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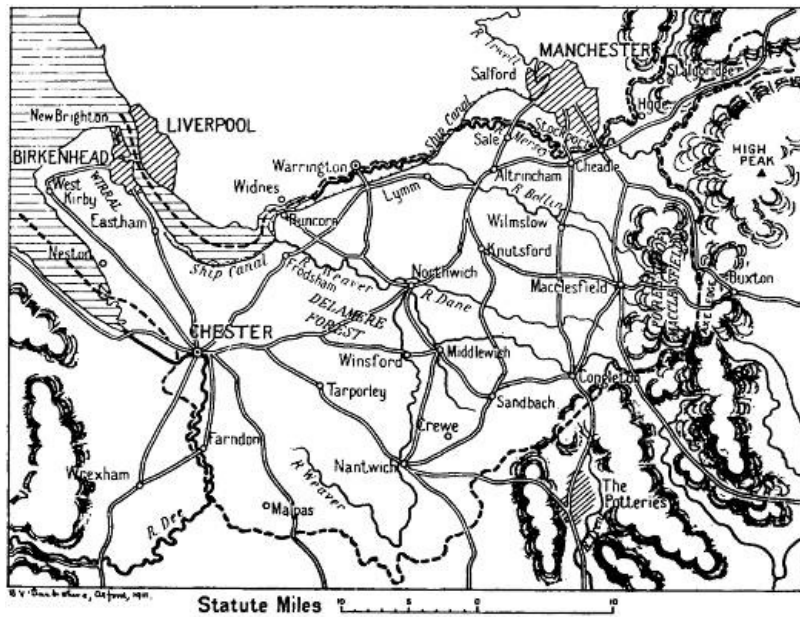
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CHESHIRE ***

CHESHIRE. ROADS



OXFORD COUNTY HISTORIES
CHESHIRE

BY CHARLES E. KELSEY, M.A.

WITH TEN MAPS AND FORTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS

OXFORD
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PREFACE

The aim of the present volume in the Oxford Series of County Histories for Schools is to assist the study of the progress of the English people by an examination of local antiquities, visits to ancient sites and buildings, and suggestions of big national movements from local incident. An attempt is made to foster the powers of observation in children by showing them how to connect various styles of architecture, for instance, with successive stages in the story of their county, and to construct from familiar objects the broad outlines of national history. Thus it is hoped that sooner or later the teaching of history may become, to some extent, an *out-of-school* subject and take its place side by side with outdoor Nature-study and Practical Geography in the curriculum of our schools.

In rural districts this end is obviously more easily attainable than in large industrial centres. In the latter the expense of moving classes of children from their schools to visit a site some miles distant would be no doubt considerable; but is it too visionary to hope that before long a motor-bus, capable of carrying a class of thirty or forty boys and girls, will be deemed by Educational Committees a necessary part of their 'apparatus'?

Apart from the educative value of such work there would, as the children grow up, arise a body of public opinion which could give valuable help in saving historic sites and buildings from loss or destruction, and preventing the removal of antiquities from their natural home. Cheshire has suffered perhaps more than her share of both these evils, and looks with sorrowful eyes at many of her treasures housed in the museums of towns beyond her borders.

All students of Cheshire history owe much to Ormerod's great work. But his history is largely genealogical, and personally I wish to acknowledge a greater debt to the labours and transactions of local societies, particularly the Chester Archaeological Society and the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Many learned members of these two bodies have made most important contributions to our knowledge of ancient and mediaeval Cheshire within the most recent years. Among other works consulted I may mention the *Palatine Note Book*, *Cheshire Notes and Queries*, and Morris's *Diocesan History of Chester*. I have received kindly assistance from several Cheshire clergymen, and to all who have given me permission to take photographs within their churches I express my thanks.

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The maps, drawings, and photographs are original, with few exceptions. I am indebted to the Council of the Chester Archaeological Society, and the Grosvenor Museum for the loan of the block of a Roman tombstone from a photograph by Mr. R. Newstead, and to Mr. Alfred Newstead, Curator of the Museum, for photographs of the Runic stone and Roman altar.

The Rev. J. F. Tristram, of the Hulme Grammar School, read the two geological chapters and made valuable suggestions. To the Clarendon Press I am grateful for much kind help and criticism.

THE HULME GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
MANCHESTER,
JULY, 1911.

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CHAPTER I

POSITION AND NATURAL FEATURES OF CHESHIRE

Few English counties owe more of their history to their geographical position and surroundings, and to the character of their natural features, than Cheshire. Not only in the past have the rocks and rivers of Cheshire helped to make history, but even to-day they have a very direct bearing upon the fortunes of Cheshire men and women. How many of us reflect, as our eyes travel over

the plain to the distant hills, that on the wise and orderly arrangement of mountain and valley, forest and winding stream, our very existence and means of livelihood depend? Truly Nature has other work to do than merely create picturesque landscapes.

Cheshire is situated in the north-west of England, washed partly by the Irish Sea, and guarded as it were on its eastern and western sides by two great ramparts of hill country, that on the east formed by the southern spurs of the Pennine Chain, while the Welsh hills of Flint and Denbigh are the natural frontier on the west.

The western boundary, however, which has been frequently changed, now follows roughly the Valley of the Dee. A semicircle of hills of lesser height fringes the county on the south, and the river Mersey divides it from its northern neighbour, Lancashire.

In the north-west of the county a rectangular stretch of country known as Wirral is washed by two great estuaries and by the Irish Sea, and a wedge of moorland in the north-east penetrates into the heart of the Pennines. Here the hills reach their greatest height, Black Hill the highest point in Cheshire being just under 2,000 feet above sea-level. The low-lying lands enclosed by this amphitheatre of hills form the Cheshire Plain, broken only by ridges or terraces of low sandstone hills running north and south.

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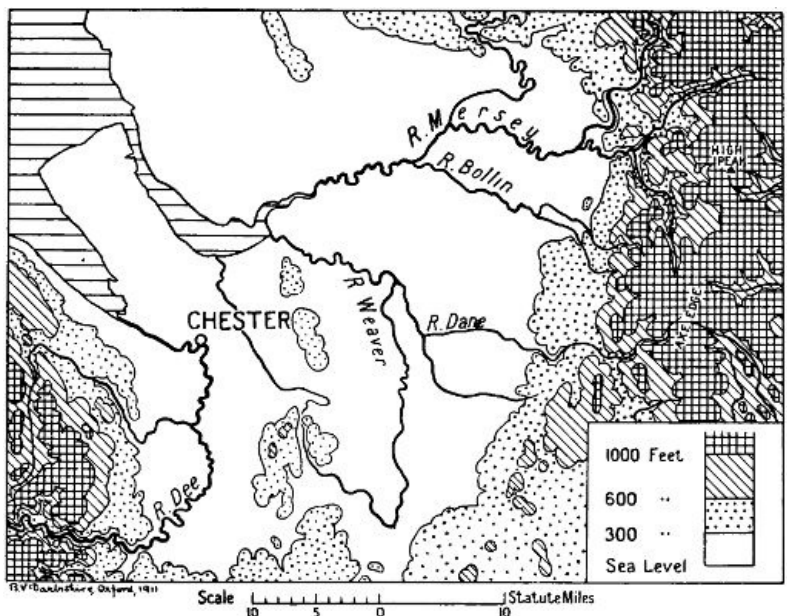
A glance at a map of the British Isles will show you that Cheshire lies in the very heart of the three kingdoms. Its geographical position has thus made it a meeting-place of nations, and you will see in later chapters that all the peoples that have helped to make our national history have in turn realized the importance of its position, and have fought desperately for its possession. Briton and Roman, Angle and Saxon and Dane, Welsh and Norman have all left some mark of their presence in the county, and from these many elements is derived the blood that flows in the veins of nearly all Cheshire boys and girls of to-day.

Now look at the map opposite. The shaded portions represent land over 300, 600, or 1,000 feet above sea-level. In the south, the eastern and western uplands slope gradually down towards the bit of white which touches the centre of the bottom of the map and forms what is known as the Cheshire Gap. Through this gap the Midlands lie open to the north-west and to the Cheshire Plain, and over these lower heights naturally passed the great highway from London to the Irish Sea. Chester, built on a rocky plateau at the head of the tidal waters of the Dee and protected on its western side by a natural bend of the same river, was clearly a position of great importance for guarding alike the coast road into North Wales and the roads to the north of England; and there is no doubt that it was held as a fortified post long before the Romans built the Roman city of Deva.

For many centuries this stronghold was one of the chief military outposts and frontier towns of England, not often free from war's alarms, and the sentinels on her walls and watch-towers ever on the look-out for the approach of some new enemy. Chester became the 'base' or head-quarters from which all military campaigns in the north-west, in Wales or in Ireland were carried out, united with the metropolis by the great road that passed through the heart of England, along which armies could march without any difficult hills to cross and hardly a river of any great size to bridge. In later and more peaceful times, for the same geographical reasons, the London and North-Western Railway, the lineal descendant of the ancient 'Watling Street', laid its lines on nearly the same ground as the old highway, and is thus the easiest as well as the most direct of all routes from London to the north-west.

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CHESHIRE



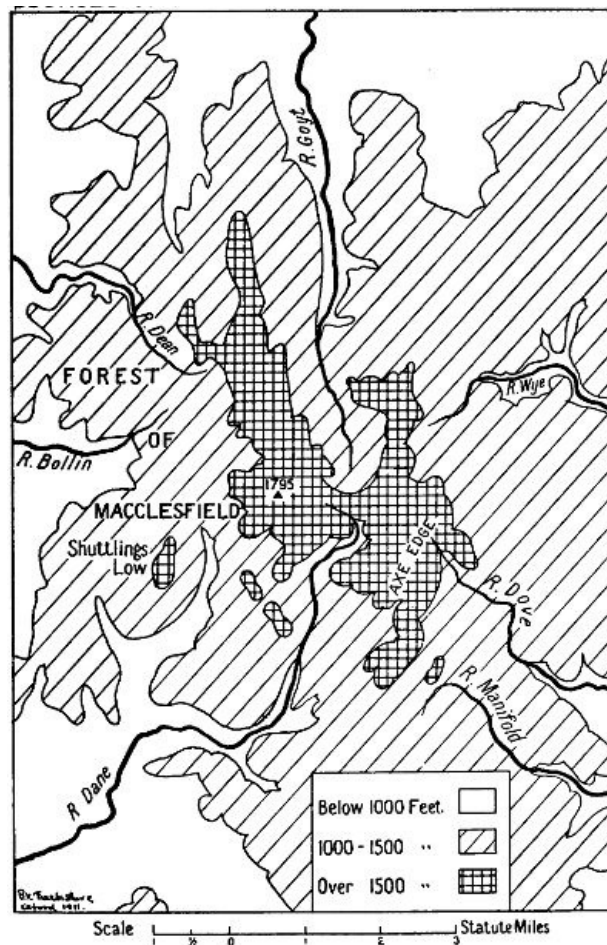
CONTOUR MAP

With the exception of the Dee, which rises near Lake Bala in Wales, the rivers of Cheshire have their sources in the eastern or southern uplands. For eight months of the year moisture-laden

winds blow from the sea across the Cheshire Plain and deposit their rains upon the hills. In the hilly country of the north-east, where the rainfall is greatest, the water is gathered and stored in a number of reservoirs in Longdendale; and the moist climate is the chief reason why this district is the seat of the cotton industry, for cotton threads become brittle in a dry atmosphere. In the valleys of the Tame and Goyt the abundance of fresh running water from the hills formerly caused many mills for the bleaching, dyeing and printing of calicoes to be erected on or near the streams. Nowadays, however, owing to the greater supply of water brought by pipes from a distance, mills are erected principally on the outskirts of the great towns and nearer the centres of population. Hence in the villages of the Goyt it is no uncommon sight to see the tottering walls of mills that have been abandoned and allowed to fall into ruin and decay.

The combined waters of the Etherow, Tame, and Goyt form the Mersey at Stockport. Only the left bank of this river is in Cheshire. Moreover, for a large part of its course it has been 'canalized', so that it no longer flows between its natural banks, but down the artificial channel of the Manchester Ship Canal. The estuary of the Mersey, which is three to four miles across at its widest point, narrows at Birkenhead to a width of barely three-quarters of a mile. At this point the river is kept open to the largest vessels afloat by constant dredging. Here in the docks you may see ships of all nations, and generally one or more of our huge ocean greyhounds riding at anchor in mid-river or awaiting but the turn of the tide to take out their cargoes of human lives to distant lands.

SOURCES OF RIVERS IN E. CHESHIRE



The Weaver, on the other hand, is wholly a Cheshire river, rising in the Peckforton Hills in the south-west of the county. The Mersey and the Weaver receive a number of tributaries, of which the Bollin and the Dane are the most important, from the eastern highlands,

the high-crowned Shutlingslawe
 ... with those proud hills whence rove
 The lovely sister brooks the silvery Dane and Dove,
 Clear Dove that makes to Trent, the other to the West.

At Northwich the Weaver becomes navigable as far as the Mersey.

The rivers flow mainly in a westerly or north-westerly direction. Spreading evenly over the plain in almost parallel lines, they serve to drain and fertilize the land, which thus affords the finest pasturage for cattle. Dairy-farming and stock-raising have therefore become the principal occupation of the inhabitants of the Cheshire midlands; and on market days the piles of the famous Cheshire cheese are generally the first thing we notice in the open market-places of our country towns.

The most noticeable feature of the county are the two estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey. The tract enclosed between them is for the most part flat, Heswall Hill, the highest point, being little

more than 300 feet in height, and the lowest parts have to be protected from the inroads of the sea by long embankments. Several portions were in fact, at one time separated from the mainland, like Hilbre Isle at the present day, as is shown by the names Wallasey, 'isle of the Welsh or strangers,' and Ince 'an island'. In the Middle Ages, owing to the importance of Chester, the Dee was the principal outlet for the trade of the north-west, as Bristol was for the south-west of England. In those days Liverpool was but an insignificant town, and the Mersey was known as the 'Creek of Chester'. But in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the shipping trade of the Dee declined owing to the great accumulation of sand and silt in the channel. When vessels could no longer unload or ship their merchandise under the walls of Chester a quay was formed at Shotwick, some six miles along the northern shore of the estuary. In this neighbourhood over two thousand acres of land have been recovered from the sea that once flowed over them. Navigation was partially restored as far as Chester for small vessels by a new artificial channel, but since the rise of the cotton and other great industries in South Lancashire Liverpool and Birkenhead have replaced Chester and become the second port in the kingdom.

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Cheshire also possesses a miniature 'Lake District'. Between the Bollin and the Weaver are scattered many lakelets or 'meres'. They are particularly numerous in the salt districts, where they are due to the pumping of brine which has been going on for ages, and caused the sinking down of the overlying rocks. In the neighbourhood of Northwich the sheets of water thus formed are called 'flashes'.

The county still contains much 'forest', that is, uncultivated land. The hilly country of the east consists mostly of bleak and barren moorland, affording but poor pasturage for sheep and used mainly for the preservation of game. Such names as Wildboarclough, Wolf's Edge, Cat's Tor, Eagle's Crag, and many others, show clearly the wild and desolate character of this district. Extensive woods are found in the valleys and 'cloughs' of the Etherow and Goyt. Delamere was once a deer forest extending as far as Nantwich, but in the last hundred years the greater part of it has been cultivated. Many towns and villages still retain their 'common' land, often bright with patches of broom and gorse, while the numerous and extensive parks of the great landowners are justly noted for their fine forest trees.

To many of you the natural features described in this chapter must be a familiar sight. Some of you have perhaps stood by the beacon on Alderley Edge or by the sham ruins on the summit of Mow Cop, and viewed wide stretches of the Cheshire Plain. Others have looked down from the Frodsham Hills upon the estuary of the Mersey mapped out at their feet, or from the walls of Chester have gazed upon the purple hills of Wales. But the surface of the county suffered many changes before it assumed its present aspect, and we must now see what story the stones have to tell us of bygone ages when Cheshire was yet in the making.

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CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF CHESHIRE. I

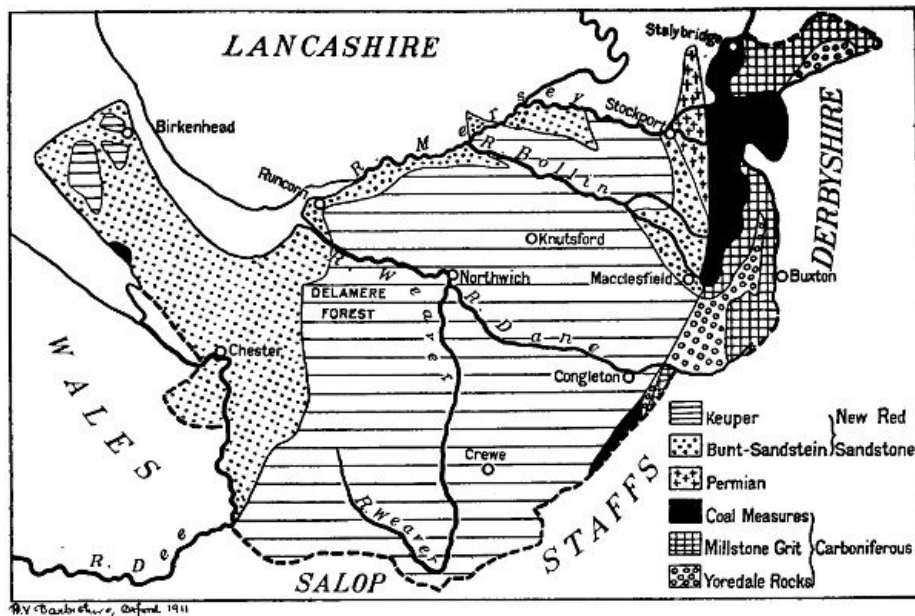
THE NEWER ROCKS

There rolls the deep where grew the tree:
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There, where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

Nearly every Cheshire boy has visited at some time or another a quarry in the neighbourhood of the town or village where he dwells. He will probably have noticed that beneath the two or three feet of soil at the top of the quarry the rocks are arranged in beds or 'strata' piled one upon another in horizontal rows, or sometimes sloping in parallel lines towards the bottom of the quarry. When and how were these beds of rock formed and laid down?

If our quarry is in the central or western parts of Cheshire we shall find that the rocks are of a reddish colour, generally hard and gritty, but sometimes so soft that pieces may be crushed into fragments with the fingers. These rocks are known as the New Red sandstones, and are largely used for building purposes. Chester Cathedral and a great number of Cheshire churches have been built of this material; and the hillsides where the rocks crop out above the soil often glow with a rich warm red in the evening sunlight. You may see them best perhaps in the railway cuttings in the neighbourhood of Frodsham and Chester, or in the great quarries at Storeton-in-Wirral and Runcorn.

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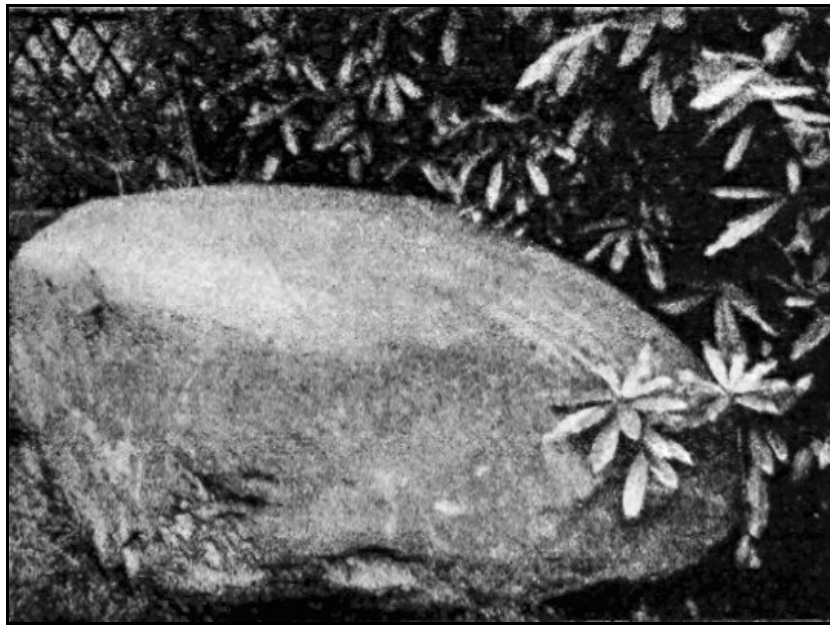
GEOLOGICAL MAP

These beds of sandstone are really wide stretches of the sandy shores of an ancient sea, which have been pressed into a solid substance by the weight of other layers of rock deposited over them in later ages. Thus they belong to a group of what are called 'water-laid' rocks. We know that seas once flowed over them because some of the beds show the ripple-marks that we see so often in the sands when walking by the sea-shore. A fearful looking monster, with the equally terrible name of labyrinthodont, in appearance rather like a gigantic frog, has left his 'footprints in the sands' in the rocks near Lymm and Weston. You will probably not be able to find these footprints, but in the museums at Manchester and Warrington you may see them on large slabs of sandstone rock. How would you like to meet one of these reptiles to-day, wallowing in the mud on the shores of some Cheshire mere? On the same slabs you will see sun-cracks which tell us of the baking of sand and mud in the sun's rays when the tide has gone down.

The lower layers of the New Red Sandstone are of a paler colour, light brown or almost white. To these the name of 'Bunter' has been given to distinguish them from the upper and therefore later deposits known as 'Keuper' sandstone. The Bunter beds are found chiefly in the west of the county, and in Wirral, where you may see the Keuper rocks of Storeton Hill sticking up above the layers of Bunter stone that surround and underlie them.

The greater part of the surface of Cheshire consists of these rocks. Alderley Edge and Helsby Hill, the hills of Delamere and Peckforton are composed of it, and it crops out often in our village streets. The steps of the village cross at Lymm are cut out of a piece of rock which sticks out in the middle of the road.

In the sandstone beds at Northwich, Winsford, and Middlewich are layers of rock salt from which we obtain our salt for food and other domestic uses. The salt was formed at a time when the sea was gradually disappearing from the surface of Cheshire leaving inland salt lakes, which, becoming dried up, deposited beds of salt crystals. These, like the sandstone, became pressed into a solid condition by the weight of other layers. Where the salt has been taken out of the earth the upper layers have sunk from time to time. At Northwich the land is continually sinking, and you may see houses and chimneys cracked and twisted out of their proper shape as if they had been visited by an earthquake. Often the hollows where the land has sunk have become filled with water and produced the numerous meres or small lakes dotted about the county. In the valley of the Weaver they are locally known as 'flashes'.



STRIATED BOULDER (ERRATIC): HIGH LEGH

When, in the course of time, the red sandstone formed the dry land of Cheshire, it became covered by a great ice-sheet which extended over Britain even as far south as the Thames valley. Beneath this covering of ice the rocks were crushed and ground to atoms by the movement of the ice-sheet over them. This formed beds of a substance called boulder-clay, containing lumps of rock which must have been brought by the ice great distances, for they are of a kind found only in the north of England or in Scotland. Some of these 'boulders' are of great size. Several have been placed in Vernon Park, Stockport, and in the West Park, Macclesfield, you may see one that was dug up in the neighbourhood of the town. It weighs about thirty tons. On Eddisbury Hill is a mass of rock, ten feet long, of a kind found only on Skiddaw in the Lake District, and in the narrow lane behind the 'Wizard' Inn on Alderley Edge is a lump of granite from Eskdale, so that these rocks have been brought by the ice a distance of a hundred miles. Such blocks and boulders are called 'erratics', because they have wandered so far from their original home. Another proof of the existence of the ice-sheet may be seen in the scratchings and marks (called 'striae') on pebbles and rocks found in these beds. In the lane outside the church at High Legh are a number of large boulders which still show the lines of furrows and scratchings made on their surface by the movement of the ice over them. 20

The boulder-clay has been worn away by the action of water and weather from a great part of Cheshire, but in the west of the county large patches may be seen in the low-lying districts. You may observe the beds most clearly in the cliffs of boulder-clay on the estuary of the Dee between Heswall and West Kirby. In the neighbourhood of Chester, many of the villages—Tarvin, Christleton, Aldford, Saughton, and Barrow, for instance—are built on sandstone knolls and ridges which stick up through the boulder-clay, for the sandstone is drier and healthier than the clay to live upon, and the wells, especially those in the Bunter beds, provide the purest water.

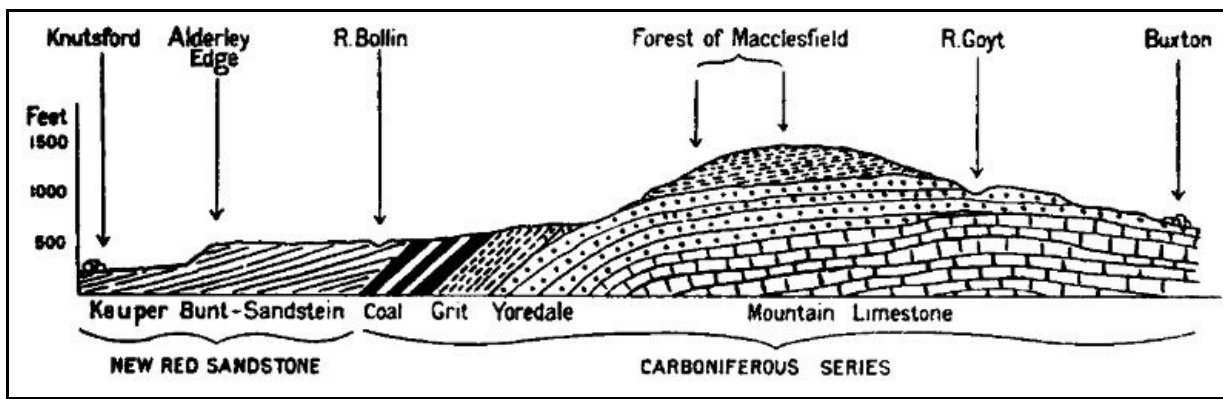
As the ice-sheet melted and the glaciers or ice-rivers retreated northwards when the climate became warmer, beds of sand, gravel, and stones were spread over the Cheshire plain. These are called drift beds. The stones and pebbles are rounded by the streams of melted ice and snow which flowed from the mouths of the ice-rivers. Upon the beds of drift lies the surface soil in which grow the crops and grass, the herbage and the woods of to-day; and it is in the drift, as you will see in a later chapter, that traces of the earliest inhabitants of Cheshire are to be found. 21

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF CHESHIRE (*cont.*). II

THE OLDER ROCKS

Let us now visit some quarries in East Cheshire. We shall find considerable difficulty in reaching some of them. It will be necessary to get permission from the owners of the quarries, put on a special suit of clothes, enter an iron cage, and descend many hundred feet perhaps into the depths of the earth's surface until we find ourselves—in a coal-mine!



SECTION OF ROCKS FROM KNUTSFORD TO BUXTON

Unlike the New Red Sandstones, which are found for the most part in flat horizontal beds, the coal beds slope downwards from east to west. This is due to the uplifting of the East Cheshire hills, which we shall presently explain. When this uplift took place, the coal beds, which were originally flat, became raised in the east and equally lowered in the west. When the sea flowed over them they became covered by sandy deposits of such a thickness that in the greater part of Cheshire the coal cannot be reached. The earliest sands laid down formed what are called the Permian rocks, and the later layers the New Red Sandstone series mentioned in the last chapter. The Permian rocks may be well seen at Stockport, in the river beds of the Tame and the Goyt which have cut their way through them. In the strip of country between Stockport and Macclesfield, and again on the south-eastern borders of Cheshire, the upturned edges of the coal beds have been left exposed so that the coal is near the surface and can be easily extracted.

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Coal consists of the vegetable remains of forest trees and their undergrowth. If you look at a lump of coal you will see that it has been pressed down into thin layers like the leaves of a book. When these layers are split apart there are often found the fossil remains of leaves and roots of trees, fronds of ferns, seed-cones and stems of plants which grew in the forests. Some of these, particularly the ferns, are often of great beauty. You may see a number of these 'coal pictures' in the Vernon Park Museum at Stockport. Here too you will find portions of the actual trunks of trees that have been dug up just where they stood when the seas flowed over them.

You may learn even to distinguish different varieties of these forest trees, just as you are able to distinguish the oak and the beech and the elm of to-day. Latin names such as Sigillaria, Lepidodendron, and Salisburia have been given to them. The most beautiful of all is a Maidenhair Tree-fern. The Calamites was a huge 'Horse-tail' plant of which you may find small varieties to-day on banks and in hedgerows.

On the coast of Wirral, between Meols and New Brighton, are the remains of a forest which has only in very recent years been covered by the sea. Boys who live in this neighbourhood may have heard their parents tell of the stumps of tree-trunks sticking out through the sands when the tide was low. This shows that the land is continually undergoing changes, at one time being raised above the seas, at another time sinking beneath the waves.

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The beds or 'seams' of coal vary in thickness from a thin film to several yards, and are separated from one another by layers of hard clays and flagstones. From the flagstone beds are obtained the square slabs with which the pavements of our towns and cities are laid. In many of the quarries near the Cheshire coal-field you may watch the workmen cutting and shaping these stones.

The beds of clays and seams of coal make up what are called the 'Coal Measures'. These in their turn rest upon a foundation of hard rock, harder than any we have yet examined, called Millstone Grit or Gritstone. Boys who live in the hilly parts of East Cheshire are very familiar with it, for very probably the houses in which they live and the churches and chapels where they worship have been built of this stone. It is composed of coarse sand and grit, and, like the red sandstone, is a waterlaid deposit several thousand feet in thickness. The Pennine Hills, on the borderland of Cheshire and Derbyshire, are covered with Millstone Grit, which has been thrust upwards by the crumpling and arching of the rocks beneath it.

Below the Gritstone are still older rocks of a different character called the Limestone series. The uppermost beds contain layers of a sandy substance called Yoredale sandstones. Mixed with them are layers of shale, a dark bluish grey clay that crumbles into thin fragments when crushed with the hand, and thin seams of limestone and, occasionally, of coal. These are the oldest rocks that are found anywhere in Cheshire. You may see them in the hills east of Macclesfield and Congleton and the higher parts of Longdendale. Below these beds is a mass of Mountain Limestone which has been forced upwards into an arch by tremendous pressure of rocks from either side, and has lifted up the Gritstone above to a height of nearly two thousand feet. In this way the highlands of East Cheshire, and indeed the whole of the Pennine Chain, have been formed. The Mountain Limestone, which consists almost entirely of animal remains, especially shells and corals, extends right under the highest hills of Cheshire, and comes to light in the cliffs of the beautiful dales of Derbyshire. Only at one spot, a quarry near Astbury, does it appear at the surface in Cheshire.

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The Coal Measures, Millstone Grit, Yoredale sandstones, and Mountain Limestone make up what

geologists call the Carboniferous or Coal-bearing series, so called because in England our chief supplies of coal are obtained from this group of rocks.

But we should have to dig deeper even than the Mountain Limestone before we could reach the original surface of the earth in Cheshire. Long ages ago, ages so distant that not even the most learned men of science can reckon them, our earth was a globe of fiery molten rock. As the surface gradually cooled it became wrinkled, as a baked apple will when taken from an oven. Water collected in the hollows into which fragments of rock were washed down from the ridges, and thus the waters were raised and formed into seas and lakes. But we shall not find any of these rocks in Cheshire, though you may see them in great masses in the mountains of Cumberland and Wales, where they have been forced upwards by the violent movements always at work in the interior of the earth. It is of these molten rocks that the mass of stone which was brought by the ice from Cumberland and left on Eddisbury Hill is composed.

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CHAPTER IV EARLY INHABITANTS OF CHESHIRE

A few years ago some workmen digging on the high ground of Alderley Edge came across a number of flint stones, which from their shape and the marks of chipping upon them had clearly been fashioned by the hand of man. Some of the flints were shaped like a knife blade with a sharp edge on their entire length, and others of a more or less oval shape had a keen edge on one of their curves. The former were the knives with which the earliest men of Cheshire cut the flesh of animals for food; the latter were the scrapers with which they removed the flesh from the bones or from the hides that provided them with clothing.

Flints, however, are not naturally found in any of the Cheshire rocks; they must be sought for in the districts where chalk hills abound. Clearly therefore these men must have brought their tools and weapons with them when they first came into Cheshire from the east or from the south. Afterwards, no doubt, they bargained for them, giving skins and furs in exchange.

Men first made their homes in Cheshire when the glaciers of the Great Ice Age retreated northwards and the climate became more suitable for human habitation. A flint arrow-head found during some excavations at Clulow Cross near Wincle, tells us that men lived then by hunting, depending for their food on the flesh of wild beasts. They lived in caves or in holes dug in the ground. The roughly-chipped stone axe in the Grosvenor Museum was made by these men.

The Flint men, or men of the Old Stone Age, probably came originally from the mainland of Europe to which Britain at that time was joined, the North Sea and English Channel being then dry land. The reindeer, the mammoth, the wild ox, and packs of hungry wolves and hyenas roamed over Cheshire in those days.

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These Flint men were succeeded by other races of New Stone men who found that they could manufacture their necessary tools out of the boulders embedded in the drift and boulder-clay. The men who dug up the knives and scrapers of Alderley found near Mottram Common a heap of small boulders carefully placed in a pit dug in the ground and clearly selected for some useful purpose. For out of these stones were to be cut and shaped stone hammer-heads with which they learned to crush copper ore and axe-heads to cut down trees. Some of the hammer-heads themselves have been found in this locality, and they are made of a stone similar to that of the unbroken boulders. The stone 'celt' or axe-head in Vernon Park Museum shows that they were improving in their skill and workmanship, for their tools were no longer chipped into their required shape but ground with hard mill-stones and afterwards smoothed and polished. Afterwards, as you may see from the specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, which has a hole cut through it, the New Stone men learned how to fit handles to their axe-heads.

In the course of time these primitive dwellers learned to tame and train animals for their service and use. They were protected from attack by wild beasts by circles of piled stones or raised earth covered with turf. Traces of these circles have in recent years been found at Alderley Edge, but they have been mostly levelled for agricultural purposes.

They also taught themselves the art of pottery, making rough jars and urns of sun-dried clay and sand, jars wherein to store their water, and urns in which to place the remains of their dead. One of these urns, dug up at Stretton, may be seen in the Warrington Museum.

The Stone men were succeeded by tribes of an entirely different race called Celts. The Celts drove out the earlier inhabitants from their Cheshire homes, compelling them to seek refuge in Wales and Ireland. They came not all at once but in successive waves, the earliest arrivals being the Goidelic or Gaelic Celts, who in their turn were ousted by the Brythonic Celts, from whom the name of Briton is derived. These are the ancestors of the Welsh nation.

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The Brythons, or Britons as we may now call them, were a more intelligent and civilized race than any that had hitherto dwelt in the land. They were a pastoral people, and brought with them

great herds of cattle, as well as horses and dogs. They could spin and sew, making their spindles and needles of bone or horn, and grew corn, which they ground with hand-mills.

But the Britons must have been continually fighting against fresh incoming tribes, for on some of the hill-tops of Cheshire you may see the camps and earthworks which they made for their defence and refuge in time of war. Suitable positions were chosen, with one side guarded by precipitous cliffs if possible, the whole being enclosed except on the steep side by a raised rampart of earth and a ditch. These earthworks are circular or oval with gaps on either side for entrances. At Bucton Castle, high above Mossley and the Tame Valley, at Kelsborrow Castle in Delamere Forest, and Maiden Castle in the Broxton Hills, British encampments may still be seen.

The Britons were very particular about the burial of their dead. Over the graves of their chiefs they erected great round 'barrows'. Many of these barrows, or, to give them their Latin name, 'tumuli,' may be seen to-day, and several of them have been opened and examined. In a field near Oakmere, not far from the high-road that passes through Delamere Forest, is a cluster of barrows called the 'Seven Lows' which clearly mark an early settlement of considerable importance. They vary in size from fifteen to thirty yards in diameter. One of them, when opened, was found to contain an urn with charred human remains within it. The urn was inverted, the better to support the weight of soil above it, and was set in the middle of a floored space over which was a thin layer of charcoal. This seems to show that a funeral pyre was erected on which the body was first burnt, the remains being then gathered and placed in the urn. The barrow was erected over the urn by piling stones and covering them with soil and turf. Burial urns have been found at Castle Hill Cob and Glead Hill Cob in Delamere Forest, and at Twemlow where there is a group of five tumuli. 28

In the hilly district of East Cheshire, where rocks are plentiful, the burial grounds were marked by circles of upright stones. There are some remains of such circles on the moorland near Clulow Cross. Among the burnt bones in a barrow at this spot were found a flint^[1] knife and arrow-head, for it was believed that the dead man would require his tools and weapons after death just as in his lifetime. For the same reason often the wives and slaves of a chief were sacrificed or cremated at his death to serve and wait upon him in another world. The barrows were also used by the tribes as a place of assembly for their religious rites, when prayers and human victims were offered to their gods and to the spirits of their dead leaders, who, as they believed, would continue to watch over them and help them in battle.

The Brythonic Celts came to Britain between 1,000 B.C. and 500 B.C., and were acquainted with the use and manufacture of bronze implements. Hence the period during which they arrived and lived in Britain is called the Bronze Age. The bronze 'celt' in the Grosvenor Museum was found in the camp at Kelsborrow, and when the railway was cut at Wilmslow an urn containing bones and a bronze dagger was dug up. The urn and dagger are now in the museum at Peel Park, Salford.

The river valleys and the lowlands of Cheshire were in those days swampy and unhealthy, so the Britons lived as much as possible in the higher parts, which were also more suitable for agricultural pursuits. On the crests or slopes of hills were tracks or ridgeways for pack-horses, leading from one settlement to another. On Werneth Low, Eddisbury Hill, and Alderley Edge, these ancient ridgeways may still be traced. When men went down to the rivers to fish they carried on their backs light coracles of plaited reeds covered with skin, such as the fishermen still use on the Dee between Farndon and Bangor where the water is too rapid or shallow for boats. 29

Roman writers have left us descriptions of the Britons who lived in the centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ; from them we learn that, although the British tribes were mainly occupied in fighting against one another, a certain amount of trade was carried on with travellers and merchants from other lands, and that they dwelt in 'towns' or collections of wattled huts surrounded by a stockade and ditch. From the numerous fragments of British pottery that have been unearthed in the neighbourhood of Chester, we gather that there was a British town of considerable importance on the site of the later city, and traders from the Mediterranean, who visited this country, may well have moored their vessels in the tidal waters of the Dee.

CHAPTER V

THE ROMANS IN CHESHIRE. I

In the previous chapters all that we know of Cheshire and its people has been learned from unwritten records, 'stories in stones', and from such scanty remains as have been brought to light by excavation and careful examination of the soil. From this time onwards our knowledge will be much more extensive and sure, for we shall have *written* records left by men who lived in the times of which they wrote.

Fifty-four years before the birth of Christ the British inhabitants of Cheshire must have heard of the landing on the southern shores of Britain of the drilled and disciplined soldiers of one of the

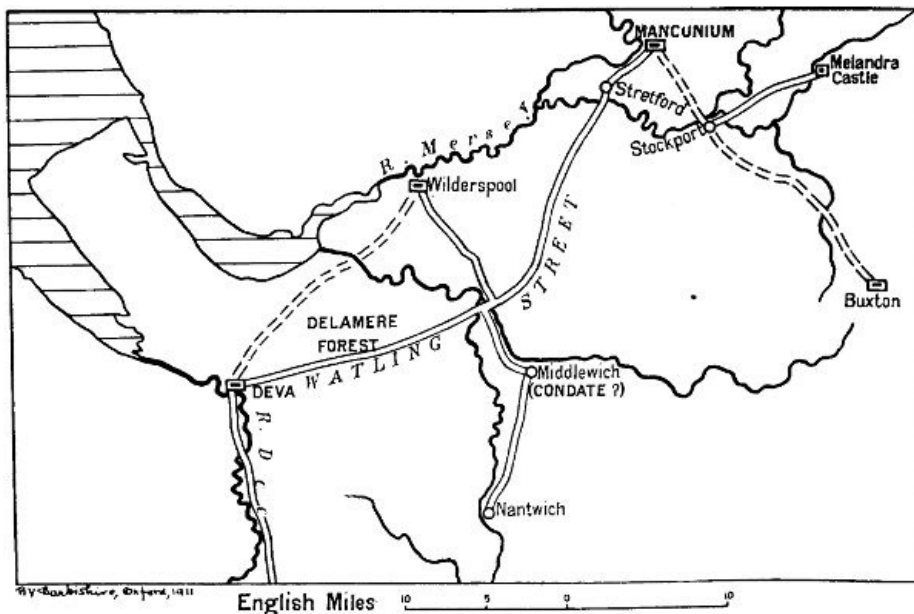
greatest generals that ever lived. Julius Caesar, who first led the Roman eagles into Britain, has given us in his 'Commentaries' a description of the Britain of his day and of its inhabitants. Some of the fierce hill-men of East Cheshire may possibly have fought against him, for he tells us that the British tribes ceased making war on one another, and united themselves under a single leader called Cassivellaunus to resist the invaders. After a decisive victory—at least, according to his own account—Caesar returned with his legions to the Continent, and ninety years passed by before the Romans came again, this time to make a long stay of nearly four hundred years.

About the year A.D. 50 the Roman axe might be heard hewing a road through the dense forests which in those days almost surrounded the city of Chester. A Roman governor, Ostorius Scapula, was busy in the neighbouring county of Shropshire making war on the sturdy Welsh-Britons of the borderland of Wales, and fortifying the city which he built under the shadow of the Wrekin. From this point, slowly but surely, the Roman soldiers made their way through forest and foe to Chester, or Deva as it was then called. This was the chief town of a tribe called the Cornavii, a pastoral people occupying the present county of Cheshire, except the hilly districts of the north-east, where the Brigantes, a more warlike tribe than the Cornavii, had their homes.

The Romans did not, however, capture Chester without a struggle. The city was well protected on its western and southern sides by the river Dee, whose waters spread over the Roodee right up to where the walls of the city now stand. Only from the east could the place be attacked, and the highest points of Delamere Forest and the Peckforton Hills are still marked by the British encampments and earthworks where the Britons made their last stand, and by green earth-mounds or 'tumuli' where the dead bodies of their leaders were buried.

