

# England of My Heart : Spring eBook

## England of My Heart : Spring by Edward Hutton (writer)

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# **Page 1**

## **THE DOWNS**

THE WEALD OF SUSSEX, NORTH OF LEWES

## **ARUNDEL CASTLE**

THE MARKET CROSS, CHICHESTER

## **BOSHAM**

THE TUDOR HOUSE, OPPOSITE ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, SOUTHAMPTON

## **IN THE NEW FOREST**

ROMSEY ABBEY

## **NORTH TRANSEPT, WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL**

ST CROSS, WINCHESTER

## **SELBORNE FROM THE HANGER**

ENGLAND OF MY HEART

## **CHAPTER I**

THE PILGRIMS' ROAD TO CANTERBURY

## **FROM THE TABARD INN TO DARTFORD**

When I determined to set out once more to traverse and to possess England of my heart, it was part of my desire first of all to follow, as far as might be, in the footsteps of Chaucer's pilgrims. Therefore I sought the Tabard Inn in Southwark.

For true delight, it seems to me, a journey, especially if it be for love or pleasure, should always have about it something of devotion, something a little rigid too, and dutiful, at least in its opening stages; and in thus determining my way I secured this. For I promised myself that I would start from the place whence they set out so long ago to



visit and to pray at the tomb of the greatest of English saints, that I would sleep where they slept, find pleasure in the villages they enjoyed, climb the hills and look on the horizons that greeted them also so many hundred years ago, till at last I stood by the “blissful martyr’s tomb,” that had once made so great a rumour in the world and now was nothing.

In many ways I came short of all this, as will be seen; but especially in one thing—the matter of time. Chaucer and his pilgrims are generally thought to have spent three and a half or four days and three nights upon the road. It is true they went ahorseback and I afoot, but nevertheless a man may easily walk the fifty-six miles from London to Canterbury in four days. I failed because I found so much to see by the wayside. And to begin with there was London itself, which I was about to leave.

It was very early on an April morning when I set out from my home, coming through London on foot and crossing the river by London Bridge. It was there I lingered first, in the half light, as it were to say good-bye.

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I do not know what it is in London that at long last and in some quite impersonal way clutches at the heart and receives one's eager affection. At first, even though you be one of her children, she seems and for how long like something fallen, calling you with the monotonous, mighty, complaining voice of a fallen archangel, ceaselessly through the days, the years, the centuries and the ages. She is one of the oldest of European cities, she is one of the most beautiful, of all capitals she is by far the most full of character: and yet she is not easy to know or to love. Perhaps she does not belong to us, but is something apart, something in and for herself, a mighty and a living thing, owing us nothing and regarding us, whom she tortures, with a sort of indifference, if not contempt.

And yet she is ours after all; she belongs to us, is more perhaps our very likeness and self than the capital of any other people. What is Berlin but a brutalised village, or Paris now but cosmopolis, or Rome but a universe? She is ours, the very gate of England of my heart. For she stands there striding the boundary of my country, the greatest of our cities, the greatest even of our industrial cities—a negative to all the rest. To the North she says Nay continually, for she is English, the greater successor of Winchester, and in her voice is the soul of the South, the real England, the England of my heart.

Ah, we have never known her or loved her enough or understood that she is a universe, without the self-consciousness of lesser things or the prepared beauty of mortal places. Indeed, she has something of the character of the sea which is our home, its changefulness, its infinity, its pathos in the toiling human life that traverses it. Almost featureless if you will, she is always under the guidance of her ample sky, responding immediately to every mood of the clouds; and in her, beauty grows up suddenly out of life and is gone e'er we can apprehend it....

But to come into Southwark on a Spring morning in search of Chaucer and the Tabard Inn is to ask of London more than she will give you. It is strange, seeing that she is so English, that for her the living are more than the dead. Consider England, southern England, if you know her well enough, and remember what in the face of every other country of Europe she has conserved of the past in material and tangible things—roads, boundaries, churches, houses, and indeed whole towns and villages. Yet London has so little of her glory and her past about her in material things, that it is often only by her attitude to life you might know she is not a creation of yesterday. It is true the fire of 1666 destroyed almost all, but apparently it did not destroy the Tabard Inn, which nevertheless is gone—it and its successors.

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Something remained that should have been sacred, not indeed from Chaucer's day but at least from that of the Restoration, something that was beautiful, till some forty years ago. All is gone now; of the old Inn as we may see it in a drawing of 1810, a two-storied building with steepish roofs of tiles, dormer windows and railed balconies supported below by pillars of stone, above by pillars of wood, standing about two sides of a courtyard in which the carrier's long covered carts from Horsham or Rochester are waiting, nothing at all remains. The last of it was finally destroyed in 1875, and the Tabard Inn of the new fashion was built at the corner as we see.

The old hostelry, which besides its own beauty had this claim also upon our reverence, that it represented in no unworthy fashion the birthplace as it were of English poetry, owes of course all its fame to Chaucer, who lay there on the night before he set out for Canterbury as he tells us:

When that Aprille with his shoures sote  
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote....  
Bifel that, in that season on a day  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At night was come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye  
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;  
The chambres and the shelter weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste  
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,  
That I was of hir felawshipe anon  
And made forward erly for to ryse,  
To take our wey, there as I yow devyse.

It is in these verses lies all the fame of the Tabard, which it might seem was not a century old when Chaucer lay there. In the year 1304 the Abbot of Hyde, near Winchester, bought two houses here held of the Archbishop of Canterbury by William de Lategareshall. The abbot bought these houses in order to have room to build himself a town house, and it is said that at the same time he built a hostelry for travellers; at any rate three years later we find him applying to the Bishop of Winchester for leave to build a chapel "near the inn." In a later deed we are told that "the abbots lodgeinge was wyninge to the backside of the inn called the Tabarde and had a garden attached." Stow, however, tells us: "Within this inn was also the lodging of the Abbot of Hide (by the city of Winchester), a fair house for him and his train when he came from that city to Parliament."

Here then from the Inn of the Abbot of Hyde Chaucer set out for Canterbury with those pilgrims, many of whose portraits he has given us with so matchless a power. The host of the inn at that time was Harry Bailey, member of Parliament for Southwark in 1376 and 1379. He was the wise and jocund leader of the pilgrimage as we know, and though Chaucer speaks of him last, not one of the pilgrims is drawn with a livelier touch than he:



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Greet chere made our hoste us everichon  
And to the soper sette us anon;  
And served us with vitaille at the beste,  
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste.  
A semely man our hoste was with alle  
For to han ben a marshal in an halle;  
A large man he was eyen stepe,  
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe;  
Bold of his speche and wys, and wel y-taught,  
And of manhod him lakkede right naught.  
Eek therto he was right a mery man,  
And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
And spak of mirthe amonges others thinges,  
Whan that we hadde maad our rekeninges....

A noble portrait in the English manner; there is but one, and that is wanting, we should have preferred. I mean the portrait of Chaucer himself—that “wittie” Chaucer who “sate in a Chaire of Gold covered with Roses writing prose and risme, accompanied with the Spirites of many Kyngs, Knightes and Faire Ladies.” For that we must go to a lesser pen, to Greene, who thus describes him in his vision:

His stature was not very tall,  
Lean he was; his legs were small  
Hos’d within a stock of red  
A button’d bonnet on his head  
From under which did hang I ween  
Silver hairs both bright and sheen;  
His beard was white, trimmed round;  
His countenance blithe and merry found;  
A sleeveless jacket, large and wide  
With many plaits and skirts side  
Of water-camlet did he wear;  
A whittle by his belt he bear;  
His shoes were corned broad before;  
His ink-horn at his side he wore,  
And in his hand he bore a book;—  
Thus did this ancient poet look.

