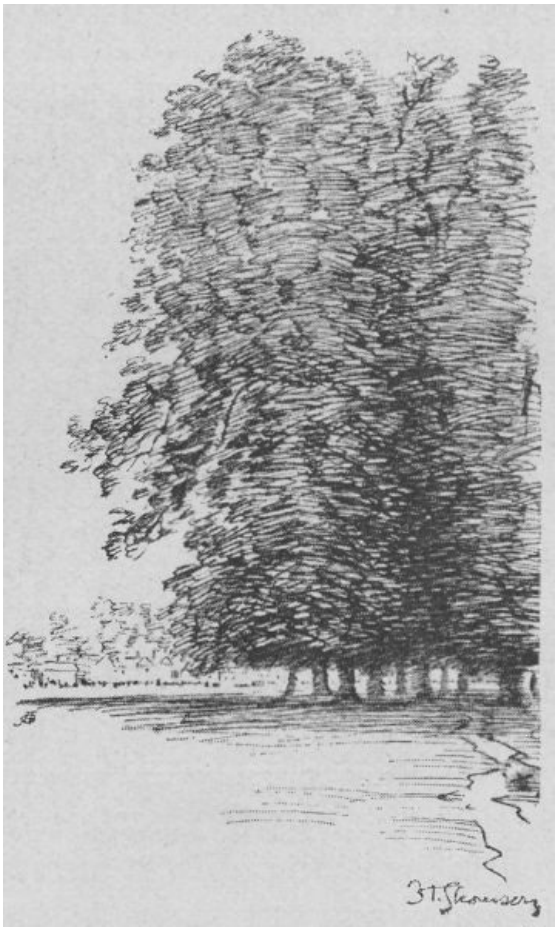
Ripley itself, but for the traffic, would be the prettiest village on the road. A long string of low-roofed houses lines the highway; little white gabled cottages offer tea and refreshment; two old inns share most, I suppose, of the custom of fasting travellers. The Anchor, an inn of many gables, has fixed itself in the affections of bicyclists since the days when they rode velocipedes, and its black-beamed walls and passages hold drawings of strange souls mounted on wheels [Pg 223] which would have scared Ixion. The Talbot, which was once the Dog (but a talbot is a dog always), is a house of imposing squareness. You may see the dog painted above the door, a liver-and-white fox-terrier, all proper. Opposite the inns stretches Ripley green, a broad and shining level with many memories of Surrey cricket, and in particular of "Lumpy" Stevens, of Send.



The Village Street, Ripley.

The motor-car has brought prosperity, even if it is a prosperity that can soil. But the tarnish washes off in night and rain. Ripley may look its best early on a Saturday morning, before the flood rushes down the road. When the little village lies clean and fresh in the sun, and the inns are busy with white tablecloths and cooking potatoes, and the children sit on the edge of the green before the dust comes, there is a sense of orderly bustle and of waiting for a day of hard work and good money that is pleasant enough.

One building only has suffered from the business of the road. The little church stands behind arches and canopies of clipped yew, its walls almost touching the highway. It is an interesting [Pg 224] little building, though much altered from its oldest form; the chancel has the remains of clustered pillars, and a beautiful string-course of Caen stone running round it. But those have not been the only attractions to visitors. When I was there I noticed that the oak collection-box by the door stood with its lid propped open. The caretaker happened to be in the church, and I showed it to her. "Oh yes," she said in a matter-of-fact tone, "we have to keep it like that. It has been robbed so often that we prop it open, so as to prevent people putting anything in." The church door still remains as wide open as the box. It would be a pious act for some passing motor-car—or a collection from many—to present the little church with a stronger box. Such continued hospitality, so vilely abused, deserves a return.



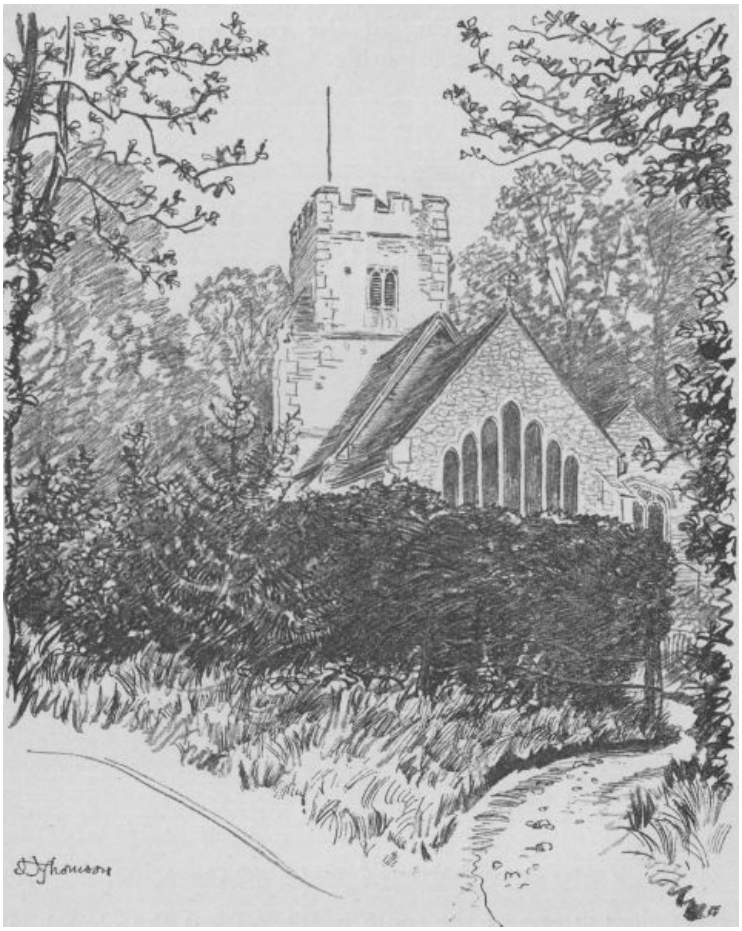
Trees on the Green, Ripley.

Two miles up the road lies the Hut Pond, opposite an inn that serves many tables. There is no quiet on the pond in the business of the day, but I was once on it on an October evening, and as the sun went down the sky filled suddenly with teal. Bunches of teal wheeled and circled in the cold twilight, whizzed down among the rushes, darted up again and round over the pines, then shot down again and settled, splashing quietly in the sedge.

Priest's door and Norman Chancel Ripley Church.

Ockham village, with its church and park, is south-east of Ripley by a mile or so. The charm of Ockham church lies in its tower, its east window, and its deep and happy site among the oaks and

elms of Ockham Park. The church lies some hundred yards from the road, under the windows of the manor-house, a building which cannot be said to owe anything to the taste or consistency of [Pg 225] successive architects. The tower is thirteenth century, buttressed, mottled into cool greys and pinks, and heavy with ivy. But the chief decoration of Ockham Church is its thirteenth century, seven-lancet east window, and in the carving of the capitals of its slender columns of black Sussex marble. There is some quaint Flemish glass in one of the south windows; but the church is spoiled by an extraordinarily ugly little chapel built on the north side as a mausoleum for the family of the Kings. The first of the line of these Kings was one Peter, the son of an Exeter grocer. He came up to London, soon made his mark as a lawyer, and died Lord Chancellor. There are several of his descendants buried with him, and their coronets hang above the arch of the chapel. [Pg 226] They add a peculiar tawdriness; but the chapel itself, with its dull blue paint, and the strange, bath-like sarcophagus below Rysbrach's statues of the first Lord King and his lady, is the main offence.



Ockham Church.

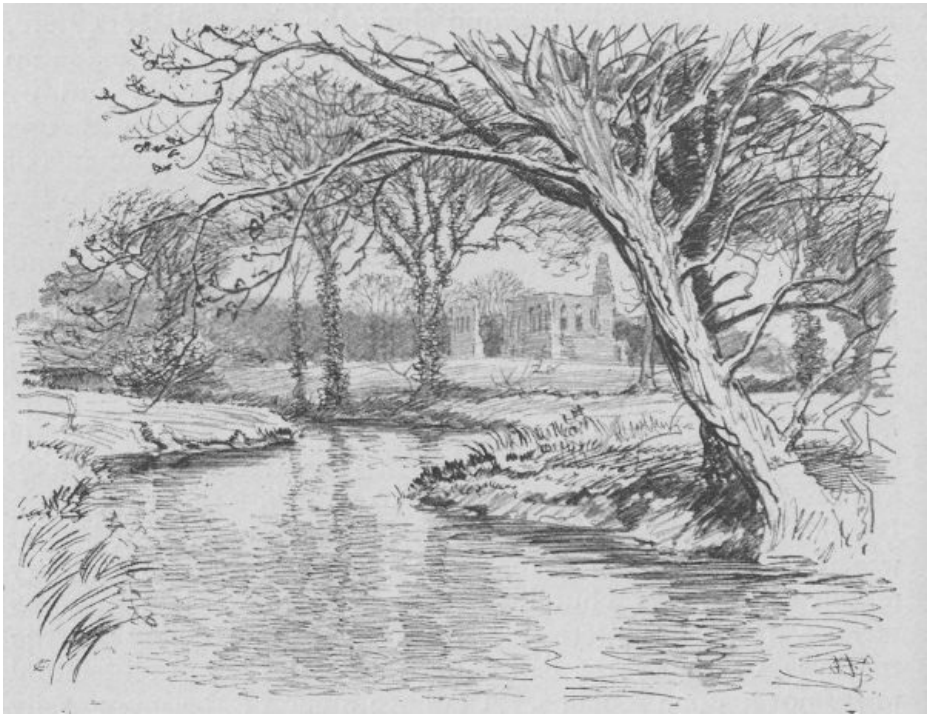
Ockham itself, even with that humming white highway not a mile distant, is untouched and [Pg 227] unspoiled: nothing more than a half-dozen or so of half-timbered or brick cottages and farm-buildings, rain-bleached and creeper-veiled, and fronted with some of the prettiest and brightest gardens in Surrey. One of the sleepy little buildings bears the legend "County Police," forbidding in new blue enamel. What should anyone do with police in Ockham?

But Ockham, perhaps, lies a little too far from the old waterway to join the group of villages and churches which cluster along this winding stretch of Wey. Still it belongs to Ripley, if not to Ripley's group along the river. Rivers, here, would be the better word, for the Wey has hardly yet made up its mind as to its right channel north of Woking, and by Ripley runs actually in seven streams almost parallel with one another, some of them cut artificially, but others tiny remnants of the broad watercourse which once rolled through Surrey to the sea. No doubt it was this abundance of water which first attracted the founder of Newark Priory, whose ruins stand almost in the centre of the seven streams. The monks must have had plenty of choice of fishing.

Newark Priory is generally supposed to have been founded as a house of Black Canons by Ruald de Calva and his wife Beatrice de Sandes in the reign of Richard I. But Ruald de Calva as a fact only re-founded or endowed the house, which was founded long before, probably by a Bishop of Winchester. Its older name was Aldbury, and Newark—or Newsted, as it was once called—which for us is an aged ruin, was Aldbury rebuilt with a new church and a new name. It is in some ways a rather uninteresting ruin. Of the tracery of the windows, or any of the lighter and more delicate architectural work, not a stone remains. I believe much of the more easily used stone-work found its way into the building of neighbouring houses, perhaps into the paving of the roads. But it has a certain bluntness and gauntness of its own, standing solid and stark in the plain meadowland of the Wey. Perhaps if one were to "visit it by the pale moonlight" it would take on darker graces and dignities. As it is, there is somewhere about it an air of protest; it is like a ghost that cannot get back before daylight. Horses gallop about the rough field under its walls; boating parties wonder why it should be thought worth while to fence it off with wire. Once I caught an echo of

the real Newark, late on a dark and stormy afternoon, when a sudden snipe rose at my feet out of one of the half-dry Priory stewponds. That wild cry must have been familiar enough to the old monks wandering by the stream in search of a likely run for perch or pike. [Pg 228]

The "very old castle" which Frank Buckland, the naturalist, mentions in the following note, taken from his edition of White's *Selborne*, must surely be Newark Priory, which is now a happy (and I think unmolested) home of jackdaws:—

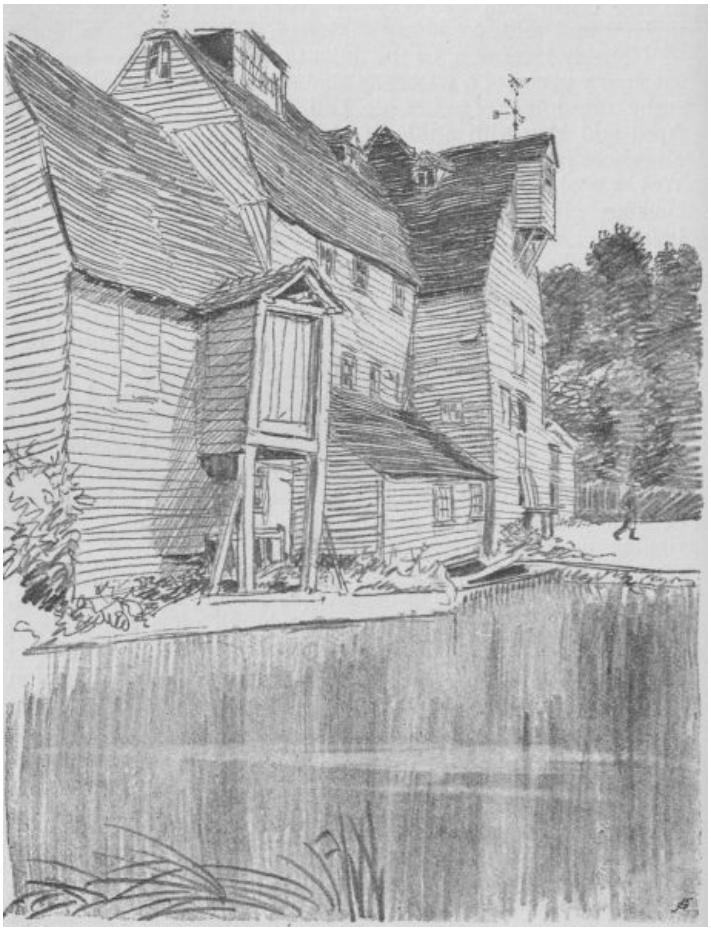


Newark Priory.

> "At Whistley, near Weybridge, the people go in May, when the birds are about a fortnight old, to the ruins of a very old castle. Men carry long ladders, and with blunt iron hooks take out the young jackdaws, and if there are no buyers they throw them to the ground. Bird dealers take hampers down to Whistley and bring up all the birds caught, as many as ten dozen of young jackdaws. They cost on the spot 2s. per dozen. The reason why they are taken is to stop the increase of jackdaws in the neighbourhood. If the young jackdaws are taken when about a fortnight old, the old ones will not 'go to nest' again that season. If the eggs only were taken, the birds would lay again immediately."

The Canal and the Wey by Newark lie in some of the quietest and wildest country in Surrey. It is not the wildness of Thursley Common, or the quiet of the pinewoods; but it is the sunny peace of a waterway almost deserted, of unploughed, rushy meadows, of waterside paths and thickets that fill in April and May with a tide of bird life which stays here, and elsewhere passes or is hardly seen. A May morning on the Wey Canal rings with singing. You can count scores of cuckoos gliding in the sun and calling from the budding branches; woodpeckers laugh from oak to oak; plovers tumble in the wind; herons flap up lazily at a bend in the stream, and flap lazily down again; snipe cut high arcs in the blue and drum down from the sailing clouds; perhaps from the very heart of the thicket the nightingale bursts into a pulsing riot of song. Surrey varies extraordinarily widely as a shelter and a nesting ground for birds, but most of its birds, I think, know the Wey Canal. [Pg 229]

Of the seven streams which surround Newark Abbey the northernmost runs under the little hill on which stands Pyrford Church. Pyrford itself, on its outskirts, unhappily, is beginning to hear Woking. The Woking builder's hammer is already ringing under its trees. But the heart of Pyrford hitherto remains untouched. A cluster of red-brick farm-buildings, a footpath over meadows of buttercups, a score of arching elms, and a little shingle-spired Norman church on a knoll above the stream—Pyrford is one of the smallest and sweetest of Weyside villages. Few churches have so strong an impression of an untouched past. In plan it is scarcely altered from its Norman design of the twelfth century; and it stands on its knoll overlooking the meadows away to the great Priory of which it was a chapel, the Priory in ruins, and itself with hardly a stone loosened for nearly eight centuries. The roof is later than the walls, but there is a fascination in staring up at the old oak timber. It was the same vista of retreating beams of mighty wood on which the eye of the Newark priest droning from the altar must have rested; perhaps for his sleepy congregation there was the same glimpse of ivy tendrils creeping in under the eaves, and on drowsy afternoons in May the same chatter and hiss of nesting starlings. From the scanty scraps of the paintings on the wall you can only guess vaguely at the texts of the old Sunday sermons: manna falls in the wilderness; Moses brings water out of the rock; probably the congregation listened with most eagerness to the third, the death of Jezebel. [Pg 230] [Pg 231]



Mill on the Wey, between Pyrford and Ripley.

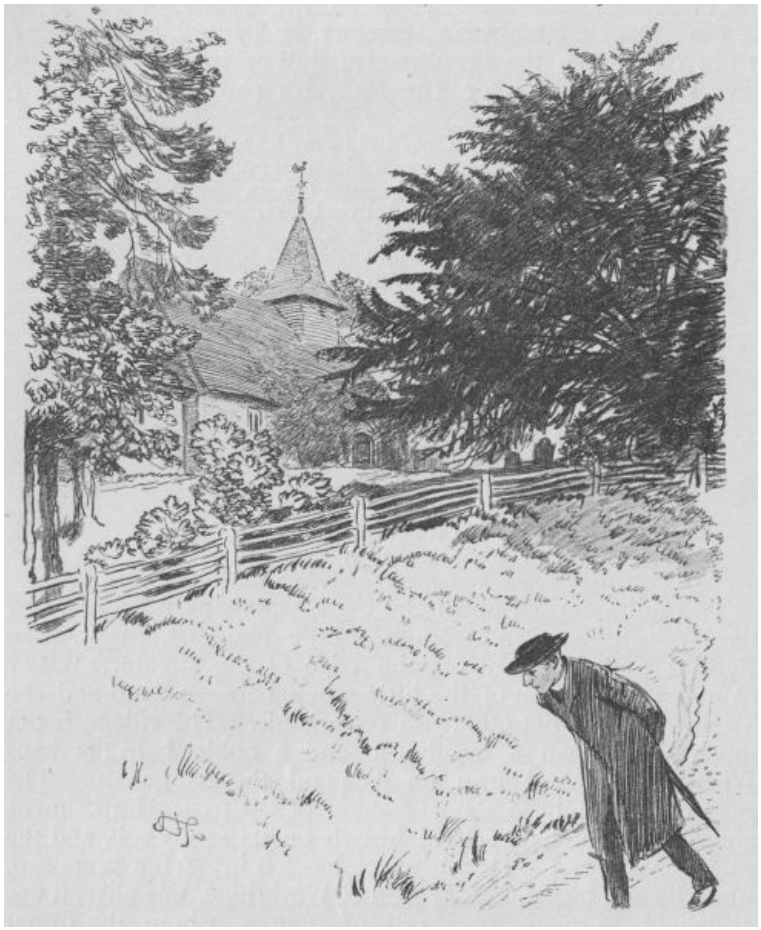
Donne, the poet, perhaps knew the paintings well. In the days when he was still unforgiven by Sir George More of Loseley for having run away with his daughter Anne, he and his bride lived for some years as the guests of Sir John Wolley, Queen Elizabeth's secretary, at Pyrford Park. May it not have been the seven-streamed Wey by Pyrford which gave him his stanzas for *The Bait*, his parody of Marlowe?

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands and crystal brooks,
With silken lines and silver hooks.

Let others freeze with angling reeds,
And cut their legs with shells and weeds,
Or treacherously poor fish beset
With strangling snare, or windowy net.

Let coarse bold hands from slimy nest
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest;
Or curious traitors, sleeve-silk flies,
Bewitch poor fishes' wandering eyes.

For thee, thou need'st no such deceit,
For thou thyself art thine own bait;
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas! is wiser far than I.



Pyrford Church.

Two miles further down the Canal—perhaps nearly four by the Wey itself—stands another little church, almost, like Pyrford and Woking, on the edge of the stream. Wisley church is the tiniest of the little group between Send and the Thames, but is not otherwise remarkable. The village is not much more than a farmhouse and a noble barn; perhaps Wisley is better known for its pond and its garden. The garden, unhappily, is almost a thing of the past. Experiment and officialdom have settled heavily on its sandy soil, and the wilder charm of the old pleasance has left it. A few years ago, when its late owner, Mr. Wilson of Weybridge, was alive, it was a delight to many hundreds of visitors, whom the owner generously allowed to share in his pleasure in rare and beautiful flowers. He had collected into a few acres of ground, protected by ingeniously laid out plantations, an almost incredible variety of plants, especially flowering bulbs, and in his woods and ponds, besides, had tried to establish other curious and interesting wild life. Bird-boxes [Pg 232] fastened to the trees were to tempt tits and nuthatches; in the reeds of the ponds great bull-frogs used to squat croaking, and little green frogs climbed the leaves above them. To-day that is hardly more than a memory. When the owner died the garden was bought by Sir Thomas Hanbury and presented to the Royal Horticultural Society. The society came down from Kew [Pg 233] upon the fold; and on the open ground beside the old garden, tangled and unhappy, set down a row of superb glasshouses, planted a number of specimen fruit trees, and devoted itself forthwith to up-to-date research and education on the most approved lines of modern scientific arboriculture and hybridisation in hothouses.

Wisley Church.

Last of the little bunch of Weyside churches is Byfleet, with a belfry built on some magnificent oak beams. Byfleet Manor House used to be a royal hunting lodge, and was given with the right [Pg 234] of free warren by Edward II to Piers Gaveston. Its last royal owner was James the First's queen, Anne of Denmark, and it was probably she who built the massive walls and the forecourt of the garden of the present home. But the manor house itself is early Georgian; and though it has had some ugly additions, it still stands square and strong behind its fine old gateway. James is supposed to have planted the Scotch firs in the garden, to remind Queen Anne of the home she left behind her in the north.

Such a building would be sure to have some quaint traditions. It is known locally as the King's House, and there is a legend that Henry VIII was nursed there. He may have been, but not in the present building. It has no regular ghosts, but Miss Frances Mitchell, writing on the history of the Manor in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, tells us that Anne of Denmark is said to have been seen moving through the lower rooms; and there is a very dim tradition of a dwarf in purple velvet who wanders in the forecourt. A third legend, in which the rustic historian apparently confuses Anne of Denmark with the last Stuart Queen, relates that Queen Anne came to Byfleet and from a neighbouring hill watched Marlborough win the battle of Blenheim. [Pg 235]

CHAPTER XXI

RICHMOND AND KEW

The Woking of the Surrey Thames.—Peasants in the field.—Ham House.—The Cabal.—Petersham.—Richmond Hill.—*The Heart of Midlothian.*—Deer in the sunlight.—Queen Elizabeth dying.—Kew Palace.—The secret of the Gardens.

Woking is the centre to which it is difficult not to return in exploring the Wey and the Wey villages: Surbiton is the centre of the roads about the Surrey Thames. Surbiton has tramways besides a railway, and Surbiton station is perhaps the most convenient starting point either for Hampton Court on the Middlesex bank, or for Kingston, or through Kingston to Ham and Richmond and Kew. Kingston, in one direction, has its own chapter; so have the Dittons and Walton in another; beyond Kingston lies a walk (not often taken, perhaps), along the river bank to Ham and Petersham; a walk that leads to Richmond Park and its deer dozing among the bracken in the afternoon sun, and Kew Gardens waiting in the evening—the best hour of all the day among those ordered flowers and trees.

I never saw Ham until one day, walking out from Kingston, I suddenly found myself in the fruitful spaces of market gardens and farms. It is the suddenest change. Kingston, with the oldest memories of all Surrey towns, is as new and noisy as a thoroughly efficient service of tramways

can make it; and then, within a stone's throw of bricks and barracks, you come upon acres beyond acres of level farmland, bean-fields and cabbage-fields and all the pleasantness of tilled soil and trenched earth and the wealth of kindly fruits. When I saw the fields by Ham on a hot day in August there were country women gathering runner beans into coarse aprons, stooping over [Pg 236] the clustered plants, the humblest and hardiest of workers of the farm. Under that hot sun, in the wide spaces of those unfenced fields, with no English hedge to shut off neighbouring crops and tillage, the air of those bent, lowly figures was of French peasantry, French nearness to the difficult livelihood of the soil. They might have gleaned for Millet; they should cease their work at the Angelus.

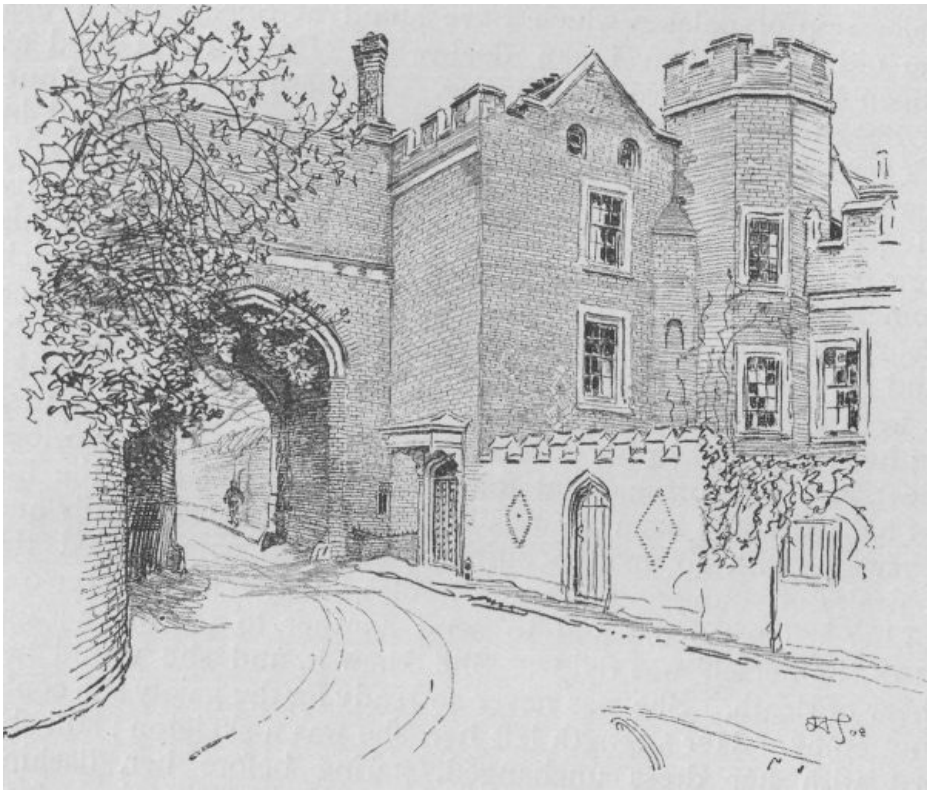
Richmond Bridge.

Teddington Lock, a mile down stream from Kingston suburbs, joins Surrey to Middlesex and the tide to the tideless river with a vast piece of engineering. Further down, Eel Pie island breaks the stream, a bunch of chairs, tables and trees, where, for all I know, others may still eat and praise eel pie. But the fascination of this stretch of river is on the Surrey bank, where Ham House stands among noble trees. Ham House is not a "show house"; and indeed, considering its nearness to Richmond and London, it would be impossible that it should be. There are limits to [Pg 237] the claims which may be made upon owners of historic houses who may also wish to live in them. But Ham House holds other magnets than its pictures and relics of Stuarts and Lauderdales. The guide-books catalogue the pictures, and perhaps I need not copy the catalogues. The real fascination is Ham House with its history, the meeting-place of the great Cabal. But you may see that Ham House from a distance; the house as the Duke of Lauderdale saw it from the river bank, or driving to the door to join his fellow Ministers; the garden front, with its statue of Father Thames, the statue at which Buckingham and Arlington used to stare, perhaps, wondering how much longer their sinister power would be left to them. All that they knew and saw day by day remains—the dull red brick, the wrought iron gate, the quaint statuary of the walls; and round the garden walls and shading the wide lawn behind the house, the trees as later, gentler souls saw them; Thomson, walking from his Richmond cottage, and Hood, strolling under the long avenue of elms.

Petersham has riverside houses which would dignify Georgian aldermen; square red houses set about with wistaria and high garden walls, worthy to be neighbours of Richmond Park; worthy, too, of a handsomer neighbour than Petersham church, an insignificant little building which yet was thought sufficient for the dust of the Duchess of Lauderdale. Outside in the churchyard lies the sailor who sought for the North-west passage and named Vancouver's Island.

The Thames from Richmond Hill.

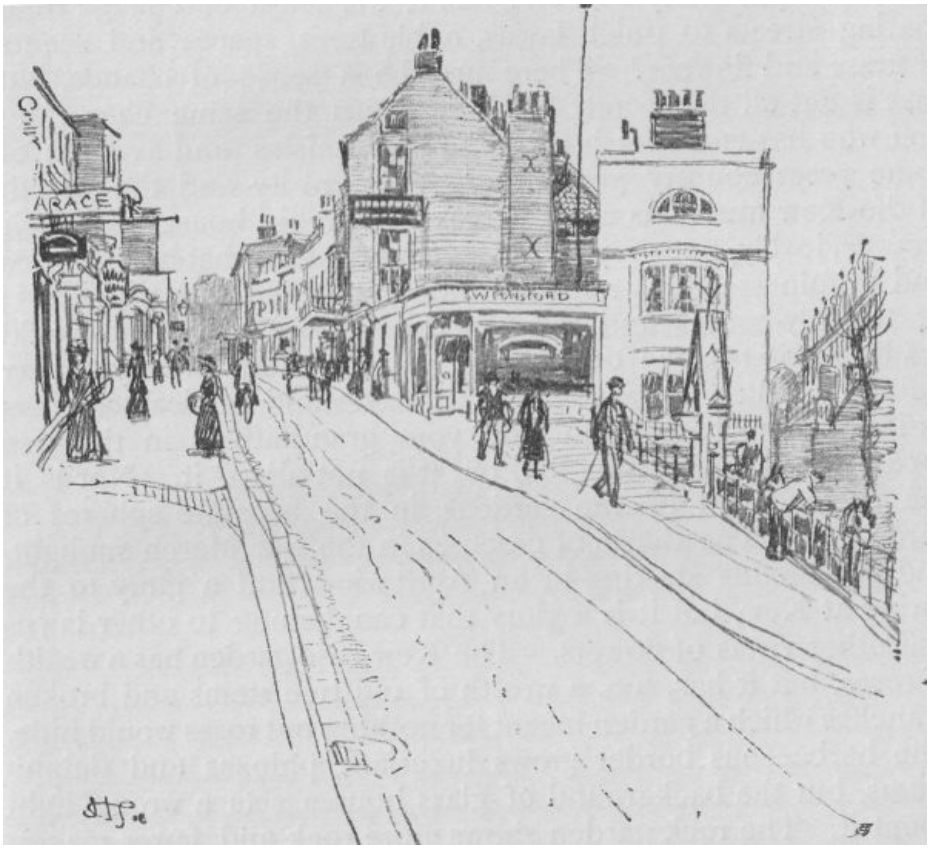
Of Richmond Park, and the view from Richmond Terrace, and the departed glories of Richmond's palace which was the palace of Sheen, what should be said? How should the beauty of the view from the Terrace be measured? Scott has set it in the pages of *The Heart of Midlothian*, and Scott, perhaps, thought it the loveliest and richest of English landscapes. It was "a huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves." It 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 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 an hundred barks and skiffs, whose white [Pg 238] sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole." That was the scene which was shown to Jeanie Deans, arrived at Richmond to sue for pardon for her sister, by the Duke of Argyle. "We have nothing like it in Scotland," said the Duke of Argyle. Is that the secret? Is it because it is all that is typical of south country greenness and the peace of broad water and deep woodlands that it made its appeal to the Scot used to grey crags and barren moorland? Or is its chief appeal not to the Scot but to the Londoner, and does the Londoner praise Sir Walter's taste because Sir Walter has praised his? That is part of the story of the beauty of the Richmond view, perhaps. It is so easily found from London. It has all that the Londoner loves to look at. It is the country as he wishes to see it. A glorious stretch of luxuriant woodland, a noble breadth of shining water, sunlight on wide meadows; but above all, setting a difference between this orderly beauty and [Pg 239] the wild splendours of some western or northern moorland valley, the presence of befriending, comrade man. The boats, the sails, the swans, the water flashing on the oars; the neighbouring roofs, the patterned flower gardens, the comforts of hotels at hand, the readiness with which it is all won and enjoyed—those are some of the secrets of the ideal. It is the country seen from an outdoor theatre.



Palace Yard, Richmond.

Richmond Park itself would be worth visiting for any countryman because of its deer. Deer standing about in the bracken; deer asleep in thick fern under great oaks; deer feeding slowly up wind on a distant slope of green; deer leaping shadows of tree-stems one after another as if the shadows were water, which is one of the deer's prettiest games in the sun: deer trotting off as you try to come nearer to them, with that curious quivering, shaking amble which is born of lissom daintiness and muscles like steel; deer with hot sunlight on their coats—it is the Richmond [Pg 240] Park deer which are the creatures to come and see. How many are there? Who should count them? Sixteen hundred fallow deer and fifty red deer, the figures are given; Farnham Park, I think, comes next in Surrey, with three hundred fallow deer.

The great palace has left little more than an archway on Richmond Green. More history belongs to it, or rather to the succession of palaces which have stood at Sheen, which was the old name, than I can deal with. Edward III died at Sheen Palace, unloved and alone. Richard II's queen, Anne of Bohemia, died there seventeen years later, and Richard in his grief threw the palace down. It was rebuilt by Henry V, burnt down in 1497, rebuilt and renamed Richmond by Henry VII; then the Richmond who named it died in his new palace. But the overmastering sense of unhappiness which somehow has set itself about the story of Richmond Palace belongs to the closing days of Elizabeth. Elizabeth's death, and the month that went before it, patch English history like a week of night. She had been so strong, so untiring, so wise in her council chamber and so magnificent in her victorious fleet, and the fortune that followed her like a wind; the life of her body had been so unfailing, she had jested, wittily and coarsely, with so many courtiers; she had commanded the chivalry of young and splendid nobles, she had lived to see one of her favourites die and to send another to the block; and now she herself was dying. She knew it, and she would not hear of death. She was never so ready for the gaiety she could not enjoy. Her strength left her, she was a skeleton; still she sat with her dress unchanged, staring before her, flashing sudden rages at her ministers, rallying at the mention of an heir's name. Beauchamp, heir to the Suffolks, they put forward; she cried out he was the son of a rogue. The King of Scots? they asked; she answered nothing. Dead, propped among her pillows, an old woman in ruff and stays, the memory of her last days shadows Richmond Palace like a drawn blind.



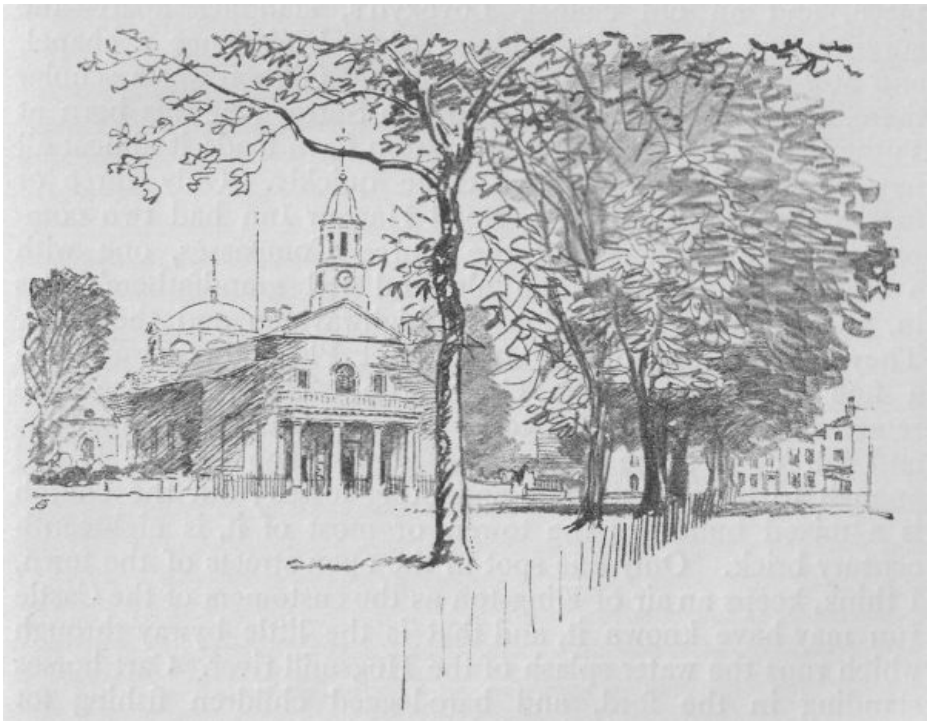
Richmond Hill.

To the north beyond Richmond Hill and the huge hotel, twice burnt down, which looks over the woods and the river, one may come by tramways and railways to Kew and Kew Gardens. Kew, too, once had a palace, or an attempt at a palace. Frederick Prince of Wales, George III's father— [Pg 241] the prince who did so much for Surrey cricket, and died, perhaps, from the blow of a cricket ball —lived at Kew House, and so did George III after him. George III pulled down Kew House in 1803, and built another; to be not less royal, George IV pulled that down. A smaller building, vaguely named Kew Palace still, stands in the Gardens; Queen Charlotte died there; you may see the room, and look, if you wish, on the tables and sofas she knew. But the pictures in Kew Palace were not all Queen Charlotte's; they are catalogued to-day, and so are many manuscripts and autograph letters of royal persons which attract careful readers. From remarks which can be overheard in those sombre rooms, many visitors, I think, imagine the paintings of still life, of flowers in vases, odd representations of game and fruit, and so forth, to have been selected and [Pg 242] hung in the house as specially suitable for public gardens. The portraits of royal gentlemen in blue and red puzzle them; why should they be shown these at Kew? These are for palaces and galleries; Kew is for a flower show.

What is the chief, the compelling fascination of Kew Gardens? What is it that sets Kew apart, not more beautiful than other gardens, but different from them, with a different attraction peculiarly its own? Is it the sense of change from roaring streets to quiet lawns, noble trees, spaces and scents of grass and flowers? There may be a sense of change, but that is not all the secret, for Kew keeps the same charm for one who has come fresh from the broad aisles and avenues of some great country garden. Is it the rarity and the wealth of the Kew museums and houses—the orchid houses with their strange, lovely, uncanny inflorescences, flowers that have fancies and wilfulnesses, flowers that would people the dark with faces; or the lily-houses and the superb *Victoria regia* that would cradle a water-baby; or the great palm houses, where you may walk in a gallery among enormous leaves and tropical creepers as if you were back again with your grandfathers in the tree tops? That is an attraction, but it is not all of it. Nor is it the achievement of the gardens in the separate spheres of gardening. The sheets of crocuses in the low March sunlight, and of daffodils shaking in an April wind, add a glory to the spring at Kew, but it is a glory that can belong to other lawns and other vistas of flowers. The Kew rose-garden has a wealth of roses, but it has, too, a wealth of old tree stems and broken branches which a garden meant for nothing but roses would hide. The herbaceous border grows luxuriant phloxes and delphiniums, but the background of glass houses sets a wrong light about it. The rock garden shows more rock and fewer masses of Alpine flowers than other English gardens more lately made, with better knowledge of what wall and rock flowers need.

Then what is the abiding charm? To me, at all events, Kew has much the same appeal as the Londoner finds in Richmond Hill. It is a London garden, the garden of a town, perfectly made for its purpose. It can never, even with its glorious trees and its wide spaces of grass, have the peace or know the spirit of a country garden. Too many feet tread its lawns; too many voices chatter in its walks. It may spread its wild flowers and grow its curious blossoms for those who know where [Pg 243] and how to look for them; but its main effects must be of ordered gravel, of shaven grass, of patterned beds, of flowers that will suit artificial lakes and buildings and stone balustrades. The keynote of Kew is by the wide pond, with the smooth green turf and the white stone, and the masses of pansies and heliotrope and brilliant red geraniums. Those are the flowers which suit

best the steps down to the water, and the fountains, and the swimming ducks and the birds on the banks. There is the right touch of artificiality about them; the right note of London. The birds are Londoners themselves. The stately brown geese stalk over the lawns careless of poulterers or punt-guns. The cormorant, who most certainly knows he is being watched, dives to show off before admiring children. Even the blackbirds have forgotten their country habits, and will sing when country blackbirds are silent for the year. Once, late in July, I heard four singing in evening sunshine after rain. They would take any countryman back to the days of chestnut blossom and the scent of Surrey may; but that indolent melody, in July sunshine, belongs to London.



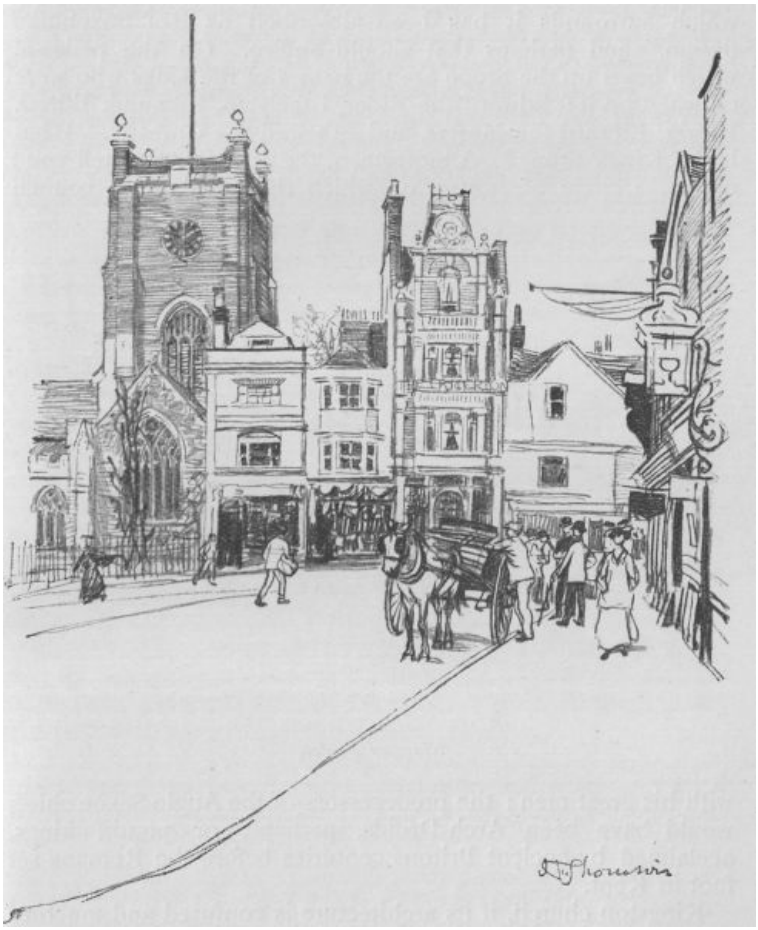
Kew Church.

[Pg 244]

CHAPTER XXII

KINGSTON

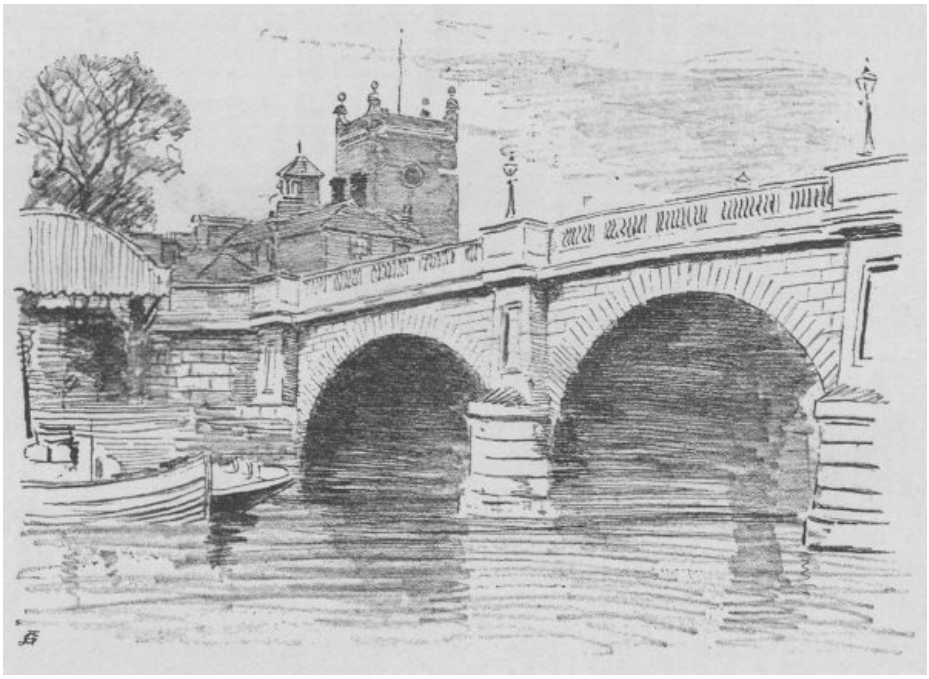
Kingston Old and New.—The Stone.—The Sexton's Escape.—Throwing over the Church.—Ducking a Scold.—Aaron Evans's shot at a Cormorant.—The Dog Whipper.—A Feast of the Church.—Lord Francis Villiers's fight.



Kingston.

Kingston has kept little of the past. An old alehouse, old almshouses, an old staircase, an old roof or two by the market place, and an old chapel, Lovekyn's, standing apart—the survivals are the loneliest things. Lovekyn's, once a chapel, and now a school, is one of the links. Gibbon was a scholar there, and Gibbon belongs doubly to Surrey; he was born at Putney. But the changes at Kingston have made it almost all new, and the changes have come quickly. Only three or four years ago the quaint, small Harrow Inn had two companions, the Anglers and the Three Compasses, one with a fireside corner to warm ale and tell grandfathers' tales in, the other with traditions of highwaymen and the road. They were pulled down. In Market Place there was once a fine Tudor house, the Castle Inn. The noble staircase remains, a good, thoroughgoing piece of carving of Bacchus and full casks; the house has gone. The church is old enough to have seen these and other losses; but the church is a mixed building; the tower, or most of it, is eighteenth century brick. Only one spot in the open streets of the town, I think, keeps an air of Kingston as the customers of the Castle Inn may have known it, and that is the little byway through which runs the water splash of the Hogsmill river. Cart horses standing in the ford, and bare-legged children fishing for minnows, are what Kingston saw in the old days. [Pg 245]

The Stone remains; the Stone on which tradition says that the Anglo-Saxon kings were crowned. Once it stood in the chapel of St. Mary, a Saxon building adjoining the church; but St. Mary's Chapel fell in 1730. It was moved to the Market Place; afterwards in 1854, to the open space [Pg 246] where it now stands opposite the Court-house; on the very spot, they say, where there was once an Anglo-Saxon palace. The railing which surrounds it has been described as "of Saxon-like design," and perhaps that should suffice. On the pedestal which bears up the Stone are the names of the kings who were crowned on it: Edward the Elder, Ethelstan, Edmund, Edred, Edwig, Edward the Martyr, and Ethelred the Unready. What is the Kings' Stone? A morasteen, the archæologists tell you; one of a circle of stones, on which the chief sat in council with his great men; the predecessors of the Anglo-Saxon chiefs would have been Arch-Druids, perhaps, or pontiff kings, acclaimed by ancient Britons centuries before the Romans set foot in Kent.



Kingston Bridge.

Kingston church, if its architecture is confused and much of it modern, has an imposing solemnity about it, and it contains some strange memorials. One is a stone fragment, on which the grateful survivor of an accident and a ruin has painted the words "Life Preserved." She was Hester Hammerton, daughter of Abram Hammerton, sexton of the church, and in 1729 she was helping [Pg 247] her father to dig a grave in the churchyard near the Saxon chapel of St. Mary. They dug too near the chapel foundations, and the chapel fell in upon them. The sexton was killed, almost on the spot; his daughter was saved through the jamming of a piece of stone, and survived him as sexton for fifteen years. Another memorial is a brass kept in the vestry; a long screed begins dismally enough—"Ten children in one grave—a dreadful sight"; but the verse is unequal to the opportunity. Another brass shows Robert Skern and his wife Joan; she, according to Manning and Bray, was a daughter of Alice Perrers, mistress of Edward III. A fourth monument, said to be in the chancel (but I did not find it), praises Mrs. Mary Morton, daughter of the wife of Robert Honeywood, of Charinge, Kent; she was "the Wonder of her Sex and this Age, for she liv'd to see near 400 issued from her Loynes." So Aubrey describes it, and so, with variations, the local historian. Mrs. Mary Morton died in 1620.

Aubrey has another record of the giants of those days. He had heard of one Wiltshire of the Feathers Inn at Kingston, who was a great thrower. He would stand in the churchyard and throw a stone over the weathercock; "he would also throw a stone over the Thames (by the bridge) and struck the pales on the town side, which (I think) was not so difficult as the other throw. He was then of middle stature, and about thirty years of age." But if he had grown to greater stature? The weathercock of those days is no more, or we might measure the throw.

Kingston has other history besides its coronation stone and its monuments. The Parish Registers have added pictures of its past. Here is one of two poor women allowed to beg at the church:—

> February 1571.
>
> 24. Sonday was here ij wemen the mother and dowghter owte of Ireland she called Elynor Salve to gather upon the deathe of her howsbande a genllman slayne amongst the wylde Iryshe being Captain of Gully glasses and gathered xviijd.

Here is a record of a Thames flood, October 9, 1570:—

> Thursday at nyght rose a great winde and rayne that the Temps rosse so hye that they myght row w^{t} bott^{s} owte of the Temps a gret waye in to the market place and upon a sodayne.

In the year 1572 Kingston got a new cucking stool; the Kingston scolds had become past bearing. It cost £1 3*s.* 4*d.*, and as soon as it was finished there was a very shrewish woman ducked in it. [Pg 248]

> 1572 August. On Tewsday being the xix daye of this monthe of August —— Downing wyfe to —— Downinge gravemaker of this paryshe she was sett on a new cukking stolle made of a grett hythe and so browght a bowte the markett place to Temes brydge and ther had iij Duckinges over hed and eres becowse she was a common scolde and fyghter.

Here are extracts from the burial registers:—

> June 4. 1593. John Akerleye wentte too bathe hymsellfe and was drownde & buryede.
>
> August 25. 1598. William Hall was bered being shott by thefes when he was Constabl at Coblers Hol.

September 28. 1623. Richard Ratlive a Londenner which was slayne.

17 January 1623/4 W^{m} Foster son of W^{m} a goer about.

This is hardly a burial:—

July 11. 1629. A Bird called a Cormorant light on the top of the steeple and Aaron Evans shot, but mist it.