If you take up an Ordnance Map you will often find a length of road running quite straight for some miles. Such roads will nearly always prove to have been the work of the Romans, for the Romans made their roads direct from point to point, like modern railways, their chief object being to enable troops to march rapidly from one military station to another. Two straight pieces of Roman road enter the city of Chester, one on the south and the other on the east.

ROMAN ROADS IN CHESHIRE



The Romans were skilful engineers and did their work very thoroughly, clearing the forest land as they advanced, and draining marshes or laying stone causeways across them. Bridges were built, though not every bridge now called Roman was the work of the Romans. The 'Roman bridge' near Marple was not built until many centuries after the last Romans had left Cheshire, but it may well mark the spot where, according to tradition, a Roman bridge had once stood.

More often, where the roads crossed rivers, fords were marked by stakes, and the bed of the river carefully laid with stones. In the Museum at Vernon Park is a paving-stone taken from the Mersey at Stockport where probably the Roman road crossed the river. The Roman roads were paved throughout, except where they were hewn out of the solid rock.

The road through Delamere Forest was part of the 'Watling Street' which went in an almost straight line from Deva to Manchester, called by the Romans Mancunium. Stretford is the place where the Roman 'street' crossed the Mersey. The modern high-road from Chester to Manchester for nearly its entire length keeps very close to the line of the ancient Watling Street, only departing from the older road to avoid hills. At such points the straight track of the Roman road can still be traced in the fields and woodland. Often in the neighbourhood of Tarvin and Kelsall has the pickaxe or the spade of the labourer struck against the Roman paving-stones.

When an excavation was made at Organsdale, midway between the villages of Kelsall and Delamere, a portion of the Roman Watling Street, cut in the solid sandstone, was discovered, still showing the wheel-ruts worn on the surface by Roman and British carts. In other parts of the forest, when the crops are in, you may see lines of raised earth and gravel where the ancient road

was laid along an embankment.

At Northwich, which the Romans called Salinae or the 'saltworks', a second road, which entered Cheshire at Wilderspool near Warrington, crossed Watling Street at right angles and ran in a perfectly straight line to Middlewich or 'Condate'. This road was called by the Saxons Kind or King Street, and was continued southwards to Nantwich.



TOMBSTONE TO CAECILIUS AVITUS (GROSVENOR MUSEUM)

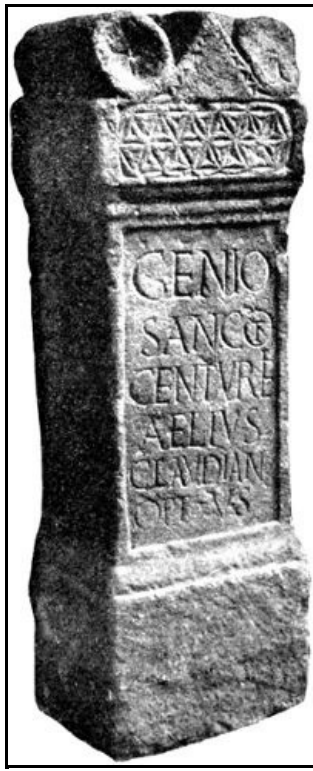
The Grosvenor Museum at Chester contains a large collection of stones with figures and inscriptions carved upon them, and other objects from which we may learn a great deal about the Roman conquerors. The inscriptions, which are of course in Latin, the language of the Romans, show that Chester was an important garrison town, and the head-quarters of the Twentieth Legion. A legion, or division, of the Roman army contained about five thousand men.

A number of these relics are tombstones of the legionary soldiers who were stationed here. You may distinguish them by the opening words DIS MANIBUS, or shortly D.M., which practically means in English, 'To the memory of.' The inscriptions then give the name of the soldier and his native place, his age, and the name of the 'century' or company to which he belonged. Women accompanied the legion, as you may see from a tombstone of a centurion and his wife. Another stone of which a picture is given, shows the ordinary dress, the tunic and belt of a Roman soldier. In most of the inscriptions on these stones are the letters VV, which are the initials of the words 'Valeria Victrix', the victorious Valerian, by which name the Twentieth Legion was known. The badge of the legion was a boar, and this also appears on many of the stones and tiles of the buildings put up by the soldiers of this legion.

These tombstones were discovered in the year 1883 inside the base of the north wall of the city of Chester while the wall was being repaired. It is probable therefore that there had been a cemetery outside the city wall at this point, from which the stones were taken during its construction.

The bodies of the Romans were burnt after death, and the ashes placed in urns of earthenware not unlike those of the Britons. Roman burial urns have been discovered on Winnington Hill near Northwich and at Boughton. You may see them in the Chester Museum.

Here also are a number of Roman altars dedicated, as their inscriptions show, to the Roman gods Jupiter, Mars, Minerva, &c. On one of them you can easily make out the words DEO MARTI CONSERV, which mean 'To the god Mars the Preserver'. The lower portion, which has been broken off, contained the name of the soldier who dedicated it. Another altar is dedicated to the 'Genius', or guardian spirit, of the century. On the sides of the altars are rough carvings of the axe and the knife, the jug and the dish, used in sacrificial ceremonies.



ALTAR: GENIO (GROSVENOR MUSEUM)

A third group of stones are called centurial stones. These, like our modern foundation or memorial stones, were built into a portion of wall or building and gave the name of the 'century' of soldiers by whom the work was constructed.

At first the Romans were hard taskmasters. Heavy tribute was demanded from the conquered Britons, who complained loudly of the miseries of bondage, and of the insults and injuries put upon them. Gangs of British slaves were forced to work in cornfield and quarry under the whips of their Roman rulers, or compelled to fight with one another or with wild beasts 'to make a Roman holiday'. Rebellions were frequent, and were put down by the Roman officers with great cruelty; and for many years it was only the superior arms and military science of the Roman legions that made it possible to keep in subjection a discontented people.

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CHAPTER VI THE ROMANS IN CHESHIRE. II

A piece of leaden water-piping discovered in Eastgate Street, Chester, bears the name of Julius Agricola. Agricola was made Governor of Britain in A.D. 78. Tacitus, a Roman historian, who married Agricola's daughter, wrote a life of his father-in-law and a narrative of his work in Britain. From his writings we learn that Agricola first turned his attention to the fierce tribe of the Brigantes who inhabited the hilly districts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and North-East Cheshire.

Agricola made the preparations for his expedition at Chester, which became his head-quarters, and built the fortified outposts of Mancunium on the Irwell and Melandra on the Derbyshire bank of the River Etherow, connecting them with one another with new roads. Both Mancunium and Melandra have been excavated in recent years, and at the latter you may see the foundations of portions of the wall laid bare, and the base of one of the principal gateways leading into the fort.

A Roman camp was usually square, with the corners slightly rounded, as has been proved by the excavations at Melandra and by the piece of Roman wall lately discovered at Chester, which shows a distinct curve towards the Pepper Gate. Roads crossed the camp at right angles. The wall or 'vallum' was protected when necessary by a fosse or ditch, but Agricola chose his positions with such care that one side at least was usually already guarded by the waters of some stream. Watch-towers were placed at the corners and on either side of the gateways.

Chester still preserves the shape and plan of the Roman fortress. Its four main streets, which are hewn out of the sandstone on which the city is built, cross each other at right angles. The Welsh called it *Caer Lleon* or *Lleon Vawr*—the 'Camp of the Legion'. The present walls are not, however, the work of the Romans, though here and there they have been proved to have been built on the foundations of the Roman walls. The lowest courses of the North Wall near the Deanery Field, when excavated, were found to be faced with massive stones of Roman masonry, with a Roman 'plinth' running along the base. The stones fit very closely together and no mortar was used. The

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inside of the wall was filled with rubble.

From time to time portions of Roman wall have been found in other parts of the city. One big piece is in the cellars of Dickson's seed warehouse. When the foundations of the offices of the National Telephone Company in John Street were being excavated a year or two ago, a fine piece of Roman wall was unearthed. The builders have left it standing where they found it, and you may now see it in the basement of the building, protected from future harm by an iron grid.

On the Roodee is a portion of Roman masonry of finely jointed stones which is thought to have been the quay of the Roman city.

In the middle of a Roman fortress was the Praetorium or general's quarters. Traces of such a building are to be seen in the camp at Melandra, and at Chester the foundations of a large edifice discovered in Northgate Street may possibly be a portion of a similar building.

Inscriptions show us that another legion, called the Legio Secunda, was stationed at Chester for several years. When Britain was more or less pacified and required fewer troops this legion was recalled and sent to the Roman provinces on the Danube.

Tacitus tells us that Agricola spread civilization among the Britons, sent the sons of chieftains to Rome to be educated, and even in time taught the Britons to adopt Roman habits and dress and to speak the Latin tongue. But he would not at first let them join the Roman legions in Britain; those who wished to fight for the Roman emperors were sent abroad to the Roman provinces on the Rhine or the Danube.

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The soldiers of subject races were not for many years after their conquest allowed by the Romans to fight in their own country. The tombstones mentioned in the previous chapter prove this, for not one of them bears the name of any British soldier. A bronze tablet dug up at Malpas, on which is engraved a decree of the Emperor Trajan, shows that the soldiers who fought in the Roman army in Britain were not all Romans, or even Italians, for it speaks of Thracians, Dalmatians, Spaniards, and men of other nations conquered by Rome.

For seven years Agricola was a wise and a humane ruler. He removed many of the burdens put upon the Britons by previous governors, and it was chiefly due to him that the Romans were able to make their rule acceptable to the Britons. In time Britons became proud of the name of Roman citizens.

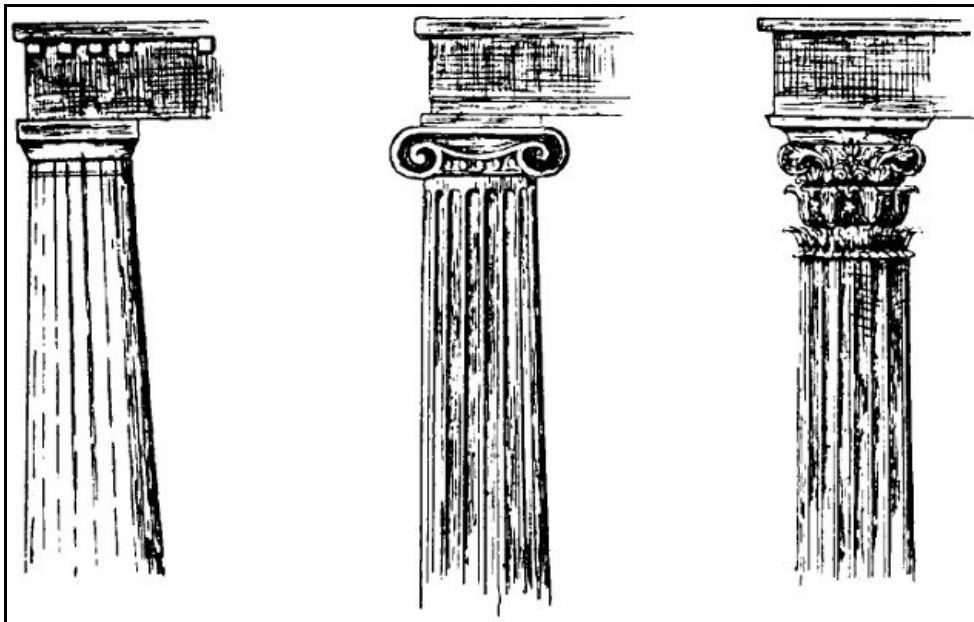
We have seen from the character of the remains that Chester was peculiarly a military city. Thus it differed greatly from many of the Roman cities of southern Britain, which lost their military character as the tide of war rolled northwards and westwards. These cities soon became busy centres of trade and civic life, with all the conveniences and luxuries of Italian towns. They had their temples and their basilica or town hall, theatres and public baths, palaces and colonnades of shops, and handsome villas of Roman officials. But life at Chester, with the continual arrival and departure of troops and stores, must have been hard and monotonous, with the din of warfare probably never far distant. The Welsh were never really subdued by the Romans.

Yet even at Chester there were buildings of importance, as we can see from the broken fragments of pillars in the little garden by the Water Tower, and in the basements of Vernon's Toy Bazaar and other shops in Chester.

These pillars were made to support the porches and colonnades with which the fronts and sometimes the sides also of Roman buildings were adorned. No doubt you have noticed them in pictures you have seen of ancient Rome. In a later chapter you will learn that the Englishmen of the eighteenth century copied the Roman or Italian style of architecture in their churches, town halls, and other public buildings, and from the buildings then made you can get some idea of those of a Roman town.

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The pillars were of three different patterns or 'orders', and by observing carefully their differences you will be able to tell at a glance to which particular order a modern building belongs. The capitals of the Doric and Ionic pillars are much simpler in design than those of the Corinthian, which were often of a very ornamental nature.

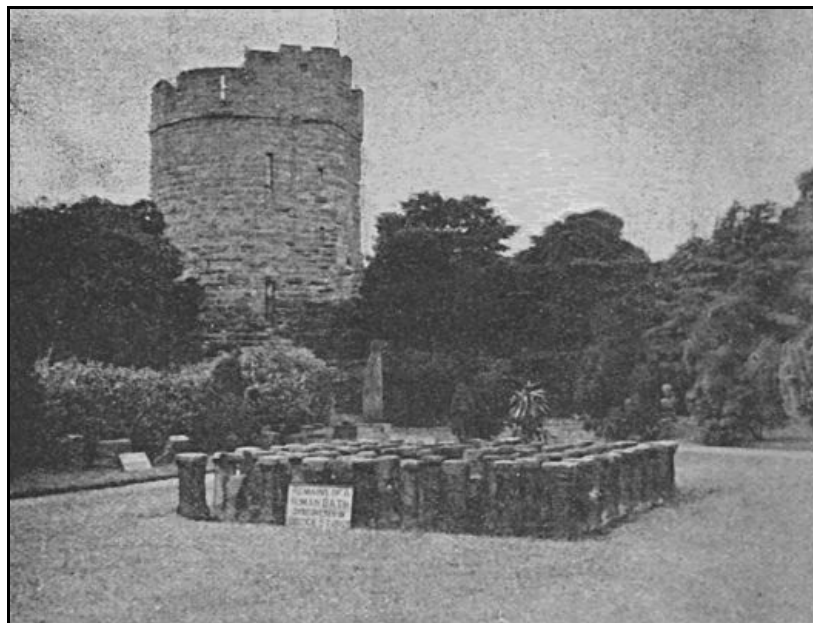


ROMAN CAPITALS: DORIC, IONIC, AND CORINTHIAN

The Romans felt the cold and damp of the British climate, so different from that of their own warm and sunny land. Many of their houses and public buildings were warmed by 'hypocausts' or heating chambers, and every city had its public baths with rooms heated by hot air. In Bridge Street is a hypocaust remaining just where the Romans left it. The pillars which you see in the illustration are those of another hypocaust found many years ago in Bridge Street.

The pillars were set up in rows on a solid foundation, being fixed in their places by cement. On the top of these a second floor of cement and bricks, several inches thick, was laid. The space between the two floors was heated by hot air, introduced through an opening in the side wall communicating with a furnace or oven. In their own country the bath was an important event in the everyday life of the Romans.

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REMAINS OF HYPOCAUST, CHESTER

The floors of Roman buildings were paved with tiny blocks of brick called 'tesserae', three to four inches long and one inch wide. A piece of flooring in the Grosvenor Museum shows that the bricks were laid on a bed of cement or concrete in 'herring-bone' pattern, that is, with the bricks at right angles to one another. A large number of tiles used in roofing have been found all over the city; on many of these you will see the stamp LEG XX VV of the Twentieth Legion. There was a tile factory at Holt on the Dee where also many of these tiles bearing the same stamp have recently been found.

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The Romans taught the Britons many useful trades. 'Veratinum' or Wilderspool became under the Romans quite a busy manufacturing town, the forerunner of a modern Warrington or Wigan. The site of the ancient Roman town has been carefully dug over. Traces have been found of many pits, hearths, furnaces, and ovens for the manufacture of glass and pottery, a bronze foundry, and an iron smelting furnace, and an enameller's workshop. In the museums at Warrington and at Stockport are many fragments of pottery found here. Most of it is of a rough brown-red ware, called 'rough-cast', of which the commoner utensils, water-jugs and bowls and funeral urns, were made. A more ornamental kind is called 'Samian', and is of a darker colour, highly glazed and decorated with embossed figures of men and animals. Many articles of iron, knives, padlocks,

keys, nails, found on the same spot show that Veratium was the Birmingham of the Roman occupation.

Roman coins have been dug up in large numbers at Chester and other sites along the Roman roads. Many of them are to be seen in Chester Town Hall and in our museums. Nearly all the emperors of the first four centuries are represented upon them. Several emperors came to Britain, and we may be sure that in their tours of inspection they paid visits to the important garrison city of the 'great legion'.

Some of these coins bear the name of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, who was born at York, and whose mother was perhaps a lady of British birth. There is unfortunately nothing to show that there was any Christian church in Roman Cheshire, though many of the Roman soldiers must have been familiar with the Christian faith. Romans who became Christians were allowed to worship in the basilica, which in after days, as we shall see, became the model upon which Christian churches were built.

On a house near the East Gate of Chester are carved these words: 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.' This is the translation of an inscription on a Roman coin found when the workmen were digging the foundations of the building. The coins of the Emperor Magnentius show the monogram of the first two letters of Christ.

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The Roman rule lasted for 370 years. During this period they had transformed a desolate and barren land, inhabited by a people that were almost savages, into a fertile and prosperous province; Britannia Felix the Romans themselves called it. Large tracts of forest land were cleared and brought under cultivation. Britain became one of the chief granaries of Rome. In the museums you may see the Roman querns or handmills with which they ground their corn.

The Romans worked the copper mines on Alderley Edge; stone hammer-heads with which the Britons crushed the ore for their Roman masters have been found there. A 'pig' of lead weighing over a hundredweight, dug up in the Roodee, shows that lead mines were extensively worked. The lead was brought to Chester from the mines of Denbighshire and was part of the tribute paid by the Britons to the Roman emperors. Salt, a scarce commodity in many countries, was obtained, as at the present day, from the salt beds of Northwich.

At the end of the fourth century the Roman empire was overrun by hordes of barbarians from Northern Europe. The Romans, weakened by luxury and wealth, were unable to beat back the ruthless invaders. Legion after legion was summoned from the distant parts of the empire for the defence of the imperial city itself. About the year A.D. 380 the 'Conquering Legion' marched out for the last time through the city gates of Chester, and by 410 no Roman soldiers were left in Britain.

With sorrow and despair the Britons watched the last soldiers depart. Their own fighting-men were far away in distant lands, and they knew that without the protection of the Roman legions on whom they had so long relied, they were left a defenceless prey of the foes that were threatening them on all sides.

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CHAPTER VII

SAXONS AND ANGLES COME TO CHESHIRE

As the Romans retreated southwards, tribes of Picts, a fierce race inhabiting the northern parts of Britain followed in their wake plundering and destroying the cities built by the Romans, and everywhere falling upon the defenceless Britons. We know little of the doings of this terrible time, for with the departure of the Romans there descended upon Britain a veil of darkness that was not to be lifted for 150 years.

In the latter part of the fifth century the tide of Pictish invasion was rolled back by other races who landed on our southern and eastern coasts. These were the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles, the rude forefathers of the English people, who left their homes in Northern Germany to make new settlements and found kingdoms in our country. You will read elsewhere of the long and gradual conquest of England by these barbarian invaders. 'Field by field, town by town, forest by forest, the land was won' from the British inhabitants.

According to the story usually told, though I am obliged to admit that we have very strong evidence for it, it was not until the year 584 A.D. that any of them reached the part of the country that is now Cheshire. By that time the West Saxons, one of the most powerful of these tribes, had fought their way from the English Channel to the River Severn and Shropshire, where they destroyed the great Roman city of Uriconium. Under their leader Ceawlin they appear to have made an attempt to reach Chester, but were met near Nantwich at a spot called Fethanleagh, now probably the modern village of Faddiley, by Brocmael, Prince of Powys or mid-Wales. The Saxons were routed and retired quickly to the South. Chester was saved for a time and became the capital of the Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd.

Thirty years later, however, a greater than Ceawlin appeared before the walls of the Roman city. The Angles, who had founded on our north-eastern shores the powerful kingdom of Northumbria, crossed the Pennine Hills under their leader and king Aethelfrith, and descended upon Cheshire. Once more Brocmael put himself at the head of the Britons and Welsh. We are told by Bede, the earliest of our English historians, who wrote in the succeeding century, that 1,200 monks from a great monastery at Bangor-Iscoed on the Dee accompanied Brocmael after a fast of three days to the battlefield to offer up prayers for victory. Aethelfrith watched the wild gestures of the monks and bade his followers slay them first of all. 'Bear they arms or no,' he said, 'they fight against us when they cry against us to their God.' Brocmael left them to their fate and fled from the battle, which ended in the utter defeat of the Britons.

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The victory of Aethelfrith was followed by the capture of Chester, and Cheshire became a portion of a kingdom that stretched from the Tweed to the Dee. But the most important result of the 'Battle of Chester' was that the northern Welsh Britons or 'Cumbrian' Welsh were now completely cut off from their kinsmen in Wales. Everywhere the conquered Britons were driven northwards and westwards to the mountains of Cumberland or Wales, and the Britons as a united nation ceased to exist.

For forty years Cheshire was ruled by Northumbrian kings, but during the latter part of this period another kingdom was gathering strength in the Midlands of England. This was the kingdom of Mercia or the Marchland. The Mercian Penda defeated the Northumbrian king and added Cheshire to the lands over which he ruled. Mercia and Cheshire were frequently raided by the Welsh, and it was to keep them out that Offa, greatest of the Mercian kings, built his famous 'Dyke' from Chester to South Wales, many portions of which you may trace to this day.

Mercia in turn was conquered by the kings of Wessex, one of whom, Ecbert, is usually styled the first king of all England. Ecbert and his West Saxons overran Cheshire and captured the city of Chester in the year 828. Thus did three kingdoms strive for the possession of Cheshire, which from its central position must have been the scene of many an unrecorded fight.

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Numbers of Cheshire villages show by their names their Anglo-Saxon origin. Davenham, Frodsham, and Warmingham speak to us of the 'hams' or homesteads that the Saxons made for themselves in their newly won lands. Bebington, Bollington, and Congleton take their names from the 'tun', the enclosure or hedge of a farm or village; Prestbury, Marbury, and Astbury from the 'burh' or fortified house of the headman of a tribe.



RUNIC STONE, UPTON

Goostree is perhaps the 'God's tree' where the land was parcelled out among the villagers and punishment meted to wrong-doers; Thurstaston, or the tun of Thor's stone, the place of sacrifice to their heathen god Thor.

The ash tree gives its name to several Cheshire villages, Ashton, Ashley, Astbury, for instance. This fact tells us that the tree was held in great veneration by the Angles and Saxons. Even to this day the tree is thought to possess the power of bringing good or evil. A superstitious Cheshire labourer will not, if he can help it, cut down an ash tree for fear it should bring him misfortune, and churn staves made of ash are used by farmers' wives to prevent the butter from being bewitched.

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It is in fact from the Angles and Saxons that we have inherited the priceless possession of our English tongue. The oldest traces of our language in a written form in Cheshire may be seen in the Grosvenor Museum at Chester. Here on a plaster cast is an inscription written in strange letters, 'Runes' or 'mysteries' as they are called. This cast is a copy of an inscribed stone discovered at Upton-in-Wirral when the old church was pulled down. The stones of this building had previously been taken from the ancient ruined church at Overchurch. Learned scholars examined the stone carefully and made out these words: FOLCAE AREARDON BEC[UN]. [GI]BIDDATH

FOR ATHELMUND. The meaning is 'Folk reared tomb, bid (i.e. pray) for Athelmund'. You can see that the words are English, though their form has changed considerably during the 1,200 years or more that have gone by since the runes were carved.

Fierce and bloodthirsty were these early ancestors of ours, 'hateful alike to God and men,' as Gildas, a Welsh monk, described them. Yet even they were taught in time to abandon their strange gods and turn to the worship of Christ, and through the land in town and village uprose a cross of wood or stone, the outward symbol of a new and better faith.

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CHAPTER VIII THE CROSS IN CHESHIRE

During the latter years of the Roman occupation there must have been many among the Roman soldiers stationed in Cheshire who had heard the message of the Gospel, and, following the example of their emperors, professed the faith of Christ. But, as we have before stated, there is no proof that a Christian church existed in Cheshire in those days, though tradition says that where the cathedral church of Chester now stands there was a church dedicated to S. Peter and S. Paul, which had previously been a temple of Apollo.

In Wales and Ireland the Church flourished greatly through the troublous period of the Anglo-Saxon invasions. We are told that Kentigern, the first bishop of Glasgow, on his return to Wales landed in Wirral and founded a church there. In the previous chapter we have seen that at Bangor-Iscoed on the Dee there was a monastery of great importance, which after the victory of Aethelfrith of Northumbria was razed to the ground.

Yet it was from Northumbria that Christianity was destined to be brought and preached to the Angles and Saxons of Cheshire. Oswald, the son of the heathen Aethelfrith, had during his exile in Scotland been converted by Celtic missionaries. During the reign of this 'most Christian king, a man dearly beloved of God, and fenced with the faith of Christ', missionaries from Scotland 'began with great and fervent devotion to preach the word of faith to those provinces which King Oswald governed, baptising all such as believed. Therefore churches were builded in places convenient: the people rejoicing assembled together to hear the word of God,' The ancient churches dedicated to S. Oswald at Chester, Malpas, Brereton, Peover, Bidston, and Worleston, are proof of the great part played by King Oswald in the conversion of Cheshire and of the high repute in which he was held as a champion of Christianity.

48

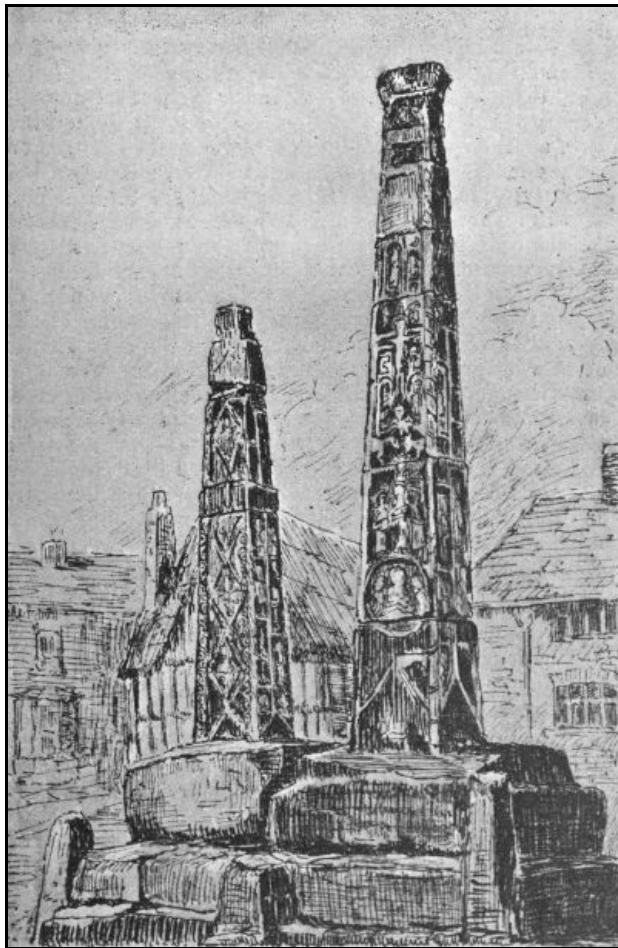
The tiny hamlet of Chadkirk near Marple suggests to us a famous missionary who lived at a time when Cheshire had become part of the kingdom of Mercia. This was Ceadda or Chad, who was sent by the Irish saint Colomba to preach the gospel to the people of Mercia, and became in later times the patron saint of the bishopric of Mercia, founded by King Offa. Chad, who like Oswald had received Christianity from the Celtic missionaries of North Britain, continued the good work of the Northumbrian missionaries. At the village of Over were formerly two stone crosses which may well mark the spots where Chad preached to the Saxons of Cheshire, baptizing the converts in the river Weaver that flows hard by. The old church of Over is dedicated to him, as are also the churches of Farndon and Wybunbury. It is worthy of note that all the Cheshire churches named after him were built on the banks of streams, which leads us to suppose that S. Chad, like S. John the Baptist by the banks of Jordan, chose places where his preaching might be immediately followed by the ceremony of baptism.

At Sandbach are two stone crosses which are thought to be closely connected with the conversion of Cheshire. The story goes that Peada, son of Penda the heathen king of Mercia, wished to marry the Christian daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria. To win the maiden the young man consented to forsake his old religion and become a Christian; whereupon the crosses were set up to commemorate his conversion and marriage.

If you look carefully at the Sandbach crosses you will see that the Angles of Mercia had reached a very high level of art in sculptured stones. Carved upon them are several scenes in the life of our Lord, the Nativity in the stable at Bethlehem with the ox and the ass kneeling before the infant Christ, the Crucifixion with S. Mary and Apostles below, Christ carrying the Cross, and Christ in glory with S. Peter on His right hand bearing the keys of heaven.

Few crosses were, however, carved so elaborately as these Sandbach crosses. The majority were doubtless of wood, set up in the middle of the open space round which clustered the huts and wattled dwellings of the inhabitants. Others consisted of a plain stone shaft set upright in the ground or on a base of stone steps, sometimes rudely adorned with scroll-work such as you may see on the fragments of a cross preserved in the churchyard of Prestbury. Most of them have perished, broken into fragments where they fell, or have been used for repairs to damaged buildings. Many were wantonly destroyed in the seventeenth century during the Civil War.

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ANGLIAN CROSSES AT SANDBACH

Crosses were set up by the wayside at the junction of important highways or in towns at the crossing of the principal streets, as at Chester. Here in the open air the monks would gather round them bands of listeners, and preach the Word of God. Afterwards close to the cross was erected an edifice of wood or wattles in which the services of the Church were held, and in still later times these wooden churches would be replaced by stone buildings. Nowhere, however, in Cheshire are there any churches or even portions of churches remaining which can be said to have been built by our early Saxon forefathers.

The church of S. John's, Chester, is said to have been founded by King Aethelred of Mercia in the year 689. An ancient legend states that Aethelred 'was admonished to erect a church on the spot where he should find a white hind'. In the church you may see fragments of an ancient wall-painting or 'fresco' on one of the pillars of the nave which illustrates this story. A church certainly did exist here in very early times, for we read that in later days Leofric, Earl of Mercia, *repaired* and enriched the church of S. John's, which may mean that the earlier wooden church had fallen into decay, and a more substantial building of stone was erected in its place.

The house of the Mercian Penda produced yet another name closely connected with the story of the Cross in Cheshire. Werburga, a great-granddaughter of Penda, succeeded her mother as head of several great abbeys. She died at Trentham in Staffordshire towards the end of the seventh century, and two hundred years later, when the Danes (of whom you will read more in the next chapter) were harrying the land, her body was removed to Chester for safe keeping, and placed in the church of S. Peter and S. Paul which had been re-dedicated to S. Werburga and S. Oswald. For many centuries crowds of devout pilgrims made their way to Chester to offer prayers and gifts at S. Werburga's shrine.

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CHAPTER IX THE COMING OF THE NORTHMEN

With the capture of Chester (Chap. VII) Ecbert's conquest of Mercia was complete. Northumbria, Kent, and East Anglia also submitted to him. But neither Ecbert nor the kings that came after him were to be allowed to enjoy the blessings of peace, for a new and terrible enemy now appeared on our shores.

In the ninth century, the coasts of Britain were ravaged by the Northmen or Vikings, those

The word Vikings or 'wickings' means creek-men, from a Scandinavian word 'wick', 'a creek'. These Scandinavian and Danish sea-pirates left their homes in the bays and fiords of North-West Europe, and made raids upon Britain and the neighbouring lands more at first from greed of plunder than with any idea of conquest. Large numbers of Danes landed on our eastern coasts and ravaged the midlands. Under their leader Hasting or Hastein, they seized and occupied the city of Chester. We can imagine the hasty flight of the monks, for the abbey and churches were always the first objects of attack by these heathen invaders. You will read elsewhere how King Alfred finally saved the greater part of England from the Danes and converted their leaders to Christianity.

52

The little village of Plemstall (or Plegmundstall), near Chester, reminds us of Plegmund, a Saxon hermit, who took refuge here to escape the Danes. Plegmund had been a friend and tutor of King Alfred. When Alfred's work was done, and peace made with the Danes, he called Plegmund from his lonely retreat in the marshes of the Gowy to be Archbishop of Canterbury.

Meanwhile, the Scandinavians had sailed round the north and west coasts of Scotland, plundering the rich monasteries that had been built by S. Patrick and his followers, and making new homes for themselves in the Isle of Man and in Ireland. Towards the end of the ninth century they crossed into Wales and sailed up the Dee to the walls of Chester, drawn thither perhaps by the report of the wealth of the great church that had been built on the banks of the river. But they found only a deserted city in ruins, and retired to the shores of Wirral, where they settled and tilled the land, and devoted themselves to the more peaceful pursuits of agriculture.

In the Wirral peninsula many of the names of the villages still show their Scandinavian origin. Thus Shotwick means the south wick or creek. This village stands at the edge of a strip of land that has been recovered from the sea. In early times, boats could run along the creek right up to the rising ground where now stands the village church.

53

An interesting name survives in the little hamlet of Thingwall, situated almost in the centre of the Wirral. Thingwall is the field where the 'thing', that is the tribe, assembled to divide the land and to dispense justice. You will recognize the same word in the town of Dingwall in the North of Scotland, and at the present day 'thing' is the Norwegian and Danish name for Parliament.

The ending '-by' in the villages Kirby, Irby, Raby, Frankby, and Helsby, is the Danish name for a township, and we see the word in our modern word 'by-laws', that is town laws. You will not find this ending in the names of villages in any other parts of Cheshire.



NORSE HOG-BACK, WEST KIRBY

In the museum in the old school-house by the churchyard at West Kirby you may see a stone, which, from its shape, antiquaries call a 'hog-back'. The hog-back was a tombstone or grave-slab that marked the burial-place of some Scandinavian chief. The carved ornamentation as well as its shape is like that of other similar stones that have been found in the parts of Britain where the Northmen settled. The stone gives you some idea of the homes from which these pirates came, for the carved oval shapes represent little wooden tiles; and the interlaced lines are the wattles or osiers of which their huts were made. The heathen Scandinavian liked his place of burial to be as much like home as possible, which may be taken as a proof that he did not think that his soul would perish along with his body. In the same museum is another stone with a head shaped like a wheel, which is also the work of the Vikings.

We are, fortunately, able to tell almost the exact time at which the settlements in the Wirral were made. We read in an old chronicle that in the year 900 A.D. Alfred's daughter Ethelfleda, Lady of the Mercians, granted lands in Wirral to one Ingimund who had been driven out of Ireland. This lady, Ethelfleda, fortified Chester and rebuilt the walls which had lain in ruins since the departure of the Romans. Perhaps Ingimund and his followers had already become Christians during their stay in Ireland. If they had not, we may be sure that Ethelfleda did as her father had done in his treaty with the Danes, and insisted on their becoming Christians in return for being allowed to settle in Cheshire.

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It was in the reign of Alfred that many English counties or shires first received their modern names. Cheshire or Chester-shire, like Staffordshire and Warwickshire, took its name from the chief city or fortress which dominated the district and protected it from the ravages of the Danes.

Alfred also ordered an English history to be written, in which the chief events of each year were recorded. This Old English Chronicle, as it is called, was kept up in the reigns of the successors of Alfred, and is the principal source of our knowledge of England under the Anglo-Saxon kings.

The Chronicle tells us that, in order to prevent any fresh landing of Danes, Ethelfleda built a castle or 'burh' at Runcorn at the head of the estuary of the Mersey. The very site of her castle has now disappeared, for 'Castle Rock', upon which it was built, was destroyed when the Ship Canal was made.

Another fortress was erected by Ethelfleda on Eddisbury Hill, the highest point of Delamere Forest, where, probably, there was a large camp in British times. Her brother Edward, who succeeded Alfred as King of England, also fortified Thelwall on the Mersey, as an inscription on the gable of an inn at Thelwall tells us. For the next twenty years he carried on a vigorous war against the Danes of the 'Five Boroughs', Nottingham, Leicester, Derby, Stamford, and Lincoln. But in many parts Saxon and Dane had already settled down side by side, the Danes abandoned the worship of their heathen gods Odin and Thor, and received the Gospel of Christ, and in the next century a Danish king was destined to rule over all the land and to advance greatly the cause of Christianity.

55

Edward's work was done when he received the homage of the chief kings of Britain, and made the royal house of Wessex supreme. In the year 924, as you may read in the English Chronicle, 'then chose him for father and lord the King of Scots ... and all those who dwell in Northumbria whether English or Danes, and also the King of the Strathclyde Welsh.'

Chester appears to have rapidly risen in importance, largely no doubt owing to its central position, and to have become a great and populous city. The walls were extended beyond the limits of the ancient Roman city, and a new fortress built where the present 'Castle' of Chester now stands, to guard the road over the river.

Henceforth, the city was kept in a state of defence by a custom which bound every 'hide' in the shire to provide a man at the town-reeve's call to keep its walls and bridge in repair. A considerable trade with the seaports of Ireland followed, largely it is to be feared in connexion with the slave traffic, and the city became a favourite resort of the English kings. Coins were minted here in the reign of Athelstan.

Athelstan must often have been in Cheshire, for this favourite grandson of King Alfred was brought up by the Lady of Mercia, and no doubt learned from her the ways of a strong and wise ruler. When Athelstan became king he was attacked by the King of the Scots and the Danes of Ireland. A great battle was fought, perhaps on Cheshire soil, and the English Chronicle breaks out into a wonderful song of victory.

Athelstand King
Lord among Earls,
He with his brother,
Gained a lifelong
Glory in battle,
Slew with the sword-edge,
There by Brunanburh ...
.....
Bow'd the spoiler,
Bent the Scotsman,
Fell the ship-crews
Doom'd to the death.
All the field with blood of the fighters
Flow'd, from when first the great
Sun-star of morningtide,
Lamp of the Lord God
Lord Everlasting
Glode over earth till the glorious creature
Sank to his setting.

56

Brunanburh has been thought by some writers of history to be the village of Bromborough in Wirral. We cannot be sure of this, but some day perhaps the land will give up its secret, when some labourer's spade shall dig up the javelins and the war-knives of the defeated Northmen.

'Edgar's field' is supposed to mark the site of the palace of one of the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon Kings of England. It is related that in the year 973, Edgar the 'Peacemaker' visited Chester, and received there the submission of many tributary kings. He assembled an imposing fleet of ships on the Dee, and was rowed from his palace to the minster of S. John's by six under-kings, the King of Scots, the King of Cumberland, the King of Man, and three Welsh princes, he himself taking the helm as being their head-king. 'Those who come after me', he said, 'may indeed call themselves kings, since I have had such honour.'

Guided by his chief adviser, the good Archbishop Dunstan, Edgar also did much to increase the power and influence of the Church. He gave a charter in 958 to the church of S. Werburga, and endowed it richly with lands. The English Chronicle thus speaks of him:

He upreared God's glory
and loved God's law
and bettered the public peace
more than the kings
who were before him
within man's memory.
God also him helped
that kings and earls
gladly to him bowed
and were submissive
to all that he willed.

57

In Edgar's reign we first hear of the division of the shire into 'hundreds' for the trial and punishment of evildoers. Why this name was chosen is not quite clear, but the Hundred probably denoted a collection of a hundred homesteads or hamlets. The Hundred had its 'moot' or assembly of freemen, held near some sacred spot or conspicuous landmark. In Cheshire some of them, Bucklow for instance, took their names from the ancient 'lows' or burial-places.

Early in the eleventh century fresh invasions of Danes took place, and in 1016 Cnut Dane became King of England. Cheshire formed a portion of a great earldom, embracing the whole of Mercia and governed by Earl Leofric. Cnut, who during his reign visited Rome and had there learnt much about church building, was a generous friend to the churches, rebuilding those that had suffered in the wars and erecting many new ones. The church of S. Olave or Olaf, in the south-eastern part of the city of Chester, probably owes its foundation to him, for the name shows that there was a Danish settlement in the city. The city itself was governed at this time, like other Danish cities, by twelve 'lagmen' or lawmen who presided over its law-courts.

Leofric, not to be outdone by his master Cnut, almost entirely rebuilt the church of S. Werburga in 1057, and if we may judge from the memorials of his work which he has left in other cities of his earldom, much of the new church was probably built of stone. It is doubtful whether he lived to see the completion of his work. In any case, before many years had passed, the church was again enlarged on a still grander scale and by a greater race of church builders than any that had gone before them.

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CHAPTER X

THE NORMANS COME TO CHESHIRE

In the early months of the year A.D. 1070 the Saxons of Cheshire fled before the approach of an army of discontented and almost mutinous troops who had cut their way through the deep snowdrifts of the Pennine Hills. But neither the severity of the weather nor the hardships of the march seemed to have any effect upon the stern and indomitable Norman warrior at their head, who, like the Vikings whose blood flowed in his veins, set an example of energy and endurance to his half-starved fainting followers.

William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, had landed in England three and a half years previously, and defeated the English King Harold at the battle of Senlac. But the real 'conquest' was yet to come; and after swift visits to the west and north of England William crossed the hills that lay between York and Cheshire and made a dash upon Chester, the one great city of free England that had not yet bowed to the might of the Norman invader.

There were at this time in Chester many English, the wife of Harold among them, who had fled thither after the defeat of Senlac, prepared on William's approach to cross the seas to Ireland. In the next century Gerald 'the Welshman' related the legend that Harold himself was not killed at the battle of Senlac, but escaped, and, after many wanderings, took refuge in a hermit's cell near the minster of S. John's, where he remained until his death. The story was no doubt invented by those who were unwilling to believe that an English king had been defeated by a foreigner.