There is one other personage upon whom indeed the whole pilgrimage depended of whom Chaucer says next to nothing, but we should do wrong to forget him: I mean the “blissful martyr” himself—St Thomas of Canterbury. In old days, certainly in Chaucer’s, we should have been reminded of him more than once on our way e’er we gained the Tabard. For upon old London Bridge, the first stone bridge, built in the end of the twelfth century, there stood in the very midst of it a chapel of marvellous beauty with a crypt,



from which by a flight of steps one might reach the river, dedicated in honour of St Thomas Becket. This chapel was built in memory of St Thomas by one Peter, priest of St Mary Colechurch, where the martyr had been christened. It was this same Peter who began to build the great bridge of stone, and when he died he was buried in the chapel he had erected in the midst of it.

Such a wonder was, however, by no means the only memorial here, at the very opening of the way, of the great and holy end and purpose of it.



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Every schoolboy knows St Thomas's Hospital in Lambeth, but not all know that the saint whose name that hospital bears is not the Apostle, but England's Martyr. Now, until 1868 St Thomas's Hospital stood not in Lambeth but in Southwark, upon the site of London Bridge Station. [Footnote: The fact is still remembered in the name of St Thomas Street, leading out of the Borough High Street on the east.] It seems that within the precincts of St Mary Overy a house of Austin Canons, now the Anglican Cathedral of St Saviour, Southwark, was a hospital for the sick and poor founded by St Thomas, which after his beatification was dedicated in his honour. But in the first years of the thirteenth century, Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, rebuilt the little house in a healthier situation—*ubi aqua est uberior et aer est melior*—where the water was purer and the air better, and this new house, finished in 1215, of course also bore the name of St Thomas of Canterbury. That the hospital fulfilled its useful purpose we know from a petition which it presented to Pope Innocent VI., in 1357, wherein it was stated that so many sick and poor resorted to it that it could not support its charges. Not quite two hundred years later, in 1539, a few days before the feast of St Thomas upon December 29, it was surrendered to King Henry VIII., the infamous Layton having been its visitor. From the king it was bought by the City of London, a rare comment upon its suppression, and so notoriously useful was it that Edward VI. was compelled to refund it, and therefore in some sort it still remains to us. It is curious to note that, ages before the hospital came to Lambeth, St Thomas was at home there, for he had a statue upon the Lollards' Tower, and it was the custom of the watermen to doff their caps to it as they rowed by.

It is meet and right that this pilgrimage should be begun with thoughts of St Thomas, and especially of what we owe to him, for the first few miles of the way upon what we need not doubt was of old the Pilgrims' road, is anything but uplifting, crowded though it be with memories, most of them of course far later than the Canterbury pilgrimage. As you go down the Borough High Street, for Southwark is of course the old *borgo* of London, and all the depressing ugliness of modern life, it is not of anything so serene as that great poet of the fourteenth century, the father of English poetry, that you think, but of one who nevertheless, in the characteristic nationalism of his art, in his humanity and love of his fellow-men, was only second to Chaucer, and in his compassion for the poor and lowly only second to St Thomas: I mean Charles Dickens. No one certainly can pass the site of the Marshalsea Prison without recalling that solemn and haunting description in the preface to "Little Dorrit": "Whosoever goes into Marshalsea Place, turning out of Angel Court leading to Bermondsey, will find his feet on the very paving stones of the extinct Marshalsea jail; will see its narrow yard to the right and to the left, very little altered if at all, except that the walls were lowered when the place got free; will look upon the rooms in which the debtors lived; will stand among the crowding ghosts of many miserable years."

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It is still of Dickens most of us will think in passing St George's Church, for was it not there that Little Dorrit was christened and married, and was it not in the vestry there she slept with the burial-book for a pillow? But St George's has other memories too, for it was there that Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, who staunchly refused the oath of supremacy to Elizabeth, was buried at midnight after his death in the Marshalsea, on September 5th, 1569. There too General Monk was married to Anne Clarges.

These memories, for the most part so unhappy, have, however, nothing to do with the Pilgrims' Way. No memory of that remains at all amid all the dismal wretchedness of to-day, until one comes to the "Thomas a Becket" public-house at the corner of Albany Road. This was the site of the "watering of Saint Thomas":

A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,  
Up roes our host, and was our aller cok,  
And gadrede us togirde, alle in a flok,  
And forth we riden, a litel more than pas  
Unto the watering of seint Thomas.

The "watering of St Thomas" was a spring dedicated to St Thomas, and it came to be the first halting-place of the pilgrims. It is still remembered in the name of St Thomas's Road close by, and not inappropriately in the tavern which bears St Thomas's name. It was here that the immortal tales were begun:

And there our host bigan his hors areste,  
And seyde; Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.  
Ye woot your forward, and it yow recorde  
If even-song and morwe-song acorde,  
Lat see now who shal telle the firste tale....

No memory of the pilgrims would seem to remain at all in the road after St Thomas's watering until we come to Deptford. The "Knight's Tale" and the "Miller's Tale" have filled, and one would think more than filled that short three miles of road, till in the Reve's Prologue the host began "to spake as loudly as a king...."

Sey forth thy tale and tarie nat the tyme,  
Lo, Depeford! and it is half-way pryme.

Nothing more lugubrious is to be found to-day in the whole length of the old road than Deptford; but it is there that we begin to be free of the mean streets. For Deptford, which the pilgrims reached, after their early start, at "half-way pryme"—any hour, I suppose, between six and nine—lies at the foot of Blackheath Hill above Greenwich:

Lo, Greenwich, ther many a shrewe is inne.

Deptford Bridge, the only remaining landmark of old time, by which we cross Deptford Creek, had in the fourteenth century a hermitage at its eastern end dedicated in honour of St Catherine of Alexandria, and Mass was said there continually from Chaucer's day down to the suppression in 1531, the king, Henry VIII., having previously helped to repair the chapel.

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It is at Deptford, as I say, that we begin to leave the mean streets, for at the cross-roads we turn up Blackheath Hill, and though this is not in all probability the ancient way, it is as near it as modern conditions have allowed us. The old road, as far as can be made out, ran farther to the east, quite alongside Greenwich Park, and not over the middle of the Heath, as the modern road does. Blackheath is not alluded to in Chaucer's poem, though it must have been famous at the time he was writing, for in 1381 Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, and their company were there gathered. Perhaps the most famous spectacle, however, that Blackheath has witnessed was not this abortive revolt of the peasants nor the rising of Jack Cade in 1450, but the meeting here in 1400 of King Henry IV. and the Emperor of Constantinople, who came to England to ask for assistance against the ever-encroaching Turk, then at the gates of Constantinople, which some fifty years later was to fall into his hands. Blackheath, indeed, has always played a considerable part in the history of southern England, partly because it was the last great open space on the southern confines of London, and partly because of the royal residence at Greenwich. Fifteen years after it had seen a guest so strange as the Emperor of the East, it saw Henry V. return from Agincourt, and the Mayor of London with the aldermen and four hundred citizens, "all in scarlet with hoods of red and white," greet the hero king.

... London doth pour out her citizens  
The mayor and all his brethren in best sort  
Like to the senators of the antique Rome  
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,  
Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in!

Across the Heath we go, taking the road on the right at the triangle, before long to find ourselves perhaps for the first time on the very road the pilgrims followed—the great Roman highway of the Watling Street.

