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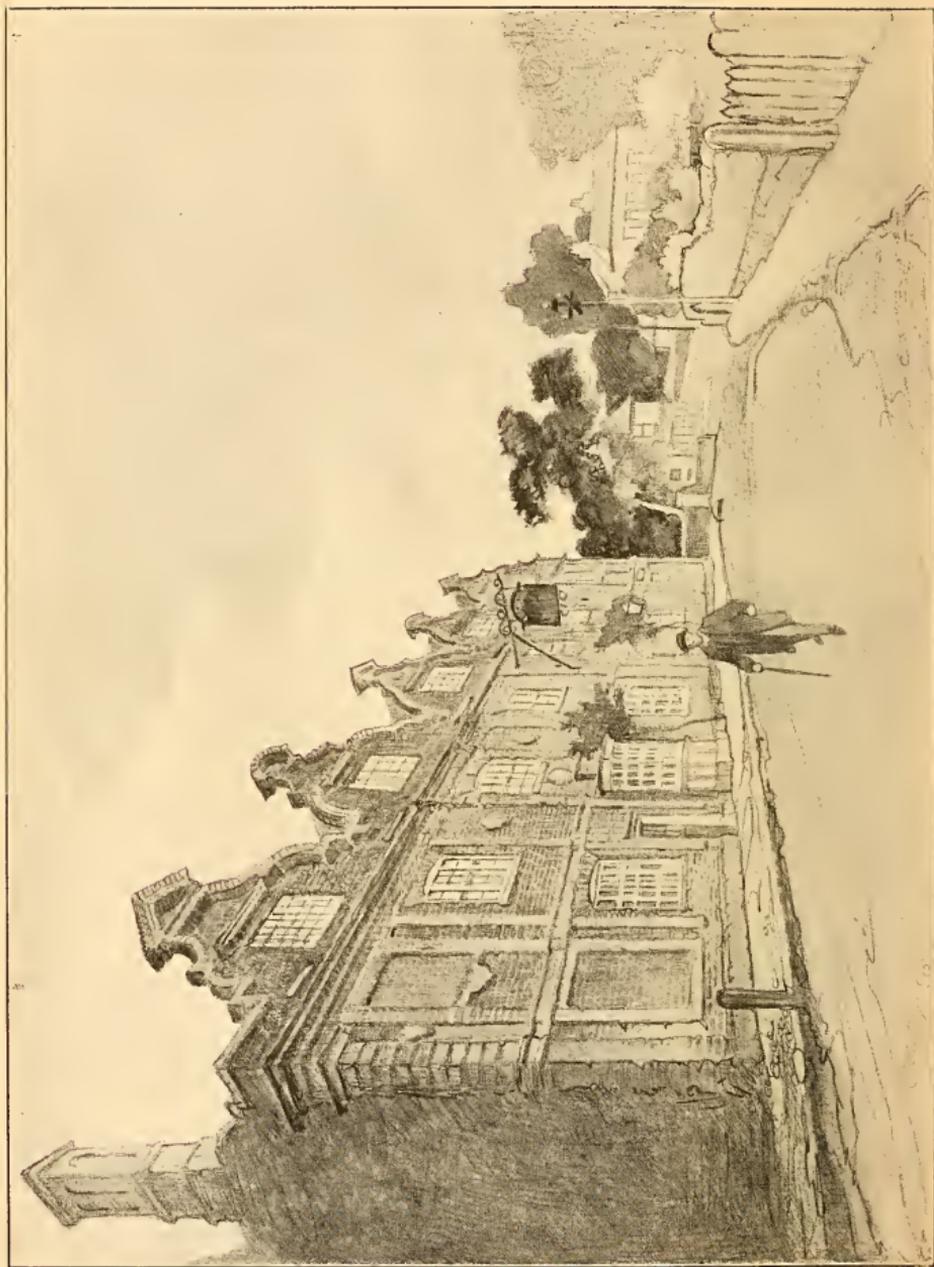
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THE NORWICH ROAD: AN EAST ANGLIAN HIGHWAY

By CHARLES G. HARPER

Author of "*The Brighton Road*," "*The Portsmouth Road*," "*The Dover Road*," "*The Bath Road*," "*The Exeter Road*," and "*The Great North Road*."

*Illustrated by the Author, and from
Old-Time Prints and Pictures.*



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PREFACE.

THE author of a little book published in 1818, called *A JOURNEY TO LONDON*, which is nearly all "London" with very little "journey," remarks that "it is as uncommon for a book to go into the world without a preface, as a man without a hat. They are both convenient coverings." Here, then, is the customary covering.

Introducing this, the seventh in a series of books telling the story of our great highways, it may perhaps be as well to re-state the methods used, and objects aimed at. The chief intention is to provide a readable book which shall avoid the style either of a *Guide-Book* or a *History*. It is the better fortune to be in the reader's hands than in the dusty seclusion of those formidable works, the *County Histories*; or disregarded among the guide-books of forgotten holidays. To the antiquary it will, of course, be obvious that this and other volumes of the series "contain many omissions," as the Irish reviewer said; but such things as find no place here have, as a general rule, been disregarded because they not only do not help the *Story of the Road* along, but rather hinder its progression.

The NORWICH ROAD, in its one hundred and twelve miles, passes by many an historic site and through districts distinguished for their quiet pastoral beauty. In being historic it is not singular, for, as Oliver Wendell Holmes very truly said, "England is one vast museum," and the old road would be remarkable indeed, that, like Canning's "NEEDY KNIFE GRINDER," had no story to tell. It is, however, in the especial characteristics of East Anglian scenery, speech, customs, and architecture that this road stands apart and is highly individualised. "East Anglia" is no merely arbitrary and meaningless term, as those who travel it, if only on the highway, will speedily find.

But this shall be no trumpet-blast; nor indeed do the charms of Eastern England require such a fanfare, for who has not yet heard of that lovely valley of the Stour, so widely known as "Constable's Country," by whose exquisite water-meadows and shady lanes the old turnpike passes? Scenery such as this; windmills, cornfields, tall elms, winding rivers, and commons populous with geese and turkeys, are typical of the NORWICH ROAD, which may, with this introduction, now be left to recommend itself.

CHARLES G. HARPER.

PETERSHAM, SURREY,

October 1901.



SEPARATE PLATES

	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
SCOLE WHITE HART	9
ALDGATE PUMP. (<i>From a drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd,</i> 1854)	21
ALDGATE, 1820	59
THE "OLD RED LION," WHITECHAPEL, WHERE TURPIN SHOT MATTHEW KING. (<i>From a drawing by T. Hosmer</i> <i>Shepherd, 1854</i>)	65
WHITECHAPEL ROAD IN THE COACHING AGE	71
MILE END TURNPIKE, 1813. (<i>After Rowlandson</i>)	91
ROMFORD	103
MOUNTNESSING WINDMILL	107
INGATESTONE IN COACHING DAYS. (<i>From an Old Print</i>)	125
NEW HALL LODGES	133
CHIPPING HILL	145
"THREE BLIND 'UNS AND A BOLTER." (<i>From a Print</i> <i>after H. Alken</i>)	215
COLCHESTER	

	PAGE
THE VALE OF DEDHAM. (<i>After Constable</i>)	219
SPRING : SUFFOLK PLOUGHLANDS. (<i>After Constable</i>)	229
THE CORNFIELD. (<i>After Constable</i>)	233
THE OLD SIGN OF SCOLE WHITE HART	265
STAIRCASE IN THE "WHITE HART"	269
DICKLEBURGH	279
A DISPUTED PASTURAGE	289
LONG STRATTON	293
NEWTON FLOTMAN	299
NORWICH, FROM MOUSEHOLD HEATH	311
NORWICH MARKET PLACE	315

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

	<i>Title Page</i>
	PAGE
Vignette	vii
Preface	ix
List of Illustrations: London Stone	1
The Runaway 'Prentice	12
Yard of the "Bull," Leadenhall Street. (<i>From a drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1854</i>)	14
Front of the "Saracen's Head," Aldgate: Present Day	16
Yard of the "Saracen's Head" in Coaching Days. (<i>From a drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1854</i>)	18
Yard of the "Saracen's Head": Present Day	27
The Yard of the "Bull," Whitechapel, in Coaching Days.	38
The Norwich Coach at Christmastide. (<i>After Robert Seymour, 1835</i>)	63
Whitechapel Old Church	76
Bow	84
Seven Kings	87
Whalebone House	89
Entrance to Romford	93
Old Toll-house, Puttels Bridge	94
The "Fleece," Brook Street	95
The Martyr's Tree, Brentwood	98
Yard of the "White Hart," Brentwood	100
Shenfield	102
Mountnessing Church	106
The Gatehouse, Ingatestone Hall	111
At Margaretting	113
The "Good Woman" Sign	

	PAGE
The Bridge: Entrance to Chelmsford	115
The Conduit, Chelmsford	116
Tindal's Statue	117
The "Three Cups" Sign	122
Springfield Church	123
Boreham	128
The "Angel," Kelvedon	141
Birthplace of Spurgeon	151
Near Mark's Tey	176
Lexden	180
The Grand Staircase, Colchester Castle	199
Old Man Trap, Colchester Castle	205
Colchester Castle	207
Gun Hill	221
Old Toll-house, Stratford Bridge	222
Wolsey's Gateway	242
The "Lion and Lamb," Angel Lane	244
Sparrowe's House	246
The "Great White Horse"	248
Mockbeggar Hall	253
"Stonham Pie"	256
Near Brockford	257
"Thwaite Low House"	259
The "Cock," Thwaite	260
Long Stratton	295
Tasburgh	297
The Old Brick Pound	301
Caistor Camp	303
Norwich Snap	318
Norfolk Turkey, on his way to Leadenhall Market	320

THE ROAD TO NORWICH

	MILES.
London (Whitechapel Church) to Mile End	1
Stratford-le-Bow (Bow Church)	2½
(Cross River Lea).	
Stratford (Broadway)	4
Forest Gate	5
Manor Park	6
Ilford	6½
(Cross River Roding).	
Seven Kings	7½
(Cross "Seven Kings' Watering," or Fillebrook).	
Chadwell Heath	9
Romford	12
Hare Street	13
Puttels Bridge	15½
(Cross Weald Brook).	
Brook Street	16½
Brentwood	18
Shenfield	19
Mountnessing Street	21
Ingatestone	23
Margaretting Street	25
Widford	27½
(Cross River Wid or Ash).	
Moulsham	28¼
(Cross River Chelmer).	

	MILES
Chelmsford	29
Springfield	29 $\frac{1}{2}$
Boreham	32 $\frac{3}{4}$
(Cross River Ter).	
Hatfield Peverel	34 $\frac{3}{4}$
(Cross River Witham).	
Witham	37 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rivenhall End	39 $\frac{1}{2}$
Kelvedon	41
(Cross River Blackwater).	
Gore Pit	42
Mark's Tey	45 $\frac{3}{4}$
Copford	46 $\frac{1}{4}$
Stanway	47
Lexden Heath	48
Lexden	49
Colchester	51
(Cross River Colne).	
Dilbridge	52 $\frac{1}{2}$
Stratford Bridge	57 $\frac{3}{4}$
(Cross River Stour).	
Stratford St Mary	58 $\frac{1}{2}$
Capel Railway Crossing. Capel Station. Capel St Mary	63 $\frac{1}{2}$
Copdock	65 $\frac{1}{2}$
Washbrook	66
(Cross Wash Brook).	
Ipswich	69 $\frac{1}{4}$
(Cross River Orwell)	
Whitton Street	71 $\frac{3}{4}$

	MILES
Claydon	72 $\frac{3}{4}$
Creeping All Saints	76 $\frac{3}{4}$
Stonham Earls	79
Little Stonham	79 $\frac{3}{4}$
Brockford	83 $\frac{3}{4}$
Thwaite	84 $\frac{1}{2}$
Stoke Ash	86 $\frac{1}{4}$
Yaxley	88 $\frac{1}{4}$
Brome	90 $\frac{1}{4}$
(Cross River Waveney).	
Scole	92
Dickleburgh	94 $\frac{1}{2}$
Tivetshall Level Crossing	97 $\frac{1}{4}$
Wacton	100
Long Stratton	101 $\frac{1}{2}$
Tasburgh	102 $\frac{3}{4}$
(Cross River Tase).	
Newton Flotman	104 $\frac{1}{2}$
(Cross River Tase).	
Hartford Bridge	109 $\frac{1}{4}$
(Cross River Yare).	
Norwich (Market Place)	111 $\frac{1}{2}$



I

IN the days before railways came, robbing the exits from London of all dignity and purpose, the runaway 'prentice lads of the familiar legends, who were always half starved and continually beaten, revolting at length from their uncomfortable beds under the shop counters and their daily stripes and scorpions, were wont, according to the story-books, to steal at night out of their houses of bondage and make for the roads. Such an one, making in those days for Norwich, and standing at Aldgate in the grey of the morning, looking across the threshold of London, would have seen, in the long broad road stretching before him, the only means of escape. The shilling or so of which he would be the owner would scarce serve him for two or three days' keep; and so, although he might have longed for a place on the coach he could see starting from the "Spread Eagle," in

Gracechurch Street, at 4 a.m., there would have been for such as he no choice but to start afoot, with as light a heart as possible, and chance the offer of a lift on some waggon returning into Essex. Had he, in leaving Aldgate behind, asked some passer-by the way to Norwich, he might have been seized for what he was, a runaway; but, if he escaped suspicion, would have been answered readily enough, for everyone in those times knew the way to lie along the Whitechapel Road and by Mile End Turnpike. Has anyone in these enlightened and highly-educated times courage sufficient to ask his way to Norwich from Aldgate? and, assuming that dauntless courage, is it conceivable that anyone in that crowded street could tell him?

There are no apprentices and no tyrannical masters of the old kind left now, and the only runaways of these days are the bad boys of precocious wits who would not think of tramping the highway while they could raise a railway fare or "lift" a bicycle. But the way still lies open to the explorer from Aldgate, and the old Norwich Road yet follows the line of the Roman way into the country of the Iceni.

Between the era of our imaginary truant and that of the Romans, who originally constructed this road, there yawns a vast gulf of time; certainly not less than eighteen hundred years. The history of the road during that space has largely been forgotten; but, worst of all, we know perhaps less of it and its life in the times of Charles the First, onward to those of William and Mary, than we

can recover from Roman historians; and certainly its coaching history is in tatters and fragments, for those who made it did not live in the bright glow of publicity that surrounded the coachmen of roads north, south or west, and died unexploited by the sporting writers of the Coaching Age.

II

NEARLY seventeen centuries have passed since, in the great *Antonine Itinerary* of the Roman Empire, the first guide-book to the roads was compiled, and almost eighty years since Cary and Paterson—the rival Bradshaws and A.B.C.'s of the Coaching Age—issued the last editions of their *Travellers' Companions*, which now, instead of being constantly in the travellers' hands, are treasured on the shelves of collectors interested in relics of days before railways.

The *Antonine Itinerary* was compiled, A.D. 200-300. Among other roads of which it purports to give an account is the road to Venta Icenorum; the Norwich Road, as we should say. Its statement is brief and to the point, if requiring no little explanation after this lapse of time:—

Iter a Venta Icenorum Londinio <i>m.p.</i> ...	cxxviii <i>sic.</i>
Sitomago	xxxii
Combretonio	xxii
Ad Ansam	xv
Camuloduno	vii

Canonio	...	...	...	viii
Cæsaromago	...	...	...	xii
Durolito	...	...	...	xvi
Londinio	...	...	...	xv

A hundred and twenty-eight miles, that is to say, between Venta and London. The Romans, of course, calculated all their mileages in Britain from that hoary relic, the still existing "London Stone," which, from behind its modern iron grating in the wall of St Swithiu's Church, still turns a battered face towards the heedless, hurrying crowds in Cannon Street, in the City of London.

In coaching days the Norwich Road, in common with most East Anglian routes, was measured from Whitechapel Church, and the distance from that landmark to Norwich given as $111\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The apparent wide difference between those measurements of classic and modern times is very nearly reconciled when we add a mile for the distance between London Stone and Whitechapel Church to the $111\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and when we reduce the Roman miles to English. An English mile measures 5280 feet, while a Roman mile runs only to 4842 feet, this fact accounting, along the road to Norwich, for some 13 miles of the discrepancy, and bringing the difference to the insignificant one of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles; or, assuming the Roman ruins at Caistor, 3 miles short of Norwich, to mark the site of Venta Icenorum, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles; no very wide margin of error.

The compiler of that ancient itinerary is unknown. He, or they (for a survey of the Roman Empire cannot have been made by one man), are

quite hidden and lost to sight under the title of "Antonine," which was given in honour of the Emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla, father and son, who both owned the name Antoninus. By similarly honorary titles we are accustomed to christen our public buildings. Thus, in coming ages, when such earthworms as engineers and architects are forgotten, the "Victoria" Embankment, "Victoria" Station, the "Victoria and Albert" Museum, and the thousand and one other things thus entitled will serve to hand a Sovereign down to futurity, while the names of those who created them, good or ill, will have perished, like the leaves of autumn. Customs change, and fashions cease to be, but snobbery is more enduring than brass or marble, and outlasts the mummies of the Pharaohs.

The compiler who drew up the list of places on the road between Londinium and Venta has chosen to reckon backwards. The "*m. p.*" is the abbreviation for *mille passus*, or paced Roman miles; the figures after the first line giving the distance from the place last mentioned. Setting out from London, we find "Durolitum" to be identified with the Roman earthworks of Uphall, near Romford; "Cæsaromagus" to be identical with Writtle, near Chelmsford; "Canonium" to stand for Kelvedon; "Camulodunum" for Colechester; and "Ad Ansam" for Stratford St Mary; while "Combretonium" and "Sitomagus" still puzzle antiquaries, who are reduced to the extremity of suggesting the opposite alternatives of Brettenham or Burgh for the one, and Dunwich or Thetford for the other; names with a

specious resemblance, and on circuitous routes east or west of the direct road which would more than account for the Roman surveyor's overplus of miles. The direct road, however, is unmistakably Roman, and those who will may seek for the elusive "Sitomagus" and "Combretonium" along it. Haply they may discover them at Scole, Dickleburgh or Long Stratton.

But along the whole length of the road, from London to Norwich, the wayfarer receives impressions of its true Roman character, whether in its appearance or in the place-names on the way. Old Ford and Stratford-at-Bow, where the Roman paved fords crossed the River Lea; that other "old ford" at Ilford, across the River Roding, which was already ancient when the Saxons came and so named it, "Eald Ford," leaving it for later times to corrupt the name into "Ilford" and for uninstructed historians to explain the meaning to have been that it was an "ill ford"; to which condition, indeed, many had descended in mediæval times: these are examples. Others are found at Ingatestone, the Saxon "Ing-atte-stone" = the "meadow at the stone," a Roman milestone that stood by the wayside; in the names of Stanway, Colchester, Stratford St Mary, Little Stonham, Tivetshall, and Long Stratton, places to be more particularly mentioned later in these pages.

It has been aptly pointed out by East Anglian antiquaries that the circuitous route eastward or westward of the straight road between Stratford St Mary and Norwich, on which Sitomagus and Combretonium may have been situated, may probably

have been an early Roman way, constructed shortly after the conquest of the Iceni, along an old native trackway, and superseded in later and more settled times by the direct road, overlooked by the Antonine compilers who, working at Rome, the very centre of the Empire, may not have been fully informed of changes in countries like Britain, on the edge of the Unknown. This view, when we consider the long period stretching between the conquest of this part of the country and the final break up of the Romano-British civilisation, about A.D. 450, has much to recommend it. A period of some three hundred and eighty years of colonisation and development, equaling, for example, the great gulf of time between our own day and that of Henry the Eighth, the changes in its course must have rivalled, if not have surpassed, those in our roads between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. During those eras, between the first and the fifth centuries, many of the original winding tracks must have been straightened, or left to the secondary position of byways, while new and straight roads were engineered across country formerly, for one reason or another, avoided. Meanwhile, the Antonine Itinerary-makers must have relied for their surveys upon old and out-of-date information, just as, in our own time, we find many recent maps, printed from the Ordnance Survey of a hundred years ago, still indicating winding roads that have been non-existent for generations, and ignoring the direct highways made by Telford and others just before the opening of the Railway Era.

III

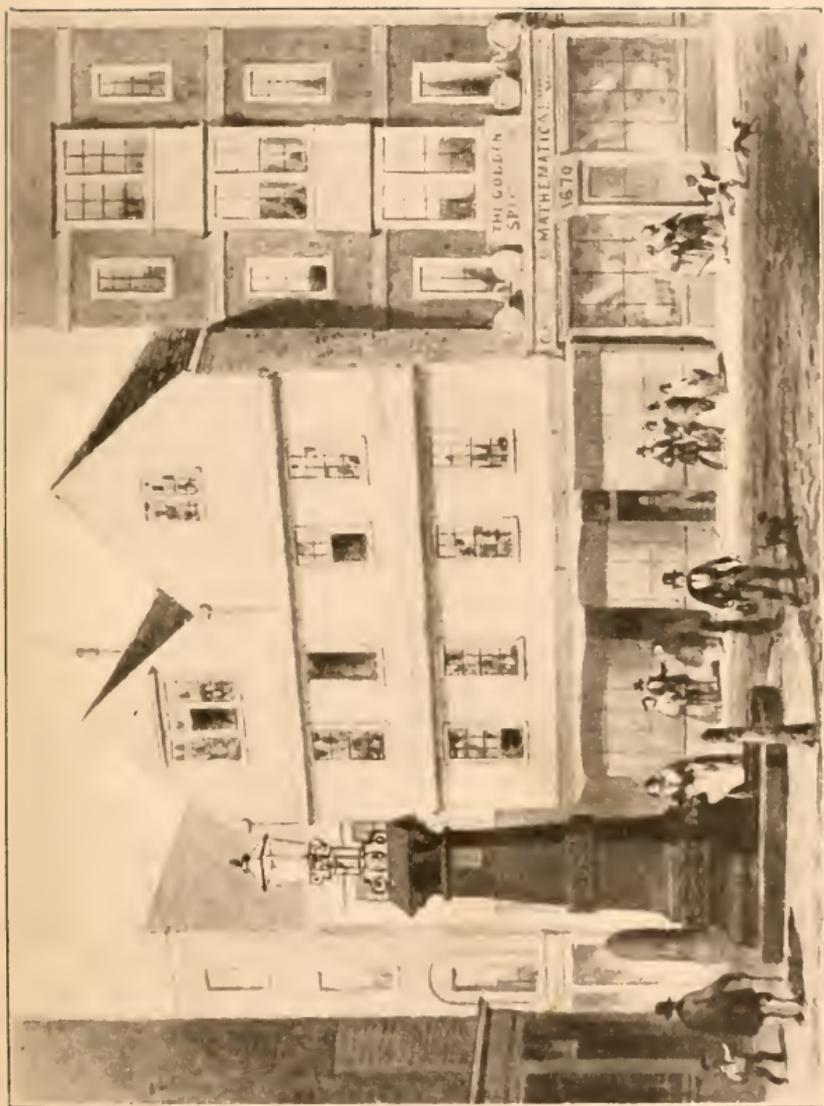
LONDON made no remarkable growth between the Roman and mediæval periods, but this road had in that time slightly altered its course from its starting-point, and, instead of going from Cannon Street to Shoreditch, Bethnal Green and Old Ford, left the City by way of Leadenhall Street and Aldgate, continuing down the Mile End and Bow Roads to Stratford.

The traveller of Chaucer's day, coming to Ald Gate, in the City wall, had reached the country. That gate spanned the road at a point marked nowadays by the house, No 2 Aldgate High Street, standing at the boundary of the parishes of St Katharine Cree and St Botolph. In 1374 Chaucer took from the Corporation of London a lease for the remainder of his life of the rooms in this gate, which was pulled down and succeeded by another, built in 1606, which in its turn disappeared in 1761.

From his windows commanding the road Chaucer must often have seen that dainty gentlewoman, the Prioress of St Leonard's, Stratford, riding to or from London, escorted by a numerous train, and from her must have drawn that portrait of the prioress who spoke French with a Cockney accent:—

“After the scole of Stratford-attè-Bowe,
For French of Parys was to hire unknowe.”

In Chaucer's day they probably taught French, of sorts, at the Priory schools.



ALDGATE PUMP.

From a Drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1854.

At that time it was no little journey to Stratford, although by measurement less than four miles, and the lady went strongly escorted, as, indeed, did all of consequence, or those who had aught to lose. For the more common wayfarers who went alone on this desperate eastern trail there stood the Chapel and the Holy Well of St Michael the Archangel within the City, where the otherwise unprotected might seek the aid of the Saint's strong arm before leaving the walled City behind on their perilous faring. This chapel stood where Leadenhall Street, Fenchurch Street and Aldgate meet, on a site thrown into the roadway in 1876, when the street was widened. Until that year the crypt of this shrine had filled the prosaic functions of a cellar in the corner house, itself demolished, together with the beautiful Early English arches on which it stood. Adjoining was "Aldgate Pump," which had long before unromantically taken the place of the sanctified spring. That celebrated civic monument is seen in the accompanying illustration, taken in 1854. Many City wits have exercised their satirical powers upon it, and the expression long current of "a draft on Aldgate Pump," a once popular mercantile phrase for a bad note, goes back so far as the days of Fielding. Oddly enough, the water of the pump retained some repute until 1876, when, on being analysed, it was found impure, and the supply closed. The pump, however, is still in existence, rebuilt of its original stones, a few feet away from the old site, and yields water again; not, however, from the old saintly source, but from the strictly

secular filter-beds of the New River Water Company.

Having implored the protection of St Michael, travellers of old went, heartened, upon their way down what is now Whitechapel High Street, which Strype, writing in the time of James the First, calls a "spacious fair street," with "sweet and wholesome air." Past hedgerows of elm trees and rustic



YARD OF THE "BULL," LEADENHALL STREET.

From a Drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1854.

stiles and bridges, those old wayfarers went, and onward down the Whitechapel Road, where the country was a lovely solitude, with "nothing but the bounteous gifts of Nature and saint-like tokens of innocency," which, according to Sir Thomas More, in 1504, characterised the charming fields of Mile End, Shadwell, Stepney and Limehouse. This, it will be allowed, is scarcely descriptive of those

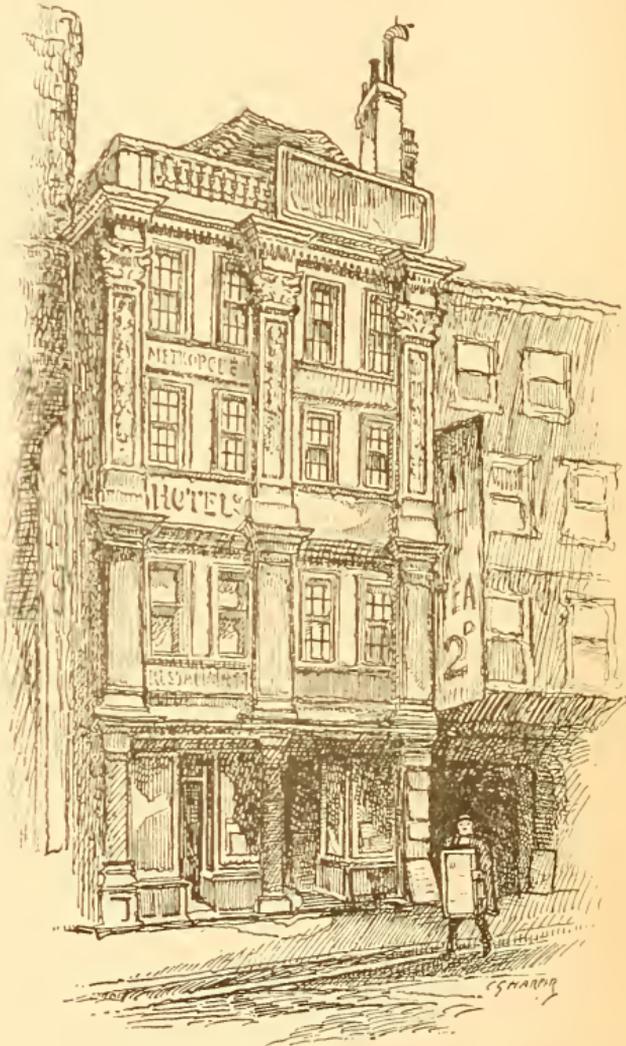
places to-day, whatever they may become when the People's Palace and the University Settlements have done their work.

Thus far for sake of contrast. Let us return to Aldgate for a while, and, without following its fortunes throughout the centuries, glance at it in the Coaching Age, before the squalor of modern Whitechapel had invaded it from the east, or the extension of City business had come to destroy most of that picturesque assemblage of old inns and mediæval gabled houses, to replace them with the giant warehouses and "imposing" offices of modern London.

I V

ALTHOUGH, as we have seen, the East Anglian roads were, in coaching days, measured from Whitechapel Church, the great actual starting-place was Aldgate, where many of the old inns were situated, as, in like manner, the ancient hostelries of the Borough clustered at the beginning of the road to Canterbury and Dover. Aldgate occupies a position midway between London Stone, the Roman starting-point in Cannon Street, and Whitechapel Church, and to and from this spot came and went the stage-coaches, post-chaises and waggons in the palmy days of the road. The mail-coaches, of course, had a starting-point of their own, and

set out from the old General Post-Office in Lombard Street, or, in the last years of coaching, from St Martin's-le-Grand.



FRONT OF THE "SARACEN'S HEAD," ALDGA TE : PRESENT DAY.

It is true that one might have taken coach from many other and more central inns for Col-

chester, Ipswich and Norwich:—from the “Spread Eagle,” in Gracechurch Street, a fine old galleried inn demolished at the close of 1865; from the “Cross Keys,” in the same street; from the “Swan with Two Necks,” in Lad Lane, anciently Lady Lane (that is to say, the Lane of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin), now Gresham Street; or from the “Bull,” 151 Leadenhall Street, which must by no means be confounded with its namesake in Aldgate High Street. Exactly what that Leadenhall Street hostelry was like let the picture of its old galleried courtyard show.

There was also “another way” to Norwich; out of Bishopsgate, by way of Newmarket, Bury and Thetford. Taking this route, which, although $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles shorter, no true sportsman considered to be the real Norwich Road, one started from the “Golden Cross,” Charing Cross; from the “White Horse,” in Fetter Lane (improved away in 1898); from the “Flower Pot,” in Bishopsgate Street; from yet another “Bull,” also in Bishopsgate Street; or from the “Bull and Mouth,” St Martin’s - le - Grand. But when all these places have been duly set forth, it is to Aldgate that we must turn as the real starting-point.

Aldgate in the days before railways was quite unlike the Aldgate of to-day. Certain of the old buildings remain, but the “note” of the place is entirely altered. It is now a noisy, distracting ante-room to the City, in which tinkling tram-cars and costermongers’ barrows jostle with elephantine

railway goods vans; where the Jewish second-hand clothes shop rubs a greasy shoulder with the "merchant tailor's" vulgar show of electric light, plate glass and wax models; and where the East End, in the person of the aproned, ringleted and ostrich-feathered factory girl, meets the West, in the shape of some City clerk strayed beyond his mercantile or financial frontiers, each regarding



YARD OF THE "SARACEN'S HEAD" IN COACHING DAYS.

From a Drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1854.

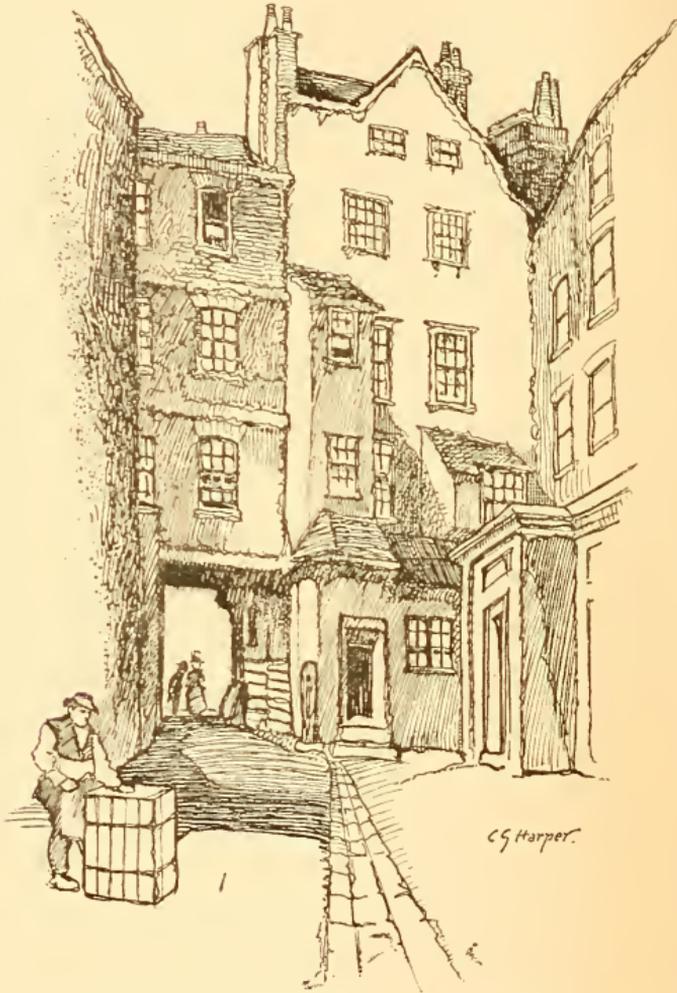
the other as a curiosity in these social marches. It is as the meeting of salt water and fresh, this mingling of the tides of City and East End, and to the observant not a little curious. Nothing like it—nothing so marked—is to be seen on any other of the borders of the City. There is, too, a smack of the sea, a certain air of romance, in the street, coming, perhaps, from the windows

of the nautical instrument-makers, where the binoculars, the quadrants, the sextants and the sea-faring tackle in general hint of distant climes and the coral reefs of South Pacific isles.

These mariners' emporia were here and in the Minories before railways came, and so also were many fine old inns. For Aldgate, difficult though it may be to realise it to-day, was not only the place whence many of the Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk coaches set out, but was also the resting-place of travellers to London; and its inns were quite as well-appointed as those of the more central ones in the City, or those of Charing Cross, or the West End. As travellers by rail to London in modern times resort to the railway hotels, so did our great-grandfathers find rest at the coaching inns at whose thresholds they were set down at their journey's end.

The fragments merely of the last of Aldgate's old hostelries remain, in the bold front of Nos. 6 and 7, forming two-thirds of the old frontage of the "Saracen's Head." No. 5, the other third, has been destroyed, and so also has the old appearance of the galleried courtyard, still named "Saracen's Head Yard," but now surrounded by warehouses. The old coach archway remains, and the gables at the back of the buildings are quaint reminiscences of other times. Coaches plied between the "Saracen's Head" and Norwich so far back as 1681, and Strype, the antiquary, born in the neighbourhood, in a court whose name now flaunts the horrid travesty of "Tripe

Court," referring to the inn, speaks of it as "very large and of a considerable trade." The existing fragment, with its handsome architectural elevation



YARD OF THE "SARACEN'S HEAD": PRESENT DAY.

of richly-moulded plaster in the Renaissance style of the late seventeenth century, is part of the building mentioned by him. Small shops now

occupy the ground floor, and the upper rooms are let as tenements.

But the "Bull" was perhaps the most famous of these old inns. From it Mr Pickwick set out for Ipswich, and from Sam Weller's remark on that occasion, "Take care o' the archway, gen'l'men," as the coach started, it is evident that the "Bull" possessed a courtyard. At that palmy time of inns and coaches, the opening of the nineteenth century, the "Bull" was, and long had been, in the Nelson family, a noted race of inn and coach proprietors. At that particular time Mrs Ann Nelson, widow of the late host, who died about 1812, was the presiding genius. Associated with her was her son John. Another son, Robert, had a business of his own, and was long proprietor of the "Belle Sauvage," on Ludgate Hill, and partner with others in many coaches. A third son, George, drove the Exeter "Defiance," horsed by his mother out of London.

But to return to the "Bull" and Mrs Nelson, who had, as her husband had, and his father before him, some sort of interest in many coaches running into Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, on main or bye-roads. She also at one time leased the "Spread Eagle," in Gracechurch Street, and extended her energies so far as to horse the Exeter "Telegraph" and the "Quicksilver" Devonport Mail out of London, together with the Exeter "Defiance" night coach, the Manchester "Telegraph," the Oxford "Defiance," Brighton "Red Rover," and the Leeds "Courier." In their

coaching speculations the Nelson family were associated with a pastrycook whose little shop adjoined the gateway of the "Bull." Occasionally a new hand on one of the coaches would send his leaders' noses through the shop front, for that gateway was very narrow and Mrs Nelson's coachmen anything but deliberate. On the other side of the gateway was a whip-maker's shop, kept by one James Johnson, who throve mightily on the custom of the coachmen and others who frequented the "Bull."

This most energetic of landladies and Napoleonic of coach proprietors developed and managed her extensive coaching interests long before her husband died. He, good, easy-going man, had been a fair whip in earlier days, but had long left the box, and had no head for business, although a very fine taste in wines and spirits: the lack of the first probably a corollary of the second. She spared neither herself nor her servants. Rising considerably before the lark, she saw the owls to bed, and was a martinet to her coachmen. Left a widow while in the prime of life, she still wore in old age the dress of her youth. The sketch of her in the picture of the "Bull" yard in coaching days shows exactly what her costume was like. A short skirt revealed high-heeled shoes with large buckles, the heels painted red. Black velvet was her winter wear, and fancy apron, lace neckerchief and frilled cap invariable items. Up to her seventieth year she was the last up at night, scouring the house to see that



ALDGATE, 1820.

all was safe; and the first up in the morning, looking after the stable people and seeing that the horses had their feeds and were properly cared for. Inside and outside the house, and down the eastern roads, her influence was despotic and would brook no defiance. Her "Ipswich Blues" had long been famous when an opposition coach was started. Opposition could not be allowed to live, and so the fares were reduced from eight shillings inside and sixteen shillings out, by regular stages until the point was reached when passengers were not only carried for nothing, but were presented with an excellent dinner at Witham. At that point the rivals discreetly retired, when fares rose again to their old level.

Mrs Nelson insisted on the most rigid punctuality. Did the coachman of one of her crack coaches, or one of her still more famous "Oppositions" bring his team down her yard five minutes over time, he was reprimanded; ten minutes, and he was fined half-a-crown; a quarter of an hour, and he stood a good chance of being dismissed. She ran a Southend "Opposition" every afternoon by Romford, Brentwood, Billericay, Wickford, Raleigh and Rochford, along Essex roads of a feather-bed softness of mud; but time must be kept. She provided good horses and would not hear of excuses. One day, when the roads were particularly heavy, the "Opposition" came in half an hour late from Southend. The coachman, after the manner of his kind, on driving into the yard

and pulling up at the coffee-room door, threw his whip across the wheelers' backs. Mrs Nelson had long been watching the clock, and, coming out, took the whip and hung it up, with the quiet remark, "That whip is no longer yours, Philpot—half an hour behind."

"But the roads are so bad, ma'am," remonstrated poor Toby. "I'm sure, ma'am, the gentlemen knew I did my best; but I felt bound to spare the cattle."

"I find the cattle and employ you to drive them," replied the inexorable landlady; "*you* have nothing to do but to keep time. Draw your wages and leave the yard."

Under this iron rule it is no wonder that her coachmen were sometimes "pulled up" for furious driving. On one of these occasions she appeared in court in defence of her man. "I understand, Mrs Nelson," blandly remarked the Chairman of the Bench, "that you give your coachmen instructions to race the rival coach."

"Not exactly," replied the lady; "my orders to them are simply that they are to get the road and keep it."

But if a very dragon of strictness, she treated coachmen and guards very well. They had their especial room, and dined as well there, at reduced prices, as any of her coffee-room customers. This especial consideration reflected itself in those functionaries, who jealously preserved the privacy of their room; the amateur coachman who secured the invitation to join them (and to pay out of his

own pocket for their wine and spirits) feeling himself greatly honoured.

In other respects, the "Bull" was a model to other houses. No damp sheets in any one of its hundred and fifty beds, no drunken brawlers; nothing a minute out of time, or an inch out of place. Mrs Nelson's fine house was, indeed, nothing less than an institution. In later years her son John took more of the management upon his shoulders, and the business seemed likely to long outlast his time.

V

BUT a whisper of coming changes disturbed the air as early as 1830. Coachmen and travellers talked in the stableyard and the cosy rooms of the "Bull" of men with strange instruments encountered along the road; "chaps with telescopes on three sticks, and other chaps with chains and things, measuring the fields." It was thus that they described the surveyors, with their theodolites and their staff of men, who were setting out the proposed route of the projected Eastern Counties Railway that was to run all the way from London to Colchester, Norwich and Yarmouth.

John Nelson was too confident in the existing order of things to believe that a few pounds of coal and some boiling water would ever be a match for his horses, or that a time would

presently come when those passengers of his who now derided the railways would desert the coaches. The "Bull" had been in his family for more than a hundred and twelve years, as an inn and a coaching house, and he could as soon have imagined the end of the world as a day coming when the Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk coaches should no longer enter or leave his yard. It was a good joke for a while, when the coaches came in, to ask "How they were getting on with that railway?" but when the surveys were completed and the prospectus of the "Grand Eastern Counties Railway" was issued in 1834, it was seen that the railway men meant business. The original proposal of the directors was to follow the road closely and to bring the line into Aldgate. When it was seen that the railway was really to be made, Nelson raised an opposition against the Aldgate terminus, and was successful in driving the Company into an out-of-the-way site in Shoreditch, where for many years that terminus remained.

The Eastern Counties Railway was opened as far as Chelmsford in 1839, to Colchester in 1842, and communication to Norwich was opened up in 1845. From the day of the first opening, the "Bull" declined. Old customers still found their way from the slums of Shoreditch to its hospitable door, but were not reinforced by the newer generation of travellers, to whom the road and its end in Aldgate were alike unknown. They went to the City inns, and later to the more central hotels,

leaving the "Bull" to slowly sink into neglect. John Nelson made a big bid for success in another line, and ran the "Wellington" omnibuses with success from 1855 until his death, at the age of seventy-four, in June 1868. He had long resided in the West End, and was a man of ample fortune, so that the end of the "Bull's" coaching career



THE YARD OF THE "BULL," WHITECHAPEL, IN COACHING DAYS.

hurt him only in sentiment. His mother, that most autocratic and business-like of women, had died ten years before, active almost to the last, although she had reached the age of eighty-five years. Towards the close of 1868 the old inn ended its long career. Its substantial, old-fashioned silver-plate and massive furniture were sold by auction, with the stock of rare old wines, laid in many years before, for that

old generation of travellers who delighted in port and sherry, and plenty of both.

The very site of the "Bull" is now sought with pains and labour, and only to be discovered with difficulty by the present generation. It was numbered 25 Aldgate High Street, and stood where Aldgate Avenue, a modern alley rich in offices of "commission agents," and curious things of that kind, now cuts its way through where the old yard used to be.

Close by the "Bull" was another old coaching inn, the "Blue Boar," now quite vanished, kept for a time by John Thorogood. The Thorogoods were in those days, and in these times of amateur coaching are still, a family of coachmen. "Old John," who owned the "Norwich Times," and actually drove it for two years without missing a journey the whole of that time, clearly deserved his patronymic, in thus handling the reins along a hundred and twelve miles of road for seven hundred and thirty consecutive days.

It was to the "Blue Boar" that little David Copperfield came, on his miserable journey from Yarmouth:—"We approached London by degrees, and got, in due time, to the inn, in the Whitechapel district, I forget whether it was the 'Blue Bull' or the 'Blue Boar,' but I know it was the Blue Something, and that its likeness was painted upon the back of the coach." The sculptured effigy of a boar, with gilded tusks and hoofs, built into the wall of a tobacco factory, marks the site of the inn.

Among other noted inns, the "Three Nuns" must be named. From it set out the short stages to Ilford, Epping, Romford and Woodford, together with coaches for several of the Essex by-roads. The house owes its name to the Minoreesses, or nuns, of St Clare, from whose religious establishment the Minories obtains its title. The inn was rebuilt in 1877, and is now nothing more than a huge public-house.

Many other inns of consequence in their day have left nothing but their yards behind them to show where they stood: — George Yard, Spread Eagle Yard, Black Horse Yard, Boar's Head Yard, White Swan Yard, Half Moon Passage, and Kent and Essex Yard are such relics, bordering High Street, Whitechapel, where one curious sign survives, that of an inn called the "Horse and Leaping Bar."

VI,

ONE decided advantage the Chelmsford, Colchester and Ipswich route to Norwich possessed in old times over that by way of Newmarket and Thetford. Neither could have been considered safe in the bad old days, but while the traveller across the wild heaths of Newmarket and Thetford was almost certain to be "held up" on his lonely course, the other way, through Essex, passed by few such wildernesses, and had more towns and villages along

its course, to give a sense of security. Briefly, robbery on one route was a probability, and on the other was regarded as certain. Margaret Paston, writing from Norfolk to her husband in London, so long ago as the fifteenth century, certainly gives even the way through Essex a bad name, for she asks him to pay a debt for one of their friends, because it was not safe, "on account of the robbers," to send money up from the country; but at the very same time the Thetford route had a much more sinister reputation, and travellers versed in the gossip of the road avoided it if possible, or went in company and well armed, for in that era a certain William Cratfield, Rector of Wrotham, "a common and notorious thief and lurker on the roads, and murderer and slayer," lurked and robbed and slew on Newmarket Heath, in company with a certain "Thomas Tapyrtone, hosyer." He was at last laid by the heels, in 1416, and charged with robbing a Londoner of £12. This distinguished ornament of the Church died in Newgate, but of the villainous hosier we hear no more. Perhaps he had realised a fortune in the business and retired to enjoy the fruits of his industry. With the disappearance of this worthy couple, travellers breathed more freely, but for surety's sake continued to patronise the Essex route, and so by way of Ipswich to come to the City of Orchards, as Norwich was called of old.

As time went on, a certain degree of security was found in the coaches that began to make an appearance with the second half of the seventeenth century.

They travelled at first no more quickly than a man could walk, but they provided company, which was, under the circumstances, highly desirable. Soon, however, they found it possible to do the journey in two days. Strype, we have already seen mentions the "Saracen's Head" in Aldgate as the centre of a considerable trade, and to it in 1681 a Norwich coach was running; an innovation which aroused the indignation of innkeepers on the way to almost as great a height as that of their descendants when, two hundred and forty years later, railways were depopulating the roads. When travellers began to go by coach instead of on horseback, and to reach London or Norwich in two days instead of three or four, those antique tapsters thought they saw their living going, and, strange to say, there were not wanting men who raised their voices against the innovation of being carried on a journey, instead of riding; although, for the most part, their outcry was the result only of innate conservatism.

"Travelling in these coaches," said an anonymous pamphleteer, "can neither prove advantageous to men's health or business. For what advantage is it to men's health to be called out of their beds into these coaches an hour before day in the morning, to be hurried in them from place to place, till one hour, two, or three within night; insomuch that after sitting all day in the summer time stifled with heat, and choked with the dust, or the winter time starving and freezing with cold or choked with filthy fogs, they are often brought into their inns by

torchlight, when it is too late to sit up to get supper; and next morning they are forced into the coach so early that they can get no breakfast. What addition is this to men's health or business? to ride all day with strangers, oftentimes sick, ancient, diseased persons, or young children crying; to whose humours they are obliged to be subject, forced to bear with, and many times are poisoned with their nasty scents, and crippled by the crowd of the boxes and bundles."

Yet "these coaches" (one can almost hear the intonation of contempt in that phrase) were from the first a success. The greater that success the louder for a time was the outcry against them. Taylor, the Water Poet, was one of those who wrote vehemently against the new methods of travel. To him a coach was "a close hypocrite; for it hath a cover for knavery and curtains to vaile and shadow any wickedness. Besides, like a perpetual cheater, it wears two bootes, and no spurs, sometimes having two pairs of legs to one boote, and oftentimes (against nature) it makes faire ladies weare the boote; and if you note, they are carried back to back, like people surprised by pyrats, to be tyed in that miserable manner and thrown overboard into the sea. Moreover, it makes people imitate sea-crabs, in being drawn sideways as they are when they sit in the boot of the coach; and it is a dangerous kind of carriage for the commonwealth, if it be considered."

The boot of which he speaks so contemptuously. was a method of packing the "outsides," of which

we still find a survival in the Irish jaunting-car. There are those who trace the origin of the term from the French "*boîte*," a box. Even now the coachman's seat is "the box," and the modern foreboot is under it.

Writers of that time seem almost unanimously to have taken sides against coaching; with, however, no effect; for, somewhat later than Taylor, that doughty Conservative, John Cresset, is found exclaiming furiously against the multitude of them. He favoured the suppression of all, or, at least—counsels of moderation prevailing—of most. They were, he said, mischievous to the public, destructive to trade and prejudicial to the land. Not only did they injure the breed of horses, but also that of watermen; which last objection goes further than the complaints of Taylor himself, who, writing at the same time, does not speak of his breed being debased, but only of his trade being crippled. Cresset thought the stage-coaches tempted the country gentry to London too often, and he accordingly proposed that these conveyances should be limited to one for every county town in England, to go backwards and forwards once a week.