William captured the city and received the submission of Edric the Forester and other Saxon leaders. Chester was put in charge of a Flemish noble called Gherbod, who, however, in the following year returned to his native land. Then, leaving a trail of fire and sword through mid-Cheshire, William marched southwards to Salisbury Plain, where he held a grand review of all his followers and distributed to them their rewards. You will not see him again in Cheshire. No part of the country ever needed a second visit from the 'Conqueror'.

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The English who had borne arms against William were treated as rebels and deprived of their lands and possessions, which were parcelled out among the Normans. A parcel of land thus

granted was called a manor. All the landowners, including those English who were allowed to keep their estates, were compelled to take the oath of fealty to King William in person. In this way William broke up the great earldoms which had been created by the Danish king Cnut.

Cheshire, however, in which the Saxon Earl Edwin, Harold's brother-in-law, owned vast estates, was from the first treated in a very special manner. Owing to its position on the border of Wales, William saw that it was very necessary to place a strong military power in this part of England to protect his newly-won kingdom from invasion from the west. So he bestowed the county upon his own favourite nephew Hugh d'Avranches, surnamed Lupus or 'the Wolf', and his heirs, giving him the title of Earl of Chester. The earl's duty was to repel any attacks that might be made by the Welsh, and permission was given him even to extend his earldom, if possible, beyond the Welsh border. Royal rights were granted to him over all land within the earldom, which was held by him 'as freely by the sword as the king held England by the Crown'. For this reason Cheshire was called a County Palatine, that is, a county whose ruler exercises all the powers of an independent prince, save only that he owns allegiance to his overlord the king. And the sword, the 'sword of dignity', as it was called, was no light one. You may see it if ever you visit the British Museum, a mighty two-edged weapon four feet long, with its inscription in Latin engraved beneath the hilt, 'Hugo comes Cestriae,' Hugh Count of Chester.

In the quadrangle of Eaton Hall is an equestrian statue of Hugh Lupus, an ancestor of the Dukes of Westminster, whose family derives its name of Grosvenor from Robert the 'gros veneur' or great huntsman of the Conqueror and nephew of 'the Wolf'. 60

An old engraving gives us a picture of the royal state with which Earl Hugh was surrounded. He is represented sitting on a raised throne and presiding over his council or parliament, which consisted of the four chief abbots and the four greatest barons of Cheshire. Behind a barrier at the lower end of the council-chamber a crowd of humble people are gathered, bearing petitions or grievances for the earl's hearing and consideration. For the earl possessed power of life or death over all offenders, could pardon treason and murder within his own domain, and give protection or 'sanctuary' to criminals, who, however, paid heavy fines for this privilege. He also raised taxes, appointed all the judges and justices of the peace in the earldom, and created his own barons, who were themselves permitted to hold baronial courts for the trial and punishment of evildoers. Gilbert de Venables, the Baron of Kinderton, and his successors held courts at their castle near Middlewich until late in the sixteenth century, when all these courts were swept away.

Ordericus Vitalis, a Norman monk who wrote in the early part of the twelfth century, says that Earl Hugh 'was very prodigal, and carried not so much a family as an army along with him. He daily wasted his estate, and delighted more in falcons and huntsmen than in tillers of the soil. He was much given to his appetite, whereby in time he grew so fat that he could scarcely crawl.' He was also a lover of minstrelsy and romance, and invited the best narrators of great deeds to live with him and spur on to rivalry the young nobles whom he delighted to gather round him at his court.

The mass of the English people became dependent on their Norman masters. The latter had learned the use of the lance and the longbow, and the fame of their mailclad mounted knights had spread through all Europe. They kept the English down by building strong castles in their midst. At Aldford, Shocklach, Doddleston, and Malpas on the Welsh borderland, where castles were naturally more numerous, little remains to be seen at the present day but the green mounds on which were erected the keeps or donjons of the Norman lords. Round the tree-clad hummock at Aldford—'Blob's Hill' the village folk call it—the moat that surrounded the Norman castle yet remains, now dry and carpeted in springtime with primroses, whose waters must often have been dyed with the blood of Norman, Saxon, and Welshman. 61

The Norman castles were of great strength, though not always built of stone. Many were built on the sites of British encampments or Saxon 'burhs', in which case the old wooden stockade was doubtless allowed to remain. The central fortress or keep, a square, or sometimes circular, building with walls of immense thickness, was surrounded by an inner ward or courtyard in which cattle and provisions could be gathered in case of attack, and where, on a raised mound in the centre, the baron held his court. Round this ward were grouped the domestic apartments, the stables, and the quarters of servants and retainers. Beyond these buildings was a second or outer ward, the whole being enclosed by walls with projecting towers at intervals. The castles of the plain were further protected, as at Aldford, by a deep ditch or moat crossed by a drawbridge leading to the principal entrance. The keep was the last place of refuge when the defenders were driven from the walls, and frequently contained a well of water. In the keep at Beeston Castle is a well over three hundred feet deep, to which water was perhaps at one time drawn from Beeston Brook or some other neighbouring stream.

On the summit of Halton Hill you may still see a portion of the outer wall of the castle built by Nigel, Baron of Halton and cousin of Earl Hugh. He was the chief of all the Cheshire barons, was constable of the city of Chester, and led the Cheshire army, when required, against the Welsh. Thirty-seven manors, among them those of Congleton, Great Barrow, Raby and Sale in the county of Cheshire, were included in his possessions. Other barons created by the Earl of Chester were William of Nantwich, Vernon of Shipbroke, Fitzhugh of Malpas, Venables of Kinderton, Hamon Massi of Dunham, Nicholas of Stockport, and Robert of Montalt or Mold. The last-named shows that the county of Flint was at that time part of the earldom. The name of the Norman baron was often added to that of the Saxon village where he dwelt, as in the case of Dunham Massey, 62

Minshull Vernon.

The earl himself resided at Chester, where large additions were made to the stronghold of Ethelfleda, but probably his castle was built largely of timber, for no stone of it remains, and a hundred and fifty years later Henry the Third ordered the stockade with which the castle ward was enclosed to be removed and replaced by a wall of stone. On the eastern side of the castle was erected a great shire hall where the earl held his parliament, and an exchequer court where the dues and taxes were paid to him.

What these dues and taxes were we may learn from the Great Survey called Domesday Book, which was made by King William's orders, and completed about the year 1087. The chief object of the Survey was to find out what the country was worth, and how much the people could afford to pay in taxes. The book, which is carefully preserved at the British Museum, is the most valuable record we possess of the state of England under its first Norman king. Domesday Book was written in Latin, but translations have been made by scholars, and may be seen in many of our free libraries. In the 'Customs of Chester' we are told that the city paid in rent forty-five pounds and three bundles of marten skins, a third of which went to the earl and two-thirds to the king. The skins were imported from Ireland, and show that the Irish pirates of former days had given place to peaceful traders. The king also claimed two-thirds of the produce of the brine pits at Nantwich, Northwich, and Middlewich, the last-named being farmed 'for twenty-five shillings and two cartloads of salt'. The value of every manor, with the number of 'hides' of arable land, the extent of meadow land and of woodland, was faithfully recorded. 'There was not one single yard of land, nor even one ox, one cow, one swine that was left out.'

Some Saxon villages had little left to record after the Conqueror's visit, so that you may learn from Domesday something of the severity with which William's conquest had been accomplished. Prestbury and many other Saxon villages are not even mentioned. When Earl Hugh received the city of Chester it was worth only thirty pounds, 'for it had been greatly wasted; there were two hundred and five houses less there than there had been in the time of King Edward' (the Confessor).

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From Domesday we can learn the names of the Saxon freemen who were allowed to keep their lands. Marton was held by the Saxon Godfric, probably in return for some service rendered to the invaders, or because he had at least not taken arms against them; Butley was divided between the Saxon Ulric and Robert, son of Hugh Lupus. The manor of Brereton was retained by the Breretons, whose descendants play a great part in the later history of Cheshire. But such cases are few and far between, and by far the greater part of the county passed into new hands.

The story of Mobberley may be taken as a good example of what happened in most cases to the old English landowners. The very name of the village brings to our eyes scenes of old English life as the Normans found it, for Motburlege, as the name is written in Domesday, is the open space (lege) by the fortified house (burh) where the assembly of the people was held (mote). 'The same Bigot' (thus Domesday runs) 'holds Motburlege. Dot held it and was a freeman.... The value in King Edward's time was twelve shillings, now only five shillings.' Such is the simple story, repeated again and again in the great survey. Dot was a Saxon lord of sixteen villages, including Cholmondeley, Bickerton, Shocklach, Grappenhall, Peover, and Dodcot, to the last of which he gave his own name. Thus, even as Dot's own forefathers had driven out the Celtic tribesmen who pastured their flocks on the neighbouring commons, so now it was Dot's turn to be thrust from his ancestral home at Mobberley and seek a refuge perhaps among the very people whom he had displaced.

Bigot received more than one manor. Domesday tells us that he held Sandbach also. Over the entrance of Sandbach Town Hall you may see his statuette, placed there to remind you of the days when Cheshire lands passed from the hands of the English to their Norman conquerors.

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CHAPTER XI THE NORMAN ABBEYS AND CHURCHES OF CHESHIRE

Among the friends of Earl Hugh who visited him at his castle at Chester was Anselm the great churchman, who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm was at the time prior of the Abbey of Bec, which was close to Avranches, the earl's own Norman home. Now if there was one thing on which the Normans justly prided themselves, it was the founding and building of churches, and the heart of Earl Hugh was set on building in his own city of Chester a monastery that should rival in splendour those of his native country. Perhaps, too, the Norman lords thought that by devoting a portion of their wealth to the service of God they could win salvation for their souls and atone for the shortcomings and misdeeds of their stormy lives. So the Cheshire earl sent for his former friend Anselm to come and aid him in his scheme, and the result of his visit was that in 1093 the clergy of S. Werburgh's were turned out of their homes, and the church itself pulled down, and in its place was erected a monastery of Benedictine monks who were brought over from Bee, Anselm's chaplain, Richard, being made the first abbot.

The monks were men who lived a life of prayer, fasting, and study apart from the world. None might ever leave the precincts of the monastery without permission. The Benedictines received their name from Saint Benedict, who lived in the sixth century, and drew up rules for the daily life and conduct of the monks of the Order. They all slept in the same dormitory, and all took their meals together in a common room called a refectory. In the refectory at Chester you may see a lector's pulpit from which portions of the Scriptures were read aloud to the monks as they sat at their meals. They gave all their private possessions to the monastery, and had to obey their superior in all matters. Every hour of the day and night had its allotted duties of work, study, or religious services. High up in the wall in one of the oldest parts of Chester Cathedral is a row of tiny arches, and behind them a narrow passage, along which the monks went from their sleeping-chamber to the early morning services in the abbey church.

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To some of the monks was given the work of gardening, agriculture, and even building. The name of Caleyards at Chester still speaks to us of the kitchen-garden which the monks tended. Others made copies of illuminated 'missals' or books of Church services, or wrote histories and the annals of the abbey to which they were attached. The Chronicles of S. Werburgh were kept and added to yearly by the monks of Chester; though the original has been lost, a copy of it, made by a later scribe, has happily been preserved.

The most important part of the monastery was of course the church. The Norman churches were built of stone, and, as they took many years to build, very few of the founders lived to see the completion of their work. Probably only the foundations and portions of the walls of the church of Earl Hugh Lupus were finished during his lifetime. The work of the Norman builders may be recognized by the round-headed arches, doorways and windows which they copied from the Roman buildings. The Roman basilica or hall of justice, in which the earliest Christians were permitted to worship, was taken as a model for Christian churches. The capital of a Norman pillar in Frodsham Church proves that they had studied the architecture of the Romans, for it has the Ionic 'volute' or spiral scroll on each of its four faces. If you look for the round arches in the Cathedral of Chester you will be able to make out the portions which remain of the church built by Earl Hugh and by the abbots who completed his plans after his death.

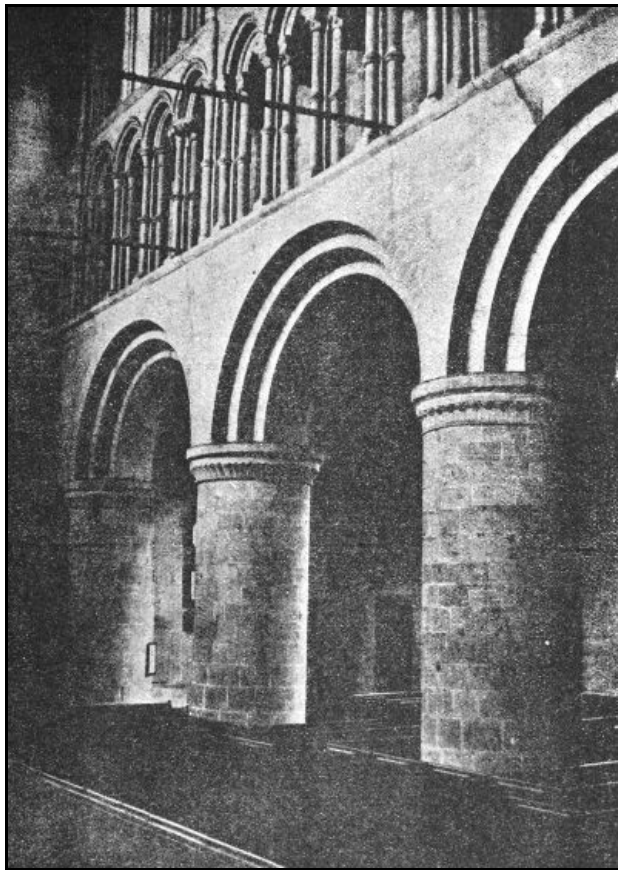
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You will see from the Norman church of S. John's at Chester that the churches were built in the form of a cross with four great semicircular arches to support a central tower. Similar arches on massive circular columns separate the nave from the two aisles. An examination of these columns reveals the fact that the building of the nave was commenced from both ends at once in order to make more rapid progress with the work, for the mouldings of the capitals of the outer columns is the same, but differ from those of the inner ones. Moreover, the masonry of the latter is more finely jointed than that of the earlier end columns. This shows that the Normans improved in the quality of their work as they went on. In the north transept of Chester Cathedral, which is part of the first Norman church, the stones in the lower parts have wider joints and are less carefully fitted than those above them.

The choir and aisles generally ended in a semicircular 'apse'. A semicircle of dark blue stones set in the floor of the north aisle in the Cathedral of Chester marks the apse of an aisle of Earl Hugh's church.

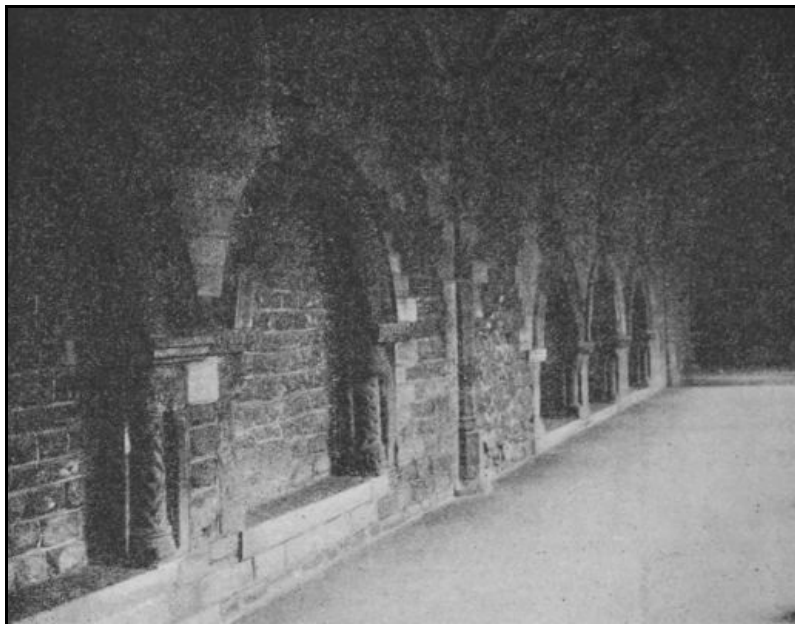
The village churches were of course not built on the same scale of grandeur as the churches of S. John and S. Werburgh. Nearly everywhere the Norman 'lords of the manor' rebuilt the rude and humble churches of wood and stone that had served the needs of the Saxons before them. But little remains in Cheshire of these Norman churches, save here and there a doorway or a window or a capital, that has escaped destruction or the ravages of time. The Norman architects and builders were few in number, and must have employed many Saxon workmen in the task of rebuilding. The latter, as you have already learned, were no mean masons and sculptors, and the carving of the mouldings and capitals of the doorways of the village churches was doubtless in many cases done by them. The 'chevron' or zigzag moulding, and the spirals carved on the face of capitals could easily be cut with an axe, for the Saxons were not yet acquainted with the use of the Norman chisel. At Shotwick and Shocklach you may see doorways, which, from the simplicity of their mouldings, are probably the work of Saxons, performed under the eye of their Norman masters.

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NORMAN ARCHES, S. JOHN'S. CHESTER

Towards the end of the eleventh century the clever Norman masons, who loved to invent new patterns and vary their work, introduced other forms of ornamentation such as the 'billet' and 'lozenge' and 'scollop' in their mouldings, and adorned the capitals and even the pillars with rich carving. Carved pillars may be seen in the Norman arcade in the cloisters at Chester.



CLOISTERS, CHESTER: PORTION OF FIRST NORMAN ABBEY OF S. WERBURGH

The head of a Norman doorway is sometimes filled with a semicircular stone called a tympanum, usually covered with a carved picture of some scriptural subject. The tympanum over the door of the Norman chapel at Prestbury represents Christ seated in glory.



NORMAN DOORWAY WITH TYMPANUM, PRESTBURY

The Norman windows, like the doorways, were round-headed. The tiny window in the chancel at Woodchurch shows us that they were often mere slits on the outer face of the wall, widening considerably towards the inner face in order that the light entering through the narrow opening might be diffused as much as possible. Very few Norman windows have been allowed to remain in Cheshire, for nearly all have been replaced by larger ones of a different style at a later date when more light was needed.

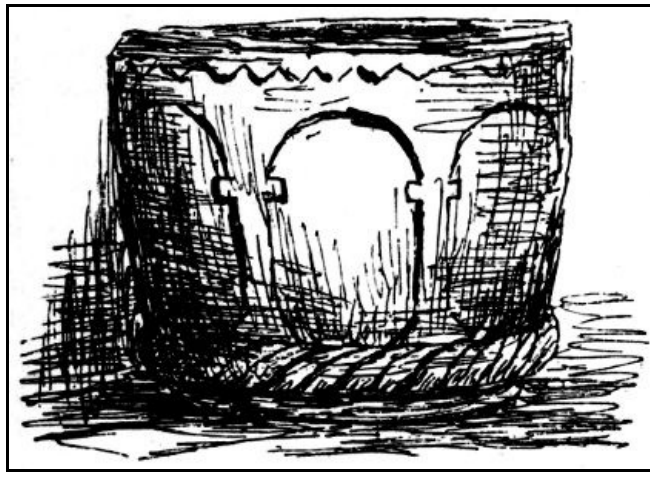
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NORMAN WINDOW, WOODCHURCH, SHOWING WIDE SPLAY INSIDE

The font is sometimes the sole remaining portion of the older Norman church in which it once stood. In the modern church of Wallasey is an ancient font, which by the arcade of semicircular arches carved upon it is evidently the work of the Norman builders, and belonged to the Norman church that formerly stood on the site of the present building. The font of similar pattern at Grappenhall was dug up during a restoration three feet below the floor of the present church, where it had lain for centuries, and there are Norman fonts at Eastham, Bebington, and Burton. In addition to those already spoken of, the churches of Bebington, Bruera, Frodsham, Church Lawton, and Barthomley contain portions of Norman work in some shape or form.

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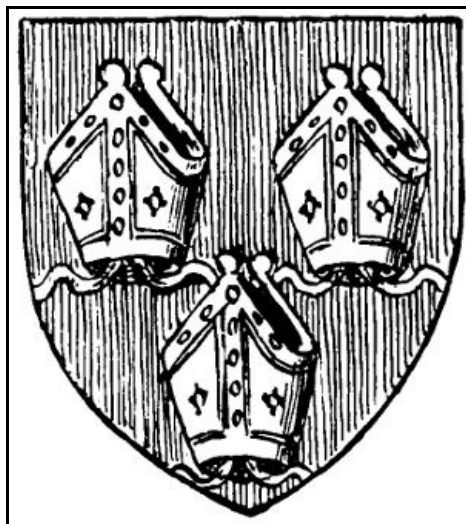
NORMAN FONT AT WALLASEY

The Norman style of architecture is rarely copied nowadays in the building of churches, being considered too massive and sombre as well as costly. Boys who live in Wirral should, however, walk to the village of Thornton Heath, where they may see a new church built entirely in this style, with every detail copied faithfully from famous old Norman churches.

Other Norman barons were not slow to follow the example of their overlord the Earl of Chester. In 1150 Hamon de Massey, Baron of Dunham Massey, built a priory at Birkenhead for sixteen Benedictine monks. The tolls from a ferry across the Mersey were granted to them for their support, the charges being 'for a horseman two-pence, for a man on foot one farthing, a halfpenny for a footman on market days, and a penny when he had goods or produce with him'. The name of 'Monks Brow' still marks the landing-place of the ferry on the Cheshire side of the estuary. The monks were also freed from attendance at the 'Hundred' Court of the Wirral. The manors of Tranmere, Bebington, Saughall Massey, and Claughton were also given to the priory, and the priors sat in the council or parliament of the Earls of Chester. The ruined refectory is the only portion of the priory now remaining.

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The Abbey of S. Werburgh received grants of land from Earl Hugh's barons as well as a large number of churches and manors from the earl himself. In the course of time one-fourth of the entire city of Chester became the property of the abbey. The abbot also had the right of taking the tolls at the annual fair held at Chester at the Feast of S. Werburgh. The fair lasted for three days, during which time even criminals might visit the city to make their purchases without danger of arrest.



ARMS OF THE SEE OF CHESTER

Chester had in fact rapidly become the chief seat of trade in the north-west of England, and when the Conqueror ordered the sees of the bishoprics to be removed from thinly populated centres to the large towns, Peter, the first Norman bishop of Lichfield, left Lichfield 'a sordid and desert place' and came to Chester, 'a city of renown,' making the church of S. John his cathedral. Chester did not, however, keep this honour long, for Peter's successor removed to the rich monastery of Coventry. Hence it is that you find three mitres on the arms of the bishopric of Chester.

Earl Hugh Lupus died in the second year of the reign of Henry the First. Three days before his death he had put on the cowl and robe of a Benedictine monk and entered his own monastery at Chester. He was buried in the abbey cemetery, and his only son Richard, a boy of seven years of age, inherited the earldom.

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The Abbey of Combermere was founded for another brotherhood of monks called Cistercians. Their 'rule' was even more strict than that of the Benedictines. They wore neither boots nor cowl,

and for a portion of the year were allowed but one meal a day; nor were they permitted even to speak to one another. In 1178, John, Baron of Halton, to secure the safety of body and soul previous to making a pilgrimage to Palestine, built a Cistercian abbey at Stanlaw, a dreary spot on the shore of the Mersey estuary, and a third house of the same Order was founded at Pulton on the Dee by Robert Pincerna, butler to Earl Randle II. Stanlaw was almost wholly destroyed by a huge tidal wave which swept up the Mersey, and the monks were removed to Whalley on the banks of the Lancashire Calder. The monks, doubtless, were not sorry for the change, for by the end of the twelfth century the majority of them had grown tired of the simple life, and, becoming more luxurious in their way of living, preferred to build their homes in delectable river valleys, where they could fish the streams to their hearts' content.

Pulton Abbey was not more fortunate, and was much too near to the Welsh to be a comfortable place to live in. The Welsh visits were so frequent and unpleasant that the monastery was abandoned and the monks placed in a fine new abbey at Dieulacresse in Staffordshire.

The monks who kept the abbey records were not always very particular about the truth of the events they relate. They were very superstitious, and ready to believe any story that would increase the fame of their founders, or of their patron saints, to whom they ascribed the power of performing miracles. The story is told that when Earl Richard was making a pilgrimage to the holy well of S. Winifred in Flintshire he was attacked by a band of Welsh insurgents and compelled to take refuge in a neighbouring monastery. He prayed for aid to S. Werburgh, who is said to have instantly parted the waters of the Dee by making new sandbanks, over which the Constable of Chester marched troops to the relief of his lord. These banks were long after known as the Constable's sands.

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CHAPTER XII

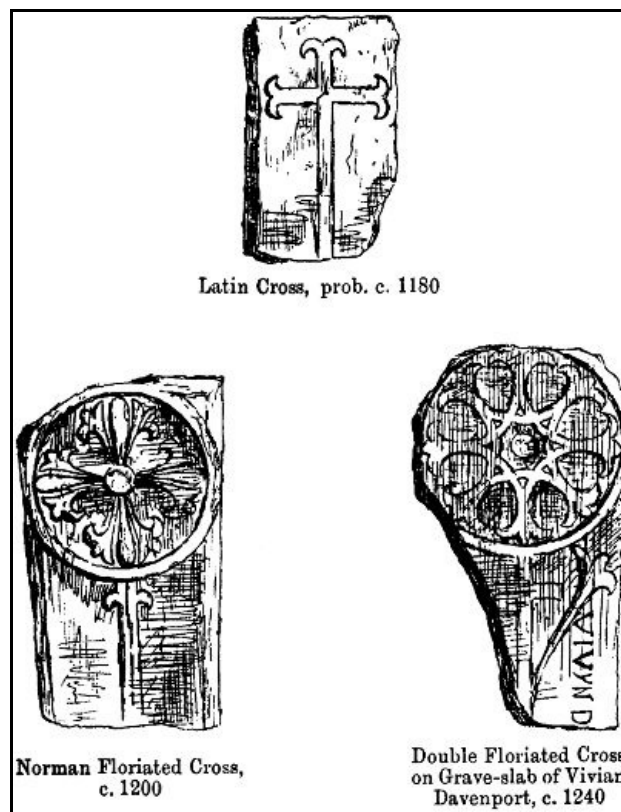
THE EARLS OF THE COUNTY PALATINE

In the western porch beneath the tower of Prestbury Church are a number of fragments of broken grave-slabs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. On nearly all is carved a cross, the head of which is usually enclosed within a circle, the ends of the limbs of the cross consisting of a triple lily, the favourite emblem of the Norman sculptors. One only of these fragments tells us over whose remains the slab was placed. An inscription, in which the letters VIVYN D are clearly seen, tells us that this fragment formed part of the tombstone of Vivian Davenport, Chief Forester of the Forest of Macclesfield. Hunting was the favourite sport of the Normans, and in Cheshire, as elsewhere, large tracts of forest land were enclosed for the protection of deer and game, and the amusement of the Norman knights. The Conqueror himself set the example by making the New Forest in the south of England, and shortly afterwards the Earl of Cheshire enclosed the Forests of Mara or Delamere in the west and Macclesfield in the eastern part of the county.

The forest laws were very strict. William the Conqueror did not indeed punish offenders with death, but he ordained that 'whoso slew hart or hind man should blind him, that none should touch the harts or the wild-boars, and he made the hare go free. So mightily did he love the high deer as though he were their father. His rich men bewailed it and the poor murmured at it, but he was so stark he recked not of them all.' The forest laws of Rufus were far more severe, and caused fierce hatred among his poorer subjects. The forests became the haunt of robbers and outlaws, who clothed themselves in suits of 'Lincoln green', the better to escape being seen in the greenwood. Foresters were appointed, whose duty it was to hunt out these lawless and rebellious men, as well as to preserve the game of the forest.

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GRAVE-SLABS AT PRESTBURY

Hugh Lupus made John Done of Utkinton and his heirs Chief Bowbearer and Forester of his Forest of Delamere. The Dones had the right to kill deer and game, take swarms of wild bees, the fallen trees, and such small game as 'foxes, hares, weasels, and other like vermin'; their badge of office was a black bugle horn tipped with gold. Their hunting-seat or 'Chamber in the Forest' was served by ten keepers and two woodsmen. Some of their descendants were buried at Tarporley, and on one of the tombs you may see the badge of the bugle carved.

Earl Richard, the successor of 'the Wolf', married Matilda, niece of King Henry I and a daughter of Stephen of Blois. He was drowned with his wife on his return from France when the ill-fated White Ship went down in 1119.

The next earl was Randle of Meschines. He was one of King Henry the First's chief fighting-men, and led the van at the Battle of Tinchebrai against the king's elder brother Robert.

His son, Randle the Second, played a great part in the civil war of King Stephen's reign. Stephen was quite unable to curb his barons as his predecessors had done, and the Earl of Chester was unruly and ambitious. In addition to his Earldom of Cheshire, he had succeeded to vast estates in Lincoln and the Midlands. His power and influence was so great that he ruled over an extent of country hardly smaller than the ancient Earldom of Mercia. Stephen refused to add the city of Carlisle to the already numerous possessions of the earl, who in anger declared himself on the side of Stephen's rival Matilda when she took up arms, and became one of Stephen's most bitter and active enemies.

The king took Randle prisoner by a stratagem, and the monks of Pulton Abbey were commanded to pray for the earl's safety. When at length he was set free, the earl in a moment of gratitude gave the monks permission to fish the waters of the Dee, and freed them from the toll which they were accustomed to pay for grinding their corn in the Dee Mills at Chester. Under the Norman rule the use of handmills, such as the Saxons had used, was strictly forbidden, and everybody had to send his corn to be ground in the mill belonging to his lord.

77

When the Welsh heard of the earl's captivity they took advantage of his absence and ravaged the county of Cheshire, but were defeated in a battle at Nantwich in 1146 by Robert of Montalt.

Randle died in the same year as King Stephen, and was succeeded by Hugh Kyvelioc. This second Earl Hugh enclosed large stretches of forest-land in East Cheshire, and gave the chief forestership to Richard Davenport. It is Richard's grandson Vivian whose grave-slab we have seen in the church at Prestbury.

To Vivian Davenport's office was also joined the office of Hereditary Grand Serjeant of the Hundred of Macclesfield. The Grand Serjeant received twelve pounds six shillings and eightpence a year, and a fee of two shillings and a salmon for the capture of a master-robber, and one shilling for a common thief. Human life was held cheap in those days. The robbers when caught were beheaded, and their heads sent to Chester, where they were publicly shown as a warning to others. Descendants of the Davenports live now at Capesthorpe, and their peculiar crest, a robber's head with a rope round the neck, recalls the gruesome duties of their ancestors.

A portion of the Forest was held by the Venables in return for providing thirty-three huntsmen on hunting days. The Downes of Taxal held their land more cheaply on the northern limits of the

Forest, which is now Lyme Park, 'by the blast of a horn on Midsummer Day and one pepper-corn yearly.' Near Overton is a spot still called Gallows Yard, where the Downes had power to execute robbers and criminals. In Lyme Park you may see to this day the red deer that are descended from their wild ancestors of Macclesfield Forest.

When Hugh Kyvelioc was Earl of Chester, Henry the Second ruled England and the greater part of France. He also received at Chester the homage of the King of Scotland. But in the later years of his reign he found it hard to keep together the widely scattered parts of his empire. Rebellions were frequent, and his wife, his sons, and his barons all took up arms against him. Among his discontented barons none was more unruly than Hugh Kyvelioc, who stirred up Brittany against Henry, but he was captured in battle and brought to England. In the great rising of 1173 Geoffrey of Costantin, one of Henry's sons, held the castle of Stockport against the king. Not a stone of this castle is to be seen now, but it stood in the highest part of the town near the Parish Church.

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After Hugh Lupus, the greatest of the Earls of Chester was Randle the Third, or Randle Blundeville. Like his predecessors, he was constantly engaged in fighting against the Welsh, on one occasion being besieged in Rhuddlan Castle until he was relieved by a rabble of vagabonds hastily gathered from Chester Fair. This Randle was earl for over fifty years, and was high in favour with three successive kings of England whom he steadfastly supported. Henry the Second gave him in marriage his own daughter-in-law, Constance, the widow of his son Geoffrey. The English historian, Matthew Paris, says that the earl carried the crown at the coronation of Richard the First, and he was present at the signing of the Great Charter by King John, whose side he took in the quarrel with the barons.

The earl ruled Cheshire wisely, favouring especially the towns in his earldom. To Chester, Macclesfield, and Stockport he gave charters by which these towns were freed from certain payments and duties, and were permitted to govern themselves under a mayor of their own choosing. In the new Town Hall of Stockport is a stained glass window commemorating the earl's grant to his baron Sir Robert de Stokeport of the town's first charter of freedom.

His gifts to the Church and the founding of abbeys won for him the title of the 'Good' earl. He did not neglect the poor, for he built and endowed the hospital of S. John, near the North Gate of Chester, for the support of thirteen poor people, with three chaplains to minister to their religious needs. At Boughton, outside the city walls, he founded a hospital for lepers, whose terrible disease was brought to this country by travellers returning from Eastern lands.

79

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries men's minds were deeply stirred by the hardships and cruelties put upon pilgrims to the Holy Land. Men of every Christian land and race joined in the Crusades or Holy Wars to win back Jerusalem, which had fallen into the hands of the Saracens, enemies of the Christian faith. Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, came to Chester and preached from the High Cross the duty of all Christian men to rescue the Holy City and the Holy Sepulchre from the power of the unbelievers. Crowds flocked to hear him, and he did not preach in vain. Men of all classes dedicated their lives or their wealth to the service of the Cross. King and baron, soldier and priest, rich and poor alike put on the sign of the Cross, and sailed to the Holy Land, where they vied with one another in deeds of chivalry and valour.

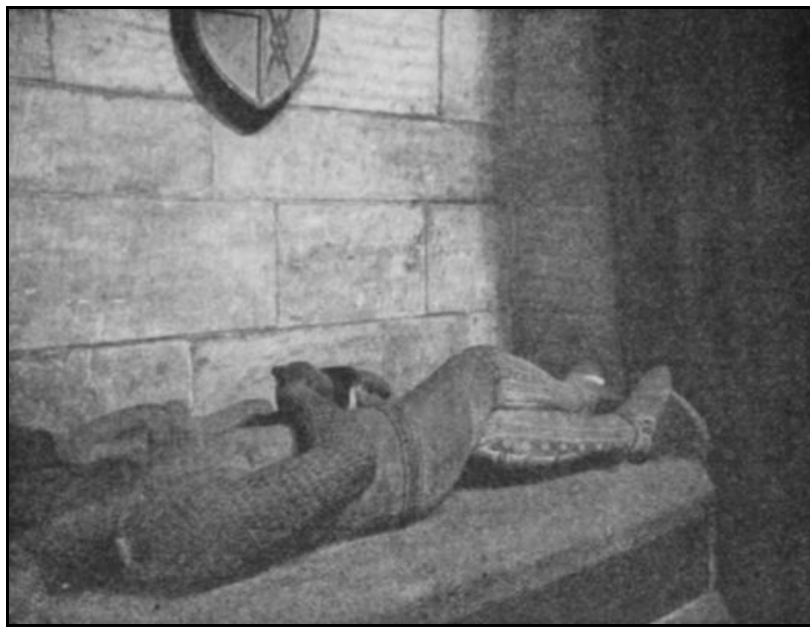
Randle Blundeville joined the Crusades in 1219, and set out with a number of other English knights for Jerusalem. He distinguished himself greatly in Egypt, and when he returned the fame of his brave deeds made him a popular hero, and his adventures were recited or sung in many a stirring ballad.

The stone effigy of Sir William Boydell in Grappenhall Church will give you some idea of a crusading warrior. He is clad in chain armour with a plain surcoat. His legs are crossed, a sign perhaps that he had taken the vows of the Cross, and his head rests on his helmet. A shield is on his left shoulder, by his left side a sword.

Many Crusaders bound themselves by sacred vows and joined different 'Orders' or companies to which the names Knights Templars, Knights Hospitallers, or Knights of Saint John, and so on, were given. The last-named founded a house where the brethren of the Order might live in their old age at Fulshaw, near Wilmslow.

When Randle returned to Cheshire he built in the heart of his earldom the strong castle of Beeston, on the summit of Beeston Rock, from whose walls he could survey nearly every portion of the county over which he ruled. He entertained Henry the Second at Chester Castle when Henry made an expedition against the Welsh, the troops encamping on Saltney marshes. Henry the Second had high views of the duties of kingship, and was always busily occupied at home or in his continental dominions. But Cheshire saw little or nothing of his son Richard, greatest of all Crusaders, for he spent the greater part of his reign seeking adventures abroad, and left his people to take care of themselves.

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EFFIGY OF CRUSADER: GRAPPENHALL

Earl Randle lived long enough to see the boy king Henry the Third dismiss his guardians and rule on his own account. Almost his last act was to refuse to allow the clergy of Cheshire to pay the tenth part of their incomes to the pope to aid him in his private wars. In 1232 he died, and was buried with his forefathers in the Abbey Church of Chester.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE CHURCHES OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The greatest churches which the Normans planned were on such a scale that they could not be finished in the lives of their designers. The work was carried on more or less continuously by the builders and architects who came after them. But, as time went on, various improvements were made in the art of building, and new fashions came into being, and the original plans had often to be altered to meet the growing needs of the day, or to allow the newest features of style to be introduced.

The interior of S. John's Church, Chester, will show you some of the changes of style which were taking place in the early part of the thirteenth century. The two rows of *pointed* arches over the circular headed arches of the nave tell us that by the time the massive Norman piers and arches were finished, an entirely different form of arch was coming into fashion.

The pointed arch was first used when Norman and Saxon had settled down peaceably side by side. From the fusing of the two nations, the English people grew in strength and power. Norman baron and Saxon peasant had combined to wrest from a wicked king the Great Charter of freedom for the English people. Hence the new style is appropriately called Early English.

The work of church building had often been interrupted. During the civil war of Stephen's reign, the building of churches was almost at a standstill; the Crusades, by drawing large numbers of people from the country, also checked the progress of the work. The raids of the Welsh often destroyed a half-built Cheshire church. But from the time of Magna Charta the erection of sacred buildings went forward apace, and was continued with even greater zeal and activity through the long reign of Henry the Third.

82



RUINS OF S. JOHN'S, CHESTER

Change from Norman round arch to pointed arch

The pointed arch was the principal feature of the new style, which is, therefore, sometimes called the Pointed style. But we must look carefully at the shape and details before we can be quite sure that an arch belongs to this period of building.

The arch must be tall and narrow, the columns on which they rest, round and slender, often grouped together in clusters of three or more. Often the columns consist of slender shafts united on one base and under one capital. The mouldings of the arch, base and capital must be deeply cut and grooved. The pointed arches of S. John's have all these characteristic features. The lower of the two rows of pointed arches is called the triforium or blind story, that is, without windows, for it is built within the slope of the roof over the side aisles of the church. The upper row is the clerestory, containing many window lights. A triforium is only to be seen in the very largest churches. In the ruined portion of S. John's you may see round and pointed arches side by side.

83

The arches of the nave at Prestbury belong to this period. The columns are very much more slender than the massive columns of S. John's. You will notice that the capital of one of the columns is covered with carved foliage which could only have been done with a chisel. Deep under-cutting is a feature of the Early English style, and shows that the English masons had improved greatly in their skill.

Early English windows, like the arches, are long, narrow, and pointed. From their shape they are called lancets. Sometimes two or more lancets are grouped together side by side under a single 'dripstone' or hood. At the east end of the Chapter-house at Chester is a window consisting of five lancets.

Several portions of Chester Cathedral, or rather the Abbey of S. Werburgh as it was still called, were built during this period. In the north aisle of the choir you may see the point where we pass from the massive Norman masonry to the lighter and more graceful Early English. The piscina or basin built in the wall is the place where you must look for the change.

At the end of the twelfth century the church of Hugh Lupus was already in ruins. Earl Randle was in the Holy Land, and, during his absence, the Welsh were more than usually troublesome. In the early years of the thirteenth century large sums of money were given to the abbey, and the abbots began building in the new style. When Hugh Grylle was abbot, the Chapter-house, in which the business of the abbey was transacted, was built. The number of monks also increased to such an extent that a new and larger refectory was needed.

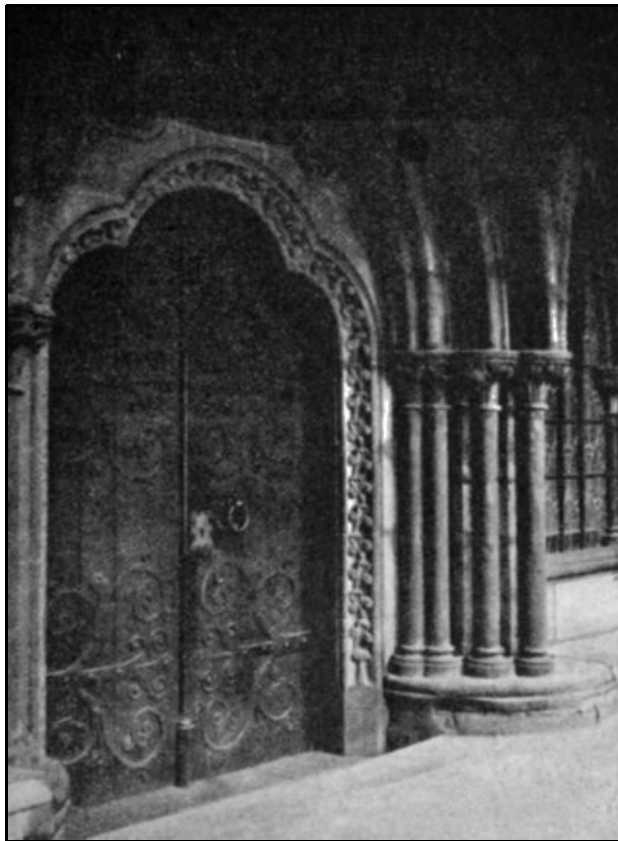
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BOSS FROM RUINS OF S. JOHN'S CHURCH, CHESTER
Left of the boss is a strip of dog-tooth moulding

This refectory and the vestibule or entrance hall leading to it contain the most beautiful examples of Early English work to be found in Cheshire, and boys and girls who live in or near Chester should study them carefully. In the refectory is the stone pulpit referred to in a previous chapter, with a staircase and arcade of Early English arches leading to it. The wall above the arches is pierced with a row of 'quatrefoil' openings, with deeply cut mouldings.