I call the Watling Street a great Roman highway, for that, as we know it, is what it is, but in its origin it is far older than the Roman occupation. It ran right across England from the continental gate at Dover, through Canterbury to Chester, fording the Thames at Lambeth, and it was the first of the British trackways which the Romans straightened, built up, and paved. It has been in continuous use for more than three thousand years, and may therefore be said to be the oldest road in England. It is older than the greatness of London, for in its arrow flight across England it ignores the City. After the ford at Lambeth, to-day represented by Lambeth Bridge, an older crossing of the Thames than that at London Bridge, it mounted the northern slope, passing perhaps across the present gardens of Buckingham Palace and the eastern end of Hyde Park, where to-day it is lost or merely represented by Grosvenor Place and Park Lane, to cross the great western road out of London at Tyburn, the original "Cross Roads," the ancient place of execution close by the present Marble Arch, and to pursue its way, as we may see it still, directly and in true Roman fashion down what we know as Edgware Road. That great north-western highway lies over the very pavement of the Romans, which lies only a few feet below the surface of the modern road.

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It is then upon this most ancient highway that in the footsteps of the Britons, the Romans their beneficent conquerors, and the English pilgrims our forefathers, we shall march on to Canterbury. The road of course is broken here and there, indeed in many places, and notably between Dartford and Rochester, but for the most part it remains after three thousand years the ordinary highway between the capital and the archiepiscopal city.

The Watling Street takes Shooters' Hill, so called, I suppose, from the highwaymen that infested the woods thereabouts, in true Roman fashion, and it is from its summit that we get the first really great view on our way, for that so famous from Greenwich Park does not properly belong to our journey. We must, however, turn to another and a later poet than Chaucer for any description of that tremendous spectacle. Here indeed, more than in any other prospect the road affords, the horizon is changed from that Chaucer looked upon.

[Illustration: *Shooters' hill*]

For we turn to gaze on London, the Protestant, not the Catholic, city:

A mighty mass of brick and smoke and shipping,  
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye  
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping  
In sight, then lost amid the forestry  
Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping  
On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy;  
A huge dun cupola like a foolscap crown  
On a fool's head—and there is London town!

Don Juan had got out on Shooters' Hill  
Sunset the time, the place the same declivity  
Which looks along that vale of good and ill  
Where London streets ferment in full activity;  
While everything around was calm and still  
Except the creak of wheels which on their pivot he  
Heard—and that bee-like, babbling, busy hum  
Of cities, that boil over with their scum.

The prospect eastward across the broad valley of the Darent, if less wonderful, is assuredly far lovelier than that north-westward over London; but from the top of Shooters' Hill we probably do not follow the actual route of the ancient way until we come to Welling. The present road down the hill eastward is said to date from 1739 only. [Footnote: See H. Littlehales, "Some Notes on the Road from Canterbury in the Middle Ages" (Chaucer Society, 1898).]

There is nothing to keep us in Welling, nor indeed in Bexley Heath, except to note that they are the first two Kentish villages upon our route, now little more than suburban places spoiled of any virtue they may have possessed. It is said that at Clapton Villa in the latter place there is preserved “an ancient and perfect sacramental wafer”—perhaps an unique treasure.

The road runs straight on through a rather sophisticated countryside, almost into Crayford, but in preparing to cross the Cray the old road has apparently been lost. We may be sure, however, of not straying more than a few yards out of the way, if we keep as straight on as maybe, that is to say, if we take the road to the right at the fork, which later passes Crayford church on the south.

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Crayford, though it be anything but picturesque, is nevertheless not without interest. It is the Creccanford of the "Saxon Chronicle," and was the scene of the half-legendary final battle between the Britons here and Hengist, who utterly discomfited them, so that we read they forsook all this valley, even, so we are asked to believe, those strange caves which they are said to have burrowed in the chalk for their retreat, and which are so plentiful hereabouts, but which assuredly are infinitely older than the advent of the Saxon pirates.

The real interest of Crayford, however, as of more than one place in this valley, lies in its church. This is dedicated in honour of the companion of St Augustine, St Paulinus, who became the third Bishop of Rochester. The form of the church is curious, the arcade of the nave being in the midst of it, while the chancel, of about the same width as the nave, is possessed of two arcades and divided into three aisles; thus the arcade of the nave abuts upon the centre of the chancel arch. Parts of the church certainly date from Chaucer's day, but most of it is Perpendicular in style.

More interesting than Crayford itself are North Cray and Foot's Cray in the upper valley beyond Bexley. At North Cray there is one of the best pictures Sassoferato ever painted, a Crucifixion, over the altar. At Foot's Cray, the church, besides being beautiful in its situation, possesses a great square Norman font.

These places are, however, off the Pilgrims' Road, which climbs up through Crayford High Street, and then in about two miles begins to descend into the very ancient town of Dartford, where it is said Chaucer's pilgrims slept, their first night on the road.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PILGRIMS' ROAD

### FROM DARTFORD TO ROCHESTER

The entry into Dartford completes the first and, it must be confessed, the dullest portion of the Pilgrims' Road to Canterbury. Here at Dartford the pilgrims slept, here to-day we say farewell to all that suburban district which now stretches for so many miles in every direction round the capital, spoiling the country as such and making of it a kind of unreality very hard to tolerate. The traveller must then realise that it is only at Dartford his pleasure will begin.

Dartford, as one sees at first sight, is an old, a delightful, English town, full of happiness and old-world memories. Its situation is characteristic, for it lies in the deep and narrow valley of the Darent between two abrupt hills, that to the west of chalk, that to the east of sand, up both of which it climbs without too much insistence. Between these two hills



runs a rapid stream from the Downs to the southward, that below the town opens out suddenly into a small estuary or creek. Where the Watling Street forded the Darent there grew up the town of Dartford, on the verge of the marshes within reach of the tide, but also within reach of an inexhaustible river of fresh water. The ford was presently replaced by a ferry, and later still, in the latter years of Henry VI., by a great bridge, as we see, but the town had already taken its name from its origin, and to this day is known as Dartford, the ford of the Darent.



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The situation of Dartford is thus very picturesque, and as we might suppose its main street is the old Roman highway that the pilgrims used. This descends the West Hill steeply after passing the Priory, or as it is now called the Place House, the first religious house which Dartford could boast that the pilgrims would see. In Chaucer's day this was a new foundation, Edward III., in 1355, having established here a convent of Augustinian nuns dedicated in honour of Our Lady and St Margaret. The house became extremely popular with the great Kentish families, for it was not only very richly endowed, but always governed by a prioress of noble birth, Princess Bridget, youngest daughter of Edward IV., at one time holding the office, as later did Lady Jane Scrope and Lady Margaret Beaumont: all are buried within. In the miserable time of Henry VIII., when it was suppressed, its revenues amounted to nearly four hundred pounds a year. The king immediately seized the house for his own pleasure, but later gave it to Anne of Cleves. On her death it came back to the Crown, but James I. exchanged it with the Cecil family for their mansion of Theobalds. They in their turn parted with it to Sir Edward Darcy. Little remains of the old house to-day, a gate-house of the time of Henry VII., and a wing of the convent, now a farm-house; but considerable parts of the extensive walls may be seen.

It may well have been when the bell of that convent was ringing the Angelus that Chaucer and his pilgrims entered Dartford on that April evening so long ago. As they came down the steep hill, before they entered the town, they would pass an almshouse or hospital, midway upon the hill, a leper-house in all likelihood, dedicated in honour of St Mary Magdalen. Something of this remains to us in the building we see, which, however, is later than the Reformation.