Vain hope! Coaches of sorts must already have appeared on the road to Norwich by the middle of the seventeenth century, for in a proclamation of July 20th in the plague year, 1665, when all places were dreading infected London, it is ordained, that "from this daie all ye passage coaches shall be prohibited to goe from ye city to London and come from thence hither, and also ye common carts and wagons."

Already, in 1696, the "Confatharrat" coach was a well-known conveyance between London and Norwich, and the name of Suggate, the London and East Anglian carrier, a household word. Unhappily, nothing can be gathered as to when Suggate first began to jog along the road, or when the "Confatharrat" started to ply between Norwich and the "Four Swans," Bishopsgate Street. All particulars are lost. The odd name of that coach was probably a seventeenth-century way of spelling the word "confederate," and the selection of such a name proves both that it was carried on by an alliance or co-partnership, and that "confederate" had not then acquired its sinister modern connotation. Besides these aids to travel, a stage-waggon began to ply from the "Popinjay," Tombland, Norwich, at an early date; and another from the "Angel," in the Market Place, to the "Blossoms" Inn, Laurence Lane, London, was advertised in the *Norwich Mercury*, of March 29th, 1729, to "now go regularly every Thursday night," setting out on the following Wednesday from London, on the return journey. It will thus be seen that it was a five or six days' journey for those primitive affairs, and that they apparently did not run at regular intervals until that year.

A London and Beccles coach was running in 1707, but the first regular Norwich coach of which particulars remain was the "Norwich Machine," which in 1762 set out for London three times a week from the "Maid's Head," according to the advertisement still extant. There is nothing in

that old coaching bill to show that 1762 was the first season of the "Norwich Machine." It may have been established some years before that date.

Norwich, March 26, 1762.

SUSAN NASMITH AND JAMES KEITH,

Proprietors of the

NORWICH MACHINE,

Give Notice

that their Machine will set out from the MAID'S HEAD Inn, in St Simon's Parish, in Norwich, on Monday, the 5th day of April next, at half-past eleven in the forenoon, and on the Wednesday and Friday in the same week, at the same time; and to be continued in like Manner, on those Days weekly, for the carrying four inside Passengers, at Twenty-five Shillings each, and outside at Twelve Shillings and Sixpence each. The inside Passengers to be allowed twenty pound Weight, and all above to be paid for at three half-pence per pound; and to be in London on the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday Evenings weekly.

N.B.—A Machine will set out on the same days, at the same time, from the GREEN DRAGON, in Bishopsgate Street, London, for Norwich.

In the following year, the "Widow Nasmith" and James Keith advertised that they had built large and commodious machines, to carry six inside, and reduced the fares to twenty shillings and ten shillings respectively; but they had apparently not succeeded in performing the journey in less time than a day and a half, for no mention is made of speed being accelerated. But a remarkable feature in that

announcement is the extraordinary cheapness of the fares, little over twopence and a penny a mile for inside and outside passengers, at a time when prices on other roads ruled from twenty-five to fifty per cent. higher. This tells a tale of competition; but Time, the thief, has robbed us of all knowledge of those competitors.

A year later the London and Ipswich Post Coaches were advertised to set out every week-day, and to perform the $69\frac{1}{4}$ miles in ten hours, an average pace of almost 7 miles an hour; a marvellous turn of speed for that age. As to whether those Post Coaches ever *did* cover that distance in ten hours, we may reasonably express a doubt; but there was the promise, and on the strength of it the proprietors charged threepence a mile. As will be seen by the advertisement, these coaches carried no outside passengers:—

Ipswich, August 17th, 1764.

THE LONDON AND IPSWICH POST COACHES

Set out on Monday, the 27th of August, at seven o'clock in the morning from the BLACK BULL, in Bishopsgate, London, and at the same time from the GREAT WHITE HORSE, in Ipswich, and continue every day (Sunday excepted), to be at the above places the same evening at five o'clock; each passenger to pay threepence per mile, and to be allowed eighteen pounds luggage; all above to pay one penny per pound, and so in proportion. The coaches, hung upon steel springs, are very easy, large and commodious, carry six inside but no outside passengers whatever; but have great conveniences for parcels or game (to keep them from the weather), which will be delivered at London and Ipswich the same night.

As these coaches are sent out for the ease and expedition of gentlemen and ladies travelling, the proprietors humbly hope for their encouragement, and are determined to spare no pains to render it as agreeable as they can.

Performed (if God permits) by—

PET. SHELDON, at the Bull, Bishopsgate Street, London.

THOMAS ARCHER, at the White Hart, Brentwood.

CHARLES KERRY, at the Black Boy, Chelmsford.

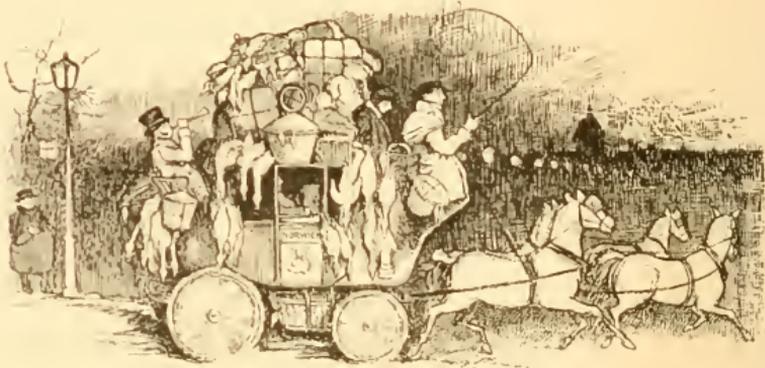
GEO. REYNOLDS, at the Three Cups, Colchester; and

CHAS. HARRIS, at the Great White Horse, Ipswich.

N.B.—The proprietors will not be answerable for any money, plate, jewels, or writings, unless entered and paid for as such.

The reader will perhaps have observed that this advertisement especially mentions a convenience for carrying game, and, as a matter of fact, game and oysters were prominent from an early period in the history of Norwich Road conveyances, and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Norfolk and Suffolk coaches had already earned quite a distinctive character in two seasons of the year, Michaelmas and Christmas. East Anglia has always abounded in game, and its broad heaths and extensive commons have been the breeding-grounds of innumerable geese and turkeys whose careers have ended on London dinner-tables. In those two seasons it was often difficult to secure a seat on or in any of the “up” coaches from Norwich or Ipswich, for while every available inch of space on the mails was occupied by festoons of dead birds consigned by country cousins to friends in town, the

whole of a stage-coach was frequently chartered for the purpose of despatching heavy consignments of these noble poultry to the London market. Christmas provided extraordinary sights along the Norfolk Road, in the swaying coaches, with parcels and geese and turkeys mountains high on the roof; with barrels of Colchester natives in the boot, and hampers swinging heavily between the axle-trees on a shelf called "the cellar"; while from every



THE NORWICH COACH AT CHRISTMAS TIDE.

After Robert Seymour, 1835.

rail or projection to which they could be either safely or hazardously tied depended other turkeys or braces of fowls, booked at the last moment before starting. It was something in those days to be a turkey or a goose, before whose importance the claims of human passengers faded; but it was a fleeting elevation which the philosophic did not envy, thinking that here indeed the poet was justified in his sounding line—

“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

That unfortunate genius, Robert Seymour, has left us a picture of the Norwich coach nearing London at Christmas time, with its feathered load. The drawing was made in 1835, at the very height of the Coaching Age, and shows from his own observation with what ingenuity every rail and projection was used to hang the birds from.

Another highly specialised branch of traffic, which only left the road on the opening of the railway, was the constant service of fish waggons running between Harwich, Colchester and London, at the then express speed of 8 miles an hour.

VII

BETWEEN the early days of coaching and the end of that period, many changes took place on the Norwich Road. So late as 1798, the Mail, the "Expedition," and the "Post Coach" were the only coaches to Norwich, supplemented by three road waggons; two of them doing the journey twice a week, the third setting out weekly. Later came the "Norwich Times," "Gurney's Original Day Coach," the "Phænomenon," as it was originally spelt; the "Magnet," the Ipswich "Shannon," and the Ipswich "Blue." With the object of serving as many places as possible, and, incidentally, securing heavier bookings, the "Times" and Gurney's coaches took a somewhat circuitous route, leaving

the direct road at Chelmsford, and going through Braintree, Halstead, Sudbury, Long Melford and Bury St Edmunds, rejoining the Norwich Road at Scole.

But the lord of the road was the Mail Coach, beside which the stages were very commonplace affairs.

The first mail-coach that ever ran the road between London and Norwich started in March 1785, and the service was from the beginning continued daily. Before that time the mails had been carried by post-boys, who began in 1741 to go six days a week instead of three, as they formerly had done.

Mail-coaches are entirely things of the past, for the modern coaching revival has only brought back the smart stages and drags of the last years of the Coaching Age. The mails were expensive and exclusive affairs, constructed to carry only nine persons; four inside and five out, including coachman and guard. For the higher fares passengers paid they had not always the satisfaction of travelling faster than on the stages; but perhaps there was some dignity attaching to a seat on the mail which was lacking on ordinary coaches. And certainly they were surrounded by pomp and circumstance. The guard wore a scarlet coat and went armed with pistol, sword and blunderbuss; not, of course, for the protection of the passengers, but for the safeguarding of His Majesty's mails. And everything gave place, as a matter of right and not merely courtesy, to the mail. Surly pikemen swung open their gates and asked no toll, for it was one of the privileges of the mail to go toll-free, and the high-

waymen, if they walked in the ways of caution, left the gorgeous conveyance severely alone, reserving their best attentions for the plebeian stages. It was a much more serious thing to rob the mail than an ordinary coach, for a conviction was more certain to end in death, judges having hints from the Government how undesirable it was that mails should be ransacked and the robbers live. The rewards usually offered by the Post-office, too, were tempting to those who could inform if they would. £200 was the sum generally to be had for this service, together with the £40 reward by Act of Parliament for the apprehension of a highwayman; and if the mail was robbed within five miles of London, another £100. Courage, recklessness, and desperation—whichever we like to call it—often nerved the night-hawks to brave even so heavy a handicap as this, as this very road bears witness, in the daring robbery of the Ipswich Mail in 1822, when notes to the value of no less than £31,198 were stolen. In addition to the usual rewards, a sum of £1000 was offered by the losing firms of bankers, as shown in the accompanying old handbill, but without avail. This sum was afterwards increased to £5000, and a notification given that, in order to prevent the notes being changed, the ink on all new ones had been altered from black to red. But the robbers had the impudence to ask £6000 for the return of the notes. They had already passed £3000 worth, and naïvely said, in the negotiations they opened up, that the trouble they had taken and the risks they had run did not make it worth

while to accept a smaller "reward." The bankers, however, would not spring another thousand, for by that time everyone was too shy of an "Ipswich black note," and it was extremely unlikely that any more could be passed. Negotiations were broken off; but a month later notes to the value of £28,000 were returned. The thieves were never traced, and although the bulk of their booty was useless to

£1000 Reward.

STOLEN

FROM THE IPSWICH MAIL,
On its way from London, *on the Night*
of the 11th Sept. Inst. the following

COUNTRY BANK NOTES:

Ipswich Bank, 5, & 10l. Notes.

ALEXANDERS & Co. on HOARE & Co.

Woodbridge Bank, 1, 5, & 10l. Notes.

ALEXANDERS & Co. on FRYS & Co.

Manningtree Bank, 1, 5, & 10l. Notes.

ALEXANDER & Co. on FRYS & Co.

Hadleigh Bank, 1, 5, & 10l. Notes.

ALEXANDER & Co. on FRYS & Co.

Particulars of which will be furnished at the different Bankers.

Whoever will give Information, either at ALEXANDERS and Co.
or at FRYS and Co., *St Mildred's Court, Poultry*, so that the
Parties may be apprehended, shall on his or their Conviction,
and the Recovery of the Property, receive the above REWARD.

them, made the very substantial haul of over £3000 by their lawless enterprise.

We have said that mail-coaches were gorgeous. They were painted in black and red. Not a shy, unassuming red, but the familiar and traditional Post-office hue. Also they bore the Royal coat-of-arms emblazoned upon the door panels, and the insignia of the four principal orders of knight-

hood on the quarters. There was no mistaking a mail-coach.

The Norwich Mail, which took fifteen and a half hours to do the journey so late as 1821, was greatly improved in later years; and finally, in the early forties, when the railway reached Norwich and superseded the roads, performed the journey in eleven hours, thirty-eight minutes, at the very respectable average speed of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour. It was not the only mail on the road, but shared the way so far as Ipswich with the Ipswich and Yarmouth Mail. This coach was unfortunate on two occasions between 1835 and 1839. On September 28th in the first year, when the coachman was climbing on to his box in the yard of the "Swan with Two Necks," the horses started away on their own accord, tumbling the coachman off and knocking down the helper who had been holding their heads. Dashing into Cheapside, they flung themselves against the back of the Poole Mail with such force that the coachman of that mail was also thrown off. He was taken unconscious to the hospital. Continuing their furious rush, the horses of the Ipswich Mail at length ran the pole of the coach between the iron railings of a house, and so were stopped.

The second happening, in 1839, was somewhat similar. The mail had arrived at Colchester, and the coachman, throwing down the reins, got off the box. No one was at the horses' heads, and they started away and galloped down the High

Street, until the near leader fell and broke his neck, stopping the team.

It was by the Ipswich and Yarmouth Mail that David Copperfield journeyed down to Yarmouth on his second visit to Mr Peggotty. In the ordinary course of things, he would have reached Ipswich at 3·12 a.m. But on this occasion the weather was a potent factor in causing delay. He occupied the box seat, and remarked upon the look of the sky to the coachman while yet on the first stage out of London.

“Don’t you think that a very remarkable sky?” he asked; “I don’t remember to have seen one like it.”

“Nor I—not equal to it,” said the coachman. “That’s mist, sir. There’ll be mischief done at sea, I expect, before long.”

The description of this stormy sky is very fine, and seems to have been drawn from observation; just as true and as effective in its way as Old Crome’s billowy cloudscapes, in his *Mousehold Heath*, or as any of Constable’s rain-surcharged Suffolk scenes.

“It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened.

There had been a wind all day ; and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and it blew hard.

“But as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short) the leaders turned about, or came to a dead stop ; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before this storm, like showers of steel ; and at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee-walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle. . . . We came to Ipswich very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London ; and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who had risen from their beds in the night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these, congregating about the inn-yard while we changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church tower and flung into a bye-street, which they then blocked up.”

At Ipswich the Yarmouth coaches left the Norwich Road, and so the further adventures of David Copperfield do not in this place concern us.

VIII

HERE, as on the other roads, the early advent of the Motor Car, in 1826, caused much commotion. The steam coaches of that period never achieved any success on this route, but caricatures of what might be expected were plentiful, and pictures of the Colchester "Dreadful Vengeance," the Norwich "Buster," and other fanciful conveyances, in the act of exploding and distributing their passengers in little pieces over a wide stretch of country, were popular. The railway itself came in for much abuse, and misguided and fanatical coach proprietors wasted their substance in pitiful attempts to compete with it. Among these was Israel Alexander, that Jewish hero of the Brighton Road in the early forties, who, although a first-class whip, was perhaps chiefly associated with the many upsets of the Brighton "Quicksilver." He fell out with his noble friends on that highway, and, coming to the Norwich Road, ran a well-appointed coach to Colchester for a little while, until even the Eastern Counties Railway, then the slowest on earth, made the pace too quick for him. His turn-out was given the extraordinary name of the "Duke of Beaufort's Retaliator," and might have continued much longer to carry those who were prejudiced against railways, had it not met with so many accidents.

One who was contemporary with the coaching age has ingeniously divided coaching accidents

into three classes:—1. Accidents to the coach; 2. Accidents to the horses; 3. Accidents to the harness. The most common kind of mishap to the coach was, he says, the breaking of an axle. This was not, as a rule, due to any faulty construction of that most essential feature of a public conveyance, but to the overloading either of passengers or goods, to which coaches were continually subject. The sudden snapping of an axle at a high speed or on a down grade produced a tremendous crash which generally shot coachman, guard and “outsides” in all directions. Happy those who, in such a case, were received into the thorny arms of a quickset hedge or the soft embraces of a mud-heap.

Another kind of mishap, not always accidental, was that of a wheel coming off; an incident often caused in early times, before the introduction of patent axle-boxes, by the mischievous removal of the lynch-pin by some unscrupulous rascal in the employ of the rival coach proprietor.

The sudden snapping of a skid-chain while descending a hill, resulting in the coach running on to the horses and a general overthrow, in which horses’ legs and passengers heads came into unwonted contact, was perhaps as uncomfortable a kind of disaster as could be imagined. Overloading, too, sometimes had the effect of rendering a coach top-heavy, when a slight lack of caution in running round curves would upset it.

Accidents to the horses were:—casting a shoe, involving lameness, and perhaps a fall; tripping

and stumbling on loose stones and rolling over; slipping up in frosty weather; and kicking over the traces or the splinter-bar.

Accidents to the harness usually happened to the traces, which commonly snapped under an uneven strain. To cobble them up with twine, and so complete a stage, was a common practice. In such cases, the thoughts of passengers during the remaining miles were, like those of the poet, "too deep for words." Most nerve-shaking of all these varied and untoward happenings, however, was the breaking of the reins. Rotted by age, by the sun's heat and the winter's frosts, they would "come away" in the coachman's hands at that worst of moments;—when he was holding in his horses downhill. In that contingency, says our ancient, who, in the modern slang phrase, has "been there," it was the approved thing to say your prayers first and then take a flying leap (result, a broken neck, or fractured leg: the bone protruding over the top of the Blucher).

"Then shrieked the timid and stood" — or, rather, sat—"still the brave;" who had this consolation, that if they fared no better than those who jumped, the odds were that they fared no worse.

To be dragged at hurricane pace by four runaway horses (for in such a case they generally *did* so run) with the broken reins trailing helplessly after them, was to acquire the knowledge of an inner meaning in the word "terror." In escapades of this kind the "insides" were in the most unenviable situation;

for the "outsides," including coachman and guard, took the better, if unheroic, part of crawling over the roof and slipping down the back of the coach into the road. The wisdom of their doing so would, in most cases, be proved a few seconds later by the sound of a distant crash as the coach hurtled against some roadside tree and dissolved into matchwork, while the "insides" were stuck as full of splinters as a "fretful porcupine" of quills.

The "human boy" was as much the terror of the old coachman as he is of the modern cyclist. The sight of a boy with a hoop reduced him to a state of purple indignation or of quivering anxiety, according to temperament. Many an one of our great-grandfathers, attired in the odd costume of boys in that period, and trundling a hoop along the road, has felt the lash of the coachman's whip. The following little story will show us why.

"When a very little boy," says one of our forebears, "I once upset a four-horse coach by losing control over my hoop, which, to my consternation, bowled among the legs of the team. I shall never forget the horror with which I for an instant saw the spirited horses floundering about with that hateful hoop among them, or heard the execrations of the coachman and the shouts of the passengers. Abandoning the wretched plaything to its fate, I took to my heels down a bye-lane, the portentous crash that followed only accelerating my speed."

Coach proprietors were favourite targets for Fate's worst shafts. They were a hard-working, much-enduring class of men; up early and to bed

late, retiring in good circumstances and rising perhaps ruined through some unforeseen accident. They were "common carriers" in law, and bound under many Acts of Parliament to deliver goods uninjured at their destination. As carriers of passengers, it is true, they were only required to exercise all "due care and diligence" for the safety of their customers, and were exempt from liability in case of mishaps through the "act of God" or the unforeseen; but the observance of due precautions and a daily inspection of the coach had to be proved in case of injury to passengers, or in default they were held liable for damages.

Thus, the carelessness of any one of his many servants might mean a very serious thing to a coach proprietor. In those days the old Anglo-Saxon Law of Deodand was not only in existence, but in a very flourishing and aggressive condition. Indeed, coaching had practically rescued it from neglect. It was a law which, in cases of fatal injuries, empowered the coroner's jury to levy a fine, which might vary from sixpence to a thousand pounds, upon the object that caused the mischief.

The very multiplicity of tribunals before whom the personally unoffending coach proprietor was liable to be haled was in itself terrifying. There was the already-mentioned coroner's jury; the jury on the criminal side in trials at the Assizes for manslaughter, and the other "twelve good men and true" who assessed damages in the Sheriff's Court.

How even the most well-meaning of men might

thus suffer is evident in the case of a proprietor who was cast in damages from excess of caution. For additional security, and in order to protect it from road grit, he had a part of an axle incased in wood. One day this axle broke and a serious accident happened, resulting in an action against him for damages. He lost the day; the judge ruling that, although no proof of a defective axle was adduced, a flaw *might* have existed which a proper daily examination would have detected had the extra precaution for safety not been adopted.

IX

WHAT Aldgate might now have been had the original intention of the Eastern Counties directors to place their terminus there been successful, we need not stop to inquire. But, as a good deal has already been said on the subject of coaches and coaching, it will be of interest to learn what were the views of the projectors of the Eastern Counties Railway. With their original prospectus was issued a map of the proposed railway from London to Norwich and Yarmouth, by which it appears that, instead of going to the left of the road from London, as far as Seven Kings and Chadwell Heath, it was originally intended to construct the line on the right of the road so far. Between Romford and Chelmsford the line has

been made practically as first proposed, but onwards, from Chelmsford to Lexden, it is again on the other side of the highway; and, north of Colchester, goes wide of the original plan all the way to Norwich.

In many ways this document is very much of a curiosity at this time, as also are the hopes and aspirations of the directors at the first General Meeting of the company. The chairman, for instance, confidently anticipated dividends of 22 per cent., upon which one of the confiding shareholders replied that the report was most satisfactory and the prospects held out by no means overcharged. "If this understanding," said he, "fails in producing the dividend of 22 per cent., calculated upon in the report, then, I must say, human calculations and expectation can no longer be depended upon." O! most excellent man. But better is to come.

"Should I live to see the completion of this and similar undertakings," he resumed, "I do believe I shall live to see misery almost banished from the earth. From the love I bear my species, I trust that I may not be too sanguine, and that I may yet witness the happy end that I have pictured to myself." His was, you think, the faith that might have moved mountains; but it did not produce that promised 22 per cent., nor, although we now have many thousands more miles of railway than he ever dreamed of, has the millennium yet arrived. Even the most far-seeing have not yet discovered any heralds of its ap-

proach. Let us drop the tribute of a tear to the sorrows of this excellent person, whose love of his species and touching anticipation of 22 per cent. dividends were so beautifully blended, and so cruelly disappointed.

For some years small (very small) dividends were paid. Hudson, the "Railway King," paid them out of capital. "It made things pleasant," he said, when charged with such financially immoral practices. Alas! poor Hudson, you lived before your time, and went to another world before such "dishonest" doings as yours were sanctified in principle by Acts of Parliament which authorise payments of dividends out of capital in the case of railways under construction.

In 1848 the Eastern Counties Railway was in Chancery, and its very locomotives and carriages were seized for debt; while for years afterwards its name was a synonym for delay. The satirists of that period were as busy with the Eastern Counties as those of our own time are with the South-Eastern Railway. Every journey has an end; "even the Eastern Counties' trains come in at last," said Thackeray, very charitably.

In 1862 it was amalgamated with several minor undertakings, and re-named the "Great Eastern Railway"; "great in nothing but the name," as the spiteful said.

When matters were at their worst, the Lord Cranborne of that time was invited to accept the position of chairman and to help extricate the company from its difficulties. He accepted the post

in January 1868 and held it until December 1871. In April 1863 he had succeeded to the title of Marquis of Salisbury. Thus the statesman and prime minister of later years was once a great figure in the railway world. His financial abilities helped to put the Great Eastern line on a firm basis, and when he left it the railway was already greatly improved in every respect. To-day, instead of being a "shocking example," it is a model to be copied by other lines.

X

ALTHOUGH the last of the old coaches was long ago broken up, and the Norwich Road is no longer lively with mail and stage travellers, it has, in common with several other roads out of London, witnessed a wholly unexpected revival, in the shape of the Parcel Mail service between London and Ipswich. When the Parcel Post came into being on the 1st August 1883, it was speedily discovered by the General Post-office authorities that in paying, according to contract, 55 per cent. of the gross receipts to the railway companies for the mere carriage of parcels, they were paying too much. Accordingly, a system of Parcel Mail coaches was established on several of the old roads, commencing with the London to Brighton Parcel Mail, in June 1887. A London and Chelmsford four-horse mail was soon added, and this was shortly afterwards extended to Colchester, and thence to Ipswich by cart. This curious enterprise of the Post-office was immediately successful, and it has



GENERAL POST OFFICE
 THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUIS OF LONDONDERRY
 Postmaster-General

**LONDON, CHELMSFORD, COLCHESTER, & IPSWICH ROAD
 PARCEL SERVICE.**

Guard's Remarks as to Delays, &c.	Date	190 .	Proper	Actual	This Column to be left blank
			Times	Times	
			H. M.	H. M.	
Coach Service between London and Colchester. Contractor— C. Webster, 279 Whitechapel Road, E.	Distance M. F.	Mount Pleasant Parcel Office...dep.	^{P. M.} 9 45		
		Eastern District P.O.....(dep.	10 8		
	11 3	Romford.....(arr.	11 40		
		Romford.....(dep.	11 42		
	6 2	Brentwood.....(arr.	^{A. M.} 12 29		
		Brentwood.....(dep.	12 31		
	5 0	Ingatstone.....(arr.	1 9		
		Ingatstone.....(dep.	1 11		
	6 0	Chelmsford.....(arr.	2 0		
		Chelmsford.....(dep.	2 5		
8 6	Witham.....(arr.	3 13			
	Witham.....(dep.	3 15			
3 2	Kelvedon.....(arr.	3 41			
	Kelvedon.....(dep.	3 43			
9 6	Colchester.....(arr.	5 0			
	Colchester.....(dep.	5 5			
18 2	Stratford St. Mary.....(arr.	5 58			
	Stratford St. Mary.....(dep.	6 0			
Signature of Guard	18 2	Ipswich.....arr.	7 20		
	71 5				

T. E. SIFTON, Inspector-General of Mails.

The Guard in charge of the Coach must report the cause of any Delay. He must enter all Remarks and Times in the proper Columns. This Bill to be sent, as addressed, by First Post.

TIME-BILL OF THE CHELMSFORD, COLCHESTER AND IPSWICH
 PARCEL MAIL.

ever since been found to effect a large saving over the railway charges. Nor is time lost in delivery. The down mail leaves London at a quarter to ten o'clock every night and the parcels arrive at Colchester and Ipswich in time for the first delivery the next morning; while the country parcels come up to London by an equally early hour. The way in which the service is worked will be gathered from the accompanying official way-sheet of the down mails.

The up service, starting with the mail-cart from Ipswich at 7.9 p.m. and continued from Colchester by four-horse van at 9.30 p.m., brings the country parcels to Mount Pleasant at 4.30 a.m., throughout the year. Up and down mails meet at Ingatestone at 1.9 a.m. On this service, as on all others, the vans go through, but the drivers and guards exchange places; the London men changing on to the van from Colchester at Ingatestone, and returning to London; the Colchester men taking over the down van and similarly returning whence they came.

It is a curious and unexpected revival of old methods, but an entirely successful one. No highwayman has ever attempted to "hold up" the Parcel Mail, for the last of that trade has for generations mouldered in his grave; but should any amateurs essay to complete this revival of old coaching days by waylaying the mail, the guards would be found well armed. Their virgin steel and untried pistols have for years been carried without any excuse for using them; but there need be no doubt that, were the occasion to arrive, they would defend their parcels—the pounds of country butter,

the eggs, and wild flowers, or the miscellaneous consignment from London—with their hearts' blood. There are more romantic things in the world to die for than postal parcels of eggs, cheese and butter, but the ennobling word DUTY might glorify such a sacrifice for the sake of a pound's weight of "best fresh," or a dozen of "new laid."

But although the possibility of attack is remote, a spice of danger and romance savours the conduct of the parcel mails.

The up Colchester Parcel Mail had a mishap on the night of October 11, 1890, when, owing to the prevailing fog, it was driven into a ditch near Margaretting. Happily, both coachman and guard escaped injury, the heavy vehicle resting against the hedge. The coachman, mounting one of his team, and hurrying back to Chelmsford, succeeded in overtaking the down coach, which, returning to the scene of the accident, unloaded and transferred the parcels, and continued to London, leaving the down mail to be forwarded with local help. It eventually arrived at Colchester four hours late.

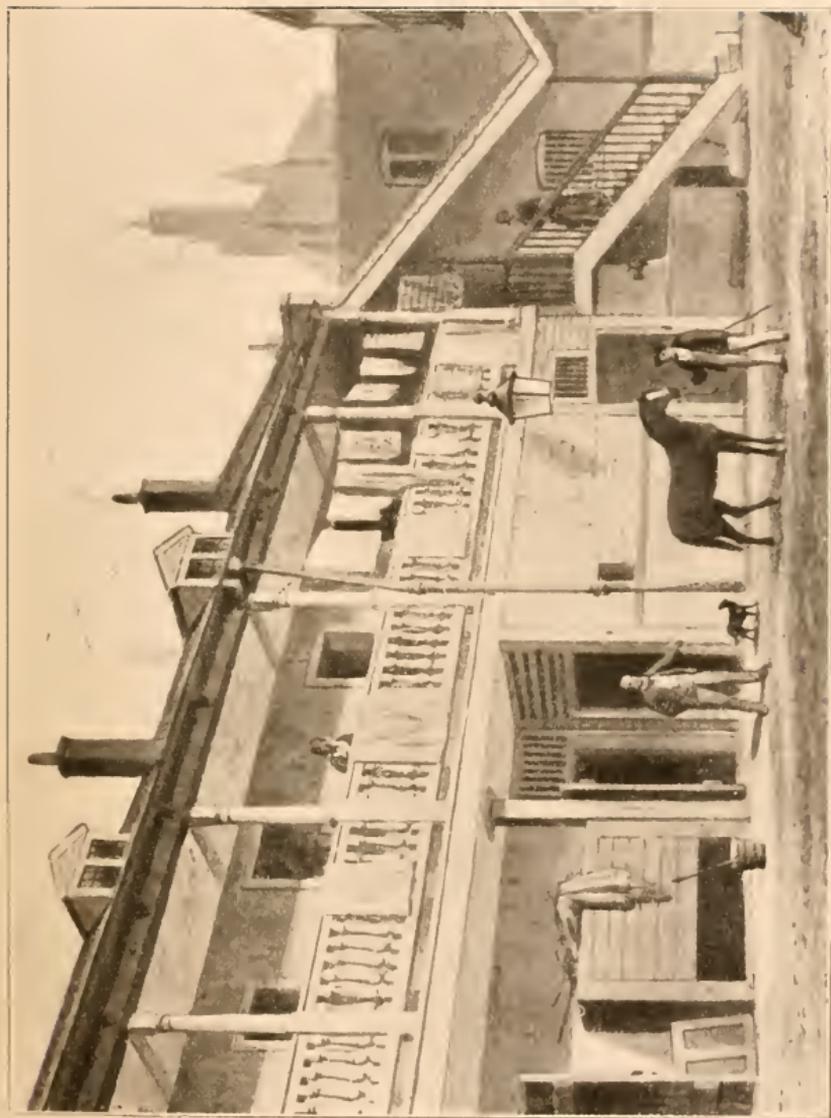
XI

COACHING days, old and new, having now been disposed of, we might set off down the road at once, were it not that our steps are at once arrested by the sight of the "Red Lion" Inn, at the corner of Whitechapel Road and Leman Street, which, together with the "Old Red Lion," adjoining, stands on a site made historic by Dick Turpin's lurid career.

It was in the yard of the old house that Turpin shot Matthew King in 1737. He had stolen a fine horse belonging to a Mr Major, near the "Green Man," Epping, and had been traced by means of the animal to the inn, where he was found by the Bow Street runners in company with Matthew and Robert King, birds of like feather with himself. The landlord endeavoured to arrest King, who fired at him without effect, calling to Turpin, "Dick! shoot him, or we are taken, by God!"

Turpin had his usual extensive armoury on his person—three brace of pistols and a carbine slung across his back. He fired, and shot Matthew King, whether by accident or design is not known. King first exclaimed, "Dick! you have shot me; make off," but is said afterwards to have cursed him as he went, for a coward. King died a week later of his wounds, Turpin fleeing to a deserted mansion in Essex, and thence to a cave in Epping Forest. It is usually said that it was the more famous Tom King who met so dramatic an end, but original authorities give Matthew; and certainly we find *a* Tom King, highwayman, decorously executed at Tyburn eighteen years later.

We have met Turpin before, notably at York, where he made an end, two years after this exploit. This especial hero of the Penny Dreadful and the romantic imagination of the average errand boy belongs especially to this road, for he was an Essex man, born at Hempstead in 1705. Apprenticed to a Whitechapel butcher in his youth, he commenced his career of low villainy by stealing



THE "OLD RED LION," WHITECHAPEL, WHERE TURPIN SHOT MATTHEW KING,
from a Drawing by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1844.

some cattle from a Plaistow farmer, and then joined a band of smugglers and deer-stealers and housebreakers in Epping Forest, where they set up a storehouse of stolen goods in the cave just mentioned. This band became so notorious that a sum of fifty guineas was soon offered for their arrest; but it was not until the amount had been doubled that two of the ringleaders were caught and hanged. The gang thus broken up, Turpin was reduced to scouring the roads singly, and pursued a solitary career until one dreary February night in 1735, while patrolling the Cambridge Road, he saw a horseman approaching through the mist. At the time-honoured demand, "Your money or your life!" the stranger simply laughed.

"What!" said he, "should dog eat dog? We are of a like trade."

Thus Turpin and Tom King met, and struck up a partnership. If only one quarter of the deeds assigned to Turpin were true, his would be a very gallant, as well as phenomenally busy, figure on the roads of England. Although by no means a mythical person, the stories told of him nearly all belong to the regions of romance, and his true history shows him to have had few redeeming qualities. Many of the old knights of the road were courageous, and hand in hand with their courage went a humour not seldom kindly; but Turpin was a bloodthirsty ruffian whose courage is not an established fact, and whose humour, like the "tender mercies of the wicked," was cruel, not to say ferocious. It is quite hopeless to attempt

to finally destroy the great Turpin myth after this lapse of time: Harrison Ainsworth's romance has enjoyed too great and too long a popularity for that; but let the attempt here be made to paint him as the cowardly ruffian he was.

Whitechapel, quite apart from memories of Turpin, owns an unenviable repute, and its very name is a synonym for villainy. Its bad savour, however, goes back no greater distance in time than the first half of the eighteenth century, for until that period it was not built upon, and indeed "Whitechapel Common" was spoken of so late as 1761, maps proving the old church to have been quite rural at that date. Originally a chapel-of-ease to the great mother-parish of Stepney, the district was erected into a separate parish so far back as the fourteenth century and the original "white chapel" — doubtless so called from its mediæval coats of whitewash — made a church. But old names cling, and although it has been a church for over six hundred years, it has not been able to confer its more dignified title upon the parish itself. Thus the name of Whitechapel is doubly misleading nowadays, for it is no longer a chapelry and its stately church is in red brick; so that there is some force in the argument for re-christening the borough and dignifying it by a revival of the old name of Eastminster, owned by that not very fortunate Abbey of St Mary Grace, founded by Edward the Third in 1348, which formerly stood on the site of the Royal Mint.

St Mary's, Whitechapel, is a beautiful church,

built in 1877, burnt August 20, 1880, and since restored. It replaced the ugly old building, which was "taken down for the simple reason that it would not stand up." The ancient wrangling over its full title of St Mary Matfelon is not yet done, and rash would be he who voted for any particular one among the rival derivatives of the name. Matfelon, holds one school, was the name of a



WHITECHAPEL OLD CHURCH.

forgotten benefactor, whose particular benefactions are not stated. Who, then, would found, since benefits are thus forgot? "*Maria, matri et filio,*" an ancient dedication, say others; while yet different parties find its source in a Syriac word meaning "mother of a son" = the Virgin Mary. Perhaps the most entertaining legend, however, is that which tells how it originated in the killing of a murderer, in 1429, by the women of Whitechapel. "Between

Estren and Witsontyd, a fals Breton mordred a wydewe in here bed, the which find hym for almasse withought Algate, in the suburbes of London, and bar away alle that sche hadde, and afterwards he toke socour of Holy Chirche in Suthwark; but at the last he took the crosse and forswore the kynges land; and as he went hys waye, it happyd hym to come be the same place where he had don that cursed dede, and women of the same parysh comen out with stones and canell dong, and ther maden an ende of hym in the hyghe strete." These things seem quite in keeping with Whitechapel's evil fame.

The old church, as it stood until well into the nineteenth century, is shown opposite this page, with one of the old road-waggons crawling past. In another view of the same date the High Street itself is seen, its long perspective fully bearing out the old description of spaciousness. At the same time, it is seen to be empty enough to resemble the street of a provincial town. The houses are exceedingly old, the road paved with knobby stones, and the shop windows artfully constructed with the apparent object of obstructing instead of admitting the light. Very few of these old shop-fronts are now left, but a good specimen is that of a bell-founding firm at No. 34 Whitechapel Road.

This old picture has long ceased to be representative of Whitechapel's everyday aspect. The coach has long ago whirled away into limbo, the elegantly - dressed groups have been gathered to Abraham's, or another's, bosom, and Whitechapel



WHITECHAPEL ROAD IN THE COACHING AGE.

knows their kind no more. Bustle, and a dismal overcrowding of carts, waggons, costermongers' barrows, tram-cars and omnibuses are more characteristic of to-day. Also, the Jewish element is very pronounced; chiefly foreign Jews, inconceivably dirty. Many of the shop-fronts bear the names of Cohen, Abraham, Solomon and the like, and others ending in "baum," or "heim." But on Tuesdays and Thursdays of every week the spacious street regains something of its old rural character, in the open-air hay and straw market held here, the largest in the kingdom. It fills the broad thoroughfare and overflows into the side streets: the countrymen who have come up on the great waggons by road from remote parts of Essex lounging picturesquely against the sweet-smelling hay or straw, attending to their horses, or refreshing in the old taverns. It is Arcady come again. The eyes are gladdened by the long vista of the haywains, and the nose gratefully inhales the rustic scent of their heaped-up loads. It is true that Central Londoners also have their so-called Haymarket, but hay is the least likely of articles to be purchased there in these days.

What do they think, those countrymen, of the Whitechapel folks, the "chickaleary blokes," used, as a writer in the middle of the nineteenth century remarked, to "all sorts of high and low villainy," from robbery with violence to "prigging a wipe," and the selling of painted sparrows for canaries? Nor was Whitechapel a desirable place when Mr Pickwick travelled to Ipswich. "Not a very nice

neighbourhood," said Sam, as they rumbled along the crowded and filthy street. "It's a very remarkable circumstance," he continued, "that poverty and oysters go together. . . . The poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters. . . . An oyster-stall to every half-dozen houses. The street's lined with 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings and eats oysters in regular desperation." Sam was a keen observer; but there is now a deeper depth than oysters. Periwinkles and poverty; whelks and villainy foregather in Whitechapel at the dawn of the Twentieth Century.

But the poverty and the villainy of Whitechapel must not be too greatly insisted upon. They may easily be overdone. Loyal hearts and brave lives—all the braver that they are not flaunted in the face of the world—exist in the cheerless and unromantic grey streets that lead off the main road. The domestic virtues flourish here as well as—if not better than—in the West End. The heroes and heroines of everyday life—the greater in their heroism that they do not know of it—live in hundreds of thousands in the dingy and unrelieved dulness of the streets to right and left of Whitechapel Road and of the Mile End Road, that go with so majestic a breadth and purposeful directness to Bow.

XII

LET the Londoner who has never been "down East," and so is given to speaking contemptuously of it, take a journey down the Whitechapel and Mile End Roads, and see with what an astonishing width, both in respect of roadway and foot-pavements, those noble thoroughfares are endowed. The London he has already known owns no streets so wide, save only in the isolated and unimportant instance of Langham Place; while, although it cannot be said that, taken individually, the houses of the great East-End thoroughfares are at all picturesque, yet there is a certain interesting quality in the roads as a whole, lacking elsewhere. This, doubtless, is partly explained by the strangeness of the East-ender's garb, and partly by the many Jewish and other foreigners who throng the pavements.

A strangely-named public-house—the "Grave Maurice"—is one of the landmarks of the Whitechapel Road. Many have set themselves the task of finding the origin of that sign and its meaning; but their efforts have been baulked by the very multiplicity of historic Maurices, grave or otherwise. The sign may originally have been the "Graf Maurice," Prince Maurice of Bohemia, brother of the better-known Prince Rupert, the dashing cavalier, but a difficulty arises from the fact that there was another "Graf Maurice" at the same time, in the person of the equally well-known Prince Maurice of Nassau, who died of grief when the Spanish overran Holland

and besieged Breda. Nor does the uncertainty end here, for Dekker uses the expression "grave maurice" in one of his plays, written at least thirty years before the time of those princes, in a passage which reads as though it were the usual nickname at that period for an officer.

Beyond the house owning this perplexing sign we come to the beginning of the Mile End Road, one mile, as its name implies, from Aldgate, and for long the site of a turnpike-gate, only removed with the close of the Coaching Age. Rowlandson has left us an excellent view of Mile End Turnpike as it was in his time; with isolated blocks of houses, groups of rustic cottages and a background of trees, to show how rural were the surroundings towards the close of the eighteenth century; while maps of that period mark the road onwards, bordered by fields, with "Ducking Pond Row" standing solitary and the ducking-pond itself close behind, where the scolds and shrews of that age were soused.

The Ducking-Pond as an institution is as obsolete as the rack, the thumb-screw, and other ingenious devices of the "good old times"; but most towns a hundred years ago still kept a cucking or ducking-stool; while, if they had no official pond for the purpose, any dirty pool would serve, and the dirtier it were the better it was esteemed.

"The Way of punishing scolding Women is pleasant enough," says an old traveller. "They fasten an Arm Chair to the End of two Beams, twelve or fifteen Foot long, and parallel to each other: so that these two Pieces of Wood, with their two Ends



MILE END TURSPIKE, 1813.

After Reynolds.

embrace the Chair, which hangs between them on a sort of Axle; by which Means it plays freely, and always remains in the natural horizontal Position in which a Chair should be, that a Person may sit conveniently in it, whether you raise it or let it down. They set up a Post upon the Bank of a Pond or River, and over this Post they lay, almost in Equilibrium, the two Pieces of Wood, at one End of which the Chair hangs just over the Water. They place the Woman in the Chair, and so plunge her into the Water as often as the Sentence directs, in order to cool her immoderate Heat."

One has only to go and look at the average rural pond to imagine the horrors of this punishment. The stagnant water, the slimy mud, the clinging green duckwood, common to them, must have made a ducking the event of a lifetime.

The difference here, at Mile End, between those times and these is emphasised by the close-packed streets on either side, and by the crowded tram-cars that ply back and forth.

Yet there are survivals. Here, for instance, in the little old-fashioned weather-boarded "Vine" Inn that stands by itself, in advance of the frontage of the houses, and takes up a goodly portion of the broad pavement, we see a relic of the time when land was not so valuable as now; when local authorities were easy-going, and when anyone who had the impudence to squat down upon the public paths could do so, and, remaining there undisturbed for a period of twenty-one years, could thus derive a legal title to the freehold. Here, then, is an ex-

planation of the existence of the "Vine" in this position.

Close by are the quaint Trinity Almshouses, built in 1695, for the housing of old skippers and shellbacks. Wren designed the queer little houses and the chapel that still faces the grassy quadrangle where the old salts walk and gossip unconcernedly while the curious passers-by linger to gaze at them from the pavement, as though they were some strange kind of animal. Nothing so curious outside the pages of fiction as this quiet haven in midst of the roaring streets, screened from them by walls and gates of curious architecture surmounted by models of the gallant old galleons that have long ceased to rove the raging main. It is a spot alien from its surroundings, frowned down upon by the towering breweries, which indeed would have bought the old place and destroyed it a few years ago, but for the indignation aroused when the proposal of the governing body of the almshouses to sell became known.

There is nothing else to detain the explorer on his way into Essex. The People's Palace, it is true, is a remarkable place, the result of Sir Walter Besant's dream of a resort for those of the East who would get culture and find recreation, but it is a dream realised as an architectural nightmare, and is a very terrible example of what is done to this unhappy quarter in the names of Art and Philanthropy.

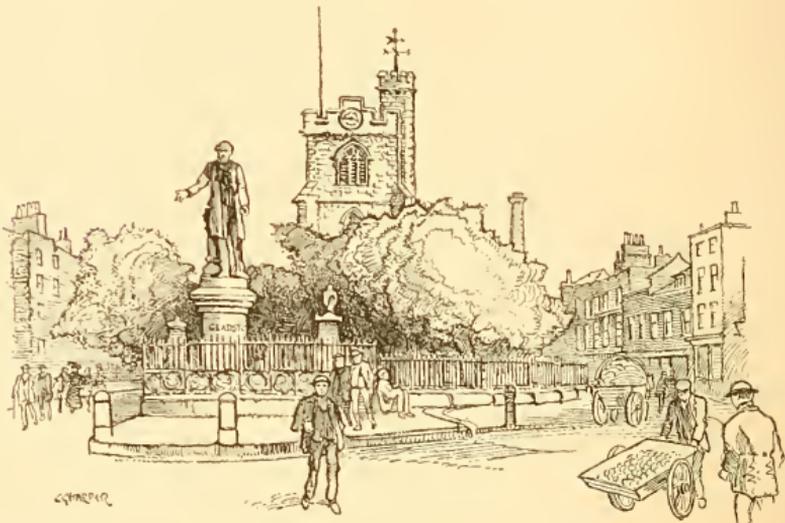
XIII

AT last, by this broadest of broad roads, we come to Stratford-le-Bow and its parish church. In these hurried times, and for some centuries past, the old hyphenated place-name has been dropped, and as "Bow" alone it is familiar to all East-enders. The place is nowadays chiefly associated with Bryant & May and matches, but there yet remain many old Queen Anne, and even earlier, mansions by the roadside, telling of days long before "patent safeties" were thought of, and when flint and steel and timber were the sole means of obtaining a light.

"Bow," says the *Ambulator* of 1774, "is a village a little to the east of Mile End, inhabited by many whitsters and scarlet dyers. Here has been set up a large manufactory of porcelain, little inferior to that of Chelsea." That description is now somewhat out of date. The manufactory of porcelain has long disappeared and Bow china is scarce, and treasured accordingly. Whitsters—that is to say, bleachers of linen—and scarlet dyers, also, are to seek.

Bow Church confronts the eastward-bound traveller in bold and rugged fashion; its time-worn tower standing midway of the road and challenging, as it were, the crossing of the little River Lea, just beyond, to Stratford and into Essex. Church and churchyard split the road up into two channels and thus destroy its width, which it never afterwards regains until the suburbs are

passed and the open country reached. A modern touch here is the bronze statue of Gladstone, in advance of the church, facing westwards in declamatory attitude from its granite pedestal, and erected in his lifetime; recalling the fervent hero-worshipping days of the "People's William." The outstretched hand is oddly crooked. Few be them that see statues raised to themselves, unless indeed



BOW.

they be made of finer clay than most mortals, kings and princes, and the like. Of recent years this bronze Gladstone has, in our vulgar way, been made to preside, as it were, over an underground public convenience, from whose too obtrusive midst he rises, absurdly eloquent.

Just how Stratford-le-Bow received its name is an interesting piece of history. Both here and at the neighbouring Old Ford the Lea was

anciently crossed by a paved stone ford of Roman construction, continuing the highway into Essex; but when that river's many channels, swollen by winter's rains, rolled in freshets toward the Thames, the low-lying lands of what we now call Haekney and West Ham marshes were for long distances converted into a sluggish lake. For months together the approaches to the Lea were lost in floods, and the real channels of the river became so deep that those who valued their lives and goods dared not attempt the passage. To the aid of poor travellers thus waterlogged came the good and pious Queen Matilda, consort of Henry the First. "Having herself been well washed in the water," as old Leland says, she fully appreciated the necessity for bridges, and accordingly directed the raising of a causeway on either side of the Lea and the building of two stone structures, of which one was the original "Bow" Bridge; "a rare piece of work, for before that time the like had never been seen in England." It seems to have been the stone arch that gave its name of "Bow," and if an arched stone bridge was so remarkable in those times that it should thus derive a name for its semi-circular, or "bow" shape, it must have been either the first, or among the earliest, of stone bridges built, in times when others were constructed of timber.

The original name of the village that afterwards sprang up here, on the hither or Middlesex shore, was thus singularly contradictory; meaning "the street ford at the arched bridge." The Stratford

on the Essex side was in those days known as Stratford Langthorne.