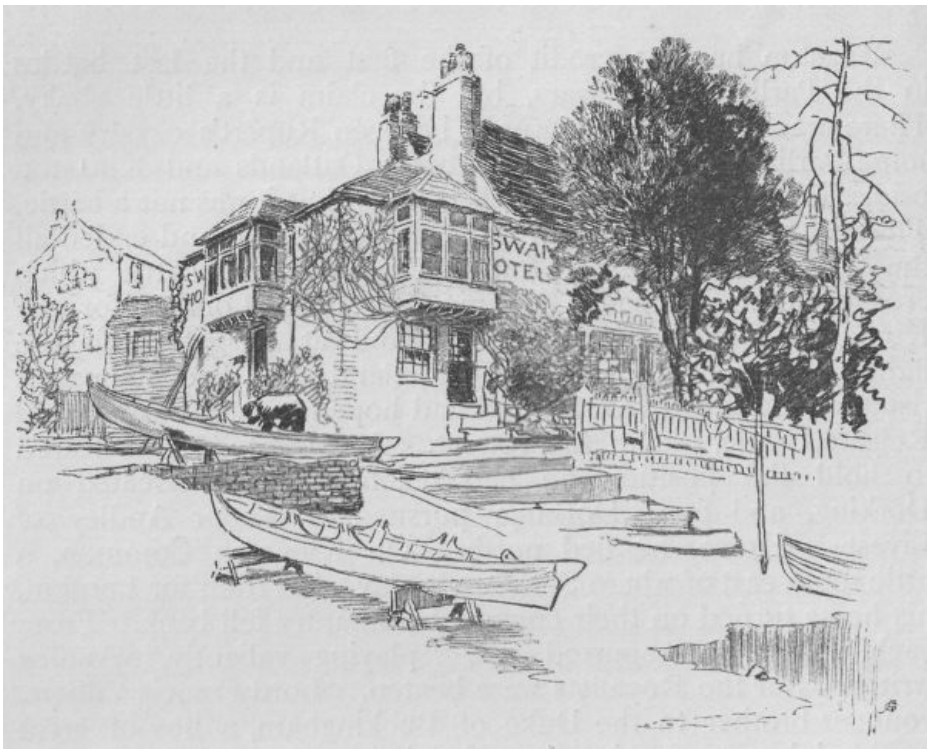
Here are items from the churchwarden's accounts. The parish dog whipper had become an institution:—

1561. To fawcon for di yere (half a year) whyppyng of doggs oute of the churche. viijd

1578. To wrighte for beating the dogges out of the churche, for half a yeare. vjd.

But the morris dance—it was the dances that Kingston would spend money upon. There were two kinds of games which brought gifts to the church, May-games and the Kyngham. What sort of a game the Kyngham was nobody knows, but it brought the churchwardens most of their money: four or five pounds was a good collection. But the expenses could be heavy; there were shoes for the morris dancers, six pairs at 8*d.* a pair; there was silver paper for the dance, 8*d.*; and there were for the feast, besides other drinking, a quarter of malt, 4*s.*; 5 goce (geese), 15*d.*; eggs, 6*d.*; lamb, 18*d.*; sugar, cloves, and mace, 11*d.*; small raisins, 3*d.*; saffern, 2*d.*; vinegar and salt, 3*d.*; 2 cocks, 18*d.*; 2 calves, 5*s.* 8*d.*; sheep, 12*d.*; lamb, 16*d.*; quarter of veal, 8*d.*; quarter of mutton, 6*d.*; leg of veal and a neck, 4*d.* The morris dancers did well, with silver paper and new shoes; but the church kept a feast. [Pg 249]

Kingston has the credit of the first and the last battles in the Parliamentary wars, but the claim is a little shaky. There was an affair of outposts between Rupert's cavalry and some Parliamentarian troops between Oatlands and Kingston bridge in the year 1642—after Edgehill—but it was not a battle. The real battle of Kingston came six years later, and ended all the warfare that Surrey saw. That was the battle which crushed Lord Holland's scheme of raising London for the King. We shall meet Lord Holland at Reigate; but the fighting belongs to Kingston. Holland, who had planned a rising on Banstead Downs, and had hoped to capture and hold Reigate Castle, was in full retreat. At Reigate he had feared to hold the position he had taken up; he retreated on Dorking, and from Dorking, pursued by Major Audley of Livesey's Horse, he fled north. On Kingston Common, a little south-east of where Surbiton to-day takes train for London, his horse turned on their enemy; his infantry fell back. From each side a few spurred out, "playing valiantly," Audley writes. But the Royalists were beaten. Lord Francis Villiers, younger brother to the Duke of Buckingham, a boy of great personal beauty, fought alone in their rear. His horse was shot under him; he backed towards an elm, and fought with six of them. They came up behind him, pushed off his helmet and cut him to the ground. Report came to London that he was wounded, and orders were sent out to care for him. But he was found dead, and his pockets were rifled. The evening was the end of the war in Surrey. [Pg 250]



The Swan, Thames Ditton.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DITTONS AND WALTON

> Surbiton trains.—Thames Ditton.—Parks for trotting ponies.—A forlorn garden.—The Dandies' Fête.—Graveyard poetry.—The Pleasance of a Ferry.—Giggs Hill cricket.—Ditton Tulips.—Hampton Bridge.—A dreary road.—Walton.—The Scold's Bridle.—John Selwyn and the Stag.—Terror at an elephant.—William Lilly, astrologer.

Surbiton is a growth of seventy years, and was born when the railway came. Once it was called a suburb of Kingston; now it has suburbs of its own. Tramways join it to London; the railway empties Surbiton into London every morning and pours London back again in the evening. Nearly seventy trains a day stop at Surbiton on their way down from Waterloo; nearly eighty stop on their way up. It must be quite inspiriting to lose your train, and to know that you have only three minutes to wait; or to catch the train before your train, or to choose which you will have of two trains. Until you realise these figures, it is difficult to understand why so many people are rushing about late for the train in Surbiton station. They are catching the train before. [Pg 251]

But Surbiton is not all villas; or perhaps it is, and it would be truer to say that what is not villas within hail of the station is not Surbiton. Thames Ditton lies rather more than a mile away, and Long Ditton, between Thames Ditton and the railway, straggling, too, beyond the railway. Thames Ditton is rapidly becoming rich and prosperous. A few years ago it was a little, twisting main street, a ferry, an inn or two, and a church, and was flanked by two fine properties, Ember Court and Boyle Farm. Now the villa-builder has got to work, and the old estates are being sliced up into acres and half acres. Ember Court was once a manor belonging to Henry VIII, who hunted over it; later, it was the property of Sir Arthur Onslow, the first Speaker of the House of Commons who earned the title "Great." It is now a racecourse; trotting ponies and American "machines" dash and flash where Mr. Speaker sauntered staidly, and theatre bills flare at the entrance gates. Boyle Farm has fared little better. Once it was the Duchess of Gloucester's, wife of George the Third's brother; a century later, Lord St. Leonards, Lord Chancellor in Lord Derby's first and shortest-lived Ministry, had it. Now the park is criss-crossed with brand new yellow roads. I walked through it while it was still ringing with the builder's hammer; and straying off the gravel, suddenly found myself in the forlornest little place possible—a formal garden, box-trimmed, tiny, deserted; the narrow, carefully-planned beds nothing but weeds, the summerhouse at the side a ruin. A park cut to pieces looks as if it were in anguish. But a garden cries.

The river at Thames Ditton in 1827 saw a festival which was doubtless considered one of the most prodigious affairs of the season. Five young bloods, of whom two were the Lords Castlereagh and Chesterfield of the day, subscribed £500 each to organise an enormous water party, to which, presumably, everybody was invited who was worth inviting. It was a superb occasion, with illuminations, quadrilles on the lawn, singers from the opera, covers for five hundred people, and all adornments proper to such gaiety. Afterwards it came to be known as the Dandies' Fête, and Tom Moore wrote a set of verses about it, which, perhaps, reflect fairly accurately the wit of the company. Here are nine lines out of many:— [Pg 252]

> "Accordingly, with gay Sultanas,
> Rebeccas, Sapphos, Roxalanas—
> Circassian slaves, whom Love would pay
> Half his maternal realms to ransom;—
> Young nuns, whose chief religion lay
> In looking most profanely handsome!
> Muses in muslin—pastoral maids,
> With hats from the *Arcade*-ian shades;
> And fortune-tellers—rich, 'tis plain,
> As fortune-*hunters*, form'd their train."

Moore sent the verses to Mrs. Norton; she, perhaps, was a Circassian or a nun.

But Thames Ditton has had its own poet. He has been dignified by the criticism of Charles Lamb, and his accomplishment was the composing of epitaphs. "What is the reason," Lamb writes to Wordsworth in 1810, "we have no good epitaphs after all?"

> A very striking instance might be found in the churchyard of Ditton-upon-Thames, if you know such a place. Ditton-upon-Thames has been blessed by the residence of a poet, who for love or money, I do not well know which, has dignified every gravestone, for the last few years, with brand-new verses, all different, and all ingenious, with the author's name at the bottom of each. This sweet Swan of Thames has so artfully diversified his strains and his rhymes, that the same thought never occurs twice; more justly, perhaps, as no thought ever occurs at all, there was a physical impossibility that the same thought should recur. It is long since I saw and read these inscriptions, but I remember the impression was of a smug usher at his desk in the intervals of instruction, levelling his pen. Of death, as it consists of dust and worms, and mourners and uncertainty, he had never thought; but the word 'death' he had often seen separate and conjunct with other

> words, till he had learned to speak of all its attributes as glibly as Unitarian Belsham will discuss you the attributes of the word 'God' in a pulpit; and will talk of infinity with a tongue that dangles from a skull that never reached in thought and thorough imagination two inches, or further than from his hand to his mouth, or from the vestry to the sounding-board of the pulpit.
>
> But the epitaphs were trim, and sprag, and potent, and pleased the survivors of Thames-Ditton above the old Mumpsimus of 'Afflictions Sore'....

The church itself, or at all events the squat and tiny tower, has not altered much since Lamb saw it. But the epitaphs have gone. Search among the ivies and yews of the shady little churchyard will discover a number of flat, weatherworn slabs of stone, but the verses and the signatures have vanished. Fire and the wastepaper man are the common lot of poets, but this "Swan of Thames" [Pg 253] has come to his end by rain and hobnails. The only Swan that remains is the inn, whose sign sits comfortably above the front door, white and bright. Few Thames-side inns have a prettier outlook, or look prettier from the river. Sunlight on shining brown boats and quivering willows is a frequent memory of Thames waters, but the Swan lies also opposite a ferry, and a ferry has a hundred fascinations. Old fashioned rowing, running water, hailings and signallings, quiet motion, thriving business, new arrivals; it is all the cheerfullest of riverside traffic. None of the pleasanter services of travel can be more directly rendered and directly paid for than being ferried across a river.

Of Surrey village greens, the Thames Ditton Ground at Giggs Hill has had much to do with Surrey cricket. Giggs Hill cricket has not always been of the most scientific kind, but who shall say it was less enjoyed for that? An old Giggs Hill cricketer tells us how the pitch used to be prepared for a match. "I remember," he says, "seeing the late Harry Stowell with an old beer barrel fixed on a trolley and filled with water, wheeling it across the wicket. He would well douse the pitch, and after running a small garden roller he had borrowed up and down a few times the wicket was ready." This proceeding took place the day before the match, so that batting must occasionally have been a venturesome business. In those days a match meant what it still means in some villages, an adjournment in the evening to the neighbouring inn, a supper, beer, and songs. How many old inns still keep the name "The Jolly Cricketers," and how many for little reason! In later days, Thames Ditton cricket has become scientific enough. The Giggs Hill ground has sent to the Oval cricketers like H.H. Stephenson, who was making centuries for the county in the sixties; in modern times the great Maurice Read, whom Mr. John Shuter has described as having "started a new order among cricket professionals," learned his cricket at Thames Ditton. But the greatest of all Thames Ditton cricketers is, of course, Tom Richardson. He was actually born at Byfleet, but played as a boy at Giggs Hill.

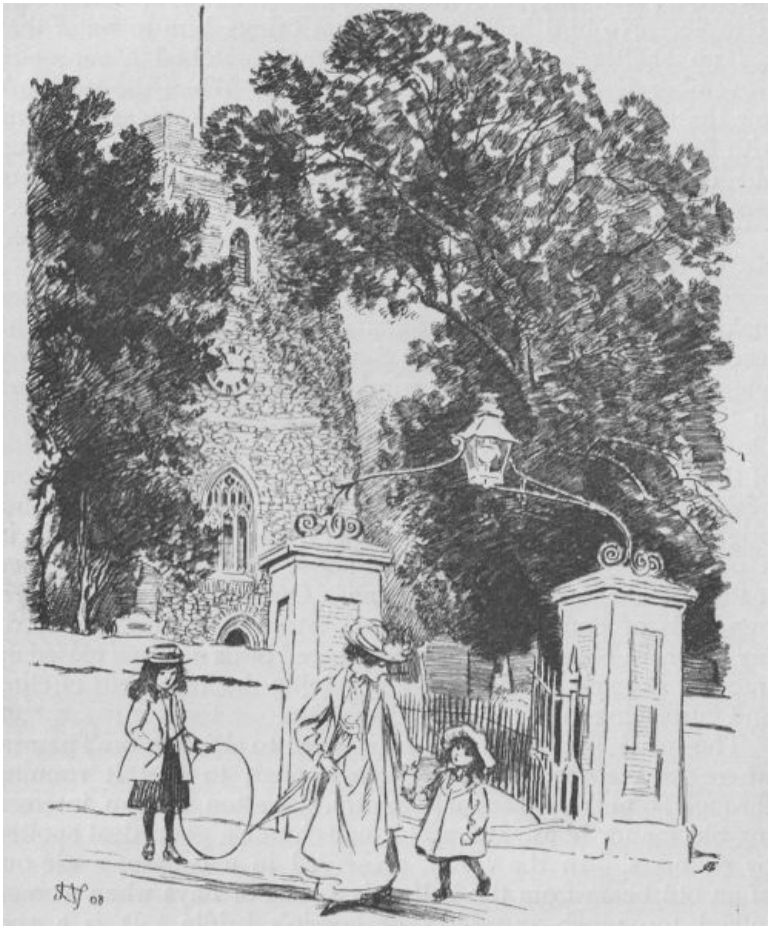
Thames Ditton's sister, Long Ditton, is probably known by sight by thousands of people who do not know its name. You are looking at the best of Long Ditton when you see Barr's nursery [Pg 254] gardens from the train window. There is hardly a month in the year, except in the deep of midwinter, when the Ditton Hill gardens are not full of blossom. They are never more glorious than in May and early June, when the long parterres glow with the tall, late-flowering tulips. Of all flowers which have been added to English gardens in the last twenty years, the great thirty inch tulips seem to me the finest. A giant daffodil can be superb, but it always looks like a giant. But these tulips have the grace of slightness and the majesty of height; their open chalices burn with the heat of jewels and the depth of the heart of wine; and here are ten thousand of them. Perhaps the daffodils, earlier in the year, light the gardens with a fresher lustre; but the tulips have the colour and the glow. Railways have the good luck to run by many nursery gardens; the tulips at Ditton Hill would help the South Western to challenge any line.

On the other side of Thames Ditton ferry lies Hampton Court Park, a noble stretch of ordered green. From the ferry to Hampton Court Bridge is a mile by river, and nearly twice as much by road, which runs through East Molesey. There is little of interest in either of the Moleseys, East or West, but it is worth walking a dull mile or two to look down stream from the Bridge over Henry VIII's palace, with its yews and elms, dark and stately, in the garden beyond the imposing walls. There is a far more comprehensive view of Hampton Court to be had from the railway or the river, but it is still a fine pile of brick seen down stream from the Bridge. Up stream, Hampton Church stands a mile away at the bend of the river, grey in the sunshine; between the church and the bridge is the lock, bright with boats in summer, and the weir, tumbling down a roar of green water to make roach-swims and barbel-swims for patient fishermen. In the road to the left you may catch sight or sound of one of the London coaches, with its white-hatted driver and painted panels, well named the Vivid. Molesey's roads carry away many of the motor cars that run to Hampton Court; but the old Vivid still jangles hopefully after them.

North and west of Molesey runs the ugliest road in Surrey. It begins with the paling running round the Hurst Park racecourse, and it goes on between the ramparts of enormous reservoirs. To stand on the edge of one of these great basins of water (it is strictly forbidden to do so) is to [Pg 255] get a new meaning of desolation. They are horribly deep—you can see how deep if you stand above one which is half empty; the sides slope so steeply that if you fell in you could never climb out again, and they are the loneliest stretches of water conceivable. No bird has any need that brings him to water that has no shelter and no food. Once I watched a sunset in November across one of these reservoirs. When the sun sank low the water blackened; the wind drove little waves slapping with foam against the stone bank; a single sea-gull swept up out of the dark and fled away down wind like a scrap of torn paper; it was the most solitary ending a day could have.

The reservoirs by Molesey stretch far back from the river. Nearer the river the birds find them more hospitable. I remember a day in October when I stood watching the martins making one of their last halts on the way south over the reservoirs on the river bank at Surbiton. It was a pouring wet afternoon, there was a high wind, and the rain drove bubbles in the ruffled water and half blotted the greens and greys of blown willows and the russet of thorn berries on the far side of the river. A short trolley line ran down a stone pier from beside the road to the edge of the water, where a barge with a bright brown sail waited; the smoke from a clinker fire built in a pierced bucket swept fitfully about the pier; grimy men loaded a car on the trolley line. Over the grey-blue water hundreds of house-martins dipped and darted and chattered; my umbrella blew inside out, a few scared birds near me tossed up into the sky and fell down again, joining the hundreds circling and curtseying in the wind and the rain.

The road from Molesey runs west to Walton-on-Thames, where you strike the river high enough to find it running through something like real country. Walton has an interesting old manor house and a Norman church a good deal spoiled by restorers. In the vestry, preserved in a cabinet made out of an old beam from the belfry, is a relic of days when women talked too much—a scold's or gossip's bridle. It is a sort of cage shaped to fit the head and made of steel, which time has rusted and blackened. A kind of bit is arranged to go into the scold's mouth and hold her tongue, and according to those who have been voluntarily bridled—nobody can remember a scold in Walton—it answers its purpose admirably. When the bit is in and the bridle properly padlocked the most [Pg 256] vixenish can only utter inarticulate murmurs.



Walton Church.

Among some curious old brasses in the church is one which commemorates, "John Selwyn 'gent,' Keeper of her Matis Parke of Oteland vnder ye right honorable Charles Howward Lord Admyrall of England his good Lord and Mr." He died on March 22, 1587, and his brass illustrates a remarkable incident. John Selwyn, dressed in a most workmanlike costume like a Scots gillie with [Pg 257] a ruff, is shown riding on the back of a stag, into whose throat he is plunging a great hunting-knife. Two stories explain the picture. One, told in the *Antiquarian Repertory*, is that Selwyn, "in the heat of the chase, suddenly leaped from his horse upon the back of the stag (both running at that time with their utmost speed), and not only kept his seat gracefully in spite of every effort of the affrighted beast, but, drawing his sword, with it guided him toward the Queen, and coming near her presence, plunged it in his throat, so that the animal fell dead at her feet." Another version told locally is that the stag was charging Queen Elizabeth when the keeper rode up, leapt on its back and killed it, but was killed by the stag as it fell. It does not seem impossible. Against the story of the keeper being killed in rescuing the Queen, Mr. F.W. Smith, a local authority, has urged that Queen Elizabeth would hardly have been hunting six weeks after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, and also when the Armada was almost on its way. But nobody in England, certainly not Drake, ever stopped doing anything because the Armada was coming, and as for hunting six weeks after the death of Mary Queen of Scots, that would be nothing out of the way for Queen Elizabeth. A huge oak, thirty feet in girth, is spoken of as the tree under which the stag was killed at the Queen's feet, but nobody could tell me where it was. There are many superb oaks in the gardens in Walton and Weybridge. Once the whole district was included in Windsor

Park.

Hidden in a group of obscure cottages stands the old manor-house, partly preserved as a curiosity, partly as an addition to a garden. The house was not improved by an experience for some years as a tenement dwelling, crowded with more families than it should have held. It was rescued from that indignity by its present possessor, Mr. Lowther Bridger. Heavy beams, oak panels, and a fine chimney-piece remain, relics of the Stuart days when John Bradshaw, President of the Council, had the house. Tradition, certainly wrongly, says that Bradshaw signed Charles's death-warrant in the hall. Bradshaw, no doubt, signed it at Westminster. But the association of his name would be enough for village gossip. "The place where they cut off the king's head," is a variant of the story.

Above Walton Bridge are Coway Stakes, where Julius Cæsar is supposed to have crossed the Thames in pursuit of Cassivellaunus, king of the Catuvellauni. The British chief drove sharpened stakes into the bed of the river, to block the ford, and built a palisade along the bank, where he waited for the enemy. They came on, cavalry and infantry, in spite of the stakes. The Catuvellauni would have met them, but fled in horror at the sight of an armoured elephant. [Pg 258]

A great cricketer is buried in Walton churchyard, and a great astrologer in the church. The cricketer was Lumpy Stevens, whom we met at Send. The astrologer was William Lilly, author of a yearly publication, *Merlinus Anglicus Junior*, a sort of Old Moore's Almanac. The prophecies of storms, fires and disasters were as dull reading then as they are now, but one or two entries in his *Life and Times*, written by himself, are illuminating, especially his record of family amenities, thus:—

> "The 16th of February 1653/4, my second Wife died; for whose Death I shed no Tears. I had 500*l.* with her as a Portion, but she and her poor Relations spent me 1000*l. Gloria Patri, & Filio, & Spiritui Sancto: sicul erat in principio et nunc et semper, & in saecula saeculorum*: For the 20th of *April* 1653, these Enemies of mine, *viz.* Parliament-men, were turned out of doors by *Oliver Cromwell*."
>
> "In *October* 1654, I married the third Wife, who is signified in my Nativity by *Jupiter* in *Libra*: And she is so totally in her Conditions, to my great Comfort."

Lilly got into trouble with the Parliament men later. He had predicted a town in conflagration, and when the Fire of London occurred in 1666 he was accused of having caused it. He had to appear before a Parliamentary committee specially sitting on the matter, but he was able to satisfy the chairman that he had nothing to do with the fire. He admitted that he had drawn mysterious designs of persons in winding sheets and digging graves, which were to foretell the plague, and of towers and houses on fire, which might have meant the city of London blazing; but he had never fixed the exact year for these things to happen. So the committee let him off. If he had lived till the next century, when William the Third's horse had thrown his rider, and the Jacobite toast was "the little gentleman in black velvet," Lilly could have pointed with pride to other cabalistic drawings in his *Merlin* One shows a mole walking about under a dragon; another, a mole attacking a crown. [Pg 259]

Epsom.

CHAPTER XXIV

EPSOM

The Widest Street in Surrey.—A lucky find.—Barbara Villiers.—Pepys at the Wells.—Nell Gwynne.—Aldermen and lazy ladies.—Epsom's fall.—A knavish apothecary.—Baron Swasso, his house.—Miss Wallin, bone-setter; bone-setter, Mrs. Mapp.—Epsom re-made at the table.—Eclipse.—The Road to the Derby.—The Ring round the Gibbet.—Catherine-wheels, Motor-cars, Kites, Pills.—Lord Rosebery.—Lord Lyttelton's ghost.

Epsom is the centre of the country between the great railway lines. It has its own railway, but it is midway between the lines that run express trains to Brighton and Southampton: Epsom's own expresses only run for two weeks in the year, when the races come round. For the other fifty weeks Epsom is a quiet town of villas, once a village, now nearly a suburb like Esher or Weybridge. Lord Rosebery sometimes lives near the town, at Durdans, and deplores the large numbers of lunatics who are brought to live near the town always. But Epsom is only occasionally ruffled by the lunatics, and has developed a dangerously good train service. [Pg 260]

Epsom has the widest and breeziest main street of any Surrey town, and you do not guess the reason until you read the history of the town pretty closely. The story of Epsom, until the two great races that belong to its downs were founded over Lord Derby's wine, is the story of its wells. Before Epsom Salts there was hardly an Epsom to give them a name. There may have been a tiny village where the church stands, but that would be all; the rector preached to a few cottagers. Then, one hot summer day in 1618, the lucky thing happened. Henry Wicker, trying to water his cattle on the common, found a small hole with a spring in it; he enlarged it, and took the cattle to the water, but could not make them drink. Then the doctors were told about it. They used it first, as Pownall the local historian tells you, "as a vulnerary and abstersive," and healed wounds with it; then some labourers accidentally drank it, and Epsom's fortune was made. The doctors agreed; Epsom salts were bitter, diluent, absorbent, soluble, cathartic—everything that salts should be. In two years the wells were enclosed with a wall; in twenty years France and Germany had heard of Epsom, and distinguished foreigners obediently paced the common. But the great days were still to come. As yet few buildings had grown up close to the Wells, merely "a shed to shelter the sickly visitors." Then came the year 1670, when Charles II gave Barbara Villiers his palace of Nonsuch two miles away. She, as careless of a king's gift and as avaricious as a king's mistress should be, turned the palace into cash, and out of its demolished walls the local builder piled up houses by Epsom Wells.

One of Epsom's inns was already built, the King's Head—perhaps the Old King's Head near the church, or an inn on the same site. Pepys was there in 1667, and gives us a glimpse of Nell Gwynne, though she was at Epsom to amuse herself, and was not one of Pepys's party. Pepys went on July 14th (Lord's day); he got up at four in the morning, and talked to Mrs. Turner downstairs while his wife dressed, and got angry with Mrs. Pepys because she was so long about it. They were off in the coach by five, with bottles of wine and beer, and a cold fowl, and talked all the way pleasantly, Pepys writes, and so came "to Epsom, by eight o'clock, to the well; where much company, and I drank the water: they did not but I did drink four pints. And to the town, to the King's Head; and hear that my Lord Buckhurst and Nelly are lodged at the next house, and [Pg 261] Sir Charles Sedley with them; and keep a merry house." Lord Buckhurst had just persuaded Nell Gwynne to leave the King's playhouse for a hundred pounds a year and his company: she was to act no more, which saddened Pepys. However, she was back at the playhouse next month, jeered at by the graceful Buckhurst and as poor as ever. She was less exacting than Barbara Villiers: she never had a palace to sell.

When Nonsuch was built up again into Durdans and other houses near the Wells, then came the full tide. Epsom was completed. About the year 1690, Pownall dates the climax: Mr. Parkhurst, lord of the manor, built a ball-room seventy feet long, and the inns sprang up on all sides. "Taverns at that time reputed to be the largest in England were opened; sedan chairs and numbered coaches attended, there was a public breakfast, with dancing and music every morning at the Wells. There was also a ring, as in Hyde Park; and on the downs races were held daily at noon; with cudgelling and wrestling matches, foot races, &c., in the afternoon. The evenings were usually spent in private parties, assemblies or cards; and we may add, that neither Bath nor Tunbridge ever boasted of more noble visitors than Epsom, or exceeded it in splendour, at the time we are describing." So Pownall praises the great days; but they have not left a glamour about Epsom, as the days of Nash and Brummell have shed on Bath.

Why has Epsom so broad a main street? In the great days the open way was narrower. Down the centre of the road as we see it Mr. Parkhurst planted a long walk of elms, and there they stood from James the Second's day till the nineteenth century. Then Sir Joseph Mawbey, lord of the manor, cut them down and sold the timber. He made a good bargain too; for the townpeople were grieved at losing their trees, and to quiet them he promised to give £200 to help build a market-house, but he never did it, and kept the cash. The trunks of the fallen trees must have made a pleasant prospect for the New Inn, the fine red-brick building which in Parkhurst's day was built for a tavern, and which still stands, but has now fallen to shops. But in the days when the city aldermen brought their wives to show off their finery, and the young sparks threw their money about at Epsom, what a bustling, handsome, pursy, turtle-soup sort of place the Wells must have [Pg 262] been. John Toland, writing in 1711, describes Epsom Wells at their height. Eudoxa is his mistress, and to Eudoxa he pictures all Epsom's charms. I quote a few passages from a long letter:—

"Here are two bowling-greens with raffling shops and musick for the ladies' diversion, as at

Tunbridge; but the ladies do not appear every day on the walks as there. Here you see them, on Saturdays, in the evening, as their husbands come from London; on Sundays at church, and on Mondays in all their splendour, when there are balls in the Long-rooms; and many of them shake their elbows at Passage and Hazard with a good grace."

Surely they never forgave Toland for writing that. Here he writes on the ladies' husbands:—"By the conversation of those that walk there, you would fancy yourself to be this minute on the Exchange, and the next at St. James's; one while in an East India factory, and another while with the army in Flanders, or on board the fleet in the Ocean; nor is there any profession, trade, or calling that you can miss of here, either for your instruction or diversion."

Thus does Toland, unkinder than Pownall, set out the glories of Epsom without comparing them to Bath. But what could be better than the luxury of it all? "You would think yourself in some enchanted camp, to see the peasants ride to every house with the choicest fruits, herbs, roots and flowers; with all sorts of tame and wild fowl, with the rarest fish and venison, and with every kind of butcher's meat, among which Banstead-down mutton is the most relishing dainty. Thus, to see the fresh and artless damsels of the plain, either accompanied by their amorous swains or aged parents, striking their bargains with the nice court and city ladies, who, like queens in a tragedy, display all their finery on benches before their doors (where they hourly censure, and are censured), and to observe how the handsomest of each degree equally admire, envy and cozen one another, is to me one of the chiefest amusements of the place. The ladies who are too lazy, or too stately, but especially those who sit up late at cards have their provisions brought to their bedsides, where they conclude the bargain with the higler; and then—perhaps after a dish of chocolate—take another nap, till what they have thus purchased is got ready for dinner." [Pg 263]

One single attraction Toland admits Epsom never had—it lacks a river. "One thing is wanting—and happy is the situation that wants no more; for in this place notwithstanding the medicinal waters, and sufficient of sweetes for domestic use, are not to be heard the precipitant murmurs of impetuous cascades. There are no purling streams in our groves, to tempt the shrill notes of the warbling choristers, whose never-ceasing concerts exceed Bononcini and Corelli."

That was in 1711; Epsom never saw better days in spite of the lack of those miraculous concerts. And in 1715 it had all come to an end. Epsom's glories tumbled like a pack of cards. It was the fault of one man: Pownall has gibbeted the rascal; Epsom fell through the "knavery of Mr. John Livingstone, an apothecary." Mr. Livingstone may have been a knave, but he was also evidently a fool. He began admirably, as a doctor with a speculative eye should do, by building a large house with an assembly room for dancing and music, "and other rooms for raffling, diceing, fairchance (what a perversion of terms!) and all sorts of gaming; together with shops for milliners, jewellers, toymen, etc." He was quite a heathen, for he planted a grove, and he made a bowling-green, and then spoiled it all by sinking a well, putting a pump to it, and calling the place the New Wells. The new water was neither diluent, nor absorbent, nor cathartic, nor anything else that water at a watering-place should be, and the visitors found out the difference. But the end was the maddest thing of all. Somehow or other, John Livingstone got a lease of the old wells, the real, genuine spring. Then he locked up the old wells, and tried to make money with the new. It killed the watering-place.

But Epsom revived—to relapse and revive again. First, it was brought to life again by the South Sea Bubble, which would have brought to life anything, and for a wild short season the quacks and alchemists and Jews came back: the ball rooms and the gaming saloons filled again. New houses were built; "amongst them that of Baron Swasso." To speculate as to who Baron Swasso may have been is agreeable: but the baronial hall could not save Epsom. Even a more powerful attraction than Baron Swasso failed to do so; or, rather, refused to try. She was Miss Wallin, whom the vulgar addressed as Crazy Sally; but she was not so crazy. Miss Wallin was a bone-setter: she could put in a man's shoulder without help, and she was not to be imposed upon. Once a cheat came to her with his head done up in a bandage, and asked her to set his dislocated wrist for him; it was not dislocated, and he wanted to show Miss Wallin up as an impostor. She saw through that, and dislocated his wrist on the spot, telling him to go back to the fools that sent him. Such a woman should have been kept at Epsom; she was worth more than mere cathartic waters. But Epsom could not keep her; she desired more than anything else in the world to marry one Mr. Hill Mapp, who did not and would not live at Epsom. She pursued him, always with an eye on the church, and Mapp capitulated; but they were married in London. Epsom took back Mrs. Mapp, but she could not live for ever. [Pg 264]

After Mrs. Mapp, the end came quickly. Sea-bathing finished the little town altogether; "the modern delightful practice of sea-bathing," as Pownall puts it with tolerance. He does not give up hope, even in 1825; he hopes that the medical profession will still give the wells a trial, and believes that the waters will be found worthy. After that he comes to the consideration of Epsom's races.

Water ended Epsom in 1715; wine began Epsom again in 1780. A party of gentlemen, drinking at Lord Derby's table at Lambert's Oaks, a house on the high ground above the town, lifted their glasses to the glories of horse-racing. They founded two races, one, in 1779, for three-year-old fillies; another, in 1780, for three-year-old colts and fillies. They named the races after their host and the house where they drank, and Epsom was made again. The Derby and the Oaks became national institutions. Before that roystering party, the downs had seen racing, but had not seen a racing crowd. Charles II had run his horses on Epsom and Banstead downs; perhaps his horse now and then bore away the silver bell, which was the first and simple prize when horses began

racing. Queen Anne may have entered a colt or two at Epsom: her consort, Prince George of Denmark, loved horse-racing and drank Epsom waters. Greatest of all memories of the Turf, Eclipse lived for years by Epsom downs, and won poor little races for an obscure commoner. He would have won any race he could have been asked by a king, but it was the fate of the finest racehorse ever foaled to live before the Derby was founded, and before he could race another horse worthy to pass the starting post with him. Pownall, in his *History of Epsom*, has a pleasant passage extolling Eclipse's merits. He writes in 1825: he has studied, he tells us, Lawrence's *History of the Horse* and Bingley's *British Quadrupeds*, and this is the result:— [Pg 265]

"Eclipse was withheld from the course till he was five years of age, and was first tried at Epsom. He had considerable length of waist, and stood over a large space of ground, in which particular he was an opposite form to the flying Childers, a short backed, compact horse, whose reach lay in his lower limbs; but, from the shape of his body, we are inclined to believe that Eclipse would have beaten Childers in a race over a mile course with equal weights. He once ran four miles in eight minutes, carrying twelve stone, and with this weight Eclipse won eleven King's plates.[A] He was never beaten, never had a whip flourished over him, or felt the tickling of a spur; nor was he ever for a moment distressed by the speed or rate of a competitor; out-footing, out-striding, and out-lasting (says Mr. Lawrence) every horse which started against him."

Eclipse, like Homer, had many birthplaces. Mr. Theodore Cook, who has written authoritatively of him where others have guessed or accepted tradition, has been informed of more than seven; and, in collecting details of relics of the great horse, he has been supplied with evidence that Eclipse possessed no fewer than six "undoubted" skeletons, nine "authentic" feet, sufficient "genuine" hair to have stuffed the largest armchair in Newmarket, and "certified" portions of skin which would easily have carpeted the yard at Tattersall's. There never was such an omnipresent animal.

After 1780, the horse-racing crowd grew. In Pownall's time, when the Derby and Oaks had not been established forty-five years, the Derby attracted some sixty subscribers, and the Oaks about forty, of fifty guineas apiece, and Epsom was full to overflowing. The watering-place has become a circus. The race week brings down all London. "At an early hour in the morning, persons of all ranks, and carriages innumerable, are seen pouring into the town at every inlet. All the accommodations and provisions that the surrounding villages can supply are put in requisition." The royal family would come to look on; sixty thousand spectators, Pownall thinks, met on the downs. [Pg 266]

But Pownall has nothing to say of the road. The road must have been the thing to see; not as we see it to-day, when motor cars start for the course before lunch instead of before breakfast, and luxurious railway trains draw decadent race-goers to Tattenham Corner. In the real Derby days all racing men that were men drove to Epsom, early in the morning, by the road. Four-in-hand coaches travelled level in the pack and the dust by costermongers' donkeys; at every inn there were touts and tipsters, haunting creatures with secrets of betting; they knew what would win outright and what would certainly lose; the Duke's trainer had whispered to them, the swindling Captain had tipped them the wink; you merely had to pay for the knowledge. Wayside strips of green were turned into cocoanut shies, wherever a man might wish to shy at nuts; clowns on stilts stalked in chequered blue; bare-legged boys and girls turned amazing Catherine wheels. There was the hill to finish with by the course, and the plaudits of the crowd for him who took his team up in spanking style. They still drive four-in-hand coaches up the hill; but the motor-horn follows the coach-horn.

Frith has made the Victorian Derby day immortal; a less well-known hand has written of what Frith painted. The author who signed himself "Sylvanus," and wrote with an admirable gusto of racing men and racing scenes in the forties, has set down in his *Bye-lanes and Downs of England* a strange picture of the Ring on Epsom downs as he saw it. In his day it was formed "on the crest of the Down, round a post or limb of a gibbet"—*similia similibus*, you might suppose reading the list of heroes who met there. "The 'plunging prelate and his ponderous Grace'; my lord George, the 'bold baker,' and Mr. Unwell; Sir Xenophon Sunflower, the Assassin, and the flash grazier; the Dollar, hellite, billiard-marker, and bacon-factor; the ringletted O'Bluster, double-jointed publican, Leather lungs, and Handsome Jack contrasted in the pig's skin; and, ye Centaurs! what seats were there!" It must have been a sight for proper men to see. Not the veriest tailor would walk on Derby day. He "would mount a mis-teached hippogriff, and risk the chance of a purl, rather than not show at the covert-side." Who, indeed, would not bestride a steed when he might meet the Assassin and the O'Bluster in the ring? But there were others:— [Pg 267]

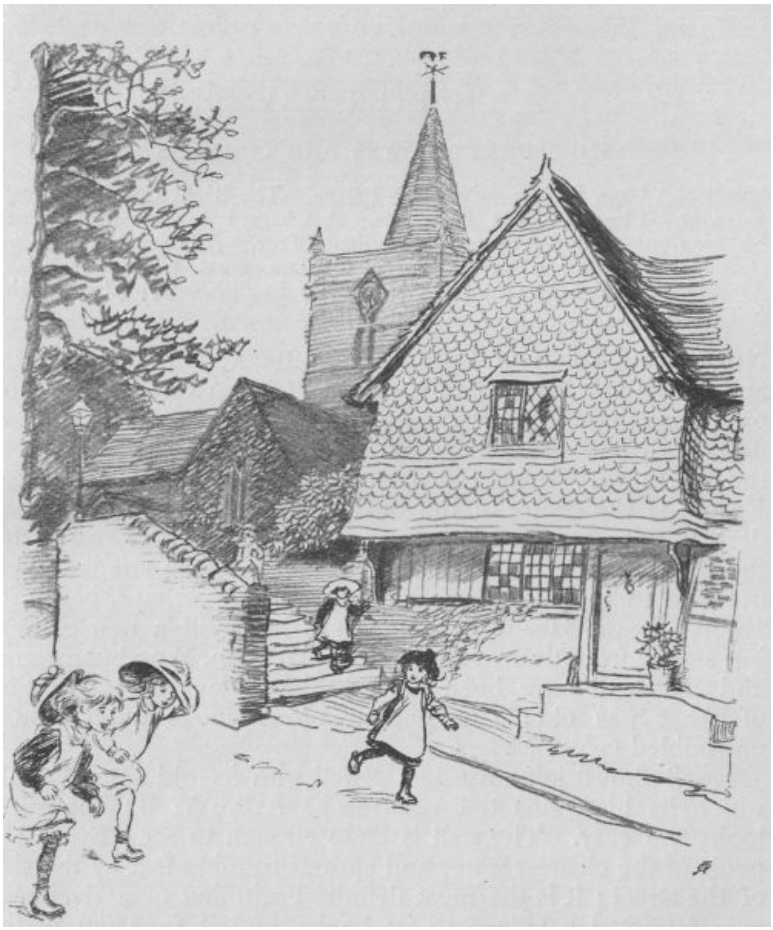
> At the time we write of, "Old Crutch," too, with his scaffolding under his arm, and disabled limb dangling like a loose girth from his rosinante's side, a quadruped equalling the Dollar's mount in beauty,—might have been seen side by side with Lord Chesterfield, on his thoroughbred, and addressing him in all the Timbobbinish horrors of his frightful vernacular. My lord was then in the zenith of his good looks and humour, and was, moreover, so well upon Cotherstone, that he saw graces in Old Crutch's physog, with the charming "thousand to forty" he hoped to draw him of on the Tuesday *prochain*,—that he joked and rattled with the uncouth old cripple in undisguised merriment. With these might have been noticed the elegant form of Lord Wilton, on his roan, shaded again by a round-shouldered knave from Manchester, with ungloved hands and snub nose, who had "potted the crack" for his special line of action. His yeoman Grace of Limbs, fresh and hearty as a summer gale, mounted on his Blue-eyed Maid, loomed in stalwart manhood by

> the side of some pallid greek or city trader, having a word of greeting and jollity for all alike, for *he* was there for the sake of sport, and had no anxiety beyond his "pony."
>
> The *Heavies*, as Thornhill of Riddlesworth, Sir Hercules Fitzoutlawe, and poor fatty Sutherland, together with my Lord Miltown, from his not being particularly adapted for an equestrian display, appeared in their several chariots on the outskirts of the ring, an occasional lull in the wordy tumult permitting the Irishman's lisping scream to penetrate the dense and agitated circle, in his praiseworthy efforts to do business. Old Crocky, too, was there, mounted on a subdued wretch of the horse-species, tenanted, according to the Pythagorean doctrine, by the evil spirit of some defunct croupier, and ready to "return on the nick" as usual. In this "mess tossed up of Hockley-Hole and White's," in addition to our foregoing inventory, were dukes and butchers....

But these are perhaps enough. Has the crowd on the hill changed much since the forties? The Ring roars no longer round a gibbet, of course; a Grand Stand of vast dimensions overlooks the course from starting-gate to paddock; dukes no longer ride side by side with butchers to make bets. But the crowd itself, and what the crowd does, and what it sees and feels—all that, surely, has changed hardly at all. The gipsies still swarm, and the touts still swindle; the bookmakers, bedizened with belts of silver coin, and outlandish hats, and flaring assertions of personal [Pg 268] integrity, still clamour by their blackboards; they still chalk up the odds they offer against horses whose names they mis-spell; the sun still shines on the jockeys' silk jackets; still, down a course cleared empty, distracted dogs rush madly; still, before the start for the great race, there broods over that huge concourse an intense, almost a dreadful silence; still there is the shout as the jackets flash from the starting-gate, still the hum as they sweep down the bend, the roar as they rush for the straight, the yell as the leader drops back, shoots out, thunders past the judge. All that remains, and will remain. But two changes are insistent. One is the motor-cars, which are all over the hill and almost everywhere else; but that is a permanent thing. The other is the advertisements on the kites. In the old days the downs lay under blue sky and white clouds. Now they lie, on Derby day, under strings of kites. You may go to Epsom to see horse-racing, but you will not escape soap, mustard, or pills.

Of Epsom's residents and neighbours, Lord Derby won the race named after him in 1787, and doubtless others have won since. But the best record belongs to the owner of Durdans, who won the Derby in 1894 with Ladas, in 1895 with Sir Visto, and in 1905 with Cicero; and who, in addition to his career as politician, man of letters, and owner of racehorses, has added difficulties to the tasks of other writers by contributing to Mr. Gordon Home's *Guide to Epsom* a discouragingly brilliant preface.

Another peer has made Epsom history in a different way. At Pit Place lived the second Lord Lyttelton, and at Pit Place he died, leaving behind him a profligate name and a ghost story which Dr. Johnson thought the most extraordinary he had ever heard. It was in November, 1779; Lord Lyttelton had just returned from Ireland, and was seized with suffocating fits. One night he dreamt a dream. A dove hovered over him, changed to a woman in white, and spoke to him. It was a dead face, and he knew who it was; her two daughters were under his roof. Her words were few: "Lord Lyttelton, prepare to die!" "When?" he gasped. "In three days," she answered, and vanished. He called his man, who found him wet with sweat and his whole frame working. The third day came, and he jested with his guests at breakfast—"If I live over to-night, I shall [Pg 269] have jockeyed the ghost." He dined at five, went to bed at eleven, called his servant a slovenly dog for not bringing a spoon for his medicine, and sent for a spoon. The man returned, found him in a fit, and roused the house. But Lord Lyttelton was dead. He was thirty-five.



A Quiet Corner in Witley (p. 159).

[Pg 270]

FOOTNOTES:

[A] It is generally admitted, that a horse which will run four miles in eight minutes, carrying a weight of eight stone and a-half, must win plates.

Bingley.

CHAPTER XXV

MID-SURREY DOWNS AND COMMONS

Ewell.—A Clear Stream.—Nonsuch Palace.—The Right Use for a King's Gift.—Cheam.—Satin Haycocks.—A Chained Anachronism.—Chessington.—Dancing Round the Mulberry Tree.—A House of Mourning.—A Fool for a present.—Esher.—The great horse Bendigo.—Macaulay and the Hop-pickers.—Surrey English.—Gypsy boys selling a pony.

North and south of Epsom are scattered villages on downs and commons; some, like Ewell and Cheam to the north and east, changing the word village into town; others, like Walton-on-the-hill and Headley to the south-west, or Chessington to the north-west, merely groups of cottages with a church. Epsom is the centre of the Surrey churches which have been destroyed or disused rather than restored, and the reason for the destruction of the group is obscure. Some strange infection ran in the destroyer's brains; Epsom, perhaps, began it; Ewell, Cheam, Headley fell later; Esher built a new church, but stayed from destroying the old. Walton, Woodmansterne, and Banstead have been altered almost out of recognition of what was old; Chessington alone looks upon almost untroubled centuries.

Ewell almost joins Epsom; Ewell with its old name Etwell, which its historians tell you means At ye Well; the guess looks too easy. The well is plain enough to see; Ewell has pools of the clearest water and springs running fast by the side of the street; it is the most definite beginning of a river that ever attracted a village to its banks, and it runs out of the village as the little Hog's Mill river—a stream with a sparkle in it that deserves a prettier name. But the village which the [Pg 271] stream drew to it has changed. The High Street has kept some of its older houses, with upper stories jutting out over the road; but the church which the old houses knew has gone. They pulled it down in the forties—that unhappy decade for anything ancient and quiet in Surrey villages; all they left was the tower, a mighty mass of stone and ivy that stands with its nave reft from it, the forlornest and most meaningless of ruins. If the tower might stand, why not the nave? They

pulled the nave down, and left the tower standing, so Mr. C.J. Swete, one of Epsom's historians, tells you, in order that it "should remain to beautify the landscape." They acted, he observes, "with good taste and judgment" in so doing. Theirs is that praise.

But Ewell has a greater ruin. Ewell Castle preserves it in Ewell Park; but when I was at Ewell the Castle and Park were for sale, and I could find no one who could show it me, or even who knew where it was. Few, perhaps, have seen it, and there can be little to see, by all accounts, but what remains is the ruin of Nonsuch Palace—just the foundations of the banquet hall; that is all that remains of the palace which was to be incomparable, like no palace a king ever built before, the royalest building in Christendom. That was what Henry VIII meant to make it, when he began it in 1538, and he had built most of it when he died nine years later. It stood unfinished for ten years more; then Mary sold it to the Earl of Arundell, and he finished it. Elizabeth bought it back, and so it came a royal palace to the Stuarts; even the Parliamentary wars left it untouched, and it was the refuge for Charles II's Exchequer at the fire of London. Pepys has a picture of Nonsuch, just after the Restoration. "A very noble house," he calls it, "and a delicate park about it, where just now there was a doe killed for the King, to carry up to the Court." Two years later he walked in the park and admired the house and the trees; "a great walk of an elm and a walnut set one after another in order. And all the house on the outside filled with figures of stories, and good painting of Rubens' or Holbein's doing. And one great thing is that most of the house is covered, I mean the posts and quarters in the walls, with lead, and gilded. I walked also into the ruined garden." That is Charles II; the doe killed in the park for the King, the ruined garden. An old print shows Nonsuch in 1582; a great quadrangle with towers at the corners, and cupolas, which [Pg 272] perhaps were gilt, and bannerets round the cupolas, and countless little windows; along the face of the building are high Tudor windows with bas-reliefs between them; in the foreground of the park a great lady rides in a chariot with gaily caparisoned horses; a greyhound bounds by her side, spaniels in leash drag a huntsman after the carriage; in the far distance, beyond the palace, hounds and men hunt a noble stag, pictured as if the whole airy chase flew round a cupola. It was a great palace, and it should be standing to-day, with its lead and its gilt and its Rubenses and Holbeins. But Charles II gave it to Barbara Villiers, and she knew the right use for a king's gift.

Cheam, east from Ewell by two miles, has kept not the tower of its old church but its chancel. The little building stands apart in the churchyard; you may peep through a grille at the tombs and the pedigree of sixteen generations of Lumleys, and at a palimpsest brass mounted on a screen. But if Cheam's church has gone, in the village there is still the White Hall, a gabled Elizabethan house of painted timber; the daintiest and lightest little place, with tiny ordered lawns under its white wood, and old-fashioned flowers in the garden and in the windows. White Hall has the graces of old books, old ladies, old lace. But its gables and chimneys are not the only happy picture in Cheam. The road that passes by the left of the house leads to an untouched corner of little, white wooden cottages, as lowly and as English as anything in deep Surrey country, and this is nearly town. They will not last long, I am afraid; the new Cheam buildings are staring at them.

All above Cheam and Ewell are Banstead Downs, once as free and open as the downs by the Sussex sea, and even now sunny places where you may walk in fresh winds. But the houses are nearer every year, and they will be lucky if they escape another asylum; the high ground gives an opportunity to asylum architects. On Banstead Downs are Lambert's Oaks, where Lord Derby's roystering guests founded great races with bumpers of claret, and where Lord Stanley, when he married Lady Betty Hamilton, gave his famous Fête Champêtre, which Horace Walpole guessed would cost £5,000; Lord Stanley had "bought all the orange-trees round London," and the [Pg 273] haycocks he imagined were to be made of straw-coloured satin. Banstead itself, like Woodmansterne, its neighbour to the east, has not much to show of village buildings. Banstead and Woodmansterne churches have many memorials to the Lamberts, one of the very old Surrey families; and it is from Garratt's Hall, whose grounds border Banstead village, that Colonel F.A.H. Lambert dedicates his *Guide to Surrey*, a valuable little pocket-book, to Admiral Charles Mathew Buckle, head of another ancient Surrey family. One of the oldest things near Banstead stands in ground once owned by the Buckle family. Nork House has a field in which stands Tumble Beacon, a mound which saw the flares run from the hills of Hampshire to London, when the Armada was breasting the Channel and Hampshire had caught the signal from Dunkerry and the Lizard. Tumble Beacon would not light an alarm now; or if it did, it would burn pine trees and elders and nettles that grow about it, and would scare a hundred rabbits. How did the trees come there? A beacon should not be planted; it should stand open and high and free as when the Spaniards came, and from the same spot where Elizabeth's sailors in the Thames saw its flame, it should wait for jubilees and coronations to send its fires roaring up into the night.

Nork, etymologists have guessed, may be corrupted from Noverca—perhaps it once had a Roman owner. There were Romans who lived on the high ground near. Walton Heath, south of Banstead on the chalk plateau, has had the pavement of a Roman villa dug from it; I have been told that you may still find Roman pavements there, if you know where to dig. But Walton's chief possession—the village is Walton-on-the-hill, so named that you may never mistake it for Walton-on-the-Naze or Walton-on-Thames—is in the church. It is a leaden font, the only leaden font which Surrey possesses, though England has thirty; and of the thirty English fonts, Walton's is of as fine workmanship and design as any. Throned apostles circle the bowl, and bless with the right hand, or hold a book in the left. The church has some interesting old glass in a southern window, and, by an oddly deliberate anachronism, a chained Bible dated 1803. The chain is an old and genuine guard of the printed word, taken from Salisbury; but why should it chain Georgian printing? But Walton has long been anachronistic; there is a tomb outside the chancel, in a recess [Pg 274]

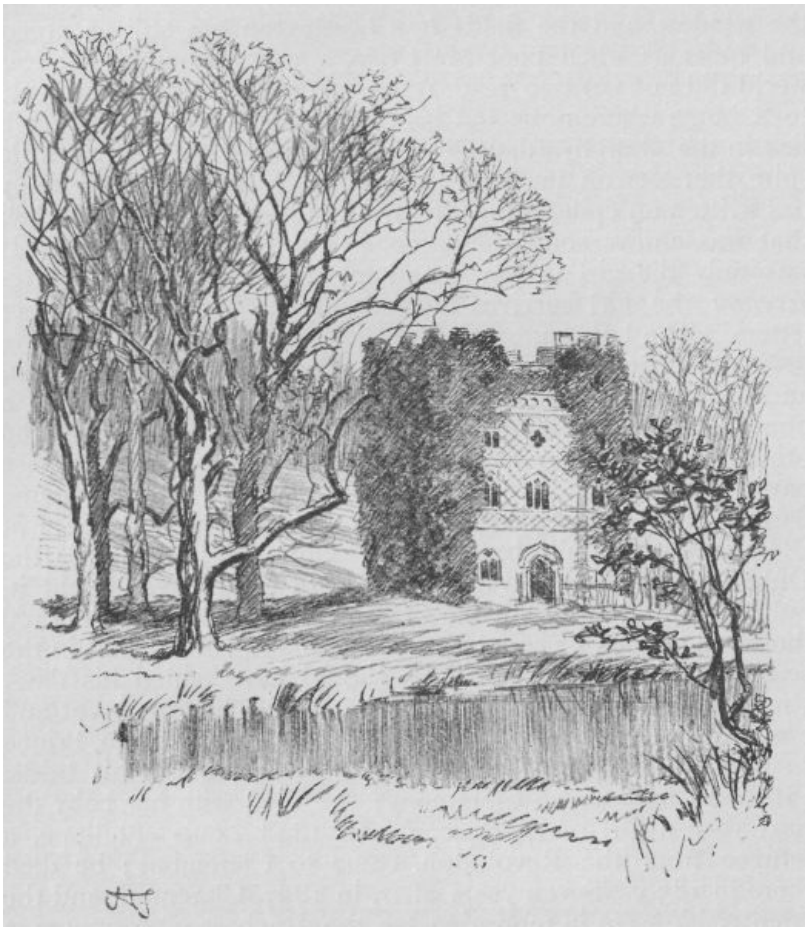
of the north wall, on which some modern Latin scholar has set the inscription, "Johannes de Waltune hujus ecclesiae fundator 1268." The weather has removed part, but the rest is in black paint.

A neighbouring village, Headley, has separated its new and old more definitely. The church has been taken down, all but the porch, which holds a grave and what looks like the sign of an inn; you may just distinguish the royal arms. The pillars of the old church have fallen, but where they stood, little clipped box-trees mark the line—a prettier memorial than a drawn plan to hang in the vestry, but need the old church have fallen? These level heights, perhaps, provoke church-building, but how few spires stand on the horizons. Ranmer spire you may see from half over mid-Surrey, but Ranmer is high on a ridge. Here you are on a plateau, and the heights see each other no more than the low ground. Kingswood's is the best seen of the spires on the plateau; a shining thing, white as the chalk of the ridge.