Nothing I think actually in the town can, as we see it, be said to have been there when Chaucer went by except the very noble church. He and his pilgrims looked and wondered, as we do still, upon the great tower said to have been built by Gundulph as a fortress to hold the ford, which, altered though it has been more than once, is still something at which one can only admire. The upper part, however, dates from the fifteenth century. Then there is the chancel restored in 1863, the north part of which is supposed to have been built in the thirteenth century in honour of St Thomas himself, no doubt by the pilgrims who, passing by on their way to Canterbury, were wont to spend a night in Dartford town, and certainly to hear Mass in the place of their sojourn e'er they set out in the earliest morning. The screen is of the fourteenth century, as are the arcades of the nave and the windows on the north, and these too Chaucer may have seen; but all the monuments, some of them interesting and charming, are much later, dating from Protestant days. Certain brasses, however, remain from the fifteenth century, notably that of Richard Martyn and his wife (1402), that of Agnes Molyngton (1454), and that of Joan Rothele (1464). There is, too, a painting of St George and the Dragon at the end of the south chancel chapel, behind the organ.

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Within the town one or two houses remain, perhaps in their foundations, from the fifteenth century. The best of these is that on the left just west of the church, at the corner of Bullis Lane. This house, according to Dunken, the historian of Dartford, was the dwelling of one "John Grovehurst in the reign of King Edward IV. That gentleman in 1465 obtained permission of the Vicar and church-wardens of Dartford to erect a chimney on a part of the churchyard, and in acknowledgment thereof provided a lamp to burn perpetually during the celebration of divine service in the parish church. The principal apartment in the upper floor (a room about twenty-five feet by twenty feet) was originally hung round with tapestry, said to be worked by the nuns of the priory, who were occasionally permitted to visit at the mansion. The principal figures were in armour, and two of them as large as life, latterly called Hector and Andromache; in the background was the representation of a large army with inscribed banners."

[Illustration: *Dartford church and bridge*]

The churchyard upon which John Grovehurst was allowed to erect a chimney was till about the middle of the nineteenth, century larger than it now is, part of it at that time being taken "to make the road more commodious for passengers." This road was of course the Pilgrims' Road, the Watling Street. That this always passed to the south of the church is certain, but it may have turned a little in ancient time to take the ford. It turns a little to-day to approach the bridge, and thereafter climbs the East Hill.

Dartford Bridge, which already in the Middle Ages had supplanted ford and ferry, happily remains to the extent of about a third of the width of the two pointed arches which touch the banks. It was kept in order and repair by the hermit who dwelt in a cell at the foot of the bridge on the east, a cell older than the bridge, for the hermits used to serve the ford. Here stood the Shrine of Our Lady and St Catherine of Alexandria, which was much favoured by the pilgrims, so we may well suppose that Chaucer and his friends did not pass it by without a reverence.

Here too at the eastern end of the town stood a hospital dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity, but this Chaucer knew not, any more than we may do, for it was only founded in 1452. It seems, however, to have been built really over the stream upon piers, perhaps in something the same way as the thirteenth-century Franciscan house at Canterbury was built, which we may still see.

Dunken tells us that "the steep ascent of the Dover road leading towards Brent was in ancient times called St Edmund's Weye from its leading to a Chapel dedicated to that saint situated near the middle of the upper churchyard." This chapel, of which nothing remains, Edward III. bestowed upon the Priory of Our Lady and St Margaret. On its site, such is the irony of time, a "martyr's memorial" has been erected to the unhappy and unfortunate folk burnt here in the time of Queen Mary.

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But Dartford is too pleasant a place to be left with such a merely archaeological survey as this. It is a town in which one may be happy; historically, however, it has not much claim upon our notice, its chief boast being that it was here the first act of violence in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 occurred, when Wat Tyler broke the head of the poll-tax collector who had brutally assaulted his daughter. Wat or Walter—Tyler, because of his trade, which was that of covering roofs with tiles—would seem, however, not to have been a Dartford man at all. The very proper murder of the tax-collector would appear to have been the work of a certain John "Tyler" of the same profession, here in Dartford.

The Peasants' Revolt, which, alas! came to nothing, brings us indeed quite into Chaucer's day, but it would have had little sympathy from him, nor indeed has it really anything specially to do with this town. The true fame of Dartford, which is its paper-making, dates from the end of the sixteenth century, when one Sir John Speelman, jeweller to Queen Elizabeth, is said to have established the first paper-mill.

If Dartford is poor in history, nevertheless it is worth a visit of more than an hour or so for its own sake, as I have said. It boasts of a good inn also, and the country and villages round about are delicious. All that upper valley of the Darent, for instance, in which lie Darenth, Sutton-at-Hone, Horton Kirby, and, a little way off Fawkham, Eynsford, and Lullingstone, is worth the trouble of seeing for its own beauty and delight.

There is Darenth for instance, Darne, as the people used to call it, only two miles from the Pilgrims' Road, it is as old as England, and doubtless saw the Romans at work straightening, paving, and building that great Way which has remained to us through so many ages, and which the Middle Age hallowed into a Via Sacra. What can be more worthy and right than that a modern pilgrim should visit this little Roman village to see the foundations of the Roman buildings, to speculate on what they may have been, and generally to contemplate those origins out of which we are come?

And then there is the church too, dedicated in honour of St Margaret, the dear little lady who is so wonderfully and beautifully represented in Westminster Abbey for all to worship her, high up over the rascal politicians. All the village churches in England of my heart are entrancingly holy and human places, but it is not always that one finds a church so rare as that of St Margaret in Darenth. For not only is it built of Roman rubble or brick, the work of the Saxons, the Normans, and of us their successors, but it boasts also an arch of tufa, has an Early English vaulted chancel of two stories, and a Norman font upon which are carved scenes from the life of St Dunstan, to say nothing of a thirteenth-century tower.

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Not far away at Horton Kirby, to be reached through South Darenth, are the remains of Horton Castle and a very interesting, aisleless cruciform church of Our Lady with central tower, a great nave, arcaded transepts, and much Early English loveliness, to say nothing of the Decorated tomb of one of the De Ros family, lords of Horton Castle, and fifteenth- and sixteenth-century brasses. Horton got its name of Kirby in this manner. At the time of the Domesday Survey the place was held by Auschetel de Ros from Bishop Odo, but the heir of De Ros was Lora, Lady of Horton, who married into the north-country family of Kirby, who, however, had for long owned lands hereabouts. In the time of Edward I. the Kirby of that day, Roger, rebuilt the castle, but it is not the ruins of his work we see, these being of a much later building. Nor will any one who visits Horton fail to see Fawks, the famous old Elizabethan mansion of the London Alderman Lancelot Bathurst, who died in 1594.

All this valley, as I have said, was used and cultivated by the Romans, whose work we find not only at Darenth but also here at Horton. At Fawkhams, however, on the higher ground to the east I found something more germane to the pilgrimage. For in the old church of Our Lady there, over the western door, is a window in which we may see one William de Fawkhams clothed as a pilgrim with a book in his hand, and on one side a figure of Our Lord, on the other the Blessed Virgin.

But the goal of my journey from the highway was reached at Eynsford. Here indeed I found my justification for leaving the road while on pilgrimage to Canterbury. For not only is Eynsford a beautiful place in itself, beautifully situated, but it was the quarrel which William de Eynsford had with St Thomas Becket, when the great archbishop was in residence at Otford Castle, that led to the murder in Canterbury Cathedral and the great pilgrimage which has brought even us at this late day on our way.