The good queen not only built the bridges and causeways, but endowed them with land and a water-mill, conveying those properties to the Abbess of Barking, burdened with a perpetual charge for the maintenance of the works. Having done all this, she died. Some years afterwards a Cistercian monastery was founded close by, where the Abbey Mills now stand, and the then Abbess of Barking, of opinion that the Abbot of that house, being near, would find it easier to look after the bridges than herself, reconveyed the property, together with its obligations, to him. The trust was kept for a time and then delegated to a certain Godfrey Pratt, who had a house built for him on the causeway and enjoyed an annual grant, in consideration of keeping the works in repair. Pratt did so well with his annual stipend and the alms given him by wayfarers that the Abbot at length discontinued the grant. Accordingly, the wily Pratt set up a quite unauthorised toll-bar and levied "pontage" on all except the rich, of whom he was afraid. This went on for many years, until the scandal grew too great, and, in consequence of an inquisition held, the Abbot dispossessed Godfrey Pratt of his toll-bar and resumed the control himself.

Meanwhile, no repairs had been effected, and the road had been so greatly worn down that the feet of travellers and those of the horses often went through the arches. Bow Bridge had, consequently, to undergo an extensive cobbling process; a treat-

ment, by the way, continued through the centuries until 1835, when it was finally pulled down.

In its last state it was a nondescript patchwork of all ages. The property for its maintenance had, of course, been lost in the confiscation of monastic estates under Henry the Eighth, and its repair afterwards fell upon the local authorities, who always preferred to patch and tinker it so long as such a course was possible. On February 14, 1839, the existing bridge was opened, crossing the Lea in one seventy-foot span, in place of the old three arches.

XIV

“FAREWELL, Bowe, have over the bridge, where, I heard say, honest Conscience was once drowned.”

Thus says Will Kemp, in his *Nine Days' Wonder*, the account of a danee he jiggged from London to Norwich in so many days, in 1600. It is hopeless to recover the meaning hidden in that old joke about the drowning of conscience here, and so we will also without delay “have over” the modern bridge of Bow and into Essex, past dingy flour mills, and crossing another branch of the Lea by Channelsea Bridge, come to Stratford.

Here, then, begins the county of calves, according to the popular jest that to be a native of Essex is to be an “Essex Calf.” It is not generally regarded as a complimentary title, for of all young animals

the calf is probably the clumsiest and most awkward. To this day in rural England the contemptuous exclamation "you great calf!" is used of an awkward, overgrown boy tied to his mother's apron-strings. Yet, if we may believe a seventeenth-century writer on this subject, the nickname had a complimentary origin, "for," said he, "this county produceth calves of the fattest, fairest and finest flesh in England."

We have already seen that the French spoken at Stratford-le-Bow in Chaucer's time was a scoff and a derision. To-day, neither on the Middlesex nor the Essex shores of the Lea is the teaching of languages either a matter for praise or contempt. Mills of every kind, the making of matches that strike only on the box, the varied work of the Stratford and West Ham factories, fully occupy the vast populations close at hand; while the business of covering the potato-fields, the celery-beds and the grounds of the old suburban mansions with endless rows of suburban dwellings is engrossing attention down the road. Stratford and Maryland Point are now strictly urban, and Ilford far greater in these days than it ever was when its "great" prefix was never pretermitted. London, indeed, stretches far out along this road, and the country is reached only after many miles of that debatable land which belongs neither to country nor town. Heralds of the great metropolis appear to the London-bound traveller while he is yet far away, and even so far distant as Chelmsford "the dim presentiment of some vast capital," as De Quincey remarks, "reaches you obscurely like a misgiving."

Stratford has not improved since coaches left the road. It has grown greatly, and grown dirty, squalid and extremely trying to noses that have not been acclimatised to bone-boiling works, manure factories and other odoriferous industries. But it is a place of great enterprises and great and useful markets, and when its introductory mean streets are passed, the Broadway, where the Leytonstone Road branches off to the left, looks by contrast quite noble. This brings one to Upton Park, Forest Gate, Woodgrange and Manor Park in succession, past a building which, whether as an institution or an example of beautiful architecture, would well grace the West. The West Ham Public Library and Technical Institute is here referred to. "Irish Row," on the way, marked on old maps, is a reference to old wayside cottages inhabited until recent years by a turbulent colony of London-Irish market-gardening labourers, subsidised by Mrs Nelson in times of coaching competition to impede hated rivals as they came past the "Rising Sun" at what is now the suburb of Manor Park; a house which, like the "Coach and Horses" at Upton, has declined from a legitimate coaching trade to something more in the gin-palace sort. This is not to say that the staid and decorous Mrs Nelson entered into direct negotiations with the Mikes and Patseys of Irish Row, but when the rival Ipswich "Umpire" or the "New Colchester" coaches developed much sporting competition and their coachmen evinced a dogged determination to be first over Bow

Bridge on the way up to London, and, by consequence, the first to arrive at their destination, why, an obscure hint or two on the part of one of her numerous staff, accompanied by the where-withal for a drink, produced wonders in the way of highway obstruction. But such recollections are become unsubstantial as the fabric of which dreams are made, and fade before the apparitions of tramways and interminable rows of suburban shops that conduct to Ilford Bridge.

Great Ilford lies on the other side of the sullen Roding, that rolls a muddy tide in aimless loops to lazily join the Thames at Barking Reach. The townlet has from time immemorial been approached by a bridge replacing the "eald," or old, ford, whence its name derives and not from that crossing of the stream being an "ill" ford, as imaginative, but uninstructed, historians would have us believe; although the slimy black mud of the river-bed would nowadays make the exercise of fording an ill enough enterprise. Ilford is now in the throes of development and is fast losing all individuality and becoming a mere suburb. Let us leave it for places less sophisticated.

The morris-dancing Will Kemp of 1600, leaving Ilford by moonshine, set forward "dauncing within a quarter of a mile of Romford, where two strong Jades were beating and byting either of other." We take this to mean two women fighting on the road, until the context is reached, where he says that their hooves formed an arch over

him and that he narrowly escaped being kicked on the head. It then becomes evident that he is talking of horses.

Leaving the centre of Great Ilford behind, and in more decorous fashion than that of Will Kemp, we come, past an inn oddly named the "Cauliflower"—probably as a subtle compliment to the abounding market-gardens of the neighbourhood—to the long, straight perspective of the road across Chadwell Heath. Unnumbered acres of new suburban "villa" streets now cover the waste on either side, so that the beginnings of the plain are not so much heath as modern suburb, created by the Great Eastern Railway's suburban stations and by the far-reaching enterprises of land corporations, which here carry on the usual speculations of the speculative builder on a gigantic scale. In acre upon acre of closely-packed streets, each one with a horrible similarity to its neighbour, thousands of the weekly wage-earning clerks, mechanics and artisans of mighty London live and lose their individuality, and pay rent to limited companies. Where the high-wayman of a century ago waited impatiently behind the ragged thickets and storm-tossed thorn trees of Chadwell Heath for the traveller, there now rises the modern township of Seven Kings, and midway between Ilford station and that of Chadwell Heath, the recent enormous growth of population on this sometime waste has led to the erection of the new stations of "Seven Kings" and "Goodmayes," while widened lines have been provided

for the increased train services. "Seven Kings" is a romantic name, but who those monarchs were, and what they were ever doing on the Heath, which of old was a place more remarkable for cracked skulls than for crowned heads, is impossible to say. Many wits have been at work on the problem, but have been baffled. The natural assumption is that at this spot, marked on old maps as "Seven Kings Watering," the



SEVEN KINGS.

seven monarchs of the Heptarchy met. History, unhappily records no such meeting, but there was no *Court Circular* in those times, and so many royal foregatherings must have gone unremarked, except locally and in some fashion similar to this. So let us assume the kings met here and watered their horses at the "watering," which was a place where a little stream crossed the road in a water-splash. The stream still crosses the highway, but

civilisation has put it in a pipe and tucked it away underground.

A lane running across the Great Eastern Railway at this point, known as Stoup Lane ("stoup" meaning a boundary-post) marks the boundary of the Ilford and Chadwell wards of Barking parish. Here it was, in 1794, on a night of December, that a King's messenger, James Martin by name, was shot by five footpads. The register of St Edmund's, Romford, records the burial of this unfortunate man on the 14th of that month.

Let us not, however, in view of the more or less grisly dangers that still await belated wayfarers on this road, enlarge too greatly on the lawlessness of old times; for the homeward-bound resident making for his domestic hearth in these new-risen suburbs towards the stroke of ten o'clock is not infrequently startled by the sinister figure of a footpad springing from the ragged hedges of Chadwell Heath and demanding—*not* his money or his life, as in the old formula, but—a halfpenny! This invariable demand of the nocturnal Chadwell Heath footpads, which argues a pitiful lack of invention on their part, is for half the price of a drink.

"You haven't got a ha'p'ny about you, gov'nor?" asks the threatening tramp.

"No," says the peaceful citizen, anxiously scanning the long perspective of the road for the policeman who ought to be within sight—but is not; "w-what do you want a halfpenny for?"

"I've walked all the way from Romford and only got half the price of a glass o' beer," says the rascal.

The citizen is astonished and incredulous, and his astonishment gets the better of his fear. "Oh, come now," he rejoins, "no one walks three miles from Romford for a glass of beer; besides, all the houses here close at ten o'clock."

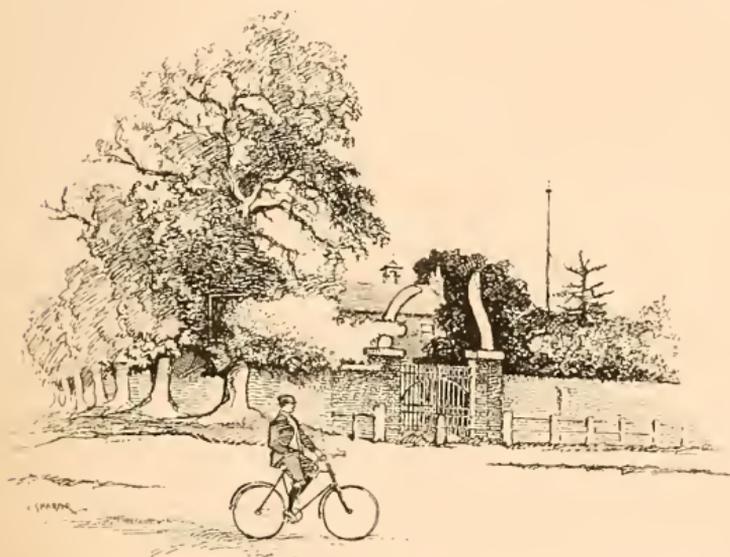
"Oh, they do, do they?" replies the tramp, offensively. "'Ere, my mate Bill'll talk to you," and, whistling, the ominous bulk of Bill emerges aggressively from the darkling hedge, and together they proceed to wipe the road with that respectable ratepayer, and, rifling his pockets, leave him, bruised and bleeding, to reflect on the blessings of civilisation and to be thankful that he was not born a hundred years ago, when he might have been shot dead instead of being felled to the ground by the half-brick in a handkerchief which he finds beside him and takes home as a trophy.

Chadwell Street, a wayside hamlet, conducts past Beacontree Heath, on the right, to an open country of disconsolate-looking contorted elms and battered windmills, telling even in the noontide heats and still airs of summer of the winter winds that race across the watery flats of Rippleside and Dagenham Marshes, out of the shivering east. Lonely, until quite recent times, stood "Whalebone House," beside the road, the two whalebones that even yet surmount its garden entrance the wonderment for more than two hundred years of chance travellers. Legends tell that they are relics of a whale stranded in the Thames in the year of Oliver Cromwell's death, and set up here in memory of him. However that may be, they certainly were here in 1698, when

Ogilby's *Britannia* was published, for the house is marked on his map as "Ye Whalebone."

These "rude ribs," it may shrewdly be suspected, have little longer yet to remain, for though apparently proof against decay, the house and grounds are, like those of the surrounding properties, for sale to the builders.

The sole historic or other vestige remaining of



WHALEBONE HOUSE.

the "Whalebone" turnpike-gate, once standing here, is an account to be found in the newspapers of the time of an attack made upon George Smith, the toll-keeper, on a night in 1829. He was roused in the darkness by a voice calling "Gate!" and, going to open it, was instantly knocked down, in a manner somewhat similar to the treatment accorded the hero of that touching nursery rhyme, who tells how:—

“ Last night and the night before,
Three tom-cats came knocking at my door.
I went down to let them in,
And they knocked me down with a rolling-pin.”

The two men who felled the unfortunate George Smith, alarmed by his cries of “ Murder ! ” threatened to shoot him if he were not quiet, and, going over his pockets, were rewarded by a find of twenty-five shillings. While they were thus engaged in sorting him over, a third confederate, ransacking the house, discovered three pounds. With this booty and a parting kick, they left their victim, and disappeared as silently as they came.

XV

ROMFORD, now approached, is but twelve miles from London, and has frankly given up the impossible and ceased all pretence of being provincial. At the same time, building-land having only just (in the speculator’s phrase) become “ ripe for development,” the townlet has not yet lost all individuality in suburban extension.

The place, say some antiquaries, derives its name from the “ Roman ford ” on the Rom brook, but it is a great deal more likely that the origin is identical with that of the first syllable in the names of Ramsgate, Ramsey and Romney, and comes from the Anglo-Saxon “ ruim ” = a marsh. Time was when the town

was celebrated for its manufacture of breeches; an industry which gave rise to a saying still current in the less polished nooks and corners of Essex—"Go to Romford and get your backsides new bottomed." Breeches have long ceased to be a noted product of the town, which for many years past has bulked large in the annals of Beer. Barricades, avenues, mountains and Alpine ranges of barrels, hogsheads, firkins and kilderkins of Romford ale and stout proclaim



ENTRANCE TO ROMFORD.

that the Englishman's preference for his "national drink" has not abated, and that

"Damn his eyes, whoever tries
To rob a poor man of his beer"

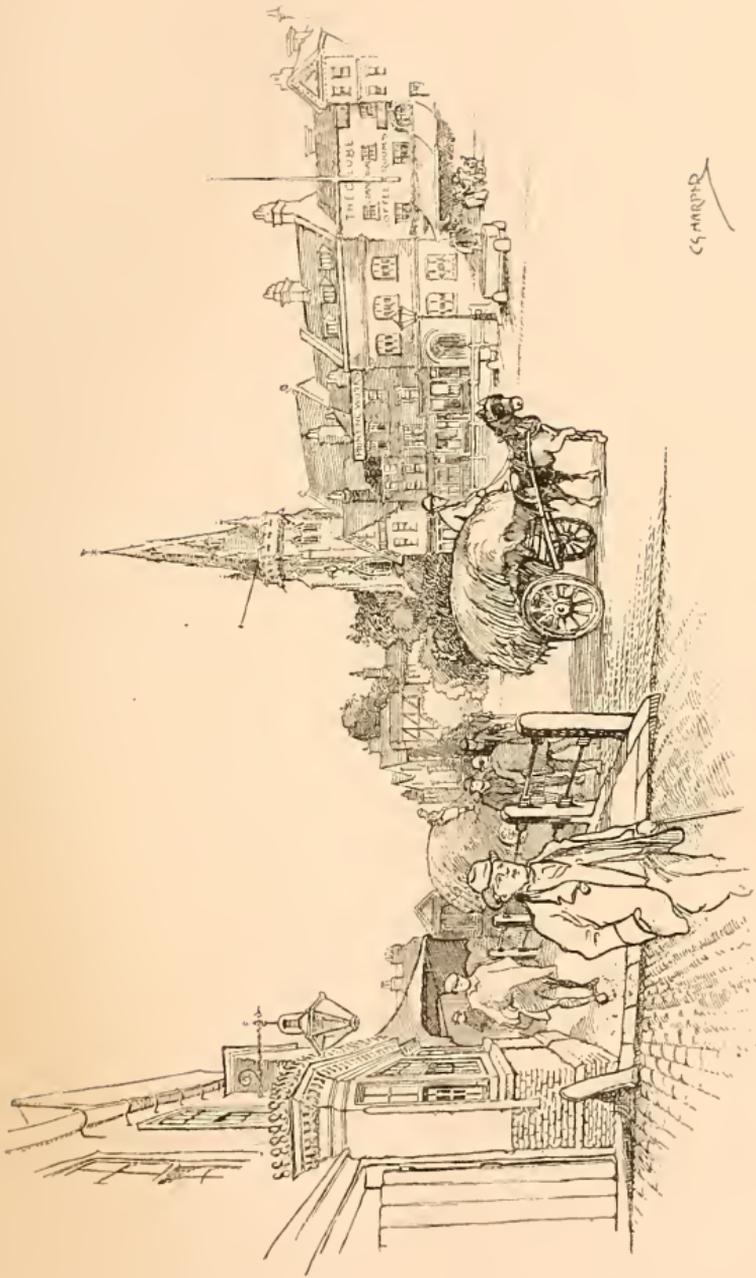
is still a popular sentiment; as both the brewers of arsenical compounds and the more rabid among teetotallers are some day likely to discover.

A French traveller in England some two hundred years ago wrote that "there are a hundred sorts of

Beer made in England, and some are not bad : Art has well supplied Nature in this particular. Be that as it will, beer is Art and wine is Nature ; I am for Nature against the world." That old fellow did not know how artful beer could be, and if he could re-visit his native France might discover that even wine is no longer the simple child of nature it once was.

But although John Barleycorn is the tutelary deity of Romford, it is quite conceivable that the stranger bound for Norwich, and turning neither to right nor to left, might pass through the town without so much as a glimpse obtained of those Alpine ranges aforesaid. True, on entering Romford, he could scarce fail to observe certain weird structures ahead : odd towers like first cousins to lighthouses, springing into the sky line, with ranges of perpendicular pipes, like the disjointed fragments of some mammoth organ, beside them, the characteristic signs and portents of a great brewery ; but the barrels are secluded, nor even are Romford's streets blocked, as might have been suspected, with brewers' drays. Romford, indeed, spells to the uninstructed stranger rather bullocks than beer ; for the cattle-pens are the chief feature of its market-place, and sheep and hay and straw bulk more in the eye of the road-farer than the products of Ind, Coope & Co., which are to be seen in all their vastness beside the railway station and on the sidings constructed especially for the trade in ale and stout.

The town in its most characteristic aspect is seen in the accompanying illustration taken from the doorway of that old inn, the "Windmill and Bells," the



ROMFORD.

C. S. MARRER

broad road margined with granite setts and the pavements fenced with posts and rails; the re-built parish church prominent across the market-place.

Beyond Romford the road grows rural, and, by the same token, hilly. This, gentle reader, let it not be forgotten, is Essex, and we all know with what persistence that county is spoken of, and written of, as flat. If you would know what flatness is, try the Great North Road and its long levels between Bal-



OLD TOLL-HOUSE, PUTTELS BRIDGE.

dock, Biggleswade and Alconbury, or search Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire or Hunts. *There* is flatness, beside which that of Essex is the merest superstition, started probably by some tired traveller of inconstant purpose, who, essaying to explore the county, gave up the enterprise when he had reached Wanstead Flats. Surveying that not highly romantic expanse, he took it as an exemplar of the rest of the shire, and so returned home to start this immortal myth on its career. Certainly no cyclist who knows his Essex

will subscribe to its flatness as an article of faith, and as such an one cycles from Romford, through the hamlet of Hare Street, over Puttels Bridge, where stands an old toll-house, to the other hamlet of Brook Street, the fact that he will actually have to *walk* his machine up the steep hill that conducts into the town of Brentwood will cause him to think hard things of myth-makers.

Brook Street Hill is the name of this eminence.



THE "FLEECE," BROOK STREET.

Beside it stands a cemetery, convenient for brakeless cyclists who recklessly descend, and at its foot is a fine old inn, the "Fleece," a house of call for the fish-waggons that were once so great a feature of this road so far as Colchester and Harwich.

Brentwood, on the crest of this hill, occupies an elevated table-land, with sharp descents from it on every side. The "burnt wood" town, destroyed in some forgotten conflagration, is now a long-

streeted, old-fashioned place, apparently in no haste to bid good-bye to the past. It keeps the old Assize House of Queen Elizabeth's time in repair, and



THE MARTYR'S TREE, BRENTWOOD.

carefully sees to it that the Martyr's Tree, decayed though the old elm stump be and hollow, is saved from perishing altogether. It was in 1555 that William Hunter, in his twentieth year, suffered in

this place for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. That staunch upholder of the Protestant faith scarce needed the modern memorial, close by, while this shattered trunk remained, its gaping rents carefully bricked up by pious hands; but let the venerable relic be doubly safe-guarded in these times, when that candle lit by Latimer and Ridley, close upon three centuries and a half ago, burns dim, and lawless and forsworn clergy within the Church of England are working towards Rome and the return of the famous days of fire and stake; when the blood of the martyrs has ceased to inspire a generation which demands to be shown some tangible object before it can realise the significance of that sacrifice. Here, then, is something that can be seen and touched, to bring the least imaginative back in fancy to those terrible days, when brave hearts of every class gave up their lives in fire and smoke rather than abjure their faith. The Romanising clergy of to-day are made of coarser fabric than the martyrs. *They* are not actuated by honesty, but take oaths they have no intention of observing to a Church whose bread they eat and whose trust they betray.

Would you know something of that martyrdom at Brentwood? Then scan the inscription on the modern granite obelisk, and control, if you can, a righteous indignation when you perceive a modern Roman Catholic chapel standing, impudent in these days of an exaggerated tolerance, over against the Martyr's Tree itself, typifying the Scarlet Woman in midst of her blasphemies, exultant over the blood of the saints. "He being ' dead yet speaketh,"

quotes that inscription ; but what avails it to speak in the ears of the deaf, or to talk of honour to the perjured ? "Learn from his example," continue those momentous words, "to value the privilege of an open Bible, and be careful to maintain it" ; but the world goes by unheeding, and only when the danger again becomes acute and liberty of conscience is passing away will indifference be conquered and the folly of it revealed.

XVI

BRENTWOOD still keeps a notable relic of coaching days in the old "White Hart" Inn, a curious specimen of the timbered and galleried type of hostelry familiar to our great-grandfathers. It turns a long plastered front to the street, but the great carved and panelled doorway leading into the coach-yard confirms the proud legend, "Established 1480." Full forty coaches passed through Brentwood in every twenty-four hours at the close of the Coaching Age, but the earlier days of coaching brought the "White Hart" more custom than came to it at the close of that era, when, in consequence of the roads being improved, travelling was quicker, and places once halted at were left behind without stopping. Innkeepers were considerable losers by this constant acceleration of coaches, and saw the smart, long-distance stages go dashing by where, years before,

the old slow coaches stayed the night, or, at the very least, halted for meals.

The "White Hart" remains typical of the earlier times, and still keeps the old-world comfort regretted in other places by De Quincey, who lived long enough to witness the beginnings of the great changes that have come over the hotels of town and country since coaches gave place to railways.



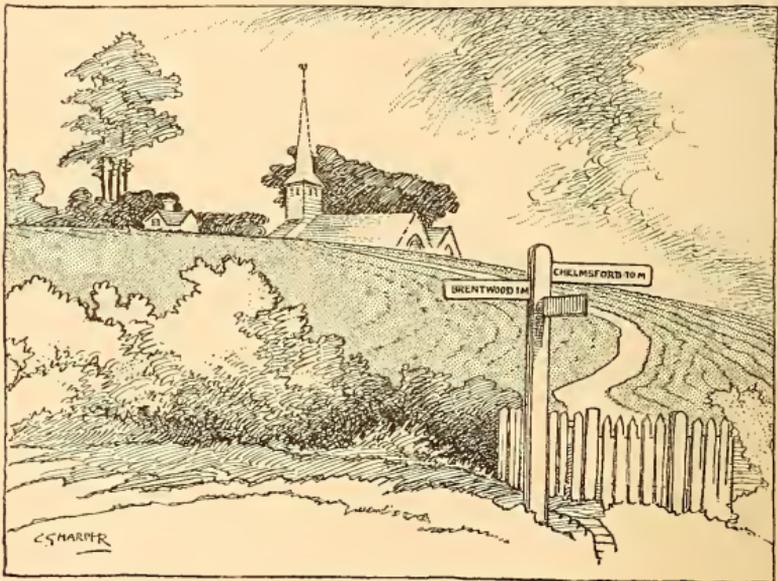
YARD OF THE "WHITE HART," BRENTWOOD.

XVII

BRENTWOOD is no sooner left behind than the road descends steeply over what was once a part of Shenfield Common, an exceedingly wild and hillocky spot in days gone by, and probably the place where, in November 1692, those seven jovial Essex squires mentioned by Macaulay were themselves, while hunting the hare, chased and at last run down by nine hunters of a different sort, who turned their pockets out and then bade them good-day and be damned. The original chronicler of this significant incident, the diarist, Narcissus Luttrell, makes no especial feature of the event. He merely records it as having happened "near Ingerstone," and then proceeds to chronicle other happenings in the same sort along the several approaches to London. Little wonder, therefore, that Macaulay should have drawn the conclusion that at this time a journey of fifty miles through the wealthiest and most populous shires of England was as dangerous as a pilgrimage across the deserts of Arabia.

From the descending road or from Shenfield Church the country is seen spread out, map-like, below, over the valley of the Thames, to where the river empties itself into the broad estuary at the Nore. At least, there is the vale, and the map vouchsafes the information that the river flows thereby; but the compacted woodlands shut out the view of that imperial waterway. "I cannot see the Spanish fleet, because it's not in sight,"

says the disappointed searcher of the horizon in the poem, and it is precisely for the same reason that the Thames is not visible from Shenfield. But if one is denied a view of that imperial river, at least Shenfield Church itself and its churchyard, a prodigal riot of roses of every hue and habit, are worth seeing. The attenuated shingled spire,



SHENFIELD.

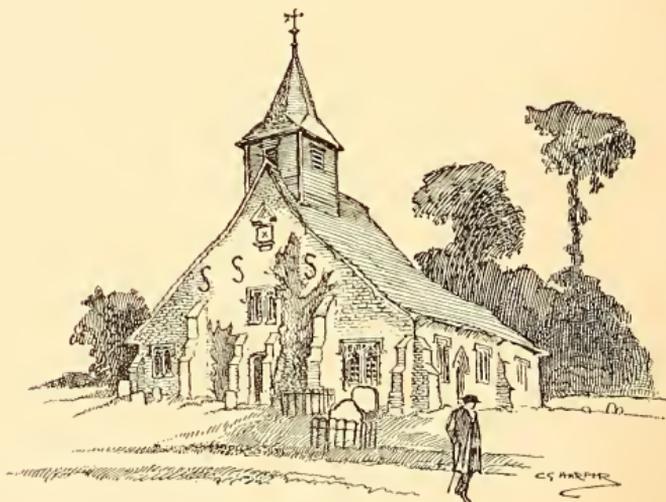
one of the characteristic features of Essex churches, beckons insistently from the road, and he who thereupon turns aside is well repaid, in a sight of the elaborately-carved timber columns of the interior, proving how in this county, where building stone is not found, thirteenth and fourteenth-century builders made excellent shift with heart of oak. This is, in fact, like so many other Essex churches, largely

wooden, and its timber is as sound now as it was six or seven hundred years ago.

Mountnessing, known locally as "Money's End" lies two miles distant from Shenfield. As in the case of so many other places near the great roads, a comparatively recent settlement bearing the name of the old village sprang up, to catch the custom of travellers; but an additionally curious fact is the utter extinction of the original village, which lay a mile distant from the highway, where the parish church now stands lonely, save for a neighbouring farmstead. Explorers in the countryside are often astonished at the great distances between villages and their parish churches, and seek in vain in their guide-books or in talk with the "oldest inhabitant" an explanation of so curious a thing. Here, as in many cases, the root of the mystery is found in the enclosure of the surrounding common lands. The enclosure of commons has never been possible without the passing of special Acts, which have divided what should have been the heritage of the people for all time between the lord of the manor and the villagers, in their proper proportions. Thus the lord of the manor and the tenants would each obtain their share of the plunder, in the form of freehold land, with the obvious result that the villagers, instead of paying rent for their cottages clustering round the church in the original village, built themselves new and rent-free cottages on their share of the spoil of the commons. The old cottages being pulled down, or allowed to decay, it was not

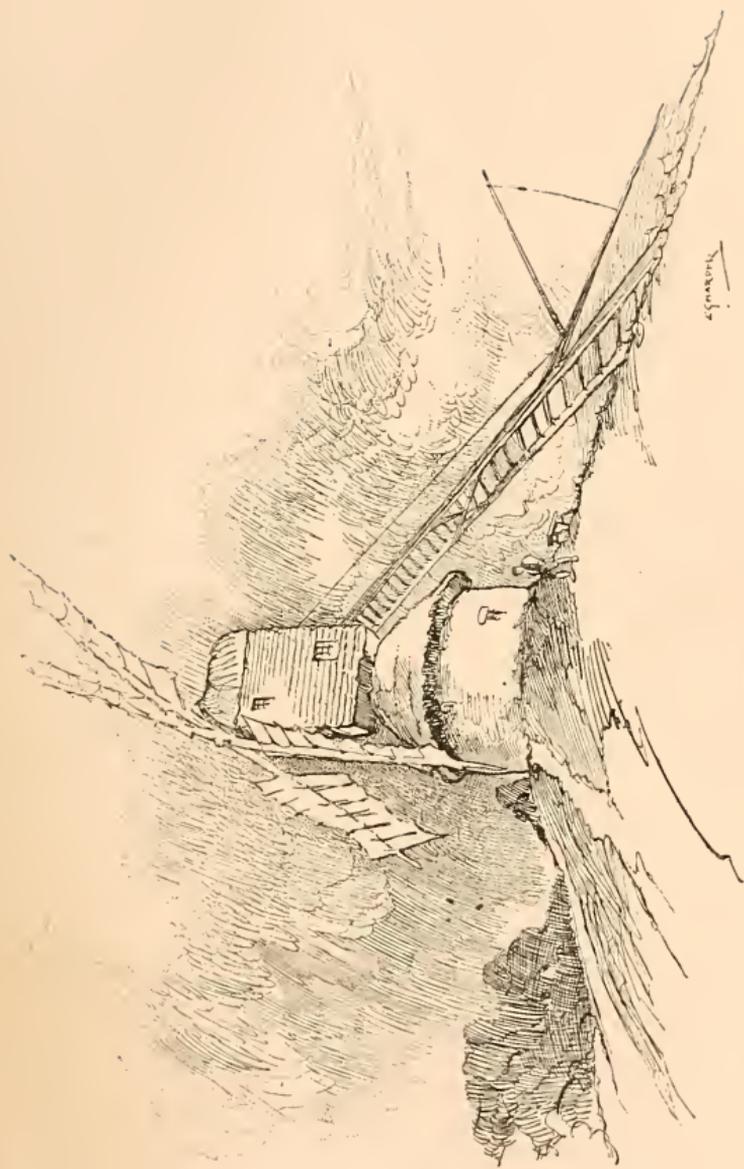
long before the last trace of the original village disappeared.

Mountnessing was once the seat of the Mountneys, who have long since vanished from their old home. The old church, largely red brick without and timber within, still preserves the fossil rib-bone of an elephant, long regarded with reverence by the country folk as the rib of a giant, and has for an additional curiosity the carving of



MOUNTNESSING CHURCH.

a head on one of the pillars, a head fitted, perhaps by way of warning to Early English parishioners of shrewish tendencies, with a brank, or "scold's bridle." The red-brick west front of the church, masking the wooden belfry-frame from the weather, still bears the date, 1653, carved in the brick, but such is the fresh appearance of the brickwork that without that evidence of age it would be difficult to credit it with so long an existence. The iron ties



MOUNTNESSING WINDMILL.

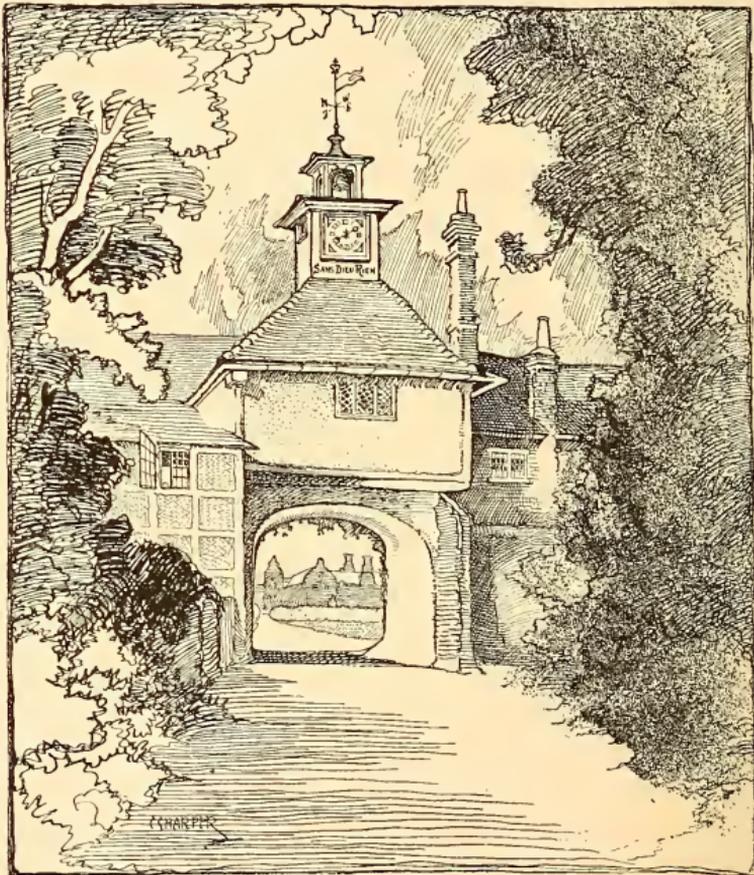
in the shape of the letter S give the view a singular appearance. An apologetic epitaph in verse, beginning, "Reader, excuse the underwritten," is a curiosity of Mountnessing churchyard.

Returning to the road, Mountnessing Street, as the modern settlement is named, is seen clustering on a hill-top, around four cross-roads and a wayside pond. The place may aptly be summarised as consisting of a dozen cottages, two public-houses, a general "stores" (our grandfathers would have been content with the less pretentious word "shop"), a tin tabernacle to serve those too infirm or too lazy to walk a mile to church; a sweep's shop, a tailor's, and a windmill situated on a knoll; a windmill that for picturesqueness might win the enthusiasm of a Crome or a Constable.

From this point it is, as a milestone proclaims, two miles to "Ingatstone," the "Ingatestone" of customary spelling. The milestones are undoubtedly strictly correct in their orthography, if erring on the pedantic side, for that village derives its name from a settlement of the Anglo-Saxons by the "ing" or meadow, at the Roman milestone they found here, but has long since disappeared. "Ing-atte-stone" they called their village, which lies in the little valley of the River Wid, or Ash, trickling (for it is a stream of the smallest) hither and thither to give a perennial verdure to the meads along its course. "Ing" is, by consequence, a marked feature of the place-names successively met with along the River Wid. Mounteney's Ing we have already seen, and Fryerning, or Friars' Meadow, is not far away; while

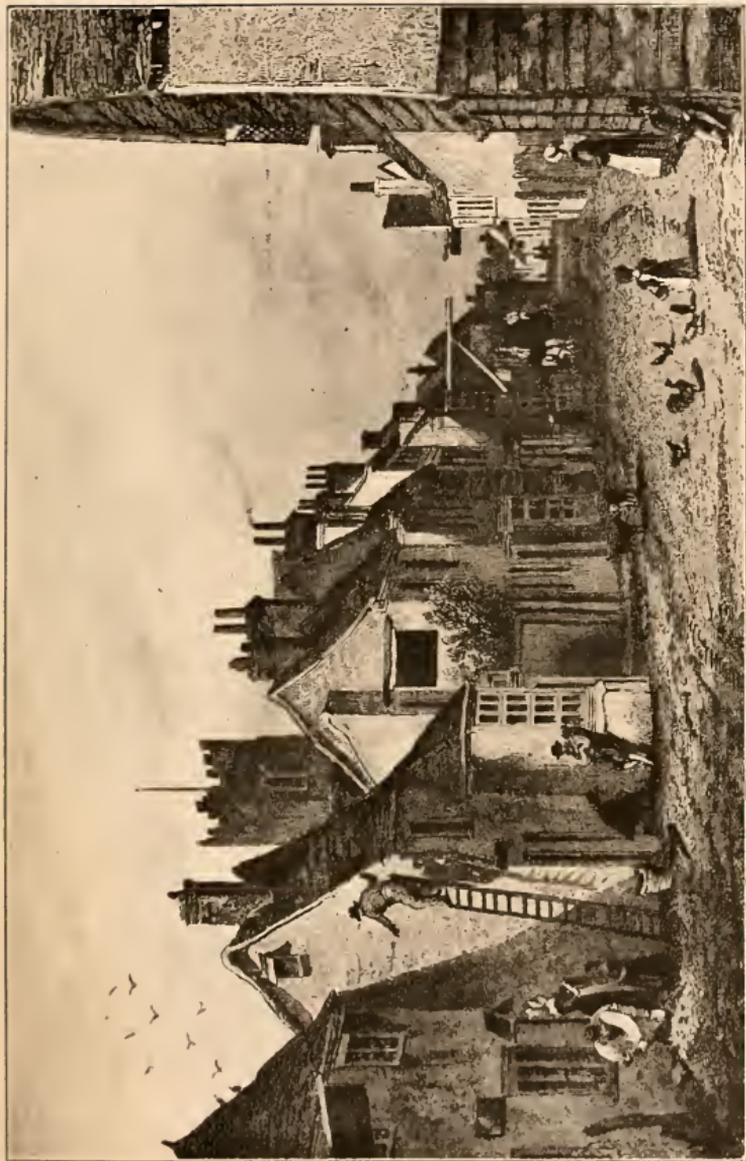
Margaretting, the prettiest name of all, lies beyond Ingatestone.

Ingatestone's one street, fronting on to the high-road, is of the narrowest, and remains in almost



THE GATEHOUSE, INGATESTONE HALL.

every detail exactly as it is pictured in the old print reproduced here, with the red-brick tower of the church still rising behind. It is a tower which by no means looks its age of over four hundred years, so deceptive is the cheery ruddiness of the brick.



INGATESTONE IN COACHING DAYS.

From an Old Print

Within, by the chancel, is the monument of that Sir William Petre who, emulating the accommodating qualities of the famous Vicar of Bray, bowed before the religious storms of the reigns of Henry the Eighth, Edward the Sixth, Mary and Elizabeth. "Made of the willow and not of the oak," those tempests not only left him unscathed, but brought him much plunder. Under Henry he was enriched with the manor of Ingatestone, plundered from the Abbey of Barking, together with much spoil elsewhere. How he managed to do it is a mystery, but during the reign of Mary this ardent Catholic (for such the Petres always have been) actually obtained a Papal Bull confirming him and his in these grants. One marvels, when gazing upon his high-nosed effigy, recumbent beside his wife, how one with that noble physiognomy could be so accomplished a time-server and truckler. His home, plundered from the nuns of Barking, and known for many years as Ingatestone Hall, is yet to be seen at a short distance from the road, down a beautifully-timbered country lane. The entrance is by a gatehouse with the motto, "*Sans Dieu Rien*," situated at the end of an avenue and framing in its archway a fine view of the romantic old red-brick turreted buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Lord Petre of to-day does not reside here, but the place is still in the family, and the Roman Catholic chapel is even now in use. Miss Braddon is perhaps scarce to be numbered among those novelists whose literary landmarks are followed with interest, but it is claimed for Ingatestone Hall that it is the scene of her *Lady Audley's*

Secret. The fish-ponds of old monastic times, the well in which Lady Audley thrust her husband, the lime-walk he haunted, together with such romantic accessories as terraced walks and a priest's hiding-hole, form items which would require the business enthusiasm of an eloquent auctioneer to fully enlarge upon. They *do* say—the “they” in question being the gossips of Ingatestone — that the guard and driver of the Parcel Mail, passing at 1.15 a.m. the head of the avenue leading from the high road, once saw “a something” in white mysteriously sauntering beneath the trees, but whether it was the shade of an Abbess of Barking or one of the sisters thus bewailing the fate of their old home, or merely a white cow, remains an unsolved mystery, the Postmaster-General's regulations and time-sheets not allowing for time spent in psychical research.

The shingled spire of Margaretting Church is visible on the right, soon after leaving Ingatestone. Like the church of Mountnessing, it has its timbered belfry-framing, and like it again, is remote from the village, standing solitary, save for the vicarage and a farmhouse, beside a railway crossing—if, indeed, any building adjoining the main-line of a great railway may ever be called solitary. The Margaret thus honoured in the place-name is the Saint to whom the church is dedicated. Some traces of the “marguerite,” or herbaceous daisy, painted on the old windows, in decorative allusion, remained until they were swept away for modern stained-glass in memory of a late vicar and his family; glass in which Saint Margaret has no place; so that,

save for an inscription on one of the bells, she now remains unhonoured in her own church, deposited in favour of Isaiah and Jeremiah and subjects kept "in stock" by the modern ecclesiastical art furnisher. The only remaining ancient glass is that of the east window, a magnificent fifteenth-century "tree of Jesse."

Margaretting Street fringes the wayside at the twenty-fifth milestone, where a post-office and some few scattered cottages straggle picturesquely at the



AT MARGARETTING.

foot of an incline leading up to Widford. The odious wall of pallid brick that helps so materially to spoil some two miles of this road is the park wall of Hylands, a large estate purchased about 1847 by one John Attwood, a successful ironmaster, who stopped up roads, pulled down cottages, and raised this eyesore to enclose his new-made park. Almost as soon as the last brick was put in its place, the autocratic Attwood became utterly ruined by railway speculations, and his walled-in Eden was sold. Nature in the meanwhile has done her best,

and a continuous fringe of trees now overhangs the ugly wall, while at a break in it, where the River Wid crosses beneath the road, water-lilies gem the stream and the wind sounds in the luxuriant Lombardy poplars with the sound of a waterfall.

If it were not for its church, which has been re-built and has a very fine and tall spire, one might easily pass Widford and not know it, for the very few houses do not suffice to make a village. Such as it is, it stands on the crest of something not quite so much as a hill and rather more than an incline, and beside its large church has an equally fine and large and brand-new inn, the "White Horse." Time was, and that until three years since, when Widford was celebrated for its one other inn, the "Good Woman," or, as it was sometimes styled, the "Silent Woman"; a bitter jest emphasised by the picture-sign of a headless woman, with the inscription, *Fort Bone*, on one side, and a portrait of Henry the Eighth on the other. "*Fort Bone*" was commonly Englished by slangy cyclists as "good business." The sign, of course, was a pictorial and satiric allusion to Anne Boleyn, but it remains an open question whether or not in their present form this and the several other "Quiet Woman" and "Good Woman" signs throughout the country are perversions of the original legend, "*la bonne fame*" displayed on old inns in the distant past; an inscription laudatory of the hostelry, and matching the self-recommendation of "*la bonne renommée*," found in modern France, or the more familiar "noted house for—" and "good pull up" inscriptions on inns

in modern England. Virgil's description of Fame, walking the earth, her head lost to sight in the clouds, may have originated the pictorial sign of the headless woman in days of ancient learning; and the classic allusion becoming lost and the supposedly incorrect spelling of "*fame*" being altered to "*femme*," we thus obtain a very reason-



THE "GOOD WOMAN" SIGN.

able derivation. We may take it that many shrew-bitten folks, innkeepers and customers alike, readily agreed to forget the original meaning in order to adopt one so exactly fitting their opinion that the only quiet or good women were headless ones.

Unhappily, in that senseless itch for change that is robbing places of all interest and distinction,

the sign of the "Good Woman" no longer swings from its accustomed place, and the bay-windowed inn opposite the "White Horse" has retired into private life. The picture sign is now housed inside the "White Horse."

XVIII

WIDFORD almost immediately introduces the explorer to Moulsham (originally the "mole's home"), itself own brother—but a very out-at-elbows brother—to Chelmsford. If we wished to put the wind between our gentility and the somewhat fusty purlieu of Moulsham, we should turn to the left at the fork of the roads, half a mile short of the town, and so, proceeding along the "new London road," come into Chelmsford, half way down the High Street. Being, however, intent rather upon old roads than new, we will e'en endure the half-mile length of shabby, untidy street, and thus come bumpily into Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, the Metropolitan City of Calves, over the hunchbacked and narrow stone bridge across the Chelmer, the successor, at an interval of seven hundred years or so, of the original bridge built by Maurice, Bishop of London. That is a huge slice of time, but it was too late, even in Norman days, for the town to change its name from *Chelmersford* to something more appropriate when the ford was thus superseded.

Straight ahead over this bridge goes the High Street of the town, the view closed by the Shire Hall and the church; the Norwich Road, however, turning abruptly to the right, by the Conduit, and refusing to make acquaintance with the town. It is the Conduit that is seen in this illustration of the High Street, its architecture scarce improved



THE BRIDGE: ENTRANCE TO CHELMSFORD.

by the placing of an electric lamp, alleged to be ornamental, over its cupola.

Chelmsford church and the Shire Hall, seen at the end of this view, spoil one another, the Hall almost entirely hiding the church when looking down the High Street, and the dignified Perpendicular exterior of the church putting the clumsy architecture of the Hall to shame, as a pagan

upstart. The Shire Hall has its terrors for some, but its architecture, alleged to be classic, alone concerns the passing stranger, who feels so concerned by sight of it that he accordingly passes the quicker. A captured Russian gun and the seated bronze effigy of a native, a bygone Lord Chief Justice (who looks whimsically like an old apple-woman crouching over her basket, and drops



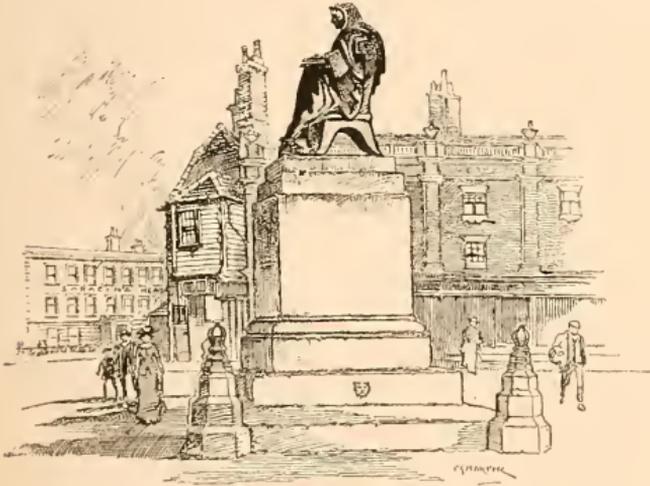
THE CONDUIT, CHELMSFORD.

green coppery stains over his nice stone pedestal) keep one another company in the open space fronting this building.

The L.C.J. in question was Nicholas Tindal, whose career came to a close in 1806. The monument was erected in 1850, "to preserve for all time the image of a judge whose administration of English law, directed by serene wisdom, assisted

by purest love of justice, endeared by unwearied kindness, and graced by the most lucid style, will be held by his country in undying remembrance." His birthplace could hardly have said more than that.

Chelmsford stands not upon the ancient ways, being indeed very severely bitten with a taste for modernity. Is it not famous as the first town in the kingdom to adopt electric lighting, and have



TINDAL'S STATUE.

not its streets been resolutely swept clear of antiquity? The town, in short, is scarce picturesque. It is busy in the agricultural way on Fridays, but on other occasions every house provokes a yawn, with perhaps the exception of the "Saracen's Head," an inn that, despite its modernised and stuccoed frontage, keeps some memories of old times. There was a "Saracen's Head" here certainly as far back as the fifteenth century, and probably

much earlier. Like all the signs of that name, it derived from Crusading times, when the knights and men-at-arms, returning from Palestine with wounds and spoils from the pagan; with monkeys, leprosy, tall stories, and other relics out of the Holy Land, found their fame come home before them, and the old inns they had known—the “Salutation,” the “Peter’s Finger,” the “Catherine Wheel,” and the like—often re-named in their honour. With little effort we can imagine the scenes at the “Saracen’s Head” of that period, when exploits at Acre, Joppa and Jerusalem were told and re-told, and gained wonderfully in the repetition over sack and malvoysie. What bloody fellows they were, and with what zest they slew the Soldan’s soldiers over and over again as they sat over their cups. It is, at the least of it, six hundred years ago, and the “Saracen’s Head” has been rebuilt many times since then; but human nature remains the same though timber rot and brick perish, and again and again the same old talk has been heard in the bar-parlour of the inn. Those who fought at Agincourt and Crécy; men of a later age who warred under Marlborough at Blenheim, Ramillies or Malplaquet; the lads of the Peninsula and Waterloo; survivors from the horrors of the Crimean winter, and heroes from a hundred fights on the burning South African veldt—all have had their circle of greedy listeners here.