From Epsom to the north is quiet, empty countryside. Esher is five miles to the north-west as the crow flies; something more by road, but the best roads near Esher are the wild pathways of Esher common. Midway between Epsom and Esher, but among pastures, not in the heather of the common, is Chessington. Chessington Hall and Chessington Church are deep in the fields. The Hall may not be to-day quite the simple little building that Fanny Burney knew, when Samuel Crisp, "Daddy" Crisp, had it, but the garden and the trees, and the avenue to the church where she walked and talked over his music with Dr. Burney can be little changed. It was at Chessington that Fanny Burney took a packet from the postman and found herself famous. *Evelina*, which not even her father knew she had written, had taken the town. All the talk of the great men was of *Evelina*. Dr. Johnson was praising it; Sir Joshua Reynolds would not let his meals interrupt him, and took it with him to table. Edmund Burke had sat through the night to finish it. That was in 1778, and a hundred and thirty years after that wonderful morning her delight is as infectious as dance music. "Dr. Johnson's approbation!" she writes in her diary, "—it almost crazed me with agreeable surprise—it gave me such a flight of spirits that I danced a jig [Pg 275] to Mr. Crisp, without any preparation, music, or explanation—to his no small amazement and diversion." She danced round the mulberry tree on the Chessington lawn, so she told Sir Walter Scott years afterwards.

She was just twenty-six. The mulberry-tree still stands by the window, and the fields by Chessington are still as green and quiet as when poor Mr. Crisp, a writer whom a careless world did not want to read, retired from his disappointments to a home where none but his friends should find him. He lies in the churchyard, under the shadow of the quaint little spire that sits on its bells like a candle-snuffer; Dr. Burney has written an epitaph for him, in the formal Georgian English that was always somewhere, too, in Fanny Burney's head. It was only the girl in her that kept it out of *Evelina*; after *Evelina* the girl survives almost only in her diary and her letters. The books grow dull.

Esher, beyond Claygate, is three miles to the north-west, and Claremont borders Esher Common. Claremont is a house of happiness and mourning. Queen Victoria spent the brightest days of her childhood there; princes and princesses have lived here and died before their day; a great name darkens its memories, ennobles its history. The first house at Claremont was built by Sir John Vanbrugh; afterwards the Duke of Newcastle had it; on his death Lord Clive bought it, pulled it down, and built the Claremont of to-day. A hundred thousand pounds he spent on the house and garden, and in the serenity of his chosen home he should have ended his days. Envy and persecution prevented that, and Clive of Arcot and Plassey died in London. Forty-two years later, in 1816, Prince Leopold, afterwards King of the Belgians, brought his bride, Princess Charlotte, to Claremont; she died with her baby the next year, a girl of twenty-one. In 1848 Louis Philippe, a refugee from the Revolution, came to Claremont; he died there in 1850. Seven years after, in 1857, Claremont and the countryside were in mourning for the Duchess of Nemours, a princess of glorious beauty. Queen Amélie died at the house in 1866. To-day the Duchess of Albany has Claremont; perhaps, as it lies so near a great highway, it might be worth while to say that it is not shown to the public.



Wolsey's Tower, Esher.

A ruined palace is Claremont's neighbour. The great gateway of the building stands on the bank of the Mole, in the grounds of Esher Place. William of Waynflete built it; Wolsey repaired it, and [Pg 276] was sent there in disgrace by his King; the Great Seal had been taken from him. Stow has a story of the fallen Minister's journey to Esher; Wolsey had left the river at Putney, and was riding along sadly enough, when a messenger brought him a kind word from the King. In his joy and relief he looked round for a present to send back; he fixed on Patch, his fool, and ordered him to the Court. Patch was all rage and tears, and stormed his unhappiness at his master. It was no good; [Pg 277] he was for Henry, and six yeomen—it took the tallest Wolsey had—carried him struggling back to the King.

The Palace did not keep Wolsey long; he was allowed back at Richmond. After him, in Elizabeth's reign, came Richard Drake, and kept Spanish grandees prisoners there, taken from the Armada by Sir Francis Drake. After the Drakes came the Lattons, one of whom, John, held a remarkable number of offices under William III. Aubrey gives the list:—

> In the reign of William III, this John Latton had given him by that Prince the Honours and Places following—
>
> Equery,
>
> Avener,
>
> Master of the Buck-Beagles,
>
> Master of the Hariers,
>
> Master of the Game 10 miles round Hampton-Court, by particular patent, distinct from that of Justice in Eyre,
>
> Master of the Lodge at the Old Park at Richmond, with a lease of 30 years from the Crown for the lands thereto belonging,
>
> Steward of the Manor of Richmond,
>
> Keeper of Windsor-House Park,
>
> Head-customer at Plymouth.
>
> All which were conferr'd upon him, without asking for, directly or indirectly, and were all held together during that reign.

Esher Palace as John Latton knew it survives now only in old prints; they show a long wing on each side of William of Waynflete's gateway. Opposite the palace a pleasure-boat, half dinghy, half barge, asks for passengers; on the bank a fashionably dressed lady holds a long fishing rod hopefully over the river, shaded by an enormous parasol.

Esher itself is scattered round a village green and a long broad street. By the green is the modern church, and in the churchyard a strange tomb. Lord Esher, the late Master of the Rolls, lies in white marble with Lady Esher; Lord Esher designed the tomb in his lifetime, and would pass it on his way to church. But the real Esher lies away from the village green, along the main road to Portsmouth—a road edged with trees and strips of grass; behind the trees stand the little, low, one-storied red houses, and Esher's fine inn, the Bear. The Bear has been rebuilt, but it has kept the air of a coaching inn; in the hall there is a vast pair of boots, once worn by the postillion of Louis Philippe. [Pg 278]

Esher's old church lies behind the Bear, the saddest little deserted place. Sorrels and grasses wave about its forgotten graves; you open the church door, and you are back in the days of Waterloo. The pews are square and high, the pulpit is a three-decker, the paint is that peculiar yellow dun which belongs to Georgian and early Victorian æsthetics. But the value of the church is that it is untouched. No restorer has laid a hand on the mouldering baize which lines the pews; no one has knocked down the hideous galleries; nobody has broken into the gallery pew in which, warmed by a fireplace and chimney in winter, the little Princess Victoria of Kent used to sit when she was allowed to visit Claremont. You may see at Esher, better than in any other Surrey church, the surroundings in which our Georgian great-grandfathers worshipped; the service might almost have ended yesterday—there should be a forgotten prayer-book somewhere under a seat, praying for the health of his gracious Majesty King William. Or there might be in the body of the church; not in the Queen's pew. I think American visitors have been there.

To racing people Esher is Sandown, and Sandown is what all travellers see from the railway. Of the smaller racecourses few can be prettier; the long flank of a green hill, the white pavilion under dark pines, and the curving course picked out with fresh painted railings and green canvas —it is as spick and span as a lawn. Either in the summer, for the Eclipse Stakes, or in the spring for the steeplechases, most of the great English racehorses go to Sandown. Bendigo won the Eclipse Stakes of £10,000 for Mr. Hedworth Barclay in 1886—the first time any horse won so huge a stake. Bendigo is surely one of the great names. Even those who know least about horse-racing may talk of Bendigo; Bendigo whom the crowd loved, Bendigo who never failed them, Bendigo who carried 9 stone 7 lb., and won the Jubilee Stakes at Kempton in 1887. I have for Bendigo the affection of a schoolfellow.

What is Surrey English? Lord Macaulay heard it at Esher. He was walking from Esher to Ditton Marsh, he writes on September 22nd, 1854, and he listened to it in a public-house:—

"A shower came on. Afraid for my chest, I turned into a small ale-house, and called for a glass of ginger beer. I found there a party of hop-pickers, come back from the neighbourhood of [Pg 279] Farnham. They had had but a bad season, and were returning, nearly walked off their legs. I liked their looks, and thought their English remarkably good for their rank of life. It was in truth Surrey English, the English of the suburbs of London, which is to the Somersetshire and Yorkshire what Castilian is to the Andalusian, or Tuscan to Neapolitan. The poor people had a foaming pot before them; but as soon as they heard the price, they rose and were going to leave it untouched. They could not, they said, afford so much. It was but fourpence halfpenny. I laid the money down, and their delight and gratitude quite affected me. Two more of the party soon arrived. I ordered another pot, and when the rain was over, left them, followed by more blessings than ever, I believe, were purchased for ninepence."

Perhaps the English of the Surrey suburbs was different in Macaulay's days. There is little dialect left anywhere to distinguish Surrey English from any other; even the gypsies speak the English of the suburbs of London. There are still gypsies on Esher common; I came across quite a settlement once, walking over the common to Cobham on a sunny morning after late April snow. The common was patched with sparkling white and blue; the snow lay in blue shadows unmelted under the gorse bushes, and among the gorse and sodden bracken twenty ponies snuffed for grass. Three gypsy boys shuffled through the fern near them. What did they do with the ponies? I asked, and the eldest told me they sold them; they were good ponies; he was voluble in suburban English. What did they fetch? That depended. What was that one worth?—it was a small chestnut creature with a child's pink pinafore for a halter. "Ah! That one," he began, and his eyes became inscrutable. He would have sold it well. [Pg 280]

CHAPTER XXVI

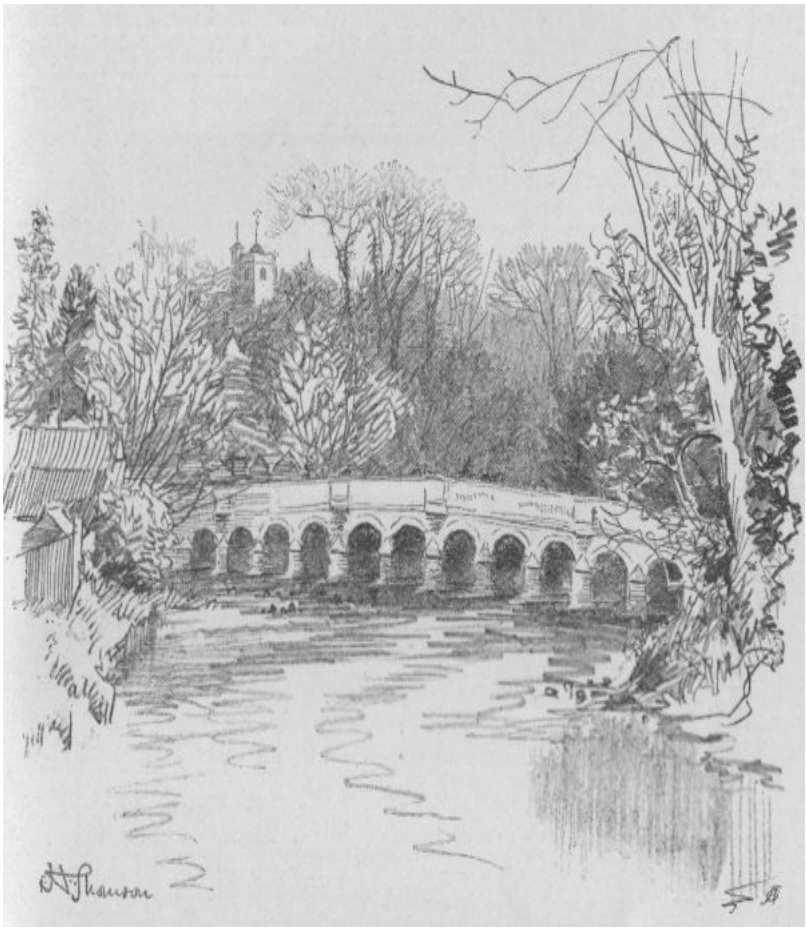
LEATHERHEAD

The Millpond.—Magic water.—Leatherhead Bridge.—The Running Horse.—The Tunnyng of Elinour Rumming.—Noppy Ale.—A penny a coffin.—Deflected chancels. —Judge Jeffreys and his daughter.—*Emma.*—Mr. Woodhouse's gruel.

Leatherhead ought to be entered from the west and left by the south. To meet the little town on the road from Fetcham is to begin with a stretch of water, which is always a good introduction; and to leave it and travel south is to pass through one of the most fascinating valleys of all Surrey.

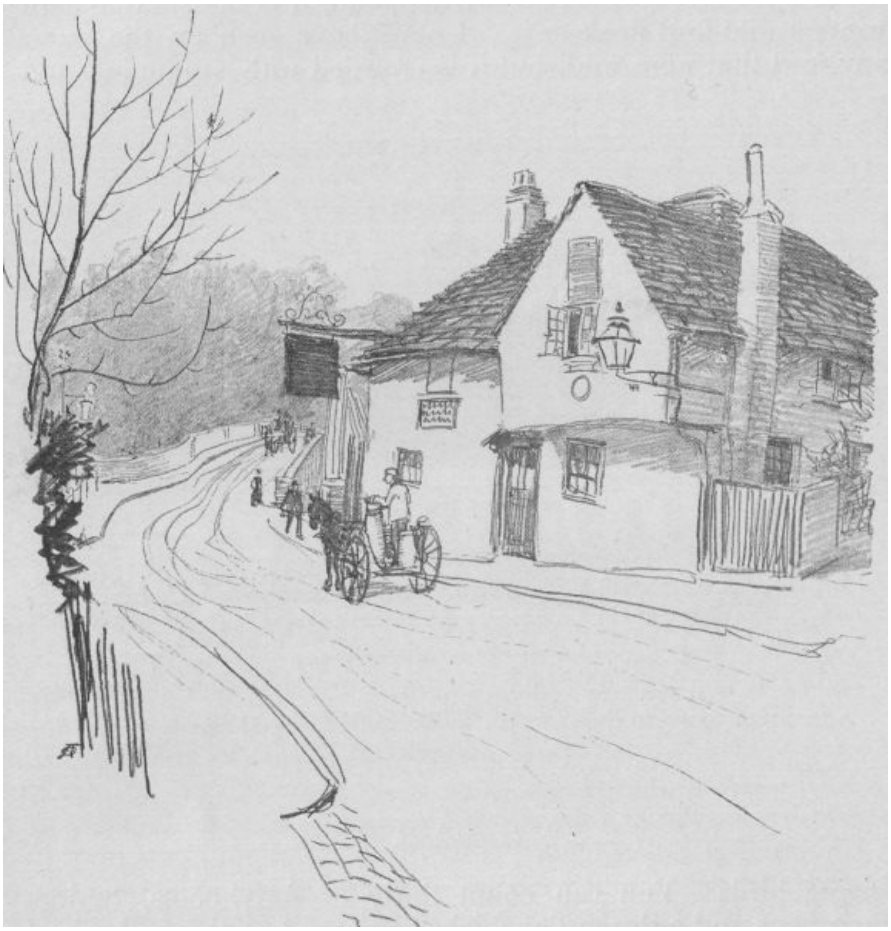
The stretch of water lying to the west is the millpond, and is unlike any other pond I know. It is

two or three hundred yards long and perhaps eighty yards wide, slopes gradually from the sides over a chalky bottom, and is of an intense clear green. Here and there are open spaces in the weeds; patches of deeper blue-green, which can be seen, if you look closely, to be moving—a most uncanny motion. The water wells up incredibly fast and quiet, and surely incredibly cold, from some unplumbed, invisible source below. It would be interesting to try to find the bottom with a plummet, but probably one would be caught by a policeman. All that I have tried to do is to throw in white stones, which disappear as if they were swallowed. But the swallowing is a puzzling thing. The stone strikes the surface and sends out a widening ripple. Then you watch the stone sinking down slowly against the up-rush of water, but distinct and white and wavering. Then another ripple—a mere ring of light, in some way mirroring the real ripple of the surface—leaps out apparently from the side of the pool a foot or so under water, touches the white, [Pg 281] wavering stone, and the stone vanishes. There is no stirring of mud, as there would be if it struck the bottom of an ordinary pond; it merely disappears into an invisible mouth in the green.



Leatherhead.

No frost ever sets ice on the millpond, it is said, and in hard winters wildfowl flock to it. I never have seen on the water any fowl that were wild, but it is crowded with swimming and diving birds. You can count thirty or forty coots, besides moorhens and a dozen dabchicks or so, and at the end where the mill stands there are fat duck and a bevy of swans. It is an arresting picture, the long, clear surface, the coots with their white foreheads dabbling in the weeds or rushing after one another with loud splashings, the dabchicks diving six at a time out of sight, and the dignified swans breasting the flowing water under the red brick and lichens of the mill. The coots, unlike all other coots, too, actually swim up to be fed. There is a strong spell of magic over [Pg 282] all that strange pool. Some naiad Circe combs her hair far below the weeds, and has bewitched the wildfowl and the green cold water.



Ye Olde Running Horse Inn, Leatherhead.

It would be easy to believe that the rushing springs of the millpond were in reality the Mole reappearing from her dive below ground at Mickleham, higher up the stream. But if that is so, the river must pass through some kind of filter, for it can be thick and cloudy at Mickleham, but is never anything but clean and pure at the mill. The mill stream joins the Mole just below Leatherhead Bridge, a fine span of fourteen arches. The Mole can put on many faces, but I think [Pg 283] she is nowhere in all her journey more fascinating than where she divides her stream under Leatherhead, and comes dancing down by separate channels to her broad sheet of ripples at the bridge.

Beyond the bridge on the left, is the site of a very famous old inn. The present inn, the Running Horse, has been partly rebuilt, and has few external attractions, but the mistress of the old inn, four hundred years ago, was the subject of an ode written by the Poet Laureate. She was Elinour Rumming, ale-wife of a cabaret at "Lederhede in Sothray," and John Skelton, perhaps to amuse Henry VIII, and perhaps to please himself, wrote one of his pungent, tumbling romps of doggerel about her. "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming, per Skelton Laureate," as one of the old editions prints it, is an interminable piece of rhyme, mostly an orgy of coarseness, but with a certain rude vigour of humour and live truth. Here are a score of lines out of some hundreds:—

The Tunnyng of Elinour Rumming, Per Skelton Laureate.

"Tell you I chill
If that ye wyll
A while be still
Of a comelye gyll
That dwelt on a hyll
But she is not gryll
For she is somewhat sage
And well worne in age
For her visage
It would asswage
A mannes courage.

And this comely dame
I understande her name
Is Elinoure Rumminge
At home in her wonnyng
And as men say
She dwelt in Sothray
In a certain stede
By syde Lederhede
She is a tonnish gyb
The deuell and she be sib

But to take up my tale
She breweth noppy ale

[Pg 284]

And maketh thereof poorte sale
To travellers, to tinkers
To sweters, to swinkers
And all good ale drynkers
That will nothinge spare
But dryncke till they stare
And bringe them selfe bare
With now away the mare
And let us sley care
As wise as an hare."

The legend is that Skelton was a fisherman, and used to come over from Nonsuch Palace by Epsom to fish in the Mole. Perhaps he did, and drank Elinour's "noppy ale"; in any case, a portrait of the Leatherhead ale-wife found its way into one of his books, with a rhymed couplet beneath it: —

"When Skelton wore the Laurell Crowne
My Ale put all the Ale Wives downe."

The portrait is of a hag of such appalling ill-favour as would certainly "asswage a manne's courage."

An inn of more interest, though never the subject of a Laureate's ode, is the old coaching hostel, the Swan. It was a famous house in the seventeenth century, and cooked the Mole trout as well as the Dorking inns cooked their water-souchy of carp and tench. The Reverend S.N. Sedgwick, in his ingenious little collection of Leatherhead legends, adds a strange record to the inn property. He founds one of his stories on a local tradition that the carrying of a dead body can establish a right of way, and he says that in quite recent times the sum of one penny has been charged for permission to bring a corpse through the Swan Brewery Yard, to prevent a right of way being established.

Whether or not the right of way was established originally by carrying a dead body over it, there is another Leatherhead tradition of a right of way which is connected with the church. The church, with the curious double dedication of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, stands apart from the southern road out of Leatherhead, above the banks of the Mole. The tower is strangely out of the axis of the nave—as much as three or four feet—and the tradition is that it was so built to avoid encroaching on an established right of way. Probably the explanation is something more symbolical or superstitious. One of the most learned of all Surrey archæologists, Mr. Philip Mainwaring Johnston, holds to the theory that these deflections of the church axis are connected [Pg 285] with legends of the Crucifixion. The deflected chancel, he thinks, suggests the head bowed upon the cross. But the deflected tower seems more difficult. The church is interesting in other ways. It contains a leather-bound Book of Homilies, chained in its original position to one of the northern pillars of the nave; and in the porch is an upright gravestone erected to the memory of Lady Diana Turner, the story being that she chose to be buried under the very spot where her sedan-chair stood for the Sunday service. She was paralysed, and listened to the Homilies from the porch.

Leatherhead has two faces. She shows one, which is slate and new, to the traveller entering the town from Ashtead and Epsom to the north-east; and another, which is the old bridge and the church road and the best of her, to those who approach her from Feltham or Mickleham. St. John's School, founded for the sons of poor clergy, lies on the Ashtead road, a large modern building of red and grey patterned brick. But the best of Leatherhead's houses stand about the Mole. One is Thorncroft, which represents the domain of Tornecrosta in Domesday Book. Another is a fine early Georgian building now known as Emlyn House, but formerly as "The Mansion." Alexander Akehurst, M.D., one of the churchwardens who presented the Book of Homilies to the church, rebuilt this house early in the eighteenth century, but parts of the older building remain. Once it belonged to Sir Thomas Bludworth, whose sister married Judge Jeffreys of the Bloody Assize. According to a local tradition, Jeffreys, when his worthy master King James had fled to France, slunk in disguise to Leatherhead. It was one of the many roads he found closed against him in his attempts to escape. But he did not come to Leatherhead solely because it lay on the road to the south. His little daughter lay at the point of death at her uncle's house, and his desire was to see her once more before she died. The once mighty Lord Chancellor, dressed as a common sailor with shaven eyebrows and coaldust smeared on his cheeks, hated with a furious intensity of loathing which has never been felt for an Englishman before or since, knocked fearfully at dead of night at the door of the house where his dying daughter lay. So says the legend, and history does not forbid belief. For the register dates the child's funeral on December [Pg 286] 2, 1688, and it was ten days afterwards that a wild crowd nearly tore the judge limb from limb at Wapping.

A gentler memory, or rather association, belongs to the Church street and the houses in the neighbourhood. There have been many attempts made by Miss Austen's readers to identify Highbury, "the large and populous village, almost amounting to a town" of *Emma*, with some Surrey town or village. There is a school of serious students who place it at Esher; another band of enthusiasts support Dorking. Mr. E.V. Lucas, in his engaging introduction to a new edition of

the novel, has another suggestion. He recommends the theory that Highbury was Leatherhead, which satisfies most of the conditions of the book. It is, as he says, rightly placed as regards London, Kingston and Box Hill; though seven miles, which was the drive from Hartfield to Box Hill, is surely rather a generous estimate of the actual distance. But Leatherhead certainly has a river and a "Randalls," and Mr. Lucas has been told that it has an "Abbey Farm." That may be a mere coincidence; but, if so, it is the more striking when one turns to the parish registers, and finds in them the uncommon name of Knightley. Mr. Knightley, in 1761, raised the pulpit of the church, and erected a new reading-desk and seat for the clerk, and it was "hereby ordered that the thanks of this vestry be paid in the most respectful manner to Mr. Knightley for this fresh mark of his regard." Surely that is precisely what would have been the attitude of Mr. Elton's parishioners to Emma's husband. If Miss Austen read the parish literature, she may also have set eyes on a poem entitled, "Norbury Park," which was written by a minor bard of the neighbourhood named Woodhouse. But that is insisting too much; though, to be sure, from the quality of his verse, Mr. Woodhouse, author of "Norbury Park," may well be imagined to have had, like Emma's father, a nice taste in gruel. [Pg 287]

The Mole at Slyfield Place.

CHAPTER XXVII

STOKE D'ABERNON

Slyfields.—A Great Bowl of Silver.—The Heir.—The Danger of Parish Relief.—Stoke D'Abernon Church.—A Knightly Memorial.—Stolen Woad.—Sire Richard le Petit.—Long Sermons.—The Earliest Honeymoon.—Cobham.—A Hermit for £700.—Matthew Arnold at Pain's Hill.

The Mole wanders west away from Leatherhead by Randall's Farm and Randall's Park, and perhaps Miss Austen used to imagine Emma and Mrs. Weston walking along the rather dull road that runs up the valley by the side of the stream. North of the road, about a mile from the town, stands an old Roman camp, now buried in a small wood, with notice-boards loudly forbidding access. Another mile to the west—but you must walk two to get there—is one of the most charming of old Surrey manor-houses, now a farmhouse, but still known by its name of Slyfields.

The Slyfields were essentially a Surrey family. They lived and worked as gentlemen and yeomen and parsons among small Surrey villages, Send and Great Bookham and Byfleet and Pirford and Ripley and the Clandons; one of them, Edmond, was Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex in the time of [Pg 288] Elizabeth. He was the greatest of the Slyfields, and left behind him sixteen sons and daughters, four Surrey manors, and a will as careful and studious as himself. Some of the items are quaint reading:—

To his son Walter, "my black velvett dublett and paire of hose of wrought velvet, my best night gowne, my best hatt, fower of my best shirtes and my best riding Cloake."

To his son William, "my coate of Tuftaffatie and a shorte cloke of rashe, laide with parchment lace."

To his son-in-law, Edward Skeete, "one shorte Cloake, called the Dutch cloke, of Black Damaske furred with squirrell, faced with caliber, and garded with velvett."

To Elizabeth, his eldest daughter, £40, "but she not to troble molest or disquiett

my saide wyfe, her mother, my executrix."

To his grandson Edmond one of his great bowls of silver.

The last item is one of the most interesting. It ought to be read in conjunction with an earlier item in the same will, in which special directions are left to the executors not to pull down or to deface any manner of wainscot or glass in or about the house of Slyfield. For the end of the Slyfield family as a power in Surrey came with bitter suddenness. Henry, the Sheriff's eldest son, succeeded his father in 1590, and died in 1598. He was succeeded by his son Edmond, who had been left one of the "great bowls of silver." Within sixteen years Edmond Slyfield had sold every stick and stone of the Slyfield manors, the Slyfield house was razed to the ground to make room for a new building, and in the new building and on the old tombstones alone the name of Slyfield remains.

The new manor-house is nearly three hundred years old, and was built for the possessor of another great Surrey name, George Shiers. He was the grandfather of Sir George Shiers, baronet, who was one of the most generous of testators to Surrey villages. Among other bequests, he left a sum of money to the parish of Great Bookham, which was to be thus devoted: —

> In preferring in Marriage such Maids born in this Parish as have lived and behaved themselves well for seven Years in any one Service, and whose friends are not able to do it.
>
> To dispose of the surplus to such Poor as by Sickness, Age, a great Family of Children, or otherwise, shall be in Danger of coming under the common relief of this Parish.

The "danger of coming under the common relief" of the parish was evidently felt to be real—a strange dislike forerunning the hatred which the modern English villager feels for "the House." When Louise Michel, the leader of the *pétroleuses* of the French Revolution, was shown over one of the great London Unions not long before her death, she was filled with wonder and admiration. "If we had had *that* in France," she said, "we should have had no revolution." The Englishman leaves legacies to enable poor parishioners to escape from the danger. [Pg 289]

Slyfields Manor, picturesque though it is, is still only a remnant. Only one side of what was once a quadrangular building remains, but the solid symmetry of its red-brick walls and ivied gables, and the hugeness of its ornate and lichened barns and granaries, make it as imposing as any farmhouse well could be. Curiously enough, like the older Crowhurst Place, the other side of the county, a farmhouse it still remains.

The Slyfields and the Shiers lie in Great Bookham church. Another church stands not half a mile away from the house, in a smooth and green garden on the banks of the Mole. Stoke D'Abernon church contains one of the great possessions of Surrey—the oldest brass in England—a monument which, besides being the oldest of its kind, is the very knightliest memorial an English gentleman could have. A plain slab of brass, on which has been elaborately engraved the figure of a soldier in full chain mail, with his six-foot lance and its fringed pennon, his long prick-spurs, and his great two-handed sword, it has lain in an English church for nearly six centuries and a-half. The Lombardic lettering which runs round the brass is half illegible, but the form of the old inscription, perfect in its simple dignity, is clear enough:—

SIRE : IOHAN : DAUBERNOUN : CHIVALER : GIST : ICY : DEV : DE : SA : ALME : EYT : MERCY.

By Sir John D'Abernon's brass lies that of his son, and between the dates of the two brasses are fifty years—1277 and 1327. The D'Abernons were a knightly family, but they never provided an English king with a great soldier, or a great politician, or with anything much more than the quiet services of a country gentleman. The founder of the family in England was Roger de Abernun, who in Domesday Book is a tenant of Richard de Bienfaite, son of Gilbert Count of Brionne. The first Sir John D'Abernon, whose brass lies in Stoke D'Abernon church, was the most distinguished of the family. Like Edmond Slyfield, he was Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex. [Pg 290]

Edmond Slyfield, dead three hundred years before our day (we can see his brass in Great Bookham church), perhaps often stared at the brass of Sir John D'Abernon, dead three hundred years before him. Perhaps, little guessing that within thirty years the Slyfield manors would belong to a stranger, and the Slyfield name be half forgotten, he reflected comfortably on the misfortunes of his predecessor in office. For Sir John was a most unlucky Sheriff, and lost a large sum partly by robbery and partly in the law courts. The story of his loss is a strange medley. One William Hod, of Normandy, in the year 1265 shipped to Portsmouth ten hogsheads of woad. Robbers seized the woad at Portsmouth and carried it off to Guildford; Hod, pursuing, recaptured his hogsheads and lodged them in Guildford Castle. Immediately appeared Nicholas Picard and others from Normandy, demanding the woad in the name of Stephen Buckarel and others. If the woad was not given up, they threatened to destroy the whole of Guildford by fire the next morning. The under-sheriff, whose family lived in the neighbourhood, at once gave up the woad, whereupon Hod instituted proceedings against Sir John D'Abernon the Sheriff, and won his case. Sir John had to pay as damages six score marks—about equivalent to £900 of our money.

Stoke D'Abernon church holds a number of other interesting monuments and brasses; indeed, for its size, it is fuller of valuable work and memorials than any other Surrey church. One of them,

placed to the memory of "Sir Richard the Little, formerly parson of this church," has a haunting note of personal loss. It is a pleasure to puzzle out the old Norman-French:—

SIRE RICHARD LE PETIT IADIS PERSONE DE CEST EIGLISE ICI GIST RECEYVE
LA ALME IESU CHRIST.

Another rare form of brass is that of a little chrysom child, Ellen Bray; another, a curious engraving of Lady Anne Norbury, with four tiny sons and four tiny daughters gathered at her feet in the folds of her gown. There are imposing monuments to Sir Thomas and Lady Vincent, Sir Thomas enormous in trunk hose and his Lady with her hair elaborately frizzed in a Paris hood. In [Pg 291] the body of the church, the pulpit is a magnificent piece of early seventeenth century carving, and to the wall near it is fastened a wrought-iron hour-glass, which must have measured many a weary discourse. Another of Stoke D'Abernon's possessions is one of the finest thirteenth century oak chests in the southern counties.

Stoke D'Abernon Church.

Outside, the church is interesting in other ways. You can see in the south wall of the chancel a large slice of Roman herringbone brickwork, perhaps brought by pre-conquest builders from some villa or other ruins close at hand; and on the south wall of the nave, high up, is a sundial which before the conquest probably stood above the old south door. With so much that is old and venerable in the building and its monuments it is dismal to add that much, also, that was old and [Pg 292] venerable has been destroyed. It is probably the worst restored of all old churches worth restoring.

Stoke D'Abernon has a claim on the attention of those about to marry. The manor-house is the first which is recorded as having been lent for a honeymoon. So I learn from Mr. J.H. Round, writing in the *Ancestor*. When William Marshall, in 1189, secured the hand of the heiress of the Earls of Pembroke, who was as good as she was beautiful, he proposed that they should be married on her own estates on the Welsh border. His host, however, a wealthy Londoner, would not hear of such a thing, and insisted on their being married in London and paying the cost of the wedding himself. After the ceremony, as the Society papers of the time might have put it, the young couple left for Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey, the peaceful and delectable country mansion of Sir Enguerrand D'Abernon, kindly lent for the occasion. Mr. Round has extracted this the earliest known reference to an orthodox honeymoon in the country, from the bridegroom's poetical biography, *L'histoire de Guillaume le Marechal*:—

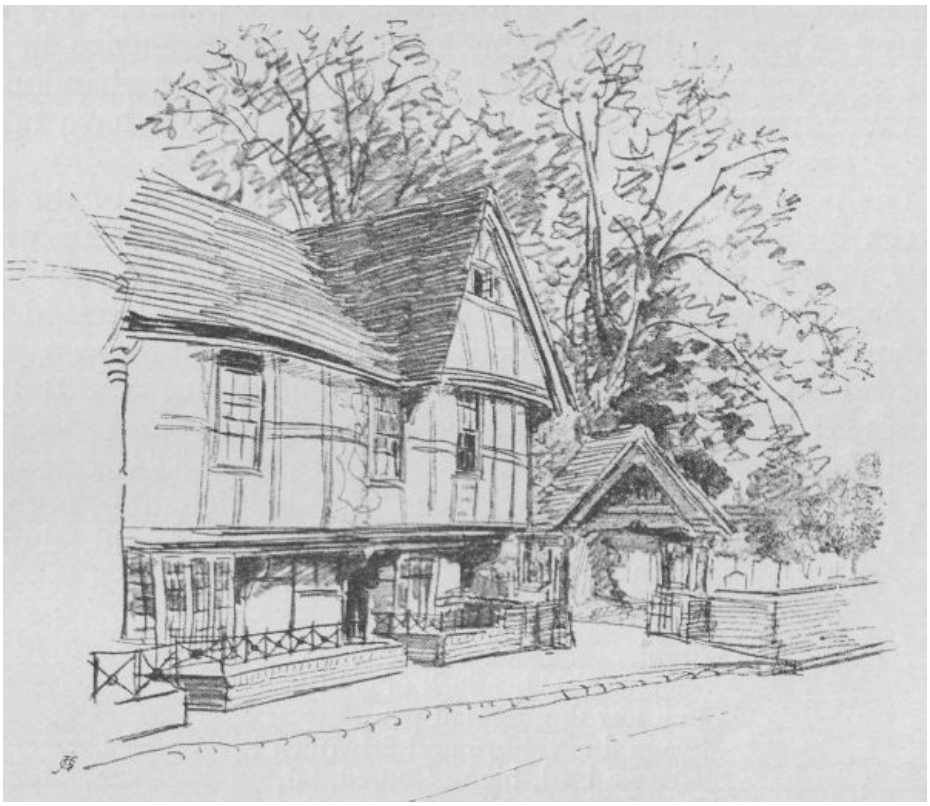
"Quant les noces bien faites furent,
E richement, si comme els durent,
La dame emmena, ce savon,
Chies sire Angeran d'Abernon,
A Estokes, en liu paisable
E aesie e delitable."

The bill for the trousseau of the heiress has also been discovered, entered in the Pipe Roll of the year. It cost £9 12*s.* 1*d.*

The road from Stoke D'Abernon runs north-west through the two Cobhams, Church Cobham and

Street Cobham. The little Plough Inn, which acts as refreshment-room for Cobham railway station, suggests the proper spirit of village revelry. A spreading yew arbour should shade good ale from the summer suns, and by the side of the garden across the road, gay with geraniums, see-saws and swings, runs a tiny stream, rippling down to the Mole.

Unlike the Wey, the Mole runs by few churches. Only five, Horley, Betchworth, Leatherhead, Stoke D'Abernon, and Cobham, stand near the river, and only Stoke D'Abernon actually on its banks. Stoke D'Abernon, too, has the best view from the churchyard across the stream, over a broad stretch of grassland on which partridges call and rooks stalk majestically. At Cobham you [Pg 293] can scarcely see the Mole when you are in the village, but there are few prettier glimpses of its stream than the brimming pool by the road outside. A grey mill stands in the stream, double-wheeled and doubly silent; swans oar themselves leisurely about the eddies, and the meadow beyond in May is a sheet of kingcups.



Ye Old Church Stile House, Cobham, A.D. 1432, restored 1635.

"Ye Old Church Stile House, Cobham, 1432, restored 1635," is the engaging legend painted on a low-roofed timbered house which stands at the churchyard gate. With its square beams, its latticed windows and red curtains, it is a model of what a "Home of Rest for Gentlewomen"—which is its vocation—should be. Cobham has one or two other good houses, Georgian, red and solid, but the best perhaps is the old White Lion posting inn at Cobham Street, half a mile away on the Portsmouth Road. The White Lion stood by the fourth tollhouse on the highway from London, and its oak-panelled parlours have entertained travellers for four centuries or more— [Pg 294] none thirstier, perhaps, than "Liberty" Wilkes, who passed that way on a day in 1794, and drank "a large bowl of lemonade."

Pain's Hill, which rises above the Mole a little further on the road, is a name associated with a gardener and a poet. The gardener was Charles Hamilton, who burdened his lawns with such an astonishing variety of temples, chapels, grottos, castles, cascades and ruins—including a hermitage with a real live hermit—that the result was voted one of the greatest achievements in landscape gardening of the Georgian or any other age. The hermit, sad to relate, was a failure. He was offered £700 to live a Nebuchadnezzar-like existence in his cell, sleeping on a mat, never speaking a word, and abandoning all the conveniences of a toilet. He would gladly have taken the £700, but threw up his post after three weeks.

The poet was Matthew Arnold, who spent most of the last fifteen years of his life at Pain's Hill Cottage. He wrote little poetry there; he came to Pain's Hill in the year after he had published *Literature and Dogma*, when his mind was occupied with his revolution against the sombreness and narrowness of modern English religious thought. But to Pain's Hill, I think, belong "Geist's Grave" and "Kaiser Dead" and "Poor Matthias;" "Geist's Grave" written for his little son, and "Poor Matthias" for his daughter, perhaps—Matthias, bought at Hastings to please a child, though she, childlike, would have chosen a bigger bird:—

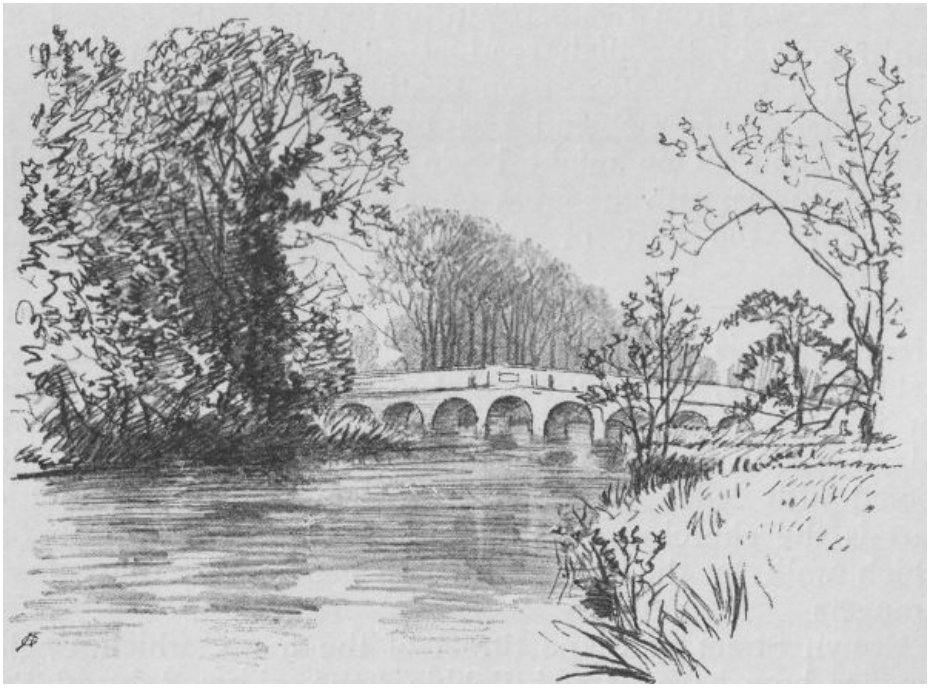
"Behold
French canary-merchant old
Shepherding his flock of gold
In a low dim-lighted pen
Scann'd of tramps and fishermen!
There a bird, high-coloured, fat,

Proud of port, though something squat—
Pursy, play'd-out Philistine—
Dazzled Nelly's youthful eyne.
But, far in, obscure, there stirr'd
On his perch a sprightlier bird,
Courteous-eyed, erect and slim;
And I whisper'd: 'Fix on *him!*'
Home we brought him, young and fair,
Songs to trill in Surrey air.
Here Matthias sang his fill,
Saw the cedars of Pain's Hill;
Here he pour'd his little soul,
Heard the murmur of the Mole."

[Pg 295]

And it was while Matthew Arnold was living at Pain's Hill that he chose out his little collection of "selected poems." I like to think of him reading over his work in his Surrey garden, and answering once more the cuckoo calling "from the wet field, through the vext garden-trees"—

"Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet William with his homely cottage smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow:
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmined-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening star."



Bridge over the Mole, Cobham.

[Pg 296]

CHAPTER XXVIII

LEATHERHEAD TO DORKING

The Roman road over the hill.—The Swallows of the Mole.—An imperial draught.—Mickleham.—Fanny Burney.—A Story of letters.—Juniper Hall and its cedars.—Norbury Park.—How to measure trout from the Mole.—Conversation Sharp.—Keats and Endymion.—Mr. George Meredith's poems.—The best known hill in the world.—A Soldier's Whim.

The best way from Leatherhead to Dorking is the longest, and hardly goes by the high road at all. It begins at Ashtead; you can get to Ashtead from Leatherhead or Epsom, but you must start from Ashtead out over Ermyn Street, the old Roman road. One might begin the walk from Epsom; but Epsom downs, with the great empty race-stand, can be depressing, and the best of the old road lies south, nearer Mickleham.

Ashtead is growing towards the railway, but east of the main street there is hardly a cottage. The church stands in Ashtead Park, and shows that it once had Roman walls for neighbours by the quantity of Roman brick and tiling mixed among its flints and stones. It has been elaborately

roofed with cedar, but otherwise contains little; the prettiest part is the churchyard and the park beyond it, with its deer which walk by the gates and gaze gently over the paths at strangers.

Ermyn Street or Stane Street of the maps, which English tongues here have named Pebble Lane, skirts Ashtead Park by the south-east, at first a wide green lane, afterwards a narrow path sometimes half-choked by trees, sometimes, in wet weather, impassable with mud, but always driving straight as the Roman roadmaker drove his pick towards the cap of Mickleham Downs. [Pg 297] The narrow lane to which the road has shrunk is less than the Roman made it, but Mickleham Downs can look very little different to-day from the downs which the legionary knew. He, too, like the modern traveller tramping by the yews and box trees, saw the sunlight on the dark, shining [Pg 298] leaves, and watched the wind ruffle the whitebeams on the shoulder of the hill.

Mickleham Church.

Below the downs lies Mickleham, halfway between Leatherhead and Dorking, and famous in all the guide-books for the "swallows" of the Mole. The "swallows" are described as deep, blue pools, into which the Mole disappears underground, and, except from the most carefully written accounts, you would imagine that the whole river dives completely into the earth and jumps up again at Leatherhead. But if you ask at Mickleham to be directed to the "Swallows," the chances are that you will have to explain that you do not mean birds. The fact is that it is only in seasons of great drought that they would be noticed. In summers when there is very little rain the Mole is said to run dry between Burford Bridge and Thorncroft Bridge near Leatherhead, but I have never happened to see it do so, and had the greatest difficulty in discovering the Swallows, which, when I saw them, were brimming with very muddy water; the stream was as full as possible. The best comment on the legend of the diving Mole is Thomas Fuller's in the *Worthies*: —

> "I listen not to the country people telling it was experimented by a goose, which was put in and came out again with *life* (though without feathers); but hearken seriously to those who judiciously impute the *subsidency* of the earth in the interstice aforesaid to some underground hollowness made by that water in the passage thereof."

The Swallows are really fissures in the chalk bed of the stream, which runs as it were over the top of a long chalk sponge. In rainless summers there is only enough water to fill the bottom of the sponge, and the top channel runs dry. Brayley has some amusing calculations as to the amount of water which the sponge drinks:—

> "From calculations made on different days, after measuring the height and velocity of the current received into these pools, it was ascertained, when both were in activity, that the swallows of the outer pool engulphed 72 imperial gallons per second, 4,320 per minute, and 259,200 per hour; and those of the inner pool, 23 imperial gallons per second, 1,380 per minute, and 82,800 per hour."

Seventy-two gallons—a good-sized tankful—of water in a second is very pretty swallowing; an

early instance of thinking imperially. To Camden, in the *Britannia*, the disappearing water suggests another image. The inhabitants can boast, like the Spaniards, of having a bridge that feeds several flocks of sheep. [Pg 299]

Mickleham is almost the centre of the Fanny Burney country. At Mickleham church she was married to General d'Arblay; Juniper Hall is half-a-mile from the church; Norbury Park lies west of the Mole; Camilla Lacey south of Norbury Park at West Humble.

Fanny Burney, retired from her post of Maid of Honour and receiving a pension of £100 a year, met M. d'Arblay in January, 1793, when she was staying with her friends the Locks at Norbury Park. He was living at Juniper Hall with other French *émigrés*—a brilliant little colony; Madame de Staël was there, and de Narbonne, and de Lally Tollendal, and Talleyrand. The General began as tutor, and the course of Fanny Burney's acquaintance with Juniperians, as her sister Mrs. Phillips used to call them, and particularly with her French master, perhaps may be given in a few extracts from her correspondence:—

MADAME DE STAËL HOLSTEIN TO MISS BURNEY,

Written from JUNIPER HALL, DORKING, SURREY, 1793.

"When J learned to read english J begun by milton, to know all or renounce all in once. J follow the same system in writing my first english letter to Miss burney; after such an enterprize nothing can affright me. J feel for her so tender a friendship that it melts my admiration, inspires my heart with hope of her indulgence, and impresses me with the idea that in a tongue even unknown J could express sentiments so deeply felt.

"My servant will return for a french answer. J intreat miss burney to correct the words but to preserve the sense of that card.

"Best compliments to my dear protectress, Madame Phillipe."

MISS BURNEY TO DR. BURNEY (her father).

"MICKLEHAM, *February 29, 1793*.

"There can be nothing imagined more charming, more fascinating than this colony; between their sufferings and their *agrémens* they occupy us almost wholly. M. de Narbonne, alas, has no £1000 a year! he got over only £4000 at the beginning, from a most splendid fortune; and, little foreseeing how all has turned out, he has lived, we fear, upon the principal....

"M. d'Arblay is one of the most singularly interesting characters that can ever have been formed. He has a sincerity, a frankness, an ingenuous openness of nature, that I had been unjust enough to think could not belong to a Frenchman. With all this, which is his military portion, he is passionately fond of literature, a most delicate critic in his own language, well versed in both Italian and German, and a very elegant poet. He has just undertaken to become my French master for pronunciation, and he gives me long daily lessons in reading. Pray expect wonderful improvements! In return I hear him in English." [Pg 300]

MISS BURNEY TO MRS. LOCK.

"*Thursday*, MICKLEHAM.

"Madame de Staël has written me two English notes, quite beautiful in ideas, and not very reprehensible in idiom. But English has nothing to do with elegance such as theirs—at least, little and rarely. I am always exposing myself to the wrath of John Bull, when this côterie come into competition. It is inconceivable what a convert M. de Talleyrand has made of me; I think him now one of the first members, and one of the most charming, of this exquisite set."

DR. BURNEY TO MISS BURNEY.

"CHELSEA COLLEGE, *Tuesday Morning, February 19, 1793*.

"Why, Fanny, what are you about, and where are you? I shall write *at* you, not knowing how to write *to* you, as Swift did to the flying and romantic Lord Peterborough."

MISS BURNEY TO MRS. PHILLIPS.

"*Friday, May 31*, CHESSINGTON.

"My dearest Fredy, in the beginning of her knowledge of this transaction, told me that Mr. Lock was of opinion that the £100 per annum might do, as it does for many a curate. M. d'A. also most solemnly and affectingly declares that *le simple nécessaire* is all he requires, and here, in your vicinity, would unhesitatingly be preferred by him to the most brilliant fortune in another *séjour*.

"If *he* can say that, what must *I* be not to echo it? I, who in the bosom of my most chosen, most darling friends——"

DR. BURNEY TO MISS BURNEY.

"*May 1793.*

"Dear Fanny,—I have for some time seen very plainly that you are *éprise*, and have been extremely uneasy at the discovery. You must have observed my silent gravity, surpassing that of mere illness and its consequent low spirits. I had some thoughts of writing to Susan about it, and intended begging her to do what I must now do for myself—that is, beg, warn, and admonish you not to entangle yourself in a wild and romantic attachment which offers nothing in prospect but poverty and distress, with future inconvenience and unhappiness...."

FROM MADAME D'ARBLAY TO MRS. ——.

"*August 2, 1793.*

"Last Sunday (July 28) M^{r} and M^{rs} Lock, my sister and Captain Phillips, and my brother Captain Burney, accompanied us to the altar in Mickleham Church; since which the ceremony has been repeated in the chapel of the Sardinian Ambassador, that if, by a counter-revolution in France, M. d'Arblay recovers any of his rights, his wife may not be excluded from their participation. [Pg 301]

"You may be amazed not to see the name of my dear father upon this solemn occasion; but his apprehensions from the smallness of our income have made him cold and averse: and though he granted his consent, I could not even solicit his presence."

FROM MADAME D'ARBLAY TO DR. BURNEY AFTER HIS FIRST VISIT TO HER AT BOOKHAM.

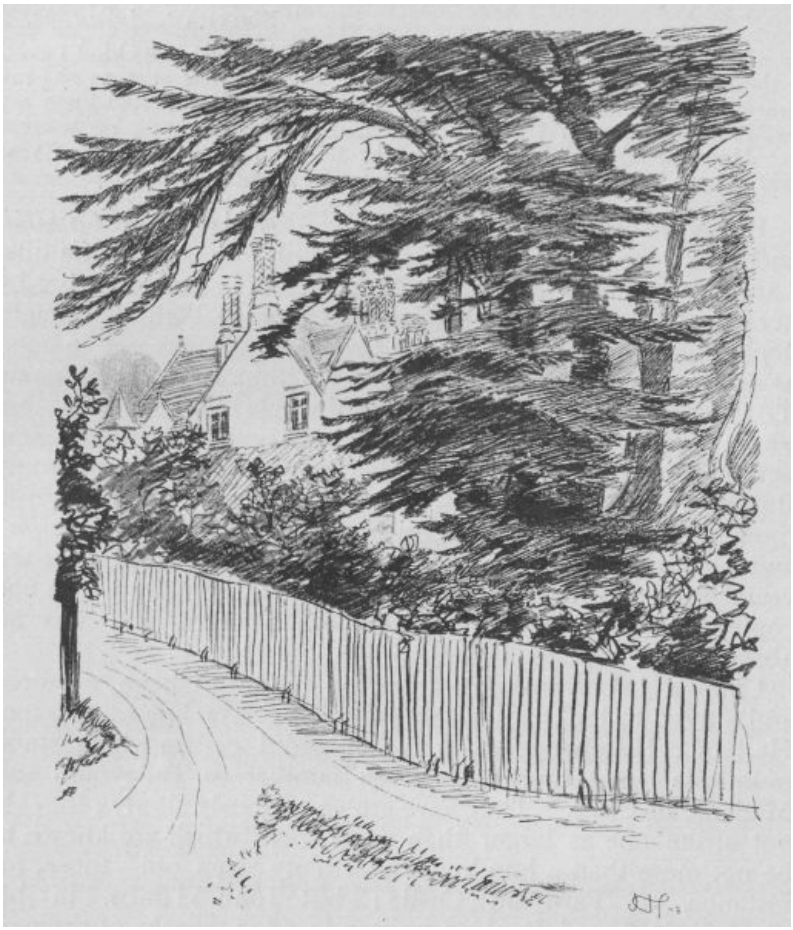
"BOOKHAM, *August '94*.

It is just a week since I had the greatest gratification of its kind I ever, I think, experienced:—so kind a thought, so sweet a surprise as was my dearest father's visit! How softly and soothingly it has rested upon my mind ever since!...

"How thankfully did I look back, the 28th of last month, upon a year that has not been blemished with one regretful moment!"

It was at Bookham that Madame d'Arblay wrote *Camilla*, and out of the sale of the novel she built her cottage, Camilla Lacey, on a plot of ground at West Humble leased to her by her friend Mr. Lock. *Camilla*, which Horace Walpole thought deplorable, infinitely worse than *Cecilia*, which was not so good as *Evelina*, was an instant success. Within a month Madame d'Arblay had made £2,000, and Macaulay's estimate of her whole profits was over three thousand guineas. There was never a stranger climb down a ladder to fortune than Fanny Burney's. *Evelina*, her first and incomparably her best novel, brought her £30; *Cecilia*, her next, £250; then came *Camilla*; and her last novel, *The Wanderer*, which she wrote after ten years' absence with her husband in France, actually sold 3,600 copies in six months at two guineas a copy, and was an absolute and hopeless failure.

Camilla Lacey, invisible from the road, has been enlarged and altered to look like nothing the d'Arblays knew. Juniper Hall has also changed, but the splendid cedars which stand round its lawns must have been familiar to Talleyrand and Madame de Staël. They have grown curiously slowly; they do not strike one as larger than many trees which are known to be not more than a hundred and twenty years old—those, for instance, at Farnham Castle; but John Timbs, in his *Promenade Round Dorking*, written in 1823, speaks of them as "immense," and as "said to be of the finest growth in England."