Becket's quarrel with the king and the civil power was, as we know, concerning the liberty of the Church, and more particularly here a dispute as to the presentation to the church of St Martin in Eynsford, which still retains many features of that time. After the martyrdom, William de Eynsford, though he does not appear to have been directly concerned in the murder, was excommunicated, and Eynsford Castle was left without inhabitants, for no one would enter it. It fell into decay, and was never after used or restored or rebuilt, only Henry VIII. venturing to use it as a stable; but his work has been cleared away, and what we see is a ruin of the time of St Thomas, and indeed in some sort his work. The ruin bears a strong resemblance to the mighty castle of Rochester, and though it is of course very small in comparison with that capital fortress, it must have been a place of some strength when Henry *ii.* was king.

St Martin's Church, whose spire rises so charmingly out of the orchards white with spring, has a fine western doorway and tower of Norman work, and a chancel and south transept lighted by Early English lancets. That tower certainly heard the rumour of St Thomas's murder, and frightened men no doubt crowded into that western door to hear William de Eynsford denounced from the altar.

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Now when I had seen all this and reminded myself thus of that great tale which is England, I set out on my way back to Dartford, passing by the footpath through the park to the south-east towards Lullingstone Castle, which, however, is not older in the main than the end of the eighteenth century.

And then from Lullingstone through the shining afternoon I made my way by the western bank of the Darent to Sutton-at-Hone, where there are remains of a Priory of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem; the place is still called St John's. The church dedicated to St John Baptist is a not uninteresting Decorated building, the last resting place of that Sir Thomas Smyth of Sutton Place, who was not the least of Elizabethan navigators, director of the East India Company, interested in the Muscovy trade, and treasurer of the Virginia Company (1625). So I came back to Dartford and on the next day set out once more for Canterbury.

One leaves Dartford, on the Pilgrim's Road, with a certain regret, to find oneself, at the top of the East Hill, face to face with a problem of the road. For there on the hill-top the road forks; to the left runs the greater way of the two, into Gravesend; straight on lies a lane which after a couple of miles suddenly turns southward to Betsham, where the direct way is continued by a footpath across Swanscombe Park. Which of these ways was I to follow? That question was hard to answer, because the road through Gravesend is full of interest, while the direct way is almost barren all the way to Rochester. There can be little doubt, too, that many of the pilgrims on the way to Canterbury did pass through Gravesend, to which town doubtless many also travelled from London by water, while others landed there from Essex and East Anglia. But the lane which is the straight way and its continuation in the footpath across Swanscombe Park is undoubtedly the line of the Roman road and in all probability the route of Chaucer.

Face to face with these considerations, being English, I decided upon a compromise. I determined to follow the Gravesend road so far as Northfleet, chiefly for the sake of Stone, and there by a road running south-east to come into the Roman highway again, two miles or so east of Swanscombe Park, whence I should have a practically straight road into Rochester.

I say I chose this route chiefly for the sake of seeing Stone. This little place, some two miles and a half from Dartford, has one of the loveliest churches in all England, to say nothing of a castellated manor house known as Stone Castle. "It is a common jest," says Reginald Scot, writing in the time of Elizabeth, "It is a common jest among the watermen of the Thames to show the parish church of Stone to their passengers, calling the same by the name of the 'Lanterne of Kent'; affirming, and that not untruly, that the said church is as light (meaning in weight not in brightness) at midnight as at noonday." The church, indeed, dedicated

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in honour of Our Lady is a very beautiful and extraordinarily interesting building of the end of the thirteenth century, in the same style as the practically contemporary work in Westminster Abbey and, according to the architect and historian, G.E. Street, who restored it, possibly from the design of the same master-mason. Certainly nothing in the whole county of Kent is better worth a visit. It would seem to have been built with a part of the money offered at the shrine of St William in the Cathedral of Rochester upon the Pilgrim's Way; for Stone belonged to the Bishops of Rochester, who had a manor house there. The nave, aisles, chancel, and tower are all in the Early English style and very noble work of their kind, built in the time of Bishop Lawrence de Martin of Rochester (1251-1274); while to the fourteenth century belongs the vestry to the north of the chancel and the western windows in nave and aisles and the piers of the tower as we now see them. Perhaps the oldest thing in the church is the doorway in the north aisle which would seem to be Norman, but Street tells us that this "is a curious instance of imitation of earlier work, rather than evidence of the doorway itself being earlier than the rest of the church."

Within, the church is delightful, increasing in richness of detail eastward towards the chancel where nothing indeed can surpass the beauty of the arcade, so like the work at Westminster, borne by pillars of Purbeck, its spandrels filled with wonderfully lovely, delicate, and yet vigorous foliage. Here are two brasses, one of 1408 to John Lambarde, the rector in Chaucer's day, the other of 1530 to Sir John Dew. In the north aisle we may find certain ancient paintings the best preserved of which represents the Madonna and Child.

The north aisle of the chancel is not at one with the church; it was built in the early sixteenth century by the Wilshyre family as their Chantry. Here lies Sir John Wilshyre, Governor of Calais in the time of Henry VIII. The glass everywhere is unfortunately modern.

One leaves Stone church with regret; it is so fair and yet so hopelessly dead that one is astonished and almost afraid. Less than a mile along the road, to the north of it one passes Ingress Abbey, where once the nuns of Dartford Priory had a grange. The present house, once the residence of Alderman Harmer, the radical and reformer of our criminal courts, was built of the stone of old London Bridge.

Here upon the high road one is really in the marshes by Thames side; but a little way off the highway to the south on higher ground stands Swanscombe and it is worth while to see it for it is a very famous place. "After such time," says Lambarde, quoting Thomas the monk and chronicler of St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, "after such time as Duke William the Conqueror had overthrown King Harold in the field at Battell in Sussex and had received the Londoners to mercy he marched with his army towards



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the castle of Dover, thinking thereby to have brought in subjection this county of Kent also. But Stigande, the archbishop, perceiving the danger assembled the countrymen together and laid before them the intolerable pride of the Normans that invaded them and their own miserable condition if they should yield unto them. By which means they so enraged the common people that they ran forthwith to weapon and meeting at Swanscombe elected the archbishop and the abbot for their captains. This done each man got him a green bough in his hand and beare it over his head in such sort as when the Duke approached, he was much amazed therewith, thinking at first that it had been some miraculous wood that moved towards him. But they as soon as he came within hearing cast away their boughs from them, and at the sound of a trumpet bewraied their weapons, and withall despatched towards him a messenger, which spake unto him in this manner:—'The Commons of Kent, most noble Duke, are ready to offer thee either peace or war, at thy own choice and election; Peace with their faithfull obedience if thou wilt permit them to enjoy their ancient liberties; Warr, and that most deadly, if thou deny it them.'

They prevailed according to the legend and this as some say is the difference between the Men of Kent and the Kentish Men, for the former retained their old liberties and were never conquered, and these dwelt in the valley of Holmsdale; but the rest were merely *victi*. As the old rhyme has it—

The vale of Holmsdale  
Never conquered, never shall.

It is pleasing with the memory of all this in one's heart—and upon it there is a famous song—to come upon Swanscombe church, in which much would seem to be of Saxon times, as parts of the walls of both nave and chancel, and the lower part of the tower, where one may see signs of Roman brick. The nave, however, at least within, is late Norman if not Transitional, and the windows in the chancel are Norman and Early English. Here, too, is the tomb of Sir Anthony Weldon, the malicious gossip [Footnote: He was the author of "The Secret History of the first Two Stuart Kings" and of "A Catt may look at a King, or a Briefe Chronicle and Character of the Kings of England..." ] of the time of James I., who had acted as clerk of the kitchen to Elizabeth. His wife lies opposite him with others of his family. It is more interesting for us, however, to note that in Chaucer's day the church was chiefly famous for its shrine of St Hildefrith, a soveran advocate against the vapours.