The “Saracen’s Head” of to-day turns a sleek and stuccoed face to the street, and the house shows

signs of extensive rebuilding and remodelling, undertaken in the full flush of the great days of coaching prosperity, when so many old inns were rebuilt, in the belief that coaching, and the road as an institution, would last for ever. Fond belief! Has anyone ever stopped to consider the fact that the great coaching era of the 'twenties and the 'thirties had a great deal more to do with the pulling down of the old-fashioned galleried and timbered inns of country towns than ever railways have had? The average small country town felt in fullest measure the great increase in business incidental to the last years of the coaching age, and every innkeeper hastened to rebuild his inn and to call it an "hotel." Those who had, from one cause and another, deferred rebuilding until the dawn of the Railway Age, on seeing that the road would decay and travellers be carried to their journeys' ends without halting for rest and refreshment, promptly gave up any such ideas and were thankful that they had not begun the work of reconstruction and enlargement. Those who had were ruined, and to this day the huge hotels they reared may yet be often met with, a world too large, in country towns where once the mails and the stage-coaches passed, like a procession, day by day. It is quite by a happy chance that an old galleried house like the "White Hart" at Brentwood remains, and it is not too much to say that, had the Coaching Age lasted another ten years, it also would have been rebuilt.

An amusing story, with Anthony Trollope for its central figure, belongs to the "Saracen's Head" at

Chelmsford. For some years after he had won fame as a novelist he still retained his position in the General Post Office, of which he was a travelling inspector. On one of these official journeys he happened to be staying here, at the time when his *Barchester Towers* was being issued, after the then prevailing fashion, in parts. He was seated in the coffee-room when two clergymen entered, one of them with the newly-issued part of the story. The cleric, cutting the pages, was soon immersed in the trials of the Bishop and the domineering ways of Mrs Proudie, who was rather a trial to Trollope's readers, as well as to the Bishop. Suddenly the clergyman put the book down. "Confound that Mrs Proudie!" he exclaimed, "I wish she were dead!"

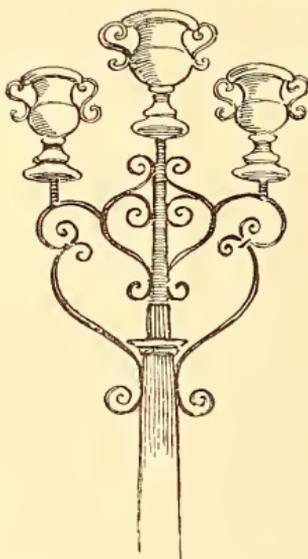
Trollope looked up. Introducing himself, he thanked the reader for thus accidentally telling him that the Bishop's wife had become wearisome, and undertook to have done with her. "Gentlemen," said he, "she shall die in the next number;" and die she accordingly did. But in defence of Trollope's truthful character-drawing, let it be said that, in the opinion of those likely to be best informed, Mrs Proudies may yet be found in a goodly proportion of the episcopal palaces of England.

XIX

RETURNING now to the Conduit, and making for the open road once more, Chelmsford is left by way of Springfield, past the successor of Chelmsford's finest old inn, the "Black Boy," demolished in 1857. The old inn of that name had stood on the spot for five centuries, and had been the halting-place of many famous travellers, among them a long line of Earls of Oxford, journeying between their castle at Hedingham and London; but none of these associations sufficed to save the house. Fragments of its carved beams are preserved in the local museum, but recall it as little as does the skeleton of the mastodon bring back in his majesty that denizen of the earth in the dim æons of the past. Chelmsford would dearly like many of its old buildings—wantonly demolished years ago—back again; but what is done cannot be undone, and there's an end on't. The "Cross Keys" remains, in a restored condition.

The name of Springfield, the eastern suburb of Chelmsford, carries varying significances. To the mere newcomer it sounds idyllic; to the American from the New England States it recalls the Pilgrim Fathers and their settlement of Springfield, Massachusetts; and to the gaol-bird it means a "stretch" of longer or shorter duration. At Springfield, in fact, is situated the County Gaol, a gloomy building enlarged in recent years for the accommodation of the guests consigned to it at Assize time from the Shire Hall down yonder in the High Street. But,

once past this depressing place, Springfield is pleasing and cheerful. Its long miscellaneous street, where the quaint sign of the "Three Cups" stands out, gives place to suburban villas situated in attractive grounds and designed to sound the ultimate note of picturesqueness. That this has been the aim of their architects is abundantly manifest in examples where, under a single roof, one may experience the mingled



THE "THREE CUPS" SIGN

romantic feelings of inhabiting an Edwardian castle, a Tudor manor-house, a Jacobean grange, and a "Queen Anne" mansion; all done in red brick, gabled here and battlemented there, and, moreover, fitted with electric light and hot and cold water supply. To this end has castellated and domestic architecture unwound its long story during some five hundred years. It will be seen thereby that William

of Wykeham, John Thorpe, and many another old-time architect did not live in vain.

But if Springfield be modern as a suburb, it is ancient as a village. To see old Springfield, it is necessary to turn off the road to the left, and to journey a quarter of a mile, towards the old church, a noble building with mingled red brick and stone tower bearing the inscription, "Prayse God for al

PRAYSE GOD FOR AL THE GOOD BENEFACTORS ANO 1586

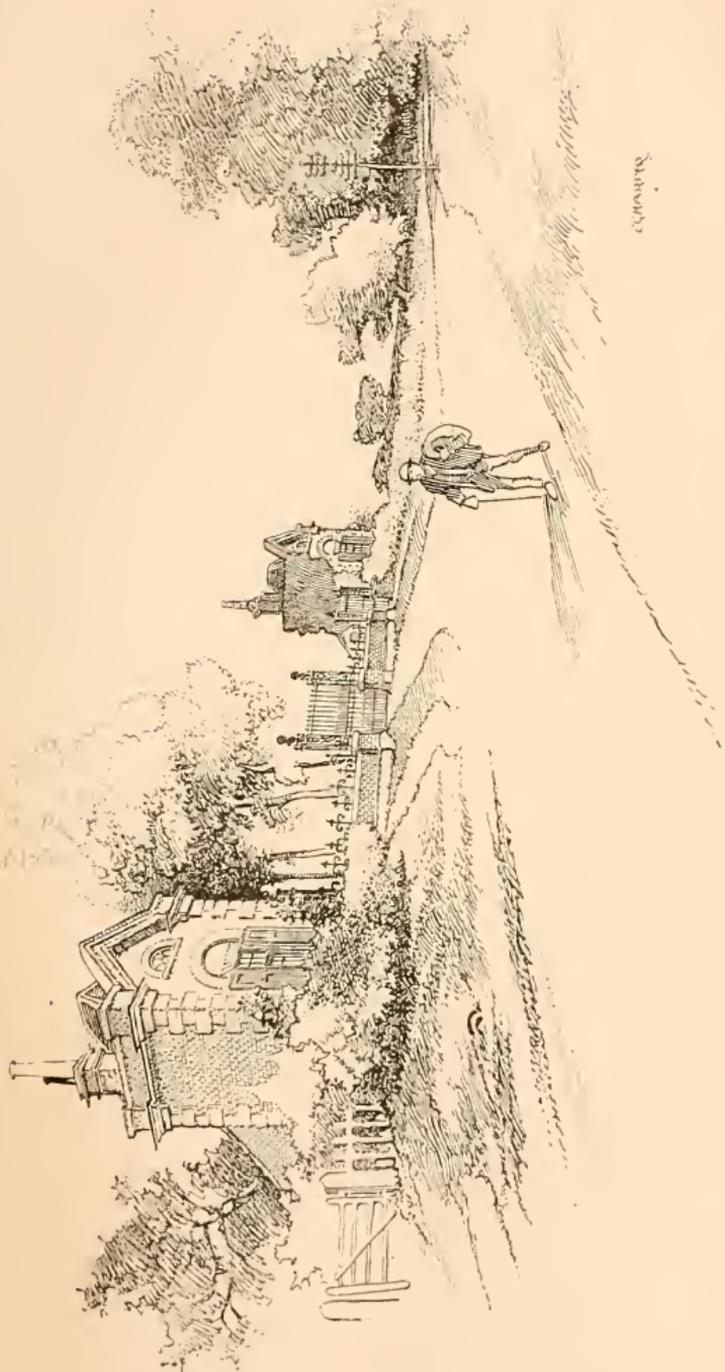


SPRINGFIELD CHURCH.

the good benefactors 1586." Oliver Goldsmith, it is quite erroneously said, took Springfield as the model for his *Deserted Village*. He certainly visited at an old cottage opposite the church, but the real Sweet Auburn is Lissoy, in Ireland.

Beyond the village and facing the high road are the strangely impressive lodges of the historic estate of New Hall; new at the end of the fifteenth century,

but declined into a respectable age by now and cobwebbed with much history and many legends. The place, now and for a considerable number of years past an alien convent, has been owned during a period of four hundred years by an astonishing number of historic personages, who have succeeded one another like fitting phantoms. Here the solemn reminder, "shadows we are," peeps out spectrally at every turn of Fate's wrist in the handling of the historic kaleidoscope. Built by Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond, whose daughter and heiress became the wife of Sir Thomas Boleyn and mother of the unfortunate Anne, New Hall thus eventually came into possession of Henry the Eighth, who occasionally resided here and re-named it "Beaulieu." Elizabeth gave Beaulieu to Thomas Radcliffe, third Earl of Sussex. By this time it had resumed its name of New Hall. Later owners were George Villiers, the magnificent Duke of Buckingham, and Oliver Cromwell, who had it as a gift from Parliament and exchanged it so soon as he decently could for the more magnificent, convenient and king-like residence of Hampton Court Palace. To him succeeded another Duke of Buckingham, and to him that soldier and king-maker, the crafty Monk, Duke of Albemarle, who kept great state at the Hall and was visited here, when he was suffering from gout and dropsy, by that scribbling traveller, Cosmo, Grand Duke of Tuscany. With Monk the line of historic owners may be said to end, but constant change has ever been the lot of New Hall, and a succession of lesser lights followed him until the



NEW HALL LODGES



nuns set up their secluded life here and bade farewell to a vain world. That world passes by; the road on one side, the railway midway in the grounds, and if it gives them a thought at all, scorns them as morbid and idle malingerers from the work of the vineyard.

No glimpse of the Hall is gained from the road. All is emptiness, and the lichened brick and the crumbling stone vases of neighbouring boundary walls add to the melancholy air of failure and unfulfilled aims characteristic of the place.

There is an air of romance about Boreham House, as seen from the tree-embowered road at a little distance from New Hall; an altogether deceptive air, let it be said, for the house is modern; a classic building of white brick. It is its situation at the head of a formal lake, fringed with stately elms, that confers the illusory distinction, but the explorer of old roads, who halts here and listens to the cawing rooks on the swaying tree-tops, or watches the waterfowl squatting on the lake, can weave his own romance to fit the scene. And if the house, though stately, be modern, yet it holds something of interest in the shape of the identical carriage used by the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo. Greatly daring, they dragged it out in recent years to grace a Chelmsford holiday, when it was broken to pieces in an accident. Restored now to its original condition, it will need to be a great occasion indeed that brings it forth again.

Boreham village lies hidden from the road, its old gabled cottages clustering round the still older

church, itself embowered in lime trees whose delightful scent weights the July air with an Arcadian languor. The explorer who adventures into Boreham has every likelihood of having his nerves startled by the sudden glimpse at a bend of the road of a great mausoleum in the churchyard, with the door open, and, if it be midday, the sight, apparently, of



BOREHAM.

one of the inmates of the silent tomb making a hearty lunch of bread-and-cheese. High noon being an hour when the supernatural is not so terrifying as to daunt investigation, it becomes evident on drawing nearer that the old tomb-house has been converted into a tool-house and general lumber-room, and that the figure seated within is the sexton enjoying his lunch, screened from the noonday heats.

An inscription over the door of the ornate building—a copy of the Temple of the Winds at Athens—proclaims it the “Mausoleum Gentis Walthamianæ, Anno 1764”; but the Walthams have disappeared, both from their mausoleum and the district. The body of the last appears to have been arrested for debt when on the road hither from Chelmsford. The sexton explains that the parish took over the Walthams’ last home in consideration of repairing the ruined roof. “We ha’n’t the convenience hee-ar, years ago,” says this typical Essex rustic, and goes on to tell how the oil and coals and candles for church use were formerly stored in the Radcliffe Chapel, where the Sunday School was also held. Three Radcliffes, Earls of Sussex, 1542-1583, grandfather, father, and son, lie in effigy side by side on an altar-tomb in that chapel, “as like as my fingers are to my fingers.” “Old wawriors,” the sexton calls them, and explains that their broken noses are due to the “ruff” having fallen in, years since.

Returning to what, in Essex parlance, is called the “mine” road, Hatfield Peverel is reached, past the great red-brick Georgian mansion of Crix, standing in its meadows where the little River Ter comes down from Terling, flows under the road, turns the wheels of Hatfield Mill, and then hurries off, as though belated, for a rendezvous with the Chelmer, two miles away. It is an old mill, fronting the road with whitewashed brick walls, a chimney bearing warranty of its age in the inscription, “A.A. 1715”; but if that evidence were lacking it could be found in the position of the mill-house doorway, sunk into

an area with the raising of the road for the building of the bridge that long ago replaced the watersplash at this crossing of the stream.

Hatfield Peverel nowadays shows few signs of the heaths that once gave the place its original forename of "Heathfield," and the Peverels, identical with the Derbyshire Peverels of the Peak, are so utterly vanished that they have left not the slightest vestige of themselves in the church—that last resort of the antiquary in search of old manorial lords. It is true that on modern tablets built into the west front of the church the founding of a Benedictine Priory here in 1100 by Ingelrica, mother of William Peverel, is alluded to, together with the rather scandalous story of the Peverel origin, but these things are decently wrapped in the combined obscurity of Latin and lichen-stains, so that both their monastic beneficence and their maternal origin are only dimly to be scanned by the vulgar or the hurried.

It is the distance of half a mile from the high road to where Hatfield church lies secluded, adjoining the grounds of a mansion partly occupying the site of the Priory, and so named from that fact. It is here, if anywhere, that the "heaths" of Hatfield's original baptism must be sought, and accordingly some stretches of common-land may be discovered close by. But wayside Hatfield chiefly concerns us, though there be little enough to say of it, beyond the note that its closeness to the railway station has caused a certain growth and a certain amount of rebuilding, in alien and uncharacteristic style, of the old plaster cottages that were once the invariable

feature of its street, and admirably figured forth the Essex manner of decoratively treating plaster-work. There remain here but two such cottages, bearing the date 1703, and the initials M.R., with *fleur-de-lis*.

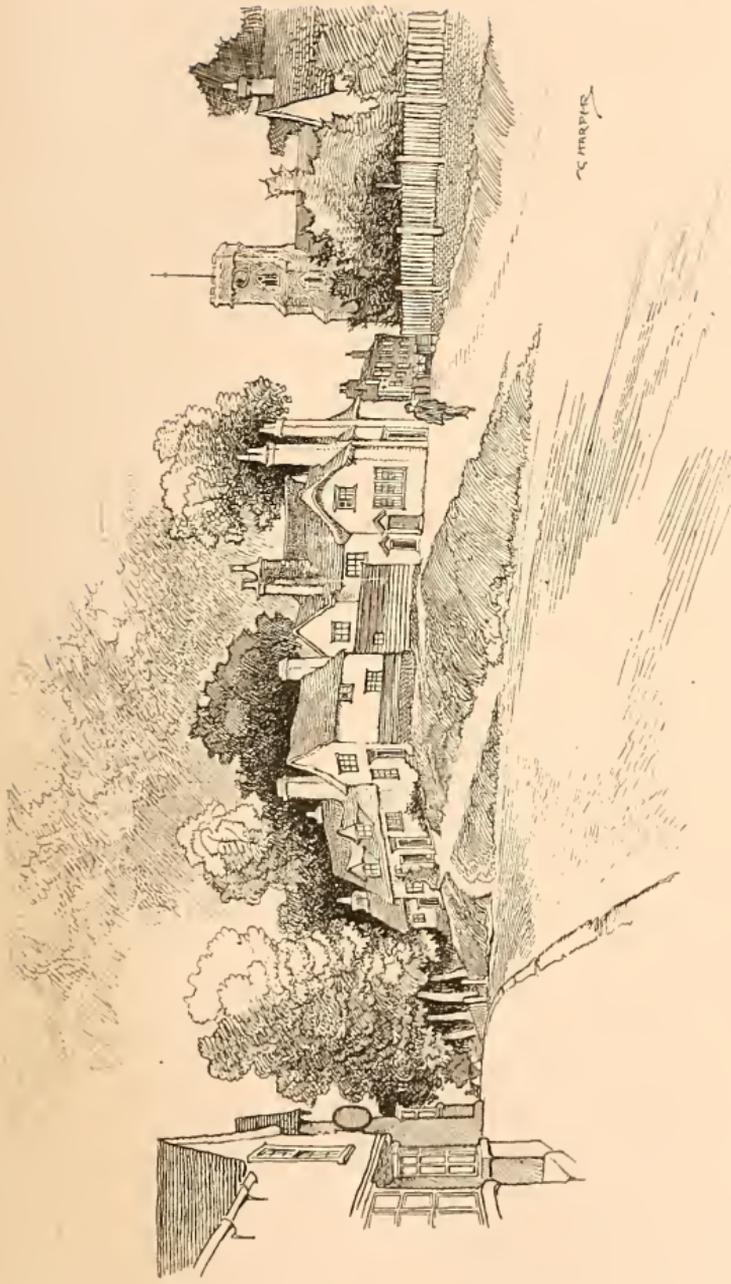
XX

A ROAD of almost unvarying flatness conducts in something under three miles to Witham, entered nowadays over an imposing bridge erected by the Essex County Council over a stream that luxuriates in no fewer than three separate and distinct names. As the River Witham, it confers a name upon the townlet; as the Brain, it performs the same sponsorial office for Braintree; but as the Podsbrook it is endowed with a title that smacks rather of the farcical sort. The traveller looking in summer-time over the railings of the bridge, down upon the mere thread of water oozing and stewing in the mud among the kitchen refuse of the neighbourhood, comes to the conclusion that it is not ill-named as the Podsbrook; but the Essex Council in bridging it so substantially think of it rather as the River Witham, which they have every right and cause to do, for the stream can avenge itself of those disfiguring potsherds and that contemptuous title in the most sardonic way when winter comes and the floods are out.

The long street of Witham is remarkable for

the number of large and handsome mansions dating from the time of Queen Anne, through the period of the four Georges. The greater number of the professional men of Essex would, from the number of those houses, appear to have settled in the little town and to have medically attended it and legally represented it to such an effect that it is only now beginning to recover from them and from the coming of the railway, which dealt a death-blow to the thriving coaching interest of the early part of the nineteenth century.

For Witham was the half-way house, the dining-place of Mrs Nelson's famous "Ipswich Blues," the crack coaches on the seventy miles of road, which started at eight in the morning and by extraordinary exertions made Ipswich in something under six hours. Such remarkable performances as these were possible only by establishing six-mile stages in place of the average ten miles on other roads, and by placing leaders in readiness at the foot of hills like Brook Street Hill at Brentwood. The "Blue Posts" is gone, but the "White Hart," where some of the principal coaches drew up, is still in existence; its sign, a pierced effigy of that animal projecting from the front of the house and looming weirdly against the sky-line. There are many "White Harts" on the road to Norwich, the sign being just as peculiarly a favourite one here as that of the "Bay Horse" is on the Great North Road; but of all the many examples to be met along these hundred and twelve miles this is the one that is most quaintly out of proportion, with



CHIPPING HILL.

a head and neck less than half the size demanded by body and legs, and a golden collar and chain of prodigious strength. This heraldic device was the favourite badge of Richard the Second, whose connection with East Anglia was too slight for assuming this herd of White Harts to be especially allusive to him, or indeed more than a curious preference on the part of innkeepers along the Norwich Road.

Those who would seek the site of the original Witham must turn aside from the high road the matter of half a mile, past the railway station, to Chipping Hill, where, within the earthworks of a camp successively occupied and wrought upon by the Britons, the Romans and the Saxons, it will be found. Chipping Hill overlooks the pleasant valley of that triply-named river already mentioned, in 1749 described by Walpole as "the prettiest little winding stream you ever saw." The "sweet meadows falling down a hill" of which he speaks are there to this day, and as sweet, and the by-road that comes up from the gravelly hollow and cuts through the earthy circumvallation of the ancient stronghold climbs up romantically under the blossoming limes into as pretty a picture in the rural sort as you shall easily find. It is a little piece of Old England before railways came, or science and the ten thousand plagues of modern life, and the cheap builder of hideous new cottages were let loose upon the old order of things. Not a jarring note is in the picture of yellow-plastered and red-roofed old dwellings, flint-built church tower and red-brick

rectory, set in, upon and around the swelling grassy banks where Romans kept guard and Saxons had both their fortress and their market, as evidenced by the still surviving name of Chipping, or Market Hill.

Old East Anglian cottages have their own special characteristics, arising from local conditions, but one feature they share in common with all old rustic dwellings; the great size and relative importance of their genial chimneys, suggesting warmth and the lavish laying on of logs. They tell the passer-by of old times when wood was the only fuel; when it was to be gathered for the mere labour of gathering, and plenty of it was piled upon the generous open hearth. Modern cottages, all over the kingdom, tell a different tale, in the look of their meagre chimney-pots—a tale of coal, dearly purchased, economised in tiny grates.

But the special features of East Anglian cottage architecture? They are here, in the highways and byways, for all to see who will. It is a land without stone, this East of England, where timber and flint and brick play important constructional parts in church and hall and manor-house, and where timber framing, lath and plaster, parge-work, and a few bricks for the chimney stacks, are combined to build up the cottages.

Out of their necessities our ancestors contrived dwellings that for durability, comfort and artistry put modern houses, whether halls or cottages, to shame. The stone cottages of Somersetshire, Rutland, Leicestershire; the cob and thatch of

Devon, the granite of Cornwall; the timber and plaster, or timber and brick noggin of Cheshire and Herefordshire are all evidence to this day of how skilfully our forbears employed the materials to their hands; and here in Essex you shall find a something in the art of cottage building hardly to be discovered elsewhere. This is the frequent use of parge-work, or pargetting, as it is sometimes called, on old cottage exteriors. Parge-work is the ornamental filling or surfacing of walls with plaster. The term is just as often applied to the elaborately-moulded and panelled plaster ceilings of Elizabethan and Jacobean halls as to the exterior decoration that forms so remarkable and pleasing a feature of Essex rustic cottage architecture. Few Essex villages that can claim to preserve many relics of old times are without examples of this peculiarly local style; although, to be sure, an ignorant want of appreciation has been the cause of much destruction of late years. The commoner forms of this decoration are frequently seen, in the easily incised patterns that even the unskilful can make in the plaster while still wet, by the aid of anything from a trowel to the finger-tips; just as a cook ornaments the dough of her uncooked pies. Many of these patterns are traditional; as much a matter of tradition, for instance, as are the needlework patterns wrought on the breast of an old smock-frock. The commonest is one produced by a process of combing the plaster in repetitions of a device resembling an elongated figure 8 laid flat, or perhaps more narrowly resembling a hank of worsted. Other patterns, of

whorls or concentric circles, stars, triangles and the like, are produced by wooden stamps. But the really beautiful examples are not the products of to-day. These belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and are lavish in decoration of a Renaissance character moulded in high relief. Architects with sufficient culture and understanding to enable them to appreciate local style have, in recent years, reintroduced decoration of this character when building residences in the country, but many a humble cottager lives within walls that display a profusion of artistic devices unapproached by the houses of the wealthy.

Discoveries close by the church on Chipping Hill have led to the belief that the building stands on, or near, the site of a Temple of Diana, and certainly Roman bricks are still visible in great numbers in the walls of the tower. A memorial in the chancel to Sir Gilbert East, who died in 1828, reminds the historian of some strange survivals existing at that time. The Easts were owners of the tithes at Witham, and although they lived so far distant as Berkshire, always insisted on their right of being buried here. Sir Gilbert East's body was, by his express direction, buried beside his wife, with a band of brass encircling both, engraved with the words from the marriage service, "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." His funeral was a three days' business, with knights bannerets accompanying, and much pomp and circumstance. In the family vault they laid him, wrapped in linen, returned to Berkshire for the

reading of the will, when, to the dismay of the family, it was found that the knight had expressly wished to be buried in woollen. The family solicitor hurried back and, disinterring his defunct client, saw to it that he was comfortably tucked in as desired.

Between Witham and Kelvedon, where the road runs level, there is but one hamlet, an offshoot of Rivenhall known as Rivenhall End, where a cottage close by the "Fox" inn, once a toll-house, bears its former history, plain to read, in the evidence of its windows commanding either approach, up or down the road. A mile and a half beyond begins Kelvedon, set down in the flats beside the River Blackwater; "Kelvedon Easterford, vulgo Keldon," as Ogilby calls it; "consisting," he continues, "chiefly of inns"; a description which remains strikingly true to this day. This pronunciation, "Keldon," throws some light upon the following remarks of an old traveller who kept a diary of his wayfaring, and, writing in 1744, says, "From Colchester in an hour or two, I came to an old Village call'd Kildane, where they tell you the famous Massacre of the Danes began; but the true Name of the Town is Kelvedon."

How Kelvedon can ever have escaped being called "Long" Kelvedon is a mystery, for it straggles on and on and must be nearly a mile in length; a street of handsome old residences, of cottages and humble shops of all ages, and old broken-backed taverns where the Essex labourer gathers night by night and discusses the prospect of the carraway crop and the likelihood of the entire agricultural interest presently going *en masse* to the "work'us." After

which, with the courage of despair, and to drown his troubles, he will call for "another pot o' thrup'ny, missus," and, when closing time comes, slouch home through the mud and mist until the following evening, when the same programme is repeated. It is the agricultural labourer who supports the little wayside "publics" whose existence in such numbers puzzles the mid-day stranger, who, seeing them empty and apparently lifeless, wonders how they can possibly live. Business practically only begins when work in the fields is done, and the rent is not so high but that a few pots of beer a night represent a sufficient profit.

It must not be supposed that Kelvedon has not its exquisite architectural relics of a bygone time, or that its inns are all of the rural beer-house type. Not at all. Chief among the inns of Kelvedon is the "Angel," which indeed is a house not only of considerable size and outstanding character, but of historic interest, as having been the favourite resting-place of William the Third on his journeys along this road. Its projecting porch is the first thing the traveller sees on entering the town from the direction of London, where the road swerves violently to the left, and again as violently to the right, forming a very awkward corner. "Angel Corner," said Alexander, of the "Retaliator" coach, "is the very devil of a corner." This remark was drawn from him on the occasion of his nearly driving into the porch, when trying conclusions with a rival charioteer.

Almost opposite the still-existing "Angel" stood the equally extensive "Red Lion," long since retired

from business and remodelled as a row of cottages. The histories of both houses, and of many another fine old inn, which might once have been written from the recollections of those who knew the old days of the road, are now in great part lost, and the world so much the poorer. Had scribblers then abounded, and the "personal" note of the modern journalist been sounded in those days, we should have known how King William came to and set out from his inn ;



THE "ANGEL," KELVEDON.

how he looked, what he ate and drank, how many long clay pipes he smoked, and what comparisons he drew in conversation with Bentinck between the flat lands on the way from Kelvedon to Harwich and the still flatter lands of his native Holland. And besides such records of the great, we should then have been better furnished with the early history of coaching, which, if not indeed a sealed book, is at least a very short and fragmentary one.

XXI

EARLY coaching days are wrapped round with strange adventures and the oddest tales ; some, doubtless, of the *ben trovato*, rather than the most truthful, nature. But those stories of coaching miseries and adventure that have been proved truthful are themselves so surprising and incredible to modern ears that even the most improbable of uncertified tales cannot be dismissed as mere romancing. The tale of the Sprightly Lady and the Anxious Gentleman should, for instance, surely be picturesquely written up some day and included in some English (and therefore strictly proper) kind of Thousand and One Nights' Entertainments.

The coach was nearing the outskirts of London. The rheumy air hung in dank and foggy vapours on the countryside and transformed innocent roadside trees and hedges into all sorts of menacing shapes. The guard let off his blunderbuss at a pollard willow that loomed suspiciously like a highwayman out of the reeking air, and the passengers all began to automatically turn their pockets out. It proved a false alarm, and purses and trinkets were returned. But the travellers were uneasy. One gentleman, in especial, feared for ten guineas he carried, whereupon a lady advised him to hide the money in his boot. He had hardly done this when a hoarse voice was heard commanding the coachman to stop. When the unhappy insides had picked themselves up from the straw at the bottom of the

coach, into which they had unceremoniously been thrown by the driver's prompt obedience to that behest, they found themselves covered with a pistol projected through the door, and were invited to deliver up their money and jewellery. Those who had little gave it and were thankful it was no more. The lady protested that she had nothing; "but," said she, "if you look in this gentleman's boot you will find ten guineas." There was nothing for it but to take off that boot and hand over the coin; but when the highwayman had gone it was another matter, and the plundered traveller accused her, in no measured terms, of being the robber's accomplice. Bound to admit that appearances were against her, she (how like the Arabian Nights fashion!) invited the company to supper the following evening, when matters should be explained. They accepted, not, it is to be feared, very graciously. The time came, and, ushered into a splendidly-appointed room, with a supper laid, they were re-introduced to their acquaintance of the night before. When the repast was over she opened a pocket-book. "Here," she said, addressing the loser of the ten guineas, "in this book, which I had with me in the coach, are bank-notes to the amount of one thousand pounds. I judged it better for you to lose ten guineas than for me to be robbed of this valuable property. As you have been the means of my saving it, I entreat your acceptance of this bank bill of one hundred pounds."

Much of the humour that went to lighten old road travelling was of an evanescent kind, and has

not survived, but a few examples, preserved in contemporary literature, keep their flavour. Among them is the narrative called "Three Blind 'Uns and a Bolter." "I recollect," said the Jehu who told the tale, "having a sanctified chap for a passenger, and nothing that was either said or done was at all to his mind. On that day I happened to have a very awkward team—three blind ones and a very shy off leader, and I confess that two or three times I lost my patience as well as temper. My near leader pulled to such a degree that I was obliged to get down and put up her bearing-rein up to the top of the bit, and curb her enough to break her jaw. After starting again, I could deal with her very well for about a mile, when her mouth got dead again, and I was wicked enough to let drive a few hearty damns at her, my pious companion all the while exhorting me to patience. 'Patience be damned,' at last said I, fairly sick of the two; upon which he bolted as if he had been galvanised.

"'Pray, sir,' said he, 'did you ever hear of Job?'

"'He can't keep out of the shop,' thought I, 'but I won't have it;' so I answered, 'What coach does he drive?'

"'Awful in the extreme,' said he, throwing up his hands, 'I fear you don't read your Bible; but I will tell you—he was the most patient man that ever existed.'

"'But, sir,' said I, 'did he ever drive three blind 'uns and a bolter?'

"'Certainly not,' replied he; 'he was not a coachman.'



From a Print after H. Alken.

“THREE BLIND UNS AND A BOLTER.”

“‘Then it’s accounted for,’ said I, ‘for if ever he had had four such horses to deal with as I have here, he would have had no more patience than myself.’”

Here, at Kelvedon, one of the old-time coachmen played a drunken trick that would have been impossible in the last years of coaching, when discipline was strict and drivers less eccentric than they had been. He had just driven the London stage from Ipswich, and having more by good luck than careful driving brought his passengers safely to dinner at the “Angel,” turned into the bar for a jorum of that favourite drink of coachmen—rum. Emerging, he perceived one of the Harwich to London fish-waggons, fully laden, standing at the door, and, mounting on to the driver’s seat, unobserved, he wheeled the waggon round and dashed off at top speed on the way to Colchester, coming to grief at Lexden Hill, where the huge conveyance was upset and two tons weight of fish strewed the king’s highway. The mad coachman survived to repent his escapade, but he went on one leg for the remainder of his life.

“Other times, other manners” is a saying that assumes an added force when contrasting the Coaching Age with the Age of Steam. Our fellow-travellers by railway, who glare at us, and we at them, like strange cats on a roof-top, have little idea of the chivalry that ruled on the road a hundred years ago. Glance, if you dare, at a lady who may be the only other occupant of a railway

carriage with you, and she wonders whether she had not better call the guard; but it was, in the days of our great-grandfathers, almost the bounden duty of the gentlemen to see that the ladies in whose company the chances of the road might place them lacked nothing that courtesy could supply; whether it were merely the aid of an arm in walking up one of those hills the coaches could only climb unladen, or the more material attention involved in seeing that the dear creatures were duly supplied with refreshments. It was, for instance, long the chivalric custom of the gentlemen travelling by coach to pay for the breakfasts and dinners of the unprotected ladies who might be travelling by the same conveyance. "I vow," says one of these old travellers, "'tis a pleasure in a cavalier to do so; but, the Lord save us, what a prodigious appetite does not the swiftness of the travelling confer upon the fair, whose lassitude and vapours at other times render them incapable of more than drinking a dish of that noxious herb they call 'tay,' a thing which it is only fitting that the heathenish and phanatick peoples of the Indies should partake of. I protest that the ladies of the coach, when we alighted at the 'Angel' at Kelvedon, finding they could not be suited with tay, went to it with a right good will and left as good an account of the claret and the beef as if they had been going empty for a week. Spare me, I do beg, from your languishing creatures who would die of a surfeit of two biscuits at home, but

compare with the most valiant of trenchermen abroad."

This protesting gentleman might, had he thought of it, have exclaimed with Othello on the pity "that we can call these delicate creatures ours and not their appetites."

He must have been particularly hard hit in the pocket by the robust appetites of his fellow-travellers, but did not, however, let his feelings appear, for he goes on to tell how he gave as a toast, "the ladies, bless them, whose bright eyes," etc., etc.—a toast we have many times heard of; and, indeed, rather flatters himself upon having "made an impression." He, in fact, seems to have been like Constable, in a way; for it was said of that painter that he was "a gentleman in a stage-coach; nay, more, a gentleman at a stage-coach dinner." "Then," said one, hearing that praise, "he must have been a gentleman indeed!"

That is very significant. It was, then, only your very paragon among gentlemen who could sustain the character at a stage-coach dinner. His manners might survive the strain of the journey itself, and even the sight and sound of lovely Phyllis, adorable when awake, snoring, unlovely to eye and ear, with open mouth and suffocating gurgles; but when after the tedious stage had been accomplished and the passengers had descended, irritable, hungry and thirsty, to a dinner scarce to be eaten, even at express speed, in the short time allowed, then, ay *then*, my friends, came the test! No man so insensible to polite-

ness as a starving man, and few attentions were paid to the ladies by strangers whose sole chance of obtaining the dinner for which they had paid was the resolute determination to attend only to their own wants.

The discomforts of travelling by coach certainly outweighed the pleasures of that old-world method. A pleasant day and the open country made a seat on the outside of stage or mail an eminence not willingly to be exchanged for any other mode of conveyance then known; but, as little David Copperfield found on his first coach journey, *night* on a coach was an experience once gained not willingly repeated. Being put between two gentlemen, to prevent his falling off, David found himself nearly smothered by their falling asleep, so that he could not help crying out, "Oh! if you please!" which they didn't like at all, because it woke them. With the rising of the sun David found his fellow-passengers sleeping easier than they had done during the night, when terrific gasps and snorts disturbed their midnight slumbers. As the sun rose higher, so their sleep became lighter and they gradually awoke, one by one, each one indignant when charged with having slept. During the rest of his career, David invariably observed "that of all human weaknesses, the one to which our common nature is the least disposed to confess (I cannot imagine why) is the weakness of having gone to sleep in a coach."

XXII

COACHING times and coaching inns have long kept us at the very threshold of Kelvedon, which has a modern claim to notice of which it is not a little proud. Spurgeon was born here. Although the



BIRTHPLACE OF SPURGEON.

figure of that great wielder of homely and untutored pulpit oratory is but one among several preachers in the same family, there is only one possible Spurgeon when that name is mentioned. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in a house still pointed out, on June 19, 1834; the eldest son of the Rev. John Spurgeon. The old cottage is now the

“Wheatsheaf” beer-house and has had a bay window and a brick frontage added since that time. Close by is a now highly respectable and not a little dignified private residence known still as the “Tommy shop,” although almost seventy years have passed since it was used as a kind of restaurant and canteen for the navvies then working on the construction of the Great Eastern Railway, which runs at the rear.

The oldest house in Kelvedon is doubtless the “Sun,” which dates from the middle of the fifteenth century and has within recent years had its carved woodwork, long covered with plaster, once more exposed to view. It stands, almost the last house in the town, by the bridge over the Blackwater, on the way to Gore Pit.

Gore Pit is generally said to be the site of a battle. *What* battle, however, historians do not and cannot specify; and indeed this name, bloody though it may sound to modern ears, has, despite the popular legend of the derivation of Kelvedon from “Kildane,” perhaps no such sanguinary association, and is probably a contraction of the old word “coneygore,” or rabbit warren.

It is, despite its name, a pretty and a peaceful hamlet, with a blacksmith’s shop and a roadside horse-pond, and surrounded by the fruit-farms of a great jam-making company. The church of Feering can be seen across the flat fields, on the other side of the railway. Messing lies a mile away, in the other direction.

Let the idle wayfarer, curious as to the name of Gore Pit, speak to the blacksmith on the subject,

and he will be told, with the seriousness of implicit belief, of the fighting of a great battle here, and that the blood ran down into "that there horse-pond." Moreover, that at Kelvedon—"Killdane they used to call it—they killed the Danes; at Feering they feared 'em, and at Messing they made a mess of it"; which seems to very correctly reflect the views of the neighbourhood on local history in ancient times, as reflected in place-names!

Rural Essex, in the aspect of its fields and meadows, is revealed along these miles in its most characteristic form. It is, in many respects, unlike other counties. In some ways the unhappy industry of farming has fared worse here than elsewhere, and many holdings have for years past gone uncultivated, and the dock, the thistle and other lusty weeds have resumed an evil possession of fields once kept clean and trim. But in the smaller operations of husbandry Essex has always been, and in some districts still is, remarkably successful; while, although the farmer protests that it does not pay to grow any kind of grain, the yellowing seas of autumnal cornfields are still a prominent feature of the landscapes of Essex and of its neighbouring Suffolk. Essex and Suffolk are old-world, far beyond the rest of England, and in growing wheat in these times, when a cornfield is a rare sight in other parts of the country and when "our daily bread" is chiefly compounded of grain grown in North America, Russia, or the Argentine, they maintain their singularity. It does the heart good to see the ripening wheatfields of East Anglia, to see the

gathered stooks in the reaped perspectives, and to hear the hum of the threshing machine; for the sights and sound seem to carry us back to that England of a bygone age, when Constable painted such fields, and when they were numerous enough throughout the land to feed the population. Here and there one may still find fields of that famous grain, the "Essex Great Wheat," which grows at least two feet higher than the ordinary varieties, and is greatly prized for the length and stoutness of its straw; but it is a few miles to the north-eastward, in the light lands around Harwich, that the Great Wheat may be found. Seed and herb-growing are the most prominent industries between the Blackwater and the Colne, and the roadside fields are striped to wonderment in summer with the rainbow colours of the seedsman's trial-grounds. The heavy perfume of stocks and mignonette, the claret colour of that gorgeous flower, the "sops-in-wine," the gay and varied displays of asters, marguerites, marigolds and a hundred others make a midsummer fairyland of the levels that loom so drear and misty in the long months of winter. Nor is it only for the flower-garden that the Essex seedsman labours. With the sights and scents of the flaunting beauties of the garden are mingled the homelier ones of mint, grey-green sage and other dowdy kitchen herbs, together with the subtle beauty and piercing odour of wide-spreading, blue-grey lavender-fields. Even the unromantic mangold, running to seed in bush-like shape, sends forth a sweet and pleasing aroma, while the yellow mustard contributes its share.

The byways of farming are now, as we have already said, the most—some would say the only—profitable kind of husbandry in Essex. Some forms of cultivation have largely migrated to other counties, but others remain. The growing of the clothiers' teasel was discontinued with the decay of the Colchester and Norwich baize industry, and is now carried on in other parts of the country, close to districts where textile fabrics are still manufactured; but there was a time when, along this road between Chelmsford and Colchester, the fields of teasels were quite as much a feature as those of mustard are even yet. The clothiers' teasel, greatly prized in the East Anglian baize manufacture, was nothing but a weed, found useful and cultivated accordingly. An aristocratic relation of the less spiky burrs that have not been rescued from the hedges and ditches and are still allowed to grow wild, the clothiers' teasel was cultivated so far back as the reign of Richard the First, but the "common" burr will have to be contented with its lowly estate to the end of time, unless something unexpected happens.

To "stick like a burr" is proverbial, and the cultivated teasels have an even more pronounced clinging property. Furnished as they are with natural hooks, they were used in baize-making, and are still employed in the cloth trade for raising the nap of the material. The dried heads are fixed to cylinders, between which the fabric is passed, and their sharp spines, re-curved like so many minute fish-hooks, draw up the surface of the cloth. Thus the teasel was raised from its character of a worthless weed, and for

many years Essex farmers devoted large portions of their holdings to its cultivation. It was hoed and kept clear of other vagrom weedlings ; its heads were cut by hand and dried with every care, and eventually were eagerly competed for by manufacturers at £12 a load. When the old cloth manufacturers left East Anglia, a goodly portion of the Essex farmers' livelihood went with them.

Around Colchester, too, is cultivated that other weed, the colewort, for cole or rape-seed, which has the quadruple properties of feeding cage-birds, yielding rape-oil, making cake for cattle, and of manuring the fields. Coriander and carraway seeds, too, help to prop the husbandman's fortunes. Corianders and carraways are what "the faculty" knows as "carminatives," curative of flatulency ; like the once popular "eringo root," a candied preparation of the root of the sea holly that grows by the estuaries of Essex rivers. Eringo root was once a favourite specific for lung troubles, but its popularity waned at last, and the preparation of it gradually died out and became extinct about 1865, when the only manufacturer was an elderly spinster who supplied a chemist in High Street, Colchester. Corianders are still used in the making of kümmel and other liqueurs, and carraway seeds, which look like commas, are those familiar denizens of "seed cake" that stick in the teeth and refuse to be dislodged, and are the central feature of "carraway comfits."

Farmers who do not occupy themselves with seed-growing have passed through evil times, but prosperity beams cheerfully from the seedsman's well-

tilled land, and fruit-farming has come to render cultivation profitable. Still, to the shiftless farmer, who cannot adapt himself to new conditions, agricultural depression in Essex is a very real thing. Here, shambling along the road, comes such a one, a small cultivator, a son of the soil. He does not hurry. Who, indeed, would hurry in rural Essex, in these times, when the Bankruptcy Court and the Workhouse are said to close every vista? Besides, he has been hard at work in the fields, and much of that kind of labour takes all the lamb-like friskiness out of the limbs.

A conversation, leaning over a field-gate very badly in need of repair, elicits the fact that he has just come away, worsted, from another bout in the eternal conflict between Man and Nature. No conflict with wild beasts, but a struggle, really just as fierce, for life or a livelihood, with weeds—the sorry heritage of the present occupier from the slovenly or bankrupt farmer before him. A bookmaker, gazing upon the weedy scene, would back Nature pretty heavily against the cultivator.

“Farmin’?” says our rustic friend; “no great shakes, I tell ’ee. It don’t pay to grow nawthen now, an’ it gets wusser’n wusser. All the fields goin’ under grass, for ship’n cattle. An’ the land’s fair poisoned with weeds. Yow see them ’ere beece, in that there close down along o’ the chutch? There’s a mort o’ docks in that ’ere close. More docks’n grass, an’ I thinks warsley o’ the chanst of cattle gettin’ a fair bite off’n it. Don’t know what docks is? Wish I didden! I’ve bin a-pullin’ of ’em till

my back's pretty nigh broke, and I'm fair dunted with 'em. Last year there worn't ne'er a one: t'yen there's a mort on 'em. Where do they come from? God A'mighty knows. *They* don't want no cultivation, bless 'ee. There ain't no land so chice but what'll grow docks." Here he pulls out his "muckinger," that is to say, his handkerchief—the Essex dialect is not the most elegant form of speech—and, trumpeting on it like an elephant, with indignation, goes his way.

The "chutch" in question is that of Feering, on the other side of the Great Eastern Railway, along whose embankment go the frequent Prussian-blue-painted locomotives with long trains at their tail, past Mark's Tey Junction, whose forest of signal-masts is visible ahead, into Colchester. With the raising of that embankment went the life of this highway, only now experiencing a revival.

XXIII

THE cyclists, the pedestrians the motor-men, who adventure along the road rejoice at its smooth surface, and find little incident to mark their journey. A punctured tyre, a defective valve alone hinder those mechanical travellers; while the pedestrian finds a limit set to his progress only by his walking powers. Even so, he may obtain to Norwich long before the others, for the railway

hugs the road closely for three parts of the distance, and stations are frequent.

In any case, the curtain has long since been rung down upon the Romance of the Road. If this were the place to do it, that romance might be recounted at great length; sometimes rising to tragical height, again sinking to comedy or farce. But we must take our romance as it comes, and, reading as we run, be content to act a vicarious part in the long story. And we may well be so content, for to have essayed the journey in days of old often meant a "speaking with strangers in the gates" that entailed fighting on unequal terms, with the possibility of a roadside grave and the tolerable certainty of being robbed of anything and everything worth the taking.

Nowadays, the trim suburbs of the towns stretch out on either side along the old highway and join hands with the villages; so that when travellers of the speedier sort spurn the dust from their flying wheels, they think the country is becoming one vast town, and are depressed and regretful accordingly. But when the road was the sole means of travelling and the towns were still girdled by their walls and entered only by fortified gates, the wayfarer welcomed the sight of a house in the lonely country between town and village. Even to the rich these perils came home, and in the more lawless times they were beset with troubles of their own.

Royal progresses were not infrequent along the Norwich Road, and they have elsewhere been duly

chronicled, but they are things apart and give no glimpse of old wayfaring life. If we are at all in the way of conjuring up that old-time traffic, we must certainly not forget the odd processions that trailed their slow length after my lord and my lady, changing residence from one castle or manor-house to another. My Lord Duke of Norfolk in Elizabeth's time had an exquisite palace, of which Macaulay has told us, in Norwich, and the Earls of Oxford no doubt kept great state in their castle at Hedingham, but, for all their magnificence, they were obliged to take many of their household goods with them when flitting from place to place; for the very excellent reason that they did not, certainly up to less than three hundred years ago, possess more than one fully-equipped establishment. When the nobility of old left one of their manor-houses for another they commonly took their bedding and a good deal of their furniture with them. In even more remote days they removed the glass from their windows as well, and stored it carefully away until their return. *That*, of course, was a custom of very long ago, when even the most luxurious were content with—or, at any-rate, had to endure—things which nowadays would drive the inmates of a casual ward to rebellion; but, even when the Stuarts reigned, the great ones of the land moved from home to home with long baggage-trains and with their entire staff of domestics. No board-wages, then! The whole establishment took the road, down to the scullery-maids and the hangers-on of the kitchen who

took charge of the domestic pots and pans. My lord's pages and the dignitaries of his household formed the advance-guard; the lowest in the scale, who travelled with the culinary utensils and even took the coals with them, were, appropriately enough, the "black guard." The black guard were probably a very rough lot indeed, at odds with soap and water, and on every count deserving of their name, which has in the course of centuries obtained a different application, as a term of reproach to individuals of moral rather than physical uncleanness.

Turning from general conditions of travelling to particular travellers, there comes tripping along the road an antic fellow, one Will Kemp, who danced from London to Norwich in the year 1600; a frolic he undertook for a wager, afterwards writing and publishing a book about it, which he called *Kemp's Nine Days' Wonder*. Will Kemp was accompanied by a drummer whose play upon parchment helped to sustain his flagging energies as he skipped it to Widford and thence by a route of his own through Braintree to Norwich.

Sprightly, irresponsible Kemp, cracking weak jokes and playing the fool, is succeeded in the memories of the road, after an interval of some eighty years, by a very grave and responsible figure indeed; no less an one than that of King William the Third, on his frequent journeys between his dear Holland and his little-loved Kingdom of England. Burdened with the care of an alien realm, that saturnine little figure with the hooked nose was a

familiar sight at Kelvedon, where, travelling to and from Harwich, he was wont to stay at the "Angel" inn, which still confronts the wayfarer on entering the village from London. When the "little gentleman in black" had done his work and King William of blessed Protestant memory was no more, the Norwich Road, so far as Colchester, was still graced with Royal travellers, for, with the coming of the Hanoverians, Harwich became more than ever a favourite port of entry and departure, and the choleric early Georges knew this Essex landscape well. This way, too, came the Schwellenburgs, the Keilmanseggs and the other vulgar and grotesque figures of that grotesque and vulgar Court.

Among these figures comes that of the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, arrived for the first time in England, in 1761, to marry George the Third. One German princess is very like another in the pages of history, and the likeness remains even when they become queens, so that it is not a little difficult to disentangle a Caroline from a Charlotte. Their virtues are of the same drab domestic order, and their faces partake of the common fund of unilluminated dulness distributed between the Mecklenburg-Strelitzes, the Sonderburg-Augustenburs, and the dozens of other twopenny-halfpenny principalities made familiar by German princely marriages and intermarryings. On their mere merits, these personages would find no place here, though they travelled all their lives up and down the road; but in the circumstances of this particular Princess Charlotte's journey there are

some incidents worth mentioning. She landed at Harwich, and comes into our road at Colchester, September 7, 1761. At Colchester she was presented with a box of eringo-root, the famous local production highly valued for the cure of pulmonary diseases, prepared from the root of the sea holly. Graciously receiving this in a box "perfumed and guilt," her carriage swept on towards Witham, where she stayed the night at a seat then owned by Lord Abercorn, supping with open doors so that all who would might gaze upon their future Queen. Next day the journey to London was resumed. The King's coach was in readiness at Romford, and into it she changed. At Mile End a squadron of Life Guards was in waiting as an escort, and from that point the procession was viewed by thousands. But by this time the September day was closing. The Duchess of Hamilton, who accompanied the Princess, looked at her watch. "We shall hardly have time to dress for the wedding," she said.