Cedars at Juniper Hall.

Norbury Park also has its famous trees. The Druids' Walk, a path running under enormous yews, is no longer open to the public. But Louis Jennings, thirty years ago, saw the trees and preserved a memory of them in *Field Paths and Green Lanes*:— [Pg 302]

> "As the path descends the shadows deepen, and you arrive at a spot where a mass of yews of great size and vast age stretch up the hill, and beyond to the left as far as the eye can penetrate through the obscurity. The trees in their long and slow growth have assumed many wild forms, and the visitor who stands there towards evening, and peers into that sombre grove, will sometimes yield to the spell which the scene is sure to exercise on imaginative natures; he will half fancy that these ghostly trees are conscious creatures, and that they have marked with mingled pity and scorn the long processions of mankind come and go like the insects of a [Pg 303] day, through the centuries during which they have been stretching out their distorted limbs nearer and nearer to each other. Thick fibrous shoots spring out from their trunks, awakening in the memory long-forgotten stories of huge hairy giants, enemies of mankind even as the "double-fatal" yew itself was supposed to be in other days. The bark stands in distinct layers, the outer ridges mouldering away, like the fragments of a wall of some ruined castle. The tops are fresh and green, but all below in that sunless recess seems dead."

In another respect Norbury Park has changed—in the opportunities the Mole running through the park offers to anglers wishing to catch large trout. Mr. C.J. Swete, writing in his *Handbook of Epsom*, not longer ago than 1853, is pleased to take his reader with him by the banks of the Mole, in which he has obtained "permission from the proprietor to gather some of the finny treasures of its liquid mines." Quite unwarrantably, he assumes that his reader is no fisherman:—

> "Well, now, cast out your line, you have a respectable cast, for here the river is broad, you can scarce cast your line across it. Well, you must be a little patient,—You cannot expect to catch a fish the moment you throw in.... I see you are not a great proficient at the piscatory science. Cast out very little line at first, perhaps about the length of your rod, and then increasing by degrees, you will soon be able to throw full across and with precision. Ah! now you have a fine fish; let him down the stream a little. Now bring him close to the shore. Stay! It is safer to land him with the net. For this stream it is a very excellent fish, exactly three pounds weight, I find. How do I know it is just three pounds? I will tell you."

He proceeds to do so. He knows because he has measured the fish and finds him nineteen inches long by ten in girth, and if you do the sum his way, it works out at three pounds. "This is in accordance, as you suppose, with the mathematical law that similar solids are to each other in the triplicate ratio of one of their dimensions." That is the way to measure trout in Norbury Park.

Two quaintly spelt epitaphs can be read on the black marble tombstones in Mickleham Church. Under one lies the body of Peter de la Hay, "Eldest Yeoman of his Majesties Confectionary Office,

who Departed this Liee" in 1684, and under the other Thomas Tooth, "Yeaman of his Ma[ties] Sculery, who deceased this Life" a year later.

Almost opposite Juniper Hall is Fredley Farm, once the home of "Conversation" Sharp, hat-maker, poet and member of Parliament. Fredley Farm, in the years between 1797 and 1835, when Sharp [Pg 304] lived there, must have been visited by more distinguished poets, authors, politicians, wits, scholars and artists than any other house in Surrey. Wordsworth came there, and Scott, Coleridge, Campbell, Southey and Moore; he talked painting with Lawrence, and sculpture with Chantrey; Macaulay talked with him "about everything and everybody," and so did Grote and Mill and Lockhart and Jeffrey; Porson was there, and perhaps had his favourite porter for breakfast; and the politicians were without number—Brougham, Sheridan, Grattan, Talleyrand, Huskisson, and almost a link with to-day, Lord John Russell. Macaulay has left a few sentences which greater men than Sharp might not deserve as an epitaph: "One thing I have observed in Sharp, which is quite peculiar to him among town-wits and diners-out. He never talks scandal. If he can say nothing good of a man, he holds his tongue." Yet with all his virtues and all his conversation, Sharp lacks his Boswell.

A little further towards Dorking the road crosses the Mole at Burford Bridge. The inn at Burford Bridge, a sort of Swindon of the Dorking Road, where everybody stops to have lunch or dinner, perhaps will again welcome a great admiral and finish a great poem. Nelson stayed there before leaving to command at Trafalgar; Keats came there to finish *Endymion*. His visit, he writes to his friend Benjamin Bailey, is "to change the scene—change the air, and give me a spur to wind up my poem, of which there are wanting about 500 lines." Night on the hill inspired him; in another letter he shows the way for other poets: "I went up Box Hill this evening after the moon—'you a' seen the moon'—came down and wrote some lines." And it is of the inn at Burford Bridge that the story is told, by Mortimer Collins, in his "Walk through Surrey," of Keats and the waiter. Keats was reciting *Endymion*:—

"For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms;"

The waiter heard, and obeyed, bringing mushrooms uncooked on a plate and a decanter of sherry. But that story is a little too artificial.

Still, *Endymion* owes a good deal to the trees and the solitude of the hill above Burford Bridge. It was with the woods in his memory that Keats wrote something very like a description of Box Hill, [Pg 305] with the Mole below it:—

"Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
And where dark yew trees as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:
For by one step the blue sky should'st thou find,
And by another in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its midday gold and glimmering."

But the great poet and novelist of Box Hill came later. Mr. George Meredith lived his long life and died at last, on May 18, 1909, at his house, Flint Cottage, near Burford Bridge. It was by Box Hill that he imagined the gayest and wisest of novels and some of the most glorious of all English poetry. Here, in his châlet looking out over the Surrey hills, he wrote *The Thrush in February*:—

"I know him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours
A herald of the million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to the world:—

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
An image of the deluge-ebb:"—

The lines ring with the bird's song; the light of all February evenings is on the hill. But if you are

to take the heart of the poem, you must choose the last eight lines:— [Pg 306]

"For love we Earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers.

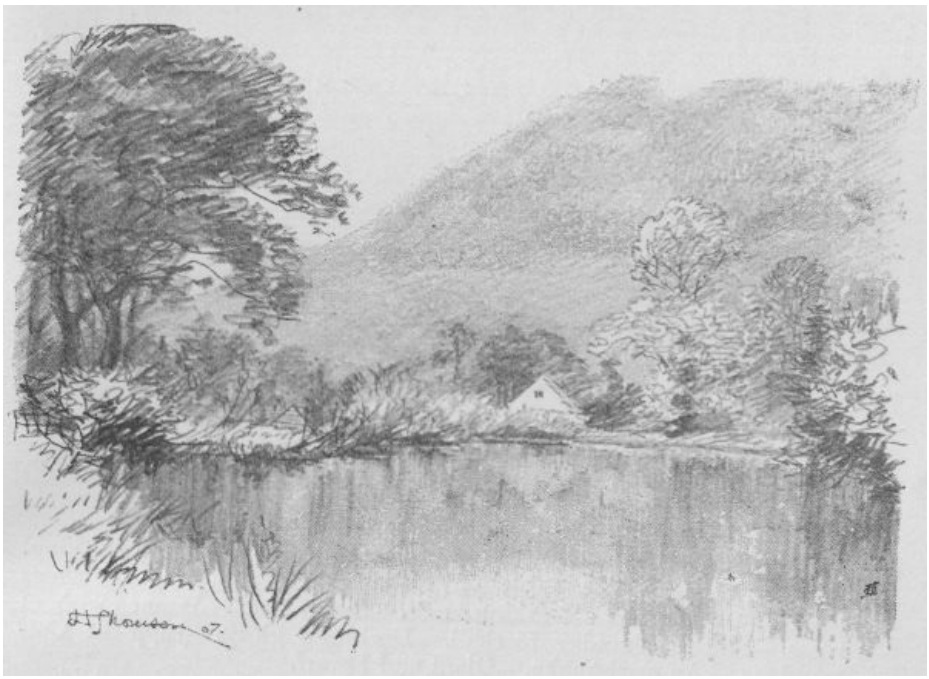
Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire."

The noblest philosophy of poetry belongs to this Surrey hill, and so does the most wonderful love-song of its century, the long, enchanted cadences of *Love in the Valley*:—

"Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
  Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
  Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
  So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
  Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled."

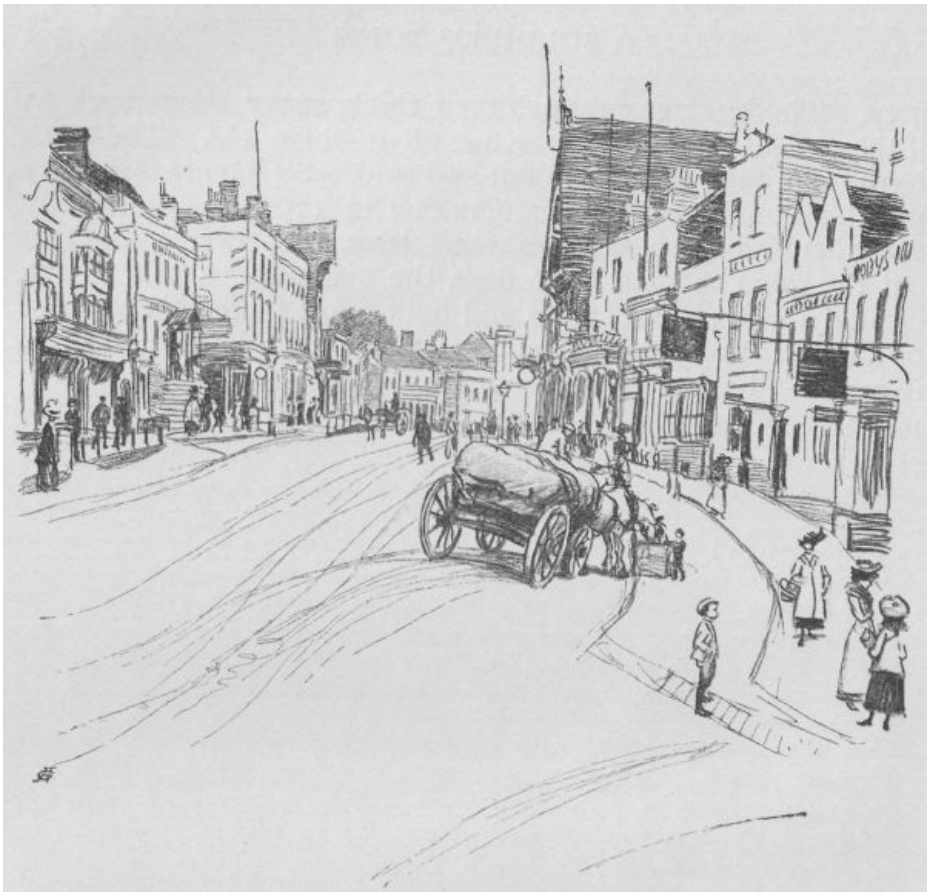
Box Hill must be pretty nearly the best-known hill in the world. It has all the advantages. It is within easy reach of London for school treats, excursions, choir outings, week-ends, and all other journeys in open air; it has a railway station at its foot, and several inns, and a tea-garden at the top, and a hundred Bank holidays have left it unspoiled. The box-trees that name the hill are the finest in England. Box-trees love chalk, and here they drive their roots into the crown and scar of a cliff of chalk, so steep on one side down to the Mole that a stone could almost be thrown from the path round the ridge into the water. On the grass outside the box-grove the distance to the level valley below deceives even more strangely. It looks as if you could drive a golf ball straight from the hill on to the green; you may speculate as to the beauty of the arc curved in the sunlight, and the deadness with which the ball would lie after an absolutely perpendicular drop—to the extreme danger of those disinterested in the experiment. But the hill is not really steep enough. The contours crowd on the map, but they show that you would have to drive nearly a quarter of a mile.

At a distance, in spring and summer, the trees which mark Box Hill are not box or juniper, but the whitebeams that patch the deeper green of the oaks and beeches with glaucous grey. The [Pg 307] box-trees, though their thick, snaky stems look as if they might be any age, are not all of them old. The trees have more than once been cut and sold. Sir Henry Mildmay put them up for auction for £12,000 in 1795 and apparently sold them for £10,000 two years later, with twelve years to cut the wood in. In later days, the wisdom of a War Office cleared a wide space of trees and built a fort there; the wisdom of another War Office abandoned the fort as useless. There it remains, behind spiked railings, the idlest monument of a whim.



View of Box Hill, Misty Day.

[Pg 308]



Dorking.

CHAPTER XXIX

DORKING

Mr. Stiggins at the Marquis of Granby—A Ruin.—The battle of Dorking.—Real fighting.—The Table and Cellar.—Water-souchy, a delicious dish.—Wild cherries.—Dorking snails.—Sandy kine.—Women without roses.—Shrove Tuesday football.—Dorking's glory.—Jupp at Cotmandene.—An earthquake.—Giant and Dwarf.

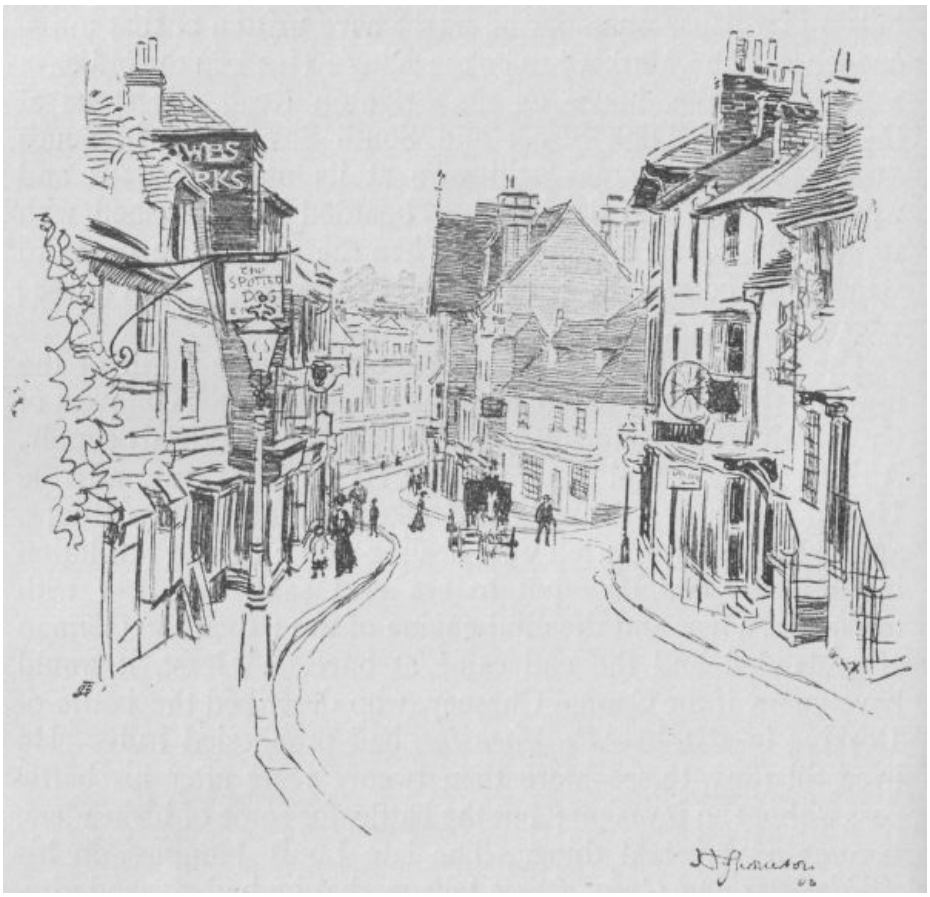
Dorking has twice had history made for it, and travellers come to visit the scenes. It was in the bar of the Marquis of Granby at Dorking that Sam Weller met his mother-in-law, and watched the reverend Mr. Stiggins make toast and sip the pineapple rum and water, and advised Mr. Weller senior as to the best method of treating Shepherds with cold water. Pilgrims cross the Atlantic to [Pg 309] visit the Marquis of Granby. No Dorking inn bears the name, nor ever has; but Americans will tell you that the Marquis is only a name Dickens invented to cover the identity of the White Horse, which fronts the cobbles of Dorking High Street with its gables and white and green paint much as it must have done in the time of Dickens. Dickens himself, in *All the Year Round*—he did not sign the article, but in that paper none but he might have written of that inn—conceived "the Markis" to be the King's Head, in the old days a great coaching house on the Brighton Road. It stood at the corner of High Street and South Street, and in South Street to-day you may still gaze at its unhappy walls and windows. The old lattices are boarded up, smashed with stones; the rooms are empty. When the post office came to stand at the corner, the King's Head became a tenement house; afterwards a ruin.

The Battle of Dorking took place on the ridge north of the town in 1871, and resulted, after the invasion, in the conquest of Great Britain by Germany. It all came about perfectly simply. A rising in India had taken away part of our army; war with the United States over Canada had taken another 10,000 troops, and half of what were left were dealing with a Fenian revolution in Ireland. Germany put to sea and sank our fleet with torpedoes, a new and dreadful engine of war; then the German army landed and the end came at once. At least, it would have come, if Sir George Chesney, who described the battle of Dorking in *Blackwood's Magazine*, had prophesied truly. He lived till 1895, to see more than twenty years after his battle pass without an invasion; but the battle, for some of his readers, became a very real thing. The late Louis Jennings, in his *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, tells us that he had a friend who, believing most people to have very hazy notions of history, was in the habit of saying, "Of course you remember the battle of Dorking? Well, this was the very place where it was fought!" He was seldom contradicted.

The real history of Dorking has traditions of the table and the cellar. Dorking fowls perhaps first came to the neighbourhood with the Romans, and poultry and Dorking have been associated ever since. The true Dorking fowl is a large, well-feathered bird, and walks on five toes instead of

lesser fowls' four. He has always been a great fowl for the table and historians have written about him since the days of Columella. Thus a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in 1763:— [Pg 310]

> "An incredible quantity of poultry is sold in Dorking, and it is well known to the lovers of good eating for being remarkably large and fine. I have seen capons about Christmas which weighed between seven and eight pounds each out of their feathers, and were sold at five shillings apiece; nor are the geese brought to the market here about Michaelmas less excellent in their kind. The town is supplied with sea-fish from Brighthelmstone and Worthing, in Sussex."



Dorking.

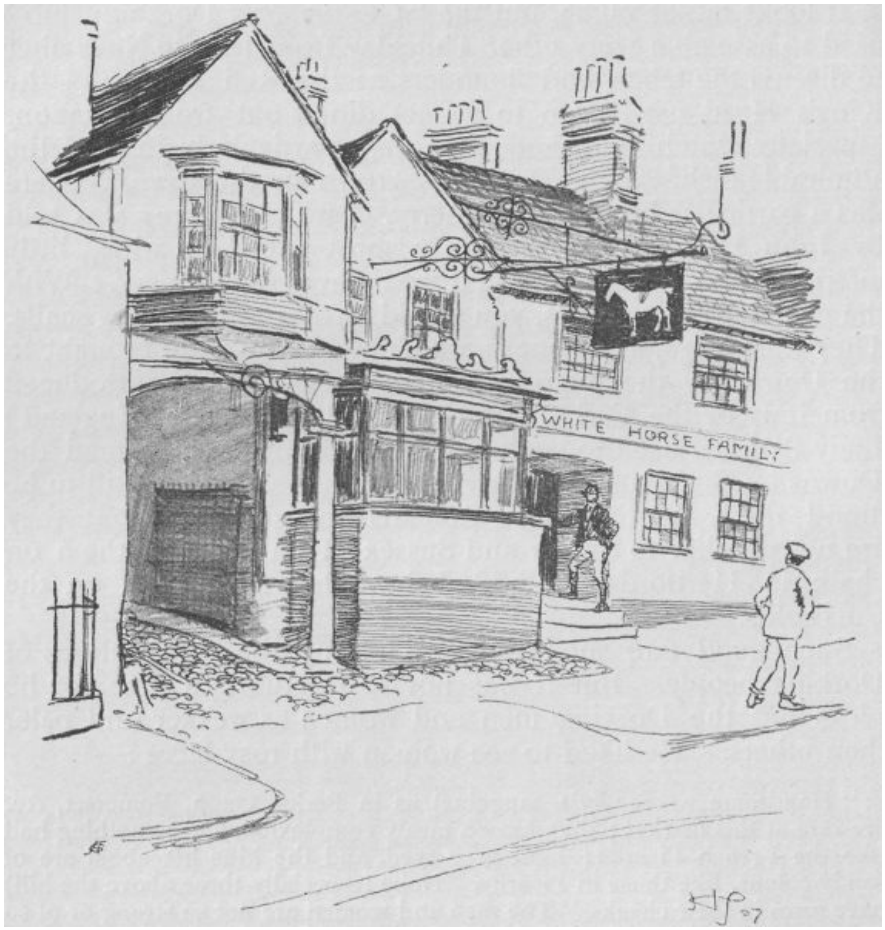
The Dorking cooks knew well what to do with the sea-fish when they got them from Brighton. Dorking was famous for a particular way of making water-souchy, a delicious dish of various fishes, of which Mr. J.L. André in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, has preserved the recipe rescued from an 1833 cookery book 'by a Lady':— [Pg 311]

> "Stew two or three flounders, some parsley roots and leaves, thirty peppercorns, and a quart of water, till the fish are boiled to pieces; pulp them through a sieve. Set over the fire the pulped fish, the liquor that boiled them, some perch, tench, or flounders, and some fresh roots or leaves of parsley; simmer all till done enough, then serve in a deep dish. Slices of bread and butter are to be sent to table to eat with the souchy."

It looks rather vague, but the "Gentlemen's Dorking Club" used to assemble every other Thursday from June to November to discuss the tench and flounders at the Red Lion, and the King's Head used even to attract diners-out from London, especially Dutch merchants, who were particularly fond of the admirable dish. Wine, too, was grown in the town. There was a particular kind of wild cherry, of which Aubrey was told by John Evelyn that it made a most excellent wine, little inferior to the French claret; it would even keep longer. With the cherry wine, perhaps, you would have eaten Dorking snails. They were large, white snails, which some said were brought to the Downs by the pilgrims, others thought were introduced from Italy by the Earl of Arundel, Lord Marshal of England; Lady Arundel used to cook and eat them. They roamed the Downs by Box Hill and other chalky places, and are still to be found there. Perhaps the Romans brought them, but they are not peculiar to Surrey and Sussex; I have found them on chalk in Hertfordshire, and I have heard of them on the Cotswolds.

Such good fare should have built up the constitutions of Dorking people. But it was not so in Aubrey's time, for he picks out the Dorking men and women as weaker and paler than others. He liked to see women with rosy faces:—

> "Handsome women (viz. sanguine) as in Berks, Oxon, Somerset, &c. are rare at this market; they have a mealy complexion, and something hail like the French Picards; light grey eyed, and the kine hereabout are of sandy colour, like those in Picardy. None (especially those above the hill) have roses in their cheeks. The men and women are not so strong or of so warm a complexion as in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, &c."



The White Horse, Dorking.

One, at least, of the old customs of the town survived until very recent memory. Now it has died out with the rest. From Mr. J.S. Bright's *History of Dorking* I learn that the office of constable has lapsed; the places of the 'Beggar-poker' and the 'Ale Taster' have been taken by the local police. Parish funds are no longer dispensed at the close of church service. The poor on St. Thomas's Day used to go out 'Gooding'; to-day they plead no more. The Ditchling Singers, which were the [Pg 312] Dorking Waits, no longer keep Christmas. On the 29th of May, sacred to King Charles II of blessed memory, an oak bough used to hang from the church tower; the tower is bare throughout the year. Guy Fawkes has been burned for the last time; the Jack in the Green dances no longer in cowslips and buttercups on the first of May. One ancient rite alone persisted until the other day. Every Shrove Tuesday, in dim remembrance of the great carnival which in ancient, pre-Reformation days, preceded the rigours of Lent, mummers made the circuit of the town. In the afternoon all the shops were shut and boarded up, and a game of football, started at the church [Pg 313] gates, rioted up and down the main street. In the *Southern Weekly News*, an account describing the game of 1888 says that just before midday a procession of men grotesquely attired was formed, headed by a man bearing three footballs on a triangular frame, over which was the motto:—

> "Kick away both Whig and Tory,
> Wind and water Dorking's glory."

The Town Crier started the game, kicked off the first ball at two o'clock, and stopped it at six. But that was in 1888. Twenty years have changed the Crier's duties. Fines and the police have stopped the old custom altogether.

Fifty years ago the Dorking cricket ground at Cotmandene was hardly less well known than the Oval. Two Dorking cricketers belong to the glorious days of Cotmandene. Henry Jupp was born in the town, and Tom Humphrey at Mitcham, but both kept public-houses in Dorking, and both played great cricket for the county. Many stories are told of Jupp, who was a favourite with the crowd, but one of the oldest belongs to Cotmandene. The match was for his benefit, and he was batting. Playing back at a ball, he trod on his wicket, and a bail fell. He picked up the bail, replaced it, and was reminded that he was out. "Out! At Dorking! Not me!" Nor did he go out, but made a hundred instead.

Another of Dorking's inhabitants made history in a different way. Brayley's *History of Surrey* was printed throughout in Dorking, and Ede, the printer, is said to have spent over £10,000 in the printing. What he made out of it is doubtful; he had made the £10,000 by his three businesses as printer, chemist, and perfumer.

The real Dorking, apart from its battles over and to come, is sufficiently happy to have had very little history. The Danes sacked it, tradition says: they cannot have had much plunder. Julius Cæsar marched through it, perhaps, if there was a Dorking then; the Roman road, at all events, the great Stone Street, which is still an English road by Ockley to the south, drove through the

corner of Dorking churchyard. Another event of the dark days was an earthquake in 1551, in which, according to Henry Machyn's *Diary*, "pottes, panes, and dysys dounst and mett fell downe abowt howse and with many odur thyngs." But an earthquake which could do nothing more than [Pg 314] make pots, pans and dishes dance is hardly an earthquake at all.

Perhaps its greatest event of historical times was a funeral. On the 23rd of December, 1815, Charles Howard, eleventh Duke of Norfolk, was buried at Dorking with the pomp and pageantry of a king. The procession left St. James's Square in London at nine in the morning; the coach and six horses of the Duke of Sussex and twenty carriages followed it; they reached Dorking at five. Deputy Garter King of Arms, Norroy King of Arms, three heralds and three pursuivants attended in tabards of state; Deputy Garter, after the service, proclaimed the Duke's styles and titles:—

The Most High, Mighty, and Most Potent Prince,
Charles Howard, Duke of Norfolk,
Earl Marshal,
And Hereditary Earl Marshal of England,
Earl of Arundel Castle,
Earl of Surrey, Earl of Norfolk, Earl of Norwich,
Baron Mowbray,
Baron of Howard, Baron of Segrave,
Baron Brurese of Gower,
Baron Fitzalan, Baron Warren, Baron Clun,
Baron Oswaldestre, Baron Maltravers,
Baron Greystock, Baron Furnival, Baron Verdon,
Baron Lovetot, Baron Strange,
And Premier Baron Howard of Castle Rising,
Premier Duke, Premier Earl, Premier Baron of England,
And Chief of the Illustrious Family of the Howards.

The parish registers add little that can have stirred the world. Eleven years after the earthquake, on February 28, 1562, "Owyn Tonny was christened; who (a later hand adds), scoffing at thunder, standing under a beech was stroke to death, his clothes stinking with a sulphurious stench, being about the age of twenty years or thereabouts."

Another entry is more personal. De Foe, perhaps, who lived near Dorking, and knew two Dorking giants, might have liked to see the parish register side by side with a note in his "Tour." The "Tour" gives two measurements of the giants:—

"At this place lived another ancient gentleman and his son, of a very good family, Augustine Bellson, Esq.; the father measured seven feet and a half, and allowing that he might have sunk [Pg 315] for his age, being seventy-one years old; and the son measured two inches taller than his father."

From the Parish Register, 1738, May 16: "Richard Madderson, aged 29 years, and was not above three feet and three inches high; but in thickness grown as much as any other person. He was all his life troubled with an inward griping distemper, of which he at last died very suddenly."

Thus the quiet life of Dorking in the quiet centuries. The days before the repeal of the Corn Laws, with the introduction of machinery for hand labour, saw the usual terror and the usual threats. "Captain Rock" and "Captain Swing" signed the letters which were sent to Dorking farmers; special constables were sworn, the windows of the Red Lion were broken, and once, on November 22, 1830, a van drawn by four horses took Dorking prisoners to the county gaol. Cavalry patrolled the town by night; but that November saw the end of Dorking's nearest knowledge of modern war. [Pg 316]

CHAPTER XXX

WOTTON AND LEITH HILL

Denbies.—Tea veniente die.—A Temple of gloom.—Wotton House.—John Evelyn.—A child of five.—The Crossways.—Dabchicks in the Tillingbourne.—Friday Street.—A Swiss tarn.—Leith Hill.—The Day of Days.—Forty-one spires unseen.—Anstiebury Camp.—The Black Adder of Leith Hill.

North-west of Dorking, and overlooking the wide greenness of the Weald away to Leith and Holmbury Hills, is Denbies, now the residence of the Lord Lieutenant of the County, and once the property of Mr. Jonathan Tyers. Jonathan Tyers was the Kiralfy of a less aspiring age. He was the founder of Vauxhall Gardens, where, as Boswell puts it, you had a form of entertainment "peculiarly adapted to the taste of the English nation; there being a mixture of curious show—gay exhibition—music, vocal and instrumental, not too refined for the general ear, for all which only a shilling is paid; and, though last, not least, good eating and drinking for those who choose to purchase that regale." The founder of Vauxhall Gardens was also the father of Tom Tyers, the wit who parodied Virgil over Dr. Johnson's tea-cups—

"Tea veniente die, tea decedente"

—a phrase which has been of incalculable service to tea-drinking undergraduates. It was Tom Tyers who summed up Dr. Johnson, to the Doctor's liking: "Tom Tyers described me the best: 'Sir,' said he, 'you are like a ghost: you never speak till you are spoken to.'"

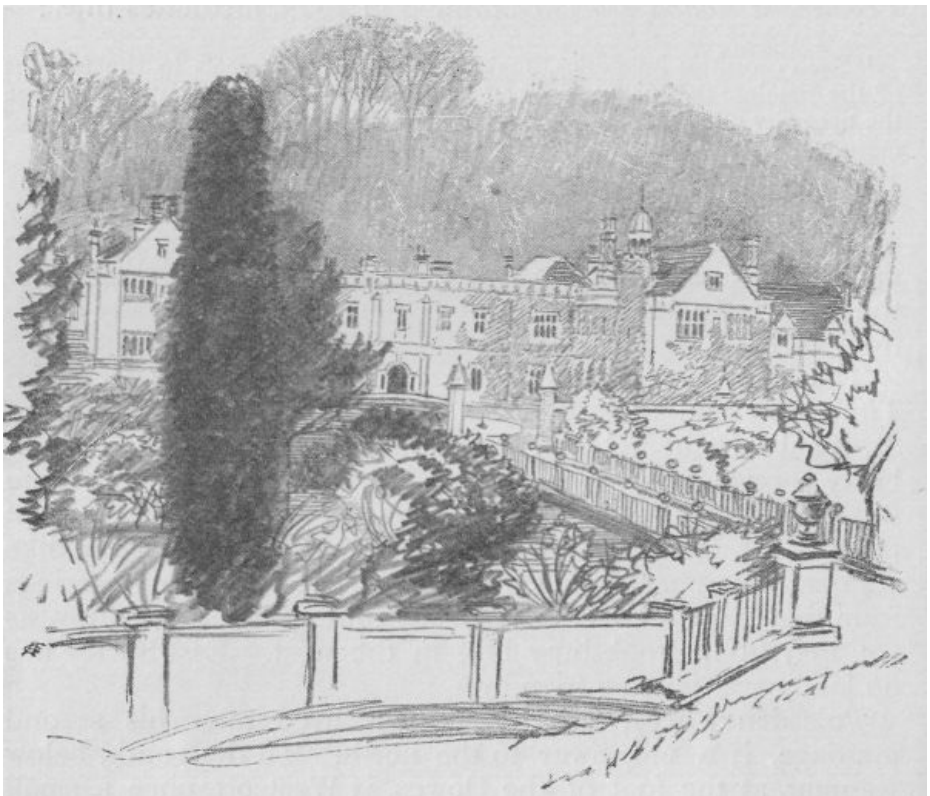
Jonathan Tyers reserved a private gloom for his own garden at Denbies. He named one of his plantations *Il Penseroso* and in it built a small temple which he bespattered with dismal texts. A [Pg 317] clock struck every minute, to remind the visitor of the constant approach of death, and in an alcove were two life-size paintings of a Christian and an Unbeliever in their last moments. At the end of a walk stood a pair of pedestals, one of which carried a "Gentleman's Scull" and the other a "Lady's Scull" with appropriate verses; upon all of which melancholy properties Mr. John Timbs in his *Picturesque Promenade Round Dorking*, printed in 1823, meditates thus:—

> "Such eccentric imageries, making irrefragable appeals to the feelings of the dissolute debauchee, might form a persuasive penitentiary, and urge the necessity of amendment with better effect than all the farcical frenzies of mere formalists and fanatics."

A later owner removed temple and all. Denbies of to-day offers the traveller a kindlier welcome by allowing access to more than one private roadway, from which the outlook over the country to the south is more than worth the steady climb from Dorking.

The road runs on to Ranmer Common, where Mr. John Timbs was able to look north to the dome and pinnacles of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, but I was not lucky enough with the weather. Ranmer has a church more finely placed, I think, than any in the county, except perhaps St. Martha's; but St. Martha's has no spire like Ranmer. Ranmer spire is a landmark: you take your bearings from that graceful needle for many miles in central Surrey, as you may from Crooksbury Hill in the west. East Surrey has no landmark quite so friendly.

Polesden Lacey, where Sheridan lived after his second marriage, is a mile away to the north. To the south, below Ranmer, at the foot of the Downs, is Westcott, once a small hamlet and now something more, with a pretty little church set on a hill. Further on the road west, is Wotton Hatch, and at Wotton House and in the church you are with John Evelyn. Of all the great men who belong to Surrey history, John Evelyn is first. He had not the religious exaltation, nor the ambition of a stern divine like Archbishop Abbot; he had the dignity, but not the desire of public service, of a politician such as Sir Arthur Onslow; he was not a fiery reformer like William Cobbett, or a diplomatist like Sir William Temple; he left behind him no such monument of stately [Pg 318] learning as Edward Gibbon, nor a record of military service like that of the great Howard, the general of Queen Elizabeth's navy at sea against the navy of Spain. But what he left will endure; the fame of an English gentleman who was honest, surrounded by intrigue; unambitious of honours and titles, a royalist who had the friendship of kings whom courtiers flattered; a virtuoso of learning hardly equalled in his time, a diarist whose jottings, never meant for printing, are a classic; a pious, honourable, shrewd, country squire of deep family affections, and set in a niche of his own by all who live and work in the country to-day, as one of the greatest of English woodmen and gardeners. Upon his grave, on the two hundredth anniversary of his death, February 27, 1906, the Society of Antiquaries placed a wreath of bays—an honour, I think, unique in the annals of Surrey churches. [Pg 319]



Wotton House.

The Evelyns have their own chapel in Wotton Church, locked by the same wooden gate which

opened to John Aubrey. In the little square space lie John Evelyn and his wife, in raised tombs, and on the walls are elaborate memorials of other Evelyns. One tomb the chapel does not hold, though John Evelyn intended it should. His son Richard, who lived to be scarcely five years old, died at Sayes Court, John Evelyn's property in Kent, and lies at Deptford. The father wrote nothing sadder than his short record of his child's few years—a strange enough comment on the life of the nursery (if it was a nursery) of Stuart days:—

"At two years and a-half old, he could perfectly read any of the English, Latin, French, or Gothic letters, pronouncing the three first languages exactly. He had, before the fifth year, or in that year, not only skill to read most written hands, but to decline all the nouns, conjugate the verbs regular, and most of the irregular; learned out *Puerilis*, got by heart almost the entire vocabulary of French primitives and words, could make congruous syntax, turn English into Latin, and *vice versâ*, construe and prove what he read and did the government, and use of relatives, verbs, substantives, ellipses, and many figures and tropes, and made a considerable progress in Comenius's *Janua*; began himself to write legibly, and had a strong passion for Greek.... He was all life, all prettiness, far from morose, sullen, or childish in anything he said or did."

"Far from childish"—it is perverse enough. John Evelyn himself began the dreary round of tropes and primitives almost as early. He was taught in a little room above Wotton church porch, by one Frier, when he was nearly four. The porch has been renewed, and the room has gone.

Wotton House stands in a dip of grassland under noble trees. It is little like what it was in Evelyn's day, for fire has taken away part of it, and much that is new is added. The result is partly imposing, partly incongruous; but much of the best of the house has aged well, and the red-brick court and walled carriage-drive stand finely from their background. Behind the house is the terraced garden which Evelyn himself made, and beyond it a streak of water running between wooded banks away to the blue dimness of Leith Hill. John Evelyn shall describe Wotton as he knew it:— [Pg 320]

> "The house is large and ancient, suitable to those hospitable times, and so sweetly environed with those delicious streams and venerable woods, as in the judgment of strangers as well as Englishmen it may be compared to one of the most pleasant seats in the nation, and most tempting for a great person and a wanton purse to make it conspicuous. I will say nothing of the air, because the pre-eminence is universally given to Surrey, the soil being dry and sandy; but I should speak much of the gardens, fountains, and groves that adorn it, were they not generally known to be amongst the most natural, and (till this later and universal luxury of the whole nation, since abounding in expenses) the most magnificent that England afforded."

Between Wotton and Westcott is The Rookery, once the home of David Malthus, father of the historian and economist. The name of David Malthus hides behind his more famous son's; but he was a translator of the *Sorrows of Werther* and of *Paul and Virginia*, who deserves memories of his own. He lies in Wotton churchyard.

From Wotton one might go on by Abinger Hammer to Gomshall, but the natural round, perhaps, and certainly one of the loveliest walks in the county, is by Abinger Hatch and Friday Street to Leith Hill. But by neither way must anyone walking by these roads miss the Crossways, a mile west of Wotton Hatch, with its perfect little farmhouse and the stream running through the fields past Abinger Mill. The Crossways farmhouse—perhaps Mr. Meredith had the name in his mind when he imagined the most gracious of his heroines—is of all the Surrey farmhouses I know the most fascinating. It lies behind a high wall, which runs round a square little garden; you peep through a gateway covered with ivy, and find an old lichened, weatherworn house, with ornamented brickwork and latticed windows, a house which Evelyn's grandfather may have known, and would find to-day unaltered. Crossways farm is most like Slyfields, the old Jacobean house near Bookham, but it is smaller, and is, I think, perfect, whereas Slyfields is a fragment. Crossways, besides its delightful front, has a fine chimney stack, and a strange but most satisfying buttress which ties the house to the garden wall.

The farm lies among pasture-lands through which rushes the prettiest possible little brook. It is the Tillingbourne, here a stripling, and never much bigger for that matter; but here it is the meadow-brook in its ideal form. It runs from a broken mill-wheel below an old hammerpond, past a cottage shaded by four noble yews, and then races through two meadows faster, I think, than [Pg 321] any brook anywhere else in Surrey. The water runs with the deep sparkle of cut glass; forget-me-nots grow about it, and reed mace, and figwort and bittersweet; waterhens wander in the shaven grass of its brim, and dabchicks go plump in the current like cricket-balls. There may be trout in the stream here as there are by Albury, but I am sure it runs too fast and round too many corners for anybody to catch them.

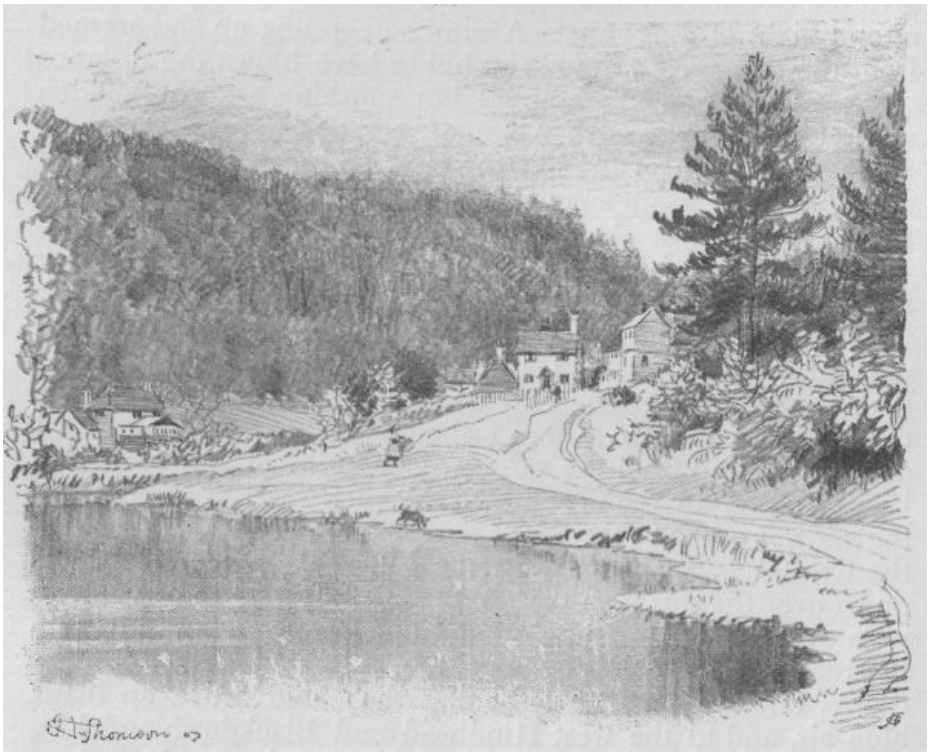
Crossways Farmhouse, Abinger.

The road leads south and up hill from the Crossways to Abinger Hatch, bordering deep woods of oak and beech. In July and August the glades of the Abinger woods, like the woods about Byfleet and Woking, gleam with the pinks and purples of rosebay. Abinger Hatch is no more a village than Wotton Hatch: both are wayside inns, and Abinger Hatch one of the best country inns to be found in a walk. Saturdays and Sundays in the summer fill it with guests from almost everywhere, who sit down to a long table; my own first visit to the inn was on an ordinary weekday, and the surprise was to discover that there was a hot lunch ready. Such surprises are rare. But Abinger [Pg 322] has everything worth keeping of the old customs. The stocks stand at the churchyard gate, mouldering, but they are there. The inn has the old name, and the little old bar, and the old-fashioned custom of hanging the squire's portrait in the dining-room. Only the church is a difficulty. It is kept locked, and it takes ten minutes to walk to the rectory to get the key—too far for the patience of those who would merely wish for rest and refreshment in the cool and sacredness of a country church. I was fortunate in my day, for I found the vestry door accidentally open, and a kindly countrywoman cleaning the church; she let me in. The nave, with its hugely thick walls and lancet windows, is unlike any other Surrey church; Mr. Philip Johnston, who perhaps knows more about Surrey churches than anyone else, dates it at 1080.

Nobody should go straight from Abinger Hatch to Leith Hill. You should turn aside to the left and let the road take you eastwards into the woods. Then you may come upon the tiny gathering of cottages called Friday Street with a suddenness which is a delight. You turn a corner of the road and you are in Switzerland. A little tarn, unruffled by any wind, mirroring a hill of pine-trees, lies below you; beyond the water is the blue reek of wood-fires; open grass runs to the edge of the lake, a light green rim to the dark of the pines. So do the little emerald tarns lie like saucers full of sky and trees in pockets of the Alps. The illusion wants but the tinkle of cowbells: it would be pleasant to present bells to straying goats.

From Friday Street to the tower on Leith Hill is a walk through the very depths of the wood. Heather glows in the openings of the pines, bracken brushes rain on your sleeve, bilberries ripen in the scented heat, and almost any path—though not the road—runs higher and higher to the open ground at the very top. At the top, nine hundred and sixty-five feet up, you are on the highest hill in the south-east of England.

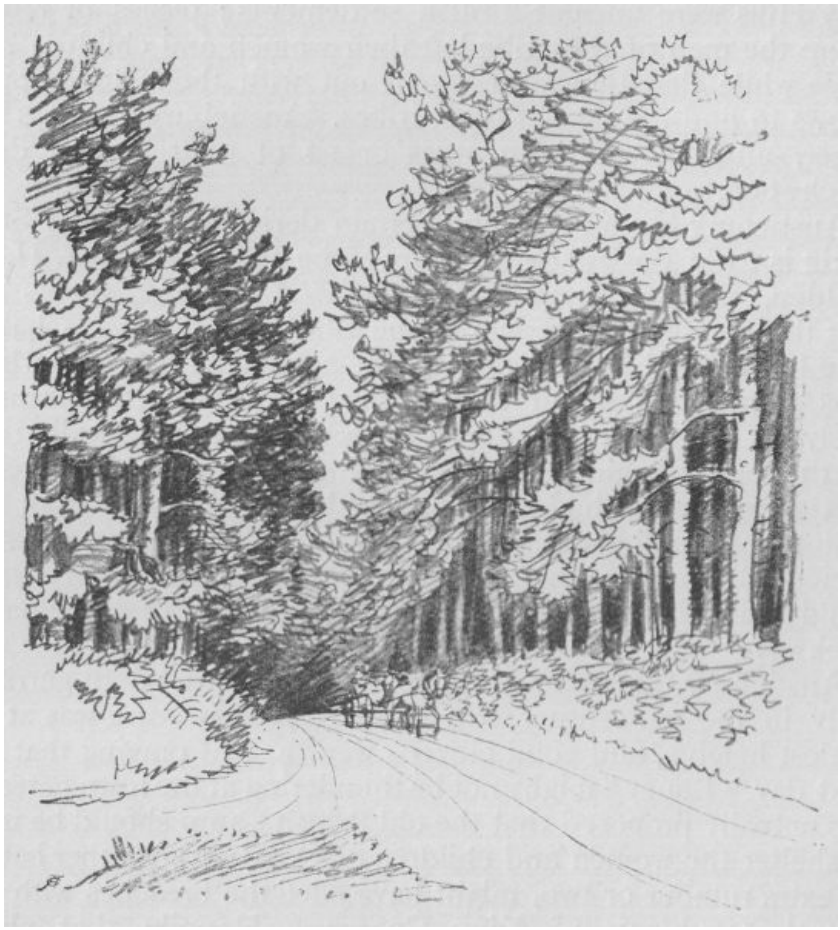
Leith Hill is not for the multitude which climbs Box Hill. It is further from London, and further from a railway station. But it calls its own companies of travellers, and they are often large; the roads from Holmwood, which is the nearest station, are lined with notices indicating the right direction. When brakes carry excursionists from Holmwood, the brakes halt at the foot, and the [Pg 323] visitors climb. The climb ends in a tower with a story. It was built by Richard Hull, eldest bencher of the Inner Temple and member of several Irish Parliaments. He built it, his Latin inscription informs you, for the enjoyment of himself and his neighbours, and six years later, in 1772, he was buried under it. Gratefully enough, the neighbourhood rifled the dead man's tower of its doors and windows; then, by way of compensation, to prevent more robbery, filled it half full of cement. It was left to the late owner of Wotton, Mr. W.J. Evelyn, in 1863 to restore the building and to add a staircase, and I believe the platform of the roof stands now exactly a thousand feet above sea level.



Friday Street.

The full view from Leith Hill has been described by a number of very fortunate persons. Aubrey was one of the first, and he estimated that the whole circumference of the horizon could not be [Pg 324] less than two hundred miles. It is probably more. But did Aubrey ever see the full vision? If he did, he climbed the hill on a lucky day. English weather sends few days clear enough of mist to set a sharp outline on the Kentish downs, the Buckinghamshire hills and the slopes of Wiltshire, and the combination of transparent air and presence in the neighbourhood of a great height must be rare for ordinary men. Yet Leith Hill, even on the mistiest day, can give the true notion of height. The first day I climbed it was after a night of July rain. A wind had sprung up and seemed from the lower roads about the hill to have blown the distance clear. Then came an hour of hot sunshine, and the sudden view of the weald was of a sea of cloud. For two or three miles, perhaps, near the hill the oaks and elms, the roofs and the roads were plain enough. Beyond swam an infinite veil. But the sense of height, of detachment, remained.

I have never been on Leith Hill on the day of days, nor seen the spires of forty-one churches in London, which the Ordnance Surveyors counted in 1844, nor watched a sail on the sea through Shoreham Gap. But I was once there on an August day of sunshine and cold rain and wind, and saw all the southern view in a way I should like to see it again. I came to the hill from the west by Coldharbour, and black rain brooded over all the distance to the east. To the south-east the air was clear to the Kent horizon; north-east the glass of the Crystal Palace winked in the sun. Then the rain came down over the weald to the south and the west, and the cloud rode over the fields and dotted trees like the shower of rain in Struwelpeter, blotting out the villages and the Sussex downs one by one. Then behind the cloud drove up blank blue air, and to the west Hindhead and Blackdown and hills beyond them came clean cut in a cold wind that made my eyes water; Hascombe Hill stood up dark and far, and the Hog's Back to the north of it, edged like grey paper; I was lucky to see the Hog's Back so plainly, the vendor of tea and melons at the tower told me; she had seen the sea by Shoreham Gap that morning, but often went a week without seeing the Hog's Back. Below, to the south-west, Vachery Pond lay a gold mirror; Chanctonbury Ring faithfully marked the south as the rain drew past, and I left Leith Hill with the rain cloud riding down wind like night over the weald of Kent. [Pg 325]



Among the Pines.

The unsatisfactory result of climbing a hill for a view is that you must come down again. Leith Hill is better than other hills for the reason that if you come down the best way, which is eastwards, you can climb up almost as high again on the other side of the dip and walk nearly a mile in the wind at the edge of a ridge overlooking half Kent and Sussex, and then come to the prettiest village of all the Downs. Friday Street is less a village than a handful of cottages, but Coldharbour has its church and its inn, the Plough, and its scattered roofs lie on the side of a valley of green brake and red sand. Coldharbour is almost as Swiss as Friday Street, and the paint of its inn as bright white as any in the sun of the Engadine. If Friday Street lacks the [Pg 326] cowbells, Coldharbour would be complete with the grey turbulence of snow-water.

Left and right of Leith Hill are two great camps, both of them firmly linked in local legend with Cæsar and the Danes, and both of them connected by history with neither. Like the camp on St. George's Hill, the camps on Anstiebury and Holmbury Hills were ancient British settlements; places of refuge where the men of the tribe left their women and children and cattle while they themselves went out with their stone-tipped arrows to find the men of other tribes. Anstiebury Camp is the larger, and covers eleven acres or so of what is now deep beechwood.

Anstiebury has an easy and certain derivation. Hean Stige Byrig is early English for the Bury of the High-way. Mr. H.E. Malden, in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, points out that this may be the Roman Stone Street, which passes half a mile left of the hill, or it may be the ancient British road which runs from Coldharbour to Dorking; the latter he thinks most likely. Certainly a native with proper pride would hardly refer to the newly engineered road in the distance in preference to the wonderful highway close at hand. It runs from the hilltop north and south, cut deep in the yellow sandstone as the ancient Briton liked his pathways cut. A man twenty feet high could walk invisible between the banks of that sheltering trackway.

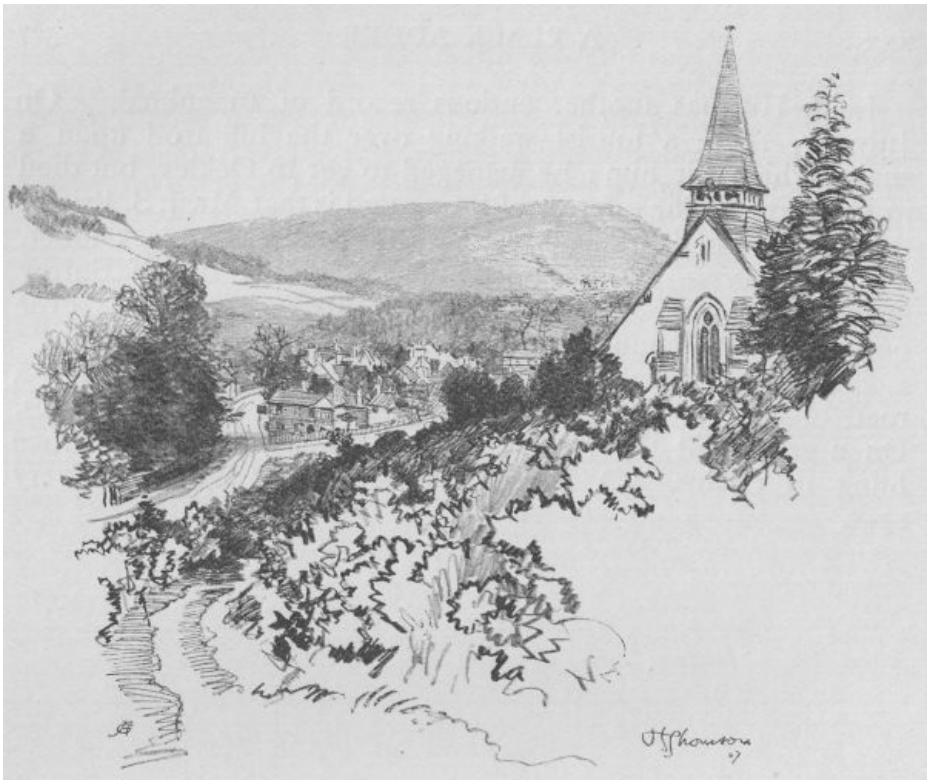
Anstiebury camp came near to harbouring a modern garrison early in the last century, when the Napoleon scare was at its wildest heights, and good citizens went to bed praying that the next day "Boney" might not be thundering at the town gates; it was actually proposed that the old British Camp should be used to shelter the women and children of Dorking. Another battle, an extra rumour or two, might have filled the breaches with the dauntless subjects of King George. Happily, that cloud vanished.