85



EARLY ENGLISH DOORWAY, CHESTER

In the hollows of the Early English mouldings we sometimes see an ornament pointed like a dog's tooth. You will see it in the moulding round a circular opening over the doorway of the vestibule in the cloisters of the Cathedral. Another ornament which the thirteenth-century masons invented and put into their work was the 'cusp', a projection made by the meeting of two curves placed end to end. If you put two cusps into the head of a pointed arch you will find that you have made a trefoil-headed arch. The triforium arches in the choir of the cathedral are all of this description.

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Quatrefoils are made by arranging four cusps within a circle.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Abbot Simon of Whitchurch built the Lady Chapel east of the choir. The windows of this chapel are all lancets, those at the side being arranged in groups of three, while the east window contains five lights. The Lady Chapel looks very new now. It has, in fact, been almost entirely rebuilt since Abbot Simon's day. The mediaeval builders of Cheshire did not select their building-stone very carefully. You will see from the cloisters how the red sandstone has weathered and crumbled to ruin.

The walls of Early English buildings were not so thick as those built by the Normans, and required to be supported on the exterior by buttresses which projected further from the walls than the flat Norman buttresses. You will find Early English buttresses at Audlem and Prestbury.

Many houses in Chester are built over crypts or underground cellars, which were made during the reign of Henry the Third, and consequently show some of the features we have been describing. The oldest of these crypts is under a shop in Bridge Street. It is lighted by a triple lancet window having deep splays. The door of the staircase leading to it has a trefoiled head, and the vaulted stone roof is groined and ribbed like the roof of the cloisters of the cathedral. The roofs of Early English churches were groined in the same way, but with wood instead of stone.

Many Cheshire churches were, no doubt, rebuilt or repaired in the new style. At Bruera there is a pointed doorway under a semicircular arch. Bruera was one of the many churches bestowed on the Abbey of S. Werburgh by Norman lords. A grant of a manor or a church was often made when a baron or some member of his family entered the abbey as a monk of the brotherhood.

Their descendants did not always approve of these gifts. In the Chronicle of S. Werburgh, we read that in 1258 Roger de Montalt, Chief Justice of Chester, tried to recover the churches of Bruera, Coddington, and Neston, which the lord of Montalt had given to the abbey in the days of Earl Hugh. Roger entered Neston Church with a body of armed men, and turned out the monks who had been sent from the abbey to perform the services, and gave the living to his nephew Ralph. The Chronicle speaks of the misfortunes that befell Roger as a warning to other would-be robbers of the Church. His eldest son died within fifteen days, and Roger himself 'died in poverty within two years, the common people being ignorant of the place of his burial'.

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CHAPTER XIV GROWTH OF TOWNS IN CHESHIRE

Earl Randle 'the Good' had no son to succeed him, and when he died the earldom passed to his nephew John the Scot, the son of Randle's eldest sister. John married the daughter of Llewellyn the Prince of Wales, so that peace was secured for a time between the Welsh and the earl's subjects. He did not live to enjoy his earldom long, however, and he too died without an heir. His wife was suspected of causing his death by poison.

Henry the Third was at this time King of England. He had looked with anxious eyes upon the growing power of the Earls of Chester. Now that a suitable opportunity presented itself, the king decided to take the earldom into his own hands, his excuse being that he was unwilling that so fair an inheritance should be divided 'among distaffs', meaning the sisters of John the Scot. So he gave them each a portion of land and a husband, and appointed John de Lacy, the Earl of Lincoln, as custodian of Cheshire.

A few years later Henry bestowed the earldom on his son Edward, and from that time down to the present day the title of Earl of Chester has belonged to the son and heir of the reigning monarch. The present Prince of Wales is also Earl of Chester. One of Edward's first acts was to confirm to the barons and the people of Cheshire all the liberties and privileges which Randle had formerly granted them.

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Some of these 'liberties' are set forth in the Charter which John the Scot gave to the people of Chester: 'Know that I have conceded and by this my present charter confirmed to all my citizens of Chester that no merchant should buy or sell any kind of merchandise which has come to the city of Chester by sea or by land, except these my citizens of Chester themselves and their heirs, or in accordance with their will, and except in the established fairs, that is on S. John the Baptist's day and at the feast of S. Michael. Likewise I have conceded and by this my present charter confirmed to my citizens of Chester, to have and to hold their guild merchant, as freely as they held it in the time of my uncle, Lord Randle, Earl of Chester.'

Similar charters were given to other Cheshire towns. Earl Randle, who was one of those who saw King John sign the Great Charter, gave to his baron, Sir Robert de Stokeport, a charter for his town of Stockport, with permission to hold markets and fairs, receiving in return the market dues and tolls. Hamon de Massey gave a charter for a weekly market to the inhabitants of Altrincham. Congleton received its charter in the reign of Edward the First from Henry de Lacy, whose statue you may see on the front of Congleton Town Hall. Macclesfield boasts of charters received from

Randle Blundeville and from Edward the First, though by the latter the citizens were compelled to grind their corn at the king's mill and bake their bread in the king's oven, paying a toll of one shilling each for this privilege.

In the thirteenth century the merchants and traders of a town formed themselves into guilds, which drew up sets of rules for the regulation and protection of their trade and industries. The merchants met at fixed times in their guild-hall, where they elected the officers of the guild, an alderman, a steward, a chaplain, and an usher, and where they transacted the business of the guild. By these laws no merchant could buy or sell goods in the town unless he was a member of the guild. All the members subscribed to the guild, and if one of their number fell into poverty, or was unable to work and provide for himself, he received a sum of money every year from the common chest.

89

The little schoolroom in the churchyard of Nantwich was the old Guild Hall. The guilds became very rich in time, and bought property and built homes for poor people who had belonged to the guild, and schools where their children might be taught.

The workmen also who worked for the merchants wanted their own guilds, and craft guilds were formed by the different trades of a city, each of the guilds receiving a charter of its own. Several charters of this kind may be seen in the muniment room of the Chester Town Hall.

In mediaeval towns those who were engaged in a particular trade lived near to one another in the same street, to which they often gave the name of their industry. The name of Shoemakers' Row still survives at Chester to tell us where the shoemakers' shops were to be found. Newgate Street was formerly Fleshmonger Lane, and was the chief place of business of the butchers. The Skinners lived in 'Castle Drive', and a portion of Bridge Street known as Mercers' Row was given over to the mercers, drapers, and haberdashers. The trade guilds were formed in the same way as the merchant guilds. Each had its own officers and meeting-place. The Phoenix Tower takes its name from the crest of one of the city guilds, which used the tower as its council-chamber.

While the merchant guild looked after the interests of the trades, the town itself was governed by a mayor and aldermen, who were responsible for the good behaviour of the inhabitants. They also fixed the prices at which food and other necessities of life were to be sold, and had the control of all markets and fairs. Commonhall Street takes its name from the old Common Hall in which the mayor and aldermen of the city met for their deliberations. The old hall has long since disappeared. The mayor and the magistrates administered justice in the Penthouse or Pentice, which used to stand close to S. Peter's Church in the centre of the city.

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During the two great fairs of the city of Chester a large white glove was suspended from the tower of S. Peter's as the symbol of welcome to all strangers to bring their wares into the city for sale. In the church of S. John's is an ancient grave-slab with glove and scissors carved upon it. The slab once covered the remains of a glover; glove-making has always been one of the chief industries of Chester. Another slab shows by the hammer and horseshoe engraved upon it that it belonged to the tomb of a smith.



TOMBSTONE OF A GLOVER, S. JOHN'S CHURCH, CHESTER

One of the privileges of the Shoemakers' Guild was that of providing the ball for the annual game of football played on the Roodee on Easter Monday. The mayor and all the city guilds came to watch the game, which unfortunately did not always end happily, for we read that 'great strife did arise', and many of the players were haled away to be dealt with by the Mayor at the Pentice

court. The saddlers provided a silver bell as a prize for the winner of a horse-race on the Roodee.

But the greatest event of the year in mediaeval Chester was the performance of scenes from the Scriptures—mystery plays, as they were called—at the Festival of Whitsuntide. The city guilds bore the whole of the expense and chose the players to perform them, each guild being responsible for one scene. Thus the painters and glaziers performed the Shepherds' Watch and the Angels' Hymn; the vintners acted the part of the Wise Men of the East; the butchers the Story of the Temptation; the glovers the Raising of Lazarus. Scenes from the Old Testament were included, the linen drapers performing the story of Balaam and the Ass, and the watermen of the Dee, appropriately enough, the story of the Flood. 91

The plays were put into English verse by Randal Hignet, a monk of S. Werburgh's, and no doubt were originally performed by the monks as a means of instructing the people in the outlines of the Christian faith. As the abbey church was found to be unsuitable they were performed publicly in the streets, in order 'to exhort', as a clerk of the Pentice said, 'the minds of the common people to good devotion as well as for the common weal and prosperity of the city.'

Twenty-five scenes in all were played, and the performance lasted for three days. On the first day the people saw scenes representing the Creation of the World, the Banishment from the Garden of Eden, the Birth of Christ and the Vision of the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Wise Men; on the second day the Passion and Resurrection of Christ; and on the third day stories illustrating the founding of the Christian Church, the Lives of the Saints, and the final Advent of Christ and the Day of Judgement.

The plays were performed on movable stages fitted with wheels. The stages consisted of two stories, the upper one being left open for the plays, the lower one covered with curtains that it might serve as a dressing-room. The first performance took place at the Abbey Gate. The stages then passed one by one to the Water Gate, where a second performance was given. The plays were acted for the third and last time in Bridge Street.

People crowded into Chester from all the country round on these occasions, for the pope granted one thousand days of pardon to all who witnessed the plays. The abbey also grew in wealth, for every one was expected to visit the Abbey Church and lay some offering at S. Werburgh's shrine. To provide a passage for the crowds of pilgrims, side aisles were built round the choirs of famous churches, and behind the high altar a vacant space left where the shrines of saints were placed.

The Cheshire towns which grew in importance during the thirteenth century as a result of the great increase in trade were situated on or near the great roads of Cheshire, which were still, in the main, the old roads laid by the Romans. Their position was generally one of great strength, having been chosen in early times in order that men might be able to beat off the attacks of enemies. Chester was, as you have already seen, guarded on two sides by a bend of the river Dee, and was the meeting-place of Roman roads. Northwich on the Watling Street, Middlewich on Kind Street, and Stockport were all built at a point where two rivers meet. Runcorn, Lymm, and Altrincham are on sandstone heights protected on the north by the Mersey; Macclesfield is astride the main road in East Cheshire, and Nantwich on the highway into Wales. It was only by means of the roads that commerce between the towns could be kept open. The 'Welsh Row' of Nantwich recalls the days when the principal trade of the town was with the wool-weavers of Wales, a trade that was too often interrupted by the fierce outbreaks on the border. 92

CHAPTER XV EDWARD THE FIRST AND CHESHIRE

Simon of Whitchurch received the Abbey of S. Werburgh from the hands of another and a greater Simon, the powerful Earl of Leicester, who was engaged in a grim struggle with the king on account of the king's extravagance and misgovernment, and the rule of foreign favourites. Both Henry and his son Edward were, in fact, at this very time prisoners of the earl, for the battle of Lewes, which ended so disastrously for the king, had just been fought. In the same year Earl Simon summoned the famous Parliament in which knights from the shires, and citizens from the boroughs, sat side by side with the nobles and bishops.

Edward had not long received the Earldom of Chester from his father when the Barons' War broke out. Simon de Montfort made an alliance with Llewellyn the Welsh prince, and Chester, expecting an attack, was put into a state of defence. Abbot Simon could hardly have commenced building his beautiful Lady Chapel when he saw his church desecrated and turned into barracks by Sir William de la Zouche, the Chief Justice of Chester. 93

After the defeat of Henry and Edward at Lewes they were compelled to hand over to Earl Simon the Earldom of Chester, and Henry de Montfort, Simon's eldest son, came to Chester and received in his father's name the homage and oath of fealty of the citizens. Lucas de Taney was left in charge of the city.

Edward afterwards escaped from the custody of Earl Simon, and James de Audley seized the castle of Beeston on his behalf. He also besieged Lucas de Taney in the castle of Chester for ten weeks, but did not succeed in taking it on account of the excellent defence made by the garrison. De Taney surrendered when he heard of the death of Simon de Montfort at Evesham, where Edward won a great victory. The chief of the surviving barons were brought as prisoners to Beeston Castle.

But the great prize for which de Montfort fought and laid down his life was won. When Edward came to the throne he learned from the mistakes made by his father, chose his ministers wisely, and gave his people good laws. His reign saw the growth of a full and free parliament, in which all classes of free men were represented. Cheshire did not, however, send any members, but being under the personal eye of the king had still a separate government of its own as well as its own judges and law-courts.

Vale Royal reminds us of the great Plantagenet king, whose motto was 'Keep Troth' and who for thirty-five years did all he could to win the love of his people. Before Edward became king he went on Crusade to the Holy Land, where he distinguished himself by recovering the holy city of Nazareth from the Saracens. On his return he narrowly escaped shipwreck. In his peril he invoked the aid of the Virgin Mary, and vowed that if he were saved he would build a monastery in her honour on his return to his own country. The Chronicle tells us that 'the vessel straightway righted itself and was miraculously brought safe into port; the sailors disembarked, the Prince landing last of all, and immediately the vessel broke in pieces, and every fragment of the wreck vanished under the water'.

94

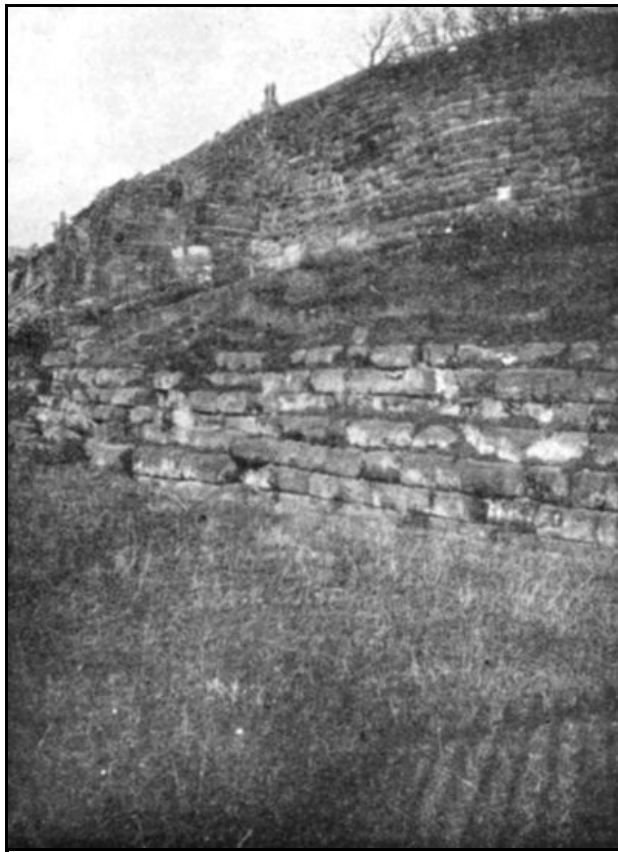
Edward 'kept his troth' and built a home for one hundred monks of the Cistercian Order at Darnhall. Four years later he laid the foundation stone of a stately Abbey at Vale Royal, in the very heart of Cheshire. Queen Eleanor and a great company of nobles accompanied him. We may not now hear the Angelus tolling its summons to evening prayer, nor see jolly monks fishing the streams of the Weaver, but in the last few months the foundations of the Abbey church where they chanted the mass have been discovered.

The abbey took more than fifty years to build, and it was not until the reign of the third Edward that the monks were able to move from their temporary lodgings to the new and spacious building. The abbey received valuable lands in the neighbourhood of Over, Darnhall, and Weaverham, of which villages the abbot became lord. By the ancient 'customs' of the manor of Darnhall the villagers were required to attend at the manorial, now the abbot's court; the abbot had power of life and death over all his tenants, who had also to grind all their corn at the abbot's mill; at the death of any native the abbot took all his horses, cattle, and pigs, and half of his standing and gathered corn.

Cheshire saw a good deal of Edward the First in the earlier half of his reign. In the year after the ceremonies at Vale Royal we find him at Macclesfield, when he began to build the parish church of S. Michael.

He was the first English king to take in hand the conquest of Wales seriously. In the reign of Henry the Third the Welsh had taken advantage of the king's troubles with his barons, and waged a murderous warfare on the Cheshire border. They advanced as far as Nantwich, and James de Audley, who owned a large part of the barony of Nantwich, saw his castles burnt, woods felled, and cattle destroyed. Preparations were made for a big expedition into Wales, and Prince Edward summoned the knights and barons of Cheshire to Shotwick Castle on the banks of the Dee. A grassy knoll, where once stood the castle keep, is all that is left of the scene of the gathering.

95



CHESTER WALL. Roman below; Edwardian above

Chester, from its position at the very gates of North Wales, was the natural meeting-place for the troops, and the starting-point of Edward's expedition against Llewellyn. Soon after his accession he summoned the Welsh princes to do homage to him. This they refused to do, and the king prepared for war. Llewellyn's brother David for a long time fought on the side of the English, and received the manor of Frodsham as his reward.

96

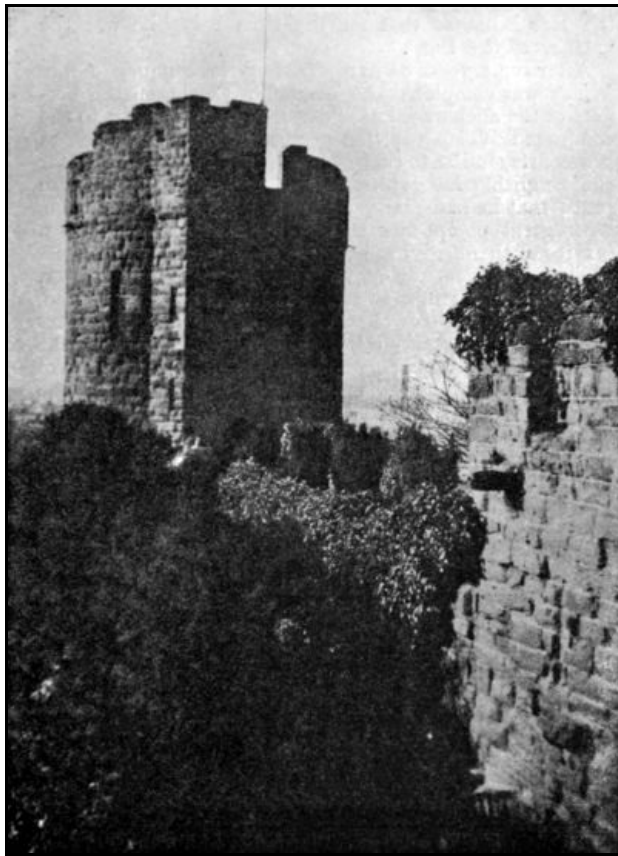
Edward's first task, however, was to strengthen the defences of Chester so that it might resist all attacks. The enemy frequently came close up to the walls of the city, and raided especially the suburb of Handbridge on the opposite shore of the Dee, naming it Treboeth or 'Burnt Town', a name that tells its own tale.

Edward was a great castle-builder, as many of you have learnt from pictures you have seen of his Welsh castles. The Norman castle of Chester had been constructed largely of wood. Edward now rebuilt it of stone, and greatly enlarged it by adding an outer ward or 'bailey'. He surrounded the whole fortress with 'curtain' walls flanked with towers and protected with a deep ditch. He also set to work to rebuild the walls of the city.

The ancient Roman walls had long since crumbled to their foundations, though here and there a mass of masonry remained standing, and the Roman east gate was still in its place. The stones of which the walls had been built had provided building-material for many centuries. On the east side from the Pepper Gate to the Phoenix Tower Edward built his wall on or near the foundations of the Roman wall, portions of which you may still see on this side of the city. For the most part, however, the new walls were built outside the older ones, and the area enclosed was much greater than that of the Roman town.

The walls were strengthened by a number of watch towers, some of which were not completed until the time of his grandson Edward the Third, when Bonewaldeston's Tower and the Water Tower were built. A wall-tax called 'murage' was levied on the inhabitants of Cheshire for keeping the walls in repair. The citizens of Chester were also made to build a bridge over the Dee. Edward's chief engineer was named Richard, and in return for his services he received for a number of years the Dee Mills, so that for the time being he was the 'Miller of the Dee'.

98



WATER TOWER AND CURTAIN WALL, CHESTER

After some years of hard fighting the conquest of the Welsh was complete. At Rhuddlan Castle, on the borders of the ancient palatine earldom, Edward gave to the conquered Welsh a settled government and a system of law-courts similar to that which he had already set up for the English. He returned to Chester to celebrate the peace that he had made, and accompanied by his queen, with great pomp and ceremony attended mass and a service of thanksgiving in the Abbey of S. Werburgh.

The river Dee washed the walls of the Water Tower, and great iron rings, to which the barges were moored, were fixed in the Tower walls. The ships brought wines from Gascony and cloth from Flanders, whither the monks of Vale Royal and Combermere sent the wool of the flocks that pastured on their meadows. Some of the Flemish weavers left their own country and settled on the shores of the Mersey near Birkenhead.

In nearly every field in the pastoral parts of Cheshire are to be found one or more small round pools, often fringed with willows and reeds. You know them well, for you have been to them often to watch the tadpoles and the minnows. But you have not wondered why they are there, and why there are so many of them. Yet they have something to tell of the wool-raising in the days of the three Edwards. For they are marl-pits, and many of them were dug first when the first Edward was king; the marl, which is a great fertilizer, being taken out of the earth and spread over the grass-lands on which the flocks were pastured. The farmers do not use it now, for new and easier ways of enriching the soil have been found.

The marl-diggers, or 'marlers' as they were called, had their own particular feast-day once a year, when they claimed toll of every passer-by, and in the evening sang their marling songs in the village ale-house.

When shut the pit, the labour o'er,
He whom we work for opes his door
And gies to us of drink galore,
For this was always Marler's law.
Who-whoop who-whoop wo-o-o-o-o.

CHAPTER XVI THE COMING OF THE FRIARS

Three streets in Chester in the neighbourhood of the Church of S. Martin bear the names of Grey Friars, Black Friars, and White Friars respectively. During the thirteenth century numbers of

begging friars, clad in simple grey or black or white tunics, came to Chester and settled in the poorest quarters of the city. Like the early disciples of Christ, whose lives of poverty they sought to imitate, they carried with them neither gold nor silver, and walked unshod, begging their food and shelter as they journeyed from town to town.

Their simple teaching appealed to the poor, who soon began to look upon them as their best friends. For they brought the Gospel of Christ to them in their streets, and tended the sick and the aged amid their squalid homes. They were forbidden by the rules of their Orders to receive either money or lands.

The first to arrive in Chester were the Dominicans or Black Friars, who settled near the Watergate when Randle Blundeville was earl. The old palace of the Stanleys formed part of the home of the Black Friars. They were followed a few years later by the Franciscans or Grey Friars who also lived by the Watergate, near the spot on which the Linen Hall was afterwards erected, and in the reign of Edward the First the White Friars or Carmelites took up their abode in the neighbourhood of White Friars Street.

Unlike the monks, the friars had at first no fixed homes of their own, and preached at wooden crosses set up at the street corners. Afterwards, with the alms they received from the people and the legacies from rich men who admired their devout lives, each of the different Orders of friars built for themselves a permanent dwelling-place or friary, to which a church in time was added.

The Church of the Carmelites must have been one of great beauty. Some of the glazed coloured tiles which formed the pavement of the building may be seen in the Grosvenor Museum. Excavations have been made at the spot where the tiles were found, and three feet lower down the workmen came across broken columns and bases of a large Roman building. Mediaeval Chester was built on the ruins of the ancient Roman city. A doorway in an old house called 'The Friars' was part of the Carmelite Friary. 100

The friars studied medicine and devoted themselves particularly to the care of lepers. They also built schools for the children of the poor. The Dominicans were also skilful engineers, and Edward the First employed them in making wells and laying water-pipes in the city.

Unfortunately some of the friars did not live up to their early vows of poverty, and the rules which S. Francis and S. Dominic had drawn up for them. When wealth poured in upon them they became jealous of one another, and quarrels and disturbances frequently arose between them. The Records of Chester tell of many violent acts on the part of the Dominicans and Carmelites, the latter of whom, armed with cudgels, were wont to roam in the night time through the city to the terror of the inhabitants.

The monks of the thirteenth century had also become idle and luxurious. They had, as you have already read, become great landowners, and received the manorial dues from the manors which belonged to them. The Abbots of Vale Royal ruled with a rod of iron. The poor people rebelled, and fights between them and the monks were frequent. They laid their complaints before the king, and good Queen Philippa interceded for them as she did for the burghers of Calais, but the abbot was generally able to prove his 'rights', and the people obtained little satisfaction. The wealth of the monasteries was also greatly increased by the cultivation of crops and the sale of their wool. But the richer they became, the more they neglected their spiritual duties. The poor could no longer look to them for their spiritual teaching or for charity and good works, and so gladly turned to the friars who for a time ministered to their needs so well. 101

Monks and friars alike were bitterly attacked in Edward the Third's reign in a poem written by William Langland. In this poem, which is called 'The Vision of Piers Plowman', the poet speaks of the ignorance and sloth of the monks, one of whom is made to confess that he cannot even chant the Lord's Prayer.

I cannot the Pater Noster as the priest it syngethe,
But I can Rimes of Robin Hood and of Randall of Chestre.

A few exceptions there were to the general rule. In his quiet retreat in the Abbey of S. Werburgh, Ranulf Higden wrote a work called 'Polychronicon', which contained a history of the world from the Creation to his own day, with geographical descriptions of the different countries of the world, and the favourite mediaeval legends of Babylon and Rome. The book is valuable because it is one of the earliest pieces of literature written in the language of mixed Norman and Saxon which is our mother tongue to-day. When printing was invented in the fifteenth century, the Polychronicon was one of the books printed by Caxton the first English printer.

Many of the churches in Cheshire show us that the masons and builders of Edward the Third's long reign made great progress in their art.

We have seen how the thirteenth-century workmen learned to group a number of lancets together under one hood, and to shape the lancet heads like a clover leaf by the addition of cusps. In the fourteenth century the space above a row of lancet or trefoil-headed lights was filled in with a number of geometrical figures such as circles and foils. Hence the name of Geometrical or Decorated has been given to the work of this period. The large east windows of many of our Cheshire churches are made up in this way. The patterns of flowing lines thus produced are called 'bar tracery'. There are Decorated windows in the aisles of the choir and south transept of Chester Cathedral.



NORTH-WEST VIEW OF NANTWICH CHURCH

Windows and arches were now made wider than in the previous century. The builders of the Pointed period sought after height; those of the Decorated period aimed rather at breadth and openness.

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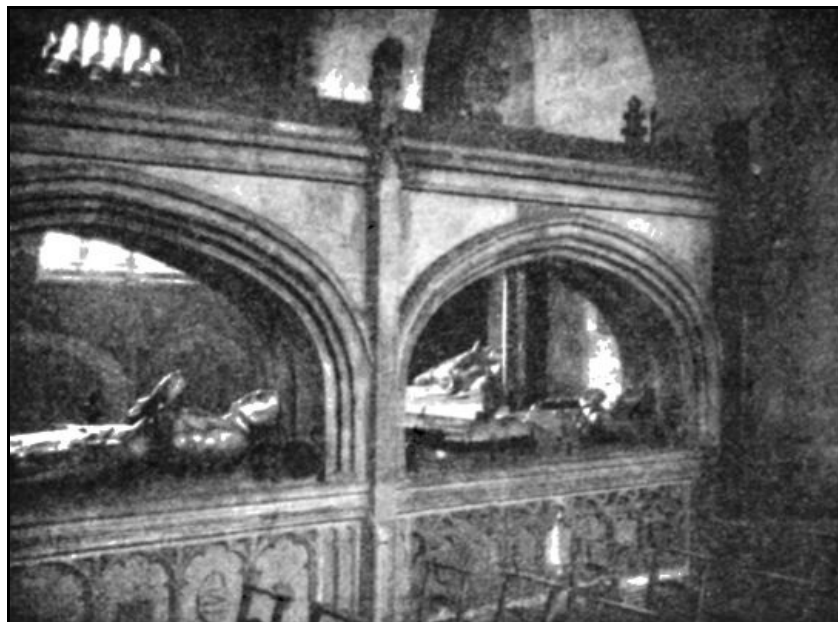


GEOMETRICAL WINDOW, SOUTH TRANSEPT, CHESTER CATHEDRAL

The fourteenth-century masons studied nature carefully, and put masses of carved fruit or flowers or leaves in the capitals of their columns. The arches of the nave of Chester Cathedral prove this fact.

A favourite ornament of the Decorated period is the crocket, a projecting bunch of foliage added to pinnacles, the hoods of arches, and the canopies of niches and tombs. Another device is the ball-flower carved in the mouldings. The ball-flower is as sure a sign of Decorated mouldings as the dog-tooth was in those of the Early English period.

104



ALTAR TOMBS, MACCLESFIELD

The choir of Stockport Parish Church is a beautiful example of the Decorated style, and the greater portions of Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Prestbury Parish Churches belong to the same period. In many other churches you will find some detail, generally a window or a doorway or an altar tomb, which will show you some of the features of this style.

In the Early English and Decorated periods a spire was sometimes added to the tower, as at Astbury and Bebington. The spire grew out of the pyramid-shaped roof with which the towers of Norman churches were covered.

In the low-lying portions of the Cheshire plain, where stone was scarce but timber plentiful, the framework of a church was often built of wood. In the village of Warburton, on the banks of the Mersey, is a fourteenth-century wooden church, which served as the chapel of a priory that was established here by the Normans. The name itself ('Werburgh-ton') speaks to us of S. Werburgh, the patron saint of the Abbey of Chester, and a field by the river is still called the Abbey Croft; the stone coffins within the church once contained the bones of monks who lived here.

105



INTERIOR OF WARBURTON TIMBER CHURCH. FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The arches within are made of rough-hewn timber, rudely shaped with the axe. Lantern pegs of buck-horn from the deer that once roamed the woodlands of Dunham Massey are fixed on the oak pillars; the roof is supported by stout cross-beams. The brick tower has been added at a later day, and the south wall built when the timbers on that side of the church collapsed. The timber churches of Lower Peover and Marton belong to the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century. Marton Church was the burial-place of the Davenports, who lived at Marton Hall.

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THE OLD PRIEST'S HOUSE, PRESTBURY

The Davenports had a more splendid home at Bramhall, the oldest portions of which were built when Edward the Third was king. The great hall at Baguley was built about the same time. The massive upright posts are cut from timber more than two feet square, and the spaces between them filled with wickerwork and plaster. The open roof is supported by a mighty 'tie-beam' and two uprights called 'queen-posts'^[2]. The windows are tall and the lights narrow, and separated from one another by oak mullions.

107

Surely the men who built it had hearts of oak. The building reflects the rugged character of the men of the days when 'knights were bold' and 'might was right'. In this hall we can picture old Sir William Baggiley feasting with his family and his retainers, when the summons came from his king to follow him to the French wars.

His effigy still rests in the hall that he himself perhaps built. It is broken and battered, but enough remains to show us that the knights who fought for Edward and the Black Prince had changed the fashion of their war dress since the Crusades. A hood of mail still protects the head and neck, but the suit of mail has given way to plates of steel riveted or hooked together, so that the whole body is cased in armour.

CHAPTER XVII A DEPOSED KING

When Edward the First completed his conquest of North Wales, and the Welsh chiefs swore fealty at Chester to the first English Prince of Wales, the fighting squires of Cheshire found themselves without any occupation. Edward the Third, ambitious of recovering the French dominions of the Norman and Angevin Kings of England, provided the Cheshire men with a fresh field of adventures, with far greater opportunities of performing deeds of valour and satisfying their thirst for warfare.

A number of Cheshire knights followed the king and the Black Prince to France. The French Chronicler, Froissart, tells us that Sir James Audley and his four Cheshire squires 'fought always in the chief of the battle' at Poitiers. One of the four squires was Sir John Delves, who built the old tower of Doddington Castle, near Audlem. In Barthomley Church is a monument to Sir Robert Fulleshurst, who also was one of the dauntless four.

108

In the chancel of Bunbury Church is the tomb of Sir Hugh Calveley, who, by his bold deeds, won for himself the title of the 'Cheshire Hero'. Over the doorway of the inn at Handley you may see the sign of the three calves, the ancient coat of arms of the Calveleys. Sir Hugh was the leader of a famous band of soldiers called the 'Companions', who gave their services for pay to any leader who required them, and were the terror of the country people of France for many years. Edward made him the Governor of Calais, from whence he sacked the seaport of Boulogne, and treated the inhabitants with great cruelty. Indeed, many of his exploits are anything but deeds of glory.

When Sir Hugh Calveley returned in his old age to his home in Cheshire, wishing to atone, perhaps, for his ruthless acts, he founded a college at Bunbury for a master, two chaplains, and two choristers. Their chief duty, no doubt, was to pray for the repose of the soul of their benefactor.

Cheshire knights and Welshmen fought side by side at Poitiers. When the Black Prince returned to England he gave the Dee Mills for life to Sir Howell y Fwyall.

An inscription on the wall of the Parish Church of Macclesfield tells us that Perkin a Legh 'serv'd King Edward the Third and the Black Prince his sonne in all their warres in France, and was at the Battell of Cressie, and hadd Lyme given him for that service'. The descendants of the Leghs still live at Lyme Hall, near Disley, where a life-size portrait of the Black Prince hangs in the entrance hall. Sir Perkin married the daughter of Sir Thomas d'Anyers, who received a handsome reward for rescuing the Royal Standard at Crecy from the French. His body lies beneath the d'Anyers monument in Grappenhall Church. 109

The same inscription at Macclesfield tells us that Perkin a Legh 'serv'd King Richard the Second, and left him not in his troubles, but was taken with him and beheaded at Chester'.

Cheshire was very loyal to the unfortunate Richard, who styled himself Prince of Cheshire, and showed great favour to the ancient earldom. The victory of Crecy was due to the English archers, and among them none were more famous than those of Cheshire. On their return from the wars, Richard's faithful bowmen became his body-guard, and could always be relied upon whenever he wished to strike a blow at his enemies. 'Sleep in peace, Dickon,' they would say to him, 'we will take care of thee, and if thou hadst married the daughter of Sir Perkin of Legh, thou mightest have defied all the lords in England.'

Cheshire men got a very bad name, for they were cruel and bloodthirsty, given to lawless deeds and inspiring terror wherever they appeared. They were safe in Cheshire, for the county was governed directly by the king, and did not yet send representatives to Parliament. The House of Commons itself was overawed by a force of 2,000 Cheshire archers, commanded by seven Cheshire esquires. When the Commons rose against the misgovernment of the king, the unpunished robberies and evil deeds of the Cheshire men were one of the causes of complaint. The bowmen all wore the badge of the White Hart, Richard's own device. There are at the present day many inns in the villages of Cheshire that bear the sign of the White Hart, a reminiscence of the days of Richard and his Cheshire guards.

The enemies of Richard were determined to depose him, and put in his place Henry of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt. Richard banished Henry, and deprived him of his estates and possessions. When Henry landed with a small force at Ravenspur in Yorkshire, in the year 1399, he was joined by many of the northern lords, chief among whom was the powerful Earl of Northumberland and his son, Harry 'Hotspur'. Richard surrendered to his cousin at Flint, and was brought to Chester 'on a sorry hack not worth a couple of pounds'. He was confined in the tower over the gateway of the Castle at Chester before being removed to Pontefract, where he probably met a violent death, though it was given out that he died of starvation. Perkin a Legh was executed for his loyalty to Richard, and his head fixed on a pole on the highest tower of Chester Castle. 110

The Cheshire archers struck one more blow in Richard's defence. Hotspur had been made Justice of Cheshire and North Wales by Henry the Fourth, to keep down the turbulent Cheshire men and the Welsh insurgents. He suddenly changed sides, and joined Earl Mortimer and Owen Glendower of Wales in their revolt against the new king.

Hotspur gave out that Richard was yet alive at Sandiway, and the chief barons of Cheshire, the Venables and the Vernons, and the archers of Macclesfield and Delamere flocked to his standard. The Mayor of Chester went too, and the parsons of Pulford, Davenham, Rostherne and other villages, each with his own following. Though they were afterwards told that Richard was really dead, they were quite content to avenge him, and the army decked with the badge of the White Hart marched from Cheshire to join the Welsh leader.

King Henry met them near Shrewsbury, where a fierce battle took place. The Cheshire archers fought with great bravery, and even routed a portion of the king's army. But they were gradually overcome by the more numerous royal forces, and Henry's victory was complete. Hotspur himself was killed, and among the slain were 'the most part of the knights and squires of the county of Chester'. After the battle, the baron of Kinderton, Sir Richard Venables, was executed, and his estates given to his brother, a supporter of the king.

The ancient yew-trees in many of the churchyards of Cheshire will remind you of the sturdy bowmen who overthrew the mail-clad mounted men of France at the battles of Crecy and Poitiers. The big yew in the churchyard of Farndon must have been of great age, even in the days when Richard's archers cut their bows from its tough and pliant boughs. 111

The bow was made in England, in England,
Of true wood, of yew wood, the wood of English bows:
So men who are free
Love the old yew tree
And the land where the yew tree grows.

In order to encourage archery among workmen and labourers, Richard forbade the playing of football, tennis, and the like, under penalty of fine or imprisonment. Among the town-laws of Chester was one which compelled all children of six years old and upwards to be taught the use of the bow and arrow, both 'for the avoiding of idleness' and for service 'in the ancient defence of the kingdom'. Every Easter Monday the two sheriffs chose teams of archers, and shot a match on

the Roodie, the prize being a breakfast or dinner of calves' heads and bacon, in which the Mayor and Aldermen also took part. When a man of any well-to-do family married in Chester, he was expected to give a silver arrow in the following year as a prize for archery.

Some of the knights who returned from the French wars found their old homes burnt or destroyed by marauding Welshmen during their absence. The castles which they built for their protection were built of stone, and portions strongly fortified. The massive tower or keep of Doddington is crowned with a battlement and four square corner turrets; the windows are mere slits in the walls. Brimstage Tower in Wirral was built in 1398 by Sir Hugh de Hulse. The parapet or gallery is 'machicolated', that is to say it projects beyond the walls of the tower, so that molten metal might be poured through holes in the parapet upon an attacking force below.

The more famous Storeton Hall was built about the same time, though little remains now to show its former splendour. From Storeton came the powerful Cheshire House of Stanley. In the reign of Edward the Third, Sir Philip de Bamville was master-forester of Wirral, which at the time was covered with an extensive forest, so that an old rime said

112

From Blacon Point to Hilbre
Squirrels in search of food
Might jump straight from tree to tree,
So thick the forest stood.

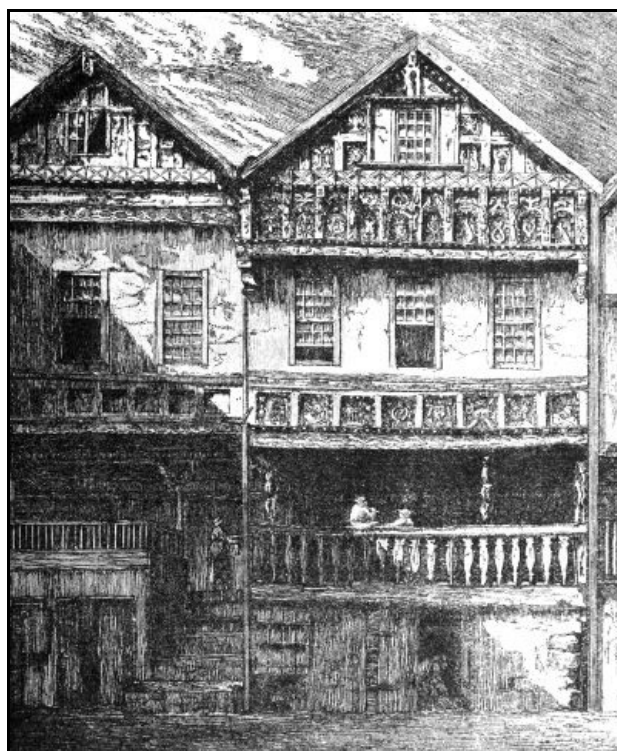
Sir Philip was being entertained by John Stanley. In the evening, when the festivities were at their height, young William Stanley ran away with Joan de Bamville, Sir Philip's only child. Through forest and over moorland they spurred their horses, and stayed not till the wide Cheshire plain lay between them and their homes. At Astbury Church they were wedded, and after the old knight's death, the Stanleys succeeded to the forestership and the estates that went with it.

Scarcely any churches were built in Cheshire in the latter part of the fourteenth century, though the chancel of West Kirby was put up in the reign of Richard the Second. The carved heads on one of the window-hoods are those of Richard and his queen. Labourers were very scarce, owing to the ravages of the terrible calamity known as the Black Death, and the men who returned from the wars had no fancy for doing the work of the mason and the builder. Men refused to work; wages and the price of bread rose so high that a limit had to be set to them by law. Even so great a person as the Abbot of S. Werburgh was fined because his steward charged too big a price for the abbey corn.

When the next century dawned and the land had rest for a while under the Lancastrian king, churches were no longer built in the Decorated style of the fourteenth century. Another style of church-building prevailed.

The curious Chester 'Rows' were originally built during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, though they have been altered and rebuilt many times since then. There is nothing quite like them in any other English city. The 'Rows', or galleries, run continuously for most of the length of the four principal streets over the shops on the street level, as if the front rooms on the first floor of all the houses had been taken out and a thoroughfare made through them. At the ends of the Rows, and at street corners, you may descend by a staircase to the pavement below.