"The wedding?"

"Yes, madam; it is to be at twelve."

On that the Princess fainted, as well she might. It really took place at 9 p.m., instead of three hours later. The King, it is upon record, was a little disappointed at the first sight of his bride; but that has generally been the way with our Royal marriages. The eldest son of this amiable pair, George the Fourth, similarly saw his bride for the first time practically on the steps of the altar, and his disappointment was keen. "No sooner," we read, "had he approached her than, as if to subdue the qualms of irrepressible

disgust, he desired the dignified envoy to bring him a glass of brandy." The Princess, we are told, "expressed surprise," which statement requires no credulity for belief. Henry the Eighth's disappointment when he saw Anne of Cleves was reflected in the words in which he likened her to a "Flanders mare."

Two years later, in 1763, we find Dr Johnson and his inevitable Boswell journeying down the road; Boswell on his way to Harwich for Utrecht, and the Doctor good-naturedly accompanying him as far as that seaport. They set out by coach on the 5th of August, early in the morning; among their fellow-travellers a fat, elderly gentlewoman and a young Dutchman, both inclined to conversation. Dining at an inn on the way, the lady remarked that she had done her best to educate her children, and particularly that she never suffered them to be a moment idle.

"I wish, madam," said Johnson, "you would educate me too; for I have been an idle fellow all my life."

"I am sure, sir," said she, "you have not been idle;" which was a mere empty compliment, for she had not the least idea whom she was addressing.

"Nay, madam," rejoined the Doctor, "it is very true; and that gentleman there," pointing to Boswell, "has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London, where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever."

At this, Boswell was very wroth, and asked Johnson, in an aside, how he could expose him so.

“Pooh, pooh,” retorted the immortal Samuel, “they know nothing about you, and will think of it no more.” Nor, in all probability, did they.

In this manner they travelled, the gentlewoman talking violently against the Roman Catholics and the horrors of the Inquisition; Johnson, to the astonishment of all the passengers, save Boswell, who knew his ways, defending the Inquisition and its methods with “false doctrines.” This would appear to have annoyed the rest of the company, for Boswell relates that Johnson presently appeared to be very intent upon ancient geography. Not so intent, however, but that he noticed Boswell giving a shilling to the coachman at the end of one of the stages, when it was the custom to give only sixpence. The great man took Boswell aside and scolded him for it, saying that what he had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who had given him no more than his due.

They stopped at Colchester a night, at an inn unfortunately not specified, Johnson talking of the town with veneration for having stood a siege for Charles the First.

The last great occasion on the road, before railways took its traffic away, was the funeral, in 1821, of George the Fourth's Queen. Caroline of Brunswick had landed at Greenwich twenty-seven years before: her body was embarked for Brunswick on August 16, 1821, after a hurried three days'

journey from Kensington. So many years have passed by since the stormy times when the nation was divided between partisans of the King on one side and the Queen on the other—both parties equally violent—that the long and bitter quarrels between the “First Gentleman in Europe” and the most vulgar and indiscreet princess of modern times have become historic, and no longer divide families, or cause fathers to cut their sons off with a shilling, as they did when the trial of the Queen was a recent event. George, Prince Regent and King, was no saint; Caroline, Princess and Queen, was at least odiously vulgar and utterly wanting in dignity and the commonest dictates of prudence. They were not worth quarrelling about, but their feuds were taken up by parties and made political missiles of, so that even the occasion of the Queen’s funeral was made the excuse for a riot by her followers, who were indignant at seeing her remains hurried out of the country, as they thought, without proper respect. The Queen died on the 7th of August, and it was decided to take her body to Brunswick. “Indecent haste” was the expression used by the *Times* of that day in describing the funeral arrangements for the 14th, but that journal was a most violent enemy of the then Government and had always supported the Queen and vilified the King as far as it could safely be done.

It was proposed to complete the journey of eighty miles between Kensington and Harwich in two days, and the *Times* furiously bellowed in its reports that the procession was hurried through London at a trot.

However that may be, certainly the pace was decently slow when on the open road. Ilford was reached, for instance, at 6·15 that afternoon, but Romford, only five and a half miles further on, not until 7·45; an extravagantly slow rate of progression, even for a funeral. At Romford the cortège was met by sympathisers with blazing torches, who stood on guard round the coffin, while the wearied escort and the few mourners refreshed at a roadside inn.

At eleven o'clock the journey was resumed by the light of a full moon which shone in splendour from a cloudless summer sky. Throughout the night they travelled, coming into Chelmsford at four o'clock in the morning. Here the coffin was placed in the church until a start was made again, seven hours later. At last Colchester was reached, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the famished escort leaving the hearse unguarded in the High Street, while they took their fill at the "Three Cups." Thus, in its squalor and irreverence, the passing of this Queen of England resembled the funeral of a pauper, without kith or kin.

It had been proposed to complete the journey to Harwich that day, but, after violent disputes in the street between opposing factions, it was agreed to defer the departure until the next morning, and to deposit the coffin meanwhile in St Peter's Church. Inside that sacred building, disputes broke out afresh, one party wishing to affix a plate on the coffin-lid, bearing the inscription, "Caroline of Brunswick, the injured Queen of England," while the other vehemently objected. The quarrel was

finally settled by agreeing to postpone fixing the plate until after the embarkation.

With the start made the following morning at half-past five, this melancholy procession leaves the Norwich Road, and history goes with it. The tale is done, the colophon reached.

XXIV

IF we seek some touchstone by which to test the progress of a century or so in civilisation, there is scarce a better than found in comparison between the condition of the roads in old and modern times. That Waller could, in all sincerity, speak of "vile Essexian roads" is not remarkable: he was a poet, dealt in superlatives and lived in the seventeenth century. But that Arthur Young, a hundred years later, could with equal sincerity, and in more emphatic language, describe Essex roads as "rocky lanes, with ruts of inconceivable depth," is startling. It was in 1768 he penned that indictment, adding that they were so overgrown with trees as to be impervious to the sun, and strewn with stones "as big as a horse, and full of abominable holes." It were, he concludes, a misuse of language to call them turnpikes, for they were rich in ponds of liquid dirt; while loose flints and vile grips cut across to drain off the water made the traveller's pilgrimage a weariness.

The modern reader, perusing all these manifold sins and wickednesses of the roads, rather wonders how they could all have been crowded on to such truly vile ways, and if a stone were as big as a horse, how room could have been found beside it for holes, ponds and other objectionable features. But Arthur Young was a truthful man in general.

To-day the Essex high roads are as near perfection as any in the home counties, even though the byways be steep and rough and more than usually winding.

It is in these byways that he who seeks rural Essex shall find. The dramatic suddenness and completeness with which, a few hundred yards from the high road, the sophisticated wayside towns and hamlets are exchanged for the unspoiled rusticity of the original villages is surprising. In these lanes the older rustics talk and think much as their grandfathers did, but the rising generation unhappily do not, and the Essex rustic in general, like his fellows elsewhere, has almost wholly discarded the old dress of the peasantry. Only the very old or the more remote yet wear the smock-frock—the “round frock,” or the “gaberdine,” as they called it—that was once as honourable a distinction of the ploughmen, herds, or carters as are the uniforms of our soldiers and sailors.

The time is long past since a clean smock-frock, corded breeches, worsted stockings and well-greased lace-up boots formed the approved rural costume for Sundays or holidays, just as the same articles of apparel in a “second-best” condition made the

workaday wear. The Sunday costume of the agricultural labourer is now a cheap and clumsy travesty of the clothes worn by townfolk, and in hideous contrast with his surroundings. Exactly what it is like may be seen on any advertisement hoarding in the outskirts of Chelmsford, Colchester and lesser towns, where pictorial posters bid Giles go to Shoddy's for cheap outfits. Sunday mornings find him flaunting his finery in the village street; his would-be stylish boots creaking, his every article of wear writ large with vulgarity. Often he carries gloves in those large hands of his, rough with honest week-day toil, and a pair may thus last him for years—for he dare not attempt to put them on. Would that he equally purchased his cheap cigars for show and refrained from smoking them!

But there the village dandy is. Often his pocket-handkerchief is scented; generally his hair is glossy with grease; and he would not consider himself fully equipped without watch and chain, scarf-pin, ring and walking stick. To grease his boots he would be ashamed. *They* must be brightly polished, even though his manners are not, and his language defiles the village street what time the bells are ringing to church. Such is Young England in the villages at the dawn of the Twentieth Century. These things may spell Progress, but they are rather pitiful.

It is a little difficult, in presenting a sketch of his ancestor of a hundred years or more ago, to avoid drawing too favourable a view of him; but the rustic in old times certainly seems to have matched much better with his surroundings than is the case now-

adays. He made no attempts to dress up to town standards, and if he wanted to shine above his fellows did so by virtue of superior neatness only. Perhaps he had the finer instincts of the two, or more likely lacked the opportunities for bad taste that surround his descendants. Certainly, if we are to believe in the origin of the smock-frock, as put forward by some antiquaries, we must sorrowfully admit that the rustic's remote ancestor had as great a longing for unsuitable display in dress as can possibly be charged to the present generation. The smock-frock is, in fact, traced back by some to the ecclesiastical garments worn at Mass by deacons and sub-deacons, at the time when the Reformation swept vestments out of every village church in the land. Those who are familiar with genuine old smock-frocks have noticed the elaborate and often beautiful needlework on collar and breast. The devices appear to have a traditional likeness, all over the country, and consist either of Celtic-looking whorls, or of semi-decorative flower forms, or of lozenge patterns. The comparative simplicity or elaboration of this needlework depended solely upon the fancy, or the time at command, of the wearer's women-folk whose work it was. Whence came this tradition? It is thought from the tunics of the minor clergy, which were certainly decorated in the same position, if not in similar patterns. When the minor belongings of the Church became the spoil of the villages, Hodge and Giles found themselves the proud possessors of the strange garments, for which they could find at first no better use than for Sunday wear. A striking

appearance they must have made in them, down the village street, the envy of their less fortunate fellows.

When the looted vestments grew shabby they must have been used for everyday wear, and so have set the fashions in smock-frocks, both in shape and decoration, for centuries to come. If it be thought that the costume was rather extravagant, it can only be asked, is not that of the modern Sunday morning yokel extravagant also ?

The rustic of long ago was a man of dense ignorance and dark superstitions. No one county was then more guilty than another in that respect, but East Anglians, and perhaps especially the Essex bucolics, are still, despite their veneer of civilisation, sunk in uncanny beliefs. Witches still "overlook" folks in Essex hamlets, and spells are cast on cattle and horses, or unhappy fowls are blighted by the Evil Eye. Consequently the learned professions of Witch-Doctor and Wise Women are not yet extinct. Their existence is not likely to be discovered by the stranger, but they thrive, in limited numbers, even in these days of pills and patent medicines.

Board Schools are supposed to be educating Young England into a dead monotony of speech, but it will be long before they complete the horrid work. In Essex, indeed, we may not unreasonably think it a task beyond the power of teachers and inspectors, who if they have not succeeded, after thirty years working of the Elementary Education Act, in inducing the lower-class Londoners to say "yes" for "yuss," together with other linguistic enormities, are not likely to be successful in abolishing the very

marked and stubborn Essex shibboleths. It may not generally be known that much of the so-called "Cockney" talk derives from the Essex dialect. From Essex especially comes that curious perversity of the unruly member which in many cases insists upon pronouncing the letter A as I. The lower-class Londoner and the Essex peasant are unanimous in enunciating A as I in all words where that letter retains its open sound and its individuality. Thus, in the words "baby" "favourite," "made" and "native," for instance, the letter becomes I; and the Fleet Street newsboy, shouting his "spusshul uxtry piper," can legitimately call cousins, if he wishes it, with the Essex lad at the plough-tail.

Where A is sounded broadly, or in cases like the word "was," in which it masquerades as O, or where the letter is absolutely silent, or not fully pronounced, as in "beast" and "maternal," this peculiarity does not appear.

The effect is sometimes grotesque, as, for example, near Colchester, where the villages of Layer Marney, Layer Breton, and Layer de la Hay are always spoken of as Liyer, the last mentioned becoming Liyer de la High.

Nor is pronunciation the only singular feature of Essex talk, as those who keep their ears alert in these parts will soon find. The oddest phrases are matters of everyday use, and the Essex peasant can no more help using the word "together," in season and out, than he can help being hungry before meals or sleepy by bedtime. "Together," as

employed by the Essex peasant, is a word absolutely meaningless ; a kind of linguistic excrescence which, like a wart or a boil, is neither useful nor beautiful. When a ploughman says he is going to plough "that there field together," he does not mean to imply that he is about to plough it together with some other land, or with a party of other ploughmen. He simply adds the word from force of habit, and from hearing his father and grandfather before him so use it, in almost every sentence, as a sort of verbal makeweight. The present writer has had the good fortune to hear a supremely ludicrous use of this Bœotian habit of speech. It was market-day at Colchester, and Stanway village had emptied itself in the direction of the town. A dog rolled dustily in the sunny road, and the historian of these things luxuriously quaffed his "large lemon" on the bench outside the village inn. As Artemus Ward might have said, "orl was peas," when there entered upon the scene a countryman, evidently known to the landlord. He walked into the bar, and, surprised to find mine host in solitary state, exclaimed, "What, all alone together, bor?"

"Yes," replied the landlord, in no wise astonished at this extraordinary expression, "the missus has gone to Colchester together."

"Did my missus go with her?" asked the rustic.

"No," rejoined the landlord, "she went by herself."

In this countryman's talk we find a word belonging more especially to Norfolk and Suffolk.

This is the word, "bor," a diminutive for neighbour.

XXV

STANWAY is approached along a flat stretch, past Mark's Tey, which, without being itself quite on the road, has sent out modern and extremely ugly brick tentacles to line the way. For an incredible distance along the flat the timber tower of Mark's Tey church is visible, amid an inchoate mass of railway signal masts and puffs of smoke. Whistlings, screechings, crashings and rumblings proceed from that direction, for this is a junction of the Great Eastern with the Colne Valley Railway, and the station, by the way, where the lady in Thackeray's *Lamentable Ballad of the Foundling of Shoreditch* appeared with the baby which she eventually left behind her. It is this busy junction that has caused the hideous outcrop of mean houses along the road to render the village of the old De Marcas something new and strange. Mark's Tey is at a junction of roads as well as of rails, for the road from Braintree and Bishop's Stortford falls in here.

Copford's solitary houses by the way give scarce a hint of the village nearly a mile off, whose little church formerly owned a terrifying relie, in the shape of a human skin nailed on its door; a skin that had been the personal property of some

unfortunate straggler from the hordes of marauding Danes that once infested the district, of whom we have already heard legends at Kelvedon and Gore Pit. His Saxon captors must have flayed him with a ferocious delight and nailed up his cuticle with precisely the same satisfaction as that of the gamekeeper who wages war upon stoats and weazels and other vermin, and hangs their bodies on the barn door. But there must have been a bitter day of reckoning for those Saxons when the



sea-rovers came this way again and saw in what fashion that doorway was decorated.

Copford and its outlying houses lie at the crest of a gentle descent into the valley of a rivulet which finds its way into the Colne. It stands, as its name implies, overlooking some ford which, once important, has, in the gradual draining of the country and the shrinkage of streams, now lost all significance. Stanway adjoins it, and lies along the descent, in the hollow and up the

corresponding rise on the other side, where its church stands in a forbidding loneliness. The name of Stanway is sufficient warranty of this being, thus far, the Roman road. It is, however, not so certain that the remaining four miles of the existing highway from this point into Colchester follow the course taken by the Romans; and, indeed, the later researches of archaeologists go far to prove that the original way into Roman Colchester avoided the intervening village of Lexden altogether, and, curving eastwards, avoided what may then have been a marsh, to take the higher ground over a portion of Lexden Heath; bending westwards again and crossing the site of the present road between where the grammar school and the hospital now stand. From this point it seems to have crossed by where the Lordsland Nursery grounds stood until recently built over, to the ancient Roman gateway and bastion in the western wall of the town, long known as Colking's, or King Coel's Castle, but originally the Decuman Gate of Roman times. The course followed by this old Roman way is lined on either side with sepulchral remains, and seems to have once been a great cemetery. Wherever the ground is disturbed the relics of some soldier or citizen of Colonia are found, some dating back to the foundation of the colony, nearly nineteen centuries ago. The most remarkable among them are to be seen in the museum at Colchester Castle. There—the most human relic of them all—is the touching monument to M. Favonius, a Centurion of the Twentieth Legion, discovered in 1871 between the hospital and the

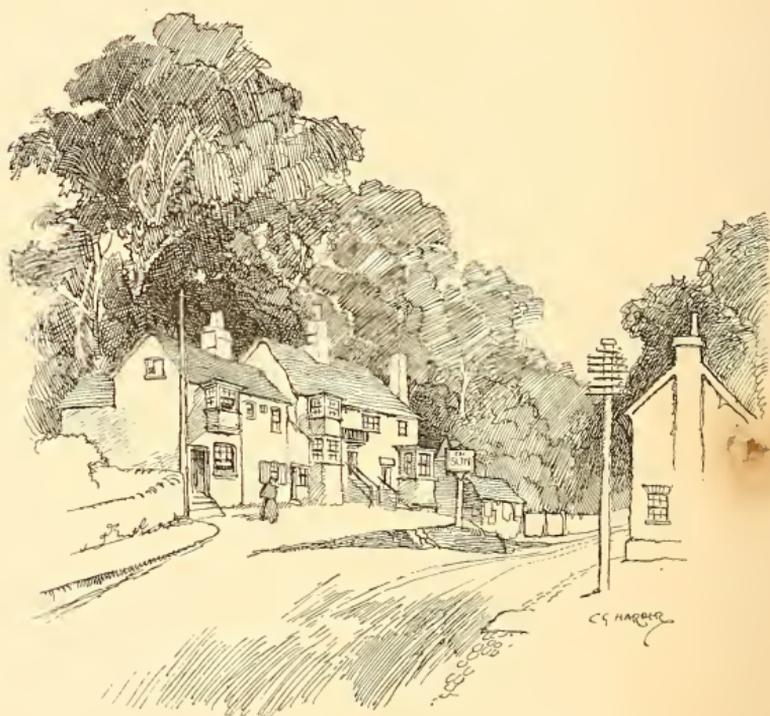
grammar school, at a depth of 3 feet below the surface, and at a distance of 10 feet from the old Roman road. It is a sculptured stone, 4 feet in height, with the figure of the Centurion himself carved on it, in high relief. It is evidently a portrait of him. He stands in full military costume, his cloak hanging from his shoulders, his sword and dagger by his side. The inscription, almost as sharp as on the day when it was cut, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, tells us that the monument was erected by two of his servants, Verecundus and Novicius. They call him "facilis," the "easy" or "good-natured." It is surely a sweet and touching thing that when all other record of that soldier has perished, we should yet know him to have been a kindly creature.

But to return to Stanway, which keeps, as sole vestige of its heath, a little space of the greenest turf, perhaps half an acre in extent, beside the insignificant stream in the hollow, and opposite the "Swan" Inn. The heath that formerly spread out across the elevated but flat table-land between this village and the succeeding one of Lexden was, in its different parts, variously named after them. On Stanway Heath, in Ogilby's *Britannia* of 1697, a picture map shows a beacon standing between the forty - seventh and forty - eighth milestones from London, on the right-hand side of the road. It appears to have been a post some 30 feet in height, crowned with a fire-bucket, and climbed by means of slats nailed across. The beacon, thus easily lighted, was provided for the benefit of travellers

going to or coming from Colchester across the desolate heath, whose dangers may be guessed from the existence of a “Cut-throat Lane” even in the comparative security of Lexden village. The heath by the highway is a thing of the past, for those portions not brought under cultivation by the farmer have been grabbed by the builder, and the so-called Lexden Heath of to-day is a quite recent row of houses, with a post-office, and shops, and everything complete and modern. At the forty-eighth milestone, amid all this modern upheaval, stands a disused toll-house, and, close by, something much more ancient; the deep, pre-historic hollow, smothered in dense woods and shrubs, known as “King Cole’s Kitchen,” and now—figure to yourself the shame of it!—overshadowed by a cottage, new built, and named from it “King Cole’s Cottage.”

Turning off to the right, the curious in things pre-historic may lose themselves in the solitudes of the real Lexden Heath, where the Devil, the Trinobantes, the Romans, or Fairfax, the Parliamentary General—according to varying legends—threw up the entrenchments, and delved the ditches, found there in plenty. The Devil, we say advisedly, for “Gryme,” or “Grim,” whose name is attached to the dyke across the heath, was none other, in the minds of the Saxons. “Lexden Straight Road” follows for an unconscionable distance a line of Roman entrenchments, and is straight and dull beyond belief. Followed long enough, it leads to “Bottle End,” which may originally have been “Battle End,” the scene of some traditional legend

of Boadicea's defeat at the hands of the Romans. Or, again, it perhaps marks some forgotten connection with St Botolph, whose ruined Abbey stands outside Colchester's walls, and whose honoured name is pronounced "Bottle" by Colcestrians. Anything is possible in a district where Beacon End, the site



LEXDEN.

of the old beacon already mentioned, has become Bacon End.

Lexden village now claims attention. It is a place in which one school of antiquaries finds the original Roman station of Camulodunum, established on the site of the royal city of Cunobelin, King of

the Trinobantes ; a finding strenuously contested by another following. Certainly, among the tall elms and rolling surface of Lexden Park there are remains in plenty of huge defensive earthworks, telling in no uncertain manner that this must have been a place of enormous strength, by whomsoever held. The surroundings are weird and impressive to a degree.

The village skirting the road is one of the prettiest on the way. Going towards Colchester, the road drops down the hill, where old cottages stand high above the pathway, with steep little gardens in front, kept from sliding down into the road itself by lichened retaining-walls sprouting with house-leek and draped with climbing plants. Lower still, hard by the church whose carpenter-Gothic atrocities are hung about with ivy and creepers until they are transfigured into a dream of beauty, the grouping of the 'Sun' Inn and neighbouring houses is exquisite. Beyond this point begins the suburban approach to Colchester, a town it behoves the stranger to approach with a proper respect, for here was the first Roman colony in Britain. The history of Colchester, indeed, begins so far back as A.D. 44, and there was already a pre-historic native city in existence before then ; the royal city of that ancient British king, Cunobelin, the monarch famous in the pages of Shakespeare as "Cymbeline."

XXVI

CUNOBELIN, Lord of the Trinobantes, ruler of that part of the country now divided into Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hunts, Cambridge-shire and Essex, was the successor of his father Cassivelaunus, who had warred, not ingloriously, with Julius Cæsar. He transferred his capital from his native town on the site of St Albans to where Colchester now stands. He appears to have been a powerful ruler, and, if little is known of him, certainly he is no myth, for the vague legends that held the name of the Buckinghamshire villages of Great and Little Kimble to be a corrupted form of his own were strikingly proved correct some years ago, when a hoard of gold coins was ploughed up in their neighbourhood, bearing his title.

We do not know by what name Colchester was then styled. After Cunobelin had died, full of years and worn by grief at the revolts of his sons, Caractacus, Adminius and Togodumnus, the end of the native State over which he had ruled speedily came. Adminius, in a fury against his brothers, fled from Britain to seek the aid of the Romans, and if no immediate result came, certainly his invitation must have revived the old Cæsarian dream of conquest. The real cause of the Roman invasion that took place shortly after the death of Cunobelin was the solicitation of a certain Bericus, a British Prince of whom nothing appears to be known beyond this one fact.

The invasion took place in A.D. 43, under that able general, Aulus Plautius, who threw the Trinobantes back from Hertfordshire and Middlesex, across the Lea and into the Essex marshes, where for a time they could not be followed. This was the position at the close of the year. Detached portions of the invading forces had overrun the south of Britain as far as Gloucester and had defeated the tribes on the way; leaving a garrison in the west. But the island was little known and held many mysteries. None could tell the real strength of the natives, who disappeared in the forests and marshes that covered the face of the land, and by their irregular warfare disconcerted the Roman plans of campaign. Plautius was at last driven to act on the defensive on the Essex borders. His soldiers were dying in the ague-stricken morasses between the Thames and the Lea, and had the enemy possessed powers of combination and military skill, he might well have been cut off here, at the end of the known world. A retirement with his sick and dying was impossible. Nothing remained but to go into camp during the winter, and meanwhile to send for reinforcements. He accordingly sent for forces from Gaul. They came with commendable promptitude, commanded by the Emperor Claudius in person. With these new legions came an elephant corps, brought from Africa to carry the heavy baggage. But they acted a better part than this, for their strange appearance terrified the astonished Trinobantes a great deal more than any increase of the Roman soldiery could

have done. We may imagine this corps, crashing irresistibly through the thickets, the forests and marshes on that march into the Unknown, along this line of country now traversed by the Norwich Road, and can readily understand little resistance being met with on the way. The tribes were dispersed and their territory occupied as far as the Stour, and a colony was founded in the opening of the new year, A.D. 44, on the site of Cunobelin's city—*Colonia Camulodunum*, the first Roman settlement in Britain.

The Romans had so easily overcome the resistance of the natives that they were soon lulled into a feeling of security. For an uninterrupted space of sixteen years *Colonia* grew and prospered. It became a pleasant town, inhabited by veteran soldiers grown grey in the service of the Empire, and spending their later years in retirement. The Emperor Claudius, flushed with his success, had assumed the dignity of a god and had caused a Temple to be erected in the market-place to his honour, with attendant priests and altars. The governors and consuls were lesser gods, and treated with contempt and ill-judged severity the natives who had been overcome with such ease. The soldiery were uniformly brutal. Degeneracy and luxury flourished together with this attitude of oppression, and the town wholly lacked defences. It is not surprising that these colonists were bitterly hated by their vassals, who in especial looked upon the priests as so many harpies living upon their substance, and were so in fact, just as all priesthoods

and all clergy have been from the beginning, and will be to the end. In this last respect these poor Trinobantes, these wretched barbarians, exhibited a quite surprising discernment, not equalled by the priest-ridden centuries of culture and enlightenment that have since passed.

These down-trodden natives were already ripe for revenge when a more than usually unjust proceeding of the Roman officials precipitated a rising. The Iceni, who inhabited Norfolk and Suffolk, and whose frontiers marched with those of the conquered province, had been ruled over by a certain King Prasutagus. Dying, he had hoped to propitiate the goodwill of the Roman officials by dividing the vast wealth he had accumulated, leaving one half to the Roman Emperor and the other moiety to his two daughters. But he was no sooner dead than his country was invaded. His widow, the famous Boadicea, resisted. She was publicly scourged, her daughters suffering the worst indignities, and her relatives sold into slavery. The whole nation rose in arms at these outrages, and their cousins, the Trinobantes, on the hither side of the Stour, joined them. The Romans saw their folly when too late. No more eloquent account is possible than that given by Tacitus of the premonitions of evil. The statue of Victory fell to the ground, and turned its back where the face had been, as if it fled before an enemy. Women were seen and heard singing mad, wild songs, prophesying disaster. Strange and unaccountable noises were heard in the house of assembly, and loud howlings in the theatre. In

the estuary of the river the buildings of the city appeared reflected upside down, and ghastly remains of human bodies were seen in the ooze when the tide ebbed. The sea assumed the colour of blood, and the strangest whisperings stirred the air. Many of the wealthier colonists, alarmed at these portents, discovered that their health needed a change of air, and went for a holiday into Gaul, on the other side of the Channel, and those who remained applied for military help. In answer to this appeal, a meagre force of two hundred men was sent, and immediately employed to fortify the Temple. But before these measures could be completed, the town was surrounded and taken; the houses burnt and the inhabitants all slain, the little garrison in the Temple meeting a like fate after a defence of two days.

Meanwhile, Petilius Cerealis, commanding the Ninth Legion, which had been stationed on the Icenian frontier near where Mount Bures now stands, advanced to the aid of the doomed city. He, however, had moved too late, and met the victorious natives at Wormingford, where they almost entirely annihilated his forces. The evidences of that great disaster were discovered in 1836, when parallel rows of funeral urns, placed in order like streets, were unearthed, containing the bones of the lost legion gathered and burnt after the Roman sway had been reasserted.

These events happened in A.D. 61. Suetonius Paulinus, the then Commander-in-Chief, was at that time vigorously prosecuting a war with the Druids in the Isle of Anglesey, but on hearing of these

disasters he hurried back through Verulamium and Londinium, collecting an army of ten thousand as he went. The whole of the south was aflame, and a numerous enemy hung on his flanks. The Roman citizens of both those towns piteously begged for protection, but were left to their fate, which was not long in doubt, for no sooner had the flying column passed than the tribes fell upon and utterly destroyed them. Seventy thousand citizens perished in that general massacre.

It is uncertain where the Roman army met the hordes commanded by that heroic Amazon, Boadicea, whom we should perhaps more correctly style "Boduoca." The British Queen is a deadly dull subject in the hands of the uninspired, who fail to render her "convincing." No one has done so well as Dion Cassius, who singularly resembles modern writers of "personal paragraphs" in what recent slang would term his "actuality." He says, "she was very tall, grim in appearance, keen-eyed, harsh-voiced, with a wealth of exceedingly yellow hair falling below her waist" (her golden hair was hanging down her back!), "wearing a highly-embroidered tunic and a thick cloak fastened with a buckle over it."

Tacitus describes the scene of battle as flanked by two woods, on a site resembling a stretch of country at Haynes Green, near Messing; but the great fight must have raged on many miles of ground, and no doubt included Lexden Heath.

The Britons were so sure of victory, that they had brought their women and children as spectators,

and ranged them, seated in waggons, in a great semi-circle commanding the battlefield. The Roman historian says they were an "innumerable multitude." The British Queen, addressing her warriors from her chariot, called upon them to conquer or to die, resting her hopes on the strength of her forces and the justice of her cause; while Suetonius, on his part, urged his troops not to be dismayed either by the numbers of the enemy or their furious shouts. The British attacked, the Romans at first remaining on the defensive. When the fury of the first onslaught was exhausted, the foot soldiers of the Empire advanced in a wedge-like formation, the cavalry closing in on the flanks, driving the speedily disorganised enemy back upon the semi-circle of waggons, which cut off their retreat. Pinned up in this way, the battle degenerated into a massacre, in which eighty thousand Britons were slain, including the women and children who had come out to witness the fortunes of the day. The unhappy queen, seeing all lost, poisoned herself.

Thus ended the British rule over Norfolk and Suffolk. From this time date the existing walls of Colchester. The conquerors were determined not to risk a repetition of the destruction of their first colony, and, choosing a new site, one mile to the east of the former city, they planted their walls on the ridge on which Colchester now stands, overlooking the valley of the Colne. These walls, enclosing an area of 1000 by 600 yards, still remain, after the passing of more than eighteen hundred years, the most perfect Roman fortifications in

Britain. Even in that wide space of time the town of Colchester has not extended very greatly beyond them. In some directions, indeed—notably to the north and north-east and on the west—the ramparts still look out upon the open country. The walls have a thickness of from seven to eight feet, and are built of red Roman tiles, alternating with courses of stones, brought with great labour from the coast near Harwich; the neighbourhood of Colchester, and Essex in general, being quite innocent of stone of any kind. Harwich and the seashore even to this day supply the boulders of limestone from which the building-stones of Colchester's walls were cut.

Colchester was never again attacked during the period of more than three hundred years, in which the Romans ruled. In the events of A.D. 61, they had learnt the double lesson of being armed and of treating a foe, once conquered, with generosity. In the period between these events and the year 410, when the Imperial forces were withdrawn from Britain to help save the heart of the Empire from ruin, conquered and conquerors had to live together, and made the best of the necessity. Roman colonists intermarried with the gradually Romanised British, and the race of Romano-Britons thus created, during three centuries, gradually grew to look upon Britain as their home and themselves as a nation. Thus, towards the end, usurpers of the Imperial authority are found setting up as independent sovereigns, and civilised British princes treating on equal terms with Roman statesmen. In this way the British in some measure came into their own again, and to these

circumstances we owe the wild legends of that mysterious monarch, "old King Cole," who is to Colchester what King Arthur is to Cornwall, the great local hero. "Colking's Castle," on Colchester's walls, and the earthworks near Lexden known as "King Cole's Kitchen"; nay, the very name of Colchester itself—"Cole's chester," or castle, derive, according to legends, from this scarce more than mythical personage. Those stories make him one Coel, or Collius, the last of a line of semi-independent British kings who were allowed to retain a nominal sovereignty after Cunobelin's death and the Roman conquest. The story goes on to tell how, on the death of the usurper Carausius, in A.D. 293, Coel surrendered the country to the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, on that successor of the Cæsar's marrying his daughter Helena, who became the mother of Constantine the Great, and was also the discoverer of the true Cross at Jerusalem. The arms of Colchester still bear a ragged cross between four crowns, in allusion to this tale of the Empress Helena; and in earnest that this is a distinction which Colchester will not willingly lose, an effigy of her, holding a cross very plain to see, is newly set up on the very topmost point of the gorgeous new Town Hall, recently completed.

To that most untruthful of chroniclers, Geoffrey of Monmouth, the legend of Coel is chiefly traced. He may either have imagined it, or have woven the story out of existing legends, which had in turn derived from the Saxons, who, after the departure of the Romans, had wrested the country from the

Romanised British. They captured and burnt the town of Colonia, and wondering at its massive walls, took them to have been the work of some great king, after whom the place had been named. Legends of Cole soon sprang up, and by the time the Saxons themselves had been converted to Christianity he was fully provided with a history.

“Old King Cole,” as the founder of Cole’s-ceaster, has been shabbily treated in modern times and made to figure merely as a jolly toper. That he was the most convivial of monarchs the song most emphatically assures us.

“He called for his pipe, he called for his glass, he called for his fiddlers three.”

Nothing, if you please, more than the veriest pot-house potentate! The author of that nursery rhyme has degraded Cole as much as Mark Twain did the romantic wielder of Excalibur in that monument of vulgarity, *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*.

XXVII

THE entrance into Colchester is singular. From the straight, broad road leading past the trim modern villas and so into Crouch Street—the street outside the walls that takes its name from the vanished monastery of the Crutched, Crossed or Crouched Friars—the wayfarer suddenly comes to the sharpest of

angles, and, turning abruptly to the left, enters Colchester by what has every appearance of being the back door into the town.

Historically considered, the entrance by crooked Head Street, as the continuation of Crouch Street is called, really is a back way, and was in Roman times the site of a gate leading to one of the southern and less important roads. But ever since Saxon days this has been the only way to or from London into the town.

How it happened that the original road and the Decuman Gate in Colchester's west wall fell into disuse, none can tell. It was so many ages ago that not even a pathway leads along the ancient way, now quite obliterated by houses. But if the road be gone, the Gate itself remains, though in ruins. Let us, before entering Colchester, attempt to find it. To do so, it will be necessary to retrace our steps a little distance along Crouch Street, and, so doing, to take a turning to the right-hand, down Balkerne Lane. The first sign of ancient Rome is seen where the Church of St Mary-at-the-Wall stands towering above a flight of steps leading up into the street beyond. There stands revealed a portion of the wall. The breach in it, through which the steps lead, was once a postern gate. Overhung with trees, the freshness of whose spring foliage with every recurrent April forms a romantic contrast with the almost immeasurably old of the riven wall, this is a place for thought. From the summit of that old defence, where once the legionaries lined the battlements in time of peril, or leaned gossiping in peaceful

days, one looks down over roof-tops into the valley where the railway runs, and wishes for a momentary lifting of the veil and a glimpse of what the spot will be like in another eighteen hundred years. Close by, a hoary mass of brick and tile and weather-worn courses of septaria are the remains of the Roman Gate. Three arches can be traced; the middle arch of eleven feet span, the side ones, for foot passengers, less than half that width. Candour, however, compels the admission that of architectural character they have not the slightest trace. Over against this relic stands an inn known as the "Hole in the Wall," although that is not its actual sign; and through that hole the most prominent object in all Colchester looms red and horrid. "Jumbo" brutally dominates everything, and blasts the approach to Colchester far away on every road but that from London, for which small mercy thanks be given. Who, you ask, is Jumbo? He is not Roman, but he is very big, very ugly, and very prominent; and, unluckily, cannot fail to be seen. After him, even the Roman remains of Colchester pale their ineffectual efforts at pre-eminence. It is conceivable, although not very likely, that a stranger passing though Colchester might not notice its Roman antiquities, but Jumbo will not be denied. There he is, crowning the highest point in the town, shameless in brick of the most striking red and in attempts at decoration which, however well meant, only serve to render his hulking body more objectionable, with an effect as though a navy were to adorn his rugged face with pearl-powder.

Jumbo, let it be explained, is the modern water-tower of Colchester's waterworks. It was built in 1881, and cost close upon £10,500, and there are those who say it is the second largest of its kind in England. Where the largest may be we know not, but if it injures its surroundings as effectually as does Colchester's incubus, that unknown place has our sympathies. Jumbo is shameless and rejoices in his name, for, as the curious may see for themselves, his weather-vane bears the effigy of an elephant.

Returning to Crouch Street, and so by Head Gate and along Head Street, the High Street is gained. It is one of the broadest and most spacious streets in the kingdom, as it had every occasion to be, for it was not only part of the great road leading into Suffolk, but in it was held the principal fair of the town. Here, too, close by where Colchester's new and gorgeous Town Hall stands, was the old Moot Hall, a building of Saxon, Norman and later periods, barbarously destroyed in 1843. In the Moot Hall the Mayor and justices dealt with offences of all kinds, from the selling of bad meat to charges of witchcraft, sorcery and heresy. Thus we may read in the borough records of things so diverse as the fining of Robert Barefot, butcher, in the sum of twelve pence for selling putrid meat, and may learn how William Chevelying, the first of the Colchester martyrs, was imprisoned here in the reign of Henry the Sixth until such time as it was convenient to burn him in front of Colkyng's Castle. Here the local Court of Pie Powder was held during the Corporation Fair Days, in October. Summary

jurisdiction was the special feature of that Court, and it was needed, for in those times, when people of all sorts and conditions came from far and near, offences were many and various. In the legal jargon of the Middle Ages this tribunal is called the *Curia Regis Pedis Pulverizatis*, or, in the Norman-French then common, the "Cour Royal des Pieds Poudrés," that is to say, the King's Court of Dusty Feet. Courts of Pie Powder obtained this eminently descriptive name from the original Fair Courts, held in the dusty streets long before buildings were erected for the purpose, and the name survived long after the necessity which originated it had disappeared. Imagine, therefore, the highwaymen, the cheats and thieves and those who came into disputation on the Fair Days being brought before the Mayor by the bailiffs, their cases arising and being heard, and judgments and sentences being delivered and executed, within the space of one day, amid the bleating of the flocks, the lowing of the herds, and all the noise and tumult of the Fair itself. We must not, however, suppose the High Street to have been absolutely clear of obstructions in days of old. In midst of it stood the Late Saxon or Early Norman church of that Saxon saint, St Runwald, which remained here until so recently as 1878, when it was pulled down and its site sold to the Corporation, to be thrown into the roadway.

That Colchester stands on a considerably elevated site is evident to all who, having entered from the London road, turn out of Head Street into the High Street, and in doing so glimpse the long descent of

North Hill at the corner. A further revelation is that of East Hill, which, in continuation of High Street, the traveller must long and steeply descend towards the Colne, on his way to Ipswich and Norwich. It was in High Street that Colchester's principal coaching inns were situated, and there yet remains—now the most picturesque feature of that thoroughfare—the “Red Lion,” with old timber brackets supporting a projecting upper storey and a four-centred Tudor oak entrance curiously carved; its original and restored portions so thickly smeared with paint and varnish that all might be old, so far as the antiquary can tell, or all might be in the nature of Wardour Street antiques. The “Red Lion” figured as a rendezvous in the surrender of the town to Fairfax, after the siege of 1648. In its yard the vanquished laid down their swords.

Another inn was the “White Hart,” where Bank Passage leaves the High Street. The building, a highly respectable plaster-faced one, smug and Georgian, still stands, but it is an inn no longer. Another old inn, the “Three Cups,” has been rebuilt. Older than any, but coyly hiding its antiquarian virtues of chamfered oaken beams and quaint galleries from the crowd, is the “Angel,” in West Stockwell Street, whose origin as a pilgrim's inn is vouched for. Weary suppliants to, or returning from, the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, far away on the road through and past Norwich, housed here and misbehaved themselves in their mediæval way. It would be the gravest of mistakes to assume old pilgrims decorous. Modern Bank Holiday folks

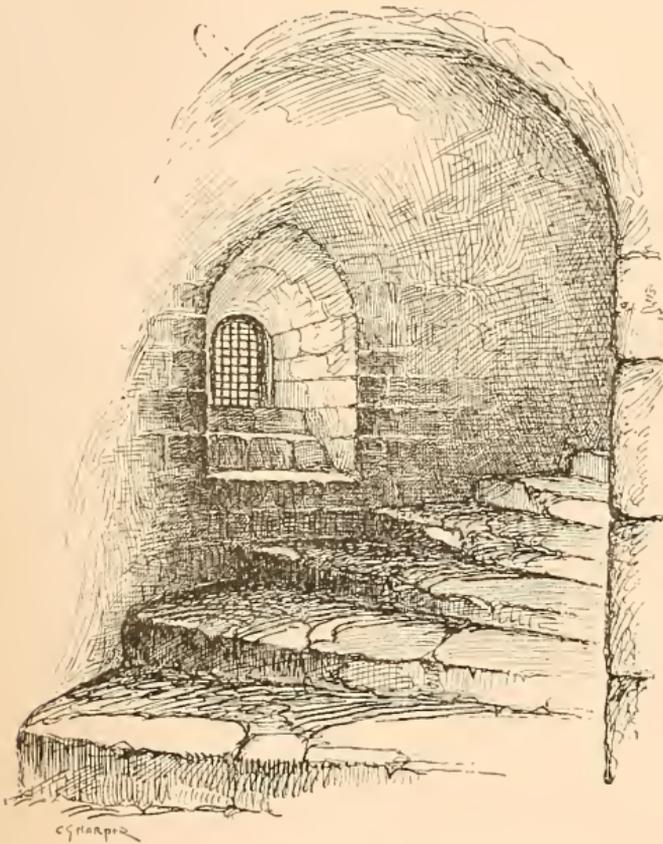
would, compared with them, seem to be of a severe monkish austerity. The shrine at Walsingham, second only in repute to that of the Blessed Thomas at Canterbury, drew crowds of every class, from king to beggar. The great Benedictine Abbey of St John at Colchester sheltered some in its guest-houses, while the late-comers inned at such hostelries as the "Angel," or, if the weather were propitious, lay in the woods. Ill fared the unsuspecting citizen who met any of these sinners on the way to be plenary indulged and lightened of their load of sin. They would murder him for twopence or cudgel him out of high spirits and for the fun of the thing; arguing, doubtless, that as they were presently to turn over a new leaf, it mattered little how black the old one was. Drunkenness and crime, immorality, obscenity and license of the grossest kind were in fact accompaniments of pilgrimage, and the sin-worn wanderers who prayed devoutly at the niche, now empty of its statue, in the east end of All Saints' Church in the High Street, on their journey to and from Walsingham, would resume their foul jests and their evil courses so soon as the last bead was told and the ultimate word of dog-Latin glibly pattered off.

XXVIII

REMOVED from all the noise and bustle of the High Street, in a quiet nook away from the modern life of the town, stands Colchester Castle, on the site of the Temple of Claudius. The Keep, built by Eudo, "Dapifer," or High Steward of Normandy, under William the Conqueror and his two successors, alone remains, and has lost its upper storey, destroyed by a speculator who bought the building in 1683, and half ruined himself in his attempts to demolish it. It is perhaps not generally known that this is by far the largest keep in England, measuring 155 ft. by 113 ft. The Tower of London, built at the same period, and the next largest, measures only 116 ft. by 96 ft. There have been those who, looking at its massive walls, 12 ft. thick, with courses of Roman tiles conspicuous in them, have believed this to be the original Roman temple, and antiquaries who should have known better have written long treatises to support their views. Those, however, were the days before comparative archæology had come into being to prove that the peculiarities in the planning, noticeable here, are partaken of by the undoubted Norman keeps of the Tower of London and of Rochester Castle, known to have been designed by Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester. Freeman was very severe in his time on those who labelled the interior of Colchester keep with such names as "podium" and "adytum," in their belief of its Roman character.

If its lack of height prevents Colchester Castle

from being impressive without, certainly its gloomy dungeons and mighty walls compel the respect and wonder of all who enter. They look not so much as though they had been built up, as though cells and



THE GRAND STAIRCASE, COLCHESTER CASTLE.

passages had been carved and burrowed out of a solid mass ; so small are those passages and staircases, so thick the walls. In the chapel and the corridors that still remain roofed, the collections of the Essex Archæological Society have a home, and from other

and roofless walls that are broad enough to afford the safest of pathways one may gaze down upon the surrounding grassy enclosures and see that spot where those two Royalist commanders, Lucas and Lisle, who held Colchester for seventy-six days against the besieging army of the Parliament in 1648, were barbarously shot by order of Fairfax, after having surrendered.

That siege of Colchester is the most romantic incident that has survived in the history of the town. It is the story of a last desperate attempt of the Royalists to contend with the Parliamentary forces that had everywhere overwhelmed the King's supporters after a bitter warfare of over six years. It was a gallant attempt, and the more so because Essex was not a county favourable to the King's cause. Sir Charles Lucas, at the head of this enterprise, was a younger member of the Lucas family, seated at Colchester. In the beginning of June 1648, a Royalist rising under Colonel Goring had been checked at Blackheath by the Parliamentary general, Fairfax. A portion of Goring's force crossed the Thames into Essex, and lay at Brentwood. This was an opportunity which Essex sympathisers could not let slip. Lucas and his friends, gathering a body of adherents, galloped down the road to Chelmsford, where the Committee of Parliament was in session, and seized them, afterwards continuing their progress to Brentwood, where they effected a junction with Goring's band. Their forces thus united, a counter-march was made upon Chelmsford again, and continued to Colchester; Lord Capel, Sir George Lisle,

and many others joining on the way. On June 12, Goring, in command of this body of four thousand Royalists, approached Colchester, and found the Head Gate closed against him by the unsympathetic citizens, but a slight skirmish soon enabled him to force an entrance. He had not intended to remain at Colchester, but the swift pursuit that Fairfax organised from London gave the Royalists no time to continue their projected march into the Midlands. The day after Goring had entered Colchester, Fairfax had assembled his forces on Lexden Heath, and immediately sent a trumpeter to demand surrender. The inevitable refusal was the signal for a battle outside the town, on the London Road; a contest which resulted in the retirement of the Royalists within the walls. The Head Gate still existed, its bolts and bars in perfect order, but as the Royalists fell back through it into the town, two hundred or more of the Parliamentary troops dashed through in pursuit. Their ardour cost them their lives, for Lord Capel at the head of a determined band pushed back the gate upon the bulk of the enemy, thrusting his walking-stick through the staples as the door closed. The eager advance-guard, thus cooped up within the walls, were all slain.

Preparations were now made on both sides for a siege. Fairfax had already lost many men, and dared not attempt to carry the town by storm. His plan was to surround Colchester and imprison the Royalists there until such time as his heavy ordnance or starvation should compel them to surrender. With his command of reinforcements from London,

and his ability thus to enclose the town with a cordon of troops, the position of the Royalists was hopeless, and it is to their honour and credit that, in order to contain Fairfax's large army and so give opportunities to the organisers of Royalist movements in the Midlands, they continued the defence in the face of starvation and despite the easy terms of capitulation at first offered them. Their domestic position (so to call it) in the town was unenviable, for the inhabitants were wholly opposed to their cause. They had with them, it is true, the members of the Parliamentary Committee whom they had kidnapped from Chelmsford, but those gentlemen were a nuisance and had to be civilly treated and fed while the Royalists themselves went hungry. The unfortunate inhabitants, too, were starving, and many of their houses and churches destroyed by the besiegers' cannon shot; while suburbs were burnt down outside the walls.

The end of this long agony came on August 27, when the town was surrendered; the officers "surrendering to mercy," the lesser officers and rank and file with an assurance that their lives and personal belongings should be spared. Seventy-five superior officers accordingly gave up their arms at the "King's Head" inn. Four of them were to be tried by court-martial. One escaped, one was pardoned, and two—Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle—condemned to be shot without delay, on a disproved charge of having once broken their parole when formerly prisoners of war. In vain asking for time to make some final disposition of their affairs,

these two officers were executed the same evening, on a grassy spot a few paces clear of the north wall of the old castle. Sir Charles Lucas was the first to be shot, and met his end as a brave, gallant gentleman should. "I have often faced death on the field of battle," he said, "and you shall now see how I dare to die." Then he knelt in prayer, and, rising, threw open his vest, exclaiming, "See, I am ready for you. Now, rebels, do your worst!" The firing-party then fired and shot him in four places, so that he fell dead on the instant.