I left Swanscombe in the early afternoon, and passing through Northfleet with its great church of St Botolph I followed the road with many happy glimpses of the Thames, avoiding Gravesend and making southward for the Watling Street, which I found at last, and an old Inn at the cross roads upon it. Thence I marched upon what I took to be the veritable way and was presently assured of this at Singlewell, which it is said was

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originally Schingled well, that is a well roofed with shingles of wood. This well stood within the parish of Ifield, but so famous was it, for it was known to every pilgrim, that it presently quite put out the name of the parish, which in 1362 is described as Ifield-juxta-Schyngtedwell, and to this day the place is marked on the maps as Singlewell or Ifield. A chapel was soon built beside the well and here doubtless the pilgrims prayed and made offerings. Singlewell, however, must not be confused with St Thomas's well a mile further on the road, which is still used and still known as St Thomas's well.

All this proved to me that I was indeed upon the old road, and so I went on across Cobham Park without a thought of the great house, intent now on the noble city of Rochester, which presently as I came over the last hill I saw standing in all its greatness over the broad river of Medway, its mighty castle four square upon the further bank. Then was I confirmed in my heart in the words of Chaucer—

Lo Rouchestre stant here fast by.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PILGRIMS' ROAD

#### ROCHESTER

One comes down the hill into Rochester, through Strood, on this side the Medway, to find little remaining of interest in a place that has now become scarcely more than a suburb of the episcopal city. Some memory, however, lingers still in Strood of St Thomas, for certain folks there hated him and to spite him one day as he rode through the village they cut the tail from his horse. Mark now the end of this misdeed. In Strood thereafter everyone of their descendants was born, it is said, with a tail, even as the brutes which perish.

The church of Strood, restored in 1812, is without interest, but close to the churchyard is the site of a Hospital, founded, in the time of Richard I., who endowed it, by Bishop Glanville of Rochester. This place must have been known to Chaucer and his pilgrims. It was dedicated in honour of Our Lady and cared for "the poor, weak, infirm and impotent as well as neighbouring inhabitants or travellers from distant places, until they die or depart healed." Those who served it followed the Benedictine Rule. A singular example of the hatred of these for the monks of Rochester appears in the story of the fight between the monks and the Hospital staff with whom sided the men of Strood and Frinsbury, a village hard by, which took place in the orchard of the Hospital. The Bishop, however, soon brought all to reason, and as a punishment the men of Strood



were obliged to go in procession to Rochester upon each Whit-Monday, carrying the clubs with which they had assaulted the monks.

[Illustration: *The gateway of the monastery close, Rochester*]

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That Strood stood on the ancient way its name assures us, since it is but another form of Street or Strada, as they say in Italy. From Strood we cross the great iron bridge, the successor of that at the Strood end of which Bishop Glanville built a small chapel. The story of the bridge is interesting. We do not know that there was a bridge at all in Roman times, but certainly a wooden bridge was supplemented in the time of Richard *ii.* by a new one of stone, consisting of twenty-one arches of different spans. This bridge stood higher up the river than that of to-day, nearer indeed to the Castle, and as at its western end there was a chapel, so at its eastern under the Castle, John de Cobham founded, in Chaucer's time, in 1399, a Chantry for all Christian souls, of which some ruins remain. This bridge, patched, altered, and constantly repaired, lasted till the existing bridge was built in our own time on the site of the old one of wood.

From the bridge we enter the High Street, almost certainly lying over the old Roman road. Here are the old Inns, the Crown, the Bull, and the King's Head. It is even probable that Chaucer may have stayed at the Crown, the oldest of the three, not of course in the present house, but in that which stood on the same site till 1863, and which was said to date from the fourteenth century. [Footnote: The old house was famous at least as the scene of Shakespeare's "Henry IV.," pt. i. act ii. sc. i., as the resting-place of Queen Elizabeth in 1573, and as the inn honoured by Mr Pickwick. It should never have been destroyed.]

In Rochester, serene and yet active, the very ancient seat of a bishopric, we have something essentially Roman, the fortress on the Watling Street guarding the passage of the Medway, precisely as Piacenza was and is a Roman fortress upon the Emilian Way guarding the passage of the Po. The Romans called the place Durobrivae, and though we know little of it during the Roman occupation of Britain, we may be sure it was a place of very considerable importance, as indeed it has remained ever since, twice in fact in our history the possession of Rochester has decided a whole campaign.

Rochester, indeed, could not have escaped the military eye of the Romans. It must be remembered that the natural entry into England is by the Straits of Dover, and that for a man entering by that gate there is only one way up into England and that the line of the Watling Street, for he must cross the Thames, even though he be going only to London. The lowest ford upon the Thames is that at Lambeth, which the Watling Street used. Now there is but one really formidable obstacle in the whole length of the Watling Street south of the Thames. That obstacle is the estuary of the Medway, which Rochester guarded and possessed. Rochester then was first and foremost a great fortress, just as Piacenza was and is.

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What was its fate in the Dark Age that followed the failure of the Roman administration we do not know; but with the advent of St Augustine Rochester at once received a Bishop. It was, indeed, the first post in St Augustine's advance from Canterbury, King Ethelbert himself building there a church in 597 in honour of St Andrew. It thus became a spiritual as well as a material fortress. Of its fate after the Battle of Hastings we know little, but it submitted without resistance and came into the hands of that Odo of Bayeaux who gave so much trouble to William Rufus.

It is now that we see Rochester suddenly appear in its true greatness. Odo, expelled by William, had on the Conqueror's death returned and successfully obtained of Rufus his estates, among them the Castle of Rochester, which he had built. In 1088, however, he was once more in rebellion against the Crown on behalf of the Conqueror's eldest brother, Robert of Normandy. Rufus struck him first at Pevensey, which was the Norman gate of England. He took it but unwisely released Odo, on his oath to give up Rochester Castle and leave the country. Rochester was then in the hands of Eustace of Boulogne, sworn friend of Duke Robert, and when Odo appeared with the King's Guard before the Castle, demanding its surrender, he, understanding everything, captured his own lord and the king's guard also and brought them in. Rufus then turned to his English subjects and demanded their assistance, for his Barons were then, as they have invariably been throughout English history, against the Crown, which truly represented and defended the people. They flocked to the Royal Standard, and after six weeks' siege, plague and famine ravaging the garrison, Odo surrendered and was imprisoned at Tonbridge, and later expelled the kingdom. As this great rascal Bishop came out of Rochester Castle, the English youths sang out "Rope and Cord! Rope and Cord for the traitor Bishop." But Odo was too near to the king.

That was the first time we know of in which Rochester stood like the gage of England; the second was in the Barons' wars. When King John, in 1215, had taken Rochester and notably discomfited the rascal Barons, they immediately invited Louis of France to assist them. He set sail with some seven hundred vessels, landed at Sandwich, and retook Rochester, which had been so badly damaged that it could not defend itself. Forty-eight years later, in 1264, Henry III. being king, Simon de Montfort coming into Kent, burnt the wooden bridge over the Medway which was too strongly held by the loyal inhabitants of Rochester for him to capture, took the city by storm, sacked the Cathedral and the Priory, and laid siege to the Castle. He failed, and Lewes could not give him what Rochester had denied.