114



CHESTER ROWS, WATERGATE STREET

No one can be quite sure how the Rows came to be built on this plan. Some people have thought that they were copied from the porticoes or colonnades of shops in Roman towns. Others, again, say that they were intended to serve as barricades in the street fighting which often took place when the Welsh attacked the city. Probably, however, neither of these explanations is correct.

Many old houses in Chester show that they were at first built with outside flights of stone steps leading from the street to the first floor. Under the steps was an entrance to a cellar or storeroom. At some time or other the steps were removed, except at the ends of the streets, and a footway laid along the tops of the cellars. The upper stories were then brought forward, and, resting on columns of wood, made level with the street fronts of the basement.

CHAPTER XVIII THE RIVAL ROSES

Henry the Fourth belongs partly to Cheshire, for a Duke of Lancaster had married the heiress of the Lacys, who were descended from Nigel, Baron of Halton and Constable of Chester. John of Gaunt, the king's father, was a frequent visitor at Halton Castle, which he used as a hunting-lodge.

The French wars broke out again in the reign of Henry the Fifth. Once more the loyal Leghs and other Cheshire knights followed their king. In fact the king's body-guard was composed of Cheshire men, among them being Richard de Mobberley, Ranulf de Chelford, and William de Mere. Piers Legh, the grandson of Perkin Legh, fell at Agincourt, as you may read on the brass plate in Macclesfield Church. In the same church is the altar-tomb of another hero of Agincourt, Sir John Savage, who was knighted after the battle. 115

Henry was stricken down at the very moment of his triumph, and a baby king succeeded to the throne of England. The royal uncles, who acted as guardians, quarrelled with one another, and in a few years the English were compelled to leave France. Foreign wars were followed by strife in our own country. The Wars of the Roses lasted for the greater part of the second half of the fifteenth century.

Queen Margaret, the 'outlandish woman' as her Yorkist enemies called her, was in Chester in the year 1459. The king was ill, and the queen conducted the wars herself, and summoned the fighting-men of Cheshire to rally to her side. The people of Cheshire were not greatly excited over the wars, which were mainly blood-feuds of powerful nobles. The trading classes and the artisans of the towns took little part in the fighting, but the sturdy Cheshire yeomen followed the squires, who ranged themselves on the one side or the other. Members of the same family often found themselves opposed to one another.

A sixteenth-century poet, describing the battle of Blore Heath, which took place just over the southern border of Cheshire, says:

There Dutton Dutton kills, a Done doth kill a Done,
A Booth a Booth, and Legh by Legh is overthrown;
A Venables against a Venables doth stand,
A Troutbeck fighteth with a Troutbeck hand to hand.

The Red Rose was badly beaten in this battle, in which Lord Audley and two thousand Cheshire men were killed.

One of the Booths who fought in the Wars of the Roses is buried beneath the chancel floor of Wilmslow Church. Set in a marble slab which covers the grave is a brass plate with figures of Sir Robert de Bothe and Douce Venables his wife. Similar 'brasses' were common enough in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries on the monuments of those families who could afford them. They represent, for the most part, knights and priests. Few are left now, for numbers were stripped from their places during the Great Rebellion. Portions of the brass at Wilmslow have been destroyed or lost, for the figures were at one time set in a handsome canopy of brass, and the whole surrounded by an inscription, only a fragment of which remains. 116



BRASS OF ROBERT DE BOTHE AND DOUCE VENABLES

The brass shows us the costume of a knight and lady of the fifteenth century. The knight is in plate armour, which, since its first appearance in the Edwardian wars, had become more and more elaborate and highly ornamental. If you study this brass and the effigies on the Savage monuments at Macclesfield you will be able to recognize in other churches the warriors who fought in the battles of the fifteenth century.

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Douce Venables was only nine years of age when she was married by her parents to the twelve-year-old husband whom they chose for her. Throughout the Middle Ages child-marriages were frequently arranged in order to make secure the estates which the children were to inherit, and save them from the greediness of the kings. The sovereign claimed the right of wardship over all heirs and heiresses who were left orphans in early life, and took a large sum of money out of their estates when he gave them away in marriage. If they did not then marry according to his wishes they had to pay a further sum. We may be sure the kings made all they could from this source, for wars were expensive and the kings were always short of ready money.

The people of Cheshire were glad when the Wars of the Roses were over. The Roses were united when Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, married Elizabeth the heiress of Edward the Fourth and of the House of York. On the porch of Gawsworth Church is a carved corbel consisting of a rose, within whose petals appear two faces. This is the Tudor Rose, a symbol of the union of the Houses of Lancaster and York. The porch was therefore built shortly after the wars were ended.

The Cheshire Stanleys helped Henry Tudor to win the crown of Richard the Third on the field of Bosworth, the last battle of the rival Roses. When Richard saw the redcoats and the harts' heads of the Stanley followers ranged on the side of his enemies, he knew that he was doomed.

The Stanley strokes they are so strong, there may no man their blows abide.

It was Sir William Stanley who picked up the crown which had fallen from King Richard's head when he was struck down, and taking Henry aside, set it on his head.

Macclesfield suffered severely in this battle. Among the corporation records of Macclesfield is preserved a letter to King Henry the Seventh, praying that the town might not lose its charter because it could not make up the necessary number of aldermen, owing to the heavy slaughter of the townsmen at Bosworth.

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Lord Derby, the head of the House of Stanley, arranged the new king's marriage with the Lady Elizabeth, and Sir William Stanley was for a time high in favour with the king. But one day he asked for too great a reward—nothing less than the Earldom of Chester, and the suspicious king chopped off his head. Thus were men often requited for their services.

Notwithstanding the squabbles and jealousies of rival kings and princes, the people as a whole were progressing along more peaceful ways. Trade was flourishing, and the class of well-to-do merchants becoming yearly more numerous and important. Wealthy aldermen imitated the good example of King Henry the Sixth, founder of many schools and colleges. Edmund Shaw, of Stockport, founded in 1487 a Free School at Stockport for the children of the burgesses. The

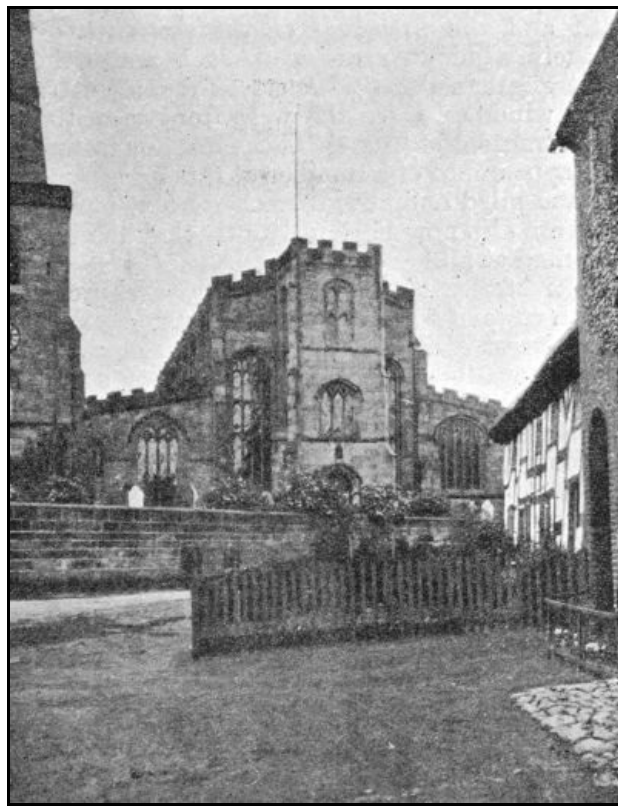
master of the school was to be a priest, 'a discrete man, and conning in grammer and able of connyng to teche gramer.' The art of printing had just been discovered, and now that books were likely to be within the reach of all, it was necessary first of all to teach Cheshire boys how to read and understand their own language.

The century, that opened with war and bloodshed, closed in peace such as Cheshire had hardly ever before experienced.

CHAPTER XIX CHURCHES OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Many of the largest and finest churches in Cheshire were built during the Wars of the Roses, and in the reigns of the early Tudors. This fact shows us more than anything else perhaps that the wars did not greatly interfere with the progress and prosperity of the inhabitants of Cheshire. During this period the churches of Mottram, Malpas, Great Budworth, Nantwich, Astbury, Grappenhall, Tarvin, Bunbury, Wilmslow, Witton, Gawsworth, and many others were built or completed.

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ASTBURY, WEST FRONT. PERPENDICULAR

If you study any of these churches carefully you will see that the style was once again changing. Probably the first thing you will note will be the change in the patterns of the windows. The mullions which divide the lights are carried right up to the crown of the windows instead of branching off to right or left in flowing curves. This is the chief feature from which the new style has received the name of Perpendicular.

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The Perpendicular builders of the latter half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries found their windows growing to such a size that they had to strengthen them with cross-bars called transoms. Thus the windows, as in the west front of Astbury and the south transept of Chester Cathedral, for instance, present the appearance of a number of rectangles placed side by side and piled one above another. The crown of the windows are also now flattened until they hardly appear to be pointed at all.

The clerestories of the Perpendicular churches were filled with rows of windows until the whole length of the wall was almost continuous glass, as at Malpas and Astbury. When Bibles and Church services began to be printed more light was needed, for people went to church to read as well as to listen.

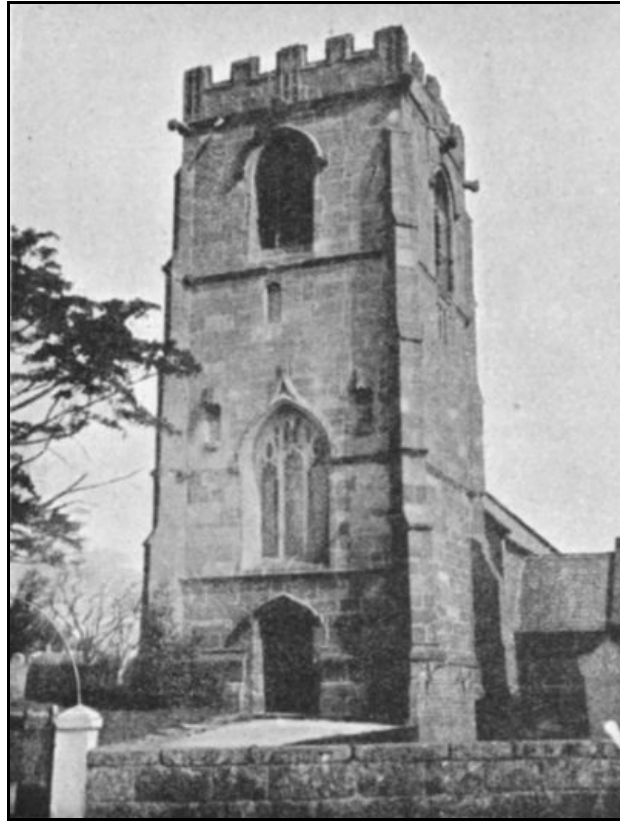
The doorways, like the windows, have changed with the times. The heads are flattened and covered with a square moulded hood. The corner spaces between the arch and the hood are called spandrels, and are generally filled in with carved foliage or shields. At the sides are often niches for the images of saints, or moulded panels. The door of the Rivers Chapel at Macclesfield

is a beautiful specimen of Perpendicular architecture.

The walls of Perpendicular churches are generally surmounted by a parapet which runs round the whole length of a church, as at Malpas. Sometimes the stone work of the parapet is pierced with panel-shaped slits or ornamented with rows of quatrefoils. Panels appear on the buttresses of Gawsworth Church.

But the great glory of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century churches are the tall and massive square towers. These are built in stages separated from one another by a narrow projecting course of stones or by bands of quatrefoils. The name of the builder often appears on the tower. Round the tower of Mobberley Church runs a Latin inscription bearing the names of John Talbot and Margaret his wife, the patrons of the church, and Richard Plat the master-mason. On the towers of Macclesfield and Gawsworth Churches are carved rows of shields bearing the arms of different lords of the manor. Like the body of the church, the tower is generally crowned with an embattled parapet with pinnacles at the four corners.

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PERPENDICULAR TOWER, HANDLEY. FIFTEENTH CENTURY

In the carved foliage of one of the capitals in the nave of Chester Cathedral are the letters S. R. They are the initials of Abbot Simon Ripley, one of the greatest of fifteenth-century builders in Cheshire. He rebuilt the upper parts of the nave and south transept of the Abbey Church, and planned the central tower, which was finished by the next abbot. Simon Ripley also built the old tower and gateway at Saighton Grange, which had been the residence of the Abbots of S. Werburgh ever since the time of Hugh Lupus.

122

Many of the village churches of Cheshire were built on the sites of former churches, and often a portion of the older building remains to prove this. The Norman font at Grappenhall and the little Norman window at Woodchurch are all that is left to prove that churches existed here before the present buildings were erected. In such churches you can often trace the successive buildings and rebuildings, alterations and additions that have been made from time to time. A single church may indeed show the chief features of all the styles from the time of the Conqueror to the Civil War. At Prestbury you may see a Norman doorway in the little chapel in the churchyard; in the chancel of the church is a window of pure Early English, and in the nave a pillar of the same period. There are Decorated windows in the aisles, and a Perpendicular window at the east end.

The Cheshire churches are beautiful still; they must have been even more beautiful in the sixteenth century, before the Puritans of the Reformation and the Civil War in their mistaken zeal destroyed almost everything of beauty within and without that could be destroyed. On the walls of the interior were often painted pictures of Bible stories such as the Creation, the Crucifixion, or the Resurrection of our Lord. When the plaster was stripped from the walls of Gawsworth Church some of these wall-paintings were discovered. Drawings were made from them, which you may see in the Free Library of Macclesfield. On the wall of the nave of Mobberley Church some of these paintings still remain, but their meaning is not very clear.

The chancel was divided from the nave by a screen of carved oak, with a long narrow gallery above it called a rood-loft, from the rood or cross which was placed in the centre of the gallery. The crosses have gone, but at Mobberley you may see the ancient screen, with an inscription, and the date 1500 carved upon it.

123



SHOCKLACH: CROSS AND NORMAN DOOR

Throughout the Middle Ages it was the custom for the lord of the manor to reserve some portion of the church for his own use, or to add to the building a chantry or chapel where his own chantry priest might pray daily for the salvation of his soul. These chapels are generally at the eastern ends of the aisles. You will know them by the handsome monuments which were raised over the graves of the founders, for these chapels were used as the burial-place of the founders and their families. The Calveleys had a private chapel at Bunbury, the Mainwarings at Over Peover, the Dones at Tarporley, the Troutbecks in S. Mary's, Chester, and the Cholmondeleys at Malpas.

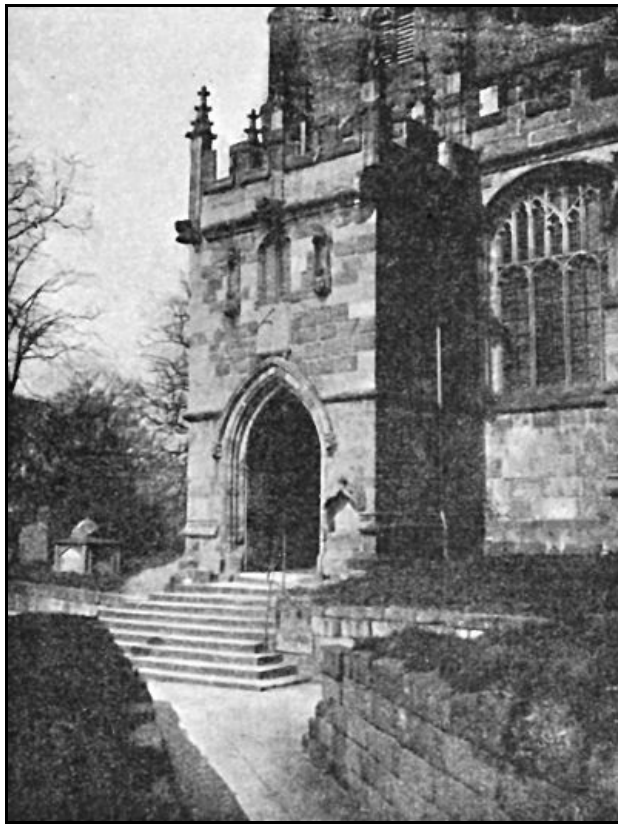
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The church porches are on the south side of the church. They are generally large, for portions of the baptismal service were read there, and the font is therefore close to the door within the church. In the corner of the porch at Woodchurch you will see a little stone basin or 'stoup' in which holy water was placed for the use of those entering the church. At Malpas there is a little room above the porch called a 'parvise'; this was used as a priest's room. Over the door of the porch are niches for the images of the saints to whom the church is dedicated.

In the churchyard near the south porch, which was nearly always the principal entrance to the church, you will generally see a cross or stump of a cross and steps representing a Calvary. From these steps the friars used to preach to the people when they travelled through the Cheshire towns and villages.

In many of the old churches of Cheshire you will see a stout oak chest, often black with age, and strongly bound with bands and clasps of iron. These chests were made to hold the deeds of gift of land and money made by rich patrons. Beneath the tower of Wilmslow Church is an ancient chest that was carved out of a solid block of wood. Some of you have perhaps tried to raise the heavy lid of the chest at Little Peover, but it is as much as a strong man may do. An old legend says that the maid who can lift it is indeed worthy to become a Cheshire farmer's wife. In the museum at Warrington is preserved the old parish chest of Grappenhall. It is the oldest chest in the county. It is of the rudest description, consisting merely of a tree trunk, seven feet long, chopped smooth with an axe, sawn into two portions and hollowed.

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PORCH WITH PARVISE: MALPAS

In these chests were also placed the churchwardens' accounts of expenses, as well as the registers of births, deaths, and marriages which Henry the Eighth in 1538 commanded to be kept in every parish. These ancient records are valuable now, and preserved with great care for from them we can glean much information about the lives of our forefathers. Many of them have been copied and published by scholars, and may be read by you in your libraries. Many Cheshire parish registers date from the times of the Tudors, but a large number were lost or destroyed during the Civil Wars.

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Churchwardens' accounts help us to picture in our minds the interior of a mediaeval church. We read of payments made 'for timber bought to make the pulpit', 'for mending of the Bible book and for the covering of the same', for strewing rushes on the floor of the church to keep it warm, and 'for a chain to the Bible'. There are chained Bibles still at Bunbury, Backford, and Burton. A printed Bible cost a lot of money, and chains were necessary to prevent it being stolen.

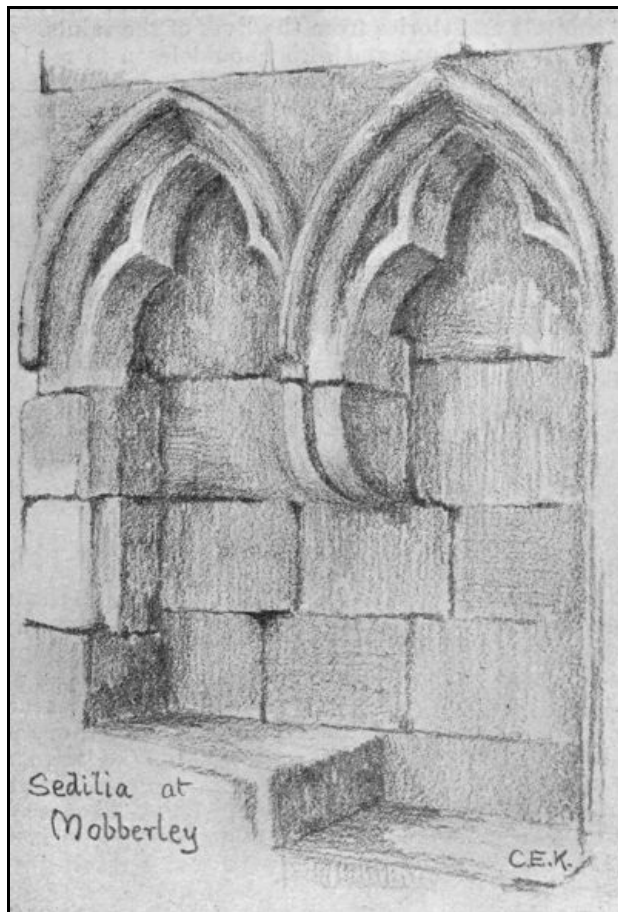
There were no comfortable cushioned seats for those who worshipped in mediaeval churches. Wooden or stone benches were ranged along the walls, and 'kneeling places' were made for those who could afford to pay for them. In Acton Church the old stone bench running all round the walls of the nave and chancel still remains.

In the choir there were stone seats, called 'sedilia', for the priests. They are set in the wall on the south side of the chancel, and are generally covered, as at Stockport and Mobberley, with a canopy of Early English or Decorated tracery.

In the churches which were closely connected with an abbey or monastery, wooden stalls were made for the monks. These are often beautifully carved, and covered with handsome canopies of wooden tracery and pinnacles. The choir stalls of Nantwich are said to have been brought from the Abbey of Vale Royal.

The carved oak stalls in Chester Cathedral are thought by many people to be the handsomest in England. Many of them still remain as they were in King Henry the Eighth's days, freed now from the coat of white paint with which stupid workmen covered them at a later time. The heavy seats are fitted with hinges, so that they may be raised. On the under side are quaint carvings of birds and dragons and unicorns, kings, knights and seraphs, illustrating ancient legends such as Richard Cœur de Lion pulling the heart out of a lion, or Scriptural subjects and stories from the lives of the saints.

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All Cheshire boys and girls should learn to read and understand the stories of the Cheshire churches, for in them is bound up the story of Cheshire men and women of many ages.

CHAPTER XX

THE REFORMATION AND THE GREAT AWAKENING

On one of the walls of the Parish Church of Macclesfield is a small brass plate, a few inches square. It is called a 'Pardon brass', and represents the Pope bowing before Christ, while Roger Legh and his six sons are in the act of prayer. Beneath the figures is the inscription: 'The pardon for saying of five paternosters, five aves and a creed, is twenty-six thousand years and twenty-six days of pardon.' We are not told how much money Roger Legh paid the Pope for obtaining pardon for his misdeeds, but it was a good round sum, I imagine.

During the Middle Ages the doctrine grew up that sins committed by one man might be atoned for by the prayers or penance performed by others, together with a sum of money, which varied according to the crime. The price of pardon for robbery was twelve shillings, for murder only seven shillings and sixpence, and for perjury nine shillings. By the sixteenth century people began to have an uneasy feeling that the sale of 'indulgences', as these pardons were called, was wrong, and preachers rose up everywhere to denounce the system.

This was only one of many evils which was bringing the Church into ill repute. Reformers, like Martin Luther, showed that the Church believed many things which did not agree with the teaching of the Bible. Moreover, churchmen filled all the principal offices of state, and used their position as a means of amassing great wealth, a portion of which passed into the hands of the Pope, who was the recognized head of the Church and whom the clergy were bound to obey. As the clergy would not reform the Church themselves, the king and his lay ministers decided to do it for them by Act of Parliament. King Henry the Eighth declared himself head of the English Church, which, from this time, became separated from the Church of Rome.

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The king then turned his attention to the monasteries, which had grown wealthy at the expense of the people. The monks themselves had grown lazy and careless of their duties, and many of them were living evil lives. The king decided to turn out the monks and do away with the monasteries altogether.

In the year 1536 the king's officers appeared in Cheshire. The first to suffer was the Abbot of Norton Priory, who resisted stoutly and summoned all his tenants to his assistance. The king's men were compelled to take refuge in a tower, but managed to send a message to Sir Piers

Dutton, Sheriff of Chester, by whose aid the abbot was captured and conveyed to Halton Castle. The priory was sold, and the revenues, plate, and jewels confiscated to the king.

Vale Royal fared no better. In this case, at any rate, the monks deserved their fate. They had long been the terror of the neighbourhood, and were the friends of the robbers and cut-throats of Delamere Forest. Abbot and monks were expelled from the abbey, which was handed over to Sir Thomas Holcroft. The Holcroft crest was a raven, and superstitious people saw in the fall of Vale Royal the fulfilment of a prophecy of a Cheshire 'wise man' named Nixon, who said that the abbey would one day be destroyed and become a raven's nest.

The Cistercian Abbeys of Combermere and Darnhall, and the Priors at Mobberley and Birkenhead, were treated in similar fashion, and their wealth and estates divided between the neighbouring gentry and the king.

The Abbot of S. Werburgh was the most powerful man in Cheshire, but he could not save his abbey from the greedy hands of the king's officials. The wealth of this abbey was reckoned at more than a thousand pounds, a large sum in those days, equal to a sum at least ten times as great at the present time. The abbots lived in their fortified manor-houses at Saighton and Ince, where they kept great state, and supported large numbers of retainers and dependants. They held a court at Chester, and frequent quarrels arose between them and the Mayor of Chester as to the extent of their powers and jurisdiction.

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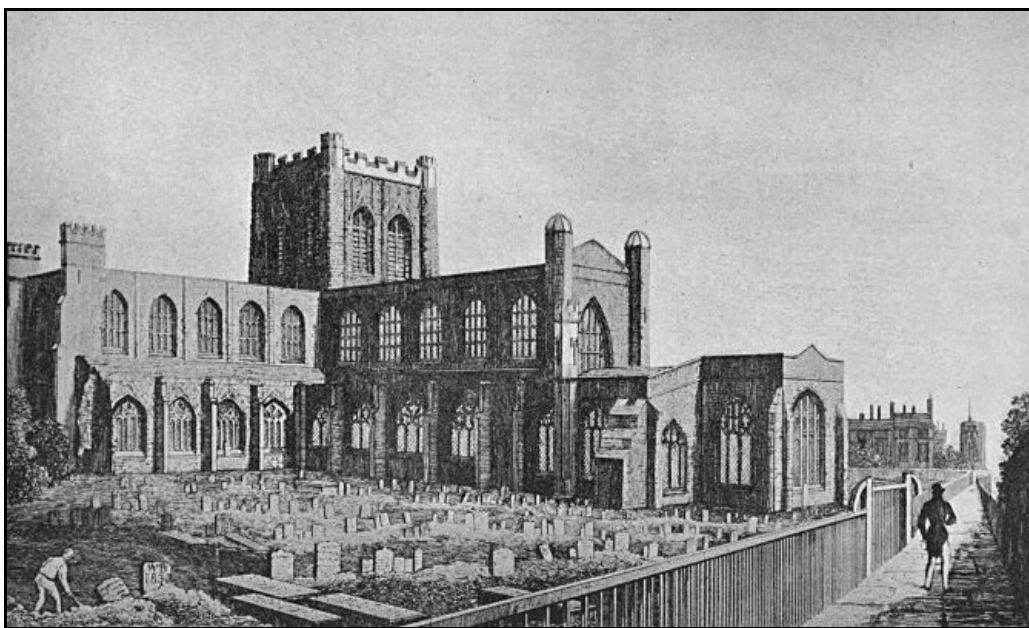
The people of Chester were probably not sorry to see the abbot stripped of his power. He did not, like the Abbot of Norton, show violence to the royal officers, but fell in quietly with their wishes. For this he received his reward, and returned to Chester within two years, no longer as abbot, but as dean of a new cathedral.

Many of the bishoprics of England covered such a vast extent of country that Henry decided to spend a portion of the wealth which he had taken from the monasteries, in creating six new bishoprics. Chester was one of them, and the Abbey of S. Werburgh became the cathedral church of the new bishopric, a portion of the new buildings being set apart as a palace for the newly made Bishops of Chester. The first bishop was John Bird, a Carmelite friar.

Henry did not go as far in his reformation of the English Church as many people wished. There were many who 'protested' against practices in the Roman Church which they thought wrong, such as the worship of images or of the relics of saints, to which the people were encouraged by the clergy to pray for help. The Protestants, as the extreme reformers were called, increased in number daily, and in the reign of Edward the Sixth got the upper hand. They did away with the old Latin services of the Church, which the greater part of the poorer classes did not understand, and wrote a Book of Common Prayer in the English tongue. By an Act of Uniformity, all the clergy were called upon to use this Prayer Book in their churches.

During Edward's reign, the rich jewelled vestments of the priests, the church plate and crucifixes, and even the church bells, were swept away and sold for the benefit of the king. Many of our village crosses were wantonly destroyed during this period. The beautiful Sandbach crosses were thrown down and broken in fragments. Most of the pieces were recovered at a later day, and the crosses set up again, but they will for ever remain a proof of the careless destruction of works of art by which the period of the Reformation was marked.

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CHESTER CATHEDRAL (before Restoration)

When Queen Mary came to the throne she restored the old religion of Rome. A memorial obelisk on Gallows Hill, Boughton, reminds us of the dark days when Protestants were persecuted with blind and bitter hatred by their Catholic enemies, and even suffered death for their beliefs. On Gallows Hill, George Marsh was burnt at the stake for teaching the doctrines of the reformed faith. He was tried in the Lady Chapel of the cathedral, and condemned to death. The citizens of

Chester, who had shown themselves sympathetic to the reformers, were filled with horror, and, led by one of the sheriffs, tried to rescue him, but failed in the attempt. The bones of the martyr were collected and laid in the burial-ground of S. Giles. The sheriff was forced to flee to the continent until better times. He returned in the more tolerant days of Queen Elizabeth, and became mayor of the city.

A settlement was brought about in Queen Elizabeth's reign, which satisfied all but the extreme men on either side. She was the more inclined to the Protestant cause inasmuch as she hated the Catholic King Philip of Spain, who called her 'the heretic queen', and whose spies were to be found all over England. When the struggle with Spain was near at hand, Protestants and Catholics forgot their quarrels in face of a common danger, and the queen had no more loyal subjects than the great Catholic families of Cheshire. Rowland Stanley, of Hooton-in-Wirral, gave a large sum of money for improving the defence of the sea-coast, for it was thought that Philip might land troops in Wirral.

The Reformation was only part of a great awakening of peoples all over Western and Central Europe. Scholars studied and brought from Italy copies of the books of the ancient Greek and Roman writers. The invention of printing helped the spread of learning, and the Tudor monarchs encouraged the building of schools and colleges in order that all classes might have the benefit of a better education. Over the porch of the King's School, Chester, is a statue of King Henry the Eighth. He was the founder of the school, which for a long time was carried on in the ancient refectory of the abbey.

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Some of the wealth taken from the abbeys and monasteries was devoted to the foundation of schools. The Grammar School at Macclesfield was endowed in the reign of Edward the Sixth. At Bunbury, Thomas Aldersey, a haberdasher of London, founded a school, the chantry and college of Sir Hugh Calveley having been dissolved at the same time as the abbeys.

Sir John Deane, son of Laurence Deane, of Davenham, gave some property which had been in the possession of monks for the building of a free Grammar School at Northwich, 'forasmuch as God's glory, His honour and the public weal is advanced and maintained by no means more than by virtuous education and bringing up of youth under such as be learned and virtuous school-masters.'

'God's glory' was indeed not the least of the things that Cheshire boys of the sixteenth century were taught to observe. In the statutes of the founder of Witton Grammar School it is laid down 'that the scholars shall thrice a day serve God within the school, rendering Him thanks for His goodness done to them, craving His special grace that they may profit in learning to His honour and glory'.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth the voice of the people of Cheshire was heard for the first time in the Parliament of the English people at Westminster. Hitherto, the miniature Parliament of the Norman and royal Earls of Chester had been considered sufficient for them. Henry now summoned two knights of the county and two burgesses from the city of Chester to take their place side by side with the chosen representatives of the other English shires and boroughs in the national assembly.

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CHAPTER XXI

ELIZABETHAN CHESHIRE. I

The chief event with which all boys, I imagine, connect the name of Queen Elizabeth is the defeat of the Great Armada sent against these shores by the King of Spain. Doubtless on that summer night in the year 1588 there were watchers by the beacon on Alderley Edge who saw the 'Wrekin's crest of fire' flashing its message northwards. There was no telegraph in those days, and yet in an hour or two at most the news of the approach of an enemy was carried by beacon fires from the Channel to the Cheviots. Cheshire indeed produced no Drake or Hawkins; but Sir George Beeston, whose tomb you may see in Bunbury Church, commanded the ship *Dreadnought*, one of the four ships that broke through the Spanish line and took an active part in the pursuit and destruction of the Spanish vessels.

A few years later Sir Uryan Legh of Adlington Hall accompanied Lord Howard and Raleigh and the Earl of Essex on an expedition to Cadiz, when they destroyed the ships in the harbour and for a second time 'singed the King of Spain's beard'. The town itself was taken by storm, and for his bravery on this occasion Sir Uryan Legh was knighted. The Leghs were always to the fore when there was any fighting to be done. A canopied arch in Prestbury Church marks his last resting-place, but the tomb itself has long since disappeared.

One result of the expeditions of Drake and Raleigh was that Englishmen were inspired with a passion for travel, whether abroad or at home, partly for the sake of adventure and the pursuit of wealth, partly out of curiosity and a thirst for knowledge. The voyages of the great navigators, 'itineraries' or diaries of travel, and histories of our own country and its people were written at

this period. These books show clearly in their pages how intensely proud the Englishmen of Elizabeth's day were of their country and their queen and her brave seamen, who by their victories over Spain raised England to the first position among the nations of the world.

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Michael Drayton wrote a long poem called 'Polyolbion', in which four hundred lines are taken up with a description of Cheshire, which he calls the

thrice happy Shire, confined so to be
twixt two so famous Floods, as Mersey is, and Dee.

He speaks of Chester as

th' imaginary work of some huge Giant's hand:
which if such ever were, Tradition tells not who.

The book was illustrated by a number of curious maps, adorned with quaint figures of men and women representing the rivers, hills, forests, and castled towns.

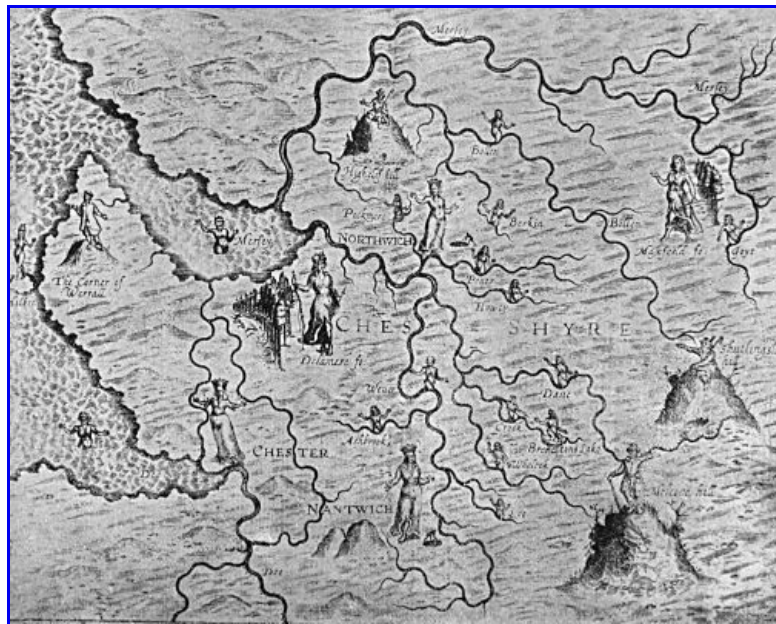
John Speed was born at Farndon on the Dee, and wrote a book called the *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, which contained the earliest set of maps published in England.

Cophurst, an old house near Sutton Downes in the Forest of Macclesfield, is thought to have been the birthplace of the chronicler Raphael Holinshed, who wrote a History of England and dedicated it to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the great minister of Queen Elizabeth. Shakespeare used this book for the plots of some of his plays.

The triumphs of Francis Drake were celebrated in a long Latin poem by Thomas Newton of Butley, who placed the small brass tablet on the wall near the pulpit in Prestbury Church to the memory of his parents. Newton was for some time the head master of Macclesfield Grammar School. Another Elizabethan poet was Geoffrey Whitney, who was born at Nantwich.

An inscription on an old house at Nantwich, bearing the date 1584, shows that Elizabeth returned the affections of her people and did all she could for them. The verse reads thus:—

God grant our royal Queen
In England long to reign;
For she hath put her helping hand
To build this town again.



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MAP OF CHESHIRE. From Drayton's 'Polyolbion'

Nantwich had been almost totally destroyed by fire in the previous year. The risk of fire was always very great, owing to the fact that nearly all the houses of the Middle Ages were built of timber and thatched with straw.

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The black and white timbered halls are the glory of Cheshire. Let us pay a visit to-day to Little Moreton Hall, near Congleton, perhaps the most beautiful of them all. The people who live here are proud of their home, and on certain days of the week allow you to examine at your leisure many of the rooms in the old house, which remains in almost the same condition as when the Moretons removed to a new and more spacious house of brick hard by.

The framework of the house is all of wood, good solid English oak, and black with age. The spaces between the beams and props are filled with plaster and painted white. The principal beams which support the building are of course upright, firmly laid on a foundation of stone.

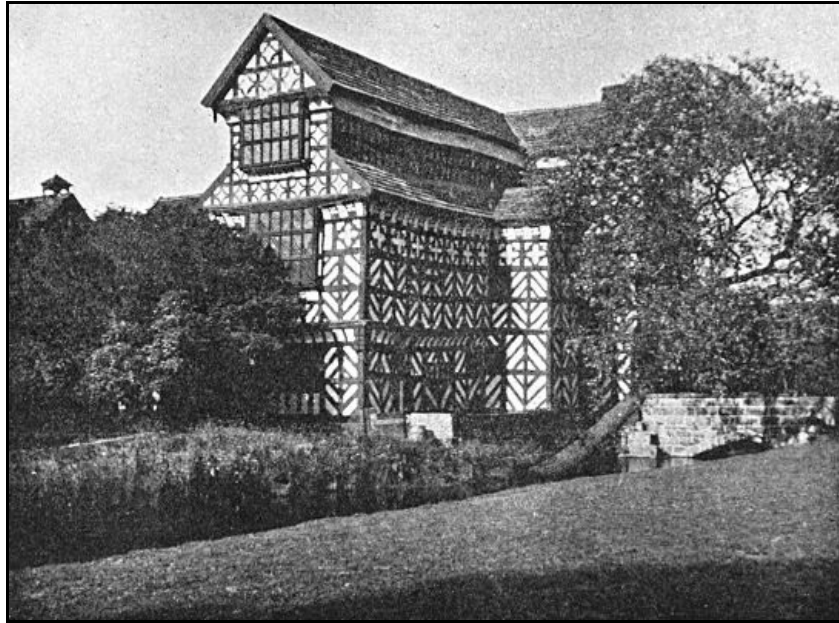
Within the squares of this framework other beams are set in sloping parallel lines, forming patterns of chevron or diamond, or arranged in rows of quatrefoils and arcades of trefoil-headed arches. The upper stories and the gables of the roof project beyond the ground floor of the building, which is thus kept dry.

We cross the moat by a substantial stone bridge, and enter through a gateway whose massive oaken lintel and side-posts are covered with rich carving, and find ourselves in a square paved courtyard. Within the gateway is a stone horse-block.

Facing us are two deep bay-windows formed of five sides of an octagon. Over them you may read the carved inscription: 'God is al in al things. This window whire made by William Moreton in the yeare of oure Lorde MDLIX.' The building of the home was regarded by our Elizabethan forefathers as an almost sacred work, to be carried out with hardly less reverence than the building of a church.

A second gateway forms the entrance to the dining-hall on the one hand and the kitchen on the other. The walls of the dining-room are lined with wainscoting of panelled oak; the open timbered roof is held up by a strong central beam; the windows are filled with countless tiny panes of glass, with bright patches of red and orange and blue where the coat-of-arms and crest of the Moretons are painted upon them.

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LITTLE MORETON HALL

In the kitchen are marks of the growing comfort and luxuries of Elizabethan days—the rows of pewter plates bearing the Moreton arms, and a great spice-chest where the fragrant spices of the East, brought home by travellers, were stored, as well as the sweet herbs, the sage and rosemary, lavender and thyme, from the herb-garden of the Hall. In the open fireplace, ten feet wide, an ox might well be roasted; the smoke from the log-fire was carried upwards from the roof by a chimney-stack of brick.

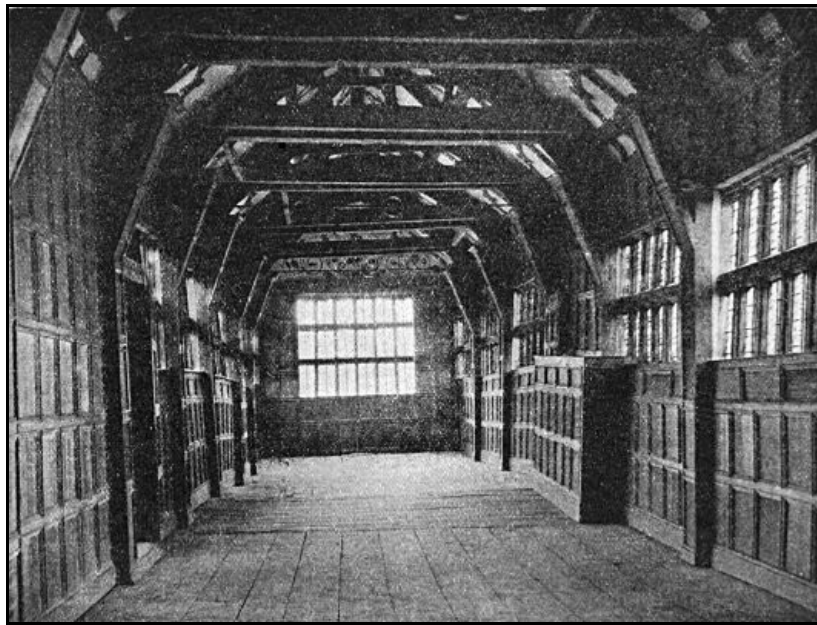
Over the 'screen' or passage that divides the dining-hall and the kitchen is a musicians' gallery, where the players of the viol and the harp made music while the squire and his lady supped in the early evening.