Round the camps and the battlefields of the heights of Leith Hill and Holmbury cluster the names of wilder enemies than man. Bearhurst, Boars' Hill and Wolf's Hill belong to the neighbourhood, and members of the Surrey Archæological Society have heard Mr. Malden discourse incisively on the scavengers' work after the battle of Ockley, when the West Saxons buried their dead, and there were no Danes left alive to bury theirs. [Pg 327]

Leith Hill has another curious record of an animal. On July 27, 1876, a tourist walking over the hill trod upon a snake, which bit him; he managed to get to Ockley, but died in two days. The interest of the record is that Mr. J.S. Bright, the historian of Dorking, says that the snake was a black adder, *Coronella laevis*, while Mr. Boulenger, in his list of Surrey snakes does not admit

that the *Coronella laevis* has ever occurred in the county.

From Anstiebury the old high road runs steep to Dorking—a road of later memories of sudden death than British battles. On a gallows at the foot of the hill three highwaymen once hung in chains. A house has been built upon the very spot. [Pg 328]



Looking towards Dorking from Westcott.

CHAPTER XXXI

DORKING TO REIGATE

> Nicknames.—Anastasius Hope.—Deepdene.—Mr. Howard's Garden.—Betchworth Chestnuts and Castle.—Brockham badgers.—The Straw-yards.—Bakers among the roses.—Leigh: Lie.—Leigh Place.—Ardernes and Copleys.—Sir Thomas's notion of a Gentleman.—Buckland's barn.

Of three dull nicknames, stuck like burrs on the mantles of Dorking's prophets, the dullest and prosiest has stuck to the richest. "Conversation" is a pretty severe burden for a man named plain Richard Sharp to carry; the hideousness of the baulked elision of "Sylva" Evelyn sets the teeth on edge (he developed into "Sylvie" as well as "Silver" Evelyn, poor man); "Capability" Brown, the gardener, must have been buttonholed by a thousand bores; but "Anastasius" Hope is beyond tolerance. How should such a name be endured? Thomas Hope endured it. He was the owner of Deepdene, the great house and garden and park a mile west of Dorking, property that once [Pg 329] belonged to the Howards, and in particular to the ninth Duke of Norfolk. His father was a vastly wealthy Amsterdam merchant, he himself a patron and a critic of art. He gave Thorwaldsen his first commission in marble, and Thorwaldsen celebrated the day of the order every year of his life. But he owed his name to a romance, *Anastasius or Memoirs of a Modern Greek*, which he wrote at his leisure, and which places him, as Mr. John Timbs, promenading around Dorking in 1824, assures us, "in the highest list of eloquent writers and superior men." The *Edinburgh Reviewer* was not less effusive. Until *Anastasius* was published he had known Mr. Hope merely as the author of an essay on *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*. In *Anastasius* was the change from the upholsterer to the epicurean.

Deepdene still holds statues and pictures, of which Mr. Bright, in his history of Dorking, gives a long list. Such a list belongs rightly to a history; but since the pictures can no longer be seen, other pages need but note that permission is occasionally granted to walk in the park. Aubrey's engaging description of the garden as he saw it late in the seventeenth century, a hundred years before Mr. Thomas Hope, belongs to his century and ours:—

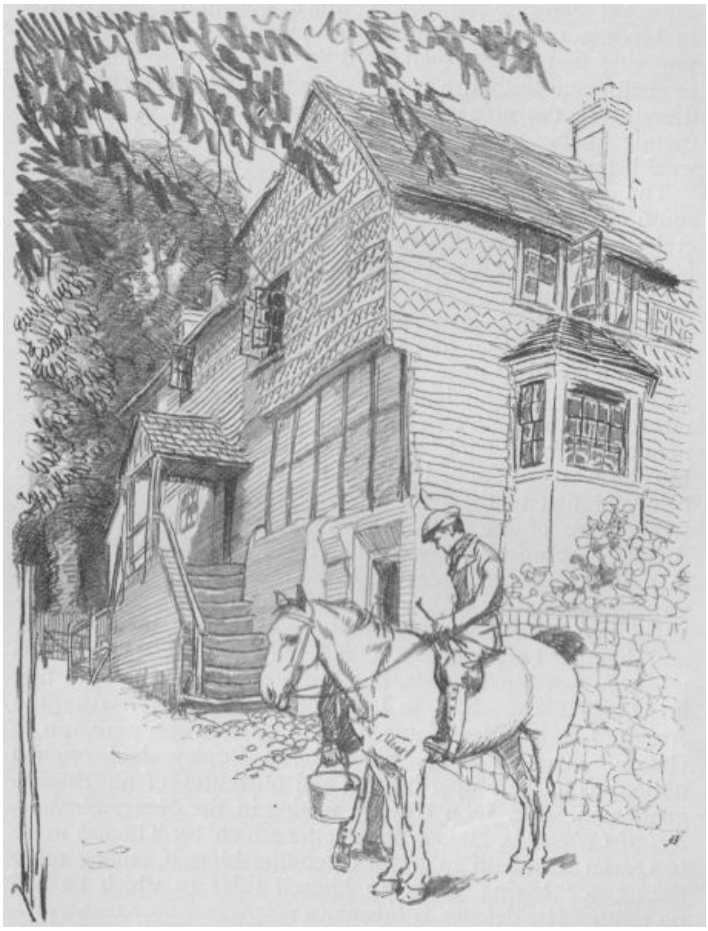
> "Near this place the Honourable Charles Howard of Norfolk hath very ingeniously contrived a long Hope (*i.e.*, according to Virgil, *Deductus Vallis*) in the most pleasant and delightful solitude for house, gardens, orchards, boscages etc., that I have seen in England: It deserves a Poem and was a subject worthy of Mr. Cowley's Muse. The true name of this Hope is Dibden (quasi Deep Dene).
>
> Mr. Howard hath cast this Hope in the form of a theatre on the sides whereof he

> hath made seven narrow walks like the seats of a theatre, one above another, about six in number, done with a plough, which are bordered with thyme, and some cherry-trees, myrtles, etc. Here was a great many orange trees and syringas which were then in flower. In this garden are twenty-one sorts of thyme. The pit, as I may call it, is stored full of rare flowers and choice plants. He hath there two pretty lads his gardeners, who wonderfully delight in their occupation, and this lovely solitude, and do enjoy themselves so innocently in that pleasant corner, as if they were out of this troublesome world, and seem to live in the state of innocency."

But not the gardeners alone. The visitor had a quiet mind who could exclaim, as John Aubrey did, that "the pleasures of the garden were so ravishing that I can never expect any enjoyment beyond it but the Kingdom of Heaven." Aubrey has been called ill-natured, and a scandal-lover. Nobody ever called him that who has met him in a garden. [Pg 330]

East of Dorking and the Deepdene are half-a-dozen Betchworths. Betchworth Clump rides a shoulder of the downs, with a superb view to the south; Betchworth village lies under the Clump a mile and more from the foot of the hill; Betchworth Park and Castle are between the village and Deepdene. Through the park runs a road, and an avenue of wonderful limes, but the Castle, which cannot be seen from the part of the park open to the public, is a castle no longer. It was never more than a castle in name; Sir Thomas Browne fortified it under Henry VI, but it saw no fighting. Thomas Hope's father, when he added Betchworth to his purchase of the Deepdene, pulled it down, and a mere fragment remains. Not much younger than the ruins, perhaps, are the gnarled and twisted boles of the Betchworth sweet chestnuts. Albury Park holds some giants, and there are a few trees quite as fine in Weybridge gardens that once stood on royal ground, but the Betchworth chestnuts must be older than either.

Badgers must have been common by Betchworth, for Brocks multiply in the local names. Brockham village, with a pretty green, stands beyond Betchworth Park on the Mole; probably the badger has left Brockham since the bricklayer came out of Dorking.



The Red Lion, Betchworth.

Other outdoor life has survived; Brockham still plays good cricket. Cricket was a favourite game on Brockham Green very early in its history. Cotmandene was not far away, and no doubt Cotmandene cricket encouraged smaller games. One of the customs of Brockham players was to wear straw hats of a pattern made in the village, and when the eleven went to play over at Mitcham there were derisive shouts—"Here come the Brockham straw yards." But the straw yards won, and in an innings.

It would be quite easy for a stranger to pass through the Betchworth that lies on the main road between Dorking and Reigate, and to believe he had seen it all. But the best of Betchworth is by the little church, south of the main road on a bend of the Mole. The church, cool and white, stands deep in a ring of beeches, elms, and ash-trees, and the baker and grocer of the village lives among roses in a little street of cottage gardens opposite. At least one of the bequests to the [Pg 331] [Pg 332]

parish is curiously described on the church wall. Mrs. Margaret Fenwick left £200, which was to be used partly in binding out poor children as apprentices, and partly "in prefering in marriage such Maid Servants born in this Parish as shall respectfully live Seven Years in any Service and whose friends are not able to do it." The intention is clear, but friends unable to live respectfully seven years in one service would, one would think, be numerous.

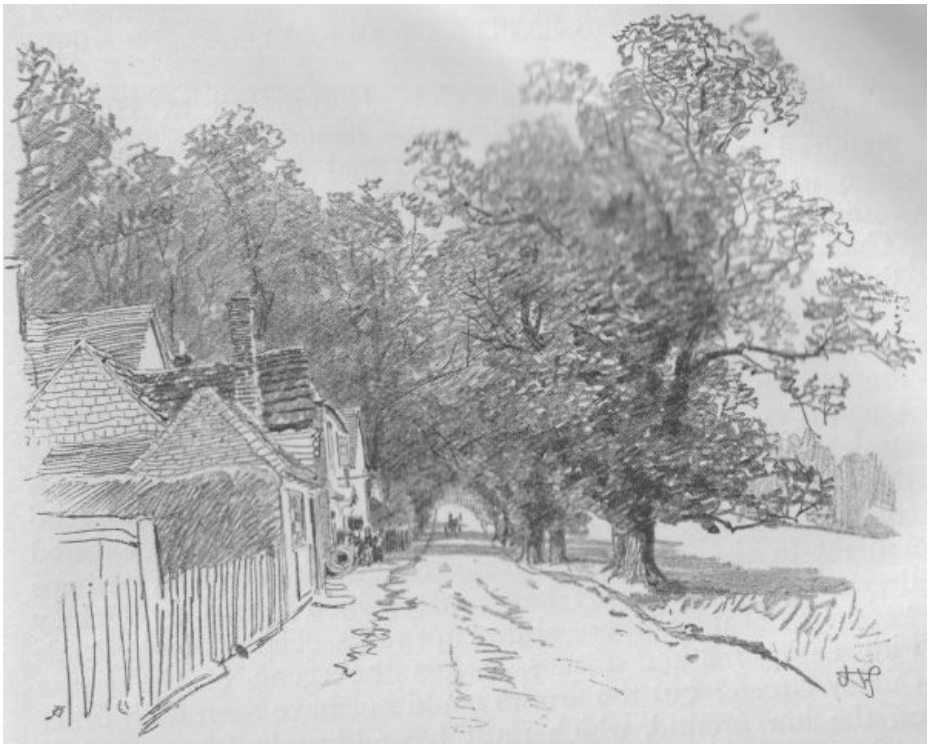
The real centre from which to see the country east and south of Betchworth is Reigate, but a walk from Dorking to Reigate might very well take in Leigh, which is a little out of the beaten track. But if you ask the way, do not inquire for "Lee." "Lie" is the name. The village is very small, but it stands round a pretty little green, and one of the old timbered cottages with a Horsham slab roof sets the right grace to a group with the church and its trees. Leigh church has fine brasses of the Arderne family, who had Leigh Place, once an ancient and moated house half a mile north of the village, now a rather nondescript but quaint building; the moat remains, the house has been partly pulled down, partly rebuilt. Leigh Place belonged first to the great family of de Braose, but its earliest legends are of the Ardernes. There was a Sir Thomas de Arderne who wooed Margery, the wife of Nicholas de Poynings, in a very rough manner; he saw no way to making her his own wife except by making her widow of de Poynings, and so killed him. Tradition says that she died of a broken heart, and haunts Leigh Place, a sad lady in white; but it was probably not Sir Thomas, but a descendant of his, who first had Leigh Place. Still, to Leigh belongs the story. After the Ardernes, Leigh Place came to the Copleys, who were also of Gatton. One of them, Sir Thomas Copley, had original notions as to the proper bearing and attributes of an English gentleman. Mr. John Watney, writing in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, gives a long letter which Sir Thomas wrote to Queen Elizabeth in 1575, defending himself, among other things, for having taken to himself titles to which he had no right. His defence is ingenious:—

> "As to the other point, where your Majesty showed to be informed, that I had attributed to myself in those letters of marque greater titles than became me or than I could well avow, that must needs be either in that I termed myself *nobilis Anglus*, or in that, for more credit both to myself and your service, I was bold to set down *Dominus de Gatton*, *Roughey* etc., naming certain my Lordships. To the [Pg 333]
> first I beseech your Majesty to consider, that there is no other Latin word proper to signify a gentleman born, but *nobilis*. As for *generosus*, as I have read in good writers *Vinum generosum*, for a good cup of wine and *equus generosus* for a courageous horse, so I never heard *generosus* alone so used, to signify a gentleman born, but only on the gross Latin current in Westminster Hall, and, if I had set down *generosus Anglus*, it would have then construed rather a gentle Englishman than an English gentleman. And as for *armiger*, it had yet been more barbarous, for surely the world here abroad would rather have understood by that strange term a page or a sword-bearer than a gentleman of the better sort, as custom has made it to be construed in England; that this is simply true, I doubt not, but that your Majesty, excelling in your knowledge of good letters, will easily
> judge a gracious sentence on my suit.... So that in setting down the term *nobilis* [Pg 334]
> used through the world for a gentleman, I had no intention to make myself more noble than I am, but to take only that which was due unto me."

Buckland.

I have taken Leigh on the way to Reigate. But the best way to see Leigh on a short walk is to reach it from Reigate travelling west. The introduction is by way of Reigate Heath, a wide and breezy common on which an old black windmill stands high above heather and bracken, a gaunt and wild neighbour to the orderly villas of the town.

Last of the little villages under the downs between Dorking and Reigate is Buckland—a handful of cottages, a pond, and a noble barn with upper-works like a tower. Buckland keeps tranquilly apart from Reigate, and Reigate, considerately enough, builds her new houses towards the railway and Redhill. [Pg 335]



The Roman Road at Ockley.

CHAPTER XXXII

UNDER LEITH HILL

> The Battle of Ockley.—The Stone Street.—The prettiest green in Surrey.—Sweethearts and Roses.—When the Gentlemen went by.—An engaging family history.—Oakwood: a forest chapel.—Capel quiet.—Newdigate bells.—Martins in September.

Battlefields are not very numerous in Surrey. The Parliamentary wars shed a little military glory on the North and the West, and attacks on London from the Surrey side—its invulnerable side—belong to almost every century of London's history. But the great Surrey battle, which belongs to Ockley under Leith Hill, is of the battles of long ago, dim and hazy in the mist of centuries, fearful with legends of blood in rivers, and warriors laid in swathes like mown corn. Even now, country tradition asserts, the rain that sweeps down Leith Hill sends the rainpools red in the plain below. The great battle of Ockley was fought when the Danes came two hundred and fifteen years [Pg 336] before Harold fell at Hastings. They had sailed across to Kent, the historian says, with three hundred and fifty large ships, and had driven in Ethelstan, who was king of Kent, Sussex, Essex, and Surrey, under his father Ethelwulf. They sacked Canterbury, and went up the Thames to London; there they beat in Beorhtwulf, king of the Mercians, and before them lay but one great town, Winchester, unsacked. Down they swept over the Thames, and out of his own country, Ethelwulf, of Wessex, overlord of the beaten Ethelstan and Beorhtwulf, came to meet them. Up the great Stone Street, the Roman road that runs as straight as a die from Chichester, he marched, and lay across the front of his enemy, clear of the deep forest that spread south of Ockley. The Danes came on. Perhaps they rested a night in the old British camp on Anstiebury Hill, perhaps they swept straight on: battle was joined "hard by Ockley wood." Local tradition, always apt to associate notable deeds with easily marked places, makes the scene of the battle Ockley Green; but the armies could not have seen each other on the low ground, which must have been half swamp, half undergrowth. They fought, no doubt, on the higher ground near Leith Hill. The slaughter was prodigious; "blood stood ankle deep," and the day ended with the great body of the Danes dead on the hills, and the rest flying where they could along the roads and through the woods. Probably not a Dane got away alive. It was a wonderful victory.

To-day the peace that broods over Ockley is born of wooded parks and sunlit spaces. Ockley Green must be one of the largest in Surrey, and I think is the prettiest of all. Along its western side runs a row of noble elms, bordering the road, and under the shade of the elms an old inn. This road is actually part of the Stone Street up which Ethelwulf marched against the Danes; and it would be hardly possible to devise a prettier road, as it passes under the Ockley elm trees, or a more tranquil outlook for an inn. Low-roofed cottages edge the grass, warm and sheltered; a drinking fountain on the green level suggests summer games and thirsty cricketers; though I think Ockley has contributed no great cricketers to the game. Beyond the green lie stretches of pasture and rich and smiling woodland.

The church stands nearly a mile from the green, and to its quiet acre belongs one of the prettiest [Pg 337] traditions of bygone Surrey—the planting of rose-trees over the graves of betrothed lovers. It was still a custom in Aubrey's time:—

> "In the churchyard are many red rose-trees planted among the graves, which have been there beyond man's memory. The sweetheart (male or female) plants roses at the head of the grave of the lover deceased; a maid that had lost her dear twenty years since, yearly hath the grave new turfed, and continues yet unmarried."

Rose-trees still grow in the churchyard, though perhaps the planting of them does not go back beyond man's memory.

Although so quiet a little village to-day, the neighbourhood of Ockley has seen some wild doings. Holmbury Hill, to the north, was once one of the principal settlements of the "Heathers," or broom squires, who still survive, a more respectable and a weaker folk, under Hindhead and elsewhere. Here one of their chief occupations was smuggling; indeed, the range of hills round Ewhurst and Holmbury Common served as a kind of halfway house for the gentlemen who were riding with silk and brandy from the Sussex seaboard to London. It was a Burwash mother who used to put her child to bed with the injunction, "Now, mind, if the gentlemen come along, don't you look out of the window"; doubtless the text which inspired Mr. Kipling's delightful verses. But there must have been many a Ewhurst and Ockley mother who knew "the gentlemen" by sight, and counselled confiding children to hold their tongues and look in the proper direction as the Burwash woman bids her child in Mr. Kipling's song:—

> "If you meet King George's men, dressed in blue and red,
> You be careful what you say, and mindful what is said.
> If they call you 'pretty maid,' and chuck you 'neath the chin,
> Don't you tell where no one is, nor yet where no one's been
> If you do as you've been told, likely there's a chance,
> You'll be give a dainty doll, all the way from France,
> With a cap of Valenciennes, and a velvet hood—
> A present from the Gentlemen, along o' being good!
>
> Five and twenty ponies
> Trotting through the dark—
> Brandy for the Parson,
> 'Baccy for the Clerk.

Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie—
Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!"

The memory of smuggling under Leith Hill has, indeed, lasted into the last decade. Mr. H.E. Malden, the Surrey historian to whom all Surrey writers and readers owe so much, tells us in a paper on Holmbury Hill and its neighbourhood that he personally knew an old man, a native of Coldharbour, who had actually seen the game going on. He was born, it is true, in 1802, but he lived to be a hundred years old, and to talk to Mr. Malden discreetly about what he had seen. In his conversation Mr. Malden remarks with proper tranquillity "he indicated this and that respectable neighbour. Well, he said, his grandfather, and *his* grandfather and so on, knew something about the smuggling. He, of course, had done nothing in that way, but he remembered his father holding open the gate at the end of Crocker's Lane, Coldharbour, for a body of men on horseback, each with a keg of brandy behind him, to ride through. A man with whom he had worked told him how he was witness of a scene when a bold gatekeeper refused to open his turnpike gate to a body of armed men on horseback, who, after threatening him in vain, turned aside across the fields." Relics of the past still remain in the district. Under Holmbury Hill there is a cottage of which the cellars run right back into the hill; tradition has placed kegs of brandy in them. A naval cutlass was picked up some thirty years ago in a field by Leith Hill—possibly it was used in a smugglers' fray with King George's men. Nor was it long ago that a trackway which runs from Forest Green, two miles to the west of Ockley, through Tanhurst over Leith Hill, was known as the Smuggler's Way. [Pg 338]

Surrey yeomen come nowhere of better stock than the oldest Ockley families. Aubrey tells a story of one of the Eversheds of Ockley, who, when the heralds made their visitation, was urged to take a coat of arms. "He told them that he knew no difference between gentlemen and yeomen, but that the latter were the better men, and that they were really gentlemen only, who had longer preserved their estates and patrimonies in the same place, without waste or dissipation; an observation very just." Aubrey adds, as examples of yeomen families who had land at the Conquest, the names of Steere, Harpe, Hether, and Aston. Steere, like Evershed, is a name that occurs over and over again in the Registers, both at Ockley and Capel.

Ockley's Parish Account Books, from which Mr. Alfred Bax—one of the oldest of Ockley names—has made some most interesting transcripts in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, furnish some quaint glimpses into the life and customs of a Surrey village in old days. I make the following extracts, of which the first is noticeable particularly as evidence that a post office existed at Ockley at least as early as 1722:— [Pg 339]

> Dec y^{e} 29 day 1722. Then John ffanne And M^{r} John Pratts Clarke of the post offis ffanne is a Vitler at the Cox, corner of Sherban Lane Cox sid of the post house? boath bound In A bond of A hundred pound for the parish of Ockley to pay one pound for the bewrall of William Drew In case he dy In bed lam and Ly wise to pay the Surgant for Cure of his sore Legs and Lychwise to tack Drew out when cured which sayed Drew was put In by Henry Worsfold and Edward Bax overseers this year 1722.

[Pg 340]

Reliefs and Accidentall Charges 1718.

	£.	*s.*	*d.*
Thomas Rapley when his children had y^{e} measles and his wives lying in	00	05	06
Thomas Rapley more by Vestry Order		02	06
Thomas Rapley relief at a Vestry	00	02	00
Paid for Laying forth Randall's Daughter	00	01	00
Paid for Bread and Cheese at Randal's daughter's Buriall	00	05	02

Wood delivered to ye Poor, 1718.

Paid Richard Bax for Rapley Last year	00	04	00

1719.

M^{r} Smith for Lying Dead in his house	00	01	00

Reliefs and Accidental Charges 1721.

8^{ber} 29th Paid Tho. Rapley to buy Tire	00	06	00
7^{ber} ye 11 Drink to Henry Warren	00	01	00
Paid for a pair of Garters for Jnõ Hide	00	00	01½

Wood Delivered to ye Poore In ye yeare 1722.

Thomas Rapley tow hundred of fagot by Richard Bax of brock, fagot	00	10	00

1723.

8ber 30th. To Rapley to buy a pair of Shoes	00 00	02
To Edwd Bax to get rid of a Boy from Jn. Coles	00 00	12
1726.		
7ber ye 4. Paid for airing and Cleansing Tho. Worsfold after the Small Pox	01 00	10
ffeb. 19. Relief to Tho. Worsfold after he had the small-pox	00 00	01
1727.		
Allowed Tho. Amey toward ffatting his Hog	01 00	00
To Tho. Raply for Sparr timber and Matrs for ye almshouse	00 00	01
[July the 10th]. The same Day Paid for a pair of Leading Strings	00 06	00
7ber ye 4th. Allowed to Goodwife Cole to fface Jnō. Songhursts Girl's Boddice and to graft her Petty coate	00 06	01
December 26. Paid Thomas Simmonds and Robt Lisney for killing a fox In ye parish Customary	00 04	03
March 18. Paid for Bread and Cheese and Bran [funeral of Rd Bashford]	00 06½	05
Paid for 7 Galls. and ½ of Beer	00 06	07
1729.		
Sepr 1. Paid Francis Heathfield for Brandy Boundwalking	00 00	04
1731.		
Paid Goody Rapley on account of ayring and cleansing her Daughter of the Small Pox	00 00	14
1739.		
Expenses carrying Sarah Rapley to Limpsfield	01 0½	05
Paid for four Horses and a Side Saddle	00 00	13
Paid for a Warrant for Sarah Rapley	00 00	01
Paid for a Marriage Licence for Do Rapley	01 00	08
Paid for her Wedding Ring	00 00	06
Paid Horsehire to Dorking for Do Rapley	00 00	01
Paid Tho. Rapley's wife for nurseing Sarah Rapley's child this month		8
1740.		
Paid the Clark's Fee at Sarah Rapley's Marriage	00 06	02
Paid Mr Pearson for marrying Sarah Rapley and burying Jno. Lipscomb ye blind man	00 00	11
1745.		
Expences having Henry Rapley to ye Sea when bitt by a Mad Dog (Paid to Richard Rapley)	00 06	12

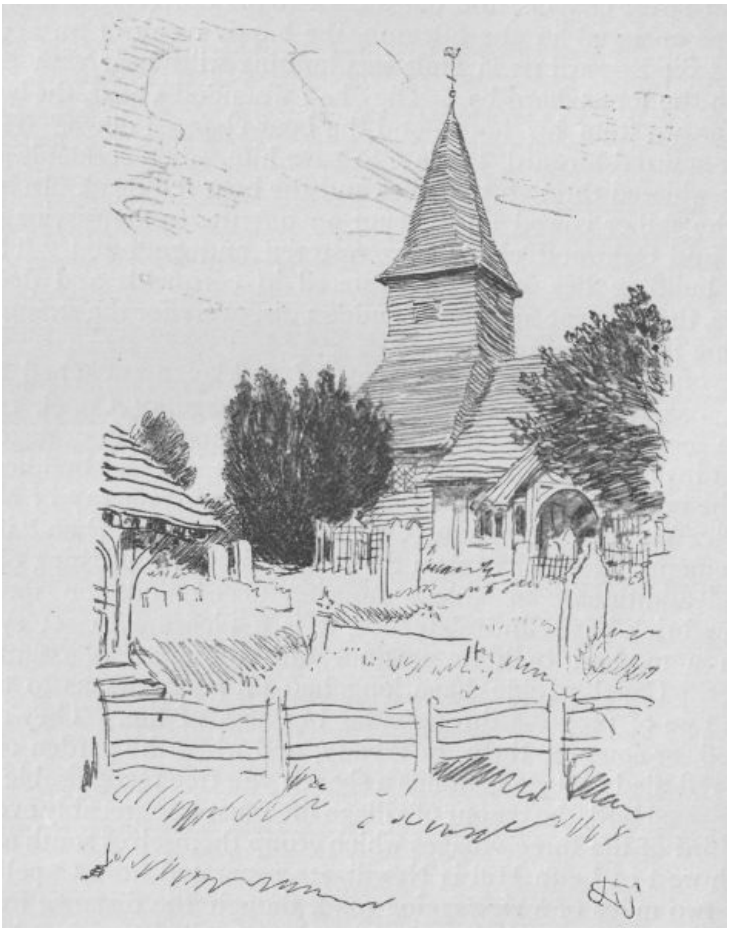
How many village families could show so long a written history as that of the Rapleys, or so engaging a record? The entries of 1739 and 1740 are a perfect climax of hopes and fears, ending, it is impossible to doubt, in the enjoyment by Sarah Rapley of every conceivable happiness. But the joys hidden under the cold print of the last Rapley entry are only dimly to be imagined. Henry Rapley's return from the sea, cured of his dog-bite, must have brought out the whole village. [Pg 341]

Two miles south-west of Ockley, a short way off the Stone street, stands the lonely little chapel of Oakwood. It is one of the old forest chapels, and dates back to the thirteenth century, but was enlarged in the fifteenth, the happy result of an accident. Sir Edward de la Hale was hunting wild boar with his son in the forest hard by. They had wounded a boar, the boy was thrown from his horse, and the boar charged down. His father spurred forward, too late to save him, when suddenly an arrow whizzed through the trees and the boar fell dead. In his joy, the father vowed on the spot an offering to the service of God, and Oakwood chapel was restored and endowed. The little building lies apart, sequestered in cornfields and deep woods, the quietest treasure of sudden discovery for the stranger walking idly by country lanes.

Beyond the railway to the east of Ockley, approached by quiet oak-shaded roads, lies the little village of Capel, not much more than a half-mile of main street lined with cottages. Capel instils a

pleasant restfulness. Almost its chief buildings are the admirably designed almshouses built in memory of Mr. Charles Webb of Clapham Common. In an age when "improvements" generally mean the destruction of something old, and "additions" to village housing accommodation mean yellow brick boxes and slate lids, it is a pleasure to set eyes upon a modern building instinct with the spirit of country places. Capel people have long had proper views as to the right rate of progress through the business of life. They are skilled, or some of them, in topiary, and when the garden of a tiny, red-tiled cottage contains a shaven yew tree recognisable as a fair-sized bird, the tenour of village life must be agreeably even.

Third of the three villages which group themselves south and south-west of Leith Hill is Newdigate, separated from Capel by over two miles of a zig-zagging road, though the distance for a steeplechase cannot be much more than a mile from church to church. Newdigate church is the chief part of the little village. The tower is wholly built of oak, and the beams supporting the belfry are almost as fine as those of the Thursley tower; possibly they are the work of the same craftsmen. Like other Wealden churches, Newdigate has an abiding charm in her peal of bells. [Pg 342] They have been re-cast, but the Newdigate bellringers have long records of changes rung in the little tower. Some of the records are painted on wooden panels in the belfry. To the layman who has never rung a bell the names of the changes are stimulating. Colledge Singles, Grandsire Doubles, College Exercise, and College Pleasure are fairly simple; but Without a Dodge provokes thought, and Woodbine Violet must have been named by the village poet.



Newdigate Church.

Surrey autumns invest the shingled spires of these Wealden churches with a peculiar beauty. [Pg 343] Grey and white, black-streaked and shining, weatherbeaten and weather-conquering, there is nothing in architecture lighter or more graceful than the patterned sheaths of native oak surmounting belfries which, sometimes for centuries, have called the villagers to church. But in late autumn, when the swallows and martins are practising starts for their long journey, the shingled spires turn themselves to fresh uses. On a sunny day the birds come about them in scores, pressing their bodies flat against the warm, dry wood, darting out for short flights, hawking gnats and midges, and flitting back again, keeping up through it all the sweetest and gentlest of anxious twitterings, and, when they are clinging to the chequered wood, resembling it so closely in colour and texture as to make it hard to count a dozen birds quickly. Martins near their time for going enter on all kinds of engaging habits, especially just before and just after dusk, when bands of a dozen or so seem suddenly to make up their minds to trial flights of the most amazing speed, utterly unlike their ordinary, quiet flittings. But there is nothing prettier in all the pageant of the migrants' year, than a dozen score martins with the unrest of autumn on them darting round a shingled spire. [Pg 344]

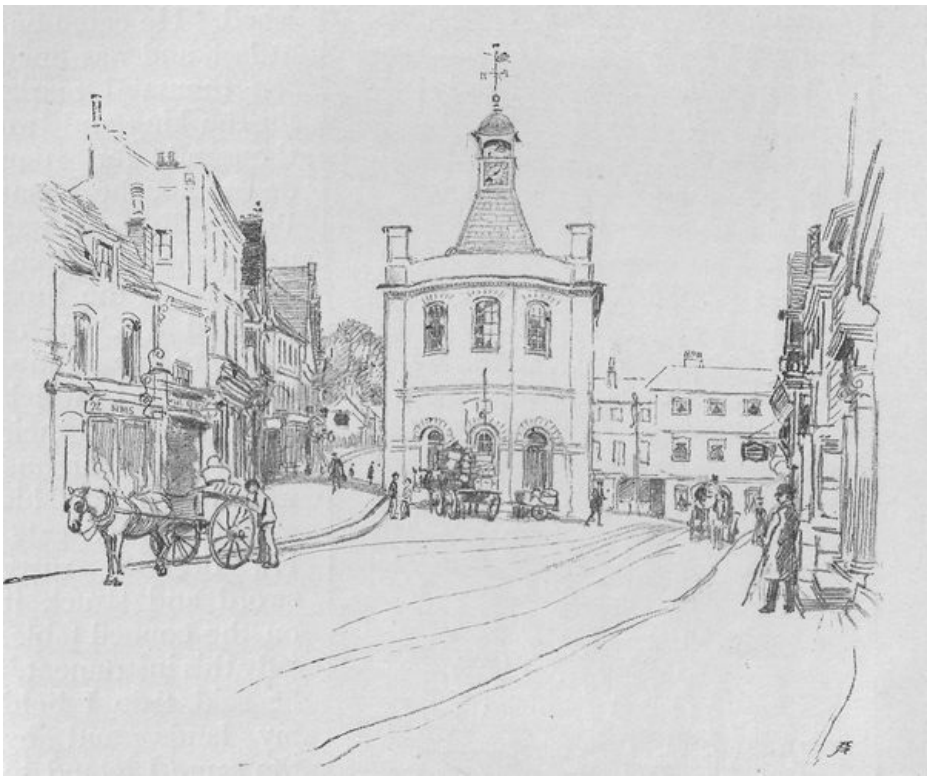
CHAPTER XXXIII

REIGATE

Reigate Castle.—De Warenne.—A Swashbuckler and a Swordsman.—The Reigate Caves.—Lord Holland's soldiering.—Pilgrims at the Red Cross.—General of the Royale Navey.—Olde Dutchesse Norf.—"W. W."—Reigate Politics.—The Marble Hall.—The White Hart.—A Race against Time.

Four castles stood along the ridge of the Surrey downs when the barons were at war, and of the four nothing worth the name of a castle remains. Farnham's keep was broken down by Cromwell: Guildford is a shell, Reigate and Bletchingley have disappeared altogether. Betchworth, never fortified for war, was built later than the others, but Betchworth is an insignificant ruin. The kings and the captains have passed, and their buildings have followed them. The castles have gone down with the palaces. Surrey never had a castle like Arundel; but she has not been able to keep even a Pevensey or a Bodiam.

Yet Reigate castle and its owners shaped a great deal of English history. It belonged to the great Earls de Warenne, the rival family to the de Clares through all the early wars and intrigues of the kings and the barons. It stood on the ancient British track, the "Way" which runs east and west across the country. Its place on the Way was within reach of the Roman road, the Stone Street that ran from Chichester to London. Its possessor held the strongest strategic position between London and the coastline, or between Canterbury and Winchester, and when there was any fighting forward the lord of the highway cross roads, the ridge gate, was the first person to be taken into account. The curious thing is that there was so little fighting along the ridge. Reigate [Pg 345] Castle never saw a pitched battle. When Louis of France was riding by the ridge to Winchester after King John, Reigate surrendered to the French, and de Warenne only got his castle back by changing sides from John to Louis. That was in 1216, and forty-seven years later, when Simon de Montfort took the baron's army by the ridge to Rochester, Reigate could do no more than watch the army march by. The de Warenne of the day was at Lewes with the king, and when the king had lost all in the battle of Lewes that followed, the lord of Reigate castle fled to France. He came back the next year, and when de Montfort fell at Evesham, Reigate was once more de Warenne's.

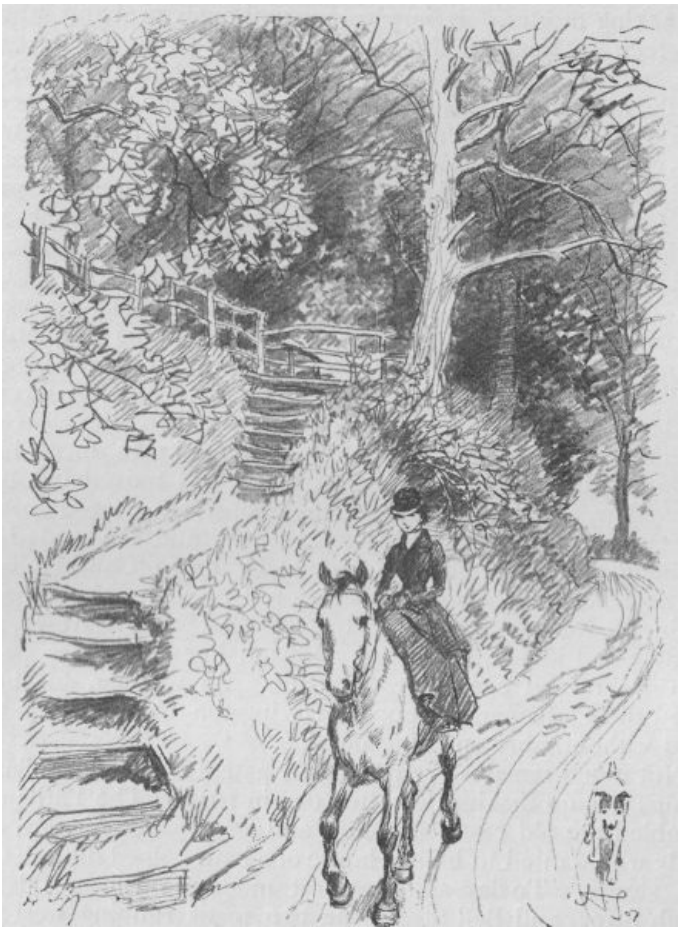


Reigate.

The kings must have found this particular de Warenne a little difficult to deal with. He was a bit of a swashbuckler as well as a swordsman, and once when he found himself getting the worst of a [Pg 346] lawsuit at Westminster with one Alan de la Zouche, he ran him through the body in the king's own chamber and was off to Reigate before anybody could stop him. King Henry was furious, and sent Prince Edward, the great de Clare, and an archbishop to bid him come out of his castle and be punished. He came out at last, and was fined ten thousand marks for the king and two thousand for Alan de la Zouche. But Prince Edward was not done with him. As Edward the First he held a Court of Assize to inquire into the warrants by which the barons held their lands. De Warenne was asked for his warrant for Reigate. He drew a rusty sword and struck it on the council table. "By this instrument," he said, "do I hold my lands, and by the same I intend to keep them." He kept them, but he had to amend his plea into something a little less swaggering.

A Reigate Byway.

Of Reigate Castle not a stone remains. But under the great mound which bore the keep you may see what local tradition has named the Baron's caves, where, as the story goes, the Barons met before the signing of Magna Charta. Martin Tupper, indeed, has written a whole chapter in [Pg 347] *Stephan Langton* describing the interesting scene, though as a mere matter of history it never took place. To begin with, the de Warenne of the day was an adherent of King John, and not of the barons, and in the next place the barons marching to Runemede never came near Reigate at all. Mr. Tupper errs. But the passages and chambers hollowed out of the yellow sandstone are [Pg 348] interesting, and so are the rough carvings of heads of horses which ornament the walls. Mr. Malden, the Surrey historian, thinks the caves are merely sand-quarries, sand being valuable for making mortar. It is pleasanter, though probably wholly incorrect, to imagine them as dungeons, or homes of early man, or even cellars. The gardener exhibits them with a candle, and in the dark they can be eerie enough for cave-bears.



Park Lane, near Reigate.

Long after the de Warennes' reign was over, Reigate Castle saw more fighting. We met the leaders on both sides at Kingston. It was nearly at the end of the Parliamentary wars, and Lord Holland, commanding the Royalist troops, conceived the idea of a rising near London. There was to be a horse-race on Banstead Downs, to draw the people together, and he was to lead them. Unhappily for his followers, he was a thoroughly incompetent soldier. He hoisted his standard at Kingston, and marched through Dorking to Reigate, where he held the castle and posted his vedettes on Red Hill. Sir Michael Livesey, commanding some Kentish horse for the Parliament, was ordered up from Sevenoaks to meet him; Major Audley, one of Livesey's officers, was moved out from Hounslow, where he had three troops, to clear Banstead Downs. Audley reached Reigate first, and engaged Lord Holland, but found him too strong: he drew off, and Holland, for no soldier's reason, fell back on Dorking. He came on again to Reigate next day, but by that time Livesey and Audley had joined, and when Holland knew who was before him he turned again for Kingston. As we saw, his horse faced the Parliament's troops on Kingston Common, and he died without glory on the scaffold.

Not much remains even of the Reigate which Lord Holland's troops saw on that luckless July day in 1648. The Parliament tumbled the old castle in ruins, and as at Bletchingley, anybody who wanted to build a house or a barn helped himself from the stones. To-day the steadiest modern business fills the High Street and Bell Street, the two roads running west and south along which old Reigate lay. Here and there the quaint slope of a red roof, or the lichen on weather-worn tiles, has a hold on the past, and in Slip Shoe Street, itself echoing the days of pilgrimages, care and good paint have preserved the beams of delightful old cottages. The Swan Inn, which may have [Pg 349] liquored Holland's cavaliers, has borne much from later builders, but it stands on the old site. Nearly all the rest of old Reigate has gone. The Red Cross Inn, where thirsty pilgrims dropping down from the chalk highway drank ale and rested, has made way for brand-new brick and rough-cast, painted a bright pink. The market which the pilgrims used to find at the western end of the town was moved to the centre cross-roads at the Reformation, and the little chapel at the cross-roads, where the pilgrims said their Aves, came down in George the First's day to make room for what is now called the old Town Hall. It is only two hundred years old, but even it is not as its Georgian builder left it.

Reigate Heath.

What happened to Reigate Church in the early part of the nineteenth century will never be quite known. There were alterations in 1818, and it was restored in 1845; that is to say, much of its [Pg 350] beautiful old work was destroyed. But it has kept a few of its Norman pillars, and a reverent rebuilding of much of the fabric by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1873 has left its noble relics enshrined under a fine tower. The vault holds the dust of two of England's greatest men. The first and second Lords Howard of Effingham lie there, each in his day Lord High Admiral of the English navy. Charles, the second Lord Howard, died at Haling House near Croydon, and was buried at dead of night in the family vault on December 23, 1624. Incredible as it sounds, from that day until 1888, the three-hundredth anniversary of the defeat of the Armada, not a single record of the Admiral who met and destroyed it was to be seen in Reigate Church, except the inscription on the coffin in the Howards' vault. Then, at last, the inscription was copied and placed on a brass in the chancel. Its terseness fits the dead man's name:—

Here in the vault beneath
at midnight the Dec. 23: 1624
lyeth the body of Charles Howarde
Earl of Nottingham
Admyrall of
Englande
Generall of Queen Elizabeth's
Royale Navey at sea
Against the
Spanyards Invinsable
Navye
In the Year of our Lord
1589, who departed this
Life at Haling House the 14
Day of December in the
Year of our Lorde, 1624
Aetatis Suae 87

We saw the Howards at Effingham and Great Bookham, and shall find them again at Lingfield. Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower, in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, has brought together some interesting particulars of the antiquities of the family. The second Duke of Norfolk, who was father of the first Lord Howard of Effingham, and now lies at Lambeth, left a remarkable will. He [Pg 351] was, as his epitaph informs us, a "High and Mighty Prince," and he writes of himself in the royal plural. He orders a tomb to be erected before the high altar of Thetford "with pictures of us and Agnes our wife to be set together thereupon." The Lambeth Parish Registers do not read so respectfully. This is the entry recording the passing of the Prince's widow—"Oct. 13, 1545, my Lady Agnes, olde Dutchesse Norf., buried."

Reigate churchyard holds the gravestones of two neighbours in name and place. A Goose and a Gosling are buried side by side.

When Reigate had a castle, it also had a priory. It was founded for Austin Canons by one of the de Warennes, and its first prior was an Adam. After the Dissolution, the Priory estate saw some strangely different owners and guests. The first Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral, had it; Foxe, perhaps meditating his *Book of Martyrs*, stayed there as tutor to the son of the Earl

of Surrey; a century later the manor came to Lord Somers, the great Lord Chancellor of William of Orange; to-day the modern house, built on the site of the old convent, belongs to one of Lord Somers's descendants, Lady Henry Somerset. It holds a famous oak chimney-piece, said to have been brought from Henry VIII's vanished palace of Nonsuch.

Reigate Priory to-day means Reigate cricket, played on the Priory ground. Three of the most famous of all Surrey cricketers belong to the town. Stephen Dingate, first of Surrey players before Beldham, was born there; so was William Caffyn, of the days of the giants Fuller Pilch and Alfred Mynn, Tom Lockyer and Julius Cæsar; and so, too, was W.W. Read, one of the very few Englishmen familiar to millions by their initials alone. "W.G." and "W.W." belong to the great years of the game.

Politics in Reigate are a mixed memory. Like Gatton, Reigate was a pocket borough, and sent two members to Parliament until 1832, when the two were reduced to one. Even the one disappeared in 1867, when the borough was disfranchised for bribery and treating—a subject of conversation which Mr. Louis Jennings, writing three years later in *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, notes as dangerous if introduced too suddenly in social circles in the neighbourhood. [Pg 352]

But an even more remarkable political record belongs to one of Reigate's neighbours. Gatton, once a borough and now a park, had the privilege granted to its owner in 1451 of sending two members to Parliament. The Copleys of Leigh were lords of the manor in the days of Henry VIII, and Sir Richard Copley was at one time the only inhabitant of the borough, so that his voting power was considerable. When Cobbett was abroad on his *Rural Rides*, there were Reigate, Gatton, and Bletchingley within a few miles of one another, all of them rotten boroughs, and each of them returning a couple of members. Cobbett, of course, boiled whenever he heard the names; Gatton in particular, was "a very rascally spot of earth." He lived to see a very bad bargain for Gatton's privileges. Lord Monson, in 1830, bought the estate with its votes for two members for £100,000. Two years later, Gatton as a borough was ended by the Reform Bill and all Lord Monson had for his £100,000 was the land.

Lord Monson started with the intention of making Gatton House one of the most superb in the kingdom. He began with the hall, which he built on the lines of the Corsini chapel in the church of San Giovanni in Laterano at Rome, though he did not add the dome. The floor he had laid of coloured marbles, patterned in the most delicate designs; the marble had been designed for Ferdinand VII of Spain, and cost £10,000. The walls and arches are as richly decorated as the floor. There are four frescoes by Joseph Severn; Eleanor of Castile represents Fortitude; Esther, Prudence; Ruth, Meekness; Patience could only be Penelope. The effect of the shining stone and painted arches is of extraordinary brilliance and completeness—the completeness of an unrivalled collection. But there is somewhere something bizarre; perhaps it is the setting. Marble demands marble neighbours, and the setting of these exotic treasures is the simple beauty of English parkland. The little church fits better with the great trees and the green grass. The building is nothing; the interior has the grace and the light of a cathedral chapel. Lord Monson decorated Gatton Church with the magnificence with which he imagined the hall, but his ideal for the church was quieter. He bought carved wood of the most exquisite workmanship and set it wherever the church could hold it; a pulpit and an altar from Nuremberg, said to be by Dürer, but the critics dispute it; the elaborately fitted stalls came from a monastery in Ghent, and altar rails from Tongres. Glass for the windows, of deep and glowing colours, he had from Aerschot, near Louvain; the east window, a strange painting, shows the eating of the Passover. One property the little church lacks; Lord Monson never gave it a wooden ceiling, and the ill-shaped stone vault is too white and cold for the stalls. [Pg 353]

View from near Reigate.

The great coaching days have many memories of Reigate. The coaches changed horses at the Swan and the White Hart, and at the White Hart to-day's Brighton coach stops, I think, for lunch. But when Shergold wrote his *Recollections of Brighton in the Olden Time*, he speaks of the inn at which the Brighton coach stopped in the days of the Regency as the King's Arms. Inns have a most confusing habit of changing their names. When John Taylor, the Water Poet, in 1636, made his *Catalogue of Taverns in Ten Shires about London*, he found some seventy or eighty taverns in Surrey, but out of the forty-nine which he mentions by name, hardly a dozen would answer to their old signboards to-day. The Reigate White Hart in Taylor's day was the Hart. [Pg 354]

According to Shergold, Reigate in the old coaching days was the scene of the most romantic episodes imaginable. He is full of comparisons between the easy charm of conversation among riders by coach and the ungracious silences of travelling by rail, and this is what you read about Reigate and the fair who travelled by coach:—

"There was an advantage and an interest in travelling by coach which travelling by rail can never communicate. In the former you saw men and their faces, and acquired some information; in the latter you learn nothing except the number of persons killed or injured by the last accident. A young man who entered the coach at eight o'clock in the morning at Brighton took his seat perhaps opposite a young lady whom he thought pretty and interesting. When he arrived at Cuckfield he began to be in love; at Crawley he was desperately smitten; at Reigate his passion became irretrievable, and when he gave her an arm to ascend the steep ridges of Reigate Hill—a just emblem, by the way, of human life—he declared his passion, and they were married soon after. Nothing of this sort ever occurs on railroads. Sentiment never blooms on the iron soil of these sulky conveyances. A woman was a creature to be looked at, admired, courted, and beloved in a stage-coach; but on a railway a woman is nothing but a package, a bundle of goods committed to the care of the railway company's servants, who take care of the poor thing as they would take care of any other bale of goods. It is said that matches are made in heaven; it may likewise be said that matches more often begin in the old stage-coaches, and that railroads are the antipodes of love."

The road from Reigate to Crawley, one of the straightest and levellest in the south country, was once the scene of a remarkable horse-race. The beginning of it was a discussion at a shooting party in the autumn of 1890 between Lord Lonsdale and Lord Shrewsbury on the pace of trotting and galloping horses. Lord Lonsdale backed himself to drive galloping horses for twenty miles, single, pair, four-in-hand and riding postillion, inside an hour. Lord Shrewsbury wagered against him, but there were difficulties about weather and the date—March 11, 1891—and eventually Lord Shrewsbury withdrew from the match and paid £100 forfeit. Lord Lonsdale then set himself [Pg 355] the task alone, and his headquarters were at Reigate; he had fifteen horses in training, fifteen men and thirteen carriages, and the cost of keeping them at Reigate came to £150 a day. The course, a stretch of five miles of road, over which horses were to be driven in the four different styles was measured from Kennersley Manor, three miles south of the White Hart, nearly into Crawley. Snow fell on the tenth, the day before the match; Lord Lonsdale borrowed a snow plough and sent it over the road. At noon on the day of the race the horses and carriages were taken to the course; at five and twenty minutes to one Lord Lonsdale drove up in a pair-horse brougham; at one o'clock to the second he trotted his single horse, War Paint, to the starting-point, and War Paint bounded down the road. War Paint took 13 minutes 39-1/5 seconds over the five miles; it would have been twenty seconds less, but a brewer's dray had blocked the road. The pair-horse was waiting with Blue and Yellow, two Americans, in it; the change took three seconds, and Blue and Yellow galloped back to the start in 12 minutes 51-2/5 seconds. It was the turn for the coach, and it took 36-3/5 seconds to change across; a groom drove the team to the starting point, a yard before it Lord Lonsdale caught up the reins, and the four horses swept up the rise to Crawley again. Fifteen minutes and nine seconds and two-fifths the four horses took; the leaders were Silk and Everton King, the wheelers Conservative and Whitechapel, and they left their driver something over seventeen minutes to ride postillion back. It took 40-2/5 seconds to change from coat and hat for riding, and exactly at seventeen minutes to the hour Lord Lonsdale rode off on Draper, a chestnut, with a bay mare, Violetta, for the pair. Draper and Violetta went over the last five miles in 13 minutes 55-4/5 seconds, and in 56 minutes 55-4/5 seconds the twenty miles were covered. And so the great race ended.

The Pilgrims' Way dropping down like white ribands over the shoulder of the down into Reigate we have already seen. On the other side of the town the high road climbs up again to the crest of the ridge—a road paved and metalled to stand the perpetual wear of shod wheels grating down the hill. At the highest point of the road is one of the finest views in England; one of the finest, Cobbett thought, in all the world. The red roofs of the town cluster among trees below; beyond is [Pg 356] all the Weald to the Devil's Dyke and Chanctonbury Ring, best of all landmarks of the Sussex downs. The separate views of the Weald along the chalk ridge have each their own characteristic, from the Hog's Back to the heights above Titsey. For me the view from the hill above Reigate has a double memory; the purple and blue of the downs seen through the stems of the beeches that line the crest, and the shadows thrown by a high summer sun in the parks and fields below. The oaks and elms set themselves in the open grass with little circles of darker green about their feet, like the wooden stands of the trees of a Dutch toy farm.

Redhill joins Reigate to the east, new, red, spreading, a junction of railways, a better sort of Woking. You do not have to wait from nine minutes to three-quarters of an hour every time you come to Redhill. To the schoolboy it has the merit of being a stage on the road from London and the sea. [Pg 357]

CHAPTER XXXIV

CROYDON

Croydon Palace.—A Neglected Relic.—Queen Elizabeth's Waiters.—John Whitgift.—Hospital, chapel, and school.—A Record of Cricket.—Macaulay's tyrant.—Izaak Walton differs.—Queen Elizabeth's Little Black Husband.—Croydon colliers.—John Ruskin.—By the Parish Pump.—John Gilpin.