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Rochester Castle, which hitherto only famine had been able to open, was to fall at last to Wat Tyler and his Peasants in 1381, with the help of the people of the city. After that culminating misery of the fourteenth century, which was so full of miseries, Rochester plays little part in history for many years. She appears again to take part in innumerable pageants, such as that in which Henry VIII. in 1540, and on New Year's day, first saw Anne of Cleves and was astonished at her little beauty, or that which greeted Elizabeth in 1573, or that which greeted Charles I. and his bride after their wedding at Canterbury, or that which shouted for the Merry Monarch, when Charles *ii.* rode down the High Street in 1660, after his landing at Dover. It was his brother, unfortunate and unhappy, who came in without any herald and stole away in the night of December 19, 1688, having foregone a throne and lost a kingdom.

All these, sieges or pageants, however, what are they but a tale that is told. There remains, in some sort at least, the Cathedral. This is the oldest thing in Rochester and the most lasting. It was founded in the end of the sixth century as we have seen, and its first Bishop was that St Justus who had come with St Augustine from the monastery of St Andrew on the Coelian Hill in Rome, the monastery we now know by the name of the man who sent them, St Gregory the Great. St Augustine and St Justus were not, however, at first received with enthusiasm in Rochester. Indeed, it is said that fish tails were hung to their habits as they went through the city and that in consequence the people of the diocese of Rochester were ever after born with tails, and were thus known as *caudati* or *caudiferi*, while upon the Continent this beastly appellation was even till our fathers' time applied to all English people.

What the Cathedral suffered in the centuries between its foundation and the Norman Conquest, we shall never rightly know. That it was ravaged, burnt and sacked by the Danes is certain and it seems even at the time of the Norman Conquest to have scarcely recovered itself. Indeed, Pepys, who was in Rochester in 1661, tells us that he found the western doors of the church still "covered with the skins of Danes." Nor did it fare much better when Odo of Bayeaux was lord. But when Gundulph, the associate of the good and great Lanfranc, became bishop in 1077, the Cathedral was almost entirely re-established and the Priory which served it rebuilt. Gundulph, however, would have nothing to do with the seculars who had hitherto served the great church. He established Benedictine monks in their place and Ernulph, Prior of Canterbury, where Lanfranc had done the same, succeeded him.

Of the Saxon church which St Justus built, he and his successors, nothing remains but the foundations discovered in 1888. This church, which was very small, about forty-two feet long by twenty-eight feet in breadth, was furnished with an apse, but had neither aisles nor transepts.

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Of the first Norman church which Bishop Gundulph built, very little remains, perhaps a part of the crypt, the nave, and the great fortress tower he built on the north side of the church. This church was a very curious piece of Norman building. It was a long aisled church, that was unbroken from end to end, but the choir-proper was shut off from its aisles by walls of stone as at St Albans. There were no transepts or central tower, but two porches, one on the north and the other on the south, and in the angle formed by them with the choir, Gundulph built towers, one a belfry, the other a fortress detached from the church. To the south of the nave stood the first monastery and it is there that we may still see fragments, five arches in all, of Gundulph's nave.

It was Ernulph who built the second monastery to replace the probably wooden buildings of the first, to the south of the choir of which parts remain to us. This done, he turned to the Cathedral and began entirely to rebuild it, recase it with Caen stone or to remodel what he left. It is therefore twelfth century Norman work we see at Rochester. All this work, however, some of it not twenty-five years old, was damaged in 1179 by fire, and once more the monks began to rebuild their church. They seem to have begun on the north aisle of the choir, and then to have set to work on the south aisle. Thence they proceeded to rebuild the eastern end of the church, erecting a transept beyond the old choir, finishing their new sanctuary in 1227.

The work did not stop there, however; by 1245 the north-west transept was finished, and by 1280 the south-west and the two eastern bays of the nave. It is astonishing to find the monastery able to support such immense and extravagant operations, but we know that in 1201 the monks had successfully established a new shrine in their church, the shrine of St William. This popular sanctuary was the tomb of a Scotch pilgrim from Perth who had been a baker. "In charity he was so abundant that he gave to the poor the tenth loaf of his workmanship; in zeal so fervent that in vow he promised and in deed attempted, to visit the places where Christ was conversant on earth; in which journey he made Rochester his way, where, after he had rested two or three days, he departed towards Canterbury. But ere he had gone far from the city, his servant—a foundling who had been brought up by him out of charity—led him of purpose out of the highway and spoiled him both of his money and his life. The servant escaped, but his master, because he died in so holy a purpose of mind, was by the monks conveyed to St Andrews and laid in the choir. And soon he wrought miracles plentifully."

The enormous fame of St William and the popularity of his shrine, not only with those who were on the way to Canterbury, but with such as were merely travellers to the coast, lasted for nearly a hundred years, enriching the monks of Rochester. By the end of the thirteenth century, however, this shrine of St William had been utterly eclipsed by the fame of the shrine of St Thomas. For this reason, then, the monks of Rochester were happily never able to rebuild their nave, which remains a Norman work of the twelfth century.

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In the fourteenth century the central tower was at last completed, but it ceased to exist in 1749. Indeed, the resources of Rochester seem to have been small after the third quarter of the thirteenth century. They had no Lady Chapel and when one was provided it was contrived out of the south-west transept. Later the north aisle of the choir, always dark on account of Gundulph's tower, was heightened and vaulted and lighted with windows. Later still, similar Perpendicular windows were placed in the old nave, the Norman clerestory was destroyed and a new one built, together with a new wooden roof and the great western window was inserted. In 1830 Cottingham, and in 1871 Scott, worked their wills upon the place under the plea of restoration. Little has escaped their attention, neither the beautiful Decorated tomb of Bishop Walter de Merton (1278) nor that of Bishop John de Sheppey (1360). The best thing left to us in the Cathedral and that which gives it its character is the great western doorway with its sombre Norman carving of the earlier part of the twelfth century. The nave is also beautiful and the crypt is undoubtedly one of the most interesting monuments left in England. Of the Priory practically nothing remains but a few fragments.

[Illustration: *Rochester*]

Doubtless Chaucer and his company did not leave the great church unvisited nor fail to look curiously, nor perhaps to pray, at the shrine of St William, for they, too, were travellers and pilgrims. But the spectacle in the little city which it might seem most filled their imagination, as it does ours, was not the Cathedral at all, but the great Keep which stands above it, frowning across the busy Medway. Nothing more imposing of its kind than this great Norman Castle remains in England. Having a base of seventy feet square, and consisting of walls twelve feet thick and one hundred and twenty feet high, it still seems what in fact it was, almost impregnable by any arms but those of the modern world. Its great weakness lay always in the matter of provision, but it was perfectly supplied with water, by means of a well sixty feet under ground, in which stood always ten feet of water. From this well a stone pipe or tunnel, two feet nine inches in diameter, led up to the very roof, access to it being given on each of the four floors into which the keep was divided within. These apartments one and all were divided from east to west by walls five feet thick, so that on each floor there were two chambers forty-six feet long by about twenty feet in breadth. That this enormous keep is the work of Gundulph and contemporary with the Tower of London, there seems to be no reason to doubt. Of the great part it played in English history I have already spoken. But even in ruin it impresses one as few things left to us nowadays, when everything we make is so monstrous in comparison with the work of our fathers, are able to do. To stand there on the platform a hundred and twenty feet in the air and look out over the Medway crowded with shipping, ringing, echoing with factories on either shore, to see the great ships in the tideway and the fog and smoke of Chatham and its dockyards down the stream, is to receive an impression of the fragile, but tremendous, greatness of our civilisation such as few other places in South England would be able to give us suddenly between two heart beats.