To the left of the gatehouse through which we first entered is the chapel, where the chaplain read the daily prayers to the assembled family. A narrow spiral staircase fixed upon a central newel post leads to a long gallery at the very top of the house, running the whole length of one side of the courtyard. This was the ballroom, where Elizabeth herself may perhaps have danced, as tradition says she did, for we know that she was fond of visiting her people in their own homes.

Few sixteenth-century houses were without a secret chamber. Little Moreton Hall contains two such rooms, cunningly concealed in a corner of the house. They are entered by sliding panels from an apartment over the kitchen, and the fugitive could escape his pursuers by an underground passage leading underneath the moat to the open field beyond.

At opposite corners of the moat are two green circular mounds, on which probably once stood two watch-towers to guard the house against attack. A large number of the old halls of Cheshire were at one time moated for their protection, though in many cases the moats have been filled up, now that they are no longer necessary. Peel Hall in Etchells, Irby, Swinyard Hall, Twemlow, Marthall, and Allostock Hall still retain portions of their original moats.

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THE GALLERY, LITTLE MORETON HALL

Handforth Hall was built, as the inscription over the entrance door tells us, 'in the year of our Lord God MCCCCCLXII by Uryan Brereton Knight.' The Tudor builders were not ashamed to put their names to their work. Within the Hall is a wide oak staircase with a wonderfully carved balustrade, one of the most beautiful pieces of Tudor woodwork in Cheshire. Sir Uryan's daughter married Thomas Legh of Adlington, who built the timber portions of Adlington Hall in 1581.

As you have already seen in a previous chapter, some of the timber houses of Cheshire belong to a period much earlier than the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Just as they reached their highest pitch of beauty and richness under the Tudors a new style of domestic architecture was coming in. Bricks, which had been very seldom used since the days of the Romans, were again employed. The bricks were much larger than those used by the Romans; in fact they were precisely similar to those of the present day. They were not, however, laid as they are now, but in the style called 'English bond', in which one 'course' or row shows all the long faces and the next one all the short ends.

These brick mansions were larger and more spacious than the old wooden ones, and built for comfort rather than defence. They were set in the midst of broad parks, and surrounded by terraced lawns and gardens enclosed by walls of clipped yew-trees. Sometimes ornamental fish-ponds, such as you may see at Gawsworth, were laid out in front of the house; avenues of limes and Spanish chestnuts imported from abroad were planted along the roadway leading to the principal entrance. Their general shape, out of compliment to Queen Elizabeth, was that of the letter E. Brereton Hall is a good example of this 'Tudor' style. It was built in 1586, the first stone being laid, so it is said, by the queen herself.

In the eastern parts of Cheshire, where stone is abundant, houses similar in design were built of this material instead of brick. Arden Hall, near Stockport, is now in ruins, but enough remains to show the chief characteristics of an Elizabethan mansion; the turret with circular stone staircase, the wings with gabled ends, and the bay windows carried up to the roof. Other Elizabethan houses are Marple Hall, Poole Hall, Carden Hall in the Broxton Hills, Dorfold Hall, and Burton Hall in Wirral.

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TUDOR MONUMENTS IN GAWSWORTH CHURCH
The central figure is that of Mary Fitton

In Gawsworth Church are a number of monuments of members of the Fitton family, who lived at the Old Hall at Gawsworth. Mary Fitton was one of Elizabeth's maids-of-honour, and used to take part in plays for the amusement of the queen; and it is not at all unlikely that she was a friend of Shakespeare. It is indeed supposed that she is the 'dark lady' of whom the poet speaks in his sonnets. From an examination of these Fitton monuments you can learn what the costume at the end of the sixteenth century was like. Lady Alice Fitton is surrounded by the kneeling figures of her two sons and two daughters, the former in plate armour, the latter wearing the familiar head-dress and ruff which are such distinctive features in the dress of Tudor ladies. The figures are carved in alabaster, and have clearly at one time been painted in bright colours. The picture of Mary Fitton will help you to recognize the Tudor monuments which are to be seen in many Cheshire churches.

CHAPTER XXII

ELIZABETHAN CHESHIRE. II

Many attempts were made by the Tudor sovereigns to conquer the Irish. From time to time expeditions were sent across the sea, and the troops embarked at various points on the Cheshire coast. The fighting Leghs of Adlington raised a troop of Cheshire soldiers, and Thomas and Ralph Legh fell in battle against the Irish chieftain Shane O'Neill. A Cheshire knight, Sir Edward Fitton, of Gawsworth, was made Governor of Connaught.

In the later years of Elizabeth's reign a constant stream of ill-clad and ill-paid soldiers marched through Cheshire on their way to the wars. The soldiers had to be supplied with food and quarters by the towns and villages through which they passed, and the cost of billeting the men in the houses on their arrival at Chester fell very hard on the city merchants, who were soon brought to great distress. The soldiers were generally put on board ship at Parkgate, for the channel of the Dee had become so choked up with sand that only the smallest vessels could reach Chester.

The leader of one of the expeditions was the Earl of Essex, who was a frequent visitor at Lyme Park, where he hunted the stag with his host, Sir Piers Legh.

The wars with Spain ruined the oversea trade of Chester, consisting at this time largely in the export of tanned leather to the French ports of Rochelle and Bordeaux. In the year 1598, Thomas Fletcher, the Mayor of Chester, wrote to Lord Burghley that he 'had found the poor city to be generally very weak and much decayed, especially in the chiefest parts thereof (the merchants) who have been heretofore the most able to do her Majesty service'. For eight months there had

not been 'one ship nor small bark laden into any foreign place'. The queen had, some years previously, given the merchants license to export 10,000 'dickers' (that is, bundles of ten) of tanned calf-skins within a certain time, but owing to the wars they were unable to get them away within the given period, and the merchants asked for the time to be extended.

An old gabled house in Watergate Street, with its pious superscription 'God's Providence is mine inheritance', reminds us of a more dreadful scourge than war which visited Chester, and indeed the whole of Cheshire, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was the terrible plague, which attacked rich and poor alike, and stopped the trade of the city so much that, as one writer says, 'grass did grow a foot high at the Cross'. Houses that were infected with the disease were marked with a cross, that none might go near; no merchandise was allowed to enter the city until it had been unpacked and aired outside the walls. Death came suddenly, or within a few hours at most; and often 'to those that merrily dined it gave a sorrowful supper'. God's Providence House received its name from the fact that its inmates alone of all the neighbourhood escaped the disease.

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STANLEY PALACE, CHESTER (showing influence of Renaissance)

The Courts could not be held in the plague-stricken city; the Exchequer Court was removed to Tarvin, and the Assizes were held at Nantwich. The annual fairs were abandoned to prevent the spread of the disease. Numbers of victims were carried out from the city and hastily buried in the 'Barrow Field'. Other Cheshire towns suffered severely. On the hills, near Macclesfield, are many gravestones of the victims of the plague; two gravestones near the Bowstones on Disley Moor tell the same tale.

Some of the English nobles had residences in Chester. The city gates were confided to noble families for safe keeping. The East Gate was guarded by the ancestors of Lord Crewe. The 'Bear and Billet' Inn in Bridge Street belonged to the Earls of Shrewsbury, who were Sergeants of the Bridge Gate. The Earls of Derby had charge of the Watergate. The North Gate, however, the most important entrance to the city, was entrusted to the mayor and the citizens.

A narrow court in Watergate Street leads to the Stanley Palace of the Earls of Derby; the gardens extended down to the river-side. The architecture is very similar to that of the old timber halls described in the last chapter, but the row of round-headed panels tells us that people were beginning to imitate in their timber decorations the round-headed arches of the Italian style.

As early as the reign of Henry the Seventh, English architects were beginning to study the remains of ancient buildings in Rome, and Italian architects were brought over to England. Henry the Eighth invited a builder named John of Padua, who designed the north side of Lyme Hall. The Italians despised the Pointed styles of English architecture, calling it contemptuously 'Gothic', from the name of the barbarian Goths, who overran the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries.

Many of the Cheshire gentry left their homes in the towns to live in new houses in the country. The old hall of the Sandbach family is now the principal inn of the town of Sandbach; the ancient home of the Ardernes in Great Underbank, Stockport, is now a bank; and the house built at Nantwich by 'Richarde and Marjery Churche' has been turned into a ladies' school. The Mainwarings lived in a fine house in Watergate Street, Chester, until a number of little shops

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were allowed to block up the front of their home. The Wilbrahams moved from Nantwich to the spacious Elizabethan hall at Dorfold.

When the monasteries were destroyed, a large number of people were thrown out of work, especially in the country districts. The distress was so great in Queen Elizabeth's reign that Parliament passed a 'poor law', by which the inhabitants of every parish were compelled to pay taxes for the support of their own poor.

This did not, however, prevent rich and charitable men from devoting a portion of their wealth to the building of hospitals and almshouses, where the aged poor could live in comfort. In Commonhall Street, Chester, are the old almshouses founded by Sir Thomas Smith in 1532, and there are almshouses at Acton, Little Budworth, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Tarporley, Sandbach, and Stockport, though some of these were built in later reigns. Nantwich was particularly favoured by benefactors, and possesses four separate sets of almshouses.

Sometimes sums of money were left to be spent on providing bread for those who were unable to work. In the churches at Little Peover, Mottram, and Woodchurch, you will see some wooden shelves fixed on the wall near the porch. On these were placed the loaves which were distributed after the Sunday services. At Bebington and Woodchurch sums of money were given by a family of the name of Goodacre for the purchase of bullocks to draw the ploughs of the poor peasants of Wirral.

Certain days of the year were set apart as public holidays. Every parish had its 'wakes' or festival of the dedication of the parish church. These were held on the feast-day of the saint after whom the church was named. Another festival was that of the 'rush-bearing'. In a former chapter you have read of the rushes that were spread on the floors of churches. They were gathered from the fringe of a stream or mere, and tied into bundles and placed on the rush-cart, which was gaily decked with ribbons and flowers. A procession was then formed of the villagers, who accompanied the cart to the church, where a special service was held. There are still rush-bearing services at Farndon, Aldford, and Forest Chapel, but in many villages the merry-making too often ended in disorder and drunkenness, and the custom has been allowed to die out.

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An Elizabethan writer tells us that the people of Nantwich visited the brine pits on Ascension Day and decked them with flowers and garlands. Then they offered hymns and prayers of thanksgiving for the blessing of the brine, on which the prosperity of their town depended.

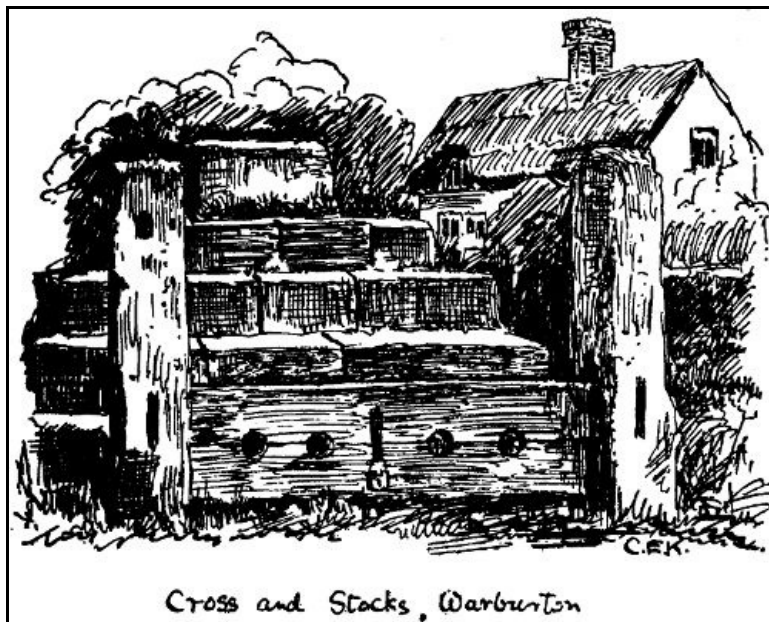
May-day was the favourite holiday of the people. The maypole was set up on the village green, where the Queen of the May was crowned, and morris-dancers danced to the fiddle and horn-pipe, as they do to this day at Lymm, Knutsford, Holmes Chapel, and many other Cheshire villages. Sometimes there were wrestling matches, and combat with sword and quarterstaff. At Gawsworth are the remains of a tilting-ground where such encounters took place. The long terraced banks of earth on which the spectators sat may still be seen.

The good people of Chester were particularly fond of shows and pageants, and processions. On Midsummer Day the mayor and aldermen of the city marched with banners through the streets to S. Oswald's Church. With them went 'four giants, one unicorn, one dromedary, an ass and a dragon, and six hobby horses'. The giants were made of pasteboard and repainted every year, and 'dosed with arsenic to keep the rats from eating them'.

Some of their amusements were, however, of a more degrading kind. The High Cross of Chester, from which the friars and Wyclif's 'poor priests' had preached in former days, now became the scene of brutal pastimes. For at this spot bulls were baited in the bull-ring when a mayor finished his year of office, the mayor himself paying the expenses.

The Bear's Head and White Bear Inn at Congleton remind us that the natives of Congleton were so fond of bear-baiting, that a local proverb says that they 'sold their Church Bible to buy a new bear'. Few towns or villages were without a cock-pit, for cock-fighting was a favourite amusement of all classes. Happily, these degrading sports are now forbidden by law, and we do not regret their disappearance.

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Little mercy was shown to those who were guilty of brawling or breaches of the peace. Often by the lichgate of a Cheshire churchyard, or near the village cross, you will see the remains of the wooden stocks in which drunkards were placed and exposed to the jeers and gibes of the passers-by. In the museums at Chester, Stockport, and Macclesfield, you will see a still more barbarous form of punishment. The scolding or brawling woman was compelled to have her head encased in a 'brank' or skeleton helmet of iron, with a spiked iron piece pressing on the tongue. A chain was attached to the woman's waist, and she was led through the town.

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Another instrument of punishment is to be seen in the Museum at West Park, Macclesfield. It is a girdle or cage, consisting of a number of iron hoops fastened together by chains which were placed round the body of a woman, who was then tied to a plank called a 'ducking-stool', and dipped in a pond. There was also an iron strait-jacket at Macclesfield for drunkards and lunatics.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RULE OF THE STUARTS

In the 'Stag Parlour' of Lyme Hall is a framed piece of needlework done by Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, when she stayed at Lyme. When she was deposed by her Scottish subjects she threw herself on the mercy of Queen Elizabeth, who permitted her to live in England. But plots were made against the life of Elizabeth, and Mary was suspected of having a hand in them, and in the end Mary had to pay the penalty of death.

Mary was a Catholic, but her son James, who succeeded to the English throne on the death of Elizabeth, had been brought up among the Scottish reformers. The extreme English reformers, or Puritans as they were now called, hoped therefore that the king would be friendly to their wishes. The Puritans were disappointed, but James agreed to one of their demands, and said that he would have a new translation of the Bible made. The Authorized Version of the Bible which is read in all Cheshire churches and chapels to-day is the one noble work due to the first Stuart king.

The Puritans were so named because they wished to 'purify' the Church of certain forms and ceremonies, such as the use of the surplice, and the sign of the cross at baptism, and even the ring in the marriage service. They also objected to the rule of bishops, and wished the Church to be governed by councils of elders or 'presbyters' after the manner of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

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During the reign of Elizabeth many Puritan clergymen had refused to perform the services of the Church in the way ordered by the Prayer Book. They were driven out of the Church, and formed separate congregations of their own. Hence they received the name of Independents, and they were the earliest of the Nonconformist dissenters.

Many Independents suffered so severely at the hands of King James and his archbishop, that they determined to leave the country and settle in new homes across the sea. They gave the name of New England to their colony in America, and thus became the founders of our American possessions. Among the exiles was Samuel Eaton, a Wirral clergyman. He returned in the reign of Charles the First, and became a minister in the chapel attached to Dukinfield Hall, which thus became one of the earliest places of worship for the Independents in Cheshire. The ancient

chapel now forms a portion of the modern Nonconformist church of Dukinfield.

The Catholics were not more pleased with James than the Puritans were. They were compelled to attend the new services of the Protestant Church. Those who refused to do so were called 'recusants'. The Bishop of Chester was ordered by James to hunt out all the Popish recusants in Cheshire and bring them to trial. The secret hiding-places built in the walls of many Cheshire halls must often have sheltered these fugitive priests, for many great families in Cheshire, such as the Stanleys of Hooton and the Masseys of Puddington, were strongly Catholic.

Chester was Protestant, and a Puritan Mayor of Chester stopped the Midsummer show, and broke up the pasteboard giants, and abolished the bull-ring; for the Puritans disliked shows and processions and sports of all kinds, and even such harmless pastimes as the May-day dances.

The Midsummer revels were, however, revived, and held with great pomp when King James paid a visit to Chester in 1617. His arms are carved in a panel under one of the front windows of Bishop Lloyd's house. One of the Fitton family was mayor on this occasion, and the king's sword was borne by a Stanley. James rode to the minster, where he heard one of the scholars of the King's School read a Latin address of welcome. 'After the said oration he went into the choir, and there, in a seat made for the king at the higher end of the choir, he heard an anthem sung. And after certain prayers the king went from thence to the Pentice, where a sumptuous banquet was prepared at the city's cost: which being ended, the king departed to the Vale Royal: and at his departure the order of knighthood was offered to the mayor, but he refused the same.' The sale of knighthoods and baronetcies was one of King James's ways of raising money, and the Mayor of Chester was not the only one who declined the honour.

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A zealous Puritan named William Prynne wrote against the performance of stage plays, dancing, and other amusements. Some things that he said were thought to refer to the Queen of Charles the First, and he was tried by the Star Chamber and ordered to pay a fine of £5,000 and to have his ears slit. There was a branch of the Court of Star Chamber at Chester, but it was abolished in Charles the First's reign. In one of the rooms of Leasowe Castle are some oak panels brought from the Star Chamber at Westminster.

William Prynne passed through Chester on his way to his prison in Carnarvon Castle. The Puritans turned out to welcome and cheer him in the streets, but their leaders were punished by fines and imprisonment for so doing.

Neither James nor Charles got on well with their Parliaments. The Tudor monarchs had for the most part understood the people, and the people in their turn allowed them to have their own way. But the Stuarts began to claim powers which the people would not permit. When Parliament refused to grant money they asked for, the Stuart kings tried to raise money by means which the people thought illegal. Charles borrowed large sums of money without the consent of Parliament. Sir Randolph Crewe, of Crewe Hall, was one of the judges who thought that this was wrong, and he was dismissed from his office by the king.

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Charles also tried to impose a tax called Ship Money, a tax which had in former times been levied on the counties on the seaboard for the support of the navy. Now the king proposed that inland counties also should contribute for this purpose. Sir William Brereton, a Cheshire knight, objected strongly to the hateful tax, and was very angry with the people of Chester for rating some land of his near Chester, called the Nunnery Fields, for the payment of the money.

It is not surprising that trouble should arise between Parliament and a king who refused to obey the wishes of the people over whom he ruled. The Stuarts believed in the theory known as the Divine right of kings, that is, that kings are made by God alone, and that from Him alone they receive their power. But from the time of the great awakening the people had begun to think for themselves, and the result of this was that they were now determined that the king should carry out the will of the nation through the mouth of its Parliament.

Moreover, Charles was suspected of being a Catholic; at any rate he had married a Catholic wife, and Parliament was not in a mood to permit a return to the unhappy state of affairs of Queen Mary's reign.

CHAPTER XXIV

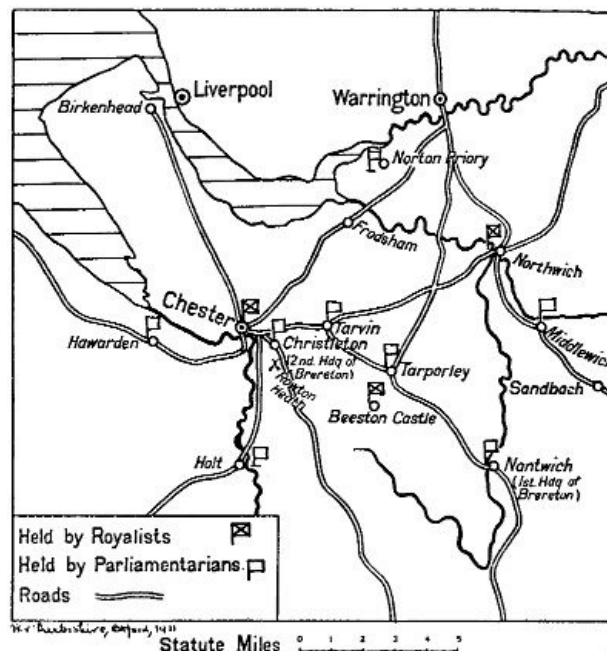
CIVIL WAR IN CHESHIRE. I

THE BATTLES OF MIDDLEWICH AND NANTWICH

Charles proclaimed war on Parliament in the year 1642, and both sides prepared at once for the struggle. Roughly speaking, London and the south-eastern counties were on the side of Parliament, for they were the chief centres of trade in the seventeenth century, and felt most keenly the evils of bad government. The great modern industrial towns of the northern counties of England were in most cases as yet mere villages.

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THE CIVIL WAR IN CHESHIRE



The king's supporters were drawn chiefly from the north and west. They were called Royalists or Cavaliers, while the Parliamentarians were nicknamed Roundheads because they wore their hair cut short, after the manner of the Puritans, and disdained the flowing curls which were fashionable at the time. But although the country was thus roughly divided into two opposing factions, supporters both of king and of parliament were to be found in nearly every town and village. Indeed it sometimes happened that members of a single family found themselves on different sides in the war. The Breretons of Brereton Hall were stout royalists, but their cousins of Handforth were, as you will see, the most determined opponents of the king.

The towns of Cheshire, with the exception of Chester, were largely on the side of Parliament, while most, but not all, of the great landowners and their numerous retainers fought for the king. The county was represented in the Long Parliament by Sir William Brereton, the son of William Brereton of Handforth Hall.

Brereton was an ardent Puritan, and at the first signs of approaching war he put himself at the head of the Parliamentary party in Cheshire, calling upon all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty to join him at Tarporley, and soon after was appointed by Parliament itself as commander of the Cheshire forces. His career was very nearly cut short at the very beginning of the struggle, for he brought about a riot in Chester by causing the drum to be beaten publicly in the streets for Parliament. He was brought to the Pentice but released, and with difficulty saved from the fury of the citizens, who in later days complained bitterly that the mayor had preserved the life of one who was to be the author of so much disaster to themselves.

In Tarporley Church you may see a helmet and breastplate that were dug up in the neighbourhood. They were probably worn by some soldier who fought in one of the earliest battles of the civil war in Cheshire. The first fighting took place in the southern parts of the county. In February, 1642, Brereton was attacked at Tarporley by the king's troops who had marched out from Chester. Entrenchments were thrown up near the church, but the severest fighting was at the neighbouring hamlet of Tiverton, where both sides lost heavily. The Royalist troops retired to Chester and the Parliamentarians to Nantwich, which Brereton made his headquarters. From these two places the two parties 'contended which should most prevail upon the affections of the county to declare for them and join them'.

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Brereton's task was the capture of the important city of Chester, in order to prevent assistance reaching the king from Ireland. To this end he placed troops on the principal roads leading to the city. The roads from the south were watched by the Nantwich forces, who captured and occupied Beeston Castle. On the north Warrington Bridge was seized to prevent help coming from Lancashire or from Scotland, which remained loyal to Charles. Norton Priory and the Norman castle of Halton, already in ruins, were fortified and held by the Roundheads. A strong force was posted at Northwich which commanded the main road through the forest of Delamere, thus completing a chain of garrisons along the valley of the Weaver from Nantwich to the Mersey. On the Welsh side the border castles of Holt on the Dee and Hawarden in the county of Flint were attacked and occupied by the Parliamentarians, who thus prevented the arrival of reinforcements from the west.

In 1643 Brereton won his first great victory by defeating Sir Thomas Aston, the Royalist leader, at Middlewich, capturing two cannon, four barrels of powder, four hundred soldiers, and arms for five hundred men. Sir Thomas Aston marched out from Chester with a strong force of Royalists one Sunday morning in March. Brereton was at Northwich at the time, and word was sent to him that the king's forces were at Middlewich and taking up a strong position there. The Roundheads hurried southwards, but had not sufficient ammunition to take the town. A fresh supply was sent for, and on Monday afternoon Sir Thomas Aston found himself between two fires, for troops from

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Nantwich also arrived on the scene.

The Royalists were driven into the narrow streets of the town, where the cavalry were penned like sheep and quite useless. The foot-soldiers fled into the church, where they laid down their arms or were slain. The church steeples, like the keeps of the Norman castles, were usually the last places of refuge for the defenders of a town, and many of them suffered great damage in consequence during the war. Aston escaped with a remnant of his cavalry, leaving the infantry to their fate. He laid the blame for his defeat upon his Welsh allies, who were sent to line the hedges of the roads by which the Roundheads advanced, but who threw away their arms and fled at the first approach of the enemy.

Brereton's victory at Middlewich was complete, but some months afterwards Sir Thomas Aston had his revenge and turned the tables on his enemy. He was reinforced by troops from Ireland, by whose aid he was able to drive the Parliamentary general out of Middlewich.

The Royalists now appeared to be getting the upper hand, and they actually laid siege to Nantwich, which was defended by Sir George Booth during the temporary absence of Brereton. The besiegers were commanded by Sir Nicholas Byron, the governor of Chester, and an ancestor of the poet Byron. Brereton returned with Sir Thomas Fairfax, one of the greatest of Cromwell's lieutenants, and compelled the Royalists to raise the siege. Thus the fortunes of war inclined now to one side, now to the other, and the towns continually changed hands. The strong Parliamentary garrison at Northwich was attacked by Aston, at first without success, but later in the year Brereton was badly defeated here by his determined enemy, and the town held by the Royalist troops.

The event which had most effect on the war in Cheshire was Brereton's victory in August, 1644, at Tarvin on the road from Chester to Northwich. Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice, nephews of the king, were attempting to reach Chester with a relieving column. Brereton attacked and routed them and posted himself astride the main road. Tarvin Church still shows traces of the fighting here, for a bullet is buried deep in a brass plate in the chancel. After this success Brereton advanced his head-quarters to Christleton, only two miles from the gates of Chester.

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CHAPTER XXV

CIVIL WAR IN CHESHIRE. II

A MEMORABLE SIEGE

In 1645 word was brought to Chester that the king himself was coming, and the drooping spirits of the Royalists revived. Charles entered the city with about three hundred followers who had escaped from the battle of Naseby, where the main Royalist army had been cut to pieces by Cromwell's Ironsides. During his short visit to Chester the king was the guest of Sir Francis Gamull at his home, still called Gamull House, in Bridge Street.

Many of you have read the inscription on the Phoenix Tower on the walls of Chester—

'King Charles
stood on this tower
September 27th, 1645, and saw
His Army defeated
on Rowton Moor.'

Rowton Moor is no longer moorland. A village now stands on the battlefield where the last hopes of the loyal inhabitants of Chester were destroyed. The defeated army consisted of the remnants of the Royalist cavalry under Sir Marmaduke Langdale, who was trying to cut his way through the enemy to reinforce the garrison of Chester. The Royalists were almost successful, and a sortie was made by the troops within the city to join hands with Langdale, but the Puritan General Poyntz, following closely on the heels of the Royalist horse, threw them into hopeless confusion and drove them helter-skelter in all directions. During the battle Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, whose tomb is in the Shakerley Chapel at Little Peover, carried dispatches to the king, ferrying himself across the river Dee in a tub. Some matchlocks and firelocks used in this battle have been found on the Heath, and are now in the Chester Museum.

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This defeat was almost the final blow received by the king in his struggle with Parliament. On the following day Charles fled into Wales by an undefended road, asking only that the city might hold out for eight days longer to enable him to make good his escape. In a tiny window in Farndon Church are some pieces of ancient painted glass, with portraits of several of the Cheshire esquires who attended Charles during his stay in Chester.

The cordon was now drawn tighter round the doomed city, and a regular blockade followed to starve the citizens into surrender. When the Cromwellian troops who had been battering Lathom

House in Lancashire arrived and took up a position on the north side of the walls, the city was completely surrounded. Dodleston Hall, to the south-west of the city, was occupied by Brereton to prevent any further escapes into Wales. The Roundheads made a floating bridge across the river Dee, which was, however, destroyed by fireships which were turned adrift and were carried up the river by a strong spring tide. Scaling-ladders were fixed on the walls, but the Royalists dragged them up into the city in the night-time.

The inhabitants were determined not to give in without a struggle. Even women took a share in the work of defence, carrying baskets of earth to fill up the breaches made by a night attack upon the city walls. The city was well protected by the river Dee on its western and southern sides; a semicircle of mud earthworks was made round the north and east of the city. Many large houses in the neighbourhood were burnt by the Royalists to prevent their being used by the enemy. The suburb of Boughton, with its hall, was entirely destroyed, fighting taking place almost daily in this quarter. The Royalists also made breaches in the Dee Bridge.

When the outworks were carried by the Parliamentary troops, all S. John's parish lay at their mercy. The Roundheads turned the church into a fortress, and planted a battery of guns on the tower, from which they battered the city walls. In a glass case at the west end of the church you may see a cannon ball that was fired from the walls and long afterwards found embedded in the church tower. 160

The walls were also fiercely bombarded from Brewers Hall on the opposite side of the Dee, though a battery of guns placed on the summit of Morgan's Mount kept the besiegers at bay on the north. The Water Tower at the north-west corner of the city bears the marks of some well-aimed shots from the guns of Cromwell's men.

Within the city the hardships were very severe. Fires were frequent, especially in the night-time. Cold and bleak December days increased the suffering, and, worst of all, food was getting scarce, and the pinch of hunger began to be felt. At length the inhabitants were reduced to eating the flesh of horses and dogs, and still Sir Nicholas Byron held out, waiting daily for the help that never came. Famine did its work at last, and after a siege of eighteen weeks the city surrendered to Brereton on February 3, 1646.

One of the conditions of surrender was that the victorious troops should not do any damage to the city. The fragment of the High Cross, now in the Grosvenor Museum, shows that in this respect the soldiers of Cromwell did not keep their word. Sir Francis Gamull, the mayor, bargained with the Roundheads that the tombs of his family should not be harmed, and this explains the fact that the Gamull monuments in S. Mary's-on-the-Hill are almost the only relics of the kind in Chester that escaped destruction.

The events of the war were published every week in the *Mercurius Aulicus* or 'Court Mercury,' a forerunner of the modern newspaper. In the Free Library at Birkenhead are preserved some sheets of this paper, on one of which is related the story of the capture and recapture of Beeston Castle. After its occupation by the Parliamentary troops a daring assault was made upon the castle by Captain Sandford and a party of eight Royalists, who scaled the steep rock on which the castle is built and called upon the defenders to surrender. Captain Steel, the Puritan commander, was tried for cowardice in yielding to so small a force, and condemned to be shot. After the battle of Rowton Moor the castle endured a seven weeks' siege, and surrendered in November, 1645. Shortly afterwards Parliament ordered the castle to be dismantled, and it has been in ruins ever since. Several of the officers who were killed at Beeston are buried at Tarporley. 161

Many of the Cheshire halls, which were held mainly by Royalists, suffered severely for their loyalty to the king. Crewe Hall was taken by the Roundheads, retaken by Byron, and finally garrisoned by the soldiers of Brereton. Huxley Hall was occupied by Colonel Croxton during the siege of Chester. Puddington Hall, in Wirral, the ancient home of the Masseys, whose owner, Sir William Massey, remained in Chester till its fall, was destroyed by fire.

Adlington Hall, the home of the loyal Leghs, endured a fortnight's siege, at the end of which time its gallant garrison of one hundred and fifty men was compelled to surrender and permitted to depart. The marks of cannon shot used in the bombardment may still be seen upon the massive oak doors of the courtyard. Wythenshaw Hall was held by Royalists, but Colonel Dukinfield, a friend and neighbour of Sir William Brereton, compelled a surrender after a short siege. Cannon balls have been found in the grounds of the hall.

Vale Royal, the private residence of the Cholmondeleys since Henry the Eighth turned out its abbot and monks, was plundered and partly burnt by the soldiers of General Lambert's army. Sir Peter Leycester, of Tabley Hall, fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians and was sent to prison. During his captivity he first planned his famous book of the History and Antiquities of Cheshire.

The lot of the unhappy Cheshire squire was indeed pitiable. Royalists and Roundheads were equally unwelcome guests, treating their host with scant ceremony, ransacking his house and helping themselves freely to everything that might be of any service to them. Let Peter Davenport, the squire of Bramhall, tell in his own words the story of his woes: 'On New Year's Day, 1643, came Captain Sankey (a Parliamentary officer) with two or three troopers to Bramhall, and went into my stable and took out my horses, above twenty in all, and afterwards searched my house for arms again and took my fowling-piece, stocking-piece, and drum, with divers other things. Next day, after they were gone, came Prince Rupert's army, by whom I lost 162

better than a hundred pounds in linen and other goods, besides the rifling and pulling to pieces of my house. By whom I lost eight horses, and they ate me threescore bushels of oats.' Poor Peter was not yet at the end of his troubles, for when the war was over he had to pay five hundred pounds in order to buy back his own property, for the estates of the Royalists were confiscated by Parliament and sold back to their owners for large sums of money.

The empty niches over the porches of many Cheshire churches tell their own tale of the damage done by the Cromwellian troops. Sculptured images were everywhere broken in fragments, lead was stripped from the fonts and roofs to be turned into bullets. The pipes were taken from the organ of Budworth Church, and the stained glass windows of Tarvin destroyed by the Puritan fanatic, John Bruen. The sacred buildings themselves were used throughout the war as barracks, fortresses, stables, or prisons.

The destruction of property and of works of art that can never be replaced was indeed largely the work of the Roundheads; but it was the Royalists who perpetrated the blackest deed in this long tale of civil strife. In the winter of 1643 Lord Byron's troopers were plundering the villages of South Cheshire, burning farms and homesteads, and driving the country people before them. One of his officers, Major Connought, entered the village of Barthomley, and many of the panic-stricken inhabitants took refuge in the tower of the church. Connought and his brutal followers broke up the pews, gathered together the mats and rushes strewn upon the floor, and made a bonfire at the entrance to the tower. Forced from their place of refuge by fire and smoke, the unfortunate villagers were stabbed and hacked to death as they came out one by one. This was their Christmastide, the season of peace and good fellowship and brotherly love, and men, blind with the lust of blood, were cutting the throats of their brothers as if they were sheep in the shambles. Happily, such scenes as this were rare, even in those dark years.

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CHAPTER XXVI

CIVIL WAR IN CHESHIRE. III

THE PROTECTORATE AND THE RESTORATION

The story is told that a schoolboy, wandering among the tombstones in the churchyard of Macclesfield, scratched these strange lines on one of the grave-slabs:

My brother Harry must heir the land;
My brother Frank must be at his command;
While I, poor Jack, shall do that
Which all the world will wonder at.

'Poor Jack' was John Bradshaw, whose name is the first on the list of those who signed the warrant for the execution of the king. On January 1, 1649, Parliament decided that Charles should be tried before a High Court of Justice, and on the twenty-seventh of the same month, Bradshaw, the president of the Court, pronounced the death sentence in Westminster Hall.

John Bradshaw, the 'regicide', was born at Wibbersley Hall, near Disley. In the register of the Parish Church of Stockport is the record of his baptism: 'December, 1602, John, the son of Henry Bradshaw, of Marple, baptised the tenth. Traitor.' The word 'Traitor' has been added by another hand, no doubt that of some ardent Royalist.

He was educated at Bunbury School by Edward Burghall, a notable Cheshire Puritan, who was afterwards made vicar of Acton, and wrote a Diary (or copied someone else's Diary) of the Civil War in Cheshire. Bradshaw also probably spent a short time at the Grammar School at Macclesfield. He became Mayor of Congleton and Chief Justice of Cheshire.

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The name of Major-General Thomas Harrison, a native of Nantwich, also appears on the list of those who signed the death-warrant of the king.

Memorials of the ill-fated monarch were eagerly sought for by the most devoted of his followers. In the Stag Parlour at Lyme Hall are some chairs, said to be covered with portions of the cloak that Charles wore at the time of his death. Here also are a pair of embroidered gloves that belonged to the king, and a dagger with his name 'Carolus' engraved upon it.

The war was continued by his son, Charles the Second. James Stanley, Earl of Derby, was made commander of the Royalist forces in Cheshire. In the year 1651 Knutsford Heath was a scene of bustling activity. Here were encamped the forces of General Lambert, one of Cromwell's most trusted lieutenants, consisting of 9,000 horse and 4,000 foot. He was waiting for the Royalist army, which was marching southwards from Scotland under the command of Charles himself and General Leslie. Lambert was ordered to cut down the bridge at Warrington to prevent the passage of the king's army, but arrived too late. Skirmishes took place at Budworth and High Legh, and Lambert was compelled to retreat to Knutsford, while the Royalist army passed on its

way to the fatal field of Worcester.

A few days later, the people of Sandbach were setting up the stalls and spreading their wares in the market-place for the September Fair. A cry was suddenly raised that soldiers were entering the town. They were all that was left of Leslie's Scottish Cavaliers. Weary of war, their horses jaded and lame, they were anxious only to be allowed to reach their homes again in safety. But the townspeople, remembering perhaps the massacre of Barthomley, were not minded to let them off easily. The foremost troopers, who alone were armed, were allowed to pass through the town. Then with sticks and staves they fell upon the rearguard and cudgelled them. Many were wounded and captured, and placed in the town prison, where perhaps they were not sorry to rest. Others escaped into the open fields. 'Scotch Commons', as the scene of the encounter is still called, reminds us of this last event of the Civil War in Cheshire. The struggle was ended. Charles was an exile, and Cromwell ruled over the land.

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One of Cromwell's Acts decreed that all who had any communication with Charles the Second should be held guilty of conspiracy against the State. The Earl of Derby, who escaped from the rout at Worcester, but was captured at Nantwich, was tried under this Act and condemned to death. He escaped from his prison in the castle at Chester, and lay concealed for a time, it is said, in a secret chamber in the Stanley Palace near the Water Gate. The 'Martyr Earl' was, however, recaptured on the banks of the Dee, and beheaded at Bolton.

Brereton was rewarded for his devotion to the Parliamentary cause with the chief forestership of Macclesfield forest. Soon afterwards, however, he left the county of his birth and lived in London until his death in 1661. His body was brought to Cheadle for burial in the Handforth Chapel. There is, however, no note of his burial in the parish registers, and tradition says that during the journey the coffin in which his body was placed was swept away by the swollen waters of a river over which it was being carried.

The Puritans determined to put an end to the government of the Church by bishops, and abolished the Book of Common Prayer from the Church services, putting in its place a new form of public worship. About thirty of the clergy in Cheshire who refused to perform the new services of the Church were turned out of their livings. Children were no longer to be baptized in fonts but from a basin. Hour-glasses were set up in the pulpits, from which long political sermons were preached to the people.

The Puritan mayor of Chester would not permit Christmas and other time-honoured festivals of the Church to be kept, and music, dancing, and games were rigidly put down.

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In 1659 an attempt was made by a number of Cheshire gentry to restore Charles to the throne. Oliver Cromwell was now dead, and had been succeeded by his son Richard. But the real power was in the hands of the soldiers, and many people soon became disgusted with military rule. The leader of the revolt in Cheshire was Sir George Booth, of Dunham Massey. He had fought on the side of Parliament in the early years of the war, and was one of the Presbyterian members of Parliament who were turned out of the House by 'Pride's Purge,' just before the execution of the king.

Sir George Booth collected a Royalist force on Rowton Moor, and prepared to attack Chester. He captured the city and the walls, but failed to take the castle, whose governor was Colonel Croxton, of Ravenscroft Hall near Middlewich. Colonel Lambert, however, was summoned with two regiments from Ireland, and he compelled Booth to retire towards Northwich. The Royalist force was overtaken at Hartford, and in the battle which took place near Winnington Bridge on the river Weaver, was completely routed.

But the return of the exiled king was not long delayed. Among the Royalists captured at Nantwich in 1644 was George Monk. After his release he entered the service of Parliament, and won the esteem of Cromwell. General Monk now succeeded in persuading Parliament to recall Charles. Nowhere was the event welcomed more gladly than in Cheshire. Church bells rang merrily, maypoles were set up again upon the village greens, and bonfires lighted on the hill-tops. The long quarrel that had separated father from son and brother from brother was at an end, and many a Cheshire home was gladdened by the return of wearied soldiers. The king had come into his own again.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE FALL OF THE STUARTS

When Charles was restored to the throne the bishops also came back to their bishoprics. The records of the churches of Chester tell of the payments made to the ringers for the ringing of the bells when the citizens joyously welcomed Bishop Walton to the city. A large number of citizens and mounted soldiers went as far as Nantwich to meet him and escorted him to the city gates of Chester, where the mayor and corporation as well as the clergy and gentry of Cheshire received him. Once more a Christmas was kept in the old time way, and the churches were decked with

holly and evergreens for one of the greatest festivals of the Church. And truly the bare walls, stripped of everything that was beautiful, needed some adornment after the ravages and desecrations of the Civil War.

But Charles was a foolish king, and spent most of his days in idle and frivolous pleasures. The people were disappointed with him, for he had plenty of brains. One of his favourite hobbies was the study of science. John Wilkins, another Bishop of Chester, was one of a little band of clever men who helped the king to found the Royal Society for the spread of knowledge and the study of science. To be a Fellow of the Royal Society is to this day one of the highest honours that men of science can obtain.

The favourite study of John Wilkins was astronomy, and he wrote a book called the *Discovery of a New World, to prove that there may be another habitable world in the moon*. Another book of his was called *Mercury; or the secret and swift Messenger, shewing how a man may privately and with speed tell his thoughts to friends at any distance*. Thus, had he lived in a later age, he might perhaps have been the inventor of the telegraph and telephone.

Charles secretly favoured the old Catholic religion, and on his death-bed was received into the Catholic Church. During his reign another Act of Uniformity was passed, much more severe than the former one. Sixty ministers of Cheshire churches, who refused to obey the Act, were turned out of their livings. Among them was Adam Martindale, a noted Puritan, who was driven from his church at Rostherne. Adam Martindale wrote the story of his life, with all his trials and misfortunes, in a book which you may read in many of your public libraries.