Croydon is best reached by rail. It cannot be called a convenient centre, for one returns to centres, and Croydon has little that would recall a traveller. But it is an easy point of departure either for the country east, by Addington and the Kentish border, or south through Sanderstead to Coulsdon and Chaldon, or west by Beddington and the Carshalton trout ponds to Epsom. You may walk in any direction, except perhaps north, where you will walk into North Croydon. But in Croydon itself there are still two or three things worth seeing.

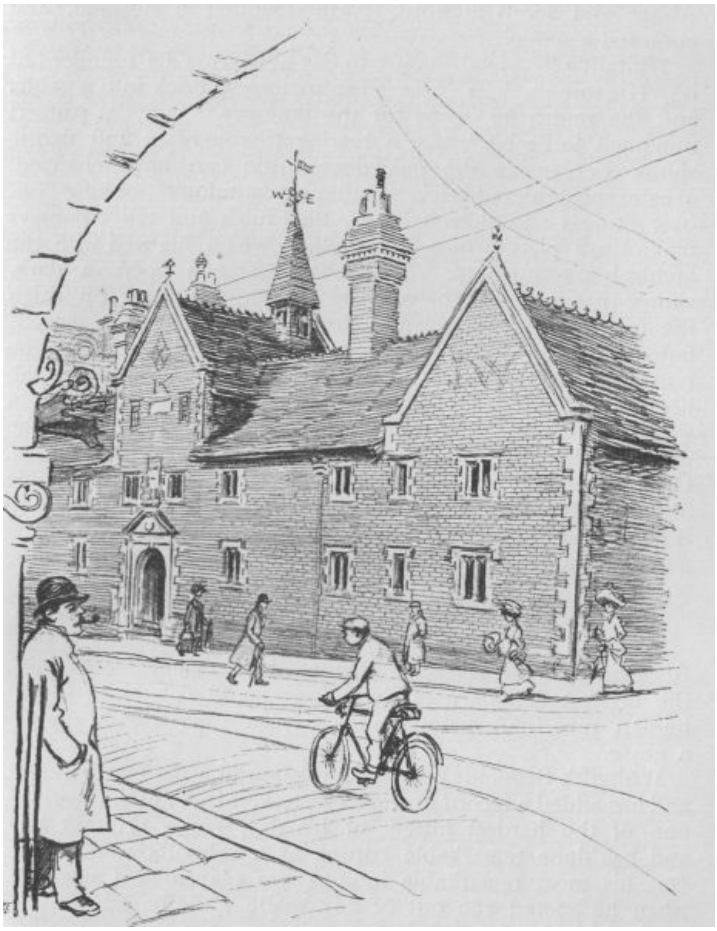
One is the Archbishop's Palace. An Archbishop's Palace is the very last building which would naturally associate itself with the Croydon tram lines and Croydon up-to-dateness, and it is the last building with which Croydon appears to wish to associate itself. The Palace stands apart from the bustle of the place, unhonoured, unhappy and ignored. Since the last Archbishop left it in the reign of George II it has served its turn as business premises for a bleacher and a calico-printer; it has been a wash-house, and is now a girls' school. One thing it has never been—of sufficient interest to Croydon to be rescued from sacrilege and neglect, and to take the place which is its due among historic national possessions. Perhaps one should be thankful that the palace of [Pg 358] Cranmer, Whitgift and Laud is to-day in no rougher hands than the gentle Sisterhood of a children's day-school.

If Croydon Palace were rightly restored, how fine a relic it might be! The great banqueting-hall, with its noble roof of Spanish chestnut, which has even survived the steam and chemistry of a bleacher's vats; the long, panelled gallery where tradition has set Queen Elizabeth dancing; the guard chamber, perhaps built by Archbishop Arundell, who burnt the Lollards; the chapel with its oak stalls, its poppy-head carvings, and the gallery added by the archbishop who stood by Charles the First on the scaffold; if the oak were cleaned and the paint taken from the panels, and if under the mellow brick walls there were set out lawns and flowers; then Croydon might justly boast of its tram lines, its admirable sanitation, and its new Town Hall. It would possess something else.

When Queen Elizabeth lay at Croydon Palace, it was not an easy matter to find room for her train of courtiers. She came in July, 1573, to visit Archbishop Parker, and wished to come again in the following May, with a larger train than before. The steward, entrusted with the task of finding more room where there had never been enough, was in despair, and made out his list of lodgings for the archbishop, or, perhaps, the Queen's chamberlain, to see. The Lord Treasurer was to be "wher he was"; the Lord Admiral "at y^{e} nether end of the great chamber"; the "maydes of honnor wher they wer"; the "La Stafforde wher she was"; the "gentylmen husshers ther olde" lodging; and so on with a very long list. But the letter ends in a hopeless puzzle:—

> "For the Quen's Wayghters, I cannot as yet fynde anye convenyent romes to place them in, but I will doo the best y^{t} I can to place them elsewher, but yf y^{t} please you S^{r} y^{t} I doo remove them. The Gromes of the Privye Chamber nor Mr. Drewrye have no other waye to ther chambers but to pas thorowe that waye agayne that my Lady of Oxford should come. I cannot then tell wher to place Mr. Hatton; and for La Carewe here is no place with a chymeney for her, but that she must ley abrode by Mrs. Aparry and the rest of y^{e} Prvy Chambers. For Mrs. Shelton here is no romes with chymeneys; I shall stage one chamber without for her. Here is as mutche as I have any wayes able to doo in this house."

Of the great archbishops few, strangely enough, have left memorials behind them at Croydon. Whitgift, Grindal, and Sheldon have their monuments in the church; of the others, Juxon added [Pg 359] some carving to the Palace Chapel. Whitgift was the great Croydon archbishop, and did for Croydon what Abbot did for Guildford. He founded a hospital, and endowed a school. [Pg 360]



Whitgift's Hospital, Croydon.

Whitgift's Hospital stands to-day almost as its founder left it. His initials, I.W., worked in patterned brick into a gable, and the motto he chose for the doorway, "Qui dat pauperi nunquam indigebit," face a roaring thoroughfare and flaring shops, but inside the oak doors little can have changed. Weatherbeaten red-brick, mullioned windows looking out over flowers and shaven lawns, tiled roofs and tall chimneys make up a picture of solid goodness which fits well with the archbishop's memory. The chapel stands open, a dark, simple little place. The oak benches are the same on which the first pensioners sat, and down upon them look curious faded pictures, dingy in black and gold. One is a fine portrait of the founder at his writing-table, with his seal, his sandbox, a bell, quill pens and a compass (or is it a watch?). Before him lies an open Latin Bible, and he points to his favourite text—*Cast thy bread upon the waters*. On another wall hangs a framed poem in manuscript, some forty or fifty lines of extravagance in which the archbishop is compared in turn to a straight sound cedar, a lost gem, a pearl, and a "fairest knotlesse Plant," whose death forces the poet to

> "Wish, that with a Sea of teares, my Verse
> Could make an Island of thy honour'd Herse."

Another poet writes a prodigious Latin elegy "containing the briefest summary of the miseries and calamities of the human race." A painter adds a picture of Death digging a grave.

Whitgift's School is an old foundation in a modern building, and has added a record to cricket history. Mr. V.F.S. Crawford, one of the hardest hitters of his day, was a Whitgift boy, and has done remarkable batting as a schoolboy and since. But his most remarkable innings was played at Cane Hill, when he scored 180 out of 215 made while he was in, and reached his first 100 in nineteen minutes.

That the school buildings should be modern is inevitable, for the school outgrew itself forty years ago. But the school house which Whitgift built was pulled down in consequence—an act which doubtless sits lightly enough on Croydon's conscience. Four years ago the Hospital nearly followed the school, the argument being that there was insufficient room for the tram-lines. [Pg 361]

Croydon church, like nothing else in the town, became modern by accident. It was burnt down in 1867, and Sir Gilbert Scott rebuilt it into the finest church, perhaps, in the county, next to St. Mary's, Southwark. In the fire the tombs of the archbishops almost disappeared. Grindal's is no longer to be seen, though possibly some tumbled stones collected into odd corners may be part of it. Sheldon's is a pile of fragments, heaped together behind a railing, charred and broken, hideous with the sculptured skulls, bones, worms, and winged hour-glasses with which our ancestors grimly decked their graves. Whitgift's monument has been restored and is a striking example of rich and intricate decoration, even if the pomp and colour of it are too garish for a tomb.

One looks at the stern, quiet features of his effigy and wonders what was the truth about the man. Was he what Macaulay has called him—"a narrow-minded, mean, and tyrannical priest, who

gained power by servility and adulation, and employed it in persecuting those who agreed with Calvin about Church Government, and those who differed from Calvin touching the doctrine of Reprobation." Could he ever have been rightly described—Macaulay so describes the Master of Trinity who was to be Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of Canterbury—as "in a chrysalis state, putting off the worm and putting on the dragon-fly, a kind of intermediate grub between sycophant and oppressor"? Perhaps Macaulay was naturally unlikely to judge him well. A portrait drawn by one who lived nearer his day is Izaak Walton—another, perhaps a gentler, I.W.:—

> "He built a large Alms-house near to his own Palace at Croydon in Surrey, and endowed it with maintenance for a Master and twenty-eight poor men and women; which he visited so often that he knew their names and dispositions; and was so truly humble, that he called them Brothers and Sisters; and whensoever the Queen descended to that lowliness to dine with him at his Palace in Lambeth,—which was very often,—he would usually the next day show the like lowliness to his poor Brothers and Sisters at Croydon, and dine with them at his Hospital; at which time, you may believe there was joy at the table."

Walton thought him a very tactful prelate. He managed Queen Elizabeth admirably, and "by justifiable sacred insinuations, such as St. Paul to Agrippa—'Agrippa, believest thou? I know thou believest,' he wrought himself into so great a degree of favour with her, as, by his pious use of it, hath got both of them a great degree of fame in this world, and of glory in that into which they are now both entered." Queen Elizabeth was devoted to him, and nicknamed him "her little black husband." Without a licence from her little black husband she would not touch flesh in Lent. [Pg 362]

The archbishops left Croydon, in 1758, when Archbishop Hutton died. The line of archbishop tenants of the Palace had been broken in the days of the Commonwealth, when Sir William Brereton, one of the Parliamentary Major-Generals, lived there. He was a soldier of conviction, and was nearly torn in pieces by the mob at Chester, "for ordering a drum to be beat for the parliament." Croydon's historian, Steinman, quotes from a pamphlet of Cavalier days, *The Mystery of the Old Cause briefly unfolded*, a quaint appreciation of him. He was "a notable man at a thanksgiving dinner, having terrible long teeth, and a prodigious stomach, to turn the archbishop's palace at Croydon into a kitchen, also to swallow up that palace and lands at a morsel." Brereton, as a reward for his military services, had been given several sequestrated properties, a chief forestership, and a seneschalship.

Four hundred years ago, Croydon was the centre of a great Surrey industry. The Croydon colliers were proverbial. They supplied London with coal, that is, charcoal, before the days of "sea-coal," the coal which blackens London smoke to-day. Then it reached London by sea. One Grimes, or Grimme, the greatest of the Croydon colliers, who lived in the reign of Edward VI, was actually sued by an archbishop for creating a nuisance with his smoke. The collier won. He was sufficiently celebrated to become the hero of two sixteenth-century plays, one of which bears his name, *Grim, the Collier of Croydon*. To be "as black as a Croydon collier," was to be as black as a sweep; and "a right Croydon sanguine" was a deep red-brown.

Once Croydon, always Croydon. The first railway line built in the country and sanctioned by Parliament ran from Croydon to Wandsworth. It was part of an original scheme proposed in 1799 for linking up London with Portsmouth by an iron railroad running through Croydon, Reigate, and Arundel. But it was thought best to begin with the part which ran from Croydon to Wandsworth, and perhaps it was as well that the scheme went no further, for it cost £35,000, and was a complete failure. The shareholders lost every penny. One feels it ought to have succeeded. The carriages or trucks were drawn by horses, and the wheels ran along grooved iron rails. Anybody who had a cart which fitted might put it on the rails and let his horse pull it along, if he paid the tolls, which were not heavy. However, its life was short. The Croydon canal, opened in 1809, robbed it of much of its heavy goods traffic, and the London and Brighton railway demolished it altogether. This is how "Felix Summerley" (his real name was Sir Henry Cole, and he liked a good walk with a good dinner at the end of it) described the change in his *Pleasure Excursions* in 1846. [Pg 363]

> "A small single line, on which a miserable team of lean mules or donkeys, some thirty years ago, might be seen crawling at the rate of four miles in the hour, with small trucks of stone and lime behind them.... Lean mules no longer crawl leisurely along the little rails with trucks of stone, through Croydon, once perchance during the day, but the whistle and rush of the locomotive, and the whirr of the atmospheric, are now heard all day long."

Felix Summerley must be suspected of admiring the change. One who knew old Croydon well, and admired its changes less, was John Ruskin, who had relations there and visited them as a boy. Of one he writes in *Præterita*:—

> "Of my father's ancestors I know nothing, nor of my mother's more than that my maternal grandmother was the landlady of the Old King's Head in Market Street, Croydon; and I wish she were alive again, and I could paint her Simone Memmi's King's Head, for a sign."

Of his aunt at Croydon he has a pleasant memory:—

> "My aunt lived in the little house still standing—or which was so four months ago—the fashionablest in Market Street, having actually two windows over the shop, in

the second story; but I never troubled myself about that superior part of the mansion, unless my father happened to be making drawings in Indian ink, when I would sit reverently by and watch; my chosen domains being, at all other times, the shop, the bakehouse, and the stones round the spring of crystal water at the back door (long since let down into the modern sewer); and my chief companion, my aunt's dog, Towser, whom she had taken pity on when he was a snappish, starved vagrant; and made a brave and affectionate dog of: which was the kind of thing she did for every living creature that came in her way, all her life long."

The Old King's Head and the fashionablest house in Market Street have gone. So has much else that Ruskin would have recognised. To guess at what his Croydon was like you may open Steinman's *History* at a little engraving of Whitgift's Hospital, from a drawing made at the cross-roads. The Hospital stands as it is to-day. Opposite it, a square, two-storied inn stretches over the road a fine carved bracket with a bunch of grapes in iron, proclaiming that here are post horses to be had from Nich: Jayne. A tall-hatted rustic pensively wheels a barrow in the middle of the road opposite the inn; a group of villagers in stout boots, smocks and stockings stands at the street corner; and, precisely on the spot where to-day's tram-lines swing north and west, a lazy-looking person in a straw hat, perhaps a sailor ashore, leans against a post within a yard or two of an imposing parish pump. [Pg 364]

Croydon tradition claims John Gilpin. He is said to have lived in a farmhouse, which Croydon pulled down in 1897. It was known as Collier's Water Farm, and stood near what is now Thornton Heath Railway Station. Undoubtedly a John Gilpin lived there; but the author of the local guide-book who asserts that he was Cowper's original refers all inquirers to Dr. Brewer for corroboration; and that admirable sage informs me that Gilpin was Mr. Beyer, an eminent linendraper of Paternoster Row. [Pg 365]

CHAPTER XXXV

BEDDINGTON AND CARSHALTON

Beddington Hall.—Careful Dissipation.—The Polite Verger.—A punning epitaph.—Actaeon and Artemis for sale.—Carshalton pools.—A dry well.—William Quelche's Apology.—The rudeness of a doctor.—Carshalton's greatest man.—Fighting and spelling.

According to the historians, the springs of the Wandle rose under the walls of Croydon Palace. Croydon has seemingly decided that they shall rise further off, and the Wandle suddenly appears, full flowing, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. You can walk along its bank and watch young Croydon transfer minnows from muddy water to jampots. A mile from the town stands Beddington Hall, now an orphan asylum which sends red-cloaked children out for walks into Croydon, but once the country mansion of the great family of Carew. Nicholas Carew built a house at Beddington in the reign of Edward III, but it was Sir Francis Carew, rebuilding it under Elizabeth, who first brought greatness to Beddington. He entertained the Queen there twice, and the orange garden was famous for many generations of Carews. When Aubrey saw the trees at the end of the seventeenth century, he wrote that they were 'planted in the open ground, where they have throve to admiration for above a whole century; but are preserved, during the winter season, under a moveable Covert.' The hard frost of 1739 killed them.

A later Sir Nicholas Carew rebuilt much of the house, but retained the hall. He was an exact and particular person, and never let his careful dissipation prevent him from keeping a precise record in his account book. One of his pocket-ledgers has found its way into the British museum. Here are some extracts of his expenses:— [Pg 366]

	£	s.	d.
Pd. my man's Nurse	-	7	-
For a Pocket-Book	1	16	-
For a smelling bottle	1	1	6
F. a table and Books	-	3	6
G. (gave) f. verses	-	10	-
Pd. my french marster	1	13	6
F. fishing tackle	-	2	6
G. f. finding my sword	-	2	6
Pd. for a gunn	4	-	-
F. Herrings and oysters	-	7	3

Sept. ye 25th 1706. I bought a P^{r} of Coach Horses 4 years old come five and gave four and thirty pounds for y^{m}.—N. Carew.

He had a nice taste in wines and tea, and was properly generous to musicians and servants:—

	£	s.	d.
Jan. ye 5th 1706/7 for s. candy and liquorish	-	2	2
G. ye serv^{ts} at Soho	2	1	6
F. gr. tea	-	12	6
F. bohea tea	-	14	0
F. asquebah	-	3	0
Sp. at ye Gre(cian)			
Sp. at Jelly H	-	1	6
F. swaring paper	-	-	3
F. a rasour case	2	15	0
G. ye Harper	-	5	-
G. ye musick	-	1	-
G. a poor woman	-	1	-
G. a fool	-	1	-

I have met with occasional difficulties in trying to enter Surrey churches, but Beddington, which is one of the most finely decorated, offered the most prolonged opposition of all. I arrived there about three o'clock in the afternoon, and finding the doors locked, inquired of one who emerged from a stoke-hole where I might get the keys. I might not get them, he replied; the church was being cleaned. But might I not just look round, having come a long way to see the church? I might not: she was cleaning the reredos. Might not one who wished to write about the church enter while she was cleaning the reredos? One might not; much had been written of the church already. Would he be so good as to direct me to the rectory? He would, and did; and as I walked away shouted after me that the rector was certainly out. But I found him in, and very courteous to a stranger; and I learned that, as I had hoped, the rule was that the church should be opened every day. He gave me his card, and wrote a message on it, and with the card I went back to the [Pg 367] church. The verger had disappeared. He was neither in the churchyard nor the stoke-hole. A stonemason working in the churchyard came to my assistance. The verger was in the church and would doubtless open the door if I knocked. I knocked. Nothing happened. The stonemason knocked; indeed, he knocked a great deal. I begged him to stop knocking, for passers-by stayed to see what this thing might be, but he was thoroughly interested, and went on knocking. Perhaps he knocked for a quarter of an hour. A young girl came up to tell us that the door would certainly open before half-past four, for that was tea-time. Just then the door opened, and before it was shut again in our faces I just had time to brandish the card. He replied at once—he would let me in by another door. He did so; he never asked to see the card, but went on industriously with his sweeping.

Perhaps no building in Surrey has been more carefully restored than Beddington church, nor more richly decorated. The chancel with its frescoes and mosaics, and the carved and painted roof are probably as fine as anything of the kind in any parish church. But is the result attained the result aimed at? The richness, the glamour of gold and purple and rare woods and stones are there, as they must have been in Solomon's temple. But to me the simplicity and cool quiet of aisles and white pillars sometimes seem to forsake such gorgeousness and glow.

There are many interesting monuments and brasses in the church, especially in the Carew chapel, where Carews of Beddington have lain since the fifteenth century. The strangest memorial is the punning epitaph on the steward to Sir Nicholas Carew. He died in 1633, and his name was Greenhill, which inspired his commemorator with a motto for his brass, "Mors super virides montes," and ten curious lines:—

> "Vnder thy feate interrd is here
> A native born in Oxfordsheere,
> First, Life and Learning Oxford gaue;
> Surry to him his death, his graue.
> He once a HILL was, fresh and GREENE;
> Now wither'd is not to bee seene.
> Earth in Earth shovel'd up is shut,
> A HILL into a Hole is put.
> But darkesome earth by powre divine
> Bright at last as ye Sonne may shine."

[Pg 368]

A mile further west, beyond Wallington, which in spite of embracing villadom still keeps an old inn and a pretty, shaded green, is Carshalton. Carshalton begins magnificently. In the spacious days of King George the First there was designed for Carshalton Park a superb dwelling, which Leoni was to have built for the lord of the manor (he built the Onslow house in Clandon Park). But the house was never built. The gates remain. They formerly guarded the green glades of a deer park. Now they stand forlornly cheek by jowl with new yellow brick. Actaeon, from one great pillar, gazes on less divine pictures than a goddess bathing; Artemis, on the other pillar, drapes herself for unseeing eyes. A papered notice-board lolls against the superb ironwork of the gates. Hunter and huntress, pillars and wrought iron, are for sale.

Few villages in Surrey are prettier to-day than they were forty years ago. Carshalton is hardly a village, but is it less pretty than it used to be? Let Ruskin decide, from the opening of *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

"Twenty years ago" (he writes in 1870) "there was no lovelier piece of lowland scenery in South England, nor any more pathetic, in the world, by its expression of sweet human character and life, than that immediately bordering on the sources of the Wandel, and including the low moors of Addington, and the villages of Beddington and Carshalton, with all their pools and streams. No clearer or diviner waters ever sang with constant lips of the hand which 'giveth rain from heaven'; no pastures ever lightened in spring-time with more passionate blossoming; no sweeter homes ever hallowed the heart of the passer-by with their pride of peaceful gladness,—half-hidden—yet full-confessed. The place remains (1870) nearly unchanged in its larger features; but with deliberate mind I say, that I have never seen anything so ghastly in its inner tragic meaning,—not in Pisan Maremma —not by Campagna tomb,—not by the sand-isles of the Torcellan shore,—as the slow stealing of aspects of reckless, indolent, animal neglect, over the delicate sweetness of the English scene: nor is any blasphemy or impiety, any frantic saying, or godless thought, more appalling to me, using the best power of judgment I have to discern its sense and scope, than the insolent defiling of those springs by the human herds that drink of them. Just where the welling of stainless water, trembling and pure, like a body of light, enters the pool of Carshalton, cutting itself a radiant channel down to the gravel, through warp of feathery weeds, all waving, which it traverses with its deep threads of clearness, like the chalcedony in moss-agate, starred here and there with the white grenouillette; just in the very rush and murmur of the first spreading currents, the human wretches of the place cast their street and house foulness; heaps of dust and slime, and broken shreds of old metal, and rags of putrid clothes; which, having neither energy to cart away, nor decency enough to dig into the ground, they thus shed into the stream, to diffuse what venom of it will float and melt, far away, in all [Pg 369] places where God meant those waters to bring joy and health. And, in a little pool behind some houses farther in the village, where another spring rises, the shattered stones of the well, and of the little fretted channel which was long ago built and traced for it by gentler hands, lie scattered, each from each, under a ragged bank of mortar, and scoria, and bricklayer's refuse, on one side, which the clean water nevertheless chastises to purity; but it cannot conquer the dead earth beyond: and there, circled and coiled under festering scum, the stagnant edge of the pool effaces itself into a slope of black slime, the accumulation of indolent years. Half-a-dozen men with one day's work could cleanse those pools, and trim the flowers about their banks, and make every breath of summer air above them rich with cool balm; and every glittering wave medicinal, as if it ran, troubled only of angels, from the porch of Bethesda. But that day's work is never given, nor, I suppose, will be; nor will any joy be possible to heart of man, for evermore, about those wells of English waters."

Things are not quite so bad to-day. Ruskin himself had the smaller pool cleaned and set about with stone, and planted with periwinkle and daffodils. The other two larger pools are the care of a district council, which forbids attempts to catch the big trout that cruise in their clear, weedy waters, and otherwise looks after them for a public which may value them more highly than in Ruskin's day, but drops in a great many newspapers. Another so-called well—Anne Boleyn's well; her horse put its foot into soft ground above a spring—is a well no longer. Iron railings ward off the profane, and narcissus and ivy cluster round its brim, but below, according to the weather, is dust or mud.

At the churchyard gate are the trunks of two ancient but still living elms, to which is fastened a beam beset with hooks, which either hold or once held joints of meat for the butcher's shop behind. The church, which is a strange mixture of old and new, the new being gradually built on to the old, is the resting-place of Gaynesfordes and Ellenbrygges, two of the great old Surrey families, and contains at least one remarkable inscription:

"M.S. Under the middle stone that guards the ashes of a certain fryer, sometime vicar of this place, is raked up the dust of William Quelche, B.D., who ministred in the same since the reformation. His lot was through God's mercy to burn incense here about 30 years, and ended his course Aprill the 10, an. dñi 1654, being aged 64 years."

Mr. Quelche was vicar in troublous times, and the distractions of the Civil War led to a hiatus in the parish registers. The fault lay with the parish clerk, but the conscientious Mr. Quelche felt [Pg 370] bound to clear himself in the eyes of future ages by a long apology in the Register of baptisms, which begins beseechingly enough:—

"Good Reader tread gently:

For though these vacant yeares may seeme to make me guilty of thy censure, neither will I symply excuse myselfe from all blemishe; yet if thou doe but cast thine eie uppon the former pages and se with what care I have kepte the annalls of mine owne tyme, and rectifyed sundry errors of former times thou wilt beginn to thinke ther is some reason why he that begann to build so well should not be able to make an ende."

But the entries for the years before the war broke out were occasionally a little vague. Here are

three full years' records of marriages:—

"1640. A Londoner married mr. Kepps sister of micham on Easter monday.

1641. Mr. Meece married a couple who came from fishsted whose names he could not remember.

1642. Not one marryed woe to y^{e} vicar."

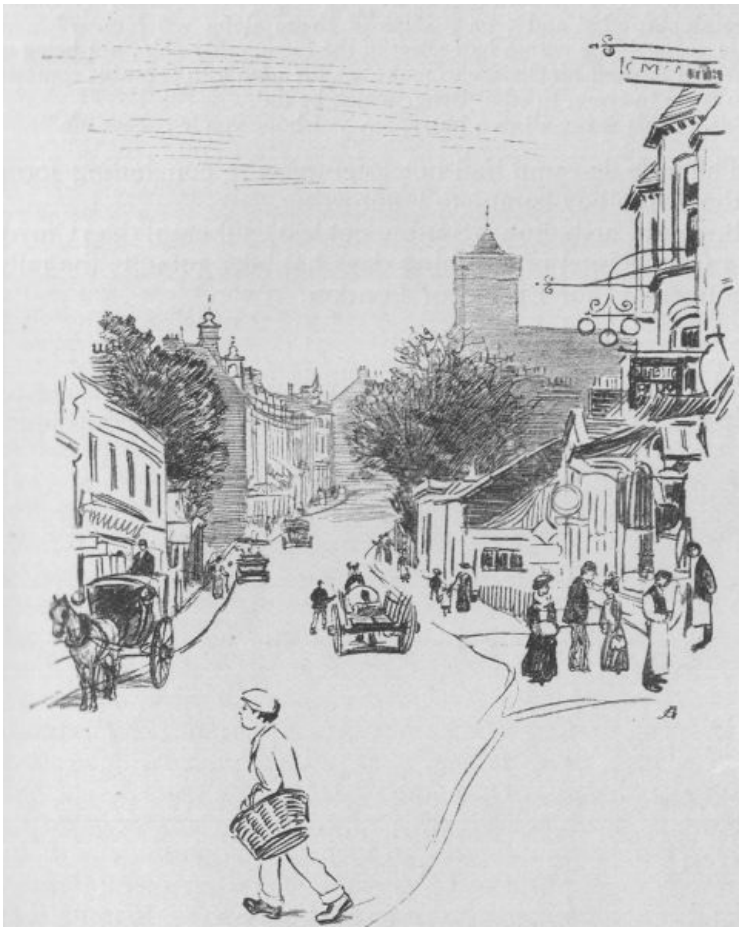
Some of the names and surnames sound odd:—

Epaphroditus wood. Epaphroditus Wandling. Anne Waweker.

Hevedebar Hill. Wroe. Buttonshere. Dilcock.

Gander. Mustian. Thunderman. Nep. Milfe.

Carshalton House, a massive pile of red brick, was built by Sir John Fellowes, one of the directors of the South Sea Bubble. It stands on the site of a house which belonged to the most famous doctor of his day. He was John Radcliffe, founder of the Radcliffe Library, and so much run after as a physician that he felt able to be intolerably rude to his patients, even if they happened to be kings and queens. William the Third never forgave him for telling him that he would not own his Majesty's dropsical legs for the three kingdoms. Queen Anne refused to make him her court physician, but sent for him when she was dying. He would not leave Carshalton, pleading the gout; and he lived and died in angry remorse. The Queen never recovered, and the doctor did not dare to show his face in London.



Sutton.

Carshalton's greatest man lies in a nameless grave. Admiral Sir Edward Whitaker, leader of the assault which first made Gibraltar a British fortress, used to spend his summers at Carshalton, and was buried in Carshalton churchyard, but the slab which marked his grave was moved and lost when the church was enlarged. He was forty-four when with Captain Jumper and Captain Hicks he led his men against the redoubt, and he was as brilliant a fighter as he was a poor speller. I quote from a letter he wrote describing the siege and assault to his friend Sir Richard Haddock, Comptroller of the Navy, a day or two after the action:— [Pg 371]

"There was three small ships in the old mold, one of which annoyed our camp by firing amongst them. One having about 10 guns, lying close to the mold, and just under a great bastion at the north corner of the towne, I proposed to Sir George the burning her in the night. He liked itt: accordingly ordered what boats I would have to my assistance: and about 12 at night I did itt effectually, wth the loss of but one man, and 5 or 6 wounded. [Pg 372]

July 23.—At 4 this morning, adm^{l} Byng began wth his ships to cannonade, a Dutch rear-adm^{l} and 5 or 6 ships of thairs along wth him, w^{ch} made a noble noise, being

within half shott of the town. My ship, not being upon service, I desired Sir George to make me his *aducon* to carry his commands, from tyme to tyme, to adm^{l} Byng, which he did....

P.S. This is rite all in a hurry, sir, y^{t} I hope you'le excuse me."

The aide-de-camp had not forgotten the concluding formula of the schoolboy complete letter-writer.

Beyond Carshalton is Sutton, not less exuberant than Croydon. The Cock Hotel of coaching days has been rebuilt; the railway is convenient for Epsom or London. [Pg 373]

CHAPTER XXXVI

CHALDON TO THE DOWNS

Coulsdon.—A giant Christian prince.—Chaldon.—The Ladder of Life.—The Brig of Whinney Moor.—Chipstead.—Merstham.—A Wizard Rector.—Addington.—The little churches.—Horne Tooke's *Diversions*.

It is possible to escape from Croydon's railway-stations. You can push out from its ringing streets into green and quiet country, and find little old churches within a mile or two of the railway, as undisturbed as if no railway were yet running. You may leave the line at Purley, and within an hour's walk find yourself in the wind on the downs, among Anglo-Saxon barrows and immemorial yews; you may even be able (though not without thought) to exclude from a generous view of hill and valley the enormous lunatic asylums which fate and County Councils have piled and multiplied in this part of Surrey.

There is a strip of country lying south of Purley in which you cannot get more than a mile and a half or so from the railway, but which contains tiny hamlets and lonely roads. Purley and Kenley will one day come out to Coulsdon, perhaps, but Coulsdon's day is not yet. The village itself is nothing more than a cottage or two with a church. But the road to Coulsdon opens on broad slopes of grass and plough, bordered with a line of yews—an ancient trackway, perhaps. Such a line, or rather lines, for there are several along the sides of the downs a little further south, would certainly be claimed as evidence of a "pilgrims' way" if they ran east and west between Guildford, say, and Dorking. Fields with such noble hedges to define them have their own air of wildness and age; it is easy enough, even with Purley slate roofs hardly a mile away, to fancy [Pg 374] partridges calling across those open spaces. Coulsdon, indeed, was once celebrated for its game. Aubrey tells us that in the parish there was "a large coney-warren belonging to the Desbouveries." They, for many years under Stuarts and Georges, were lords of the manor.

From Coulsdon one may walk to Chaldon over Farthing Down. The horizon changes, but Farthing Down itself remains high and free, smooth with short down grass, and dinted with the hoofs of galloping horses. Croydon and Purley send many riders abroad on Saturdays and Sundays. But Farthing Down is peopled with other older forms. Along the ridge, bordering the ancient trackways, lies a line of barrows. They were opened in 1872 by Mr. John Wickham Flower; some were found untouched, and contained perfect skeletons. In one grave lay the bones of a great lady; buried with her was a beautiful wooden drinking-cup, its staves fastened by bronze bands of an intricate Runic pattern of coiled snakes. Another grave held the skeleton of a warrior giant, his sword lying across him and the boss of his shield upon his foot. Mr. Flower thinks he can add a name. Coulsdon is a corruption of Cuthredesdune, and perhaps Cuthred, an Anglo-Saxon prince, lies buried here with his family. Cuthred, son of Cwichelm, and grandson of Cynegils, the first Christian king of Wessex, was baptised in 639 at Dorchester.

Farthing Down stretches for nearly three miles north and south, and under its southern slope lies the little village of Chaldon. Chaldon church holds the most remarkable wall-painting in the country. The "Ladder of Life," or "Ladder of Salvation," is the subject, and it occupies nearly the whole of the west wall of the church. In red and white and yellow ochre paint you are shown the torments of the damned, the salvation of heaven, the trampling of Satan. A ladder rises through the middle; up it the poor souls of men struggle to the joys above; some tumble headlong; a demon picks off others with a pitchfork and sets them aside to burn or boil. An enormous dog eats a woman's hand; in life she had thrown to dogs what she should have given to the poor. A usurer painted without eyes, for usurers could not weep, sits among flames; devils drive pitchforks into his head, moneybags hang round his neck, he counts and swallows red hot coins. Other hapless souls, condemned to walk a bridge of spikes, carry burdens over a thin plank like a [Pg 375] saw set on edge. Above is a nimbus of clouds, and above the nimbus, the weighing of souls. The archangel Michael balances the souls in great scales; a fiend tries to make them kick the beam. On the other side is the Harrowing of Hell. Hell is the mouth of a monstrous devil; Christ advances with the cross and banner, and thrusts the wood of the cross into the devil's mouth. The souls rise up delivered from purgatory; above them, a flying angel floats with a scroll. Mr. J.G. Waller, writing in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, explains most of the painting, but has hardly a guess for the scroll. "The heavens depart, as it were a scroll rolled together;" Mr. Waller does not mention the text which to the layman seems obvious but the expert may have reasons

against it.

The punishment of the Bridge—the walking over a sharp edge, set with spikes or narrow as a hair—is one of the oldest things of all the religions. The Chinese had it, in the distant Eastern ages, and Mr. Waller, in the *Collections*, prints verses which show it surviving in Yorkshire in 1624. There was a Yorkshire tradition that a person after death must pass over Whinney Moor; and at a funeral it was the custom for a woman to come and chant verses over the corpse. These are an extract:—

When thou from hence doest pass away,
Every night and awle,
To Whinney Moor thou com'st at last,
And Christ receive thy sawle.

From Whinney Moor that thou mayest pass,
Every night and awle,
To Brig of dread thou com'st at last,
And Christ receive thy sawle.
From Brig of dread, na brader than a thread,
Every night and awle,
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last,
And Christ receive thy sawle.

East of Chaldon is Caterham, west is Chipstead and south-west is Merstham, each two miles or so away as the crow flies and something more as the road runs, and each with a railway station. Caterham once was a valley; Aubrey wrote of it: "In this parish are many pleasant little vallies, stored with wild thyme, sweet marjoram, barnell, boscage, and beeches." I do not know barnell, [Pg 376] but the last twenty years have set many houses among the boscage. They have built, too, two new churches, one of them set very finely on a hill; the old church is disused, or used, rather, only for a Sunday school. Upon Sunday scholars, from a Norman wall, looks down a hideous stone corbel. A clown's face stretches a devil's mouth wide open with hands like rat's paws; the sharp teeth grin like rat's teeth; perhaps in the Sunday school they make their own faces at it.

Chipstead, to the west, is on a hill the other side of the railway. It has some pretty modern cottages by a pond and shading elm-trees; a post-office also, with the smallest possible aperture for introducing letters to the notice of the post-mistress within. The church has some quaint features; there are a number of oddly shaped lancet windows, a curiously carved boss in the groining of the tower, and a strange arrangement by which the members of the choir sit facing the east with their backs to the pulpit. In the churchyard lies Sir Edward Banks, perhaps Chipstead's most illustrious native. He was born poor and he died rich; and he built three great bridges, Waterloo, Southwark, and London. Chipstead churchyard, too, has a fine yew; but good yews are common in the churchyards south of Croydon.

The best walk from Chaldon is over the hill to Merstham; the sign-posts show you the path and mark it "The Pilgrims' Way" to Tollsworth Farm with the utmost assurance. From Tollsworth Farm the path drops over a plough down the side of the hill; before the railway and the tunnel came the old Way perhaps went straight across to the church. Merstham itself has little to show except one pretty little side street; but the church is more full of curiosities than any other near. Its builders placed it delightfully on a mound which is all air and sunlight, and though much of the charm of the church was destroyed in 1861, much that is old and curious remains. A queerly placed clock tells the time low down on the tower; inside are ancient monuments, one a stone effigy recovered from use as a pavement, others to the Elinbrygge family. That is only one spelling of the name, and perhaps as good as any other; variations are Elinebrigge, Elyngbrigge, Elinerugge, Ellerug, Elmerugge, Elmebrugge, Elmridge, Elmbrige, Elmebrygge, Ellmbridge, Elinrugge, Ellyngbrugg, Elenbrig, Elingbrig, Ellyngbrigg, and Ellynbrege. An Elinbrygge in those [Pg 377] days could spell practically anything. Other memorials are fragments of stone carving, once belonging to the Southcotes and Waldegraves, and built without reason into windows and walls. Over the west chancel arch is a broken piece of carving from old London Bridge; and forlornest possession of all, the north chantry is paved with a tessellated floor which was made in prison, I was told, by an unhappy woman who hoped that forgiveness would take and use her work. Merstham has had some famous rectors. One was the great Thomas Linacre, King's Physician to Henry VII and Henry VIII, founder of the Royal College of Physicians, and friend of Melanchthon and Erasmus. He became a priest when he was fifty-eight, four years before his death, and was only Rector of Merstham for a month. "I much wonder," Fuller writes of him in his *Worthies*, "at what I find in good authors, that Linacre a little before his death turned priest and began to study the Scriptures with which he was formerly unacquainted, in so much that reading the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of St. Matthew he vowed, '*That* either this was not the Gospel or we were not Christians.'"

Another rector, Robert Cole, once was a nonconformist, especially in the matter of ecclesiastical vestments, but eventually got rid of his objections. Ecclesiastical Commissioners then decided to have an object lesson in properly dressed clergymen at Lambeth. Mr. Cole was dressed in full clerical attire, and was then "placed as the front figure at the meeting, while the chancellor of the Bishop of London thus harangued the auditory: 'My masters and the ministers of London, the Council's pleasure is, that ye strictly keep the unity of apparel, like to this man as you now see him; that is, a square cap, a scholar's gown, priestlike, a tippet, and in the church a linen surplice.'" The auditors then had to sign "Volo" or "Nolo," and those who refused were deprived

of their livings. Poor Mr. Cole, priestlike in his tippet, cuts a meeker figure than another Merstham rector, James Samborne. This reverend gentleman was actually supposed to possess supernatural powers, and when a thief climbed up a pear-tree in the rectory orchard, Mr. Samborne went in pursuit, fixed his gaze upon the robber from a suitable distance and from where he stood, using dreadful arts, fastened the robber in the tree. [Pg 378]

Another walk from Croydon, for those who like a string of little old churches, and an occasional fine view, would be by Addington to the south-east through Sanderstead to Warlingham, or further south to the edge of the chalk ridge at Woldingham. The railway is never very far off. There is nothing imposing among these hillside hamlets; they leave an impression of tiny villages which felt their first need to be a church; the congregations must have been small and poor. They, of the Surrey churches, are nearest in heart to the "little, lost down churches" of Sussex and Mr. Kipling's most magical poem.

Addington, perhaps, could hardly be called lost, for many archbishops have lived at Addington Park, and two lie buried in the churchyard, Archbishop Longley and Archbishop Tait. There are memorials to three others—Manners-Sutton, Howleigh, and Sumner. But the most attractive name on the church walls belongs to the wife of the builder of Addington House. She was Mrs. Grizzel Trecothick. Addington still lies in deep country; Sanderstead, its neighbour three miles to the south-west, is half in the country and half in the town. Old Sanderstead, the Sandy Place, has a large, square red-brick house overlooking a park and a quiet churchyard, where the little church, with sloping roofs over each aisle, looks rather like a hen brooding chickens. In the chancel is a memorial to one of those squires who held strange offices under Tudor kings. He kneels in painted marble, and he was "John Ownsted, esquier, servant to y^{e} most excellent princesse and our dread soveraigne Queene Elizabeth, and seriant of her ma^{ties} cariage by y^{e} space of 40 yeres." South-east of Sanderstead are Farley and Chelsham, each with an old church; Farley's is a tiny building by a fine farmyard, but the peace of the little church is gone; its modest spire, as you walk to the churchyard, is dominated and affronted by the hideous clock-tower of a neighbouring lunatic asylum. Why should such a thing be? County Councils have decreed that in this part of Surrey must be massed together the thousands of poor souls who have lost the reason which county councillors must be supposed to possess; but why insist on their unhappy presence? A building to hold such sadness should be a quiet thing, hidden among trees, silent, alone. But that would suit neither councillors nor architects. For them, asylums must stare, scar, insist that they will be seen and known; and here, in what should be tranquil and lovely country, they violate [Pg 379] the hills.

Two other villages, Warlingham and Woldingham, lie east of the railway. Warlingham stands round a pretty green, and has a pleasant inn; the church, which once lay among fields, is at the end of a chestnut avenue which belongs to the future. It is a curious little building, with a sense of wide light and cool stone, and has been beautifully restored by Mr. Philip Mainwaring Johnston, who discovered, and has admirably preserved, a particularly interesting low-side window with a circular niche in the chancel. Woldingham, right on the edge of the chalk ridge, has a tiny church set apart among the fields; nearer the village, a pretty wooden chapel—almost the only pretty wooden chapel I have seen. But the best of Woldingham is the broad and breezy grass plateau on which it stands. On a clear day you may see London; a better view to the south is blocked by new buildings and gardens.

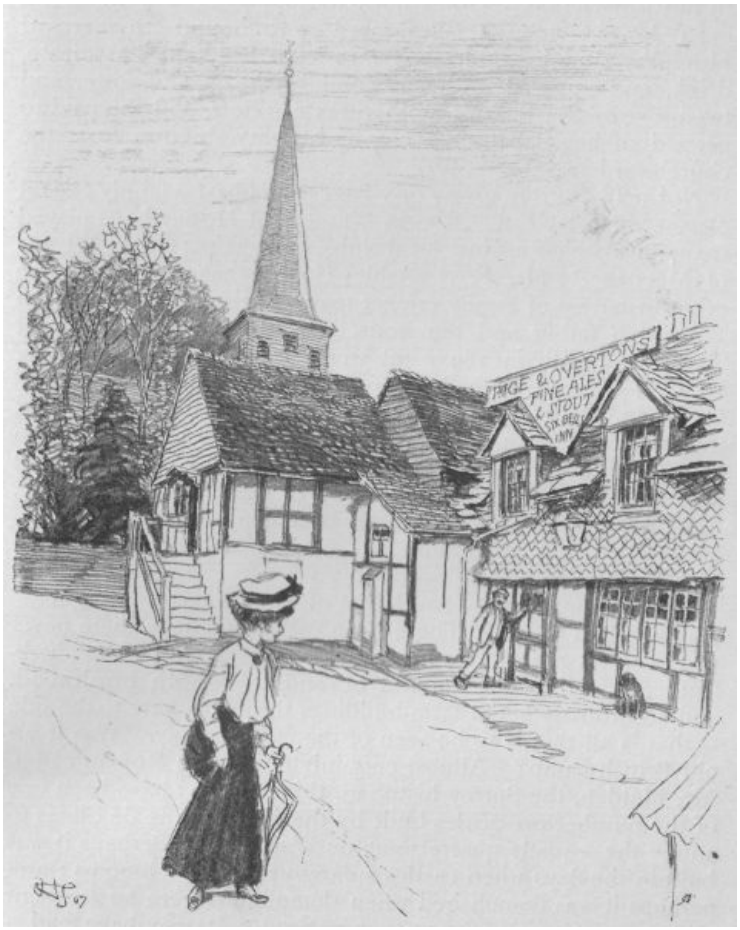
The railway returns to Purley and Croydon; Purley, where Tooke lived, and gave his name to Horne Tooke, with eight thousand pounds, for winning him a lawsuit. From Purley Horne Tooke named his *Diversions*; they may have diverted him, but if they did, he could be moved to mirth by a very dreary business indeed. [Pg 380]

CHAPTER XXXVII

HORLEY AND CHARLWOOD

Restored church windows.—A Cow for an apprentice.—A Horley eleven.—Thunderfield Castle.—Horne.—Outwood Common.—A daring jump.—Over the Green.—Burstow's Astronomer.—Causies.—St. Margaret and the Devil.—A Country Sermon.

"The pretty village and church of Horley" is the opening of a descriptive paragraph in a Surrey guide-book not thirty years old. Horley is more than a village and a little less than pretty to-day. But it has two good old-fashioned country inns, and it is a convenient centre to some interesting country. It contains in itself little of interest except the church, which has a fine tower; but which is one of the unhappiest examples of unintelligent "restoration." The story of the "restoration" is, indeed, hardly credible. In 1877 the Surrey Archæological Society visited the church, and Major Heales wrote an admirable paper on its architecture, particularly drawing attention to the beauty of the windows in the north aisle, which dated from 1310, and contained some rare deep ruby glass. He described the tracery as the most beautiful in the county. Yet within five years the church was "restored"; the windows, which were in excellent preservation and would have lasted another five hundred years, were destroyed, every stone of them; and the glass had disappeared, either broken up or sold.



The "Six Bells" Inn, Horley.

Horley parish registers have some pleasant entries. Stray daughters, who ate too much at home and otherwise were hard to look after, used to be apprenticed to persons who would undertake, for a consideration, to keep them until they were twenty-one. The consideration might be in cash or in kind. Thus, Jeremy Shoe, on January 13, 1604, took An Chamley, daughter of Edmund [Pg 381] Chamley, deceased, apprentice "until she come to xxj, in consideracon he receives some household stuffe to the valew of vj^{s} viij^{d} and is to be eased in not paying to the poore for iiij yeares to come." John Chelsham had a better bargain, for he agreed to take An Williams till she [Pg 382] came to twenty-one, and had from her father "one mare and a colte in full satisfaction." Sometimes the apprentices were bound even longer. Susan Washfoord was bound to Bernard Humphry, and he undertook "to keep her sufficient meate, drink, and apparell until she come to the age of fower and twenty yeares." Susan's mother was a widow, and she paid to get rid of her daughter a cow and twenty shillings from the churchwardens.

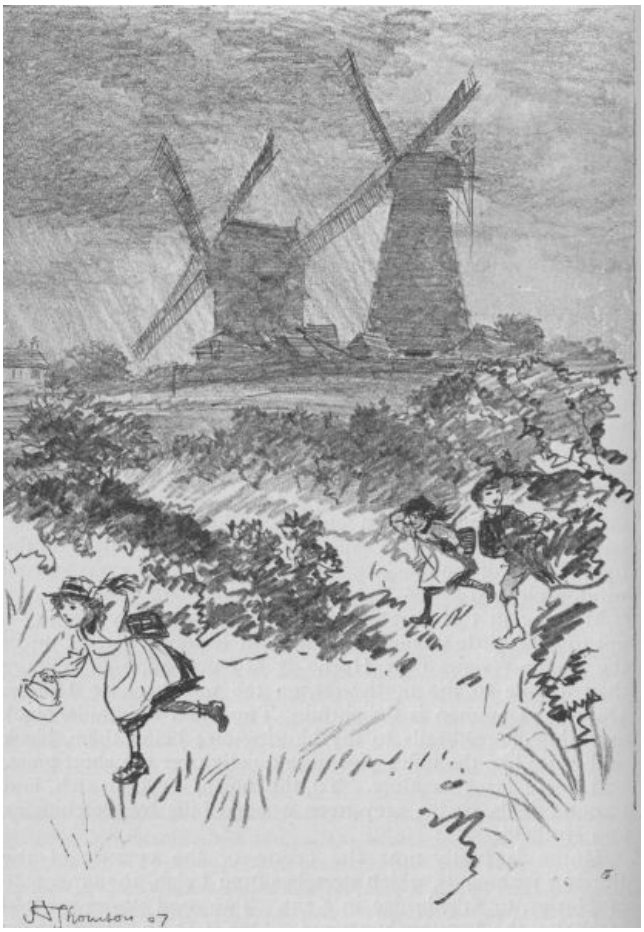
Not many Surrey towns or villages can boast a family cricket eleven. Horley can. Eleven Watneys of Horley have played frequent matches against local clubs, and against eleven Wigans of Mortlake. Mr. F.S. Ashley-Cooper has collected some other instances of family cricket teams in the county. Eleven Bacons, a father and ten sons, played eleven postmen at Thornton Heath in 1895, but were beaten by the postmen. In 1877 eleven Mitchells played eleven Heaths on Shalford Common. The Heaths all belonged to the same family, but the Mitchells were only relations. Eleven Lovells played a match at Tulse Hill in 1901, but had much the worst of it; and, most famous name of all, twelve Cæsars of Godalming, three fathers and their nine sons, once played the Gentlemen of the District. The family luck was no better; they lost by 16 runs.

Hardly a mile to the south-east of Horley lies an enigma—Thunderfield Castle. There is no castle; perhaps there never was one. A moat of brown water, splashed with white duck-feathers; an irregular mound beyond, thick with brushwood, and an ordinary set of farm-buildings through a gate to the side—that is all that is to be seen of the castle to-day. Was it an old British camp? Almost certainly not, nor a Roman camp. Mr. Malden, the Surrey historian, thinks it may have been one of the numberless castles built by the quarrelsome de Clares to annoy the equally quarrelsome de Warennes. Perhaps it was built in the days when castles sprang up like mushrooms; and perhaps it was demolished when demolitions were so frequent that one more or less was never noticed. It may have had a stone keep, but nobody can tell whether it had or not unless he excavates the ground within the moat, and that is a task which nobody, apparently, desires to try.

Another mile and a half along the west road from Horley leads to Smallfield Place, once the [Pg 383] manor-house of the Bysshe family, afterwards a farmhouse, and now a private residence, with the Jacobean part of the old house apparently well worked in with the new. Further, by another mile, is the tiny village of Horne, not much more than a school, a church, and an old cottage or two. In such a simple, open-air little place it was attractive to see, on a hot September day when I was there, a ring of schoolchildren being given their lessons out of doors in the shade. Horne is one of those little villages in which, when the busy, pleasant hum of the children's school first comes

down the wind, you wonder where the children spring from. It does not look as if there were enough cottages within walking distance to provide a class, much less four or five standards—if that is the correct expression. Horne is, indeed, one of the most out-of-the-way little places in this part of the county. But it makes a satisfactory objective for a walk from Horley, and its small church contains at least two memorials of interest. One is an elaborate piece of wood-carving, painted to look like marble, which commemorates John Goodwine, who died when James I was king; the other is an ingenious model of the church itself, as it stood before restoration. The restorers altered the interior pretty thoroughly; but the old church must have been a curious building. It had a long, large window on the roof, especially let in to throw light on the hymn-books of the musicians in the gallery. How was such a window cleaned?

Walking in this part of Surrey, which is chiefly pasture, is apt to be a little monotonous, without a good view. One of the prettiest views near Horne is at Outwood, a little more than a mile to the north-west, on the way back to Horley. Outwood Common is delightful. Two great windmills, black and white, spread sails to the blowing air; below them, black and white like the mills, pigs nose quietly over the short grass, and geese strut cackling. To the north, beyond rich and tranquil fields, lie the grey-green wooded hills by Bletchingley and Nutfield.