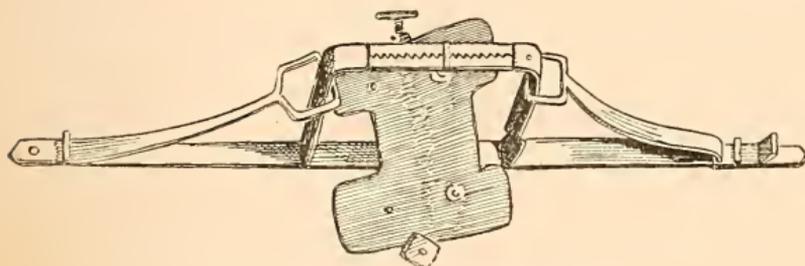
Sir George Lisle was then brought to the same place, and viewing the dead body of his friend as it lay on the ground, knelt down and kissed him, praising his unspotted honour. After bidding farewell to some friends, he turned to the spectators, saying, "Oh! how many of your lives here have I saved in hot blood, and must now myself be most barbarously murdered in cold blood? But what dare not they do that would willingly cut the throat of my dear King, whom they have already imprisoned, and for whose deliverance, and peace to this unfortunate country, I dedicate my last prayer to Heaven?" Then, looking in the faces of those who were to execute him, and thinking they stood at too great a distance, he desired them to come nearer, to which one of them said, "I'll warrant, sir, we hit you." "Friend," he answered, "I have been nearer you when you have missed me!" And so, after a short prayer upon his knees, he rose up and said, "Now, traitors, do your worst!" Whereupon they shot him dead.

The stone covering the graves of these unhappy soldiers may yet be seen in St Giles's Church, with an inscription stating that they were "by the command of Thomas Fairfax, the general of the Parliament Army, in cold blood barbarously murdered." A legend may still be occasionally met with in old books, which has it that the Duke of Buckingham, who had married Fairfax's daughter, approached Charles the Second with the object of having the passage erased that reflected so severely on his father-in-law's memory. The King conferred on the subject with Lord Lucas, who said that he would with pleasure obey the Royal command, if only His Majesty would allow him to place in its stead the statement that "Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were barbarously murdered for their loyalty to King Charles the First, and that his son, King Charles the Second, had ordered this memorial of their loyalty to be erased." The King then, we are told, commanded the already existing epitaph to be cut still deeper, and it will be readily observed by those who go to gaze upon it that the lettering is bolder and deeper than commonly is the case.

The undertaking of Fairfax with respect to the surrendered soldiery was not respected. They were ruthlessly pillaged, and some sent to the plantations over seas. Lord Capel was eventually executed in London. For many years afterwards the spot where Lucas and Lisle fell was shown by the awe-struck people of Colchester, who told the legend that grass would not grow where that loyal blood had been spilled. In later times the story became an article

of faith with one political party and a derision to the other. No grass grows there now; but for the commonplace reason that a well-kept gravel path occupies the site, which is duly marked by a small obelisk.

Colchester was long in recovering itself after the rough treatment received during the siege; and in fact, it is only in recent years that the church of St Mary-at-the-Wall, battered down on that occasion, has been rebuilt; while the Norman minster of St Botolph remains the roofless ruin that cannonading



OLD MAN-TRAP, COLCHESTER CASTLE.

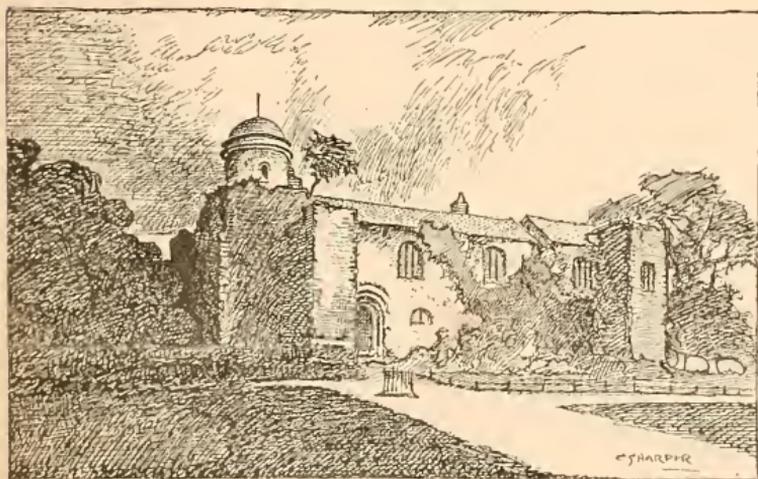
and incendiarism left it. Evelyn in 1656 found Colchester “a ragged and factious town, now swarming with sectaries,” and if he had visited it nine years later would have witnessed a worse state, for the plague almost depopulated the place.

“Sectaries”—that is to say, those who preferred to think for themselves on religious matters, and to worship in their own way—were treated with an unconscionable severity. One Parnell, a Quaker, was imprisoned in a cell within Colchester Castle, and died there, his story affording a sad example of barbarity in the authorities of that period.

But the early nineteenth century was as savage in some ways as the late seventeenth, which so delighted in spitefully using Nonconformists. The antiquarian collections in the castle, for instance, include a particularly ferocious instrument devised for the protection of the squires' property and for the maiming of poachers. It is a man-trap; one of those devilish contrivances which, actuated by powerful springs and furnished with sharp steel teeth, would, when accidentally trodden on by the poacher, snap down upon his leg with force sufficient to injure the bone and probably mutilate him for life. It was thus the landed interests protected their rabbits, hares and pheasants. The existence of this man-trap, together with the spring guns also used at the same time, is a reproach to the England of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, just as its preservation here as a curiosity is a certificate of the progress achieved in humanity since then.

The present prosperity of Colechester is reflected in many ways, but in none more strikingly than the condition of the castle, now a municipal property, and encircled with lawns and flower-beds, oddly at variance with its time-worn grandeur. The neatness of these surroundings and of the ornamental railings that fence off the enclosure is admirable from the everyday point of view, but the picturesque neglect and rural squalor of other years pointed the moral of the place and annotated its story, while present prettinesses blur the historic page. It is so everywhere throughout the land. When, a hundred years ago, Turner, Sandby, Prout and Girtin, our early

water-colourists, roamed the country, making their picturesque sketches, they did not find themselves balked by flower-beds, cursed by cast-iron fences, or requested not to walk on the grass. They had to pick their hazardous way through miry lanes, or adventure through the bottomless sloughs of farm-yards. All these things were offensive to the wayfarer, but they generally meant picturesque



COLCHESTER CASTLE.

compositions and exquisitely sketchable foregrounds. Nowadays the conscientious illustrator, unwilling to picturesquely exaggerate, and yet accursed with cast-iron railings new from Birmingham last week, is in a quandary.

The once forlorn condition of Colchester Castle doubtless originated in 1726, when its then owner, Sir Isaac Rebow, left it by will to a detested grandson, on whom he thus conferred a useless encum-

brance, a more exasperating bequest than even the proverbial cutting off with a shilling.

A relic of those old days of picturesque neglect is found in the book of an auctioneer, who wrote an account of his "Professional Travels in England in the first half of the Nineteenth Century," modestly veiling his identity, and simply calling himself on his title-page, "An Auctioneer." Part One of his work was issued in 1843, but Part Two is yet to come, and as his first instalment shows little merit, the world can well afford to forego the second.

Coming to the castle, he muses over its ruins, and weeps that cabbages and coriander employ the attention of the Colchester people, rather than the care of ancient fortresses. To him, thus contemplating "the sad remains of so many interesting scenes," enters from an adjoining farm one whom he is pleased to term "an Aborigine." By this he obviously names an Essex farm-labourer. It is an affectation, but he might have done worse. He *might* have called him, seeing that Colchester is a place of oysters, a "native," in inverted commas, evidences of jocular intent, which would have been dreadful.

"Ah! sir," says the Aborigine, "it was cruel work when them great Barons, as they call 'em, lived here."

"True, my friend," replies the Auctioneer, "but it's a pity to see hogs and donkeys depasturing in their courts and gardens, and grubbing and kicking down their halls and chapels."

"Lord! your honour," rejoins the son of the

soil, "what's the use on 'em in these days? I'd sooner see an acre of these 'ere swedes any day, than them there towers and dungeons. Them swedes afore you 'ool carry a score o' fine wethers any month in the year, and plaze ye to look at 'em, but as for them flint walls, you may look at 'em for ever and a day 'fore you find enough o' green for a garnish"; which was indeed a practical rural way of looking at things.

The summit of those old walls has nowadays a very charming green garnish of grass, rendered parti-coloured by wind- and bird-sown wallflowers and vigorous wildings; but more lusty than these are the young sycamores, that have struck deep roots into the walls and bid fair to grow into large trees.

It is still possible to follow the greater part of Colchester's old walls along the queer alleys that run above or below them. Eld Lane, out of whose elevated course the steep descent of the old postern, now known as Scheregate Steps, goes, is situated along the summit of the south wall looking over towards St John's Green, where, facing a wilderness of scrubby grass, broken bottles, and the sordid house-sweepings of the modern town, the gatehouse stands, all that is left of the proud mitred Abbey of St John. By that green is the frowzy little church of St Giles, patched up in so atrocious a manner from the wreck it was after the siege of 1648 that to call its "architecture" merely "debased" is to deal kindly with it. A dilapidated boarded tower is a feature of the exterior; the interior provided with a flat plaster ceiling, like that of a dwelling-room, and

filled with flimsy pine-wood pews, painted and grained. Dust and stuffiness reign within; dust and broken crockery without. And yet, although so unlovely, it is not altogether with satisfaction that an elaborate design is seen for rebuilding the church from its foundations, together with the notice, "It is earnestly hoped that contributions will be given toward the restoration fund." "Restoration" is not the word, for the design is alien and quite unlike anything that formerly stood on the ground. Rather let the place be repaired and cleansed and its unbeautiful details preserved as a characteristic and shocking example of how they looked upon ecclesiastical architecture in the dark days of churchwarden- and carpenter-Gothic. It is here, under the north aisle, that those two valiant captains, Lucas and Lisle, are laid.

For the church-towers built of Roman bricks, and for other evidences of that ancient Empire, let the explorer seek, and, presently finding, think himself, if he will, an original investigator: it is a harmless attitude, if at the same time unwarranted by fact. Let us to other matters, and then, leaving the town, hie away for Ipswich.

Colchester is, of course, famous for its oysters, and has been ever since the Roman occupation. In the estuary of the Colne, and the Crouch, and in the oozy creeks of the Essex shores, the Colchester "natives" still grow up from infancy to maturity and feed upon the semi-maritime slime, as they did close upon two thousand years ago, and doubtless long before that. If we may judge from the

stupendous heaps of oyster-shells discovered on the sites of Roman towns and villas, near and far, to say merely that the Romans were fond of oysters would be far too mild a term. They must have almost lived on oysters, dreamt oysters, and thought oysters. No wonder Colchester, whence the finest and the largest supply came, was so prosperous a Roman colony.

Although the fishery brings wealth to the town, it is more than a mile away and makes no sign. Those who might think that, because of it, Colchester should obtrude oysters at every turn and oyster-shells should strew every street, would be vastly disillusioned. But beside its oyster fishery, other Colchester trades are of secondary importance. Agricultural machinery is made here, and brewing and corn-milling carried on, but the once famed textile manufactures are gone. Among those old trades was the industry of baize-making, which left Colchester considerably over a century ago for other centres, after having given additional prosperity to the town for a period of a hundred and fifty years. It was shortly after 1570 that numbers of Dutch Protestants, fleeing from the Spanish persecutions in Holland, introduced the making of "bays and says," and, despite local jealousies, flourished amazingly for generations here.

But Colchester will never be dull while it continues to be what it is now—a great military depôt. Those worthy representatives of the Roman legionaries at a distance in time of nineteen centuries or so, the Tommies and troopers of the British Army,

are a prominent feature in every street, and bugles blow all round the clock, from *réveillé* to the last post, when every good soldier goes home to his barracks down the Butt Road; while the King's bad bargains stay behind and fortify themselves against apprehensions of the morrow's "clink" with another glass, or, adventuring too rashly into the street, find themselves presently in charge of the military patrol that walks the town with measured step and slow.

XXIX

"FROM Colchester to Jpswitch is ten mile," says that seventeenth-century traveller, Celia Fiennes, in her diary. The milestones, however, tell quite a different tale and contradict the lady by making the distance between the two towns eighteen miles and a quarter.

Seven miles of these bring the traveller from Colchester across the Stour and so into Suffolk. It is not an exciting seven miles. Passing the eastern outskirts of Colchester, where mud in the Colne and puddles beside the slattern streets offend the sense of propriety, as, having reversed their natural positions, the Fair Field is left on the right. "Left" is an expression used advisedly, for who would linger there? But the Fair Field cannot be passed unawares. If not seen, it will be heard, for on it camp the caravans, steam roundabouts and

travelling circuses that still draw rustic crowds with their fat women, giants and dwarfs; or delight them with mechanical rides on wooden horses to the bellowing of a steam organ, whose music-hall airs follow the traveller in gusts of stentorian minstrelsy when the wind unkindly wills it so. The sounds nerve the cyclist to quickly put the miles between himself and those siren strains, and happily the road is a fast one, so that he need not be long about the business. It goes, as an old turnpike should, broad and straight and well-kept, for the matter of six miles, with little to vary the monotony of trim hedgerow and equi-distant telegraph poles.

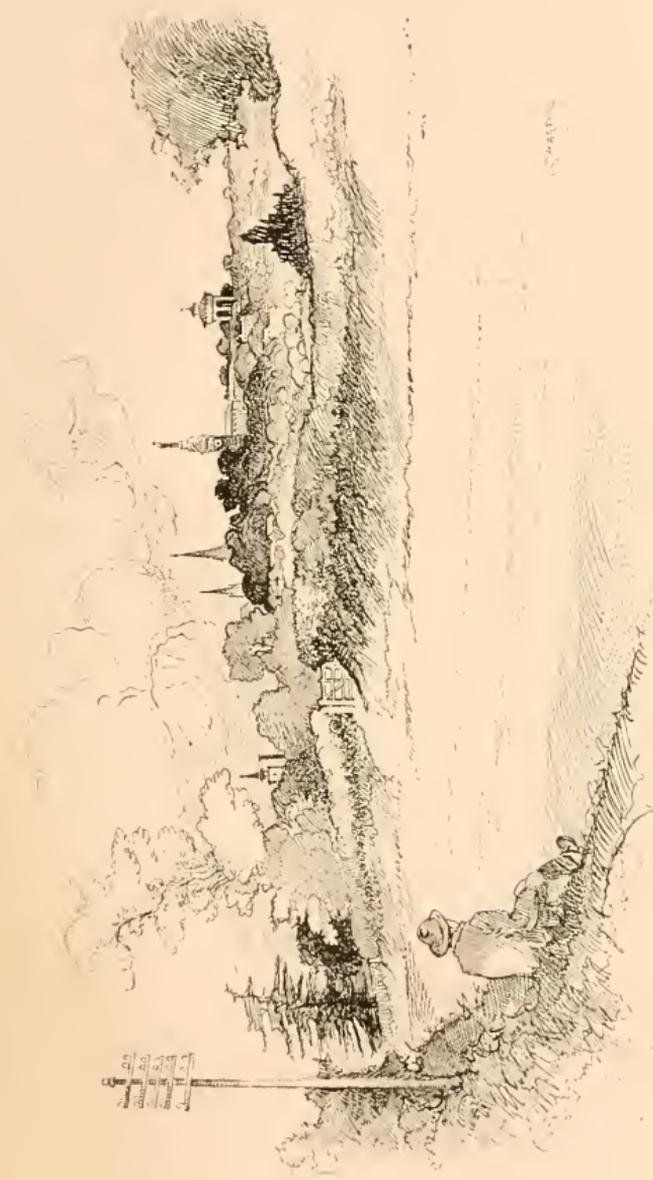
Let us therefore leave it awhile, and, journeying some three hundred yards along the Harwich Road, come across a railway level-crossing to the suburb of St Ann's, and the site of a spring and hermitage called Holy Well. The spring is now sealed up, but an inscription in the wall of a cottage still proclaims it to have been reopened in 1844. It seems strange that the Hermitage should have been placed, not on the main road where pilgrims were surely more plentiful, but on the seaward route. The explanation may probably be sought in the existence already of another establishment of the kind, long since forgotten. Here, then, the Hermitage of St Ann's was placed, and a holy well and an oratory made appeal to the piety or the superstition, as the case might be, of all who passed by. To these the hermit presented his leathern wallet, beseeching travellers, who would have gone without giving alms, to spare a trifle for

the upkeep of the road, even though they valued not the Blessed Saints.

For three hundred years the Hermitage lasted, and a long line of hermits lived here. Some were pious and industrious, keeping the road in repair; others had neither piety nor industry, spent their time in taverns, were smiters, and got drunk and fought, so that the road became scandalously neglected, and many Colchester worthies received apostolical black eyes from eremitical fists. Such an one must have been the hermit who lived here in the reign of Henry the Fifth, and was indicted in 1419 for having an unclean ditch. Finally, in 1535, when the dissolution of the monasteries took place, the Hermitage was closed, and the then occupant turned out, with a warning that if he solicited alms henceforward he would be regarded as a "sturdy beggar," and dealt with accordingly.

The road to Ipswich was the scene, in the second half of the seventeenth century, shortly after the first coaches had started running, of many highway robberies. The borough of Colchester was deeply concerned at this lawlessness, and in 1679 three men were rewarded with £6, 8s. between them "for apprehending those y^t robbed the Ipswich coach." Again, in September 1698, three men were rewarded "for pursuen hiewaymen," and for "going to Ardlegh" on that business; but as they received only two shillings each and an extra shilling for "drinck," it looks as though the pursuit was unsuccessful.

The high road, to which we have now returned,



COLCHESTER.

has already been described as an excellent highway, but Dilbridge, a hamlet, and a roadside inn on what was once Ardleigh Heath, alone break its solitude. It has, however, the advantage of commanding the best general view of Colchester, with the inevitable Jumbo prominent, and the new-risen Town Hall tower in rivalry with it.

Suddenly, when six miles from Colchester, the road changes its character and drops sharply down by an almost precipitous descent, to where a lazy river is seen flowing picturesquely in loops and bends between the grey-green foliage of willows lining either bank. It flows through a land of rich green meadows and yellow cornfields; a land, too, of noble elms and oaks. In the far distance the waters of a salt estuary sparkle in the sun, while in between, from this Pisgah height, rises the tall tower of a church. The river is the Stour, dividing Essex and Suffolk, and the pleasant vale, the Vale of Dedham. The estuary is that of the Stour at Manningtree, and the church tower that of Dedham. This, indeed, is the Constable Country, and that fact explains the homelike and familiar look it wears, even to the stranger. Constable, born close by at East Bergholt, painted these scenes lovingly for over forty years, and remained constant to his native vale all his life. By the magic power that comes of sympathy, he transferred the spirit of these lanes and fields and trees to canvas as faithfully as he did their form and colour; with the result that the veriest stranger viewing them becomes reminiscent.

Nor did Constable only *paint* his native vale; he has described it in almost as masterly a way. To him it was "the most cultivated part of Suffolk, a spot which overlooks the fertile valley of the Stour, which river separates that county on the south from Essex. The beauty of the surrounding scenery, its gentle declivities, its luxuriant meadow flats sprinkled with flocks and herds, its well-cultivated uplands, its woods and rivers, with numerous scattered villages and churches, farms and picturesque cottages, all impart to this particular spot an amenity and excellence hardly anywhere else to be found. He tells an amusing story of travelling home by coach down this very hill. He shared the vehicle with two strangers. "In passing the Vale of Dedham, one of them remarked, on my saying it was very beautiful, 'Yes, sir, this is Constable's Country.' I then told him who I was lest he should spoil it."

From this hill-top to the left of the road, and in what are now the woodlands of Langham Hall, Constable painted his best-known Vale of Dedham. In one respect the scene has changed. The willows still fringing the Stour, formerly "cobbed" or pollarded, are now allowed to grow as they will, and the river is not so visible as it was once. Otherwise the Constable Country is little altered. Even on this hill, close by Langham church, Church Farm, the original of his "Glebe Farm," remains as it was, thatched and gabled, close by the church tower. Only the foliage has changed, and the little guttering stream been drained away.



THE VALE OF DEDHAM.

After Constable.

This steep road, shelving so abruptly to the Stour, is Dedham Hill, more often locally known as Dedham Gun Hill, from the "Gun" inn at the summit, now unhappily rebuilt, but until recently a most picturesque old inn, with the painted sign of a cannon hanging over the road. The sign has gone,



GUN HILL.

and a pretentious house, which proclaims "Accommodation for Lady Cyclists," arisen in its stead. At the foot of the hill the road, turning abruptly to the left, begins a lengthy crossing of the Stour and its marshes by a bridge over the channel and a long series of flood-water arches across the oozy valley.

The old toll-house, taking tolls no longer, still stands, a quaint building on the Essex side, and bears a cast-iron tablet with the inscription,—

THE DUMB ANIMALS' HUMBLE PETITION.

Rest, drivers, rest, on this steep hill,
 Dumb beasts pray use with all good will ;
 Goad not, scourge not, with thongèd whips,
 Let not one curse escape your lips,
 God sees and hears.

T. T. H., POSUIT.



OLD TOLL-HOUSE, STRATFORD BRIDGE.

This is one of a number of similar tablets erected throughout the country in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the first glimmerings of humane treatment of animals began to show themselves. When drivers had perforce to halt here to pay toll, this was a notice they could scarce help

seeing, but it only by rare chance attracts attention now.

Across the bridge is the mill, long idle and empty. No picturesque building this, but a great hulking structure of that intolerable "white" Suffolk brick which is rather a grey-white than any other hue; a brick which, the older it is looks more shabby and crude, and by no chance ever helps the artist. The whole length of the Norwich Road is more or less bedevilled with it.

This mill is the one blot on the beauty of Stratford St Mary, a village built along the flat road and continuing round the bend, and so up the hill to where the fine old church stands overlooking the highway. It is a remarkable church, built of black flint and stone, and covered on the side facing the road with inscriptions. It owed its rise, on the site of an older building, to the Mors family, wealthy clothworkers of this place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is perhaps a little difficult to imagine Stratford St Mary, in common with other East Anglian towns and villages, a busy seat of the weaving industry, just as there is a difficulty in realising that Sussex was once a grimy iron-mining country; but trades and places have their fates, and changes and romances of their own.

From 1499 to 1530 two generations of the Mors family were busy in giving to their church and in directing its new features; and the chief of the inscriptions in stone and flint that curiously decorate its exterior in old English characters record the facts and beseech the wayfarer to pray for their souls.

Vain request! The work had not been completed five years when the long and troubled story of the Reformation began and the souls of the dead were no longer prayed for.

The most prominent inscription is that enjoining prayers for Thomas Mors and his wife Margaret, who built the north aisle:—

**Orate pro animabus Thome Mors et Margarete
uxoris ejus qui istam alam fieri fecerunt
anno dni mcccc^m lxxxviii**

Edward Mors, son of Thomas and Margaret, is, together with his wife Alice, content with an English inscription. They are also a little less self-centred than their forbears, desiring prayers for “all Christian souls” in addition to supplications for their own especial benefit:—

**Praye for the soullys of Edward Mors and Alys
hys wyfe and all crysten sowlyys, Anno
Domini 1530.**

Many other inscriptions and devices are seen, among them the letters, P B A E S, said to be the initials of an invocatory sentence, “*Propitiemini beati ad eternam salutem,*” addressed to Saints Thomas and Margaret, the patron saints of Thomas and Margaret Mors. But, stranger than any, is the appearance of the entire alphabet on these walls. Many attempts have been made to explain the reason of this, among them the view that the object was to educate the villagers in the rudiments of spelling!

X X X

THE long rise out of Stratford on the way to Ipswich lies through a beautiful Gainsborough-like woodland, with ancient trees gripping sandy banks in a tenacious clutch of gnarled roots. It is a hollow road, and one in which, when the coaches were toiling up, the guards' hands went instinctively towards their blunderbusses and swordcases. One never knew what or who might be lurking in that shade.

But if it was a chancy spot then, how very suspicious a place it must have been hundreds of years before. That it was so regarded may be learnt from the *Paston Letters*, the instructive correspondence of the Paston family in the fifteenth century. Therein we read how a rival of John Paston in the wardship of one of the Fastolf family, coming out of Suffolk to London, was escorted by a hundred retainers, all armed with bows and arrows in their hands, with saletts on their heads, well-padded jacks and rusty hauberçons on their bodies, and fear in their hearts of an ambush laid on the part of the Pastons in the hollow way where the trees meet overhead and a mid-day darkness broods under the dense foliage. This rival expressed himself as not being afraid of the Pastons or any of their friends; but if not, why did he go escorted with this motley crew, tricked out with all the ancient weapons and rusted armour they could find? Happily they were not attacked, but that it was possible for petty warfare of this kind to be plotted is proof that the Merry

England of that period was no safe place for peaceful travellers.

Now we are well within Suffolk, the "crack county of England," as Cobbett called it, the "sweet and civil county" of Bishop Hall; but a county to which the alliterative term "silly" has long been applied. It is probably by this time quite hopeless to scotch that nickname, for it is of a considerable age and has a specious and easy glibness that comes trippingly off the tongue. Suffolkers themselves—whom it most concerns—are at pains to explain that the real, and entirely flattering, solution of the phrase is found in "selig," the Anglo-Saxon for "holy" or "blissful;" a reference to the numerous and wealthy religious houses within the county, and to the East Anglian saints and the many places of pilgrimage. Another party advancing the theory that the epithet was originally "Sely Suffolk," observant of the seasons, would thus have us believe that Suffolk must have been more observant than other counties, which is not credible. True, Suffolkers still talk of the hay-harvest as "haysel," a survival of "hay sele," but this is not the only county that uses the phrase. It becomes evident that the nickname must go unexplained.

Suffolk has its claims to recognition on other than historic grounds. "I'm told the dumplings is uncommon fine down there," said William, the coachman, to little David Copperfield. Perhaps they are, and certainly it was once the custom among the peasantry here, as indeed throughout England, to serve pudding, or "dumpling," before meat in order to take the edge

off appetites with a kind of food cheaper than butcher's meat ; but the improved circumstances of the peasantry scarce demand such a practice nowadays, and in any case, Norfolk is the county of dumplings, so Dickens was in error in putting that speech in the coachman's mouth. "Norfolk Dumpplings," he should have known, are as proverbial as "Silly Suffolkers."

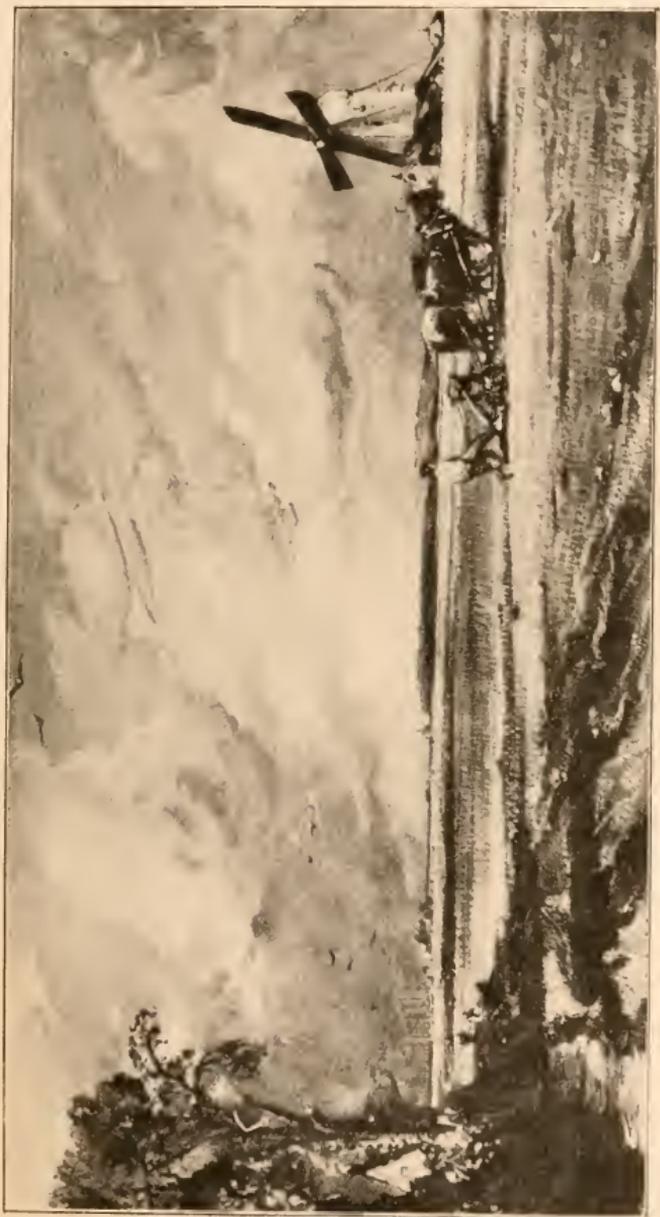
Suffolk is deservedly esteemed all over the world for the "Suffolk Punch." This sounds convivial, but has no connection with punch-bowls ; the reference being, as a matter of fact, to a breed of horses.

"And the Punches ! There's cattle !" said William, the Canterbury coachman, to David Copperfield. "A Suffolk Punch, when he's a good 'un, is worth his weight in gold," he added ; which is not a very great exaggeration. Keep an eye upon the fields or an observant glance along the road, and the Suffolk Punch will readily be noted in his native country, at plough, halted by the wayside inn, or dragging with indomitable spirit the heaviest loads that the stupidity of the most stupid of waggons could put him to. If ever horse deserved the praise contained in the familiar copy-book maxim, that he is "a Noble Animal, the Friend of Man," it is to this breed that it most particularly applies. The Suffolk Punch is a sturdy and a willing brute, and will pull against a dead weight until exhausted. It has been said that the Suffolk Punch existed as a type of horse in early British times, and it has been supposed that his remote ancestors were the horses that drew Boadicea's war-chariots. If it were not that he is

invariably a chestnut, it might be supposed that his fame in the county had originated the sign of the "Great White Horse" in Ipswich; but from chestnut the breed never varies. It may be of various shades, from the darkest mahogany to the lightest golden-brown, but never any other hue. It is, of course, not necessary to journey into East Anglia to see the Suffolk Punch. Many of his kind are at work in London, drawing heavy loads, and are to be seen expatriated to Russia, and on Canadian farms, thousand of miles away from their native clay-lands.

The Suffolk dialect is kin to those of Essex and Norfolk, but the "Suffolk whine" is peculiar to the county; it is a rising inflection of the voice towards the end of words and sentences. In Suffolk speech "fowls" become "foals," and "foals," fools"; and archaic words, heard occasionally in Essex, grow more common as the traveller advances. So also does an odd custom first noticed in the neighbourhood of Colchester—the custom of affixing the place-name to the sign of an inn in ordinary talk. The "Gun" inn at Dedham, for example, is always spoken of as "Dedham Gun," and here, at Bentley, the custom is emphasised by the sign of a roadside inn being inscribed "Bentley Tankard," and not merely "The Tankard."

But to understand Suffolk ways and to hear Suffolk talk it is necessary to linger in the villages and to gossip with the sons of the soil. The agricultural villages are only articulate at eventide, when they give themselves up to play and gossip.



SPRING : SUFFOLK PLOUGHILANDS.

After Constable.

Then, as the long summer day draws to its close, the children find romance in the lengthening shadows, in which their games of robbers and pirates seem much more convincing than they could be made to appear in the glare of the midday sun; the farm labourers slouch off to their evening, over quarts of "bellywengins," at the pub, and the coy mawthers find the twilight a seasonable time for nannicking with the hudderens. This, which may seem unmeaning gibberish to those unacquainted with the peculiar dialect of East Anglia, merely signifies the girls flirting with the "other ones"—the young men, in short,

But a mawther may be of any age. A baby girl is a mawther, and so is a grandame. It is a curiosity of speech which is apt to startle the stranger who first hears it applied to a girl who has hardly yet learned to toddle, in the maternal threat, to be heard any day in any Suffolk village, "Yow come 'ere, mawther, this instant moment, or I'll spank yow, so I 'ool." "Yow," of course, is the Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk shibboleth for "you," by which a native of these parts may be immediately distinguished anywhere.

When the labourers have trudged over to their "shants o' gatter," or quarts and pots of beer—the "bellywengins," or belly vengeance, aforesaid; when the children have been put to bed, and the mawthers and the hudderens have gone nannicking off together in the gathering dusk, then is the gossiping time, both of the housewives and of the labourers. The women talk at the doors of the "housen":

the men mostly in the village inns. Hear, passing stranger, what the mawthers are saying:—

“Good daa to ’ee, Mrs Potter, how are ye a-gettin’ arn?”

“I’m a-doin’ good-tidily, thank’ee, better’n tew or tree weeks sin’. The doctor say I fare to be on the mend; but it hev bin a bad time wi’ me sure.”

“Ay; owd bones ’on’t be young agen, I’m thinkin’; but there, ’taint so much yer aige, ’tis yer sperrut what keep ye up or let ye down.”

“Ay, that be trew,” says one of the group, “what be life wi’out sperrut? Nothin’, in a manner o’ speakin’.”

“Yar father, Mrs Cobbold, he had it, and he lived to be ninety.”

“What a man that wor! I mind him when he come to mine arter he’d walked from Ipswich, an’ that’s a good ten mile. He come to paiy a shullun he ew my ole man, and, barrin’ a bit tirsty, he were as spry as a mavish and fresher’n a paigle.”

A mile distant, to the right hand, lies East Bergholt, Constable’s birthplace, and between it and the road still stretch in summer those golden cornfields he loved so well. “The Cornfield,” that crowning achievement of English landscape, how exquisite a thing it is, radiant in colour on the walls of the National Gallery, and how ineffectually the inadequate medium of black and white attempts to translate it.

The grumbling farmer, who has good cause for his growls, poor fellow, is careful to explain his



THE CORNFIELD,

After Constable.

cornfields away. When asked why, if it does not pay to grow wheat, he still continues to do so, he says he grows it for the straw. At any rate, times are changed from those when agricultural England was merry with high prices; those picturesque days when the Ipswich and Norwich coaches were hailed, as every traveller was hailed, at harvest-time by the reapers' cry of "Halloo, halloo, largesse," the largesse going at harvest-home in a saturnalia at the village inn. "Largesse" has gone with the going of the reaping-hook, and with it and many other things has gone the Lord of the Harvest, elected from among his fellow-reapers to preside over their labours and their harvest-supper in the great fragrant barn or in the farm kitchen. The line of red-cheeked peasants, working from early morning with their sickles in the fierce sun upon the diminishing fields of standing wheat, with halts for levenses and bever, and so home by the light of the harvest moon, is no more to be seen: reaping-machines do the work instead. It was astonishing, and, in the haymaking fields, still is, what long and continual draughts of beer can be disposed of in the intervals of such labour. Levenses, that is to say the eleven o'clock forenoon meal, and bever, the four o'clock in the afternoon halt, whose name came through the Norman-French "bevre" from the Latin "bibere," to drink, reduced the contents of the barrels placed in the shady hedgerows, but quarts imbibed under such conditions were harmless. Almost solitary survivals of the old peasant life, the names of "bever" and "levenses" remain yet

in the common speech of Norfolk and Suffolk as those of the hedgeside meals of ploughman and carter.

Old country folk still talk, in their reminiscent moments, of coaching and posting days here, when, near the tiny hamlet known as Cross Green, and in a deep dip of the high road, where a byway goes, leading from Manningtree to Hadleigh and beyond, "Laddenford Stables" stood at the cross roads that went then by the name of the "Four Sisters." Four sisters, if one likes to accept the rustic belief, agreed to part here and went their several ways, but how they fared, or what was their social status, the story does not tell.

Passing Capel St Mary and the level-crossing by Capel station, and so by Copdock, whose church tower has an odd weather-vane in the shape of King David playing his harp, Washbrook is reached at the foot of its steep hill. Copdock on the hill and Washbrook in the hollow, together with the broad and still marshy valley of the little Wash Brook, tell how that rivulet was once, in the far-off days when Saxons and Danes contended on this coast, a navigable creek, an arm of the Orwell. The road, in its sharp descent into and rise out of the valley, together with its acute bend, is also eloquent of bygone geographical conditions, leading as it does down to the place where a bridge now spans the stream on the spot where the creek was, in days of old, first fordable. Having thus crossed, the road went, and still goes, in a right-angle turn uphill, towards Ipswich.

It was by no means necessary for travellers journeying between London and Norwich to touch Ipswich. The coaches did, for obvious commercial reasons, but the "chariots" and the post-chaises commonly went from Washbrook, through Sproughton and Bramford, and joined the coach route again at Claydon, thus taking the base of a triangle, instead of its two sides. There are those at Washbrook who can still tell of the coaches that halted at "Copdock White Elm"; of the time when a toll-gate (the house still existing) stretched across the way at the foot of the hill, and of the "aristocracks" who posted the long stage between "Stonham Pie" and "Washbrook Swan." They can point out the "Swan," facing up the road and looking squarely up at the hill-top, but now a private residence with its stables chiefly put to alien uses; and can show the places, in what are now meadows, where many houses and cottages stood in those wayfaring days, when the high-lying road to Ipswich, across the uplands between the valleys of the Stour and the Orwell, was not so unfrequented as now.

XXXI

THERE can be no doubt of Ipswich and its surroundings having thoroughly captured the heart of grumbling old Cobbett.

"From the town itself," he says, "you can see nothing; but you can, in no direction, go from it a

quarter of a mile without finding views that a painter might crave." This is not a little remarkable, for we do not generally attribute an artistic perception of scenic beauties to this practical farmer. Yet he was of one mind with Constable, of whom and his pictures he probably had never heard, although Constable had already for years been painting these very scenes.

The practical farming mind appears in Cobbett's next remarks: "And then, the country round about is so well cultivated; the land in such a beautiful state, the farmhouses all white and all so much alike; the barns and everything about the homesteads so snug; the stock of turnips so abundant everywhere; the sheep and cattle in such fine order; the wheat all drilled; the ploughman so expert; the furrows, if a quarter of a mile long, as straight as a line, and laid as truly as if with a level; in short, here is everything to delight the eye and to make the people proud of their country; and this is the case throughout the whole of this county. I have always found Suffolk farmers great boasters of their superiority over others, and I must say that it is not without reason."

Cobbett found the windmills on the hills round Ipswich so numerous that, while standing in one place, he counted no fewer than seventeen, all painted or washed white, with black sails. They are fewer to-day, and could Gainsborough, old Crome and Constable revisit the scenes of their artistic inspiration, they would sadly miss the picturesqueness they gave these woody scenes and

fertile hills and vales. It is from the crest of one of these hills that Ipswich is first glimpsed. There it sprawls, prosperous, beside the broad Orwell; "doubtlesse one of the sweetest, most pleasant, well-built townes in England," as John Evelyn thought in 1656; but then swarming with "a new phanatic sect of dangerous principles." The reader will scarce guess aright who these fanatics were. They were neither sun-worshippers nor Mahometans, but merely Quakers.

One obtains no glimpse of the broad estuary of the Orwell when descending into the town by the London road, and the crowded mass of the place rises confusedly up before the traveller as he steeply descends, and forms no picture. You must take Ipswich in detail to admire it, and the actual crossing of the river at the foot of the hill where the town begins is at a narrow canalised stretch before it widens out into the noble harbour that makes the fortune of the port. A sign of that accomplished fortune is the unlovely sight of the great railway sidings and goods yards spread out before the stranger's eye as he comes downhill. One may say that the town begins at the door of the "Ipswich Arms" inn, uninteresting in itself, but displaying the fine "old coat" of this famous seaport; a shield with a rampant golden lion on a red field on the sinister, and three golden demi-boats on blue on the dexter side.

"A fine, populous, and beautiful place," says Cobbett, still harping on an unwonted string of praise. "The town is substantially built, well paved, everything good and solid, and no wretched

dwellings to be seen on its outskirts." He knew no town to be compared with it, except it were Nottingham, which, after all, is not properly comparable, Nottingham standing high, while Ipswich is in a vale, and moreover, is situated on an arm of the sea. It is amusing to read Cobbett's remarks on the population of Ipswich, which stood in his time at twelve thousand. "Do you not," he asks, "think Ipswich was far larger and far more populous seven hundred years ago than it is at this hour?"—that hour being some time in March 1830. He remarked upon "the twelve large, lofty and magnificent churches," each of them seven hundred years old, one capable of holding from four to seven thousand persons, and came to the conclusion that, in fact, although he found Ipswich populous, it must, even thus, have been a mere ghost of its former self. That shrewd observer was right. Ipswich had grievously decayed even in Charles the Second's reign, when the Duke of Buckingham described it as "a town without inhabitants, a river without water, streets without names, and where the asses wore boots." The Duke, in speaking of "a river without water," was probably referring to the estuary of the Orwell at low tide, when mud-banks stretch vast, and the stream runs by comparison feeble and thread-like through them. In its then nameless streets, Ipswich was not singular, for many small provincial towns were in like case. The asses that wore boots were those employed in rolling the lawn of a neighbouring park, the object probably being to prevent their hoofs injuring the surface.

“Yepysweche,” as Margaret Paston, writing to her husband over four hundred years ago, spells the name, derives its title from the aboriginal Gippings, a tribe or clan who squatted down beside the Orwell, and not only established their primitive village of Gippingswick here, but contrived to foist their tribal name upon the non-tidal part of the river above the town, which therefore still generally bears this *alias*. The town probably saw its greatest prosperity in the time of Cardinal Wolsey, a native, and, according to legend, son of a butcher. This “butcher’s dogge,” as the envious nicknamed the great Cardinal, determined that his birthplace should be great in learning as well as in commerce, and to that end founded a College which he intended to be in some sort preparatory for his greater college of Christ Church at Oxford. That his foundation was reared on the spoliation of a religious house and its revenues, procured by him for the purpose, seemed but an ill omen for its prosperity to those who saw his buildings rising to completion, and the omen was speedily fulfilled, for the new-made abode of learning never sent forth a scholar, but was suppressed by Henry the Eighth almost before the mortar of its brick walls was dry; the buildings themselves torn down and the endowments confiscated. All that remains of Wolsey’s College is one noble red-brick gateway in College Street.

Daniel Defoe was a native of Ipswich and a curious contrast with Wolsey, his brother townsman of two hundred years before. In his day the old

prosperity of the place had vanished, in the stress of Dutch competition and the virulence of the plague ; but modern times have made amends for that temporary decay, and the town is now nearly four times larger than when, shortly after the first quarter of the nineteenth century had gone, Cobbett noted its many and empty churches and its scanty population. It numbers now over 58,000 souls,



WOLSEY'S GATEWAY.

and its trades are numerous and prosperous. Whether it be in the making of agricultural and milling machinery, its corn markets, artificial manure making, or the manufacture of corsets, Ipswich is fortunate, with the good fortune of those who give heed to the ancient proverb and do not put all their eggs in one basket.

Picturesqueness coyly hides itself from the

traveller who merely passes through the chief streets. Not in the open square of Cornhill, where the cabs and flys stand on the site of the old Market Cross and the trams fly to and fro, and where the Post-office and the Town Hall rise, side by side, does it appear, nor in the long street beyond; but rather in the Butter Market and the lanes that conduct to the waterside. There be streets in that quarter with odd names, among them Silent Street; and almshouses, and churches, and the queerest inns. Among the almshouses are Smart's, on whose walls, unhappily rebuilt in modern times, the charitable Smart and his no less charitable coadjutor, Tooley, are commemorated:—

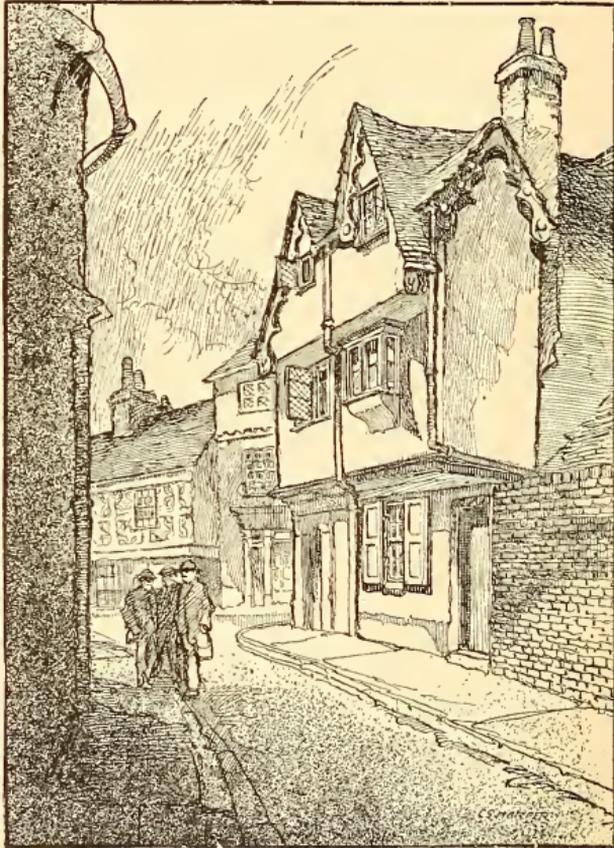
“Let gentle Smart sleep on in pious trust,
Behold his charity. Respect his dust.”

“In peaceful silence lett great Toolie rest,
Whose charitable deeds bespeak him blest.”

It is to be feared that these eulogies raise a smile at the expense of great Tooley and gentle Smart.

As to the inns, they include the odd conjunction of the “Lion and Lamb,” pictured here, and the “Neptune” and the “Sea Horse,” with a fine sound of the sea in their names. Some of these old hostelries yet retain their corner-posts: for example, that of the “Half Moon” in Foundation Street, where the post still keeps its mediæval carving of a fox, with uplifted sanctimonious eyes, preaching to three geese and a griffin; a satirical effort no doubt looked sourly upon by the clergy of St Mary

Key Church, opposite, in days of old. A great gilt key serves as vane to that church and perpetuates the error in the name, which was originally, and rightly, St Mary-at-Quay: the custom-house quay and the harbour being close by, as the sight of



THE "LION AND LAMB," ANGEL LANE.

certain corn-elevators, the rattling of chains and windlasses, and the sounds of throaty steam-sirens sufficiently proclaim. The custom-house stands in midst of coal-grit, laden steam vessels lying alongside the quay wall, bellowing steamily to be dis-

charged, and railway-sidings, along whose maze of points and turn-tables fussy little locomotive engines, dragging jerky trucks, run, screaming intermittently, as though saying to the bellowing steam-vessels, "You just wait; can't you see I'm coming as quick as I can?" It is a dignified custom-house, and seems, surrounded with dutiable goods, to be aristocratically sneering at the trade in whose midst it is necessarily placed, and with as great a consciousness of its Ionic peristyle as any high-born beauty of her Greek nose.

Many of the old wool-staplers', clothiers' and merchants' fine mansions stood by the quay and in the by-lanes. They are mostly gone now, but traces of old doorways and stray fragments of stone and wood carvings remain, and here and there a courtyard, or a house that sheltered family circles in the amphibious half-mercantile, half-agricultural Ipswich of the sixteenth century.

Certainly one of the finest things Ipswich has to show is the wonderful old place in the old Butter Market, known still as "Sparrowe's House," although the last of the Sparrowes who inhabited here has long since gone to his home in the family vault within the Church of St Lawrence, where, over their tomb-house, may yet be read the punning motto, *Nidus Passerum*, "a nest of sparrows." These Sparrowes seem to have been endowed with some of the attributes of the cuckoo, for *they* did not build the house that bears their name. It owes its origin to a certain George Copping, who built it in 1567, but alterations and additions made in the Jacobean

period give its architectural history a span of over a century. The woodwork of the bay windows and the grandly-projecting eaves, together with that of the shop premises, was added at the time. But the great glory of "Sparrowe's House" is its decorative plaster-work in high relief, which profusely covers the exterior with garlands of flowers and fruits and with quaint devices emblematic of the four quarters of the



SPARROWE'S HOUSE.