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The Nonconformists were prevented by another Act from holding prayer meetings within five miles of the town or village where they had held a living. The gaol at Chester was soon filled with those who were ready to suffer for the crime of preaching the Gospel in their homes and to their friends. Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, who had been made Governor of Chester Castle for his services in the Civil War, sought them out and persecuted them with great cruelty.

Still there were many who continued to worship in their own way. For a long time they held their services secretly in private houses, but, in 1690, the Toleration Act allowed them to build chapels. These they erected chiefly on the outskirts of towns or in remote villages. During the later years of the seventeenth century these chapels increased greatly in number. The Unitarian chapel at Knutsford and the tiny brick chapel at Dean Row, between the Bollin and the Dean, are among the earliest of such places of worship in Cheshire.

Matthew Henry, a learned commentator of the New Testament, whose father had been turned out of his church at Worthenbury, preached in the chapel in Trinity Street, Chester. You may still see the seventeenth-century pulpit from which he addressed his congregation. During the Civil War the pulpit had become the most important feature of the churches. The Puritans were in the habit of preaching long political sermons which they timed with an hour-glass fixed on the wall near the pulpit. At Shotwick is a pulpit of the kind called a 'three-decker', with a square box-pew beneath it for the parish clerk.

As soon as people were permitted to choose their own form of worship several other religious bodies came into being, each with its own peculiar teaching and belief, often differing but slightly from each other, all bent on practising their religion precisely in their own particular way. Many earnest soldiers in the Parliamentary army of Sir George Booth, when encamped in the neighbourhood of Knutsford and Alderley, had held their services in the barn of a farmhouse at Warford. Their children in after days built the tiny Baptist chapel which still remains in the village.

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The Quakers were very numerous in the neighbourhood of Stockport and Wilmslow, and George Fox the founder of their sect, or 'Society of Friends' as it was called, used often to visit them. Some cottages on Lindow Moss were once a Quaker chapel, and there is a Quaker burial-ground in a clump of trees near Mobberley. Many of the gravestones have seventeenth-century dates upon them. Often the Quakers were refused burial in the churchyards, and most out-of-the-way places were chosen for their last resting-place. There are some Quakers' graves in the woods at Burton in Wirral.

James the Second, who succeeded his brother Charles, did not try to hide the fact that he was a Papist. Many people would have preferred the Duke of Monmouth, a bastard son of Charles the Second, as king. He was known to be a Protestant, and the people of Cheshire, who were strongly Protestant, would have welcomed him as they had already welcomed him once in Charles the Second's reign.

Three years before James became king, the duke had visited Cheshire and raised the cry of 'No Popery!' He stayed at Mainwaring House in Bridge Street, Chester, and supped at the Plume of Feathers Inn. On the following day the little daughter of the mayor was christened, and the duke stood godfather, naming her Henrietta.

The duke then made a triumphal progress through the villages of Wirral. He stayed at Peel Hall, Bromborough, in order to attend the races at Wallasey, where he won a prize, which he sent to his little goddaughter at Chester. Several of the Wirral gentry met in a summer-house at Bidston, and talked of a rising in his favour. But the country people did not show so much readiness as had been expected, and all the duke's doings were secretly reported to the king by Sir Peter Shakerley, the governor of Chester Castle. Monmouth also stayed at Rock Savage and Dunham Massey, and witnessed the sports at Gawsorth. Shortly afterwards, however, he was captured

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by the king's men at Stafford, and the plot came to nothing. He was lucky not to lose his head. Charles was kinder to him than James was when the duke raised the West of England in 1685.

James was thoroughly hated by the bulk of the people, who grew tired of the mischievous rule of the Stuarts, and made up their minds to depose him. They were also determined that never again should a Catholic king reign over them. James fled to France, and Thomas Cartwright, the Bishop of Chester, who had made the citizens angry by bringing in again the old Catholic services of the Church, followed him into exile.

In the gardens of Gayton Hall are two ancient trees which have been called William and Mary. William of Orange was the new king who was invited by the English to succeed James. All who held office in Church or State were required to take the oath of allegiance to him. Some refused to do this. They were called non-jurors, and among them were several of the clergy of Cheshire who had to give up their churches. James made an effort to regain his lost kingdom, and sailed from France to Ireland, where he hoped to win many adherents. William assembled his forces in Wirral, staying at Gayton Hall, the home of William Clegg, whom he knighted after his visit.

The 'King's Gap', near Hoylake, reminds us of King William's presence in Cheshire. On the Lowlands, between Hoylake and Meols, his army lay encamped, and in the river Dee Sir Cloudesley Shovel, the brave sailor who rose from 'powder-monkey' to admiral, was waiting with the fleet to take the troops across to Ireland. Cloudesley Shovel is said to have received part of his education at the Grammar School of Stockport.

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On the chancel wall of West Kirby Church is a tablet bearing the name of Baron Johannes Van Zoelen, who died here in 1690. The foreign-looking name is that of an officer of the Dutch troops of the Duke of Schomberg, for William employed Dutch and German soldiers to put down James's rising in Ireland. The soldiers embarked at Hoylake, and a few weeks later the farmers of Wirral, who had had to feed the army, and who, no doubt, were glad to see it depart, heard of William's great victory at the battle of the Boyne. James took refuge again in France.

Many Cheshire men took part in William's Irish campaign. A regiment was raised in Cheshire by Sir George Booth, the old Parliamentary leader who had, after the Civil War, become one of Charles the Second's most devoted followers and received the title of Lord Delamere for his services. The regiment was also accompanied by a troop of horse from Wilmslow and the neighbourhood.

William was never popular with his subjects. They disliked him because he was not English. He was cold and silent, and his manners ungracious; he spoke English with difficulty, and often he seemed anxious to get back to his own country. But he was devoted to duty and a great soldier, and he did much for England in checking the power of the French king who favoured the exiled Stuart.

William died childless, and was succeeded by Anne, the last Stuart who sat on the English throne. She had Cheshire blood in her veins, for she was the daughter of James the Second's wife, Anne Hyde, whose grandfather, the Earl of Clarendon, was a Hyde of Hyde Hall.

Queen Anne's children all died young. Before she came to the throne Parliament had passed an Act of Settlement, by which the crown was settled on a Protestant, Princess Sophia, granddaughter of James the First, and her heirs. When Queen Anne died, George, the eldest son of Sophia, became king.

The fallen Stuarts made more than one attempt to recover the British crown. In 1715, when George the First was king, a number of Cheshire gentlemen, among whom were the Leghs of Legh and Lymm, the Grosvenors of Eaton, Warrens and Asshetons, and Cholmondeleys met in the hall of the Asshetons at Ashley to decide whether they should give any help to James Edward, the 'Old Pretender', James's eldest son, who was raising a revolt in Scotland. They decided by a majority of one only to remain loyal to the Protestant King George.

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Thirty years later the inhabitants of East Cheshire saw an army of rugged Highlanders in bonnets and kilts pass southwards from Stockport Prince Charles Edward, the 'Young Pretender', had raised his flag in the Highlands of Scotland and gathered together an army of 'Jacobites', as the followers of the Stuarts were called. At Manchester the Scots had been joined by about 200 Lancashire Catholics. But the villagers who cheered the rebels on the Macclesfield high-road saw them returning within a week, for they had hardly crossed the hills at Bosley and descended into the valleys of Derbyshire when the Duke of Cumberland, commanding an army in the Midlands, scattered them and drove them pell-mell northwards again.

In Lyme Hall are some Jacobite wine-glasses, with the White Rose of the Stuarts stamped on one side, and on the other the Latin word 'fiat', which expressed the thought that was in the minds of those who used them: 'May the king come to his own again!' When men were forbidden to drink the health of the Pretender in public, these 'fiat' glasses were made by the Jacobites and the toast drunk in silence.

'Bonnie Prince Charlie' stayed at the house of Sir Peter Davenport in Macclesfield, and his officers at a house in Jordangate which is now the George Hotel. Stuart 'Pretenders' were never seen in Cheshire again.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. I

During the latter part of the seventeenth century the people of Cheshire began to repair the damage done to the churches, mansions, and public buildings during the Civil Wars. It was hardly to be expected that the art of the builder could flourish during that stormy period. Gothic architecture had reached its greatest glory under the Plantagenet and Tudor kings, and when the builders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took up their work again they cast aside the aims and ideals of the Gothic craftsmen and turned to new models and new sources for their inspiration.

The changes which were now made were one of the results of the Renaissance or Great Awakening of the sixteenth century. The men who visited Italy and brought back with them copies of the works of the old Greek and Roman writers, which they printed and gave to the world, brought also the ideas of Italian architects and plans of Italian buildings, which had been copied from those of ancient Athens and Rome. Englishmen of the eighteenth century took these as their models. Like the Roman workmen, they found it easier to *copy* than to *invent*.

If you turn back to Chapter VI you will find that the chief feature of the Roman, which we will now call the Italian or Classic style, are the rows of pillars ranged along the front and sides of a building. The Town Hall of Macclesfield, and the group of buildings which now form the Castle of Chester, are good examples of the style of architecture which prevailed during the eighteenth century. The windows are sometimes round-headed, but more often they are rectangular, with low triangles above them.

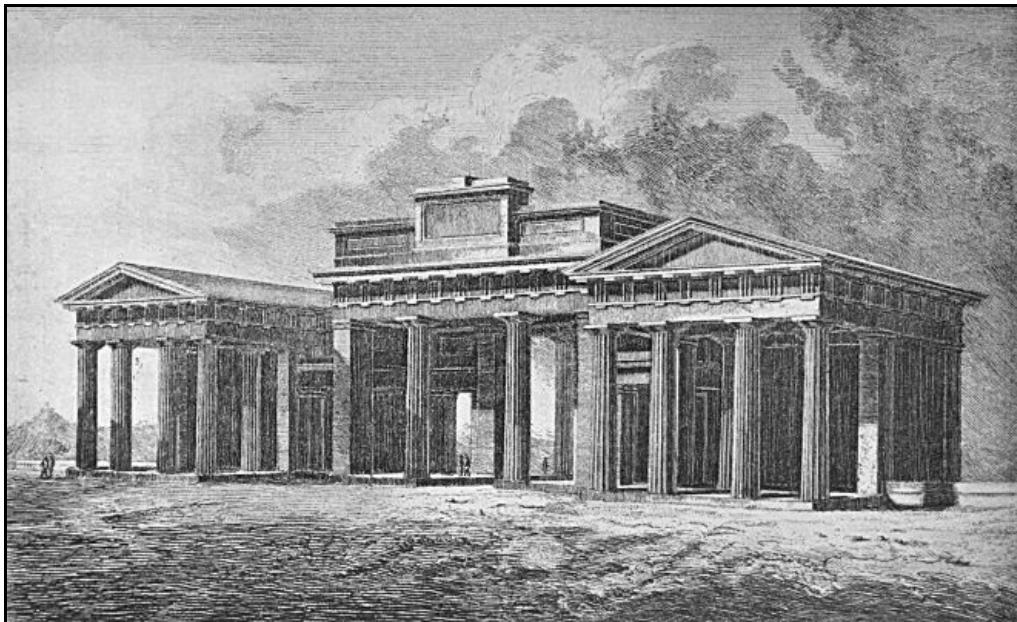
Unfortunately many ancient buildings, which we would gladly have with us now, disappeared at this time. Some of them, no doubt, were in such a ruinous state that it was impossible to repair them, but, generally speaking, little or no pains were taken to restore them to their former appearance. The people preferred to pull down and destroy and rebuild in the new Classic style, which rapidly became a craze. 174

The greatest loss was that of the mediaeval castle of Chester, which, with the exception of 'Caesar's Tower', was pulled down in 1788. The front entrance to the new castle is in the Doric style. Round the courtyard are barracks and an armoury, the county gaol and the shire hall with colonnades of Ionic pillars.

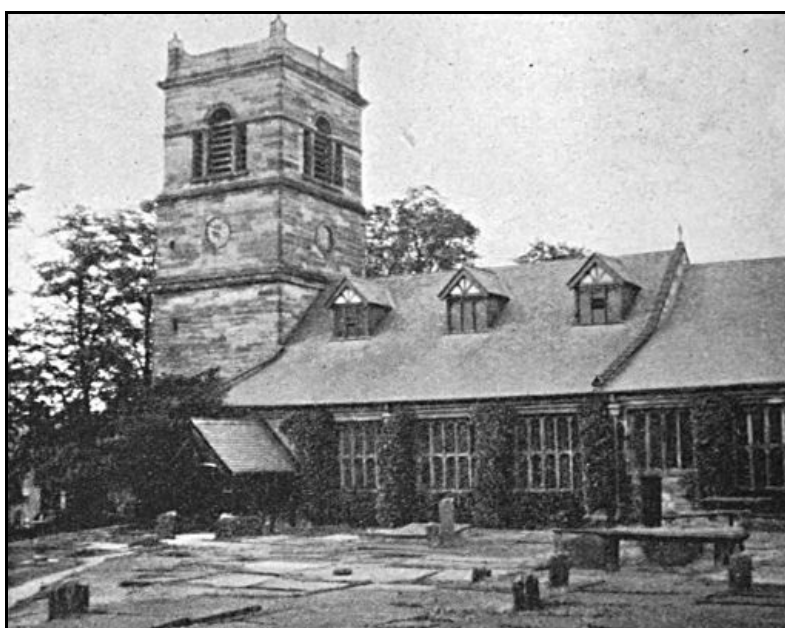
Many fine Elizabethan halls were destroyed to make way for mansions in the Classic style. Hooton Hall was built on the site of an old 'black and white' timber house. Poynton, Tabley, Tatton, Ince, and Doddington Halls were built about the same time. Other houses were altered or enlarged. The beauty of Adlington Hall was spoilt by the stone front with its Corinthian columns, which Charles and Hester Legh built. The appearance of Lyme Hall was completely changed by an Italian architect named Giacomo Leoni. His work is adorned with figures of the gods of heathen Rome, Neptune and Venus and Pan. The Leghs of Lyme brought many treasures from Italy. The stained glass in the east window of Disley Church was brought by them.

The roundheaded 'Italian' windows in the tower of Rostherne Church tell us that they are the work of eighteenth-century builders and 'restorers'. The ugly tower cuts a sorry figure when compared with the beautiful perpendicular towers of Mobberley, Cheadle, Budworth, Witton, Alderley, Middlewich, and others in the neighbourhood. The tower of Great Barrow Church, with urns in the place of pinnacles, and the porch of Frodsham, are out of keeping with the Gothic character of the rest of the buildings.

The eighteenth-century restorers had little taste or sense of beauty. Within the churches ugly wooden galleries were placed over the aisles, and the walls, pillars, and pews coated with layers of paint or whitewash. Even the carved woodwork of the choir stalls of Chester Cathedral was painted. The open timber roof of Alderley Old Church was hidden by a flat ceiling of lath and plaster. A portion of the old timber church at Warburton was repaired with common bricks, and sometimes whole churches were rebuilt with the same material. 176

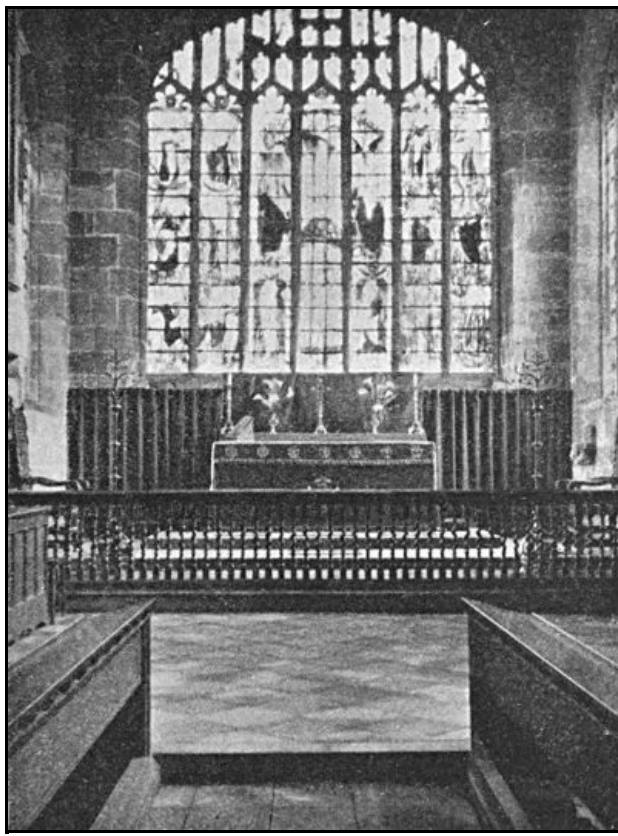


ENTRANCE TO CHESTER CASTLE



ROSTHERNE. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TOWER

In place of the handsome Decorated altar tombs, with their effigies of knights and dames, great tablets of marble brought from Italy were fixed on the walls. On them were carved skulls and cross-bones, sometimes an entire skeleton, with funeral urns like those in which the Romans placed the ashes of their dead. Scrolls with long rambling inscriptions told of the virtues of the dead. These were often written in Latin, as if the homely English of the mother tongue was not good enough for the purpose.



CHANCEL: FRODSHAM (Eighteenth Century)

The poets of the eighteenth century imitated the style of the poets of ancient Rome. Their poems are full of the wit and satire found in Horace and Juvenal. Man, not Nature, was nearly always the subject of their poems. Two lines of Alexander Pope, the greatest of the eighteenth-century poets, are carved on the tombstone of Sir John Chesshyre in Runcorn Church:—

A wit's a feather and a chief's a rod:
An honest man's the noblest work of God.

Sir John Chesshyre was a lawyer, and built the little library near Halton Castle in 1733 for the books which he left for the use of Cheshire scholars and students. 178

Clubs were formed by the poets and wits and 'men of fashion' of the eighteenth century. They met in the taverns and coffee-houses of the towns, and scratched their smart sayings on the window-panes with their diamond rings. They rather prided themselves on their eccentric habits and their superiority over other men, who had neither the time nor the money to waste on frivolous amusements.

In a little wood near Gawsorth is a lonely grave with a plain flat stone, beneath which,

Undisturbed, and hid from Vulgar Eyes,
A Wit, Musician, Poet, Player, lies.

The grave is that of Samuel Johnson, a dancing master, 'afterwards ennobled with the grander title of Lord Flame,' as the inscription tells us, who was buried here at his own desire.

Neston and Parkgate, twin towns on the southern shore of Wirral, were visited by many fashionable people in the eighteenth century. They spent the summer here for the bathing and the fresh breezes that blow from the Irish Sea and the hills of Wales. It is to be feared that Parkgate was also the resort of less respectable folk, for in some of the old houses you may still see the huge holes in which smugglers stored their unlawful cargoes. It was dangerous work, for the 'King's Yacht', as the revenue cutter was called, patrolled the waters of the Dee, and the officers had orders to shoot down all whom they caught in this illegal traffic. It is from this boat that the 'Yacht Inn' at Chester takes its name.

Neston and Parkgate were the starting-points for the Irish mails. The coaches from London and Liverpool put down their passengers here for Dublin. One of the most beautiful poems in the English language, the 'Lycidas' of John Milton, was written in memory of Edward King, a friend of the poet, who was shipwrecked on his way from Ireland to Parkgate.

The London coaches that brought travellers to Chester and Parkgate frequently got into difficulties in the low-lying parts near the River Dee. The roads were very bad, and the coach often had to be hauled out of the mud by a team of horses borrowed from some neighbouring farm. 179

The passengers sometimes found themselves without their purses and their jewels at the end of

their journey. The roads were frequented by highwaymen—'gentlemen of the road', they called themselves—who held up the coach and demanded money. With pistols levelled at their heads, the travellers were generally glad to escape with their lives.

One of the most famous of these highwaymen was Dick Turpin, whose escapades, I imagine, are known to most Cheshire boys, though I hope they have no wish to follow the career of this rascally thief.

Once it happened in Cheshire, near Dunham I popped
On a horseman alone, whom I speedily stopped;
That I lightened his pockets you'll readily guess—
Quick work makes Dick Turpin when mounted on Bess.

The robbery spoken of in these lines was committed on the high-road between Altrincham and Knutsford, and Turpin rode so fast to the inn at Hoo Green, where he showed his watch to some Cheshire squires, that he was never suspected of the crime. This and many other stories of Turpin are told by Harrison Ainsworth, the novelist, whose father lived at Rostherne.

Knutsford claimed a highwayman of its own, one Higgins, who lived on Knutsford Heath as an ordinary gentleman of means, and was very friendly with the sporting squires of the neighbourhood. His favourite amusement was to waylay the ladies who went to the county balls and 'assemblies' at the George Hotel, and rob them of their diamonds. But he, like most others of his profession, was found out at last, and paid with his life the penalty of his crimes.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. II

The people of Cheshire were not all thieves and robbers in the eighteenth century. If the rich and the idle were given to folly and extravagance, and poorer men also too often lost the little they possessed through gambling and cock-fighting, the heart of the people was sound, and only waiting to be stirred to newer life and better ideals.

In the latter half of the century a great preacher came to Cheshire, and stirred deeply the hearts of men by denouncing the follies of the age, and the lack of religious feeling which had spread over all classes of society. His name was John Wesley, the founder of the Wesleyan and Methodist bodies. At first he met with much opposition, and his meetings were broken up by the mob, but in time the people were struck by his earnestness and flocked to hear him. The chapel at Chester where he preached was so crowded that it could not hold all who wished to listen to him. In his Diary he tells us of his visits to Knutsford, Stockport, and other Cheshire towns. But Wesley and his followers often found themselves unable to preach in the churches, so they built for themselves chapels, little square brick buildings, all over the county.

Another fervent preacher of the time was Captain Scott, who left the army to be a missionary among his own countrymen, whom he gathered round him in the streets or the inn-yards of the villages where he stayed. The Mill Street Chapel at Congleton is one of the many chapels founded by him in Southern Cheshire.

Many Cheshire men were fighting in the wars into which England was drawn in the eighteenth century. In the reigns of Anne and the three Georges war succeeded war, and the intervals of peace were few and short. France and Spain were our enemies, each of whom looked with jealous eyes upon the growing power of England, and, still more, her vast colonial empire. From Canada in the West to India in the East battles were fought on land and on sea to maintain for England the supremacy of the sea and her colonies.

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Many churches in Cheshire tell the story of Cheshire soldiers and sailors who distinguished themselves in these wars. In the church of Pott Shrigley you may see a memorial tablet of Peter Downes, whose ancestors were foresters of the forest of Macclesfield. Peter Downes entered the navy and was killed in a fight between the *Leander*, an English man-of-war, and the French ship *Généreux*.

Peter Dennis, who was born at Chester and was a scholar at the King's School, became an Admiral of the Fleet. He was in command of the battleship *Centurion* in a battle fought off Cape Finisterre. Afterwards he was knighted and made commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet.

The battleships in which these sailors fought were very different to the monster ironclads of the present day with which you are familiar. The eighteenth-century vessels were the old 'wooden walls' of England, big sailing ships called 'three deckers', with three rows of guns pointing outwards from their sides. There is a model of one of them, the *Royal George*, over the inner door of Vernon Park Museum.

Robert Clive was the son of a Shropshire squire, and was educated at the little school in the

Cheshire village of Allostock. Clive went to India and became a soldier. The English and French were fighting for the mastery of India, and it is to Clive's victories that we owe in a great measure our Indian Empire.

In the last few years of the eighteenth century the dangers which threatened England from France were much nearer home. In 1794 King George the Third was obliged to ask Parliament for a large increase in our home army. Cheshire raised a regiment of six troops, with Colonel Leicester, of Tabley Hall, as its commander.

Shortly afterwards a call for Volunteers was made in Cheshire, as in other parts of the country, to defend the shores of our own land from attack. The armies of Napoleon were conquering everywhere, and an invasion of England was expected. Knutsford Heath presented the same busy scene that it had done 150 years before, when Lambert's troops were encamped upon it. For Knutsford was the appointed meeting-place of all the Cheshire forces—Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteers—and the beacon that was kept in readiness on Alderley Edge was to give the signal.

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The danger was not over for many years, for the war lasted well into the nineteenth century, ending only when Napoleon and the French were defeated by Wellington at the battle of Waterloo. Duke Street and Wellington Street in Stockport keep alive the memory of the 'Iron Duke', Napoleon's conqueror.

A friend of the Duke of Wellington was Stapleton Cotton, Viscount Combermere, whose statue stands in front of the gates of Chester Castle. He was a descendant of the Cotton to whom the Abbey of Combermere was given when Henry the Eighth plundered the Cheshire monasteries. The Duke of Wellington frequently stayed at Combermere; on one of his visits he planted an oak tree which you may still see in the Park. On the tomb of Stapleton Cotton in Wrenbury Church you may read the names of the many battles in which this gallant soldier took part.

The wars of the eighteenth century and the final struggle with Napoleon would have ruined this country but for a great increase in the wealth of the people, which made them able to bear the cost.

To understand the sources of this wealth, and the way in which it was made, we shall have to go back again to the middle of the eighteenth century, and tell the story of a great Industrial Revolution, a revolution without war and bloodshed indeed, but one that brought with it the greatest changes perhaps that Cheshire had yet seen. What these changes were, and how they affected the lives of Cheshire men and women, you will read in the succeeding chapters.

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CHAPTER XXX

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. I

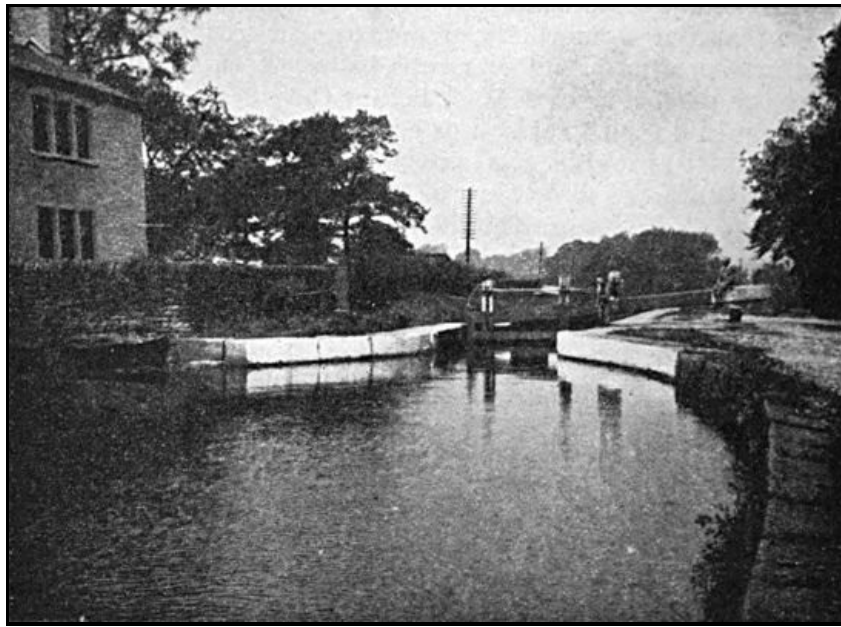
The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century laid the foundation of modern manufacturing England. With remarkable rapidity great industries came into being, and new methods of making all kinds of manufactured goods. And the first cause of this revolution was the discovery of coal, or rather the discovery of what you could do with coal. For coal was all at once in great demand to provide the power of steam, and in 1769 James Watt, the discoverer of the power of steam, showed that the steam engine could be used to drive machinery hitherto worked by hand.

Coal was first found in Cheshire about the year 1750. A colliery was opened at Denhall in Wirral, where coal is worked to this day. In East Cheshire coal was found by an accident. A farmer near Poynton had to fetch his water from a considerable distance, and asked his landlord, Sir George Warren of Poynton Hall, to sink him a well on his land. While the workmen were boring the well they came across a seam of fine coal quite near to the surface. Many other collieries have since that time been started in the same neighbourhood, and now coal is taken out of the earth nearly all the way from Stockport to Macclesfield. There are pits at Norbury, Middlewood, and Bakestonedale. The coal-field extends northwards also, and all along the Tame valley there are pits, and especially in the neighbourhood of Dukinfield, where some of the workings reach a depth of over two thousand feet below the surface of the land.

The earlier Cheshire canals were made as a result of the discovery of coal. The Duke of Bridgwater, who owned rich coal-mines at Worsley near Manchester, made very little profit out of them on account of the expense of carrying the coal by carriage to the shipping ports. A clever engineer named James Brindley was the first to suggest to him the making of a canal by which barges might take the coal to the river Irwell. This was the first canal made in England, and was finished in the year 1761.

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The Bridgwater Canal was afterwards extended and carried over the Irwell by an aqueduct. It enters Cheshire at Stretford, and passing through Altrincham and Lymm extends a distance of twenty-four miles to Runcorn, where it descends by a series of locks to the tidal waters of the Mersey.



AN OLD CANAL: MARPLE

The canal turned out so successful that the manufacturers in the Potteries of Staffordshire asked Brindley to make a canal across the Cheshire plain to unite the rivers Trent and Mersey. This was the beginning of the Grand Trunk Canal, which now winds through the heart of England and connects the great industrial towns of Lancashire and Cheshire with the metropolis.

At Harecastle the canal is carried under the hills that separate Cheshire from Staffordshire by a tunnel nearly three thousand yards long. At first the boatmen pushed their barges through the tunnel by 'legging' along the roof. This was such a laborious and troublesome way that another engineer named Telford, the great road-maker, afterwards built a second tunnel large enough for horses to tow the barges through it.

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The Ellesmere Canal connects the estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey, and thus cuts off the Wirral peninsula from the rest of the county. When this canal was being made, layers of fine sand and sea shells were found, proving that at some not very remote period the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee were connected with one another.

In the east of Cheshire the Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canal enters the county at Dukinfield. One portion goes southward to Macclesfield and the other crosses the river Goyt at Marple by an aqueduct a hundred feet above the river. The Shropshire Union Canal connects the Dee and the Severn; and thus all the great rivers of the north midlands, the Mersey, Dee, Severn, and Trent, are united with one another by this network of Cheshire canals.

The canals proved a blessing not only to the coal owners and manufacturers, but were also used by the people of the country villages in order to travel from one part to another. Passenger barges called 'fly-boats' enabled the country women to take their butter and cheese to the market towns.

James Brindley was a man of humble birth, and for several years worked as a labourer on a farm, amusing himself in his spare moments with making wooden models of machinery with a pocket-knife. He was so clever that he was often called in by the mill-owners of Macclesfield and Congleton to repair their machinery. When he was first employed by the Duke of Bridgewater he was paid only half a crown a day. He was a very practical man, and gained his knowledge not from books but from his own experiments. When he was called to the House of Commons to explain his scheme for carrying a canal over the Mersey, which many people laughed at as absurd, he took with him a Cheshire cheese which he cut in halves to represent the arches of the bridge, and made a complete model of his proposed work which greatly amused his audience, and at the same time proved that he was well able to overcome his difficulties.

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The rivers also were dredged and made suitable for navigation wherever possible. An artificial channel was made for the waters of the Dee which had become choked with silt and sand, and small ships could once more be towed as far as Chester. The Weaver was made navigable from Winsford to the Mersey, so that salt, which was taken out of the earth in ever increasing quantities, could be taken to Runcorn in barges at a much smaller cost than on wagons.

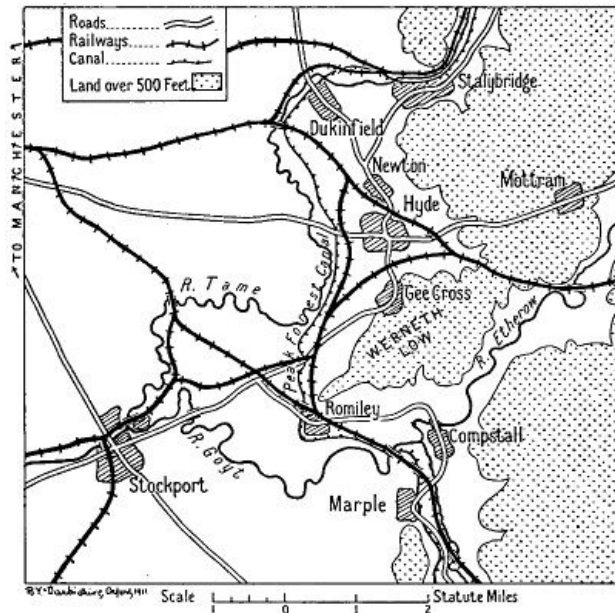
Salt is necessary in every home for cooking and other household needs. But still greater quantities are required for alkalis and other chemicals, the making of which is the chief occupation of the workpeople of Runcorn and Weston Point. Thousands of tons are also exported every year to other countries where salt is scarce.

Salt has been worked in the towns on or near the Weaver from Roman days. The earlier way was simply to mine it as we do coal now. Some of the mines at Northwich cover many acres, and when lit up by electric coloured lights are very beautiful. The roof of a mine is held up by columns of salt which are left in position for that purpose, but they frequently give way and the buildings above them are wrecked.

The coarser kinds of rock-salt are still taken out in lumps. You may often see pieces in the Cheshire fields which farmers have put there for cattle to lick. For salt contains health-giving properties, and salt-mining is not injurious to health as coal-mining is. Brine baths have been made at Nantwich for people suffering from certain diseases.

In the Middle Ages, wells or brine-pits were sunk and the water carried in leather buckets to the salt-houses. Edward King, a Cheshire historian, who in the seventeenth century wrote a book called *Vale Royal*, says that 'at Northwich there was a salt spring on the bank of the River Dane, from which the brine runneth on the ground in troughs of wood until it comes to the "wich-houses", where they made salt. Some old leaden salt-pans may still be seen at Northwich, pieces of charcoal still sticking to them on the under side, showing that the brine had been heated over wood fires.'

THE MILL TOWNS OF N.E. CHESHIRE



Modern science has found better and easier ways of making salt. The white salt which you use daily is still obtained by evaporation. The brine is first pumped into a reservoir and taken by pipes to large shallow salt-pans heated by furnaces beneath them. As the water evaporates the crystals are formed and scraped from the sides and the bottoms of the pans. You may see specimens of the different kinds of salt in the Salt Museum at Northwich.

CHAPTER XXXI THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. II

In the year 1785 cotton was brought into the Mersey from the United States of America. Long before that time so-called 'cotton' stuffs had been made in Cheshire villages. But these fabrics were not really cotton at all, but a mixture of wool and flax. The flax was brought from Ireland, and woollen manufacturers tried for a long time to keep it out. In the parish records of Prestbury you may read of an Act passed in Charles the Second's reign forbidding any one to be buried in anything but a woollen shroud.

At first there were no cotton-mills, such as you see now in the populous towns of East Cheshire. The raw cotton was given out to poor people, who spun it and wove it in their own cottage homes. Nearly every cottage became a small factory, the fathers, mothers, and children all taking part in the work. The machinery was simple and made of wood. The spinning was done by the women and children in the house, the weaving by the men in a weaving-shed of one story built in the yard.

As time went on, the machinery was improved by the inventions of clever men, so that one loom would do as much work as several had done previously. The workpeople did not like the new machines, for often a number of people were thrown out of work by them, and frequently the new spinning and weaving-frames of the inventors were wrecked by a furious mob.

The earlier and simpler machines, such as the spinning-wheel and the hand-loom, were worked by hand. But the new discoveries made it possible for one wheel to turn eighty or a hundred spindles at once by means of horse-power or a water-wheel, and the hand-loom similarly gave place to a power-loom. But in remote villages the old-fashioned methods survived, and even to this day you may still occasionally see a hand-loom at work in cottages in the highlands of East

Cheshire.

Then great factories began to be built, huge buildings of brick and of many stories, chiefly on the banks of Cheshire streams, or on the canals, by which the raw cotton could be brought in barges to the very doors. You may look down from the churchyard of Mottram into the valley beneath and count a score of them. Steam was applied, and the whole of the machinery of the factories was driven by this new force. Great towns sprang up like mushrooms. Hyde and Stalybridge and Dukinfield, from being tiny villages, soon became great busy hives of the cotton industry.

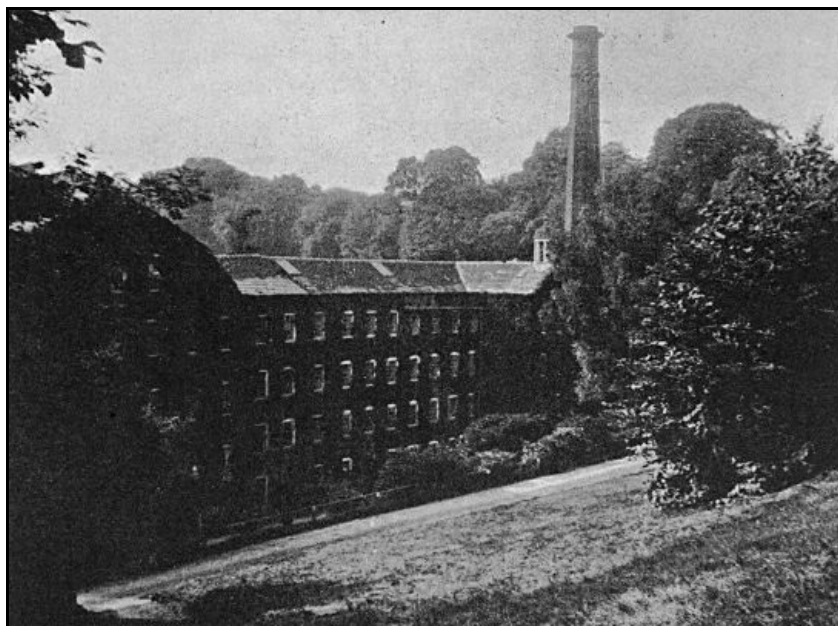
The cotton had also to be bleached and the calicoes printed, and mills for the purpose were built along the streams, whose waters provided the steam-power which worked the machinery of the mills. From Taxal to Stockport, along the banks of the now polluted Goyt, is an almost continuous line of great mills, the bleach-works of Whaley Bridge, the print-works of Furness Vale and Strines, the cotton-mills of Disley, Marple, and Mellor. The Mellor mills were built as early as 1790 by Samuel Oldknow, and were at one time in the hands of Peter Arkwright, who was one of a famous family of inventors, and who made many changes in the machinery of his works. 190

Thus the positions of modern manufacturing towns have not been chosen, as were those of the towns of the Middle Ages, by their ability to beat off the attacks of enemies. For war is no longer the principal business of the inhabitants of Cheshire. The 'cotton' towns have come into being just in those parts where the conditions are favourable to the cotton industry. In the first place the climate is damp, owing to the nearness of the Pennine hills, on which the wet winds from the south-west drop their moisture; and cotton can only be spun and woven in such a climate, for a dry climate would make the threads break. Secondly, there is a plentiful water-supply from the numerous streams that flow from the hills, and lastly, the towns are close to big coal-fields from which they may obtain the fuel for the engines that work the machinery of the mills.

In the pretty model village of Styal, on the banks of the Bollin, is a house which is still called by the name of 'Prentice House. Here once lived a number of young girls and boys, orphans many of them, who worked in the picturesque ivy-clad building, strangely unlike a mill, at Quarry Bank. They were 'apprenticed', that is, bound to their master for seven years. During that time they were well fed and clothed by their employer, and certain times were set apart for learning to read and write and sew. On Sunday mornings they walked together to the church at Wilmslow. The girls were dressed in straw bonnets and plain grey dresses, the boys in fustian coats and breeches of corduroy.

They were kindly treated, but the hours in the mill were long. They rose at five, and their breakfast of porridge and milk was eaten in the mill. Half an hour was allowed for dinner, and not until half-past eight did their long day of toil come to an end. At Christmas prizes were given to those who had been most obedient and industrious during the year.

The young people of Quarry Bank were on the whole happy in the service of Samuel Greg their master, but the lot of the apprentices in other mills was often very different. The harshness and cruelty of some employers led to the passing of Acts of Parliament which shortened the hours of labour and fixed severe penalties for ill-treatment. A later Act forbade altogether the employment of children under a certain age. 192



STYAL MILL 191

In the middle of the eighteenth century the silk industry took root in Cheshire. We first hear of it in Stockport, where a mill was started for the winding and throwing^[3] of silk. John Clayton, of Stockport, built a mill at Congleton, and the industry spread rapidly to the neighbouring villages of Sutton, Rainow, and Bollington.

The first silk-mill in Macclesfield, which is now the chief seat of the silk industry in Cheshire, was opened by Charles Roe in 1756. Roe Street is named after him. He made a fortune and built

Christ Church. Over the altar you may see his bust in marble, and over it a figure of Genius with a cogwheel in her hand. In the museum at West Park are some models of silk-loom.

There was a silk-mill at Knutsford, as the name Silk Mill Street tells us. In Mobberley also nearly every cottage had its spinning-wheel. The cottagers fetched the raw silk from Macclesfield and took back the spun yarn to be woven into pieces at the Macclesfield looms.

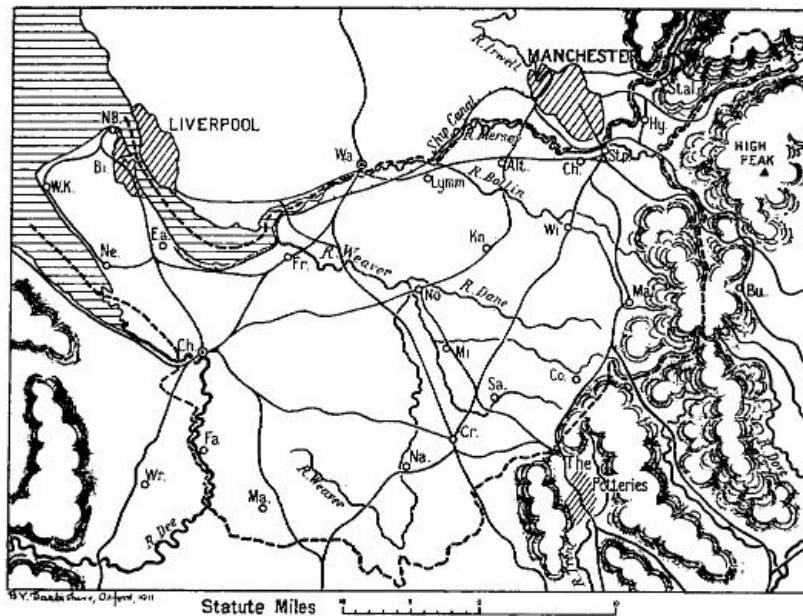
CHAPTER XXXII THE RAILWAYS OF CHESHIRE

After the making of canals came the railways, and the mighty power of steam, that had wrought such a vast change in the cotton industry, was to be the moving force of the new invention.