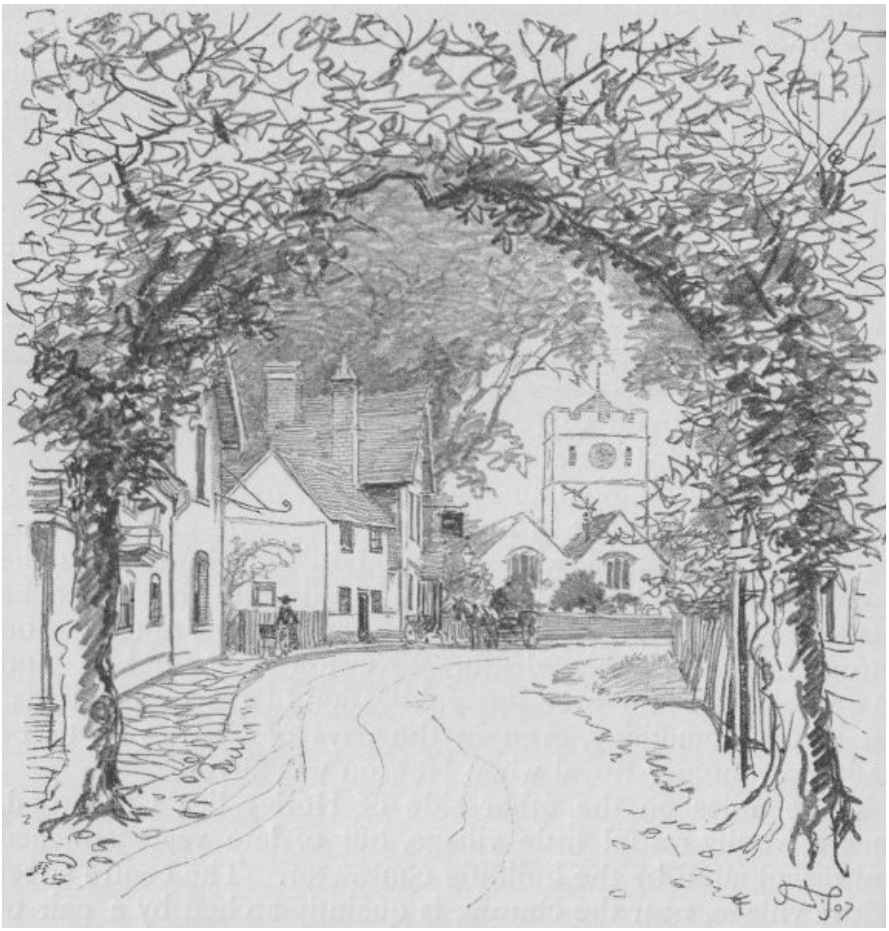
The Windmills at Outwood.

Horne is pretty near the centre of the country of the Burstow foxhounds, which stretches from Leigh, the other side of Horley, to Edenbridge in Kent. Two good stories are told of White, the Burstow huntsman. One is of an extraordinary jump, singular not for its height or the width of ground covered, but for its daring and adroitness. It was on one of the best days the Burstow [Pg 384] ever had, when they killed a fox at Crawley after an hour and ten minutes' run almost without a check; and went on to find another fox near New Chapel Green, which hounds ate in Kent at half-past five, nobody knows quite where, so bad was the light. Nearly at the end of the second run White found himself on the edge of a narrow, deep ghyll, with a stream at the bottom, crossed by an overgrown footpath which went down to the stream and up again by flights of stone steps opposite each other. Riding down two or three of the steps, he took a standing jump over the stream and landed on the top steps the other side. On another occasion his daring was of a different kind; he did not know where he was riding. Hounds had crossed the golf links on Earlswood Common, and White, close behind them, was riding straight for one of the greens. A member of the hunt shouted to warn him, but White, who had not the slightest notion what was meant, galloped straight over the green, turning round to point at the hole and shout to the hunt, "Ware hole! ware hole!"

Burstow itself, hidden among pines, has named the hounds, but has not a large part in Surrey history. One of its rectors, the Rev. J. Flamsteed, who is buried in the church, was the first Astronomer Royal. Charles II made him that, when he was twenty-nine; nine years later he took orders, and went on astronomising till his death. Newton helped him and quarrelled with him over the publication of his observations; but it was something, even in the days of Charles II, to be made Astronomer Royal when Newton was alive.

Three miles on the other side of Horley lies Charlwood, once a wholly restful little village, but of

late years stiffened and discoloured by the building contractor. The centre street of the village, near the church, is quaintly arched by a pair of elm trees, cropped and pollarded to meet overhead. Elms are not often selected for experiments in topiary. But Charlwood has more than one feature peculiar to itself, or at all events to the district. The village lies deep in Wealden clay, which can grow luxuriant roses, but which in days when Surrey roads were less well laid made getting about in the winter rains a matter of difficulty for those who could not drive. So those who walked made their own paths, which can be seen running along the side of most of the roads [Pg 386] in the neighbourhood. "Causies" is the local name for these causeways, which are single slabs of flat stone set like stepping stones in the clay, sometimes for miles together. The villagers tell you that they have been there since no one knows when. They may be right, but their probable date is the middle of the seventeenth century, when John Gainsford, as we shall see, was making a causeway like these at Crowhurst.



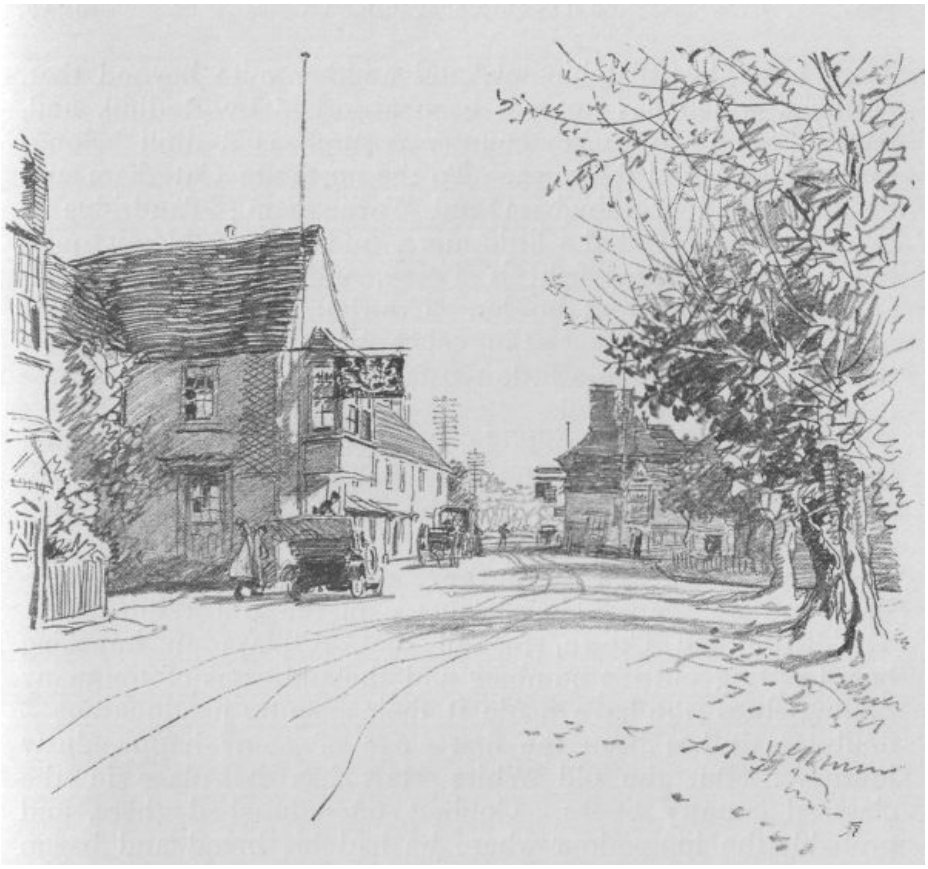
Charlwood.

A very curious set of wall paintings portrays, in the south aisle of Charlwood church, the legend of St. Margaret. St. Margaret was a virgin and a martyr, a most popular saint in the middle ages, and the heroine of a remarkable story. She was the daughter of a pagan priest at Antioch, and [Pg 387] since she was a weak child, she was sent into the country for fresh air. Her nurse brought her up as a Christian, and when she was older she was sent into the fields to mind sheep. One day the governor of Antioch, whose name was Olibrius, was out hunting, saw the pretty shepherdess, fell in love with her at sight, and offered her his hand in marriage on the spot. St. Margaret refused him; she might not wed with a pagan. Olibrius was furious. He seized the poor shepherdess, beat her cruelly, and threw her into prison; even there she was not safe. The devil himself came after her in the form of a dragon, entered the prison and swallowed the saint whole, as you may see in the picture. However, Providence intervened, and by a miracle she escaped from the dragon's body. Evidently Providence then gave up helping, for Olibrius succeeded where the devil had failed. He ordered her head off at once, and the artist has painted her soul flying to heaven in the form of a dove.

Another painting sets out a commoner story, the allegory of the Three Living and the Three Dead. Three kings ride out hunting in the forest, and are met by three ghastly spectres, who lecture them on the vanity of this world's pomps and pleasures. I should think this used to be a favourite. It must have been vastly comforting to the poor, and pretty easy, too, for the parson. Anybody could make a sermon on the sufferings in store for kings and other rich people, and the way they go out hunting and shooting and not caring for anybody, and then the spectres come at them and they see how empty life is. Even to-day those ruddled drawings can set a spell. Stare at them, and the little church calls back its preacher and his flock; there, in the pulpit, he stood, gesturing at the dragon and St. Margaret; here, below him, sat the quiet-hearted countrymen, wondering in the solemn Sunday sunshine; here, perhaps, a child, hearing the story for the first time. St. Margaret must have been more difficult than the Kings. She begins well enough, and she goes on well—the village maidens would doubt whether they would have the strength to refuse an Olibrius. Then the deliverance from the devil would do admirably; the bumpkins would swallow that as easily as the devil swallowed St. Margaret. But how to go on? How to explain the failure

of Providence afterwards? The preacher must have slurred that, and got on quickly to the wings of the dove. [Pg 388]

Two great Surrey families belong to Charlwood. One is the line of Sander, or Saunder, settled at Charlwood as early as Edward II, and still surviving, in name at all events, in the neighbourhood. It was Richard Saunder who placed in the church the delicate fifteenth-century oak screen, the most beautiful in the county; but a more famous member of the family was Nicholas Saunder, Regius Professor and Jesuit Divine, over whose writings many good churchmen quarrelled. The other family are the Jordans of Gatwick, almost as old as the Saunders, and like them surviving in cottage life to-day. [Pg 389]



Godstone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GODSTONE AND BLETCHINGLEY

The White Hart at Godstone.—Cobbett's violets.—Bletchingley.—Beagles and Foxhounds.—Dr. Nathaniel Harris.—Begging the Love of Neighbours.—A gratious woman.—Swift and a gentle prelate.—Bletchingley manor.—The Master of the Revels.—An English gentleman's Armour.—How to be buried.—Posing for a tombstone.—Nutfield.—Fuller's earth and its new uses.

The key to the east of Surrey is Godstone. It is true that the village itself lies more than two miles from the railway station which bears its name, but which might equally well have been named Tandridge or Crowhurst. But there is no other centre in East Surrey from which so many other villages and places of interest are easily reached. To the west, a mile and a-half away, lies [Pg 390] Bletchingley, and another mile beyond that, Nutfield, which has not yet been absorbed by Redhill, and, indeed, belongs to Surrey country as surely as Redhill belongs to the railway and the town. To the north are Caterham and Chaldon, and Woldingham and Warlingham; Tandridge is two miles away, Oxted a little more, and Limpsfield not quite four; north of Limpsfield is Titsey, and east of Limpsfield and Titsey is the Kent border. Crowhurst lies to the south-east, and beyond that Lingfield; but Lingfield is almost Sussex, and is perhaps a little too far for a walk from Godstone; it is best reached by rail.

Godstone begins hospitably, at least to the traveller from the south, with three old inns, the Bell, the Rose and Crown, and the old White Hart, now the Clayton Arms. The Bell and the Rose and Crown have not, I think, won any particular place in history; probably they were always a little overshadowed by the spacious frontage of the old White Hart. The Rose and Crown, for all that, displays an imposing board setting out the numbers and the addresses of the many cycling clubs who have made it their country headquarters—doubtless it has been the first stage of many happy, dusty journeys. But the old White Hart has its place in the classical country books. Cobbett often lunched there, and probably the inn-parlour where he had his bread and bacon is

very much the same as when he wrote of the village in *Rural Rides*. Perhaps the rooms upstairs hold more furniture than in the twenties—particularly the fine dining-room with its oak-beamed ceiling, which is as full of furniture as a room can very well be, besides serving various public uses as a place in which audits and meetings are held and county and local account books inspected. In the yard outside, too, although the great vats of the brewhouse are gone, and Renault cars run under the arch which used to echo with the shoes of spanking teams, there can be little changed since Cobbett saw it. He wrote, in 1822:—

> "At and near Godstone the gardens are all very neat; and at the Inn, there is a nice garden well-stocked with beautiful flowers in the season. I here saw, last summer, some double violets as large as small pinks, and the lady of the house was kind enough to give me some of the roots."

The garden is still gay and full of flowers; though if I were the landlady I should certainly stock some peculiarly pretty sorts of violets to keep up the tradition—even if she were to find it a little [Pg 391] difficult to provide the flowers in bloom in high summer. The village itself has not grown greatly during the past hundred years. Cobbett describes it as "a beautiful village, chiefly of one street, with a fine large green before it, and with a pond in the green." There is not much else to be seen now; the green is as wide and sunny, the geese and ponies graze as contentedly, and the pond is as bright under the chestnut trees and limes. If there has been any very noticeable change, it has been made, perhaps, nearer the church and away towards the railway station, which lie pretty far apart. From the main road by the Clayton Arms there runs a gravel path up to the church, which stands on higher ground, half a mile from the green, and by the path lies a very fine pond, broad and deep, edged with willows and bulrushes, where wild duck swim, and on the far side opening into a shallow bay in which you may watch plovers bathe through the summer afternoons.

The church has not quite the grace and charm of some of its simpler neighbours; but it is interesting as containing a number of monuments to the Evelyns. Church mice are proverbial; but Godstone has a church robin, or had one when I was there in the autumn of 1907. Bread had been placed conveniently for him in one of the windows, and he flew about watching me quietly, and eventually sang a loud solo from beside the organ—*cantoris*, I think. Outside the church are some of Godstone's newer buildings, the almshouses erected by Mrs. Hunt of Wonham House in memory of her daughter; like the additions to the church, they are the work of Sir Gilbert Scott. Nothing could be more admirable than the repose and solidity of these delightful houses, with their massive oak beams and sturdy red chimneys. Sir Gilbert himself lived for a time at Rokesnest, between Tandridge and Godstone.

A mile and a half to the west of Godstone lies Bletchingley, high on the ridge that runs parallel to the downs, above Merstham, to the north. When Mr. Jennings walked into Bletchingley, in his *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, the population seemed to him "at first sight to be made up of butchers and beagles." That was more than thirty years ago, but Bletchingley still keeps up its reputation, in regard to the beagles; indeed, it has added to its just fame, for the odds are that, in [Pg 392] the summer months at all events, the first animal to catch your eye in Bletchingley will be a foxhound. The kennels of the Burstow Hunt are at Smallfields, near Horley, but the puppies introduce themselves to other lodgings. Another abiding feature of Bletchingley is its cobbled gutters. The quiet, sunny main street is one of the broadest of all Surrey village roads, and its gutters drain it admirably. It lies between low and comfortable old houses, of which the White Hart is the chief, as becomes an ancient and notable inn. The White Hart when I saw it last was welcoming a couple of foxhounds; another strolled across the road careless of a hooting horn; another stood in a shopdoor. But of all that belongs to the past in Bletchingley the best lies away from the main road. Brewer Street is the name of an offshoot of Bletchingley to the north, and contains one of the most perfect small timbered houses in the county—the gatehouse of the old manor.

Old Timbered House near Bletchingley.

Bletchingley has been given a bad character by Cobbett. "The vile rotten borough of

Bletchingley," he calls it, and adds, from a Godstone inn, that it is "happily for Godstone out of sight." Long before Cobbett the Bletchingley politicians were in hot water. One of them, Dr. Nathaniel Harris, was rector of the parish in the early days of the Stuarts, and took his politics [Pg 393] with him, as other clergymen have done, into the pulpit. A Mr. Lovell was the candidate he wanted in for Bletchingley, and he did his best for a canvass. He preached a sermon specially directed against persons who would not vote for Lovell; he took his text out of Matthew—"Now the chief priest and elders sought false witnesses"; and he referred generally to his opponents as lying knaves. It must have been inspiriting to hear him. His candidate got in, but there was a petition against him for bribery, and Dr. Harris got into trouble. He had to kneel at the bar of the House of Commons and humbly confess his fault and pray for pardon, and on the next Sunday he had to confess again in church, and to beg for the love of his neighbours.

The Reform Act ended Bletchingley as a borough. It had been bought in the reign of Charles II by Sir Robert Clayton, and was just as flagrant a job as Gatton or Haslemere; generally a Clayton sat for it. In the Clayton era there were not many more than a dozen electors, but the numbers who turned out at an election were remarkable. The inns set out their barrels in the streets, free to all drinkers; the Bletchingley cobbles ran beer. As a disfranchised borough, it ended with a flash of distinction; its last members were Thomas Hyde Villiers and Lord Palmerston.

Other Rectors of Bletchingley were gentler souls than Dr. Harris. One of them, William Hampton —he belonged to a remarkable line of Hamptons, seven generations, and all clergymen—left a pretty passage in his will. He bequeathed to his granddaughter, Judith Herat, a plot of ground in Bletchingley, because, as he wrote, "she is very like her mother and beareth the name of her great-grandmother my mother a gratious woman." Another, Thomas Herring, rose to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Not everybody would have recommended him. Swift abused him. Herring preached a sermon in Lincoln's Inn and condemned Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, and Swift went to the attack in the *Intelligencer*. "I should be very sorry that any of the clergy," he wrote "should be so weak as to imitate a Court Chaplain who preached against the *Beggar's Opera*, which probably will do more good than one thousand sermons of so stupid, so injudicious, and so prostitute a divine." Swift would have quarrelled with his biographer, who gives him an engaging character:— [Pg 394]

> "His person was majestic; he had a gracefulness in his behaviour and gravity in his countenance, that always procured him reverence. His pronunciation was so remarkably sweet and his address so insinuating that his audience immediately on his beginning to speak were prepossessed in his favour."

Bletchingley.

Few manors in Surrey have passed through more distinguished hands than Bletchingley. At the Conquest it was given to the great Richard de Tonebrige, and perhaps he built Bletchingley Castle. He was pretty well off for land in Surrey, for he held thirty-eight manors in that county alone. He was the head of the de Clares, and they held Bletchingley for eight generations. The most famous of them was the Red Earl who knew how to change sides between Simon de Montfort and Henry III so as to be cursed as a traitor six centuries ago and recognised by later generations as a patriot and a statesman, who could curb the barons as well as resist the King. He was the last but one of the de Clares to hold Bletchingley, and it was during his absence, at the battle of Lewes, that a Royalist party destroyed the Castle. His son died at the head of his horse at Bannockburn, and the manor came by marriage into the Stafford family. They held it for another six generations, until the third Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Constable under Henry [Pg 395] VIII, ended the splendours of the Staffords on the scaffold.

Sir Nicholas Carew had the manor next, and followed Buckingham to Tower Hill. Then Anne of Cleves, too plain for Tower Hill, lived there, and Sir Thomas Cawarden managed it for her and succeeded her. He is the fascinating figure. He moves in a royal light of Courts and Kings, of

hunting and hawking in the sunshine, and plotting in dark chambers, and guessing the value of a queen's smile. He was Henry VIII's Master of the Revels, and Keeper of the King's tents, hales, and toyles (which were wooden stables and traps for game), and at Bletchingley he entertained Henry and perhaps more than one of his queens. You picture the Master of the Revels riding in velvet by Catherine Howard, and wondering whether her eyes would take her by the same stairway as Anne Boleyn.

When Queen Mary was proclaimed after Edward, and there were risings and rumours of risings in support of Queen Jane, Sir Thomas Cawarden had his difficulties. He had been getting his orders from Jane one day and Mary the next, and suddenly there was an end; he was arrested, and all his arms were ordered to be seized. Bletchingley Castle was searched, and was found to contain a good deal more than the armour of a few retainers and the artillery of a deer park. The inventory showed twenty-four demi-lances, eighty-six horsemen's staves, one hundred pikes, one hundred morris-pikes, one hundred bows, two handguns, and other weapons, besides sixteen heavy pieces of cannon—enough to arm a hundred horse and more than three hundred foot. All were seized and taken to the Tower. Sir Thomas complained bitterly. Might not an English gentleman keep armour in his country house if he pleased to do so? Mary could prove nothing against him, and was obliged to let him go. But she thought his weapons best kept in the Tower; and so, despite his protests, did Elizabeth after her. Sir Thomas's petition for their return and for redress is amongst the Loseley manuscripts. Here is part of his statement:—

> "That on xxv. Jan. I. Mary he was lawfully possessed at Bletchingley of and in certein horses with furnyture armure artillarie and munitions for the warres and divers other goodes to the value of £2000 and that upon certein mooste untrue surmises brutes and Rumers raised against him was brought into divers and [Pg 396] sundry vexations and troubles during which time one Sir Thomas Saunders Knight and William Saunders of Ewell on pretence of comande did take into their heads and possession the said armure and eight of his great horses and did convey the same in 17 great waynes thoroughly loaden and at the same time spent no small quantity of his corne hay and strawe and had only restored 4 loades and of the said 8 great horse oon of the best the iiird day after died. And the rest are in so evil plite and lykyng and were never since otherwise liable to serve in the carte to his great hindrance and undoing."

When Sir Thomas died, his funeral was prodigious. No expense was spared; the feasting was Gargantuan; the villagers mourned with the best beef and beer. Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower, in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, has obtained from the Loseley MS. a full account of the charges, from which I make extracts. It is headed:—

> Suche CHARGES as grew the Daye of the OBSEQUIES of Sir THOMAS CAWARDEN, Knight, decessed; viz.—
>
> Fyrste to George Melleshe Mchaunt Taylor for black lxxv^{li} v^{s}.
> It^{m} two tonne of beare iii^{li}.
> It^{m} iiii quarters wheat iii^{li} xiiii^{s} iiii^{d}.
> Item ii oxen vi^{li} xiii^{s} iiii^{d}.
> Item iiii vealls xiii^{s} iiii^{d}.
> Item iiii muttons xvi^{s} viii^{d}.
> Item iiii piggs v^{s} iiii^{d}.
> Item iiii doz. pyghons viii^{s}.
> Item vii doz. conyes xvi^{s}.
> Item iv doz. checkens vi^{s} viii^{d}.
> Item sugere spyces and frutes v^{li}.
> Item wyne v^{li}.
> Item to one Garrett for helping in the kitchyne too days ii^{s}.
> Item to Richard Leys for monye borowed of him to be dystributed at Horselye when S^{r} Thom Cawarden dyed for neesorryes iii^{li}.
> Item for the lone of black cottons xiii^{s} 1^{d} ob.
> Item for the waste of other cotten iii^{s}.
> Item for xxvii yards of black cotten that conveyed the wagon wherein the corse was carried to Blechinglie from Horselye xv^{s} ix^{d}.

The black and the bakemeats and the beer cost altogether £149 16*s.* 11*d.* But Sir Thomas had foreseen it all. There were estimates obtained for such things in those days. Here is the estimate made by a herald of the funeral charges of Sir Thomas's lady:—

> PREPARATION to be made for the BURYALL of the LADY CARDYN.
>
> First the body to be well syred (cered) and chested.
> Item a place to be appointed wher the body shall be buryed.
> Item, ordre to be takin for the hangyng of the churche withe blacke.
> Item, order to be takyn for the raylles wher the morners shall knele, to be hangyd [Pg 397] with blacke; and also the churche, and the said raylles, to be garnyshed with scochins.

Item, to apoint a gentylman in a blacke gowne to cary the penon of armes.
Item, to apoint v women morners, wherof the chiefest to be in the degree of a lady.
Item, to apoint a knyght or a squier to lede the chieff morner.
Item, to apoint iiii gentylmen to be assystance to the body.
Item, yeomen in blacke cottes to carry the body.
Item, to appoint a preacher.
Item, to appoint a paulle of blacke velvett to laye upon the body during the service.
Item, prestes and clarks to by appontyd for the said service.

Clarencieulx King of Armes was to manage it, to have five yards of black cloth for his mourning gown, five shillings a day for his services, £3 6s. 8d. for his fee, and to be paid back "his chargys to be boryn to and fro." Men knew how to die then, and how to be buried.

Bletchingley manor, after the Cawardens, came to the Howards of Effingham, and so to an heiress Elizabeth Countess of Peterborough, the richest and loveliest lady of her day. Her son fought for the king against his own father, and the House of Commons fined him £10,000 for turning Roman Catholic. The money had to be found, and the manor was sold to Sir Robert Clayton, Whig, Lord Mayor, plutocrat, and, according to Dryden, extortioner. But Dryden's political satire was not always fair. Ishban, in *Absalom and Achitophel* is Sir Robert—

Ishban, of conscience suited to his trade
As good a saint as usurer ever made.

There was a suspicion that Sir Robert would have liked to purchase a peerage, and Dryden was furious at the "shame and scandal," though a quieter spirit, John Evelyn, dined more than once with the Mayor, and evidently had some admiration for his hospitality. "He was a discreete Magistrate" Evelyn writes, "and tho' envied, I think without much cause."

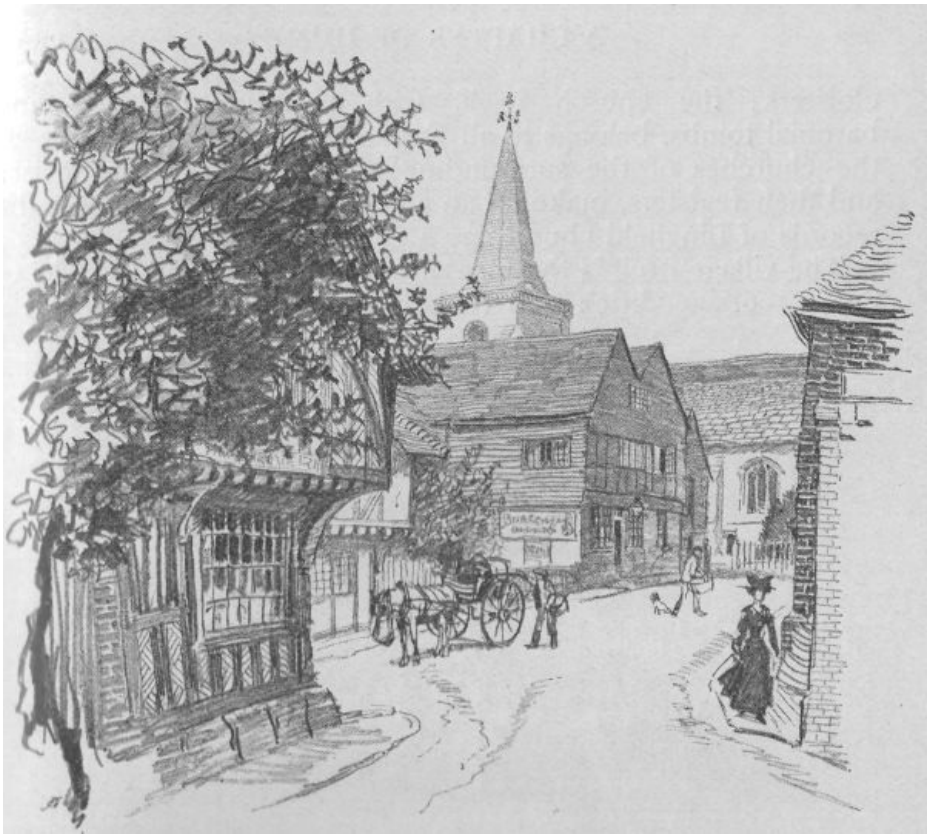
If Sir Robert Clayton was criticised during his lifetime, he left plenty of matter for dispute behind him when he died. Half Bletchingley church is dominated by his monument. Mr. Jennings was appalled by it; "a fearful neighbour" he calls it, and is of opinion that whatever may have been the [Pg 398] misdeeds of the dead, "he never could have done anything bad enough to deserve his terrific monument." As a matter of fact the dead man designed his own memorial, after the serenely contemplative fashion of his time. Is the monument, after all so appalling? It cannot but be interesting, for it is an index to the taste of a bygone age—an age when the survivors of the dead found relief in Latin superlatives, and the living looked into the future with the respectable vanity of an alderman posing before a mirror. No doubt Sir Robert spent many happy hours over his monument. Did he, or did the sculptor suggest the plump cherubs which stand on each side, rolling stony tears from upturned eyes? Did he decide on the particular direction in which he should throw a leg? was it he who selected the disjointed texts which are carved below him? or did the sculptor submit samples? It would be an arresting spectacle; the finality of the whole thing, the weight of the choosing would oppress even a Lord Mayor. A specimen angel would be shown him: no, he could not approve an angel. Had the sculptor no other sizes in cherubs? What texts were being used this season? Stone tears.... The sculptor probably thought of those.

The church once had a fine spire. Aubrey mentions it particularly, as measuring "more than forty feet above the battlements, with five great bells, the tenour weighing 2000 weight, which were melted with the spire and all the timber-work destroyed 1606." It was computed that in the spire were 200 loads of timber. In the tower below the timber is still magnificent and massive, and there is a new peal of bells, cast in 1780. Bletchingley has one of the longest records of church bell ringing in the county. On April 11, 1789, its ringers rang a full peal of 5600 changes —"college exercises"—in three hours thirty-six minutes, as you may read in a record in the belfry. In the record the ages of the ringers are carefully given. They range between 19 and 30. Bell ringing is hard work.

Between Bletchingley and Redhill lies Nutfield, which has not yet been caught into the town. Perhaps its progress into Redhill will be slow, for it stands inconveniently high for wheeled traffic in and out of that huddled basin of bricks, and from its own station a mile to the south the roads up the hill are some of the steepest in east Surrey. Before Redhill brings it more money and more [Pg 399] bricks, it ought to be worth an enterprising landlord's while to convert its principal inn to its old methods. The Old Queen's Head is a posting inn with the remains of what was once a spacious parlour, solid with oak beams big enough for a belfry, warmed by a broad open fireplace and offering the hospitality of two great chimney seats. The chimney seats have lapsed into cupboards and a stove stands where once the wealden logs roared up into the night. But if Godstone with its Clayton Arms, or Chiddingfold with its Crown, beckons in the passer-by to look at old oak and old walls, why should not Nutfield?

Nutfield Church.

Nutfield's chief industry, the digging of fuller's earth, dates back to beginnings that are now quite forgotten. The Nutfield pits are still working, and spread over the slope on which they lie a dreary stretch of blue and grey upturned soil as if a giant gamekeeper had been digging out colossal ferrets. The industry is old enough and important enough for the export of fuller's earth [Pg 400] to have been prohibited as far back as Edward II, and in 1693 one Edmund Warren was tried in the Exchequer for smuggling a quantity of earth out of the country, though it was proved to be not fuller's earth but potter's clay. But there is no doubt that great quantities were smuggled abroad, with corresponding injury—or so it was thought at the time—to the cloth and woollen industry of Guildford and south-west Surrey. Later days have discovered later methods of scouring cloth of grease, and the trade no longer makes large demands on the pits of Nutfield. But fuller's earth has still its uses at the toilet table, and in America other uses. I have ascertained them exactly. It is employed to dehydrate certain oils with which the pork-packer adulterates lard. [Pg 401]



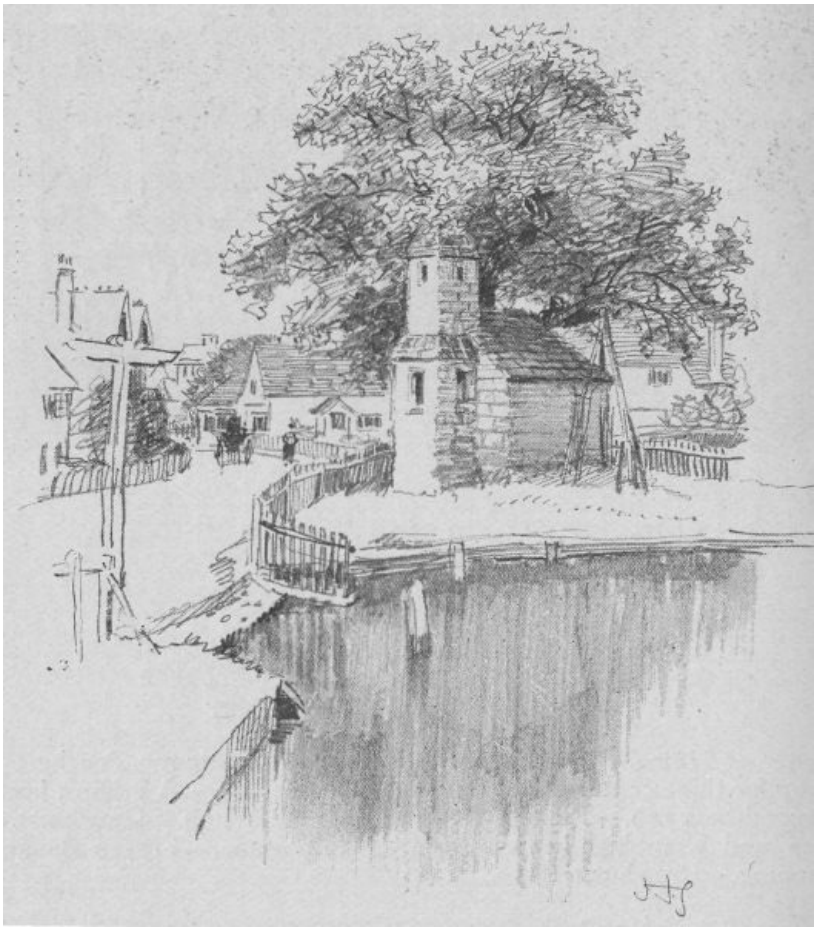
Lingfield.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LINGFIELD AND CROWHURST

A chapter of Hume.—The Village Cage.—The Copthorne Poachers.—A shop for three centuries.—The green-faced Soldan.—A griffin's hoof.—Second-best fish.—Eleanor Cobham and the Witch.—Crowhurst.—A tree and a rubbish-heap.—An iron tombstone.—Fifteen daughters running.—Crowhurst Place.

Lingfield is not large enough, nor enough overbuilt and railway-ridden, to dare to the title of capital even of a distant corner of Surrey. But it stands above and apart from the quiet country round it, like a Bible in an old library. Near it, or in its streets, are some of the prettiest and most ancient timber houses in the county; the churchyard with its brick paths, its rose-beds, the red walls round it and its view of the Weald, has the serenity of deep meadowland and sunlit [Pg 402] cloisters; the church itself, with its sculptured oak and baronial tombs, belongs to all English history from Creçy. If the churches of the surrounding parishes, with their brasses and their registers, make up an admirable local guide-book, the records of Lingfield church are a chapter of Hume.



The Village Cage, Lingfield.

The village itself is the pleasantest mixture of every style of Surrey cottage, brick and timber, weather-tiling, plain brick, plain wood, and a queer row of square white-stuccoed buildings which looks as if it had been dumped inland from opposite shingle and dancing seas. It only lacks tamarisk to be sheer Worthing. The village centres on its pond; not a broad nor a very limpid piece of water, but distinguished by a pair of swans, and by a curious obelisk standing at its head [Pg 403] which once may have marked a shrine. Built on to the bole of an old oak by the obelisk is an apartment engagingly labelled "Ye Village Cage." Other Surrey villages have had their cages, but only Lingfield has kept one. The door is massive and threatening, and you get the keys at the chemist's the other side of the road; or rather, a guide politely accompanies you and displays the cage's secrets. The cage not long ago fell into disuse. It was once used as a temporary lock-up for drunk or disorderly persons, or others who had traversed the local by-laws of morality. Local justice descended upon them, and they were cast into durance until morning should bring soberness with a headache, or, in more serious cases, until proper conveyance could be got round for Godstone. The cage has seen at least one exciting rescue. This was some fifty or sixty years ago, when a number of desperate characters vaguely described as the Copthorne poachers were captured and haled into prison. As to the exact number of captives, tradition varies; but the legend which is the most respectful to the powers of the local constable sets it at eleven. The eleven were surrounded, the door of the dungeon closed on them, and the village tried to go to sleep. Darkness came on, and a daring deed. Other poachers stole into the village, got to work with picks and crowbars, took the roof off the dungeon and hauled out their comrades exulting. The village wisely did not attempt a recapture.

The cage saw its last tenant in 1882, and the story of the rescued poachers may still, perhaps, be heard from the mouth of the oldest inhabitant, who was himself at one time a constable. As an expert in suppressing crime, he never liked the plan on which the cage was built. The floor is

higher by two steps than the ground outside, and you had to go upstairs to it. In fact, you had to throw your prisoner upstairs—a most perilous business. It ought to have been built so that you could take him by the left leg and throw him downstairs like a Christian.

Caged prisoners at Lingfield were not always treated with the utmost rigour of the law. At one time the door was pierced by a grating, and through the grating kindly souls passed packets of tobacco. Liquor could not be passed in packets, but found its way in somehow. Afterwards in severer days the grating was closed, and prisoners neither drank nor smoked, as became their [Pg 404] miserable condition. Nine years after the last captive languished behind the blocked grating the prison was taken over by the village for fresh purposes. Henceforward it was to be the museum, and was duly vested in trustees. Its collection still grows slowly. "Anything to do with village crime—we make that our special subject," the curator informs you with a pleasing urbaneness. The collection includes a man-trap, a pair of handcuffs, a canvas bed which furnishes the museum whenever it is wanted as a mortuary, a pair of farmer's snowboots used a hundred years ago, and a pair of farmer's ordinary boots used more recently.

Of tiny village streets there is no more fascinating byway than the little road which leads up to the south door of Lingfield Church. On the right is the Star inn, taking its sign from the arms of the great lords of Sterborough who lie in the church; and built beside the inn a row of quiet cottages, perhaps once part of the inn. On the left one building stands out from the rest; an early sixteenth century timber house, admirably preserved, and of peculiar interest because after three hundred years it is still carrying on the business for which it was intended. It was built as a shop, and it is a shop still. Modern preference for plate glass and easily opened doors has changed the original plan of the ground floor, but the first floor remains almost as its builder left it, and its heavy girders with their rounded ends jutting out over the pavement below are a happy testimony to the worth of wealden builders and wealden wood. Wealden paint, on the other hand, has not improved. The girders are still dark and stained as oak (or is it chestnut?) should be stained by age and weather. But a yard or two away there are beams as massive and as well-seasoned which flout the lapse of centuries with a flaring and be-varnished buff.

The church is noble and tranquil without and within. A chained Bible stands on a lectern; another Bible, "bought May the tenth 1683," as the inscription runs on the title-page, "by William Saxby of Surry Esq., for the use and benefitt of all good Christians" is in use to-day. But the chief interest of the church to-day, as it has been its chief glory in the past, is its association with the great family of Cobham. The Cobhams of Sterborough—their castle stood two miles east of Lingfield, but has fallen—came of a line which through two of the most eventful centuries of [Pg 405] English history was represented in almost every battle, consulted in the most difficult diplomacy, and allied at last by marriage to an English king. Their family goes back to a Justice itinerant who settled in Kent; but the real founder of the Surrey branch was the Justice's grandson, the first Lord Cobham of Sterborough. He was one of the greatest soldiers of his day, and, from the ransoms he had for the prisoners he took in battle, one of the richest. It was to him, with Sir John Chandos and the Earl of Warwick, that Edward III entrusted the Black Prince at Creçy; at Poictiers he rescued the King of France; he was Lord Admiral of the King's fleet "from the mouth of the Thames westwards"; and to end it all, he died in his bed of the plague. His effigy on his tomb tramples a Soldan, whose face has been duly painted green by the artist—an interesting relic, according to Mr. J.G. Waller, of Crusaders' traditions. There were not enough names for colours in those days, and perhaps the soldiers trying to describe the olive skins of the Arabs, may have called them green. For some obscure reason, too, the Soldan with his green face and his red beard is intended by the artist to be alive. Nobody can say why that should be, but the sculptor doubtless knew. He was a careful and accurate man; you can still trace below Lord Cobham's left knee the fastenings of the Garter.

Lord Cobham's wife, Joan, was the author of one of the longest wills in existence. She remembered everybody, including the prisoners in chains at Southwark and the sick men in the hospitals. Her executor Robert Belknappe was to have "a horn made from a griffin's hoof with a silver core, and the said horn has a silver rim and two silver gilt feet." But she was most anxious, poor lady, about her soul. "Before everything else" there were to be said 7000 masses, immediately upon her death, and the priests were to have £29 3*s.* 4*d.* for saying them. A penny a mass, that is, and the priests took the pence. But it was twelve years before they had said the masses.

The second Lord Cobham had mingled experiences of love and war. According to the inscription on his tomb, broken in the church but preserved in the College of Arms, he was "as brave as a leopard, a sumptuous entertainer, handsome, imperturbable, and courteous." He was a soldier, but the great struggle of his life had nothing to do with a battlefield. It was his attempt to secure [Pg 406] a dispensation from the Pope for marrying his cousin in defiance of the canon law. Almost a year passed before the Pope gave his decision on the point, and then he ordered the unhappy cousins a horribly tedious penance. For four years they might not eat meat; they might not drink wine on Wednesdays, and at the six fasts they might only eat the second-best kinds of fish, and not those which were most agreeable to them. They had to feed four poor persons daily, and wait upon them themselves; and these poor persons were to have bread and meat or fish, with half a flagon of ale, and were to have new tunics and new russet hoods every year. All this was in addition to various heavy fines. The money part must have been the least exasperating: but it might have been amusing to choose the less agreeable kinds of fish.

The eldest son of this much be-penanced marriage had two distinctions. He was for some years the warden, at Sterborough castle, of the French heir to the throne, the Duke of Orleans who was

taken prisoner at Agincourt; and he was the founder of Lingfield College. Lingfield College had a provost, six chaplains, four clerks, and thirteen poor persons, but none of its walls stand to-day. The life of the college farm alone survives, in an inventory of the implements and live stock taken at the Dissolution. Here are some extracts:—

THE LABORERS CHAMBRE. [Pg 407]

Itm a mattres ii bolsters A cou'lett a payer of Shets	iiii^{s}
Itm iii Axes & iii hedgying bylls	ii^{s}
Itm ii Augurs a whymble a chesell a horsecombe	x^{d}
Itm a Share a culter & a Towe (chain)	xviii^{d}
Itm a pycheforke	iii^{d}
Itm iii payer of new Trayes (? traces)	vi^{d}
Itm an old sleyng rope ii hempon alters & a spade	vi^{d}
Husbondry.	
Itm ii wenes (wains) w^{t} weyles unshod	xiii^{s} iiii^{d}
Itm donge pott w^{t} wheles	xvi^{d}
Itm iii barrowes ii good & one bad	xld^{d}
Itm a grynstone	xx^{d}
Cattell.	
fyrst viii Oxen price the yoke 1^{s}	x^{li}
Itm iiii Steres price the yoke xl^{s} xl^{d}	iiii^{li} vi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm xi bolocks whereof ix be yerelyngs and ii be ii yerelyngs price	l^{s}
Itm iii Steres of iii yeres of age price	xl^{s}
Itm ten kene (kine) & a bull	vii^{li} vi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm vi sukkyng Calves	x^{s}
Itm v wenyers (weaning calves)	x^{s}
Itm iiii yewes & iii lambes	vi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm ii old geldyns pry^{d} (priced for) saddell	xxvi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm an old horse	v^{s}
Itm a lame horse to go to myll	v^{s}
Itm iii mares ii grey & i bay	xx^{s}
Itm a grey ii yere colt gelded price	vi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm ii sowes and a bore	vii^{s}
Corne.	
Itm whete in the mowe price	xvi^{s}
Itm old Barley in the chaff	v^{s} iiii^{d}
Itm xii acres of whete price the acre	vi^{s} viii^{d}
Itm xxxiiii acres of ots price the acre ii viii^{d}	iiii^{li} viii^{d}
The Garnard.	
Itm di (half) a quart of Barley	xvi^{d}
Itm halff a quart of Ots	xvi^{d}
Itm a busshell & a shald (sholl, scoop)	iiii^{d}
Itm in the barn a pfan and a Shald	iiii^{d}
Itm xx^{c} of hertlatth (? heart of oak laths)	vi^{s} viii^{d}.

Warriors and statesmen though the Cobhams were, one of their women folk has made more history than they. It was Eleanor, daughter of the founder of Lingfield College, who married the Lord Protector, the "good duke Humphrey" of Gloucester, and who was convicted of dire misdemeanours. Edward Hall, the old historian, writing of 1441, tells the story:—

> "For first this yere, Dame Elyanour Cobham, wife of the said duke, was accused of treason, for that she, by sorcery and enchantment entended to destroy the kyng, to thentent to aduance and to promote her husbande to the crowne: upon thys she was examined in St. Stephen's Chappel before the Bisshop of Canterbury; and there by examinacion convict and judged to do open penance, in iij open places, within the city of London, and after that adjudged to perpetuall prisone in the Isle of Man, under the kepyng of Sir Jhon Stanley, Knyght. At the same season were arrested, as ayders and counsailers to the sayde duchesse, Thomas Southwel, preiste and chanon of St. Stephen's, in Westminster, Jhon Hum, preist, Roger Bolyngbroke, a conyng nycromancier, and Margerie Jourdayne, surnamed the witche of Eye, to whose charge it was laied y^{t} thei, at the request of the duchesse,

had devised an image of waxe, representing the kyng, which by their sorcery, a litle and litle consumed, entendyng thereby in conclusion to waist, and destroy the kynges person, and so to bring him to death; for the which treison they wer adjudged to dye, and so Margery Jourdayne was brent in Smithfelde, and Roger Bolyngbroke was drawn and quartered at Tiborne, takyng upon his death, that there was neuer no such thing by theim ymagined; Jhon Hum had his pardon, and Southwel died in the toure before execution."

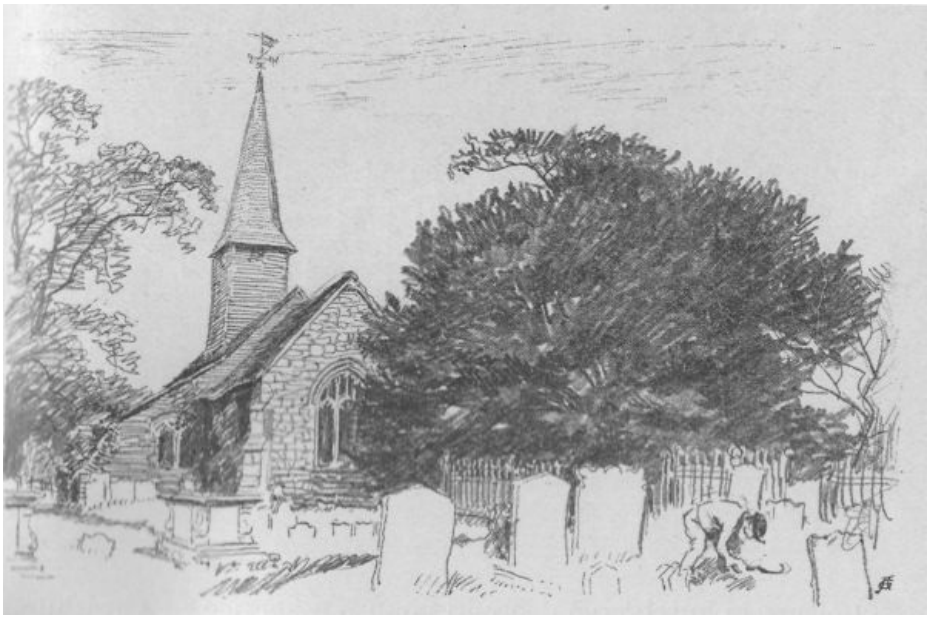
[Pg 408]

The beautiful duchess's penance is in all the history books. But it is Shakespeare, and not the historians, who makes her walk through the town in a white sheet and barefoot.

Three miles north of Lingfield is Crowhurst, one of a noble pair of names. Crowhurst in Sussex and Crowhurst in Surrey each has its immemorial yew, a tree of trees. But the yew of the Surrey churchyard—is there no better way of honouring a tree than the Crowhurst way? Who is to look at a tree like this without unhappiness? From the road the first impression to be had of it is nothing very imposing; a mass of deep and shining green, of no great stature, with strong, springy branches brushing the church walls—that is all. But the nearer view! You expect, and find, an enormous gnarled trunk, and then—Your first idea is that someone has thrown a rubbish-heap at the tree, and that most of the rubbish has stuck—old tea-trays, broken kettles, saucepan-lids, the sides of tin trunks. You then perceive that over gaps and wounds in the vast and writhen shell there have been bound, or nailed, or otherwise fastened a number of patches of thin sheet iron, painted a peculiarly ugly red. These patches of paint shriek with the names of a thousand cockneys, and the names suit the method of mending the broken tree. Gus should be the name of the man who fixed that patch; Erb, surely, daubed on that paint; Alf, I think, drove in that nail. Could none of the foresters of the weald have helped a great tree better in its old age? There should be methods of preserving a tree which are not of necessity hideous; else, it would be better for the giant to die as it pleased.

The church stands commandingly on a hill, overlooking level pastures and woodlands. But the view to the west, with all its breadth and quiet, is not more happy than the nearer picture to the east. Church gates stand opposite few more charming medleys than the multiplied gables, tumbled triangles, and oblongs of red tiles belonging to the roofs of the house on the other side of the road. This fine old brick building, with its formal garden path and clipped yews is now, like the Gainsfords' manor-house a mile away, merely a farmhouse. But it was once the family residence of the Angells, the other great family of Crowhurst after the Gainsfords. Like the Gainsfords, the Angell family has disappeared. The last John Angell died in 1784, and left a very curious will. His property was to go to anyone who could prove *himself* (not herself) descended from an ancestor of his who lived in the reign of Henry VI. Many claims followed; none were proved.

[Pg 409]



Crowhurst Church and the old Yew.

The house has one record at least of unrequited hospitality. This is an extract from the parish registers:—

"1653. July 24.—William Hillyer sonne to —— Hillyer of Bingfield in Barkshire whoe coming as a stranger to M^{r}. Angell's house in Crowhurst dyed: by whom being carefully attended by physiteans and others in his sicknes and decently and in good fashion buried, the father of the sayd William Hillyer refused to paye one farthing for his physitean and buriall like an unnatural father."

Inside the church is a strange monument—a slab of Sussex iron, let into the floor near the altar, and commemorating Anne Forster, the granddaughter of a patriarchal neighbour, Sir John Gainsford. It is odd in more than one way; it is the only iron tombstone in the county, though it is a tombstone that has often been copied. There are still several reproductions of it scattered about the country in the form of firebacks; evidently the founders considered the design

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convenient. Perhaps they might have made a better job if they had been severer scholars; for some of the lettering on it is quaint and topsy-turvy, the S's being twisted the wrong way round and the F's lying unhappily feet uppermost. Yet it fits well with the other old Gainsford and Angell monuments, and is also a memorial of a dead and gone industry, the iron-smelting of Surrey, Sussex, and Kent.

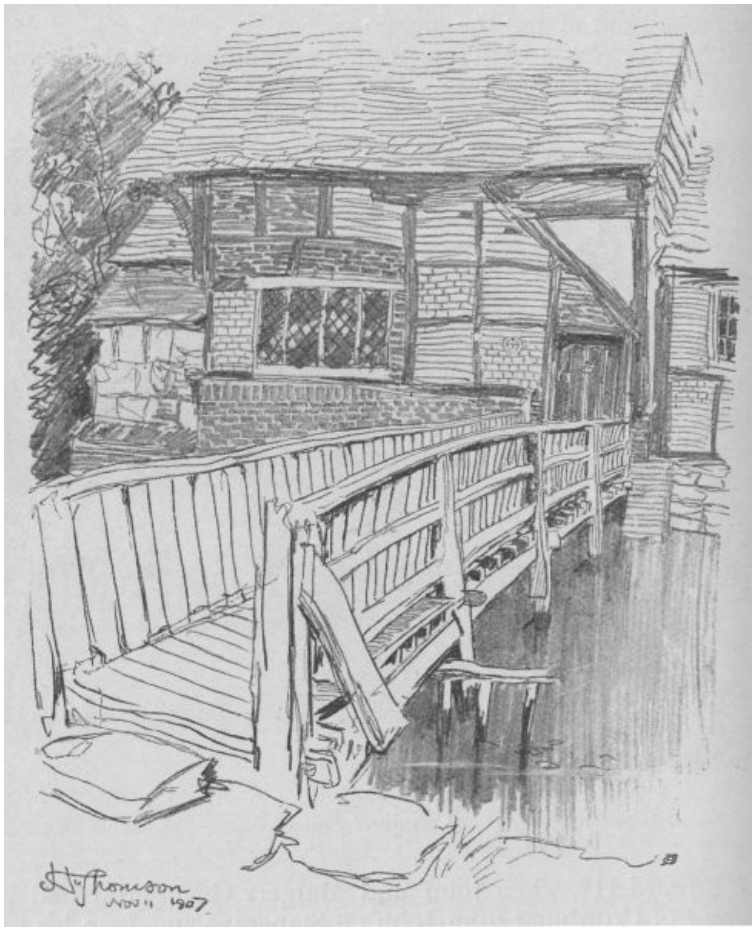
The Farmhouse opposite Crowhurst Church.

Leisured churchgoers should choose a service at Crowhurst at sunset: September drives the sun at the right angle to light its dark oak and the great beams of the belfry. Many churches have windows built high in the west end, through which part of the splendour of the setting sun can filter; but this window is set low, and the red sky floods the church.