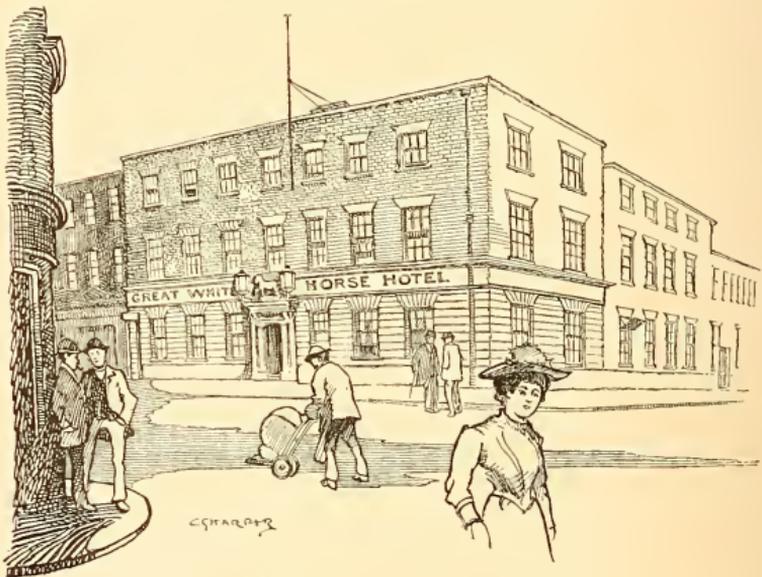
globe. Here Europa, cornucopia in one hand, book and sceptre in the other, sits with her bull, who might be taken for an elephant with half his trunk shorn off; here, on another bay, a podgy plaster relief typifies Asia, with palm-tree and a building of Oriental character in the background; followed by Africa, a nude nigger holding an umbrella over his head and sitting on a shark, at which four tiny

figures at a respectful distance express astonishment, while nearer at hand a wicked-looking bird of quite uncertain family roosts on a something that greatly resembles a battered meat tin. America is typified by an Indian in a feather head-dress which represents his entire wardrobe. He stands with bow and arrows, attended by a dog with a damaged smile. A very beautiful representation of the Royal Arms occupies one of the spaces between the windows, and other devices show the pelican in her piety; Atlas supporting the world; a classical scene in which a shepherd bows as gracefully as the artist in plaster could make him to a rural nymph; St George and the Dragon, and several smaller subjects.

XXXII

THE most famous thing in Ipswich is a thing neither ancient nor beautiful, yet it is an object to which most visitors to the town turn their first attention: it is the "Great White Horse." The "Great White Horse" is an hotel, of a size, in the merry days of the road, justly thought enormous. It has been left for the present age to build many hotels in town and country capable of containing half-a-dozen or more hostelries of the size of the "Great White Horse," but in its own especial era that house fully justified the adjective in its sign. Especially did its bulk strike the imagination of the reporter of the London

Morning Chronicle who was dispatched to Ipswich in 1830 for the purpose of reporting a Parliamentary election in the town. He was a very young, a very impressionable and a very bright reporter, and although we may be quite sure that the business on which he was come to Ipswich was an arduous piece of work, calculated to fully occupy his time and thoughts, he carried away with him so accurate an impression of



THE "GREAT WHITE HORSE."

the big inn where he stayed, that when, some time afterwards, he wrote about it the description was as exact as though it had been penned within sight of the house. That reporter was Charles Dickens, and it is his description in the *Pickwick Papers* which has made the place famous.

It was not a flattering description. Few more severe things have ever been said of inns than those

Dickens wrote of the "Great White Horse." Indeed, if such things were nowadays printed of any inn or hotel, the writer might confidently expect to be made the defendant in an action for libel. Yet (such is the irony of time and circumstances) the house that Dickens so roundly abused is now eager in all its advertisements to quote the association; and the adventures of Mr Pickwick in the double-bedded room with the elderly lady in yellow curl-papers have brought many more visitors than the unfavourable notice of the "uncarpeted passages" and the "mouldy, ill-lighted rooms" has turned away. If, as has been thought, Dickens thus wrote of the house in order to be revenged for some slights and discomforts he may have experienced here, certainly fortune has played the cynic in converting his remarks into the best of all imaginable recommendations.

The exterior of the house is much the same as it was when Dickens first saw it, "in the main street of Ipswich, on the left-hand side of the way, a short distance after you have passed through the open space fronting the Town Hall."

It is the same plain, square building, constructed of a pallid kind of brick suggesting underdone pastry, and is still, although the coaches have disappeared and railways have supplanted them, "known far and wide by the appellation of the 'Great White Horse.'" Still, over the pillared entrance trots the effigy of the Great White Horse himself, perhaps the aboriginal ancestor of that famous breed of equines, the "Suffolk Punches," a very muscular race, more famous for their bulk and

strength than for elegance, like those sturdy Flanders mares to which Henry the Eighth inelegantly likened his bride, Anne of Cleves.

Dickens, using the usual licence of the novelist, describes this effigy as "a stone statue of some rampacious animal, with flowing mane and tail, distantly resembling an insane cart-horse, elevated above the principal door." Quite apart from the fact that the word "rampacious" is unknown to the English language, and is probably meant for "rampageous," the horse is really represented in the act of beginning a gentle trot, and looks as mild as the mildest milk that ever dewed the whiskers of a new-born kitten. His off fore-leg, broken at some period, has been restored of a size that does not match with the other three. Never, in the whole of his existence, has the Great White Horse gone on the rampage, and, like all the truly great, his manners have always been distinguished by their unobtrusiveness.

"The 'Great White Horse,'" writes Dickens, "is famous in the neighbourhood, in the same degree as a prize ox, or county paper-chronicled turnip, or unwieldy pig—for its enormous size. Never were such labyrinths of uncarpeted passages, such clusters of mouldy, ill-lighted rooms, such huge numbers of small dens for eating or sleeping in, beneath any one roof, as are collected together between the four walls of the 'Great White Horse' at Ipswich." Further, he describes it as "an overgrown tavern," at whose door, when Mr Pickwick descended from the coach, stood a waiter whose description quite takes one's

desire for dinner away. He was "a corpulent man with a fortnight's napkin under his arm and coeval stockings on his legs."

Although that must have been in the best and most prosperous days of the highway, this waiter does not appear to have had anything more pressing to do than "staring down the road," while the account of the internal arrangements of the house does not indicate flourishing business. The private room into which the guests were shown was a "large, badly-furnished apartment, with a dirty grate, in which a small fire was making a wretched attempt to be cheerful, but was fast sinking under the dispiriting influence of the place." After this we are not surprised to read that it was only "after the lapse of an hour" that "a bit of fish and a steak," representing a dinner, appeared. When this was disposed of, Mr Pickwick and Mr Peter Magnus huddled up to the fire, and, "having ordered a bottle of the worst possible port wine, at the highest possible price, for the good of the house, drank brandy-and-water for their own."

Certainly Dickens must have had some very bitter grudge against the "Great White Horse."

Then come allusions to "tortuous passages," and the difficulty of a stranger's finding his way about the interminable corridors, or distinguishing between one "mouldy room" and another; difficulties which led to Mr Pickwick's comical predicament in the middle of the night. The rooms, not so mouldy now, and the passages, just as perplexing, remain, structurally unaltered to this day; but certain

alterations have been made downstairs in the courtyard, now roofed in with glass and made very attractive, without spoiling the old-style character of the house. If you be a literary pilgrim, or an American, they will show you Mr Pickwick's bedroom; and can meet any of Dickens's criticisms by telling how Nelson stayed here with—ahem!—Lady Hamilton, and how Admiral Hyde-Parker and others of world-wide fame have occupied the “mouldy rooms.”

XXXIII

LEAVING Ipswich and passing through the dusty roadside fringe of Whitton village, known as Whitton Street, Claydon, nondescript, and neither very beautiful nor quite commonplace, is reached in two and a half miles. Just before entering the village, an old mansion is glimpsed from the road, embowered in trees, a mansion which, on inquiry, the ingenuous youth of Claydon declare to be “Mockbeggar Hall.” Claydon Hall is its true title; but the popular name has been handed down since many, many years ago, when the old house (not old then) long remained tenantless. Like the many other places named “Mockbeggar,” it stands well within view of passing travellers, and must have induced many a sturdy rogue and vagabond to trudge wearily up the long approach in search of alms, only to find the windows dark, the chimneys innocent of smoke, the place, in fact, deserted of all but flutter-

ing bats and screeching owls, whose shrill notes must have sounded like jeers to the disappointed vagrants. Inhabited now, Claydon Hall is a handsome old house bearing the date 1635 on its Dutch-like gables. It will probably never lose its popular name. Behind the old Hall winds the willow-fringed Orwell, coyly approaching within view of the road, and then, as it were, timorously retreating again; its brimming



MOCKBEGGAR HALL.

stream, although seen only in such fleeting glimpses, potent in its effect upon at least three miles' length of the road, from Claydon to Creeting All Saints, in the loveliest stretch of woodland, where the fierce mid-day sun is baffled by over-arching foliage, and twilight comes early in the afternoon through the dense masses of leaves. These are the woodlands of Shrubland Park. The Hall lies secluded to the right

hand, somewhere away beyond the rather terrible lodges that confront the traveller, who wonders where he has seen their like before ; until, like a flash, the memory of certain great London cemeteries and their mortuary chapels comes upon him in desolating fashion and blights the cheerful rustic surroundings of forest trees and the scurryings of white-tailed rabbits and gorgeous blue and brown pheasants that inhabit this domain of Lord de Saumarez. The lodges, built like the Hall, from designs by Sir Charles Barry, are of white brick and stone, in the Italian Renaissance style.

At no great distance from the entrance to this lordly domain, and noticeable from the road, in an exquisitely damp situation by the river, eminently calculated to foster rheumatism in old bones, is the Barham Union-house—the “Work’us” of peasant speech. It is quite an old-world building, and one of the earliest built under the new Poor Law Act of the early nineteenth century, when outdoor relief gave place to retirement within these prison-like buildings. Hodge well named them “Bastilles.” They say who should know of what they speak, that life in Barham Union is nowadays quite desirable, but the design of the building, a quadrangular structure enclosing a courtyard, with outer walls blank or only provided with windows at a height from the ground, closely follows the prison, or restraining, idea.

The little roadside sign of the “Sorrel Horse,” standing in midst of these leafy bowers, is in pleasing contrast with the Campo Santo pretentiousness of

Shrubland lodges or the prison-like style of the Union, now left behind on a rising road, where the scarp side of the highway reveals a momentary change from the prevailing claylands to chalk; a change so sudden and so strictly confined to this hillside that it at once attracts the attention of even the least geologically-inclined. Here the champions bloom that love the chalk and refuse to grow on clay. Below this hilltop, in the deep hollow scoured out ages ago, when the now insignificant stream that crosses the road was a considerable force, is Creeting Bottom, and Creeting of several sorts are set about the countryside, all hiding from the road that goes now up hill and down dale with as lonely an air as though the little town of Needham Market and the larger town of Stowmarket were not almost within sight, over the shoulders of the hills, on the highway parallel with this, that runs to Bury St Edmunds. To be on "on the road to Needham" is an obvious Suffolk saying, applied to those who are badly off for worldly gear, and it is a little curious that Needham itself was for many years, and until quite recently, a place of fallen fortunes, lamenting the decay of its textile trades in empty houses and an "irreducible minimum" of rent for those that were so fortunate as to find occupants at all. The name of "Hungry-gut Hall" that still clings to a farmhouse marks that depressed period to all time; but in the spicy odours of the tanneries and the chemical manure stores and other thriving industries and businesses that cluster round the railway station, the explorer finds evidences enough that Needham is reviving.

Not a sign of those towns or of the railway is seen on the road to Norwich, where the cottage outposts of Stonham Earls and Stonham Aspell alone tell of the villages in the hinterland. In their gardens, spread on bushes or waving in the summer breeze, intimate articles of underclothing are prominently displayed, in the society of old hats and coats, not so much for the exhibition of the family wardrobe as in desperate attempts—bringing up all



“STONHAM PIE.”

the reserves—at scaring away the hungry birds from currants, cherries and gooseberries. These contests, the only warring incidents on the way, in which the birds are generally the victors, bring one to a level road where Little Stonham stands, its chief feature the “Magpie” Inn. “Stonham Pie” owns one of those old gallows signs, stretching across the road, that were at one time a common feature. The picture-sign, with a painting of that saucy bird, has been hung below the cross-beam instead of in its

old ironwork frame above, now that the piled-up coaches that once passed beneath are gone. Shortly before their going, and while turnpikes and tolls appeared likely to last for ever, the toll-gate that stood at the succeeding village of Brockford was removed two miles onward, to Stoke Ash, where, at the beginning of the pretty avenue at Stoke Chapel, the later toll-house



NEAR BROCKFORD.

remains, just as does the earlier one at Brockford. Brockford, the "badger's ford" of a tiny affluent of the Waveney, is preceded by Brockford Green, where the quiet road is made narrow by its sides being encroached upon by grass. It is here that the accompanying sketch of tall poplars and bushy willows was taken.

Off to the left hand, in strong contrast with this

level stretch of road, the country is tumbled into combs and rounded hills, where the River Gipping takes its rise in the village of that name, springing from the hill where the church tower stands solemn and grim, as though it held inviolate the story of the place, away from those days when the Gippings first settled here and gave it a title.

But let not the hurried seek Gipping, along the winding by-roads. The way, if not far, is not easy, and passengers are few. Scattered and infrequent farmhouses there be, at whose back doors to inquire the way, but rustic directions are apt to mislead. In any case, it is little use approaching the front door of a farmhouse. No one will hear you knocking, unless indeed it be a watchful and savage dog, trained to be on the alert for tramps; and you are like to hear him snuffing and gasping on the other side in a ferociously suggestive manner which will render you thankful that the door is closed and bolted. And not only bolted on this occasion, but always. The steps, and the space between the door and the threshold, where stray straws and wind-blown rubbish have collected, are evidence of the fact that the farmer and his family do not use the front door, but make their exits and entrances by way of the kitchen. It is an old East Anglian custom, and although many of the farmers nowadays pretend to culture and set up to be as up-to-date as the retired tradesfolk and small squires they are neighbourly with, many others would no more think of using the principal entrance to their homes than they would make use of

the "parlour," where massive and sombre furniture, covered with antimacassars, is disposed with geometric accuracy around the room, in company with the family Bible and the prizes taken at school by the farmer's children; the stale and stuffy atmosphere proclaiming that this state apartment is only used on rare and solemn occasions. In fact, the "best room" and the front door only came into use in the old days on the occasion of a funeral.



"THWAITE LOW HOUSE."

Perhaps it is a custom originating in a laudable idea of paying the greatest possible respect to the dead, but it is one which certainly gives a gruesome mortuary significance to both the entrance and the room.

Thwaite or "Twaite," as East Anglians, incapable of pronouncing "th," call it, less than a mile beyond Brockford, numbers few cottages. Beyond it, where the hitherto flat road makes a descent, is in local parlance, "Thwaite Low House," not so called on account of any disreputable character it

may once have earned, but from its situation. The name obviously entails the existence of a "High House," which was, like the other, a coaching and posting inn. The last named, now a farmstead, was in those days the "Cock," the other the "Queen's Head." While the "Low House" has fallen upon times so irredeemably evil that it has been long untenanted and is now a veritable scarecrow of a house, with gaping holes in its walls and windows battened up, the "Cock," save that its



THE "COCK," THWAITE.

sign is gone, still remains much as it was, to show a later generation what manner of place the roadside inn was in days of yore.

Stoke Ash, or "Aish," as Suffolkers pronounce it, like many another village, makes no sign from the road. Its church tower seen to the right, dimly, amid a hilltop screen of trees, a square, box-like red-brick chapel by the way, and that pretty inn, "Stoke White Horse," are the only other evidences of its being. The remaining six miles to the Norfolk border lead through Yaxley and

Brome: Yaxley, where a branch railway runs under the road, on its way to Eye, and narrowly misses the old church: Brome, where the "Swan" stands for all the village to those who look to neither side of the road; church and houses skulking down a by-road on the way to Hoxne. There, down that pretty road, where the thatched cottages nestle under tall trees and the blue wood-smoke from rustie hearths eurls upwards into the boughs and makes the sparrows eough and sneeze—there is the Rectory, approached in lordly fashion past a fine brick entranee and exquisite avenue, and, at a little greater distanee the old black flint, round-towered church, restored and titivated out of all antiquity of tone: the stone sand-papered, and the flints polished with a handkerechief. The only thing missing—and, under the circumistanees, it *is* missed—is a glass case, so that no damp, nor lichen, nor any effects of weather may come to spoil the housewifely neatness.

It was along this road to Hoxne that those who sought the revered head of St Edmund, King and Martyr, in the miraculous legend, were led to it by the voice ealling, "Here, here, here;" at length finding the sainted relie in charge of a wolf, who allowed it to be taken from between his paws. But the voice thus ealling was probably a much less supernatural manifestation, and was doubtless the hooting of owls in the woods. They still moek the belated traveller, only, to ears untuned to the miraculous, they simply seem to ask, "Who, who, who?" Ingenuity, however,

vainly seeks the basis in nature of the wolf incident.

XXXIV

Now, crossing the River Waveney, winding with tree-fringed banks through a flat country, the road enters Norfolk at Scole. Coming over the little bridge, the village is seen huddled together on either side of a narrow rising road; village and church alike wholly dominated by a great building of mellow red brick whose panelled chimney-stacks and long row of beautiful gables give the impression of an historic mansion having by some strange chance been taken from its park and set down beside the highway. This, however, was at no time a private residence, but was built as an inn; and an inn it remains, after the passing of nearly two centuries and a half. Scole, or "Schoale," as the name was often spelled in old times (when, indeed, the village was not called by its *alias* of Osmundeston), was by reason of this inn quite a celebrated place in the days of long ago. Every traveller in Eastern England had then either seen or heard of "Scole White Hart" and its famous sign that stretched completely across the road, and as a great many coaches halted here for changing teams, passengers had plenty of time for examining what Sir Thomas Browne thought to be "the noblest sighne-post in England." Both house and sign were built in 1655,

for James Peck, described as a "Norwich merchant," whose initials, together with the date, are yet to be seen on the centre gable. The elaborate sign alone cost £1057. It was of gigantic size and loaded with twenty-five carved figures of classic deities and others. Chaste Diana, with bow and arrow and two hounds, had a place on the cross-beam, in company with Time in the act of devouring an infant, Actæon and his dogs, a huntsman, and a White Hart *couchant*. On a pediment above the White Hart, supported by Justice and Temperance, was the effigy of an astronomer "seated on a Circumferenter," who by "some Chymical Preparation is so Affected that in fine Weather He faces the North and against bad Weather He faces that Quarter from whence it is about to come." On either side of the dizzy height occupied by the astronomer were figures of Fortitude and Prudence, a position suitable enough for the first-named of those two virtues, but certainly too perilous for the last.

Further suggestions of Olympus, with references to Hades and Biblical history, adorned the other portions of this extraordinary work. Cerberus clawed one side of the supporting post, while Charon dragged a witch to Hell on the other; and Neptune bestriding a dolphin, and Bacchic figures seated across casks alternated with the arms of twelve East Anglian noble and landed families. Two angels supported respectively the arms of Mr Peck and his lady and two lions those of Norwich and Yarmouth. On the side nearest the inn appeared a

huge carving of Jonah coming out of the whale's mouth, while, suspended in mid-air, and surrounded by a wreath, was another White Hart.

Although, as we have seen, Sir Thomas Browne was impressed with this work, an early nineteenth-century tourist (so early indeed as 1801) curtly dismisses it as "a pompous sign, with ridiculous ornaments," and shortly after that it seems to have been taken down, for the reason that it cost the landlord more to keep it in repair than the trade of the house permitted. Together with this, the once celebrated Great Bed of the White Hart has also disappeared. It was a round bed capable of holding twenty couples, and was therefore a good deal larger than the famous Great Bed of Ware. Perhaps it was because guests did not relish this co-operative method of seeking repose, or maybe because sheets, blankets and coverlets of sufficient size were unobtainable, that the Scole Great Bed was chopped up for firewood; but did anyone *ever* suppose beds of this wholesale capacity would be desirable?

The accompanying old view of the gigantic sign shows one of the peculiar basket coaches of the second half of the eighteenth century, on its way to London.

"Scole White Hart" must have been among the very finest of inns and posting-houses. Its wide staircases, of a width sufficient for the proverbial coach-and-four to drive up them, its large rooms and fine panelled doors, its great stone-flagged kitchen, all proclaim how great must have been its old prosperity; while the wide-spreading yard in



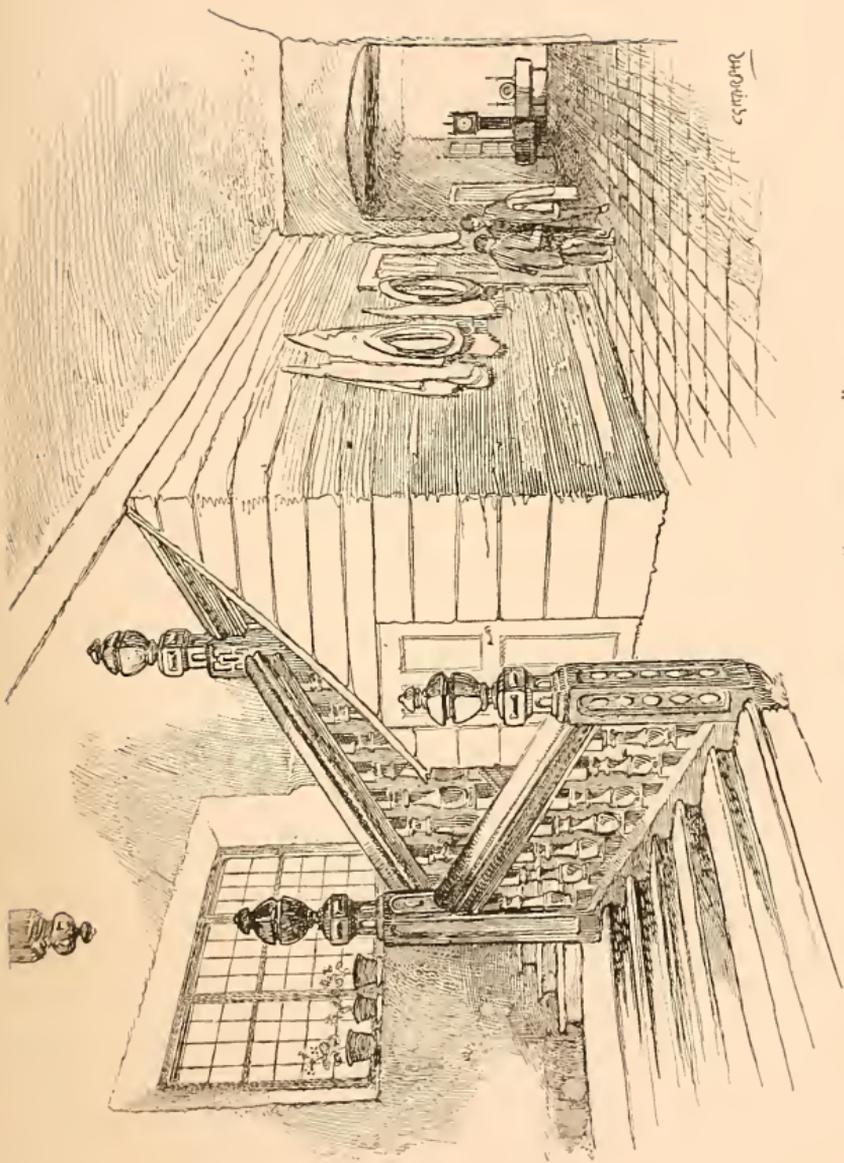
THE OLD SIGN OF SCOLE WHITE HART.

the rear of the house, together with the outbuildings, gives some hint of how heavy the traffic was at this junction of the Lowestoft, Bungay, Diss and Thetford road with that from London to Norwich. Shrunken trade has caused portions of the inn to be let off; the stone and wooden porches seen in the old print have disappeared; the coach entrance has long since been blocked up and has become the bar-parlour, and the mullions of the windows have given place to sashes; but the building still retains a noble architectural character, and is perhaps more interesting in these latter days, now that its story is told, than ever it was when that story was in the making. Little or nothing is found in contemporary records of "Scole White Hart"; only one vivid flash in its later years, when indignant would-be coach passengers stood at the door on a day in October 1822 and saw the drivers of the "Norwich Times" and "Gurney's Original Day Coach," fired by rivalry, and reckless in their long race from Whitechapel, come pounding furiously down the road and over the bridge, pass the inn without stopping, and disappear in clouds of dust in the direction of Norwich. Do you know what it is to lose a train and to wait an hour for the next? You do? Then it will not be difficult to form some idea of the blind, stuttering fury that possessed those who had booked seats at Scole and saw the coaches dash away, to leave them with half a day's wait.

Thorogood was driving the "Times." Both started from London at 5.30 a.m. The "Day" coach reached Norwich at 5.20 p.m., and the

“Times” ten minutes later, neither having stopped for changing horses during the last twenty-five miles. This was a “record” for that period, the usual time being fourteen hours.

Probably the would-be passengers had to remain the night; a fate which no one who has done the like of late would be apt to complain of. The guest at the “White Hart,” seated in solitary state in the lofty sitting-room, lit dimly by candles in antique plated candlesticks, and with two ox-eyed seventeenth-century beauties of the Lely type gazing down upon him from their sombre frames, presently feels oddly as though he were living in another era; a feeling that grows as he wanders upstairs to bed, almost losing himself in the roomy corridors. When he has closed the nail-studded bedroom door with a reverberant clang, and, creeping into the generous embraces of a damask-hung four-poster that may have been new a century and a half ago, gazes reflectively about the panelled room and on the curiously coffered ceiling, he drops off to sleep straightway into the times when the inn was new-built and dreams of how the news of the Restoration may have come to Scole in 1661. Old times live again, faded flowers bloom once more, forgotten footsteps echo along the passages, and lo, the *Has Been* is enacted again, with all the convincing air of such visions. Post-chaises and chariots clatter up to the door and their noise wakens the sleeper to the consciousness that the sound is but that of a jolting rustic tumbril going down the road in the early morning; that this is the twentieth century,



STAIRCASE IN THE "WHITE MART."

and the "White Hart" but a survival in a back eddy of life.

Besides the "White Hart," there is little else at Scole. The plain flint tower of the church stands by the roadside, on the ascent that leads from the village; and other two or three inns, a few rustic shops and cottages, and a private residence or so make up the tale. Scole, in fact, has not grown greatly since when it was a Roman station, and when the Roman soldiers whose remains have been found near the river occupied the military post on the long road to Venta Icenorum.

The legionaries first stationed in these East Anglian wastes must often have longed for their native Italy. When the sky sank almost to the level of the land in the long winter's rains and fogs, and the biting winds blew out of the east across the sandy scrub; when agues or the lurking enemy accounted for many of their comrades, and when some favoured few were recalled to the capital, they must have thought wistfully of a more congenial clime than this, situated on the edge of the Unknown. Rome, either as Empire or Republic, was a hard taskmaster, and when no fighting was in prospect employed the troops ingloriously as road-makers. The advanced garrisons in the wilderness cleared the enemy out of the tangled brush and boggy marshes, and working parties built roads under the protection of guards, or improved the rude trackways they found already in existence. Some fell by the way, and their skeletons have been found in these latter days, the teeth still clenched on the obolus placed in the dead man's

mouth to pay Charon for ferrying him across the cold and darkling Styx ; or, where the coin has perished, still stained with the metal's long decay. They perished, those pioneers, to found a civilisation, just as countless thousands of our own blood have laid their bones on distant shores, under burning skies or in the Arctic night, to make England what she is. Respect their long sleep, antiquaries, nor, as you honour your own creeds, take from the dead men their passage-money across that mystic river.

XXXV

THIS, as Dr Jessop charmingly names Norfolk, is Arcady. The scene is pleasant, but the stage waits : where are the actors ? Gone, where and for what reasons beyond the substitution of rail for road shall presently be considered. But if the merry days of old are done and population dwindled, at least in East Anglia, and especially in Norfolk, dialect flourishes among those who remain. The "Norfolk drant" or drawl, is still heard, just as the "Suffolk whine"—that rising inflection of the voice towards the end of sentences—is even yet a mark of the sister county. They are, indeed, said to have originated the Yankee combined drawl and twang, for Norfolk and Suffolk were largely represented among the Pilgrim Fathers, the first colonists of North America. With these survivals, some of the old rustic simplicity

is still met with, although the extraordinary ignorance of sixty years ago has disappeared, and the Norfolk labourer no longer thinks it possible to emigrate to America by driving over in a farm cart. The story is an East Anglian classic, how a farm labourer "didn't fare rightly to know" by what route they were going to the United States, "but we'm gwine ter sleep t' Debenham the fust night, so's to kinder break t' jarney." When railways came, and access to London grew easy, these simplicities gradually faded away. The young men took to "gettin' up the road," as the saying ran—otherwise, going to London—to "better themselves," and old illusions were soon dispelled; but in Arcady the mavis may still be seen knapping a dodman; the children of the rustic hamlets may be observed by the passing stranger gleefully sporting at the old game of tittymatorterin; the cowslips that in springtime turn the meadows to living gold are yet "paigles"; a small field remains, as ever, a "pightle," and when a countryman throws anything into a ditch, he "hulls" (or hurls) "it in t' holl," just as his ancestors did hundreds of years ago. Let some of the archaic words just noted be explained before we proceed any further. "Mavis" is the idyllic name of the thrush, and the "dodman," which he may be observed "knapping," or breaking, is a snail; called in Essex, by the way, a "hodmadod." "Tittymatorterin" is just the simple game of "see-sawing." Besides these fleeting instances there are many other peculiarities. The Norfolk peasant will never pronounce the letter E if it be possible to avoid it. It becomes I in his mouth, and

a head becomes a "hid," while hens are "hins." Throughout the whole of the eastern counties, too, the elision of the final in the present tense is a feature of rustic talk. Examples of this peculiarity are found not only in modern speech, but in old epitaphs and inscriptions, dating back some hundreds of years. Thus, a bridge across the River Wensum, at Norwich, bears the sculptured effigy of a dragon's head with the words, "When dragon drink, Heigham sink." The meaning is that when the river rises and touches, or "rise" and "touch," as a Norfolk man would say, the dragon's mouth, the neighbouring Heigham becomes flooded. An older example still is seen on an inscription at Kimberley, to John Jenkin, in the words:—

"Under this stone rare Jenkin lie,"

while a comparatively modern one may be found in Stratford St Mary church, in the concluding lines of an epitaph dated 1739:—

'The Night is gone, ye Stars Remain,
So man that die shall Live again."

Dickens has caught the East Anglian dialect readily enough in *David Copperfield*, where he makes Mr Peggotty say, "Cheer up, old mawther" to Mrs Gummidge, and speak of "a couple of mavishes," while Ham talks to David as "Mas'r Davy, bor." The willing Barkis, too, who asks "do she now?" and speaks of the "stage-cutch," is a true product of the soil.

For the benefit of those not to the manner born,

let it be repeated that a "mawther" is not necessarily a parent. It is the generic name for a female. A "mawther" may therefore be a girl infant or a grown woman. "Bor" is, of course, a corruption of "neighbour," but need not, in fact, specifically mean a neighbour, and is practically the masculine of "mawther," and applicable to any man; friend close at hand or stranger from distant parts.

The Norfolk dialect has attained the distinction of being made the subject of study, and glossaries and collections of local words have long been made by enthusiasts in these matters. Perhaps the most interesting and amusing of the examples of Norfolk talk is found in the East Anglian version of the *Song of Solomon*, published many years ago by Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte. It was taken down from a reading by a Norfolk peasant. A few verses will be instructive:—

1. The song o' songs, as is Sorlomun's.
2. Lerr 'im kiss me wi' the kisses of his mouth ;
for yar love is better 'an wine.
3. Becaze o' the smell o' yar intements, yar
name is as intements pored out, therefoor du the
mawthers love yě.
4. Dror mč, we'll run arter yč: the king he ha'
browt me into his charmbers ; we'll be glad and reijce
in yč ; we'll remahmber yar love more 'an wine : the
right-up love yč.
5. I em black, but tidy, O ye darters o' J'rusal'm,
as the taents o' Kedar, as the cattins o' Sorlomun.
6. Don't sin starrin' at me, cos I em black, 'ecos

the sun t'have barnt mē; my mother's children wor snāsty wi' me; they made me keeper o' the winyerds, but m'own winyerd I han't kept.

7. Tell onto me, yow hu my soul du love, where ye fade, where ye make yar flock to rest at nune: fur why shud I be as one tarn aside by yar cumrades' flock?

8. If so bein' as yě don't know, O yow bootifullest o' women, go yer ways furth by the futtin' o' the flock, and feed yer kids 'eside the shepherds' taents.

9. I ha' likened yow, O my love, to a taamer o' hosses in Pharer's charrits.

10. Yar cheeks are right fine wi' ringes of jeweltry, yer neck wi' chanes o' gold."

The full flavour of this vernacular is only to be obtained by reading the original verses side by side with the above.

Among the sports that obtained on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk of old was "camping." "Camping" was an old East Anglian game that, could it be revived, would please the footballing maniacs of our own day. It was a wild kind of football, played on these commons, often with a hundred players aside, and we are told that the roughest kind of Rugby football was child's play compared with it. If stories of old camping contests be true, it might almost seem that in ascribing the thinly-populated condition of Norfolk and Suffolk to the long-standing effects of the Black Death, and to mediæval insurrections and their resulting butcheries, we do an injustice to pestilence and the sword, and fail to make count of the casualties received in play. As the wondering

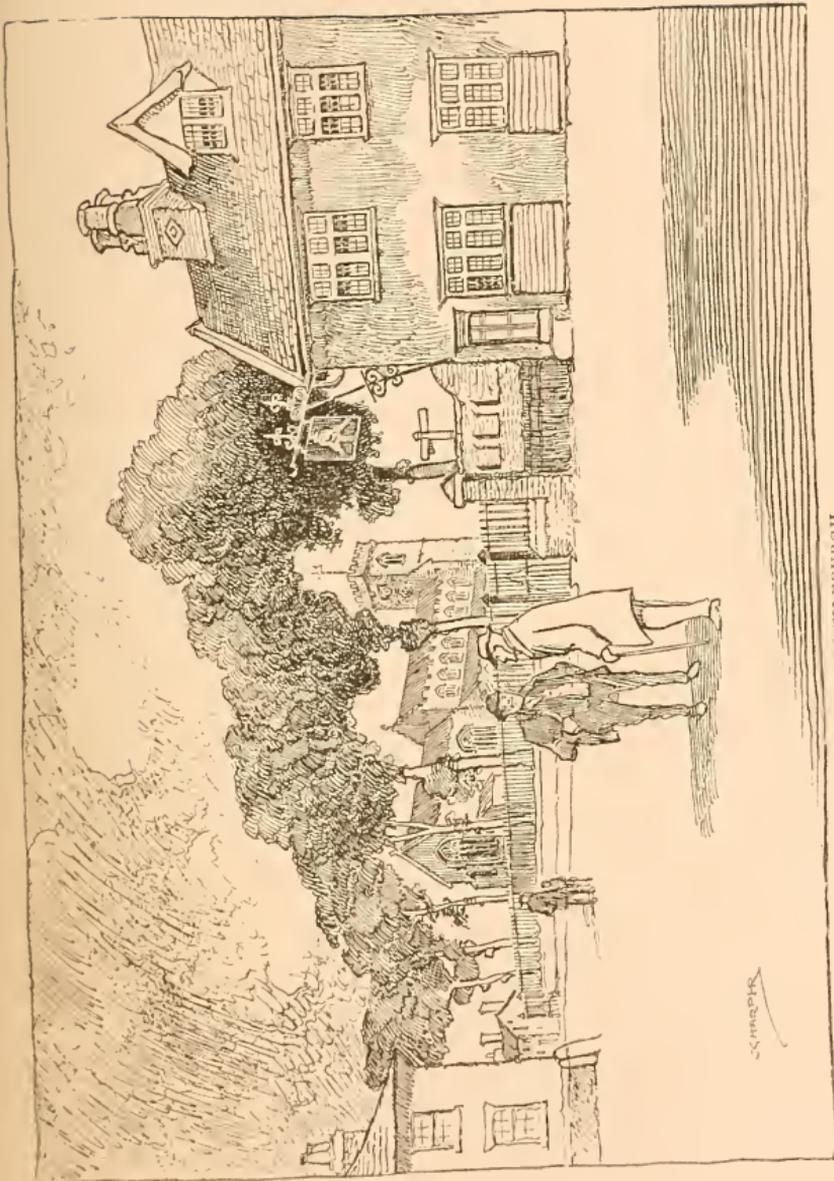
Frenchman said, in witnessing a camping-match, "If these savages be at play, what would they be in war?"

"These contests," says a Norfolk historian, "were not infrequently fatal to many of the combatants. I have heard old persons speak of a celebrated camping, Norfolk against Suffolk, on Diss Common, with three hundred on each side. Before the ball was thrown up, the Norfolk men inquired tauntingly of the Suffolk men if they had brought their coffins. The Suffolk men, after fourteen hours, were the victors. Nine deaths were the result of the conflict in a fortnight." Camping went out of favour about 1810, and the coroners had an easier time.

XXXVI

DICKLEBURGH, the next village after Scole, is in its way as imposing a place, only not an inn, but a church, is its chief feature. The great church of Dickleborough (as the name should be pronounced) charmingly screened from the street by a row of limes, but not so charmingly enclosed by a very long and very tall iron railing, stands end on to the road, its eastern wall looking down upon the pilgrims who once passed on their way to Our Lady of Walsingham; two tabernacles, one on either side of the east window, holding effigies of popular saints, and halting many a sinner for supplication.

The saints are gone, torn down by Henry the Eighth's commissioners, or by the fanatical Dowsing. They lie, perhaps, in the mud of some horse-pond, or, broken up, serve the useful part of metalling the road. Adjoining the church stands the "King's Head," the sign perhaps rather a general idea of kings than intended as a portrait of any particular one. At any rate it resembles none of the long line of English sovereigns, nor even that one-time favourite, the King of Prussia, though old enough to have been painted in the hey-day of his popularity. Dickleburgh Church is absurdly large for the present size of the place and for the empty country side; but there is a reason for the solitudes, and there was one for these huge buildings, ten times too large for the present needs of the shrunken villages. Norfolk and Suffolk, once among the most thickly-peopled of English counties, were practically depopulated in 1348 by that dreadful scourge, the Black Death. One-third of the total population of England perished under that terrible plague. The working classes were the worst sufferers, and the agriculturists, the weavers and labourers died in such numbers that the crops rotted on the ground, industries decayed, and no man would work. When the pestilence was stayed, other parts of the country flourished in greater proportion, than this. Manufacturing industries arose elsewhere and attracted the large populations; while East Anglia, remaining consistently agricultural throughout the centuries, has never shared the increase; only the few and scattered towns showing industrial enterprise, in



DICKLEBURGH.

S. HARPER

the form of weaving in mediæval and later times, and in the manufacture of agricultural machinery nowadays. In the last two decades, with the decay of agriculture and the rush of the peasantry to London and the great centres of population, the country, and the eastern counties in especial, has become almost deserted.

The present state of agriculture in Eastern England is made manifest in deserted farms, in broken gates left hanging precariously on one hinge, in decaying barns and cart-sheds left to rot; rusted ploughs and decrepit waggons standing derelict in the once fertile fields, now overrun with foul weeds and rank with docks, charlock, and thistles; and farms, long advertised "to let," remaining and likely to remain tenantless. Not to everyone is it possible to grow seeds and flowers, and market-gardening is profitable only in the lands more immediately surrounding the great towns. With wheat at its present price of thirty shillings a quarter, it does not pay to grow corn for the market, and the land is going out of cultivation. Where the farmer still struggles on, he lays down most of his holding in grass for sheep and cattle, and grows, grudgingly, as little wheat as possible, for sake of the straw. Things are not quite so bad as in 1894, when wheat was down to twenty shillings a quarter, and farmers fed their pigs on the harvest which cost them three pounds more per acre to grow than it would have brought in the market; but at thirty shillings it yields no profit. Agricultural England is, in short, ruined, and there seems no present hope of things

becoming better. While the boundless, bountiful harvests of Argentina, of Canada, the United States, Russia and other wheat-producing countries can be cultivated, reaped, and carried to these shores at the prices that now rule, and while the stock-breeders of those lands can raise sheep and cattle just as advantageously, the English farmer must needs go without a living wage. As matters stand at present, we import fully seventy-five per cent. of the wheat used in the country; the acreage under corn having gone down from 4,058,731 acres in 1852, to about half that at the present day. . . . Meanwhile the population has increased by thirteen millions; so that, with many more mouths to fill, we grow only half the staple food these islands produced then. There are, of course, those who reap the advantage of cheap corn and cheap meat from over seas. The toiling millions of the towns and cities thrive on those benefits; but what if, through war, or from any other cause, those sea-borne supplies ceased? Of what avail would have been this generation of cheapness if at last the nation must starve? Extinguish agriculture and the farmer, and you cannot recall them at need, nor with magic wand bring back to cultivation a land which has long gone untilled.

But the farmer cannot alone be ruined, any more than the walls of a house can be demolished and the roof yet left standing. It was the farmer who in prosperous times supported the country gentleman in one direction, and the agricultural labourer in the other. With wheat, as it was a generation ago, at seventy shillings a quarter, and other products of

the land proportionately profitable, the farmer could afford to pay both high rent and good wages. Farms in those days were difficult to obtain, and there was great competition among farmers for holdings. To-day, even at a quarter of those rents, tenants are difficult to obtain, and the income of the landed proprietors has dwindled away. The results are painfully evident here, in the old families reduced or beggared, and their seats either in the market or let to stock-jobbers and successful business men, while the old owners have disappeared or live humbly in small houses once occupied by the steward or bailiff of the estate.

While rents have thus, with the iron logic of circumstances, gone down to vanishing-point, and while farms have actually been offered rent free in order to prevent the disaster of the land being let go out of cultivation, the wages and the circumstances of the agricultural labourer have been, most illogically, improving. Instead of the miserable six to nine shillings a week he existed upon, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he receives thirteen or fourteen shillings, lives in a decent cottage, instead of a wretched hovel, and finds the cost of food and clothing fifty per cent. cheaper than his grandfather ever knew it to be. Yet agricultural labourers are as difficult to get now as they were immediately after the Black Death had swept away three quarters of the working class, five hundred and fifty years ago. The crops went ungarnered then, as they have done of recent years in East Anglia — for lack of hands to gather them in. It was in 1899

that standing crops at Tivitshall St Margaret's and adjacent parishes were sold by auction for a farmer who could find no labourer willing to be hired.

What has been called the "rural exodus" is well named. London and the great towns have proved so attractive to the children of the middle-aged peasant that they despise the country. They can all read and write now, and at a pinch do simple sums in arithmetic; so off they go to the crowded streets. The ambitious aspire to a black coat and a stool in an office, and others become workmen of many kinds; but all are attracted by the higher wages to be earned in the towns, and by the excitement of living in the great centres of population, and only the aged and the aging will soon be left to till the fields.

Farmers entertain the supremest contempt for the agricultural labourer's attempts to better himself. To them they are almost impious; but the farmer is himself tarred with the same brush of culture. He is a vastly different fellow from his grandfather, who actually helped to till the soil among his own men; whose wife and daughters were noted hands at milking and buttermaking; who lived in the kitchen, among the hams and the domestic utensils, and was not above eating the same food as, and at the same table with, his ploughmen and carters. He has, in fact, and so also have the landed proprietor and the labourer, undergone a process of levelling up. It is a process which had started certainly by 1825, when Cobbett noticed it.

Hear him :—

“When the old farmhouses are down (and down they must come in time) what a miserable thing the country will be! Those that are now erected are mere painted shells, with a mistress within who is stuck up in a place she calls the *parlour*, with, if she have children, the ‘young ladies and gentlemen’ about her; some showy chairs and a sofa (a *sofa* by all means); half-a-dozen prints in gilt frames hanging up; some swinging book-shelves with novels and tracts upon them; a dinner brought in by a girl that is perhaps better ‘educated’ than she; two or three nick-nacks to eat, instead of a piece of bacon and a pudding; the house too neat for a dirty-shoed carter to be allowed to come into; and everything proclaiming to every sensible beholder that there is here a constant anxiety to make a *show* not warranted by the reality. The children (which is the worst part of it) are all too clever to *work*; they are all to be *gentlefolks*. Go to *plough*! Good God! What! ‘young gentlemen’ go to *plough*! They become *clerks*, or some skimming-dish thing or other. They flee from the dirty *work* as cunning horses do from the bridle. What misery is all this! What a mass of materials for proclaiming that general and *dreadful convulsion* that must, first or last, come and blow this funding and jobbing and enslaving and starving system to atoms.”

The “convulsion” anticipated by Cobbett has not come about. This is not a country of earthquakes or of violent social upheavals. Free Trade

has beggared the agricultural interests, but, on his way to the Bankruptcy Court, the farmer contrives to live in better style than possible three quarters of a century ago, while his pretensions to gentility certainly have not decreased. As for the "funding and jobbing," Cobbett could never, in his wildest dreams, have foreseen Limited Liability and the fungoid growth of Stock Exchange speculation, or the modern "enslaving and starving system" of the gigantic Trusts that, like vampires, feed on the blood of industry. We need look for no convulsions; not even, unhappily, for the hanging, or, at least, the taxing out of existence, of the millionaires. Our expectations of the future are quite different. The people will inhabit the towns, and the country will become a huge preserve of game for the sport of the millionaires aforesaid; a preserve broken here and there by the model farm or the training establishment of some colossus of wealth.

XXXVII

BEYOND Dickleburgh, past the solitary "Ram" inn, a fine, dignified house still lamenting its decadence from a posting-inn to a beerhouse, Tivetshall level-crossing marks where the railway runs to Bungay and Lowestoft. Maps make Pulham St Mary the Virgin quite near, with Pulham St Mary Magdalene close by; Tivetshalls of different dedications, and

other villages dotted about like plums in a Christmas pudding, but no sign of them is evident. Only windmills, whirling furiously on distant ridges, break the pastoral solitudes. In this conflict of charts, a carter jogging along the road with his team is evidently the authority to be consulted.

“Coom hather,” says the carter to his sleek and intelligent horses; and they coom accordingly, with much jingling of harness, and stand in the shade of roadside trees while their lord takes his modest levenses and haffles and jaffles—gossips, that is to say—with the landlord of the “Ram.”

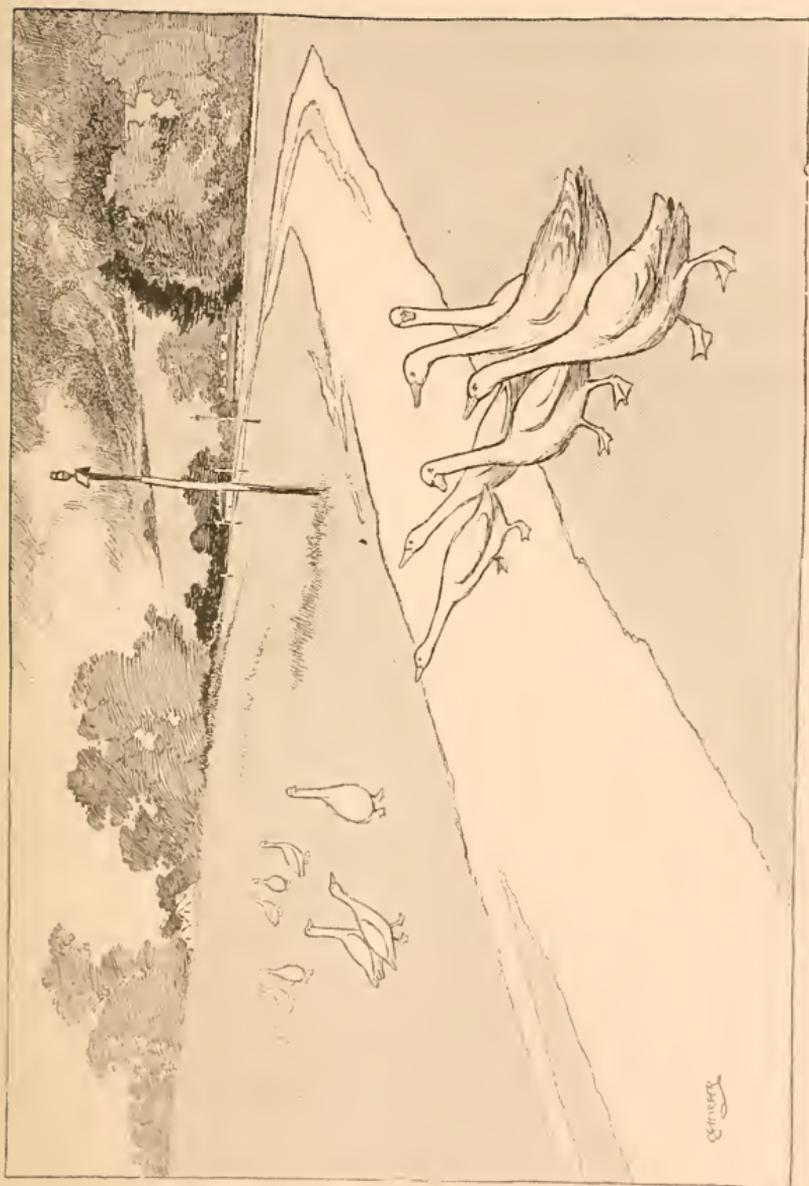
“Tivetshall?” asks the carter, echoing a question; “niver heerd of un.” Then a light breaks in upon him. “Oh, ay! Tishell we allus call ’em; Tishell St Marget an’ Tishell St Merry,” and with, a sweep of the arm comprising the whole western horizon, “They’ m ower theer.”