Late in the summer of 1830 the people who lined the river banks from Runcorn to Latchford saw a trail of smoke travelling slowly across the nine arches of Sankey Viaduct and the peaty plains of the Mersey. The smoke was that of Stephenson's 'Rocket', the steam locomotive that was drawing one of the first passenger trains in England.

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CHESHIRE. RAILWAYS



Cheshire had its 'Rocket' too in those days, the stage coach that left the 'Black Boy' Inn at Stockport and passed through Cheadle, Lymm, and Warrington to Liverpool. And the old 'Rocket' was very jealous of its new namesake, for it was thought that with the coming of the railways the coaches would be driven off the road. The canal companies also saw themselves threatened, and did all they could to hinder the spread of the new way of travelling.

Some years were to pass before the inhabitants of Cheshire saw railways laid through their own towns and villages. The farmers of Wirral rubbed their eyes when the first train seen in Cheshire carried its human freight along the southern shore of the Mersey. Many of them had doubtless never seen one before, and not a few of the more ignorant fled in terror from the puffing, panting thing, which they looked upon as the invention of the evil one.

It is hard indeed to think of Cheshire without its railways. Before their coming, almost the only way of moving from one place to another was by means of the stage coaches that rattled along the principal highways, putting down at the nearest wayside inn the passengers who lived in villages off the main roads. Goods and merchandise were carried on pack-horses or slow lumbering wagons.

Some of the most important main lines of English railways now pass through Cheshire, for the Cheshire plain is the broad gateway that leads to the busy and populous towns of South Lancashire. Within the space of half a century the county was covered with a network of lines, and to-day it is impossible to find a spot that has not a railway passing within a very few miles of it.

The earliest railways avoided the hilly districts, and for many years there were no lines in East Cheshire. The main line of the London and North Western Railway crosses the southern border of Cheshire where the hills are low, and picks its way through the Cheshire plain, keeping closely to the level valley of the Weaver, and leaving the hills of Delamere and Frodsham on the west. It crosses the Mersey into Lancashire at Warrington.

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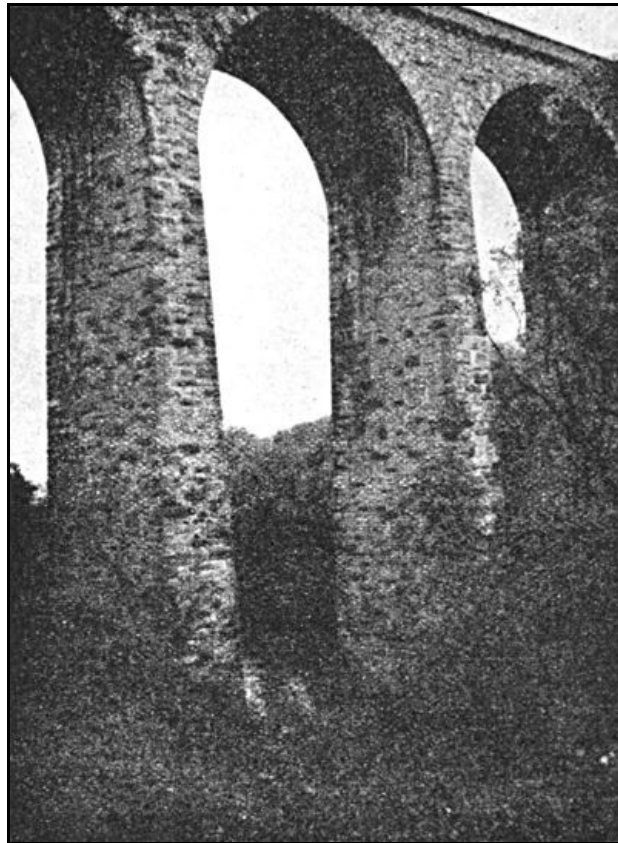
The cotton spinners of Stockport wanted a quick route to London, and so a branch line was made through Alderley, which joined the main line at Crewe. Some of the old country towns would not have the railway too near, so we find Sandbach nearly two miles away from its station. Another branch westwards left the main line at Crewe for Chester and Holyhead, to carry the Irish mails; and a third branched off at Preston Brook for Liverpool, being carried over the Mersey by a big iron bridge at Runcorn.

There were only a few houses at Crewe when the railways were made. The station was in the village of Church Coppenhall, but the shorter and more convenient name of Crewe was chosen from Crewe Hall. The little village rapidly became a big town, for it was chosen to be the headquarters of the London and North Western Company. Big engine and carriage works were built, and iron foundries for the making of boilers and steel rails. It is now one of the most important railway centres in England, giving employment to many thousand workmen.

But one line was not enough to carry all the traffic from the great manufacturing towns to the Midlands and the south of England. Other railway companies accomplished the difficult task of crossing the Pennine Hills, and Cheshire was thus brought into touch with Yorkshire and the north-midland shires. The Midland Railway tunnelled under the hills at a height of eight hundred feet above sea-level, and descended rapidly to Stockport by the Goyt valley. The Great Northern enters Cheshire by the tunnel near Penistone, and follows the Etherow down Longdendale till it also reaches Stockport. The Staffordshire Railway from the Potteries burrows through the hills at Harecastle on its way to Congleton and Macclesfield. All these railways vied with one another in quickening the speed of their trains, and their rivalry soon caused the fares for passengers and rates for goods to become cheaper.

There is one railway which, more than any other, Cheshire boys and girls may call their own. The Cheshire Line is not one of the great 'trunk' lines to London, but is confined to South Lancashire and the county from which it takes its name. This railway crosses the county from Altrincham to Chester, never more than a few hundred yards from its great ancestor, the Watling Street.

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RAILWAY VIADUCT OVER GOYT VALLEY

The populous towns of North-east Cheshire are also served by branches of the Great Central and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways. The coast towns of the Dee have their 'Wirral Railway', and through the heart of Wirral Great Western expresses rush to their terminus at Birkenhead.

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The railways teach us that time is money, and this fact is constantly brought home to us by seeing new lines made to shorten the distance between two points, so that men may get to their places of business more rapidly. The Midland Railway have in the last few years straightened their line by a short cut through Cheadle Heath, that their express trains to Manchester may avoid delay at Stockport; and the new London and North Western line from Wilmslow to Manchester, though it saved less than three miles, was yet thought worth the cost.

The railways have brought town and country into closer touch with one another, and both have gained. Farmers and market gardeners can send their produce quickly and cheaply to the great markets of Stockport and Birkenhead. Coals and salt, machinery and manufactured goods, can be distributed easily from the great towns that produce them. Moreover, many people whose daily life is spent in the crowded cities are able to live away from their places of business and, for a

portion of the day at least, breathe the purer air of the country.

Two residential districts of Cheshire are supported mainly by the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester and Liverpool. In East Cheshire, Altrincham and Bowdon, Knutsford, Alderley, Cheadle, and Lymm are practically suburbs of Manchester. In the Wirral, Hoylake, West Kirby, and New Brighton owe their present prosperity to the business men of Birkenhead and Liverpool who have built their homes on the Cheshire seaboard.

In all these places you may see the mingling of the old and the new, the older portions clustering round the parish church, the brand new villas and mansions of the rich spreading on all sides into the surrounding country. New towns spring up round the railway stations, as at Alderley Edge, which is two miles from the older village of Nether Alderley.

With the railways came also the 'penny post', for letters could now be carried cheaply and quickly to and from all parts of the country.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

PROGRESS AND REFORM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Twenty years before steam locomotives were used to draw passenger trains over the earliest railways in Cheshire, a steam packet boat had been built to ply between Liverpool and the Cheshire port of Runcorn. This boat was called simply 'The Steam Boat', and was the first steamer ever seen in the River Mersey. The sailing packets were frequently becalmed, but the new ship could make her voyage in all weathers.

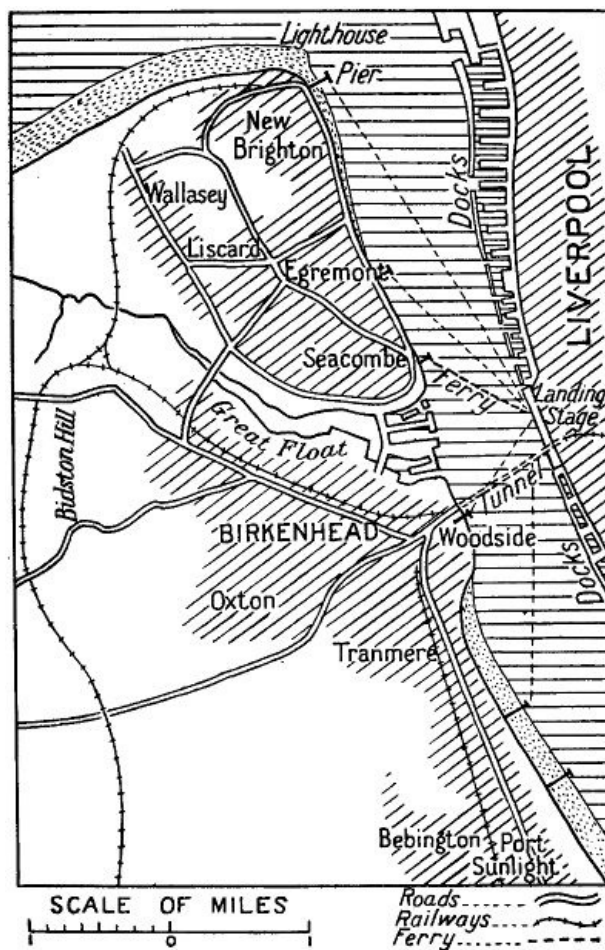
A number of steam-tugs were built soon afterwards to tow the big sailing-ships that entered the Mersey to the ports to which they were bound, and the first steam ferry-boat crossed the Mersey from Liverpool to Tranmere. In a few years the Cheshire shore of the Mersey was lined with docks and quays at Birkenhead, Seacombe, Woodside, Tranmere, and Eastham. At the last-named port Liverpool passengers could get on the coach for Chester and the midland towns.

In 1819, the year in which Queen Victoria was born, the Savannah, the first steamship that crossed the Atlantic, was seen in the River Mersey. The Savannah took twenty-eight days over the passage, lowering by many days the record of the fastest sailing-vessels hitherto. This was thought a great feat in those days, but the huge 'ocean greyhounds' that the boys and girls of Wirral see riding at anchor off Birkenhead, now make four or five crossings in the same period of time.

Just as Crewe owes its rapid rise to the coming of the railways, so Birkenhead's prosperity dates from the beginnings of steam navigation. Both of these towns are growths of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century Birkenhead was a small village of less than a hundred inhabitants. It is now Cheshire's greatest town, and contains a population of more than 100,000, or, if we include the populous suburbs which have sprung up on either side of it, nearly twice this number.

BIRKENHEAD & THE MERSEY

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The old village clustered round its ruined priory, which is still in the heart of the modern town. A triangular piece of land, now covered by the streets of New Brighton, Liscard, Wallasey, and Seacombe, was cut off from Birkenhead and the rest of Wirral by a broad and swampy river called Wallasey Pool. Mr. Laird, the founder of the famous shipbuilding company of that name, bought some land on the edge of the Pool. He saw that here was a first-rate place for dockyards and wharves, which would be protected from south-westerly gales by the natural rampart of Bidston Hill and the high ground of Oxton.

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In a few years Wallasey Pool was turned into a huge basin capable of holding hundreds of big ocean-going ships. In the 'Great Float', as this basin is now called, you may see ships of every nation. Twenty pairs of lockgates connect it with the Mersey, and there are ten miles of quays with a network of quay railways laid along them.

The big ship-building yards of Messrs. Cammell and Laird give employment to many hundreds of the working-men of Birkenhead. Here are built some of our largest merchant vessels, as well as ships for the British Navy, chiefly gunboats and torpedo boat destroyers. One of the Lairds was Birkenhead's first member of Parliament. You may see his statue in front of the Birkenhead Town Hall.

Two other men whose names are closely linked with the shipping of the Mersey will always be remembered by the people of Wirral. William Inman and Thomas Ismay were the founders of fleets of ocean liners. With a portion of the wealth that he derived from his business, Inman built churches for the villages of Upton and Moreton. Ismay lived at Dawpool Hall, and is buried in the churchyard of Thurstaston.

The first street-tramway in Europe was laid along the streets of Birkenhead, from Woodside Ferry to the Park, by an American called Train. The cars were built at Birkenhead, and drawn by horses; the length of the line was less than two miles. Now tram routes are spread all over Eastern Wirral, and are to be found in the streets of all large towns. But the horses are gone, and the cars are now driven by the cheaper and more serviceable method of electricity. Our tram-cars are one of the greatest conveniences in the busy life of a town.

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Prior to the year 1832 Chester was the only Cheshire town which had its own members of Parliament. The county returned two members, one for the north division and the other for the south. The big manufacturing towns which had increased so rapidly in size and population had no representatives, while numbers of small towns and villages in other parts of England returned one and sometimes even two members to the House of Commons. The workers of the busy industrial districts felt that this was very unfair, and demanded to be allowed to be represented. After a long struggle Reform Bills were passed, and now Stockport is allowed to choose two members, and Stalybridge and Birkenhead one each. The number of county members has also been increased from two to eight, one from each of eight divisions, to which the names Hyde, Macclesfield, Altrincham, Knutsford, Crewe, Eddisbury, Northwich, and Wirral have been given.

Until the passing of the 'Reform Bills' only those who possessed property were allowed to vote, the great majority of the people of Cheshire had no say in the government of the country at all. The Reform Bill of 1832 gave the vote to many more people, to every man in fact who paid a rent of ten pounds or more a year for his house. Thus much of the power which had previously belonged to the rich passed into the hands of the poorer classes.

One of the first results of the Reformed Parliament was the passing of a number of Factory Acts. The cry of the children at work in the mills had long been heard through the land, and the people were indignant at the cruelties put upon them by some mill-owners. As early as the year 1802 Sir Robert Peel, a Lancashire manufacturer, had persuaded Parliament to pass an Act to improve the condition of the factories. The Reformed Parliament now made it illegal to employ children under nine years of age, or to make boys and girls under thirteen work for more than twelve hours a day. Later Acts have still further shortened the hours of work for women and children, and in many other respects have made the lot of all the working classes more tolerable. Manufacturers are now compelled to keep their factories clean and wholesome, and fit to work in. Factory inspectors are appointed to see that the laws are carried out, and those whose lives are spent in dangerous occupations, such as coal-mining or the making of chemicals, are protected by strict rules which lessen the danger to life and limb.

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The greatest evil from which the poorer classes suffered in the early years of the nineteenth century was the high price of bread. This was due to the heavy duty put on corn imported from foreign countries. In S. Peter's Square, Stockport, is a statue of Richard Cobden, who for six years was Stockport's member of Parliament. Cobden saw that the poverty of the working classes could not be lessened until this corn-tax was removed. He pleaded eloquently on their behalf, and in the end he was successful. The growers of corn grumbled, but as Cheshire is not so much a corn-growing as a pastoral county, the farmers of Cheshire were not greatly hurt.

Cobden also persuaded Parliament to take away or to lessen the duties on imported raw materials, such as cotton, wool, and silk, on which the prosperity of the Cheshire workers so much depended. The result was that the manufacturers were able to pay the people who worked in their mills better wages. Thus, with cheaper bread and wages higher, the lot of the industrial classes became brighter. Soon also the duties on manufactured goods brought to Cheshire from abroad were removed, and the system of Free Trade, under which Cheshire has become rich and prosperous, came into being.

Among the leaders of the working classes were some who wanted far greater changes. In the museum at Vernon Park are some iron pike-heads taken from these men when they tried to arm the people and urge them to fight for their 'rights'. The aims of the Chartists, as these reformers were named, were set forth in a document which they called the People's Charter. Among other things, they demanded votes for all men, yearly Parliaments, vote by ballot, and payment of members of Parliament. But the bulk of the people took alarm, for it was thought that if every man had a vote, too much power would be put into the hands of the working classes. The Chartists were tried for causing riots, and many were put in prison. One of the Chartist leaders was James Stephens, who is buried in Dukinfield churchyard.

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In 1861 a great disaster befell the cotton trade. In that year civil war broke out in America between the Northern and the Southern States of the Union. The Southern States were the seat of the cotton-growing plantations, which were worked by millions of negro slaves. The English people had put an end to slavery in their own colonies, and the Northern States of America wished to do the same. When the Southerners desired to extend the cotton industry to other new States, the Northern States refused to allow it, and war broke out.

The war brought much distress to the cotton workers of Cheshire, for the ports of the Southerners were blockaded by the warships of their enemies, and the ships which had brought their cargoes of raw cotton to the Mersey could do so no longer. The result was a cotton famine. The looms were idle, and thousands of workpeople were thrown out of employment in Stockport, Stalybridge, and the other towns and villages which depended for their daily bread on a constant supply of the raw material.

Attempts were made by ships sent from England to run the blockade of the ports of the Southern States. At Birkenhead a ship called the *Alabama* was built in the dockyard of Messrs. Laird for the use of the cotton planters. The ship entered the harbours in the night-time or during fogs, and succeeded several times in bringing small supplies of cotton. She was caught at last, but not before she had destroyed sixty or seventy vessels of the Northern fleet, and she very nearly brought about a war between England and America.

The war lasted four years. Then peace was restored, and the cotton was once more brought to the starving spinners and weavers of East Cheshire. During the famine the poor had been supported by sums of money raised in the large towns of England, and many years passed before the cotton industry reached its former prosperity.

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The memory of the hard days of the cotton famine has been handed down to the grandchildren of those who suffered. Within the last few years the cotton merchants and manufacturers have started an association for growing cotton in our own English colonies, so that the workers may not depend entirely on the cotton produced by foreign States.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE REIGN OF A GREAT QUEEN

Many of the changes described in the last three chapters were but partially accomplished in Cheshire, when a young princess of eighteen years became Queen of England. The power of steam was known, but the Cheshire railways were not yet laid, and those who wished to attend the coronation of Queen Victoria had to use the stage or the family coach and take a day and a half over the journey.

Telegraph and telephone were also quite unknown, and the penny post had not yet come into being. That was to follow in the wake of the railways. During her reign all our main roads were lined with telegraph wires, and cables laid at the bottom of the seas sent our messages to the uttermost parts of the earth. The news of distant events, which formerly took weeks or even months to reach us, may now be read in our newspapers within a few hours at most.

Inventions without number followed the discovery of electricity. The shops and warehouses of large towns, railway carriages and ocean liners, and the homes of the well-to-do are lighted with it. Electric launches flit along the shores of the Mersey. Tram-cars are worked by electricity, which also sets in motion the dynamos that work the machinery of mills and workshops. The pressing of an electric button sets free the big ships when they take the water for the first time in the dockyards of Birkenhead.

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The wonderful progress made by the engineers of the nineteenth century is seen in the making of the Manchester Ship Canal, the greater part of which lies within the county of Cheshire. For many years Manchester's great ambition was to become a port. The winding and shallow bed of the inland waters of the Mersey could not be navigated by ocean-going vessels, and a ship canal was wanted in order that the bales of cotton might be brought direct from the United States and other cotton-growing countries to the place where the raw material is distributed. Thus time would be saved, as well as the expense of unloading at Liverpool and putting the cargoes on the railways, whose rates were very high.

It was therefore decided to ask Parliament for powers to make a wide and deep canal, capable of carrying ships of several thousand tons burden. The railway and canal companies and the Liverpool merchants who controlled the navigation of the Mersey were afraid that the trade of Liverpool would be injured, and opposed the scheme vigorously. But Parliament was wise enough to see what a boon the canal would be to the cotton towns and the district through which it was to be laid, and passed the bill for its making. In the Jubilee year of Queen Victoria the work was begun.

Many millions of money were required for such a vast undertaking, and more millions were asked for as the work went on. After seven years of perseverance in the face of tremendous difficulties, the canal was opened by the queen.

The canal is thirty-five and a half miles long, and, roughly speaking, two-thirds of it are in Cheshire. The entrance to the canal is at Eastham, where great locks were built. From Eastham to Runcorn, a distance of thirteen miles, the canal is tidal and laid along the foreshore of the Mersey estuary, and protected by an embankment. At Runcorn 'Gap' the canal and the Mersey, which here becomes very narrow, are separated by a concrete wall nearly one mile in length.

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The rest of the waterway lies inland. Latchford serves as a port for Warrington, and the locks here always present a busy scene. At Irlam locks the canal enters Lancashire, and its waters are at this point forty feet above sea-level. The canal is fed by the River Irwell, whose waters flow down the canal from Salford to Irlam.

The railways are carried over the canal by lofty bridges, which had to be made very high to allow the masts of ocean ships to pass under them. Bays or sidings, where ships may pass each other, occur at intervals. Wharves and docks have been built at many points along the canal, which some day may be expected to appear one long seaport.

Ellesmere Port, where the Ellesmere Canal and Ship Canal unite, has become a thriving place in recent years, and the trade of Runcorn has also been greatly increased by the canal. Large alkali works have been built at Weston Point, the most suitable place that could have been found for them, because they are equally near to the Lancashire coal-field on the one hand and to the salt beds of Cheshire on the other. The salt is brought in the form of brine direct from Northwich to the works by pipes laid underground, a great saving of money, for salt is heavy and costly to carry.

Though the cotton industry was the one that was expected to gain most from the canal, the traffic is by no means confined to this commodity. Grain and cattle are brought from the United States and from South America, timber from Canada, and hides from the Argentine, and big cargoes of bananas, oranges, and apples, pass up the canal. In addition to this oversea traffic, the canal also has a great share of the coasting trade of the West of England, of which slates from Carnarvon, and china clay from Cornwall may be taken as the best examples.

The triumphs of engineering and mechanical skill have improved our means of travelling from one place to another. The great engines that are now turned out from the locomotive sheds at

Crewe are as vastly superior to the Rocket (models of which are now but a curiosity in our museums) as the twentieth-century motor-cycle is to the velocipede or wooden 'bone-shaker' that your fathers rode. Horse carriages are fast disappearing and giving place to the motor-car, and hansoms to the taxicab. The science of aviation is turning the inventive powers of men into new channels, and 'flying men' are showing to the world that the conquest of the air is but a matter of time.

Before the reign of Queen Victoria, few of the children of the poorest classes were able either to read or write. Such education as these could receive was given in the Sunday Schools, which Robert Raikes had started in 1781. The children were hard at work in the mills all the week. Teachers volunteered for the work, which was carried on in cottages or disused factories. In 1805, Stockport built the big Sunday School which still remains, and a hundred thousand children have been grateful for the simple teaching given to them.

The Education Bills of Queen Victoria's reign brought knowledge within the reach of all. Education is cheap for the middle classes, free for the poor. Schools have been built where none existed before. Money has been found to help any Cheshire boy or girl to receive the very highest education, and to open up the way from village school to university. The municipalities have built their own municipal schools in the chief towns of Cheshire, and technical schools where you may learn a trade. At the Agricultural School at Holmes Chapel you may be instructed in the newest and most scientific ways of farming.

The people have learnt to study the laws of health, and to understand the value of light and fresh air. Towns are cleaner and your homes healthier. Open spaces, parks and playing-fields, brighten the lives of the children in the towns, and by making them stronger, fit them the better for the hard work that lies before them.

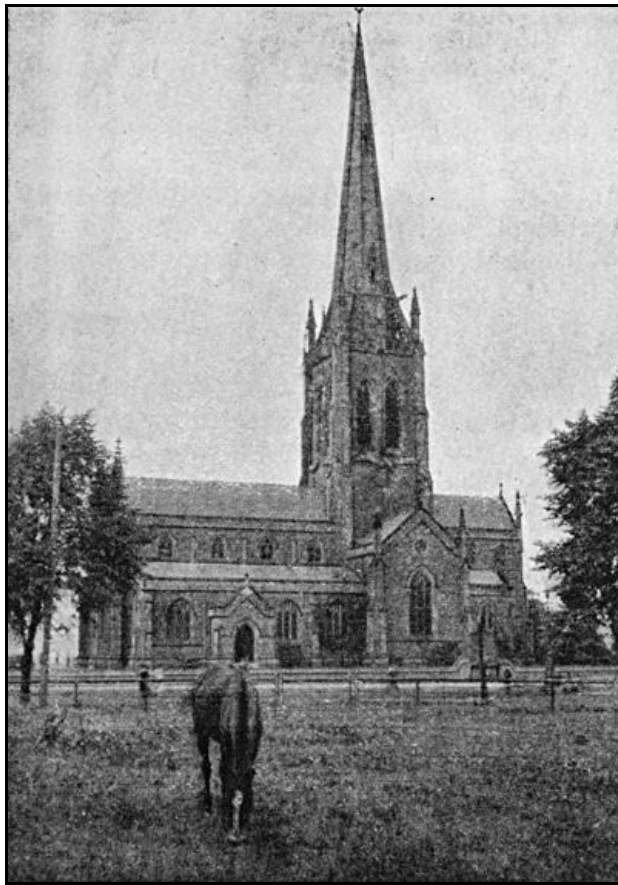
Port Sunlight shows how much can be done by those who study the needs of the working classes. This 'garden city', with its avenues of dainty cottage villas, is the home of those who work in the big soap-works on the Mersey. Here everything is done that can make for the comfort and well-being of the inhabitants. There are schools for the children, and 'institutes' for the young men and women, libraries and reading-rooms, savings banks to encourage thrift, games, clubs, swimming-baths and gymnasium for the strong, a hospital for the sick and infirm, ambulance and fire brigade and a life-saving society, and societies for the study of literature and science.

You are not all as fortunate as the dwellers of Port Sunlight. But some day many of you will perhaps see the slums of great towns cleared away, and you will take care that sunlight is let into dark places. You will have learned how foolish it is to overcrowd the towns and herd together in close and mean streets, and you will have the power to say that these things ought not to be.

The Cheshire County Council was created by Queen Victoria. Its members are elected, and the Council allows large parishes to elect a Parish or District Council to manage their own local affairs. But Stockport, Chester, and Birkenhead do not send members to this Council, for their populations are so big that they are considered as counties in themselves. The County Council also controls the education of the county, keeps roads and bridges in repair, directs the cleansing of the small towns and villages, and provides a pure water-supply.

New boroughs were made at Crewe, Hyde, and Stalybridge in Queen Victoria's reign, with a mayor and corporation to direct their affairs. Macclesfield, you will remember, was a borough in very early times. Altrincham and Over too, once had their mayors, though they have them no longer. Their mayors seem to have been men of very humble position, and to have been looked down upon by their neighbours. You have perhaps heard of the Cheshire saying:

The Mayor of Altrincham,
And the Mayor of Over—
The one is a thatcher,
The other a dauber.



MODERN GOTHIC: S. MARGARET'S, ALTRINCHAM

The work of the borough councils has become very heavy during the last fifty years. Gas, water, electricity, libraries, education, public health, baths, markets, and police, have their own special committees to look after them. The handsome Town Halls of Chester and Stockport, the latter opened only a few years since by the present King George the Fifth, had to be built to accommodate the small army of clerks who assist in the government of a great city.

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The reign of Queen Victoria was not all one of peace. The war with Russia, and the terrible mutiny of her Indian subjects with its tale of horrors and its glorious heroism, brought woe to many a home in Cheshire. The obelisk by the roadside between Aldford and Farndon reminds us that the soldiers of Cheshire were often called upon to fight our battles and too often find a grave in distant lands. Colonel Barnston, of Crewe Hill, to whose memory this monument was set up, fought at the siege of Sebastopol. In the Indian Mutiny he was wounded while gallantly leading an assault at the relief of Lucknow, and died of his wounds at Cawnpore. Numbers of memorial tablets in the Cathedral of Chester speak of the lives that were cheerfully laid down by Cheshire men in the service of their queen and country.

Your fathers will tell you how bonfires were lighted on the beacons and hill-tops of Cheshire to celebrate the Jubilee or fiftieth year of the reign of Queen Victoria. Still greater was the rejoicing some ten years later, when she surpassed in length of reign all previous sovereigns of England. Nearly every town and village has some memorial of her: a cross in the village street, a drinking-fountain by the wayside, new bells for the parish church or a lich-gate for the churchyard, a village 'hall' or a public recreation ground, these are but a few examples that prove the love and reverence that Cheshire men and women felt for the great queen whose only thought was ever for the welfare of her people.

Yet her last years were saddened by the long and costly war in South Africa, still unfinished when she died. The call to arms was once more heard from east to west of Cheshire; from town and country, 'reservists' who had thought to end their days in peace were sent oversea to defend the South African dominions of the queen. The brave 'Cheshires'—the fathers of some of you were among them—served throughout the war. A gallant Cheshire officer was one of the first to win distinction. Lieutenant Congreve, of Burton Hall, was one of three who volunteered to rescue the guns at the battle of Colenso. He was shot down in the attempt, but was able to crawl to a sheltered place, and lived to receive the reward that all soldiers strive to merit—the Victoria Cross.

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CHAPTER XXXV

FAMOUS MEN AND WOMEN OF CHESHIRE

Throughout the Middle Ages, until the end of the Wars of the Roses, war was the chief, almost the only occupation of the leading men of Cheshire. A few entered the Church, Richard de Vernon, for instance, who was Rector of 'Stokeport' early in the fourteenth century (his tomb is in the chancel of Stockport), and William de Montalt, Rector of Neston. One of the Bebingtons, William de Bebyngton, even became Abbot of S. Werburgh's Abbey.

The descendants of the barons who settled in Cheshire in the days of the Conqueror followed the Norman and Plantagenet kings to the Crusades or the French wars. Few of them stayed at home for any length of time, and when they returned, they generally found that some score had to be settled with the Welshmen, who had been making havoc of their lands during their absence. So that whether at home or abroad, fighting was always their chief business.

Cheshire has been called the 'seed-plot of gentility'. The Cheshire gentry prided themselves on marrying within their own county. A Cheshire proverb says: "'Tis better to wed over the mixen than over the moor,' meaning the moorland that separates Cheshire from her neighbours. The result of this intermarriage was that the number of great Cheshire names did not greatly increase, and soon there became

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As many Masseys as asses,
Leghs as fleas,
And Davenports as dogs' tails;

to quote another Cheshire saying.

One of the oldest Cheshire families is that of the Wooley-Dods of Edge Hill, who trace their descent from the Saxon Dot, who was a great man in Cheshire before the Normans came. The Grosvenors, whose ancestors came over with the Conqueror, live at Eaton Hall, and own vast estates in Western Cheshire. The present head of the family is the Duke of Westminster. The Mainwarings, whose forefathers fought in the Crusades, are at Peover, and the crest of the felon's head of the Davenports still survives at Capesthorpe, though the Davenports of Marton and Bramhall are no more.

Many old families of Cheshire have long since died out. The last of the Masseys of Puddington (they had lived there since the days of Rufus) died in the Stuart rising of 1715. There are no Pooles at Poole Hall nor Venables at Kinderton. The last of the Savages of Rock Savage, whose tomb is in the Rivers Chapel at Macclesfield, died in the seventeenth century.

Dutton village and Dutton Hall bear the name of a famous family that was allied by marriage with most of the great families of Cheshire. Duttons live no longer at the Hall, for the last male heir died in the reign of James the First. They were descended from a squire of Robert Lacy, Constable of Chester. When Earl Randal was besieged in Rhuddlan Castle by the Welsh, the Constable and Dutton, his henchman, hastily gathered together a motley rabble of fiddlers and mountebanks from Chester Fair and went to his assistance. The Earl was rescued, and from that time forward to the Duttons was given the charge of all minstrels and fiddlers in the county. There are Duttons in Chester now; one was a mayor of the city quite recently.

Neighbours and kinsmen of the Duttons were the Dones or Donnes of Utkinton, hereditary foresters of the Forest of Delamere. Many of them are buried at Tarporley. The name of the last Lady Done is still called to mind in the neighbourhood where they lived. The Cheshire proverb is the highest praise that can be given to a young Cheshire housewife, and 'Lady Done' is a pet name for modest and thrifty girls, as 'Little Lord Derby' is for brave and honourable boys.

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Lancashire claims the Earls of Derby now, but they are descended from the Stanleys, perhaps the most famous of all Cheshire families, by the marriage of Sir John Stanley and Isabella, heiress of the Lancashire Lathoms. The Stanleys settled at Storeton in Wirral in the fourteenth century. Many men of mark, churchmen and scholars, statesmen and soldiers, belonged to this family. A Stanley helped to win the battle of Bosworth for Henry Tudor, and a Stanley led the Cheshire troops in the famous charge at Flodden Field,

When shivered was fair Scotland's spear
And broken was her shield.

One branch of the family settled at Hooton, but the last of this line lost his estates by gambling and extravagance. The Stanleys of Alderley received knighthood from James the First; they are Barons of Alderley now. This family has given a bishop to Norwich and a still more famous dean to Westminster. The bishop was educated at the Grammar School of Macclesfield.

The Egertons are descended from the standard-bearer of Henry the Eighth, who made him a knight after the 'Battle of the Spurs'. One of them rose to be Lord Chancellor in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First, and was made Baron Ellesmere. The first Earl Egerton of Tatton was made a peer by Queen Victoria largely for the help he gave in the making of the Ship Canal.

The Jodrells, buried in Taxal Church, were descended from an archer who served under the Black Prince. Perhaps he cut his bow from the very yew tree that still stands in the churchyard. One of them fought in the Peninsular War, but the name has disappeared from this part of Cheshire now.

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Several Cheshire noblemen sit in the House of Lords to-day, their family name disguised under

the more showy title of a peerage. A Booth became Lord Delamere at the Restoration, and the Viscounts of Combermere are the descendants of the Cottons, who helped Henry the Eighth to plunder the Cheshire monasteries. The Ardernes are represented by the Earl of Haddington; Lord Newton lives at Lyme Park, the ancient home of the Leghs, and the Earl of Crewe at Crewe Hall. Lord Ashton of Hyde has only recently taken a seat in the House of Lords. He was made a baron at the coronation of King George the Fifth.

When great industries took root in Cheshire new names appeared, and some of the most honoured families in Cheshire now are those that have been closely associated with the workers of the county. We hear a great deal nowadays of 'the dignity of labour', and we think it no disgrace to rise to position and power by a life of toil. The Gregs of Styal and the Brunners of Northwich, the Levers of Wirral, and many others, have endeared themselves to the people of Cheshire by the example of their own labours and the pains they have taken to make the lives of those who live about them and work for them brighter and happier.

A simple cross in the graveyard of the Unitarian Chapel at Knutsford bears the name of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell. The people of Knutsford have a warm corner in their hearts for her, for in a way she has made their town famous for all time. One of the books she wrote—*Cranford* she called it—speaks of the people of Knutsford as she knew them in the earlier days of Queen Victoria. The book tells you much of the quiet life of a country town before the coming of the railways and the busy hubbub of the later nineteenth century, and all Cheshire children should read it. Mrs. Gaskell wrote several other books, all of which show her sweet sympathy and kindness towards those whose lives are cast in lowly surroundings.

If you have not heard of *Cranford* you have probably read a book whose title you know better than the name of the writer. *Alice in Wonderland* was written by a man who spent much of his early life in Cheshire. 'Lewis Carroll', though that is not his real name, is the name under which he wrote the humorous stories that have delighted young people and old alike.

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John Critchley Prince, the workman poet of Hyde, lived in the days when the poorly-paid workers of Cheshire were struggling for a better existence. While working in a factory at Hyde he found time to write poems which speak of the charms of home, the brotherhood of all mankind, and the hopes and ambitions of his fellow men. Prince was thriftless and intemperate, and much of his life was spent in misery, but his talents were great, and the people of Hyde have done him honour. He is buried in Hyde churchyard.

In the chancel of Stockport Parish Church is a tablet to the memory of John Wainwright, the organist who composed the tune for 'Christians, awake', the beautiful Christmas hymn 'whose sound is gone out into all lands where the praise of our Lord is sung', as the inscription runs. The words of the hymn were written by Byrom, a Manchester man.

Cheshire produced a famous hymn-writer in Bishop Heber. Reginald Heber was born in the rectory of Malpas in 1783. He gave himself up to missionary work in foreign lands, and was made Bishop of Calcutta. 'From Greenland's icy mountains' and 'Brightest and best of the sons of the morning' are two of the hymns that came from his pen.

Charles Kingsley must have loved Cheshire. Though he was not a Cheshire man by birth, he claimed descent from the Kingsleys of Vale Royal. He was a great lover of nature, and, while he was Canon of Chester, founded the Natural History Society in Chester, whose home is in the Grosvenor Museum, and encouraged the people of Cheshire to take an interest in the story of their county, and to study the ways of plants and of the wild creatures of the fields and the forests. His pathetic ballad of the Sands of Dee, 'O Mary, go and call the cattle home,' will always be a favourite with the village people of Wirral.

Tabley Hall was the home of another celebrated naturalist. Here lived Lord de Tabley, one of the greatest students of Cheshire flowers, and a lover of all wild living things. His grave is in the churchyard of Little Peover, and over it trails a bramble, which was his favourite plant and one of which he made a special study. In the gardens of Tabley Hall is a bramble-bed, still tended carefully, which he laid out from the choicest briars he could find.

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Lord de Tabley was a poet as well as a lover of flowers and birds. Perhaps you will some day read his poems, and be charmed by his descriptive pictures of the ways of his feathered friends, the 'starlings mustering on their evening tree', the 'swallows beating low before a hint of rain', the 'plaintive plovers', and the 'wide-winged screaming swift'.

Lord de Tabley's example is one which all Cheshire boys and girls should learn to copy. Those who are proud of their county will not do anything to make it less beautiful. Like him, they will cherish and protect the plants and birds and all the wild creatures that have been put into their keeping; for such things are the common heritage of the people of Cheshire, and, once destroyed, can never be replaced.

We have traced the story of Cheshire from prehistoric times. For long ages the story was one of war and bloodshed, of conquest and defeat, of the coming and the passing of many nations, each in turn yielding to a more powerful foe. Cheshire has seen more of the strife of nations than most counties of England. Her position on the map of the British Isles has willed that this should be.

When the latest struggle for the possession of our country was ended, and the Normans lorded it over the conquered Saxons, we saw Cheshire made into a bulwark to keep in check the nations that surrounded her on north and west. For 200 years this was her mission. She was a kingdom within a kingdom, with an earl or viceroy to rule over her, and a Parliament and laws of her own. More centuries passed by before a Tudor king permitted her to take her place in that greater English Parliament and to help to frame laws under which she, along with the rest of England, should be governed.

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DEE BRIDGE AND MILLS: CHESTER

But Cheshire was not denied the greatest of all good gifts. We saw the lamp of Christianity burn brightly from Hildeburgh's Isle to Chadkirk, and some of the earliest Gospel teachers were sent by the very Welsh and Irish nations over which Cheshire was afterwards set as sentinel and watch-dog. Feebly the light sometimes glimmered in days of stress and storm, but it never went out; and after the Tudor monarch had shaken off the shackles of Rome, and the minds of men had been stirred by a great awakening, its early brightness was restored in a purified religion that gave freedom of conscience to all men.

Then came the horrors of civil war, when Cheshire men fought for the liberty to believe what they thought to be right, and rose in their wrath at the unlawful misdeeds of the Stuart kings, when patriots rose in defence of the ancient liberties that are the inheritance of all Englishmen. This was the last blood shed in Cheshire.

In the last hundred years the people of Cheshire have seen the face of Cheshire greatly changed. They have helped to create great industries, and they have witnessed the wonderful discoveries of the power of steam and electricity, and all the conveniences and comforts of modern life that have followed in their train. In ways too numerous to speak of, their lives have been made brighter and happier.

The Princes of Wales are the Earls of Chester still. King Edward the Seventh, when he was Prince of Wales, came to Chester and opened the new Town Hall. The citizens of Chester knew him well, for he was often a guest at Eaton Hall, the home of the Grosvenors, the descendants of the Conqueror's 'mighty huntsman'. William the Norman harried Cheshire with the sword, and the people of Cheshire fled before him. King Edward brought not a sword but peace in his hand, and the people loved him, for he was one of the world's great peace-makers.

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In one of the earliest chapters of this book you have read of the 'making of Cheshire'. We have brought the story of Cheshire down to the present day, but Cheshire is not yet 'made'. Many and wonderful changes there have been since our ancestors shot wild beasts with their flinty arrow-heads, and devoured raw flesh in the pits and caverns of Alderley Edge. The people of Cheshire, who have struggled through long centuries to win for themselves light and liberty, have never turned their faces backwards. With steadfast purpose and unflinching steps they march forward on the way of progress.

The 'making' still goes on; and there is plenty of work to do for the Cheshire boys and girls of to-day, that they may help to make their county a better place to live in than they found it.

Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour.

The great families of Cheshire whose names recur so often in these pages were proud of the mottoes written beneath their crests and coats of arms. The words inscribed on the village cross which the boys and girls of Eastham pass on their way to school, are the best mottoes that all Cheshire school-children can take for their own:

'Fear God. Honour the King. Work while it is yet day.'

And the day is very short. As the lines on a tombstone in Little Peover churchyard remind us:

A little rule, a little sway,
A sunbeam in a winter's day,
Is all the greatest of us have
Between the cradle and the grave.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Flint weapons no doubt continued to be used, especially in remote and hilly districts, even after the arrival of the Celts.

[2] Sometimes the roof was held up by a single 'king-post' in place of two queen-posts. The 'king-post' reached from the centre of the tie-beam to the point of the roof.

[3] i.e. twisting the fine threads into yarn. Those who were engaged in this particular process were called 'throwsters', just as spinster meant originally one engaged in spinning.

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