From the church to Crowhurst Place a mile away runs an interesting byway, the only one in Surrey, so far as I know, built by a private gentleman of permanent material, extending for a mile from his house to his place of worship. In the year 1631 the John Gainsford of the day, at the fine old age of 76, determined he would walk wet to church no more. He had a stone-flagged [Pg 411] causeway laid from the manor-house to the churchyard, "it being before," as the Parish Register informs you, "a loathsom durtie way every stepp." He paid two workmen fifty pounds for the job, and the causeway is still to be picked out across the meadows.

Crowhurst Place.

The Gainsfords were one of the best, though not the greatest of the old Surrey families. They are first heard of in the reign of Edward III, when John and Margery Gaynesford had the manor of Crowhurst from John de Stangrave and Joan his wife—a delightful gathering of English names. One of them, in Tudor days, was Sheriff of Surrey, and well in the Tudor fashions: he had six wives. But he must have found them disappointing in their family duties, for the first five of them brought him fifteen daughters running, and it was only from the sixth and last that he got a son [Pg 412] and heir. He was one of a long succession of Johns and Erasmuses, but the line failed at the end. There were never enough boys in the Gainsford families, and when at last the manor went to a daughter the spell was broken; the house was sold.



The Bridge over the Moat, Crowhurst Place.

Crowhurst Place was originally a timber house built in or near the reign of Henry VII, and according to tradition Henry VIII used to stay there on his way to visit Anne Boleyn at Hever [Pg 413] Castle over the border. It was, and still is in some respects, an admirable example of the masonry and carpentry of the fifteenth century, but the destroying hand of later builders has removed part of the timber and filled up the gaps with brick and weather-tiling, so that its full character has been taken away. The great hall, with its glorious beams, was too much for the utilitarian. The waste of space distressed him. He therefore cut it in two by running a floor across the length of it halfway up, and subdivided his floor into bedrooms to accommodate the resident farmer's numerous family. It would be difficult to ruin a fine hall more completely.

But the house still has its own beauty, though it is the wild beauty of poverty and neglect. It stands half a mile from the road to the south-west of the church, approached by a rough bridle path. The first glimpse through the trees is of gables striped white and dark; a moat, befeathered and noisy with ducks, and a little wooden bridge crossing the moat to a side-door. Beyond lie great barns, a flagged courtyard and flagged paths, and round the corner a second bridge over the moat, brickbuilt and massive; and by the garden gate a mounting-stone, which it would be pleasant to think gave Anne Boleyn's royal wooer an easy step into the saddle. But it came later, perhaps.

Is it not possible that Crowhurst Place may be rescued as Tangley Manor was? It has the hall, and the kitchen and the oak panelling, and the great fireplaces for which we search all the house-agents' catalogues; it is moated, it has dined a king; there should be a ghost somewhere. But it rests apart, a farmhouse only. Brambles grow about it, such as should fence in a castle of sleep; above them timbered gables and tall chimneys to fit the cold and spacious hearths within. The fires that lit those hearths wait their rekindling. [Pg 414]

CHAPTER XL

OXTED AND LIMPSFIELD

East of Godstone.—Tandridge.—The *Notebook of a Surrey Justice*.—Sturdy rogues.—Oxted.—A Rustic Guildford.—Mittens and corduroys.—Limpsfield.—Self-criticism.—*The Old Oak Chair.*—Titsey Park and the Roman villa.—Tatsfield above the downs.

East of Godstone five churches stand in a bow stretched to the Kent boundary. Not each church has a village. Oxted and Limpsfield, in the middle of the bow, are near by a railway station, and Limpsfield plays golf on the common: both are little old villages with many new houses about them. But Tandridge and Titsey, towards each point of the bow, are churches almost without

cottages, but with great parks beside them: Tatsfield, easternmost of all Surrey villages, has houses and cottages, but the church stands apart, looking out over the Weald.

Tandridge was once Tanrige, and had a priory, which disappeared, of course, at the Dissolution. It was quite a little place; its earliest record, dated somewhere near the end of the twelfth century, describes it as the Hospital of St. James, in the Ville of Tanregge, with three priests, in perpetuity there serving God, and Confraters of the said Hospital. So Odo, son of William de Dammartin, writes of it in his deed of gift of lands, a windmill, and silver cups to make a chalice. The establishment was less a priory than a small hospice, in which poor and needy persons were cared for, and to which wayfarers might come for refuge; one of those gentle places for the help and refreshment of sorrowing men that are set so strangely before the days of Tudor cruelties and tortures. The prior's hospice welcomed and comforted the tired poor; Elizabeth's age beat them, men and women, for sturdy rogues. [Pg 415]

Tandridge Church.

Later Tandridge history centres round the church and Tandridge Court. Tandridge Court has had noble owners, but perhaps the most interesting is Bostock Fuller, who was a Justice of the Peace in the days of Elizabeth, and who has left a notebook describing his work and the cases that came before him, which takes his reader extraordinarily close to Tudor times and customs. The manuscript, entitled *Note Book of a Surrey Justice*, is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, has made extracts from the Bodleian transcript. Here are some of them:—

Apryll 1608.

4 Rogues whypped

The 7th I rode with Mr Evelyn to Sir W. Gaynsfords whoe was sycke, to have his testymonye versus George Turner & that day we tooke iiij Rogues 2 men and ij women on Blyndlye heath & had them to Godstone they had stolen ij duckes and accused eche other of other ffacts, & the 8th daye I went to Mr Evelyns & there we sawe them whipped and made them pasports to Devonshire & Somersetshire.

2 Rogues whipped

The 15th daye I caused to stoute Rogues called Marye Rendoll a wydow, & Anne Marks a wyfe to be whipped at Tanrydg & sent to Rawlyns in Essex.

June 1608 [Pg 416]

The 22th I rode to Kyngston Assyses and there I stayed 23th and 24th dayes. Botley and Renfyld whom I sent to the Gaole were there hanged and Burges whom Mr Evelyn & I bayled was burnte in the hande.

January 1608

John Berrye whom I sent to the goale for stealing Colcocks and Whites henns was arrayned & whipt....

Bartholomew Gander being accessarye & ... Roaker, were put into the Byll with the principal....

1612. 23 Dec.

I sent a warrant for Richard Mathewe of Reygate for hunting my lord admyralls Conyes.

1613. The 4th of June

Amias Gullock brought to me by the offycers of Gatton the 4th daye of June for

stealing of a petycote which was taken with him; but the partie would not accuse him of ffelonye, & he said he boughte it. I caused him to be whipte and sent to the place of byrth at Combe by Chard in Somersetshire.

Julye 19. 1613

... the abouebounden John Lambe is accused by Tho. Dennys for shooting in a gunne & vnlawfullie killing of his conyes....

Julye 1616

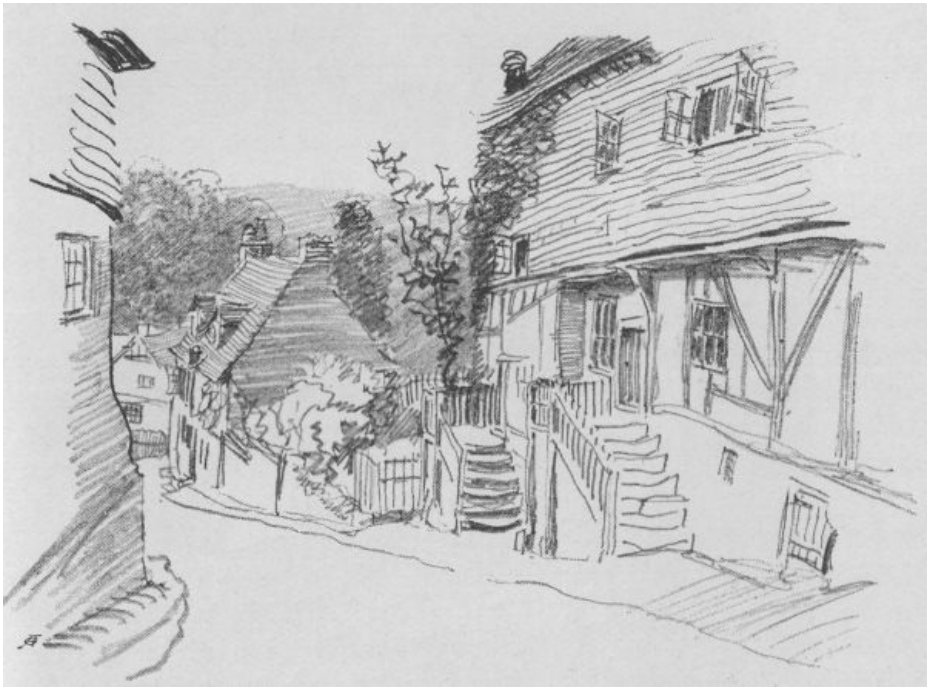
The xith I sent Eliz. Edsall seruant to Richard Greene to the house of Correction for stryking her dame and threatning her after and for departing from her seruice.

19° Nov.

... they broughte ... Toller with a goose which he said he stole from Rose Harling, & I charged the Constable to laye him by the heeles all night & to bring him again next morning.

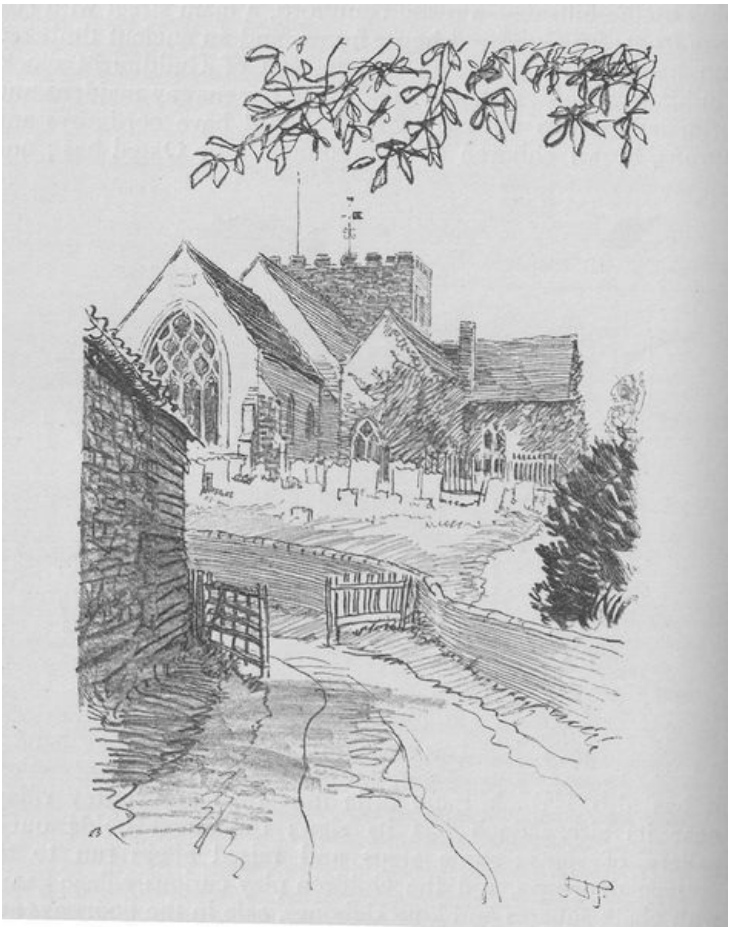
He brake the stocks and ran away.

So went village life for Tandridge in the golden days. Few cottages have been added since Mr. Bostock Fuller used to ride to the assizes. He would see little change, perhaps, in the church, with the glorious oak beams that bear up its belfry, and little, too, in the mighty yew whose branches brush its tower. Over one gravestone he might be puzzled. It has been placed in the grass, I think since his day, near the south door, and is an ancient monument of hard sandstone with a cross carved on it. Legend says that it was brought from Tandridge Priory, but there are others like it at Oxted and Titsey which belong to an older date than the priory. [Pg 417]



A Street in Oxted.

Oxted is north-east of Tandridge; but there are two Oxteds. One is the new village near the station, with new shops, a new inn, and the old church. The other is the old village, set apart from the railway; a little village clustered about a main street running up the hillside—a rustic Guildford, a main street with cottage fronts for Guildford house fronts, and an ancient timbered inn hanging out a golden bell instead of Guildford's clock. Guildford's houses should hold Kate Greenaway maidens and prim ladies with mittens: Oxted should have corduroys and aprons, brown children and sunbonnets. So Oxted has; and it has also, I think, more little inns than any Surrey village near its size. Each has its sign; the street holds out a gallery of signs: stone steps and raised alleys run to the cottage doorways, and the children play curious village games with chalk squares and knucklebones, safe in the doorways and on the pavement. There is a corner by the road crossing the main street which is the prettiest in east Surrey. Weatherbeaten, brick-and-timber cottages frame it: the Bell Inn, with its beams like letters of a big black alphabet, hangs out its gold bell; beyond, the road slopes to dim country greennesses and the hill of the downs. [Pg 418]



Oxted Church.

Oxted church tower is noble and massive; a great content is about its quiet, solid battlements. Once it had a spire, and I wish I had never read that the spire was destroyed; now when I see it I am always wondering what the church was like with a spire. In the churchyard are two ancient tombstones, like the single stone at Tandridge; they, too, are far older than the church. [Pg 419]

Other strange monuments are in the church. One is to the memory of Ann, wife of Charles Hoskins, who thus mourned her in 1651:—

LET THIS
PATTERNE OF PIETY
MAPP OF MISERY
MIRROUR OF PATIENCE
HERE REST

In another memorial you may trace the history of an extremely large family. John Aldersey "haberdas^{hr} and m'chant ventoror of London" died in 1616, aged seventy-five, "and had ysue 17 childeren." The whole seventeen are represented in marble accompanying, and from their dress and different sizes you may guess what happened to them. There are ten sons and seven daughters; of the ten sons, six are bearded men, who grew up, perhaps, and were men like their father: three are younger, just ordinary sons, and one is a baby—I suppose died as a baby. Of the seven daughters, two are babies, and the five that wear caps you may imagine to be girls who grew up and were married and lived happily.

In Barrow Green House, an admirable building, perhaps more Georgian than Jacobean, once lived Grote, the historian. He lies in Westminster Abbey; his widow, as we saw, is buried in Shere churchyard. Barrow Green Farm, close by, is all that an old farmhouse should be, complete with barns, an oasthouse, and a fascinating front to the road. Oasthouses begin here, near the Kent border. Surrey grows few hops; only at Farnham and near Oxted, I think. In the west Hampshire encourages her, and here she takes heart from Kent.

Limpsfield is the other side of the railway. The centre is unlike old Oxted, for it is the church; but you cannot get a picture of Limpsfield as separate and self-contained as of old Oxted. Oxted sets itself on its hillside more charmingly than any village of the Surrey weald; you get the picture from halfway up the road to the station, and you should look at it when the sun is setting. Then the white ricks in the foreground loom larger, and the huddled roofs and gables age into another century; the blue smoke of wood fires drifts in the wind across the hill. But you cannot hold Limpsfield at such a pleasant distance; you must come into the village street close to the old [Pg 420] cottages, and close too, to a large house with a noble frontage on the roadway; great houses are seldom set so near to cottages and the road. But Limpsfield, with all its attractive antiquities of timber and gables, somehow strikes a modern note. Detilens is the name—a name one vaguely tries to scan for a Latin verse—of a little, hidden house of great age, in the village street. But it is the common, not Detilens or neighbouring roofs, which marks Limpsfield, and on the common are golf links and the huge red-brick buildings of a school.

A century ago Limpsfield held an author and a critic. He was the author of a tiny book, *Lympsfield and its Environs*, which was republished in 1838 with an introduction by a friend, who signs himself "H.G." and dates his preface from Westerham. At Westerham, too, the curious little republication was issued. It is illustrated by George Cruikshank and with pleasant prints of old pencilled drawings, and besides a poem, contains a number of descriptions of the chief houses of the neighbourhood. Here is one of them:—

"Chart's Edge.

> On inquiring of a native, we were told that this place was the residence of "Mr. *Antiquary Streatfeild*." We doubt, however, if he has any just pretensions to that designation, a divine across the border assuring us that he is skilled in glamoury, and illustrating his account by stating that 'where there was a hill, there he would have a hollow, where there was a dell, there we should find a mound'; and, indeed, we ourselves experienced the delusion, for the spot which we had known for many years as a bleak desert, appeared sheltered and decorated with thriving plantations, a house new from the kiln, cheated us with its Elizabethan air; neither was the spell broken when we found ourselves in the interior; there we saw, or thought we saw, one of Raphael's loveliest easel pictures, one of Rembrandt's deep toned yet brilliant interiors, and a goodly row of ancestors in flowing wigs and ample ruffles; whilst, in fact, the former were no more than a foxy Italian copy of the divine Urbino, and a modern English attempt to mimic the glorious Fleming, and the latter, Cockneys and Kentish Yeomen."

Such a concatenation of studied insults might be supposed to have finished with a libel action. [Pg 421] But it is the only description of a neighbouring house which has a hint of raillery, and a pencilled note in a copy I found of the little old book adds the explanation. Chart's Edge belonged to the author of *Lympsfield and its Environs*. I imagine, also, that Mr. Antiquary Streatfeild was the author of *The Old Oak Chair*, republished in the same volume by his friend "H.G.," and described as a ballad "sung at an anniversary dinner of the Westerham Amicable Benefit Society, to which the author has proved a steady friend." This is the ballad of *The Old Oak Chair*:—

My good sire sat in his old oak chair,
And the pillow was under his head,
And he raised his feeble voice, and ne'er
Will the memory part
From my living heart
Of the last few words he said.

"When I sit no more in this old oak chair,
And the green grass has grown on my grave,
And like armed men, come want and care,
Know, my boys, that God's curse
Will not make matters worse,
How little soever you have.

"The son that would sit in my old oak chair,
And set foot on his father's spade,
Must be of his father's spirit heir,
And know that God's blessing
Is still the best dressing,
Whatever improvements are made."

And he sat no more in his old oak chair;
And a scape-thrift laid his hand
On his father's plough, and he cursed the air,
And he cursed the soil,
For he lost his toil,
But the fault was not in the land.

And another set in his father's chair,
And talked, o'er his liquor, of laws,
Of the tyranny here and the knavery there,
'Till the old bit of oak
And the drunkard broke,
But the times were not the cause.

But I have redeemed the old ricketty chair,
And trod in my father's ways;
Have turned the furrow with humble prayer
To profit my neighbours,
And prosper my labours;
And find my sheaves with praise.

[Pg 422]

Cruikshank draws the scape-thrift roystering over punch and churchwardens' pipes. The careful and thrifty farmer is in another picture. He has no pipe, and he talks kindly to his wife, and

dandles his son on his knee. There is a large ale-jug on the table, and he has had a capital dinner.

Titsey, a mile and a half away under the downs, is not a village at all; just a modern church outside Titsey Park, and a cottage opposite the church which was once an inn, and could swing a sign now if it wished; the frame is there. Once the church stood inside the park. That was when Titsey Place belonged to the Greshams, the ancestors of its later owners, the Leveson-Gowers. Sir John Gresham, looking one day in 1776 at the old church, decided that it was too near his house: it was only thirty-five feet distant. With the insolence of the day, he knocked it down, and the modern church stands obediently outside the gates. But Titsey Park has made amends. When the late Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower was at Titsey he brought to light, and described in the *Surrey Archæological Collections*, the foundations of a Roman villa discovered in the Park, almost touching the old road used by the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The foundations were interestingly complete, and from the ground near were dug coins, pottery, and a bronze mask. To-day the villa may be visited, but it is overgrown by weeds and elder bushes, and the visible remains are of scanty walls and tumbled pillars; rabbits, I think, see most of it.

From Titsey you may climb a steep road and find Tatsfield church, separated from its scattered village, clean on the edge of the steep hill. Tatsfield church, which is old and small, stands nearly eight hundred feet above the weald, and its little churchyard, with a path in it leading to no gate, but only to a hedge, lends a curious sense of a garden. The stretch of Sussex and Kent to the south is freer and wider than any other Surrey church sees; but Tatsfield, like other places with a fine view, suffers continual loss in cloudy weather. When I was last there the church stood alone on the brow, over unguessable depths of grey mist. [Pg 423]

CHAPTER XLI

DULWICH TO WIMBLEDON

Growing London.—Cigars by Dulwich Valley.—Edward Allen, Actor, Bear-baiter, Dog-fancier and Founder of a College.—Godd's Guift.—Dulwich buttercups.—Dr. Johnson.—A Prayer in a Library.—Merton.—Wimbledon Camp.—A Miser's grave.—An opportunity for a duel.—Groans for George Ranger.—Memories of the Windmill.

Nothing is more capricious than a vast town pushing out into the country. No law binds it; no power can resist it; it will not be tempted, or denied; only one future can certainly be prophesied for it, that where it comes it will remain. Looking at London and its surroundings on a new map and an old, it is an arresting thing to trace—almost to watch—the growth of the inexorable black ink on what a decade or two before was inviolate white. There is nothing orderly about it, nothing mathematical. London does not grow as the circles spread from a splash in a pond, nor regularly and certainly as geologists say stones grow in the soil—a fascinating and rather dreadful secret of growth. London grows suddenly by fits and starts. Once, perhaps, the town crept out quietly, a field at a time, a new road in a twelvemonth. Now it catches great parks and manors. But which way it will go out to catch them you cannot guess. It may walk threateningly, and it may leave alone, as it has left the deepest of hayfields alone in Kent much nearer London than in Surrey. One rule, perhaps, it keeps relentlessly; it will never leave country between London old and London new. The Londons join at once.

Ruskin, in *Præterita*, shows you London striding by Herne Hill to Croydon. Herne Hill should be a hill with a heronry on it, but the name is new; it was King's Hill when John Speed made his map [Pg 424] in the days of James I. But Herne Hill was in the country when Ruskin knew it. Norwood was a hill; Dulwich was a valley. "Central in each amphitheatre, the crowning glory of Herne Hill was accordingly, that, after walking along its ridge southward from London through a mile of chestnut, lilac, and apple trees, hanging over the wooden palings on each side—suddenly the trees stopped on the left, and out one came on the top of the field sloping down to the south into Dulwich valley—open field animate with cow and buttercup, and below, the beautiful meadows and high avenues of Dulwich; and beyond, all that crescent of the Norwood hills; a footpath, entered by a turnstile, going down to the left, always so warm that invalids could be sheltered there in March, when to walk elsewhere would have been death to them; and so quiet, that whenever I had anything difficult to compose or think of, I used to do it rather there than in our own garden. The great field was separated from the path and road only by light wooden open palings, four feet high, needful to keep the cows in. Since I last composed, or meditated there, various improvements have taken place; first the neighbourhood wanted a new church, and built a meagre Gothic one with a useless spire, for the fashion of the thing, at the side of the field; then they built a parsonage behind it, the two stopping half the view in that direction. Then the Crystal Palace came, for ever spoiling the view through all its compass, and bringing every show-day from London a flood of pedestrians down the footpath who left it filthy with cigar ashes for the rest of the week: then the railroads came, and expatiating roughs by every excursion train, who knocked the palings about, roared at the cows, and tore down what branches of blossom they could reach over the palings on the enclosed side. Then the residents on the enclosed side built a brick wall to defend themselves. Then the path got to be insufferably hot as well as dirty; and was gradually abandoned to the roughs, with a policeman on watch at the bottom. Finally, this year, a six foot high close paling has been put down the other side of it, and the processional excursionist has the liberty of obtaining what notion of the country air and prospect he may,

between the wall and that, with one bad cigar before him, another behind him, and another in his mouth." [Pg 425]

Dulwich valley, and cows and buttercups—it has still an uneasy echo of the town. Somewhere, surely, there always broods over Dulwich the spirit of the founder of its college. He is the Londoner of Londoners, and the oddest combination of characters that ever left a name as pious benefactor of a school. Edward Allen, or Alleyn as his college spells him, was to begin with an Elizabethan actor. He was one of a company of strolling players before he was twenty; he was twenty-two when he had somehow made himself a "gentleman," to be so described on a deed of gift; and when he was twenty-six, he was such an actor that Ben Jonson compared him to Roscius and Cicero, and Thomas Nash wrote that "Not Roscius or Aesope, those tragedians admired before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous Ned Allen." Perhaps he made his money as an actor-manager; perhaps he married money, for his wife was the daughter of a pawnbroker (who was also a theatre-proprietor and one of the grooms of the Queen's chamber); perhaps he began lending money early in life himself. He and his father-in-law, when James succeeded Elizabeth, were made chief masters of "his Majesty's games of Beares, Bulls and doggs"; they had a menagerie in the Paris Gardens at Southwark where they kept wolves and lions; they worried bulls and had dog-fights, and showed "pleasant sport with the horse and ape and whipping of the blind beare." Money rolled in, with the apes and the bears and the loans, and in October, 1605, Allen, by this time full esquire, bought the manor and lands of Dulwich for £4,900. Eight years later he left Southwark for Dulwich, and set about founding his college.

Aubrey has a quaint legend of the foundation. How should an actor found a college? The devil was in it somewhere. Tradition told "that Mr. *Alleyne*, being a Tragedian, and one of the Original Actors in many of the celebrated *Shakespear's* Plays, in one of which he play'd a Daemon, with six others, and was in the midst of the Play surpriz'd by an *Apparition* of the *Devil*, which so worked on his Fancy, that he made a Vow which he perform'd at this Place." That was the beginning of Dulwich College, according to one story; according to another, it was only because Allen had begun so earnestly, and tied himself up by so many legal contracts that he did not repent of his vow and take back all he had given. That was when, a widower of fifty-seven, he [Pg 426] wanted to marry a girl of twenty. She was John Donne's daughter Constance, and perhaps Donne felt bound to ask for liberal settlements. However, the settlements were arranged somehow, and the college was founded. The "colledge of God's gift" was his name for it, and as its founder he described himself as "chief master, ruler and overseer of all and singular over games of beares, bulls, mastive doggs and mastive bitches." His blood-relations were to be Master and Warden, if possible, and so, for many years, they were.

One of the statutes explains the name "God's gift." There were to be twelve poor scholars, chosen partly by merit and partly by chance. When a place became vacant three or four children were to be elected by the parish vestries, and of these two were to be chosen by the Master and Warden, and then the two were to draw lots:—

> "The manner of drawinge of the said lot shall be thus: Two equal small rowleses of paper to be indifferently made and rolled up, in one of which rolls the wordes 'Godd's Guift' are to be written, and the other rowle is to be left blank and so put into a boxe; which boxe shalbe thrice shaken up and downe, and the elder person of those two that are elected to drawe the first lot, and the younger person the second; and whiche of them draweth the lott wherein the wordes 'God's Guift' are written shalbe forthwith admitted."

Another gift followed Allen's. When Sir Francis Bourgeois died early in the last century he left his fine collection of pictures to the school. The gallery is open to the public; but a description, in the space I have here, could be no more than a list of names.

Dulwich still has some of its fields and buttercups; the playing fields are a pleasant oasis which is the last vision of sunlight and grass for the traveller on the Chatham and Dover railway before plunging into the murk of the Penge tunnel. Of its neighbours to the west, Streatham clusters about a tangle of railways; Streatham, which was deep country for Dr. Johnson, knocked down, in 1863, the house and cut up the park that Dr. Johnson knew when they belonged to the Thrales. He would not recognise the church—the church to which he bade farewell with a kiss—it has been rebuilt. The library, which, if it were standing to-day with the books that Johnson read, would be the most sought for room in Surrey, went, of course, with the house. Eighty years [Pg 427] before it fell Johnson had parted from it with a prayer. "Help me," he prayed, "that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in Thy protection when Thou givest, and when Thou takest away." That was the library which was destroyed only forty-five years ago. But Streatham, when it knocked down the Thrales' house, had very good authority for parting with all it had of Dr. Johnson. Mrs. Thrale would not have minded. She sold all the letters Dr. Johnson wrote her for a matter of five hundred pounds.

Between Streatham and Wimbledon London strides out in patches. It has not yet taken in Mitcham, which has a fine green with memories of great Surrey cricket, and which grows all manner of scented flowers, lavender and mint and rosemary and everything old-fashioned for herbalists and perfumers and ladies' sachets and linen-chests. But Merton, north-west towards Wimbledon, has been caught fast. Merton church, in which Nelson used to worship, and which has his hatchment on the wall, above fine cross beams of oak, stands among brand-new roofs and roads. Opposite the church is the forlornest thing; a house which once was Sheridan's, and which

is now the warehouse of a shop, and hangs in its hall and rooms printed calico. The windows are broken and cobwebby, the garden is a ruin, but the calico, which you may buy at a shop in the town, is fresh and very brightly printed. Francis Nixon, the founder of Merton's calico-printing, which is quite an industry, lies in the churchyard.

And so, by a ring from east to west, where London joins the Surrey countryside, we come to Wimbledon; Wimbledon old and new, as old as a camp which may have been Saxon, as young as yesterday's new villa. The camp, it is true, exists no longer. It has had more learned essays written over it than any in Surrey; it has been claimed as belonging to Cassivelaunus, it has been argued to be a Roman camp, and it has been urged that it marks the site of a battle between Saxon and Saxon for the possession of Surrey. It was a war camp, pretty certainly, from its shape, which was almost exactly circular. But you can see the shape no longer. Wimbledon was unfortunate enough to see its famous camp fall into the hands of a Mr. Sawbridge Erle Drax, and [Pg 428] he, in 1875, dared to level its dykes with the ground, to cut down its mound, and fill in its ditch. Of acts of wanton and insolent destruction, this stands supreme in the history of the county.

Wimbledon has held a great house, and has seen royal progresses which cost the lord of the manor a fortune. Thomas Cromwell was one of the lords of the manor, and after him came Catherine Parr: but the great days were those of the Cecils. Lord Burghley, Elizabeth's treasurer, lived at intervals at the Rectory House, and some of Elizabeth's summer excursions came to Wimbledon; she stayed with her treasurer and with his son. But the Cecil who belongs most to Wimbledon is not the treasurer whose nod summed up the wisdom of a Parliament, nor any Lord of Burghley; but a younger son who was a soldier and a sailor. He was Admiral and Marshal-General of the forces sent by James I. and Charles I. against the Spaniards; he was made Lord Wimbledon, and his memory on the records of the army of his day is that his name of Cecil was punned into General Sit-still when he was a soldier of almost foolhardy personal daring, and that he re-introduced into the army the "old English march." There was "one certaine measure," a royal warrant informs us, which had been lost "through the negligence and carelessness of drummers," although it had been "by the approbation of strangers themselves, confessed and acknowledged the best of marches." This march, at the instance of Lord Wimbledon, was beaten in the king's presence at Greenwich in 1610 and ordered to be exactly and precisely observed by all drummers in the kingdom of England and principality of Wales, without any addition or alteration whatsoever. We do not hear it in these days of battles without drums and colours; but we do not fight much better, perhaps, without the drums.

The old Wimbledon church was demolished; the new church was built in 1786. It has many monuments, but the grave which fascinates is the tomb neither of a great statesman nor a good man. It is apart in a far corner; over it is laid a huge slab of black stone, perhaps half a foot thick, and the stone tells you that under it lies the body of "John Hopkins, Esquire, familiarly known as Vulture Hopkins." Misers have had hard things said of them often enough; of Hopkins Pope wrote [Pg 429] that "he lived worthless, but died worth three hundred thousand pounds," and, reflecting on the "Use of Riches," Pope made a couplet on his funeral:—

> "When Hopkins dies, a thousand lights attend
> The wretch who living saved a candle's end."

But those legends belong to paper and books. They are less easily destroyed than an epithet engraved on a stone; but who of deliberation would carve an insult, as this is carved, for a dead man?

The Golf House and Windmill, Wimbledon Common.

Wimbledon will never belong to the town so long as it keeps its common. It is the wildest thing near London. It is almost as wild and lonely a place to-day as when in Georgian and early

Victorian days statesmen and noblemen chose it as a fashionable and convenient ground for duelling. The common has seen more than one historic duel. The Duke of York and Colonel Lennox met there in 1789; the Duke received the Colonel's fire, and the ball grazed his hair, but he did not fire in return. Pitt fought a duel with a member of Parliament on Putney Heath north of [Pg 430] the common in 1798; each fired twice at twelve paces and hit nothing. Sir Francis Burdett and Mr. John Paull fought in 1807, wounded each other and went back together to London in the same carriage. Canning and Castlereagh fought in 1809, and Grattan, two years after Queen Victoria came to the throne, received Lord Londonderry's fire and himself fired in the air. Another Grattan could meet another Irish peer to-day, and if they chose their places well, nobody would hear a pistol at all. The bracken and the heather slope into dells and valleys which would shelter three duels in a morning; you could deliver a salvo and hardly scare a nursery maid.

But Wimbledon's longest acquaintance with firearms was in the days before the National Rifle Association moved to Bisley. Queen Victoria fired the first shot on July 2nd, 1860, when she pulled a scarlet cord and scored a bull's-eye with a Whitworth rifle; a red and white flag was shown in an instant, you read, and "three points were scored to the Queen of England." The last shot was fired in 1889. I went to that meeting as a schoolboy, and am even now filled with an awe that belongs to spacious days, remembering that we were told that on the last evening the whole camp was to give three great groans for "George Ranger," the Duke of Cambridge, whose duty it had been to declare the common unfitted for the distant probings of misdirected Martini-Henry bullets. Those concerted, resentful, thousand-throated groans seemed a tremendous nightly business; there were camp-fires, one imagined, from which the circular groan would ascend, a rumble which should expel a ministry, unseat a prince. Not very much came of the groaning, I suppose; certainly the Volunteers liked the Bisley ranges, next year, much better. But the old windmill, which looked on in its time at thirty full meetings, still surely misses the week when the dells and the long stretches of heather rattled from the first gun to sunset with the crackle of Martinis and match rifles. The windmill watches red-coated golfers to-day, playing to some of the prettiest greens in the south of England; but the days for the windmill were when the tents were white about the heather, and when they sold Stewart's Verniers where to-day a more leisured generation misses short putts. [Pg 431]

CHAPTER XLII

THE SURREY SIDE

Mortlake.—The Boat Race.—A duel.—Putney-by-the-sea.—Punch and Judy.—Kennington.—Gallows and faggots.—The proper way to subscribe to a Cricket Club.—Camberwell Beauties.—The Tradescants and their Dodo.—Mr. Jeffery Saffery.—The old Surrey Side.—The Tabard.—The Old Road.

The Surrey side begins, perhaps, if it begins anywhere definitely, at Mortlake, where the Boat-race ends. By Kew and Richmond the Thames runs for pleasure-boats, gigs and skiffs with shining oars. Below Mortlake the river hears the forge and the dockyard; torpedo-boats drive out into the tide; it is different water, London water, under their bows. The four miles of the Thames of the Boat-race mark the gradual change. On a rough day the two eights ride through waves which are less like a river than a sea; and perhaps the rough water has made some of the best history of the race. When Cambridge sank in 1859 she was waterlogged early in the race; she could not have won, but the steamers following the eights prevented her even from passing the winning-post, by swamping her with their wash. Oxford won, but Cambridge's was an equal honour. The crew rowed on as the boat went under the water; and the name that will always belong to that race is that of a future Lord Justice, Mr. A.L. Smith. Cambridge and Mr. A.L. Smith went on rowing in the water, knowing that Mr. Smith could not swim. On another rough day, thirty-nine years later, the race was lost and won by the toss; the Cambridge boat filled at the start, and Oxford rowed in out of the wind. Other historic races belong to the curve of the river above Barnes Bridge; three in particular, in 1886, 1896, and 1901, when the crew that was behind at Barnes Bridge passed the other crew at the bend of the river and won. Of other historic [Pg 432] races, perhaps the wins of the two crews in which a Goldie turned the fortunes of his University will always possess peculiar glories. The first Goldie, in 1870, ended a series of nine Oxford wins. Another Goldie, in 1899, helped Cambridge to end another series, also of nine. The name and the two nines in the date surely made the feat inevitable.

The river water does not change, but the banks have altered from grass and reeds to concrete and stone. It was a mile or so from Barnes Bridge, in a field near Barn Elms (but who could guess where?) that the second Duke of Buckingham fought and shot Lord Shrewsbury. The Duke left behind him one of the wickedest lives of the most dissolute Courts of English history; but he left nothing viler than the name of Lord Shrewsbury's Countess, who rode in boy's clothes as a page to the duelling ground, and then held her seducer's horse while he shot her husband. They left him dying and rode back together. That was in 1667; an earlier and a kindlier association of Barn Elms is a resident who afterwards died at Chertsey, Abraham Cowley; later came Jacob Tonson, bibliophile and publisher of Pope and Dryden. And it was at Barn Elms, too, that the Kit-Kat Club, the thirty who dined at Christopher Kat's in the Strand, and bound themselves to uphold the Protestant succession, met and dined and looked at their portraits painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

The Kit-Kat portraits are now at Bayfordbury, near Hertford, and for the last fifteen years Barn Elms has housed, not publishers or painters, but polo players. The Ranelagh Club was born to help Hurlingham over the water provide grounds for the youngest of the great games naturalised in England. Nine years later Barnes welcomed another club, Roehampton, which added three more grounds to the four of Hurlingham and Ranelagh.

The Boat-race finishes at Mortlake; it starts at Putney, and Putney is the headquarters and the rendezvous of many clubs and rowing men. The Surrey bank from Putney Bridge up stream is a string of club houses, boat houses, and little wooden buildings that do duty for both, and here, on sloping banks sometimes washed by brimming tides, sometimes broad and flat by a shrunken stream on which no racing boat will set its dainty keel, London gathers on March afternoons to wait for the return of the practising crews, and to watch the blue-scarved oarsmen in and out of [Pg 433] the boathouses and the balcony windows. There is somewhere an air of the sea-side about that stretch of gravel and open river bank; it is the sunshine on the varnish of the boats, perhaps, or a smell of tar in the wind, or of salt from the weeds that the tides leave dry; or is it the banjo of the occasional nigger blacked to get pence from the waiting crowd? On a September day a year or two ago, when Cambridge within a week was to race Harvard, I saw on that strip of road one of the very last of the genuine London Punch-and-Judy shows. Toby, of course, had gone; dogs may sit no more in frills to cadge for coppers. But the rest of it was correct enough; the chequered canvas, of the proper shade of blue, draped the wooden frame discreetly at the right moment; there was the old interval of suspense, the old, the piercing squeal, the dexterous cock of the red legs over the balcony; the crocodile came and the hangman, and the devil; I watched them all. So did two of the Harvard crew, and did not know their luck. Nothing of English pride stirred in the blood of those two stalwart young men; they walked off even before the turn of the hangman.

East of Putney the river is a thoroughfare of London, and the names along the Surrey side are London names. Lambeth Palace has already included itself in Mrs. E.T. Cook's *Highways and Byways in London*, and so has Vauxhall, and the church of St. Saviour's, Southwark, the finest of all churches which once looked over Surrey fields. But Kennington, no matter how near it lies to London omnibuses and London tube railways, can never be anywhere but in Surrey; Kennington with its memories of the 'Forty-five, and the Chartists, and, a much stronger link with county history than mere memories of the past, Kennington Oval, the visible, flat, noble cricket ground which stands for the story of all Surrey cricket of the past half century. The Oval is scarcely half a mile from Vauxhall Bridge and the river; but it is the centre of the county for those who watch Surrey cricket.

Once the Oval was part of Kennington Common; even in 1845 the solid road which circles the ground was no more than a ditch and a quickset hedge. But a hundred years before 1845! Cricket, even then, was a game in Surrey. Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, and father of George III, was introducing his favourite pastime to the nobles and the gentlemen. In 1737 Kent played [Pg 434] Surrey and London on Kennington Common, and round the pavilion set up for the Prince of Wales there was so great a crush of spectators that a poor woman fell and had her leg broken. The Prince gave her ten guineas. That was a cricketer. And yet, within eight years, Kennington was back among the vilest barbarities of the Middle Ages. The 'Forty-five was to set a mark of ferocious savagery in Kennington annals hardly surpassed by Tyburn. The Earl of Kennington (that, with the nickname of 'Butcher,' was one of the titles of the Duke of Cumberland) had sent to gaol in Southwark nine officers whom he had taken prisoner at Carlisle, fighting for Charles Edward Stuart. They were ordered for execution, and on July 30, at eleven o'clock in the morning, were taken on three sledges to Kennington Common. The gallows were there, the block, the faggots. The prisoners were allowed to pray among themselves. Then they were pinioned and placed in the cart under the gallows; the fires were lighted, the cart moved away. Before they were dead they were cut down, beheaded, disembowelled and their hearts burned in the fire; the executioner, throwing in the heart of the last, who was no more than a boy, cried 'God save King George!' Part of the crowd answered with a shout; the rest looked on in sorrow. The boy who suffered with the elder men was James Dawson, and Shenstone wrote a ballad on his death. He had been engaged to be married to a young girl, who insisted on seeing her lover's last moments. When all was over, she threw herself back in the coach, called to him that she followed him, and as she spoke, died.

Another gathering on Kennington Common might have had more wholesale consequences. The Chartists met there in 1848. Feargus O'Connor was their leader, and he and the petition which the delegates were to take to the House of Commons went out in two large cars. The petition went first, drawn by four horses, and piled up like bales of cotton; the car was decorated with flags, banners, and mottoes, and so were the horses. Then came O'Connor and the delegates, equally superb in bunting. They drove down Holborn and across Blackfriars Bridge, and on Kennington Common an enormous crowd, between 15,000 and 50,000, the different accounts say, received the banners and the delegates with loud cheers. But no bloodshed followed. O'Connor was informed that the crowd could not be allowed to march to the House of Commons, [Pg 435] where, indeed, they would have found the Duke of Wellington with cannon. The Chartist leader made two eloquent speeches, and the chairman declared the meeting at an end. The delegates' horses were whipped up so hurriedly that the delegates fell to the bottom of the cart; three cabs drove up and took charge of the bales of petitions, and the meeting was at an end. One detail which the contemporary historian gives of the finish has a fascinating echo half of Ainsworth, half of Dickens. "The horses became restive and began to kick. Then was distinctly heard from many quarters the peculiar cry of the young London thieves." What was it like? Can anybody do it to-day?

The great crowds at Kennington to-day come to see better sights than carts and banners. Surrey cricket has focussed itself at Kennington; rather curiously, it has happened that Surrey plays cricket to-day on no other ground. Kent and Sussex, two neighbours, play their county matches on three grounds or four; Surrey, which has traditions at Mitcham and Dorking, has shrunk back to Kennington only. And Kennington, long ago, was nearly lost to cricket. A year after the Chartists had crowded over the Common, the County Club was in debt for £70. The story of the paying of the debt and the revival of the club has the real ring. The club met and were in despair; they could not hope, with such a debt, to play matches. The Bishop of Tasmania, in his entertaining little *History of Kennington*, tells (in 1889) the story:—

"The meeting almost decided to break up the club; and I suppose, had such a vote been carried, the Oval would have been at once built over and some very happy memories of Kennington would never have existed at all. It is to the present Lord Bessborough that we owe the continuance of Cricket upon the Oval. He was Vice-President at the time, and suggested that the £70 should be paid off by allowing six gentlemen to become Life Members by paying down £12 apiece. A gentleman present next said 'who would pay £12 to be a Life Member of a bankrupt Club?' 'I will,' said Old Mr. Cressingham, one of the oldest members: and 'I will,' said five others, of whom Mr. Ponsonby was one. Lord Bessborough, in writing of this memorable meeting, adds—'Looking back to that distant day I fear I have been a bad bargain to the Club by becoming a Life Member for £12.'" [Pg 436]

Nothing of the country and little of the past belongs to Kennington's neighbours. Stockwell, which perhaps sees a hansom as often as a motor-car, once named as a native one of the greatest of English racehorses. Camberwell, when willows grew about a village stream, long since dry, named a butterfly; but Camberwell Beauties, though they sleep sometimes in Surrey woodstacks, and flaunt their white-laced wings in Surrey sunshine perhaps twice in a summer, fly no more by brooks in Camberwell. Perhaps in the old days the Tradescants, who lived near Vauxhall, used to catch them. The Tradescants, father and son, were great naturalists and collectors, and at their house they got together the museum of rarities which after their death came to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. John Tradescant the son made a list of them, and though Oxford ungratefully hid the collection in an outhouse and only discovered it again in 1882, many of the curiosities he mentions move undergraduates to surprise to-day. In the original list are strange fowls. 'Some kindes of birds, their egges, beaks, feathers, clawes, and spurres' begin the list of chapters, and then come a crocodile and an 'egge given for a dragon's egge,' and 'Easter egges of the patriarchs of Jerusalem.' 'Two feathers of the phœnix tayle' I do not remember at Oxford, nor 'a cherrystone holding ten dozen tortoiseshell combs, made by Edward Gibbons.' But I think the Ashmolean collection still holds the 'flea chains of silver and gold, with 300 links apiece, and yet but an inch long,' and, of course, the Oxford dodo's skin is famous. It was not a dodo, though, to John Tradescant. It was a 'dodar, from the island of Mauritius: it is not able to flie, being so big.' The wrong thing about it all is that the name of the Tradescants ought to be associated with the collection, and not the name Ashmole. It was never Ashmole's to give to Oxford. Ashmole was a rich and greedy neighbour, and though Tradescant left his museum to his widow and after her death to Oxford, he, the polite Ashmole, bullied Mrs. Tradescant until she signed a paper stating that she had begged him to take the museum for his own. She would have signed anything, poor lady, to get rid of him. She suffered so much from persecution from the generous donor of her husband's museum to Oxford, that she drowned herself in a pond; a few months before having signed a statement that she had 'caused a great heap of earth rubbish to be laid against his garden wall'—doubtless she caused nothing of the sort—'so high that on the 1st day of August last, in the night, by the help thereof, it is strongly presumed that thieves got over the same and robbed the said Mr. Ashmole of 32 cocks and hens.' [Pg 437]

Easternmost of Surrey in London, Rotherhithe lies about the docks of the Pool. The Pool should have a book to itself, and will not go into mine; but of Rotherhithe ashore there is a record which deserves keeping. Aubrey, or his later editor, gives a list of the Rotherhithe residents who contributed to the rebuilding of St. Mary's church, and the names, sorted and classified, should be set aside for a future Dickens. Here are a few of them:—Bloice, Figgins, Cuthbert Finkle, Gollop, Cronker, Shadrick Lifter, Walter Mell, Mr. Jeremiah Rosher, Mr. Jonas Shish, Mr. Nathaniel Stiffon, Mr. Matthias Wallraven, Mr. Scroggs, Mr. Jeffery Saffery, Mr. Volentine Teed.

Bermondsey, which has kept the Tooley Street of the Three Tailors, but elsewhere preserves names only instead of stones, has memories of one of the three Surrey Abbeys. It was founded as a priory for Cluniac monks by Alwin Child, a citizen of London, in 1082, and it became an Abbey some three hundred years later. Bermondsey Priory had a church of some note, for in it was a crucifix which the old chronicles describe vaguely as having been found near the Thames. The crucifix attracted special pilgrimages, and when the monasteries were ended, it disappeared. 'There was the pictor of Saynte Saviour that had stood in Barmsey Abbey many yeres in Southwarke takyn down,' a diarist writes at the time. All that remains of the church and crucifix is the name, which has come to St. Saviour's, or the church of St. Mary Overie—the style now is to call it Southwark Cathedral. St. Saviour's belongs to London highways, as I have said, but I may take for Surrey the lines, not already quoted for London, I think, which are set on the tomb of Richard Humble, Alderman of London and ancestor of Wards and Dudleys. The tomb has busied many pens, the verses remain to be read—are they too well known to be written out again? [Pg 438]

> Like to the damask rose you see
> Or like the blossom on the tree,

Or like the dainty flower of May,
Or like the morning of the day,
Or like the sun or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonas had,

Even so is Man whose thread is spun,
Drawn out and cut, and so is done!

The rose withers, the blossom blasteth,
The flower fades, the morning hasteth,
The sun sets, the shadow flies,
The gourd consumes, the man he dies.

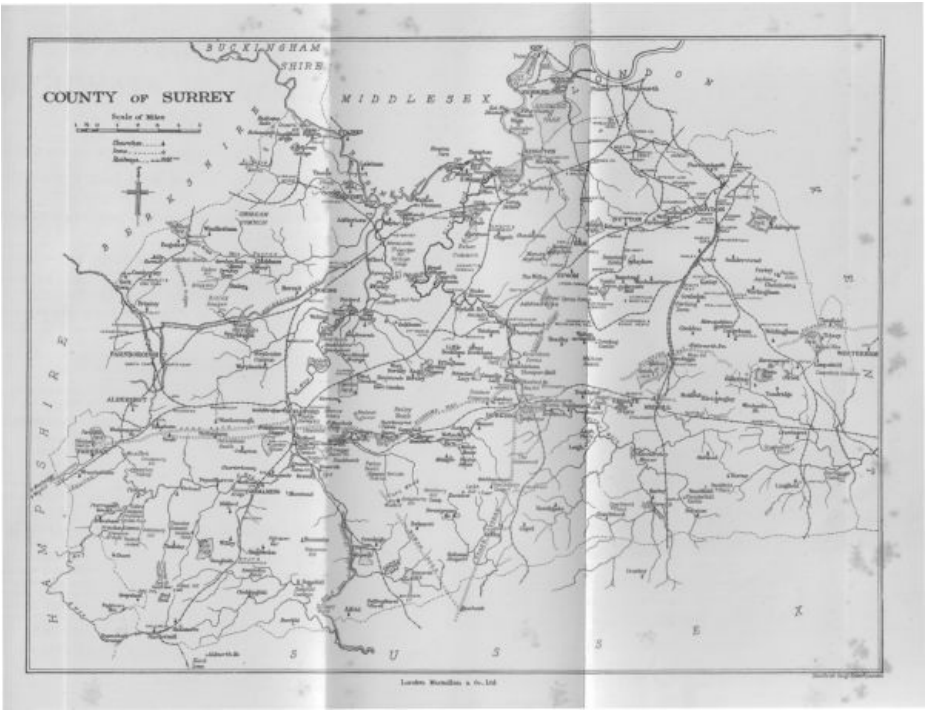
Beaumont wrote the lines, legend says; perhaps wrongly, but they have the Elizabethan life and ring.

If one had to choose a dozen square yards of London to sum up the Surrey side, where should they be? For me, there could be no choice. One spot would demand the first, the only place. It would be where Waterloo Bridge touches the Surrey shore; where you may look south to a Surrey hill by Sydenham, and north to half the panorama of London, from St. Paul's to Westminster Abbey. There, on the first few yards of the bridge, above the little hill which shrinks the wide roadway into a neck and stops overladen drays like a wall, blows the aura of all London that crowds south of the river, all Surrey that belongs to the London Thames. The business of the town and the country mingles with the business of the river and the sea. An afternoon in December, the month of months to know London in, is the time to be there. Up stream from the Nore on an east wind rides the damp of salt and of estuary fogs; about you are the steam of sweating horses and the pungent clinging scents of malt and hops and brewing; up on a yellow tide under the arches of the bridge swings a string of barges, piled with bales of hay. A flock of pigeons sways and wheels in the sky, drops to the roofs, settles with a clatter, sails up into the sky again. Black-headed gulls, in their winter suits of dove-colour and white, walk about the muddy edge of the rising tide, drift on the stream like torn paper, soar and hang in the wind above the bridge, peering this way and that for the fish and bread the Londoners give them; or late in the afternoon wing quiet journeys into unknown spaces of western light. Beyond the bridge the lights dot orange sparks in the films and shades of great buildings and the Embankment roadway. That is pure London, and London, too, is most of the Waterloo Road, with its new hospital, and the roar of the trains from the junction, and the old curiosity shops with the foreign names, and the wig-makers, and the cheap furniture spoiling in the rain. But Surrey is there, too; a shop that shows cricket bats, and another that has fruit-ladders, and, above all, the little shops that offer boxes of pansies and delphinium roots and hyacinth bulbs all the seasons round to Surrey men leaving London behind them in the evening. Surrey recollects that she is not quite London in the Waterloo Road; she plays cricket and plants pansies.

[Pg 439-440]

That would be the Surrey side I should choose, with the magic of the tide water about it and somewhere, however faint, the scent of the Surrey gardens. But the old, the oldest Surrey side? That belongs to the river-shore south of London Bridge, where once, too, Londoners could cross from crowded wood and brick to walk among Surrey hawthorn and Surrey daisies. The roar and the soot of the Borough have set that strip of country deep in London, hardly divided by the water. But it was there, when Chaucer's nine-and-twenty pilgrims lay at the Tabard inn, that Surrey began for Londoners and for all who had come to the 'dere and sweete citye' of which Chaucer sings to journey south from the Thames on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. The Tabard inn is no more; the fire that swept over Southwark ten years after the fire of London destroyed the building Chaucer knew. The piety of a later day raised another Tabard, perhaps like the old Tabard with the same galleries and balustrades to look down from upon pilgrims and minstrels and monks and fools. But that Tabard inn became the Talbot in a careless age, and as the Talbot it was razed to the ground forty years ago, when nobody minded what became of the old inns and churches and the things best worth keeping in old Surrey. The Tabard has gone, but the ancient road remains. Smoke and stone are about it, where once it stretched out bare among green fields; but the fields are there, for those who can see them, behind the veil of smoke, and through them a wayfarer may still travel with the Knight who loved freedom and courtesy, the Monk shaking his belled bridle, the Ploughman on his mare, and the dainty fingered Prioress with her eyes as grey as glass, riding to join other pilgrims travelling east to Canterbury by the old road.

[Pg 441]



Map of the County of Surrey.
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