“And Pulham St Mary the Wirgin?”

“Pulham St Merry the Wirgin? oh, yis! Pulham Maaket, yar mean, bor. Et edd’n on’y a moile, ower *theer*”—a comprehensive wave to the eastwards.

And there, on a byroad, in an embrace of trees, it is found, a little forgotten town, the greater proportion of whose inhabitants appear to walk with two sticks. It is ranged round a green or market-place, with a great Perpendicular church, gorgeously frescoed within, and with a very good recent “Ascension” over the chancel arch, painted and stencilled timber roof, and elaborate stained-glass windows. The townlet and townsfolk sinking into decay, the church an object of such care and expense, afford a curious contrast.

An old toll-house and the prison-like buildings of Depwade Union conspire to make desolate the road onwards. He who presses, hot-foot, along it, turning neither to the right nor to the left, may readily be excused a legitimate wonder as to what has become of the great feature of East Anglia, its spreading commons; for, strange to say, despite the fame they have long since attained, no vestige of them is glimpsed from the road itself. One has usually to turn aside to some of the villages lying near, but wholly hidden from the highway, to find the yet unenclosed common lands, the pasturage of geese, ducks and turkeys; but a striking exception to this now general rule is the huge common of Wacton lying off to the left of the road at the hundredth mile from London, where a cottage and a wayside inn, the "Duke's Head," alone represent Wacton village, a mile distant. Wacton Common, reputed to be the highest point in Norfolk, although of no less extent than three hundred and fifty acres, might perhaps be passed without being seen, for the reason that, although still wild and unenclosed, it is screened from the high road by a hedge and entered through an ordinary field gate. The inn and the cottage, obviously built on land fraudulently taken from the common in the long ago, serve with their gardens to hide that glorious expanse of grass and heather. Here roam those chartered vagabonds, the plump geese, that pick up a living on the grassy commons and wander, like free-booting bands of feathered moss-troopers upon the heaths, closing their careers with royal feasting in the



A DISPUTED PASTURAGE.

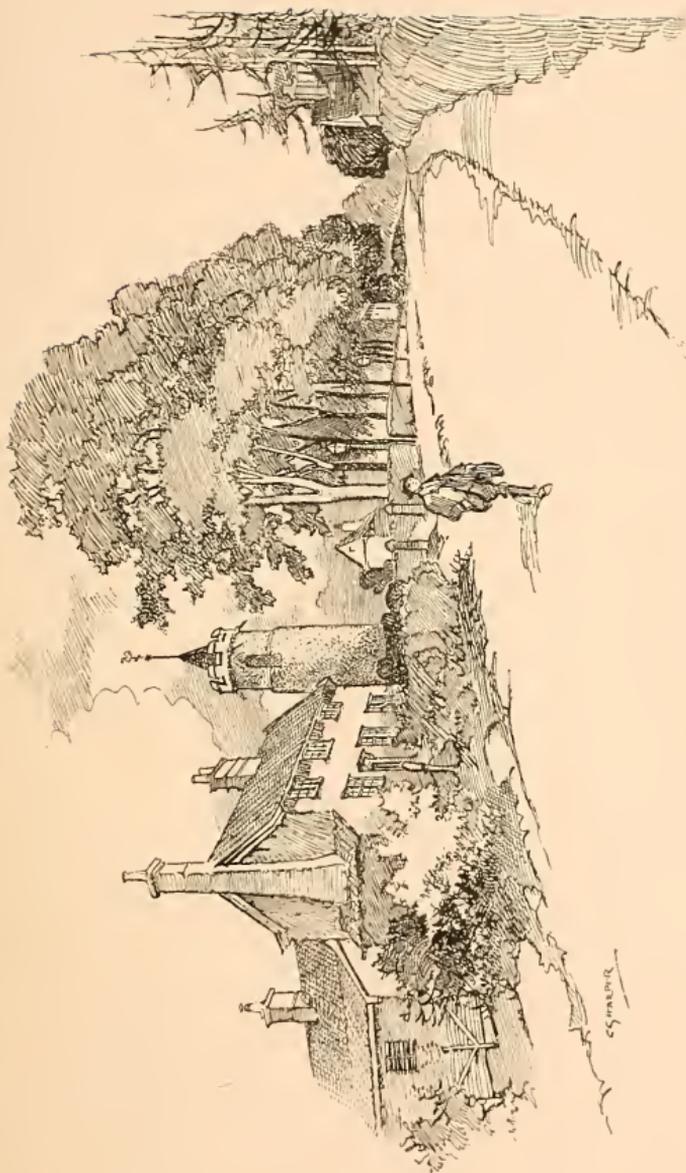
August and September stubble, and a Michaelmas martyrdom.

Norfolk and Suffolk are still famous for their geese, but those martyred fowls do not make their final journey to the London markets, between Michaelmas and Christmas, with the publicity they once attained. They go up to Leadenhall nowadays in the seclusion of railway vans. Seventy years ago they journeyed by coach, and in state, for the Norfolk coaches in Christmas week often carried nothing save geese and turkeys, beside the coachman and guard. Full inside and out with such a freight, the proprietors of fast coaches made a great deal more by carrying them than they would have taken by a load of passengers ; so the fowls had the preference, while travellers had to take their chance of finding a seat in the slower conveyances. So long ago as 1793 the turkeys conveyed from Norwich to London between a Saturday morning and Sunday night in December numbered one thousand seven hundred, and weighed 9 tons, 2 cwt. 2 lbs. Their value was £680. They were followed on the two succeeding days by half as many more.

A Norfolk common without its screaming and hissing flocks of geese would seem strangely untenanted. They, the turkeys, the ducks, the donkeys ("dickies" they call them in Norfolk) and the vagrom fowls are among the only vestiges of the wild life that once made Norfolk famous to the naturalist and not a little eerie to the traveller of old, who, startled on the lonely way that stretched by heath and common and fen between the habitations of men,

shrank appalled at the lumbering flight of the huge bustards, quivered with apprehension at the sudden hideous whirring of the night-jar as the day closed in, dismayed, heard the bittern booming among the reeds, or with misgivings of the supernatural saw the fantastical ruff stalking on long legs, with prodigious beak, red eyes and spreading circle of neck feathers, like the creation of some disordered imagination. Wild Norfolk, the home of these and of many another strange creature, is no more, and these species, now chiefly extinct, are to be seen only in museums of natural history.

What Wacton lacks along the high road the village of Long Stratton has in superabundance. They named it well who affixed the adjective, for it measures a mile from end to end. Beginning with modern and (to speak kindly) uninteresting cottages, it ends in a broad street where almost every house is old and beautiful in lichened brick or soft-toned plaster. Midway of this lengthy thoroughfare stands the church, one of the Norfolk round-towered kind, in the usual black flint, and beyond it the Manor House, red brick, with Adam scrolls and neo-classical palm branches in plaster for trimmings, set back at some distance behind a very newty, froggy and tadpoley moat. Beyond this again, the village street broadens out. Looking back upon it, when one has finally climbed uphill on the way to Norwich, Long Stratton is a place entirely charming. Its name, of course, derives from its situation on the Roman Road, and Tasburgh, that now comes in sight, keeps yet its Roman camp strongly posted



LONG STRATTON.

above the River Tase. Tasburgh—what little there is of a village—occupies an acclivity on the further side of that river, across whose wide and marshy valley the mists rise early, seeing the sun to bed dull and tarnished, and attending the rising of the moon with ghostly vapours. The old Roman camp is oddly and picturesquely occupied by the parish church, another round-towered example. Excepting it, the vicarage and the Dutch-like building of the “Bird in Hand” Inn, there is little else.



LONG STRATTON.

But what mean these sounds of anger and lamentation that drown the soothing, distant rattle of reaping machines on the hillside: a voice raised in reproach, and another—a treble one—in gusty shrieks of combined pain, fear and peevishness? Coming round a corner, the cause of the disturbance is revealed in a wet and muddy infant rubbing dirty knuckles into streaming eyes, and being violently reproached by an indignant woman.

“You’re a pretty article, I must say; a fine spettacle. I’ll give yow a good sowsin’, my lord; coom arn;” and the malefactor is pulled suddenly inside the cottage, the door slammed, and muffled yells heard, alternating with thumps. The offender is receiving that sowsing, or being “yerked,” “clipped over the ear-hole,” getting a “siseraring,” being “whanged” or “clouted,” the striking Norfolk phrases for varieties of assault and battery.

X X X V I I I

THE Tase is met with again on surmounting the hilly road out of Tasburgh and coming down hill into Newton Flotman. Here it is broad enough to require a long and substantial bridge, grouping in unaccustomed rightness of composition with the mingled thatched, tiled and slated cottages and the church that stands on a commanding knoll in the background. When Newton was really new it would be impossible to say; perhaps its novelty may have been measured against the hoary antiquity of, say, Caistor yonder, down the valley. For what says the folk-rhyme:—

“Caistor was a city when Norwich was none,
And Norwich was built of Caistor stone,”

and if Norwich partook of Caistor’s building materials, why not, in degree, Newton Flotman? But a

whisper. Caistor was never more than a camp, and not at any time a place of houses, much less of stone ones. Stone is not to be found in this neighbourhood, and flint only, of which Norwich is principally built, is available for building materials.

One object in Newton Flotman that puzzles the passing stranger is a little effigy of Bacchus fixed on



TASBURGH.

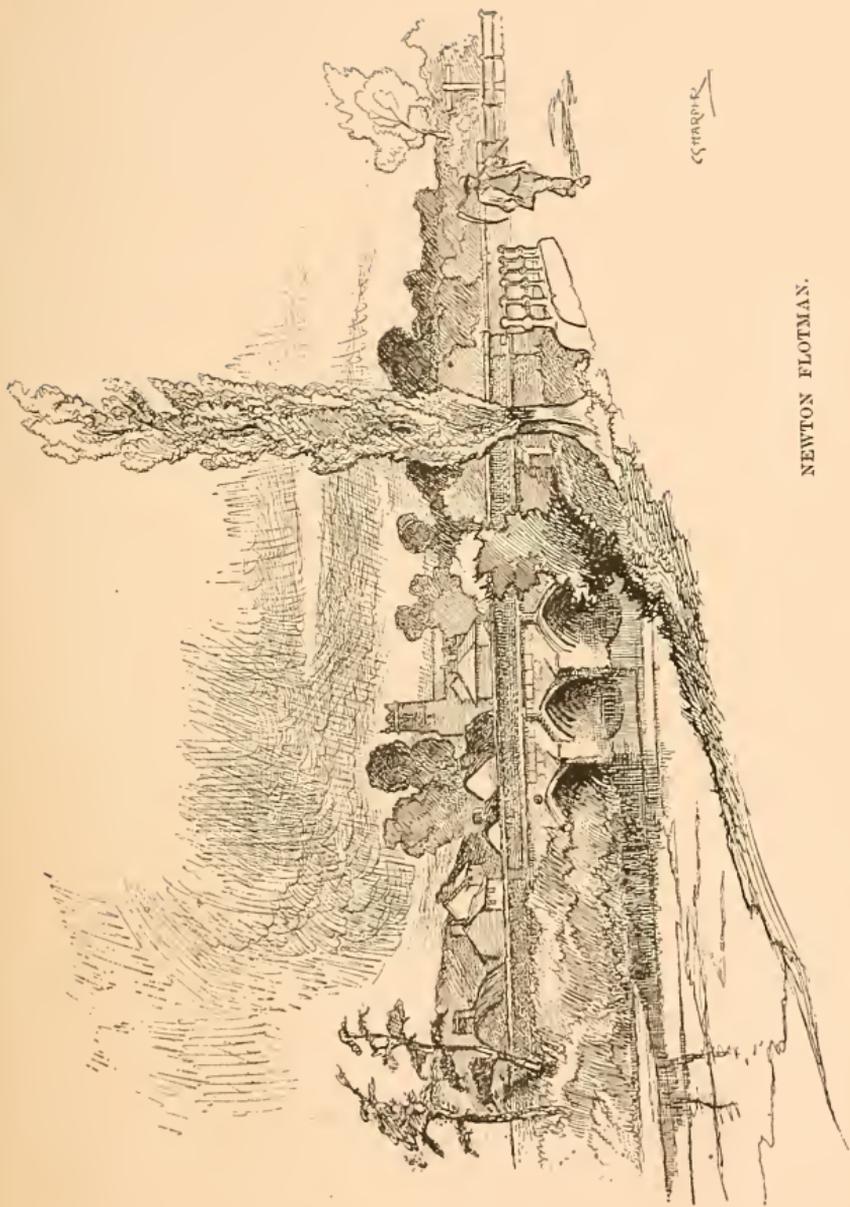
the wall of the "Maid's Head" Inn, so thickly covered with successive coats of paint that it is difficult to give it a period. Remains of Roman antiquities are so many in this district that it is often mistaken for a work of that classic age, when it can really claim no higher antiquity than that of the late eighteenth century, a time when figures of

the kind were a usual decoration of inn signs. Such an one still swings from the wrought-iron sign of the "Angel" at Woolhampton, on the Bath Road.

In the woody valley of the Tase beyond Newton Flotman lies Dunston, trees casting a protecting and secretive shade over it, and the "Dun Cow" Inn its only roadside representative. That inn and the circular brick pound for strayed sheep and cattle redeem the last few miles into Norwich from absolute emptiness. When the pound last was used who shall say? The tramps have played havoc with it, and its wooden gate has gone. The ancient office of pound-keeper is here evidently fallen into disuse.

Swainsthorpe's octagonal church tower is seen on the level to the left, but Caistor, in like manner with Dunston, is sunk deep in foliage, half a mile or more away in the valley, its church tower rising like a grey beacon from amid the trees, to tell the curious where its ancient camp may be found. Caistor St Edmunds, to give its full name, is the site of the great Roman camp established here to overawe the stronghold of the Iceni, four miles away on the banks of the Wensum, and now the site of Norwich.

Caistor camp is a really satisfactory example of a Roman fortified *castrum*. For one thing, it has the largest area of any known relic of its kind in England, enclosing thirty-seven acres. If its fragments of flint walls have neither the thickness nor the height of those at Portus Rutupiaë, the old Roman port in Thanet, now known as Richborough, its deep ditch and massive embankment assist the



CHAS. P. K.

NEWTON FLOTMAN.

laggard imagination of the layman in matters archæological, which refuses to be stirred before mere undulations in the sward. Here is a ditch that can be rolled into, an embankment that can be climbed and paced on three sides of the camp, if necessary, to put to physical test both height, depth and extent. The fourth side of this great enclosure, now a turnip-field, was bounded by the River Tase



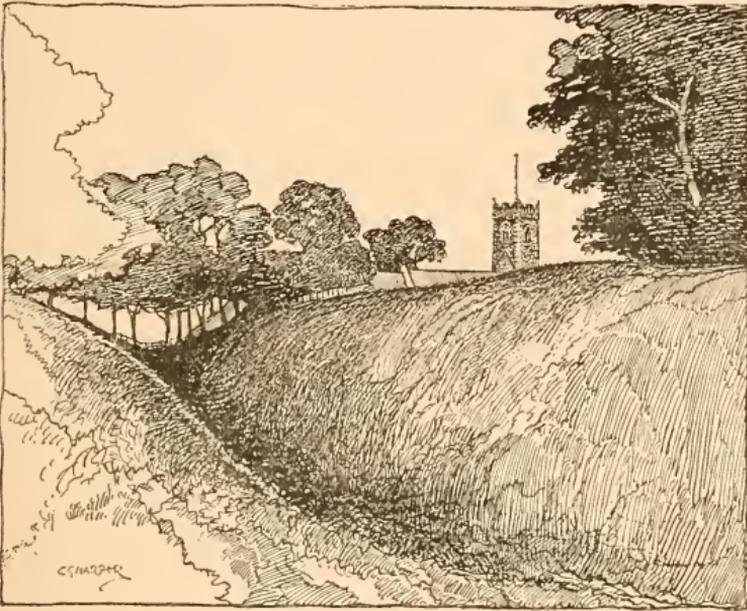
THE OLD BRICK POUND.

and was sufficiently defended by that stream, then a wide creek, so that no works are to be found there. How long it was before the Romans subdued the Iceni, whose great city is thought to have stood where Norwich does now, is not known. Nothing of that early time here, indeed, is *known*, and guesses are of the vaguest. Only it seems that the Roman advance into East Anglia, which had for its objective

the principal stronghold of the tribes, here came to its military ending. To compare things so ancient and romantic with others modern and thought prosaic, the several Roman camps on the advance from London now to be sought at Uphall near Romford; Chipping Hill, near Witham, Lexden, and Tasburgh, are, with those that have disappeared, to be looked upon in the same light as the wayside stations on the railway to Norwich, a railway which originally came to a terminus at that city, and was only at a later date continued northward.

Where the Romans and the Romano-British citizens of Venta lived when the tribes were reduced—where the Venta Icenorum of Roman rule really was, in fact—is a mystery, for, unlike most of our great cities, Norwich has furnished no relics of that age; while, beyond coins and odds and ends, Caistor camp has produced nothing. No vestiges of streets or houses have been found, here or elsewhere, and Venta might, for all there is to show of it, have been a city of dreams. The fact that the original capital of the Iceni was re-settled by the Danes when they came in a conquering flood, seems to point to the site of it having long been deserted; and that they called it after the North “wic” or creek, presupposes a “South wic” somewhere else, near or far. The position of that south creek is fixed by the ancient geography of these last few miles. In those times the ground on which Yarmouth, at the mouth of the Yare estuary, is now built, was under the waves of the sea, which ran up in a long navigable creek—the “Gariensis” of the Romans and the

“North Wic” of the Danes—from a Roman fortified port where Caistor-by-Yarmouth stands, to the site of Norwich, which indeed, centuries later, was still a port. Where the River Tase is now confluent with the Yare and the Wensum, there then branched out a shorter and perhaps shallower creek, running almost due south; the “South wic” of those



CAISTOR CAMP.

northern pirates. At its head stood Caistor, where the navigation ceased.

It is far inland now, but the marshy valley of the Tase still bears signs of those old conditions, and perhaps the villas of wealthy Roman citizens, together with other relics of the vanished city, still lie preserved deep down in the mud and silt that have filled up the old channel.

The lie of the land, in accord with these views, is plain to see when, returning to the high road, the journey to Norwich is continued to Hartford Bridge; bird's-eye views unfolding across the valley to the right. At Hartford Bridge, where there are several bridges, none of them sizeable, rivers, streams and runlets of sorts trickle, flow, and gurgle in their different ways through flat meadows, below the long rise where, two miles from Norwich, the road begins to grow suburban. It is on the summit that the Newmarket and Thetford route from London joins with this, and together they descend into the city.

XXXIX

THIS way came Queen Elizabeth into Norwich on her great "progress" of 1578, by St Stephen's Plain and through St Stephen's Gate. Gates and walls are gone that once kept out the turbulent, or even condemned the belated citizen to lodge the night without the precincts of the city, in suburbs not in those times to be reckoned safe.

Norwich long ago swept away her defences and modernised her outskirts, for this is no Sleepy Hollow, this cathedral city in the valley of the Wensum, but the capital of East Anglia, throbbing with industry and in every way in the forefront of modern life. To the entrance from London Norwich turns perhaps its most unattractive side.

No general view of the city, lying in its hollow beside the winding Wensum, opens out, and the eye seeks the cathedral spire and finds it with some difficulty, modestly peering over tangled modern roof-tops. It is from quite the opposite direction, from the noble height of Mousehold Heath, that Norwich unfolds itself in a majestic picture of cathedral, churches and houses, with trees and gardens, such as no other city can show, displayed within its bounds. Norwich does not jump instantly to the antiquarian eye, and its electric tramways that are the first to greet the traveller who enters from the old coach road are not a little forbidding. The city grows gradually upon the stranger in all its wealth of beauty and interest, and becomes more and more lovable the better he becomes acquainted with it.

Until these railway times, in the old days of slow, difficult, dangerous and expensive travelling, the capital of East Anglia was in a very high degree a capital, and sufficient to itself. Its shipping trade and weaving industries, and the famous Norwich School of artists, brought this exclusive attitude down from mediæval times to modern; and Norfolk county families until the era of political reform had almost dawned, still had their "town houses" in Norwich, just as, in bygone centuries, that typical old family, the Pastons, owned their town houses in Hungate and in what is now called King Street, formerly Conisford Street.

The coaches coming to Norwich threaded the

mazy streets to inns widely sundered. The original "Norwich Machine" of 1762 traversed the greater part of the city, to draw up at the "Maid's Head," in Tombland. On the other hand, the Mails, the "Telegraph" and the "Magnet," came to and started from the "Rampant Horse" in the street of the same name, standing not far from the beginnings of the city. The street is there still, but the oddly-named inn has given place to shops, and where the "Rampant Horse" ramped rampageously, in violent contrast with the mild-mannered "Great White Horse" of Ipswich, drapers' establishments now hold forth seductive announcements of "alarming sacrifices."

Among other coaches, "Gurney's Original Day Coach" and the "Phenomenon" favoured the "Angel," in the Market Place, while the "Times" house was the "Norfolk Hotel," in St Giles's, and that of the "Expedition" the "Swan" Inn. Other inns, many of them huddled together under the lee of the castle mound, were then to be found in the Market Place and the Haymarket and in the narrow alley in the rear that still goes by name of "Back of the Inns." Others yet, many of mediæval age, are to be sought in old nooks of the city. The Pilgrim's Hostel, now the Rosemary Tavern, like the "Old Barge," belongs to the fourteenth century, the last named still standing between King Street and the river, with a picturesque but battered entrance. The steep and winding lane of Elm Hill, where the slum population of Norwich stew and pig together down ancient courts and dirty

alleys, has more inns, ramshackle but unrestored; and in the wide open space by the cathedral, dolefully called Tombland, although it has not, nor ever had, anything to do with tombs, is the "Maid's Head," the one establishment in Norwich that stands pre-eminently for old times and good cheer. It is an "hotel" now, and has the modern conveniences of sanitation and electric light; but its restoration, effected through the enthusiasm of a local antiquary, with both the opportunity of purchasing the property and the means of doing so, has been carried through with taste and discrimination. The "Maid's Head" can with certainty claim a history of six hundred years, and is thought to have been built upon the site of a former Bishop's Palace. Heavily-raftered ceilings and masonry of evident antiquity may take parts of the present house back so far, or even a greater length, but the especial pride of the "Maid's Head" is its beautiful Jacobean woodwork. The old sign of the house was the "Molde Fish," or "Murtel Fish," a name that antiquaries still boggle at. It was long a cherished legend that this strange and unlovely name was changed to the present sign in complimentary allusion to Queen Elizabeth when she first visited the city, but later researches have proved the change to have been made at least a century earlier, and so goes another belief!

The "Music House," facing the now disreputable King Street, has not for so very long been an inn. Its name tells of a time when it was the meeting-place of the "city music," old-time ancestors of

modern town bands, but its story goes back to the Norman period, when the crypt that bears up the thirteenth-century building above was part of the home of Moyses, a Jew, and afterwards of Isaac, his nephew. "Isaac's Hall," as it was known, was seized by King John and given to one of his creatures; the unhappy Israelites doubtless, if they were allowed to live at all, finding cool quarters in the castle dungeons. A long succession of owners, including the Pastons, followed; last among them Coke, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, who resided here in 1633.

It has already been hinted that the streets of Norwich are mazy. They are indeed the most perplexing of any town in England. Many roads run into the city, and from every direction. Glancing at a plan of it, these roads resemble the main strands of a spider's web, and the streets the cross webs. In midst of this maze is the great castle, like the spider himself; that cruel keep in whose dungeons old wrong-doing, religious and private spite, have immured many a wretched captive, like that unfortunate unknown "Bartholomew," who has left his name scratched on the walls, and the statement that he was here confined "saunz resun," a reason of the best in those times. Did he ever see the light of day again? Or did some midnight assassin murder him as many another had been done to death?

"Blanchflower," that Bigod, Earl of Norwich who built the castle called his keep when it arose on its great mound, its stone new and white. He built

upon the site of a castle thought to have been Saxon, and built so well that it became a fortress impregnable save to famine and treachery. It has, therefore, unlike weaker places that have been stormed again and again, little history, and even seven hundred years ago was little more than a prison. And a prison of sorts—for State captives first, and for common malefactors afterwards—it remained until so recently as 1883, when it was restored and then opened as the Museum and Art Gallery it now is.

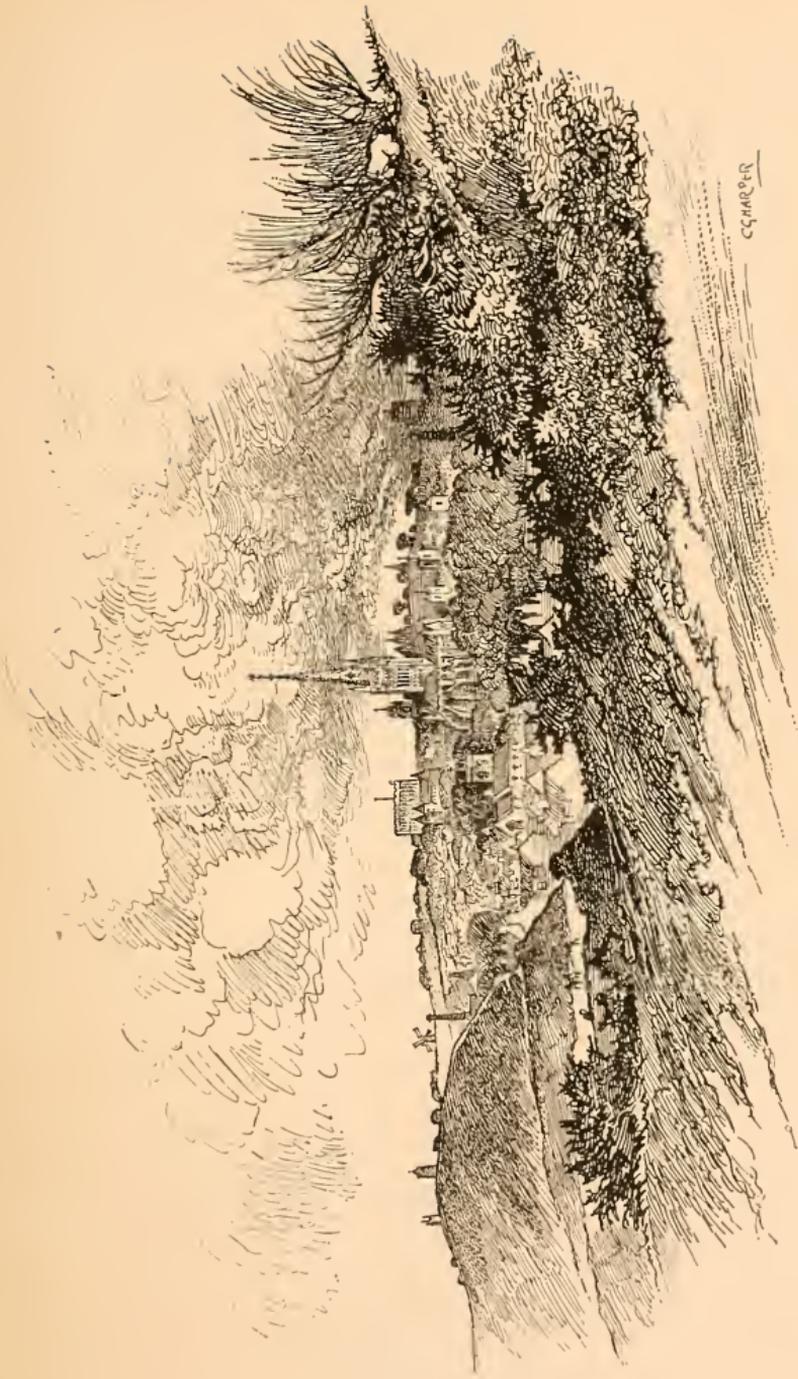
This is no place to speak at length of the cathedral that withdraws itself with such ecclesiastical reserve from the busy quarters of the city, and is approached decorously through ancient gateways in the walls of its surrounding close; the Ethelbert Gate, with that other, the Erpingham Gate, built in Harry the Fifth's time by Sir Thomas Erpingham, whose little kneeling effigy yet remains in its niche in the gable over the archway, and whose motto—variously held to be "Yenk," or "Think,"—"Denk," or "Thank"—is repeated many times on the stone work. Norman monastic gloom still broods over the close, for the cathedral, save the Decorated cloisters and the light and graceful spire in the same style, is almost wholly of that period, and the grammar school that was once a mediæval mortuary chapel and has its playground in the crypt, keeps a gravity of demeanour that, considering its history, is eminently proper.

Through the Close lies the way to Bishop's Bridge and the steep road up to Mousehold Heath: the

“Monk’s Hold,” or monastic property, of times gone by when it was common land of the manor belonging to the Benedictine priory.

X L

HERE, on this famous Heath of Mousehold where the gorse and heather and the less common broom yet flourish, despite the electric tramways that bring up the crowds and the picnic parties, Nature, rugged and unconquerable, looks down upon the city, revealed as a whole. Even though the chimneys of great factories may intrude and smirch the sky when winds permit the smoke-wreaths to trail across the view, it is a view quite unspoilable. The cathedral, as is only proper, is the grand dominating feature, with its central tower and graceful crocketed spire rising to a height of 320 feet. Second to it, on its left hand, the huge bulk of the castle keep rears up; a time-ball on its battlements to give the time o’ day to the busy citizens; those battlements where from a gibbet they hanged Robert Kett in 1549, when his rebellion was crushed and his army of 20,000 peasants who had encamped on Mousehold defeated. In similar fashion his brother William was hanged from Wymondham steeple. Between castle and cathedral the great tower of St Peter Mancroft looms up, and on the other side of the cathedral tower the twin spires of the Roman Catholic place of worship crown the sky-line. To the extreme right of



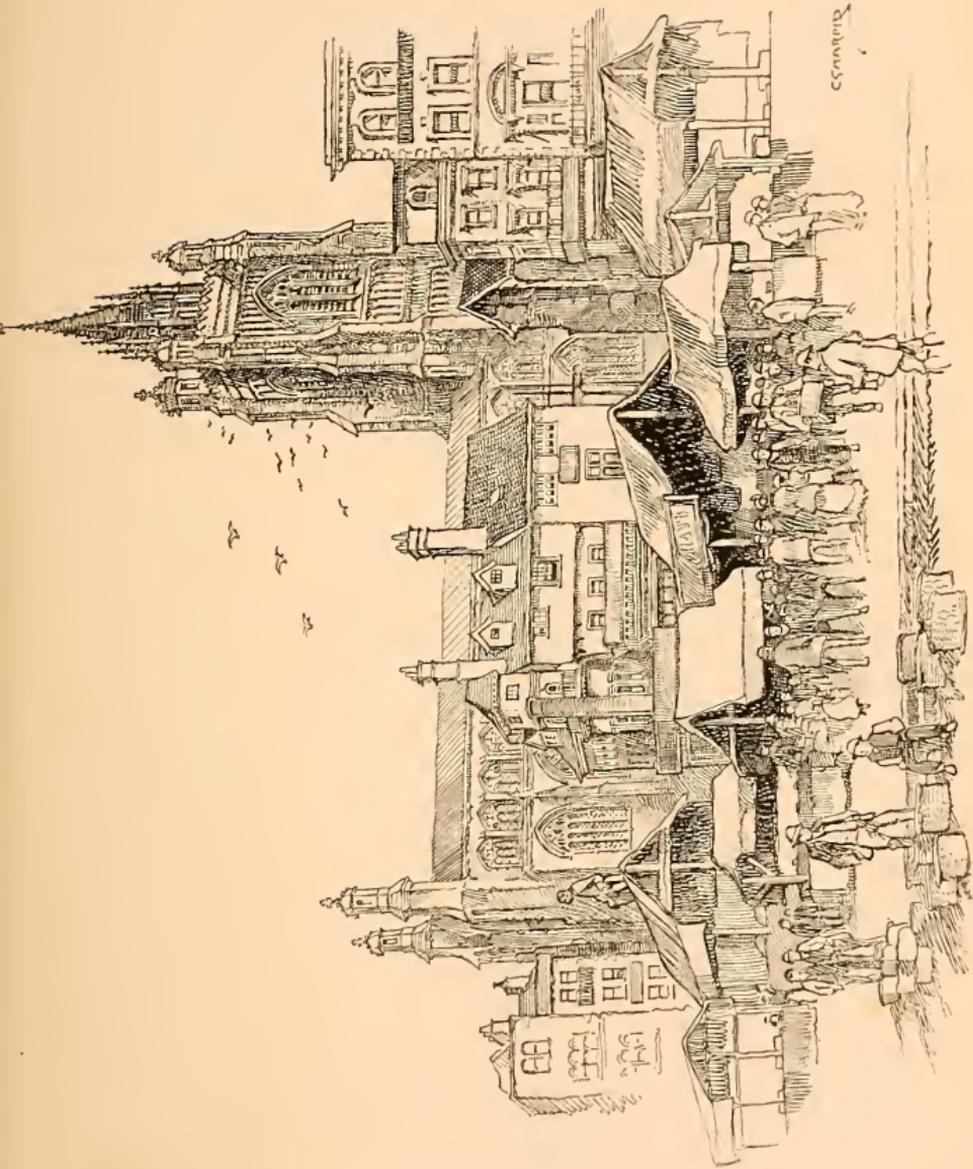
NORWICH, FROM MOUSEHOLD HEATH.

C. HARRIS

the accompanying illustration is St Giles's, and on the extreme left, in company with the pinnacled tower of a modern church, the dark tower of St John-at-Sepulchre, Bracondale, which for shortness and simplicity the citizens call "Ber Street Church." For the rest, it is a mingling of town and country, of houses and gardens and churches in great number, that one sees down there; old Norwich, in short, exclusive of the modern suburbs that are flung everywhere around and cause the Norwich of to-day to outnumber the Norwich of coaching times by 80,000 inhabitants. It must be evident from those figures that the picturesque old Norwich numbering a population of only 30,000 has been in great degree improved away and borne under by that human deluge. It is delightful now, but what it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Crome and De Wint and others sketched and painted its quaint bits, the picture-galleries of the Castle Museum can tell. Nay, even down to the mid-nineteenth century it was still very different, as a collection of early photographs in the castle proves. Then, before St Peter Mancroft was restored, before the old Fish Market was cleared away, Norwich had many more quaint nooks than now to show the stranger; even as, centuries before, it was yet more quaint and even more remarkable for its many churches than at the present time.

"The nearer the church the further from God," says the old saw. How irreligious then should Norwich be, that has even yet a cathedral and thirty-four ancient churches, and modern places of worship

fully as numerous! Let the citizens, therefore, as old Fuller suggested, "make good use of their churches and cross that pestilent proverb." These churches bear a close resemblance to one another, having nearly all been rebuilt in the Perpendicular period, some five hundred years ago, and all built of the black flint that gives a character to East Anglian architecture quite distinct from that of other districts. The time when they were thus rebuilt was not only a great period of church-building throughout England, but a time of especial prosperity in mercantile and trading Norwich; a time when guilds grew powerful and merchants wealthy in the flourishing industry of cloth-weaving introduced some time earlier by Flamand and Hollander immigrants. English wool that before had gone across the narrow seas for manufacture into stuffs was now weaved in the land of its growth. "Many thousands," says Blomefield, "that before could not get their bread could now by this means live handsomely." In that age, to become rich and prosperous was to become also a founder and benefactor of churches; hence the great ecclesiastical buildings that, according to the picturesque metaphor of an old writer, writing when there were no fewer than sixty-one churches in the city, "surrounded the cathedral as the stars do the moon." The old citizens sleep in the parish churches for which they did so much; their monuments in brass or marble, stone or alabaster curiously wrought, often with their "merchant's marks" — the distinctive signs with which they labelled their wares—engraved on them in lieu of coats of arms. It is as though a modern



NORWICH MARKET PLACE.

trader were to have the registered trade-mark of his speciality engraved on his tombstone. A typical memorial of an old Norwich trader is that of Thomas Sotherton, in the church of St John Maddermarket. He—

“Under this cold marbell sleeps,”

and was no common fellow, mark you, but

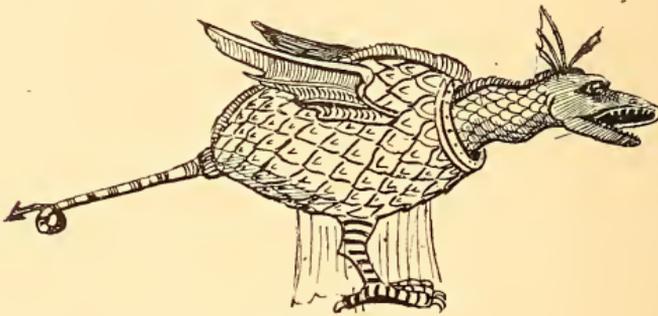
“Of gentell blood, more worthy merrit,
Whose brest enclosed an humble sperryt.”

Although the calendar of saints is a long one and more than sufficiently lengthy to have provided each one of the Norwich churches with a patron, yet so popular were some saints, that several churches to the same one are found in Norwich, as seen also in the city of London. As in old London, it was in those cases necessary to confer surnames, so to speak, upon those churches.

They are surnames of the geographical sort and not a little curious. The four St Peters are, for example, St Peter Mancroft, the largest and most important in the city, so called from the Magna Croft, or large field of the castle; St Peter per Mountergate, in King Street, named from the road by the “montem,” the hill or mount, that runs ridge-like in its rear; St Peter Hungate, the “hundred gate,” or road, reminiscent of the time when Norwich was a hundred of itself, even as it is now by itself a county; and St Peter Southgate. St Michael-at-Thorn has still thorn trees growing in its churchyard; St Michael Coslany, with St Mary’s

of identical surname, was built in Coast Lane; and St Michael-at-Plea was named from its neighbourhood to an ecclesiastical court. St John Madder-market is thus distinguished from other St Johns—St John Timberhill and St John-at-Sepulchre. In the neighbourhood of the first-named, madder for the dyers' use was marketed; while at Timberhill was the market in wood. St Martin-at-Palace, by the old Bishop's Palace, and St-Martin-at-Oak take up the tale, which might be continued at great length.

The business life of modern Norwich centres in



NORWICH SNAP.

the Market Place and the streets that immediately lead out of it: the mouldering signs of old commerce peer in peaked gables, clustered chimneys and old red-brick and plastered walls in the lanes and along the wharves of the Wensum.

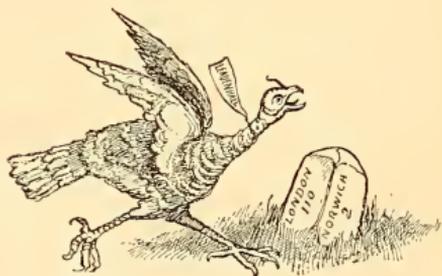
There trade hustles and elbows to the front, in many-storeyed piles of brick, stone and stucco, with great show of goods in plate-glass windows and bold advertisement of gilt lettering. All those signs of prosperity may be seen, and on a larger scale, in London, but not even in London are the electric

tram cars so great a menace to life and limb as in these narrow and winding streets, where they dash along at reckless speed.

The Market Place is not yet wholly spoilt. The huge bulk of St Peter Mancroft and a row of queer old houses beside it still avert that disaster, and form a picture from one point of view; while the flint-faced Guildhall stands at another corner of the great open place and in its Council Chamber, in use five hundred years ago as a Court of Justice, and still so used, proves the continuity of "our rough island story." In a dark and dismal cell of the Guildhall once lay the heroic martyr, Thomas Bilney, who "testified" at the stake in the Lollards' Pit, where many another had already yielded up his life. He wondered, as others before and after him had done and were to do, whether the tortured body could pass steadfast through the fiery ordeal; and on the eve of his martyrdom put that doubt to the test by holding his finger in the flame of a candle. That test sufficed, and he suffered with unshaken constancy when the morrow dawned.

The Guildhall has less tragical memories than this, and was indeed the scene of many old-time municipal revelries in times before Corporations became reformed. But old revels and frolics have been discontinued, and "Snap," the Norwich dragon, a fearsome beast of gilded wickerwork, who was wont to be paraded from the Guildhall at the annual mayoral election, and last frolicked with his attendant beadles and whiffers in 1835, now reposes in the Castle Museum.

The Market Place on Saturday, when the wide open square is close-packed with stalls, is Norwich at its most characteristic time and in its most characteristic spot. In it the story of the Norwich Road may fitly end. The city itself, glanced at in the immediately foregoing pages, could not yield its story in less space than that occupied by that of the road itself.



INDEX

Aldgate, 1, 8, 11, 13, 51
 — Pump, 11

“Bacon End,” 180
 Boreham, 127-129
 Bow, 6, 8, 75-80
 — Bridge, 77-79
 Brentwood, 23, 94-99, 132, 200
 Brockford, 257
 Brome, 261
 Brook Street, 94
 — Hill, 94, 132

Caistor St Edmunds, 4, 298, 301-303

Capel St Mary, 236
 Chadwell Heath, 51, 83, 85, 86
 — Street, 86
 Chelmsford, 5, 40, 51, 52, 54, 57, 80, 114-121, 127, 167, 200
 Chipping Hill, 133-139, 302
 Claydon, 252
 — Hall, 252

Coaches :—

“Confatharrat,” 34
 “Duke of Beaufort’s Retaliator,” 46, 140
 “Expedition,” 39, 306
 “Gurney’s Original Day Coach,” 39, 267, 306
 “Ipswich Blues,” 23, 39, 132
 “— and Yarmouth Mail,” 41, 45
 “— Post Coaches,” 36
 “— Shannon,” 39
 “— Umpire,” 81
 “Magnet,” 39, 306
 “New Colchester,” 81
 “Norwich Machine,” 34-36, 306
 “— Mail,” 39, 40, 43
 “— Post Coach,” 39
 “— Times,” 28, 39, 267

Coaches :—

“Parcel Mail,” 54-57, 111
 “Phænomenon,” 39, 306
 “Telegraph,” 306

Coaching, 30-51, 54-57, 81, 82, 97, 132, 142-151, 267

Coaching Notabilities :—

Alexander, Israel, 46, 140
 Nelson, Mrs Ann, 19-25, 27, 81, 132
 —, George, 19
 —, John, 19, 25-27
 —, Robert, 19

Suggate (Norwich carrier), 34
 Thorogood, John, 28, 267

Colchester, 5, 6, 43, 54, 56, 94, 156, 163, 165, 167, 177, 179-212, 217
 Constable, John, R.A., 149, 154, 217-219, 232, 238

Copdock, 236

Copford, 175, 176

Copperfield, David, 28, 44, 45, 150, 226, 274

Creeting, All Saints, 253

Creetings, The, 255

Dedham, 217-221

Deodand, Law of, 50

Dickleburgh, 6, 277-279

Dilbridge, 217

Dunston, 298

Feering, 152, 153, 158

Forest Gate, 81

Goodmayes, 83

Gore Pit, 152, 176

Great Eastern Railway, 25, 46, 51-54, 83, 152, 158, 175

Hare Street, 94

Hartford Bridge, 304

Hatfield Peverel, 129 131

Highwaymen, 29, 30, 41, 58-62,
85, 86, 87, 88, 99, 142, 143,
214

Highwaymen :—

Cratfield, Rev. Wm., 30
King, Matthew, 58
— Robert, 58
— Tom, 58, 61
Tapyrtone, Thomas, 30
Turpin, Richard, 57-62

Ilford, 6, 29, 80, 82, 83, 167

Ingatestone, 6, 56, 99, 105-110

Inns (mentioned at length) :—

“Angel,” Colchester, 196, 197
—, Kelvedon, 140, 141, 147,
148, 162
—, Norwich, 34, 306
“Belle Sauvage,” Ludgate
Hill, 19
“Black Boy,” Chelmsford, 121
“Blossoms,” Laurence Lane,
34
“Blue Boar,” Whitechapel, 28
“— Posts,” Witham, 132
“Bull,” Bishopsgate Street,
15, 37
—, Leadenhall Street, 12, 15
—, Whitechapel, 15, 19-28
“Bull and Mouth,” St
Martin’s-le-Grand, 15
“Cauliflower,” Ilford, 83
“Coach and Horses,” Upton,
81
“Cock,” Thwaite, 260
“Cross Keys,” Gresham
Street, 15
“Duke’s Head,” Wacton, 288
“Fleece,” Brook Street, 94
“Flower Pot,” Bishopsgate
Street, 15
“Four Swans,” 34
“Golden Cross,” Charing
Cross, 15
“Good Woman,” Widford,
111-114
“Grave Maurice,” White-
chapel, 69
“Great White Horse,” Ips-
wich, 36, 37, 228, 247-252,
306
“Gun,” Dedham, 221, 228

Inns (mentioned at length) :—

“Half Moon,” Ipswich, 243
“Horse and Leaping Bar,”
Whitechapel, 29
“King’s Head,” Dickleburgh,
278
“Lion and Lamb,” Ipswich,
243, 244
“Magpie,” Little Stonham,
256
“Maid’s Head,” Newton
Flotman, 297
— —, Norwich, 34, 35,
306, 307
“Music House,” Norwich,
307
“Norfolk Hotel,” Norwich,
306
“Old Red Lion,” White-
chapel, 57
“Popinjay,” Norwich, 34
“Queen’s Head,” Thwaite,
259, 260
“Rampant Horse,” Norwich,
306
“Red Lion,” Colchester, 196
— —, Kelvedon, 140
— —, Whitechapel, 57
“Rising Sun,” Manor Park,
81
“Saracen’s Head,” Aldgate,
14, 16, 17, 18
— —, Chelmsford, 117-
120
“Spread Eagle,” Gracechurch
Street, 15-19
“Sun,” Kelvedon, 152
“Swan,” Washbrook, 237
“Swan - with - Two - Necks,”
Gresham Street, 15, 43
“Three Cups,” Colchester, 37,
167, 196
— —, Springfield, 122
“Three Nuns,” Aldgate, 29
“Vine,” Mile End, 73
“Wheatsheaf,” Kelvedon, 152
“White Elm,” Copdock, 237
“— Hart,” Brentwood, 37,
97, 98, 119
— —, Colchester, 196
— —, Scole, 262-271
— —, Witham, 132

- Inns (mentioned at length) :—
 "White Horse," Fetter Lane,
 15
 — "Horse," Widford, 112,
 114
 Ipswich, 54, 56, 132, 212, 237-252
 Kelvedon, 5, 139-153, 162, 176
- Langham, 218
 Lexden, 52, 147, 177-181, 302
 — Heath, 177-179, 187, 190, 201
 Little Stonham, 6, 256
 "London Stone," 4, 13
 Long Stratton, 6, 292-295
- Manor Park, 81
 Margaretting, 57, 110, 111
 Mark's Tey, 158, 175, 176
 Martyr's Tree, 95, 96
 Mile End, 70-74, 163
 "Mockbeggar Hall," 252
 Moulsham, 114
 Mountnessing, 101-105
- Needham Market, 255
 New Hall, 123-127
 Newton Flotman, 296-299
 Norwich, 51, 52, 161, 301, 302-
 320
- Old Ford, 6, 8, 76
 Old-time travellers :—
 Caroline of Brunswick, Prin-
 cess, Queen of George IV.,
 165-168
 Charlotte of Mecklenburg-
 Strelitz, Princess, Queen
 of George III., 162, 163
 Kemp, Will, 79, 82, 161
 Johnson, Samuel, 164, 165
 Queen Elizabeth, 304, 307
 William III., 140, 141, 161.
- Old-time travelling, 142-150, 159-
 168, 178, 225-237
- Parcel Mail, 54-57, 111
- Pulham St Mary Magdalene, 286,
 287
 — St Mary the Virgin, 286,
 287
 Puttels Bridge, 93, 94
- Rivenhall End, 139
 Romford, 5, 23, 29, 51, 82, 85, 88-
 93, 167
- Scole, 6, 40, 262-272
 Seven Kings, 51, 83-85
 Shenfield, 99, 100
 Shrubland Park, 253, 255
 Springfield, 121-123
 Spurgeon, Rev. C. H., 151
 Stanway, 6, 174-178
 Steam Coaches, 46
 Stoke Ash, 257, 260
 Stonham Aspall, 256
 — Earls, 256
 Stratford (Langthorne), 78, 80, 81
 — -le-Bow, 6, 8, 75-80
 — St Mary, 5, 6, 223-225, 274
 Swainsthorpe, 298
- Tasburgh, 292, 295, 296, 297, 302
 Thwaite, 259
 Tivetshall St Margaret, 6, 284, 287
 — St Mary, 6, 287
 Toll-gates, 40, 70, 71, 78, 87, 93,
 94, 139, 179, 222, 237, 257, 288
- Uphall, 5, 302
 Upton Park, 81
- Wacton, 288, 292
 — Common, 288
 Washbrook, 236
 West Ham, 77, 81
 Whalebone House, 86, 87
 Whitechapel, 2, 12, 62-69
 Whitton Street, 252
 Widford, 111-114, 161
 Witham, 23, 131-139, 163
 Woodgrange, 81
 Writtle, 5
- Yaxley, 260

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