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Such a vision of feverish and yet noble energy and endeavour, wholly material if you will, and seemingly unaware of any world or life but this, is altogether alien from Rochester itself, where an old fashioned leisure, an air almost Georgian lingers yet. Indeed, one expects to meet Mr Pickwick in the High Street or at least Charles Dickens come in from Gadshill.

The only mood that has quite passed from Rochester, and that is yet more securely crystallised there in the Cathedral and the Castle than any other, is that of the Middle Age. You will not find it in any of the churches now, nor in any inn that is left to us, nor in the houses often both interesting and charming. All day long Rochester expects the coach and not the pilgrims; but at night, under a windy sky, if you wander up the hill and linger about the Cathedral in the shadow of the great Keep while the moon reels steeply up the heavens, you may in early Spring at any rate return for a little to that age which built such things as these, so that they have outlasted everything that has followed them and put it under their feet. And yet their heart was set upon no such victory, but in the heavens. It was the great and self-forgetting act of an obscure baker, but a saint of God, that built the mighty half abandoned church we see at Rochester, nor was he for sure altogether forgotten when all England went by to kneel and to pray beside Becket's shrine at Canterbury, raised there in a heavenly cause, which must prevail in the end, though neither Rochester nor Canterbury to-day might seem to bear out any such certainty.

The modern pilgrim, knowing what he knows, will be fain to remember at Rochester, on his way to St Thomas, one who died in the same cause, but as it might seem, disastrously without success.

For the liberty of the Church St Thomas died, that neither the king nor any civil power should control, or govern that which Christ had founded long ago upon the rock of Peter. In that same cause died Blessed John Fisher, the last Catholic Bishop of Rochester, in the year 1535. He was almost the first of Henry's victims, and he was beheaded, as was Blessed Thomas More, for refusing to recognise the royal supremacy. It was treason to deny the king's right to the title of Supreme Governor of the Church in England; and though it be still treason to deny it, a host to-day will gladly stand beside St Thomas Becket and Blessed John Fisher of Rochester.

This quarrel need never have arisen had not Henry, perjured and adulterous, desired to make the Pope his accomplice in putting away his lawful wife in order that he might marry Anne Boleyn. Because the Pope refused to aid him in this crime Henry destroyed the Catholic Church in England, and he and his successors founded the so-called Church of England, with himself as first Supreme Governor.



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Among those who had most strenuously opposed the claim for divorce was Blessed John Fisher of Rochester, and with equally unflinching firmness he opposed the doctrine of the royal supremacy. He asserted that "The acceptance of such a principle would cause the clergy of England to be hissed out of the society of God's Holy Catholic Church." He was right, his prophecy has come true, and he nearly won. His opposition so far prevailed that a saving clause was added to the oath of convocation, "so far as the law of God allows." This Henry refused. The King persecuted him, Anne Boleyn tried to poison him, all England was putrid with lies concerning him contrived by those masters of lies, the Tudors; but the imperial ambassador asserted that the Bishop of Rochester was "the paragon of Christian prelates both for learning and holiness," and the Pope made him Cardinal with the title of San Vitalis. Henry, in November 1534, with the passing of the Act of Supremacy, attainted him of treason and declared the see of Rochester vacant. But Blessed John Fisher said, as St Thomas had said, "The King our Sovereign is not supreme head on earth of the Church in England." For this he was condemned to die a traitor's death; that is, to be hanged, disembowelled, and quartered at Tyburn in order that Henry might enjoy his Kentish mistress in peace, and found a new Church eager to acknowledge his adultery as lawful and to enjoy the spoil of God.

That death, once shameful but soon to be rendered glorious by the Carthusians, was denied to Fisher. His sentence was commuted to that of death by beheading upon Tower Hill, where he suffered upon June 22, 1535. His head was exposed on London Bridge; his body, interred without ceremony, now lies in the Tower, where a little later that of Blessed Thomas More was laid beside it—two countrymen of St Thomas Becket martyred in the same cause.

They might seem to have died in vain; their cause, as old as Christendom, might seem to have been long since defeated. Not so: this battle truly is decided, but in their favour, and my little son may live to see the glory of their victory. For he shall know and believe in his heart that his love and hope are set upon a country and a city founded in the heavens of which David sang, to which St John looked forth from Patmos, and of which these our Saints have told us.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PILGRIMS' ROAD

### ROCHESTER TO FAVERSHAM

The old road leaves Rochester to pass through Chatham, and is by no means delightful until it has left what Camden called "the best appointed arsenal the world ever saw." Chatham, indeed, is little else but a huge dockyard and a long and dirty street, once the



Pilgrim's Way. There is, however, very little to detain us; only the Chapel of St Bartholomew to the south of the High Street is worth a visit for

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Bishop Gundulph's sake, for he founded it. Even here, however, only the eastern end is ancient. The parish church of Our Lady was for the most part rebuilt in 1788, but it still keeps a good Norman door to the south of the nave. It was here that Our Lady had in Chaucer's day a very famous shrine concerning which the following rather gruesome legend is told. The body of a man, no doubt a criminal or suicide, having been cast upon the beach in this parish, was buried here in the churchyard. Our Lady of Chatham, however, was offended thereby, and by night went Herself to the house of the clerk and awakened him. And when he would all trembling know wherefor She was come. She answered that near to Her shrine an unshriven and sinful person had been laid, which thing offended Her, for he did naught but grin in ghastly fashion. Therefore unless he were removed She Herself must withdraw from that place. The Clerk arose hurriedly we may be sure, and, going with Our Lady along towards the church, it happened that She grew weary and rested in a bush or tree by the wayside, and ever after this bush was green all the winter through. But the Clerk, going on, dug up the body and flung it back into the water from which it had so lately been drawn.

Now, as to this story, all I have to say of it is that I do not believe a word of it. Not because I am blinded by any sentimentalism of to-day, which, as in a child's story, brings all right for everyone in the end; but for this very cogent reason that of all created beings Our Lady is the most merciful, loving and tender—Refugium Peccatorum.

Also I know a better story. For it is said that one day Our Lord was walking with Sampietro in Paradise, as the Padrone may do with his Fattore, when after a while He said, not as complaining exactly but as stating a fact, "Sampietro, this place is going down!"

Here Sampietro, who is always impetuous and knew very well what He meant, dared to interrupt, "Il Santissimo can't blame me," said he huffily. "Il Santissimo does not suppose they all come in by the gate? *Che Che!*"

"Not come in by the gate, Sampietro. What do you mean?" said Our Lord. "If Il Santissimo will but step this way, round by these bushes," said Sampietro, "He shall see." And there sure enough He saw; for there was Our Lady drawing us all up helter-skelter, pell-mell, willy-nilly into Heaven in a great bucket, to our great gain and undeserved good. O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

The road between Chatham and Sittingbourne might seem to be unquestionably that by which the pilgrims rode, and as certainly the Roman highway. It is, however, rather barren of mediaeval interest, little being left to us older than the change of religion. At Rainham we have a church, however, dedicated in honour of St Margaret, parts of which date from the thirteenth century, though in the main it is a Perpendicular building. Within are two ornaments of the late

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seventeenth century, and two brasses, one to William Bloor, who died in 1529, and the other to John Norden, who died in 1580, and to his four wives. As for William Bloor, there is a local story of some relation of his, Christopher Bloor by name, and of a nightly journey on a coach driven by a headless coachman beside whom sits a headless footman, and all drawn by headless horses, Christopher himself sitting within, his head in his hands. So much I heard, but I could not find out what it portended or referred to.

But it is not till we come into Newington that we find any sign or memory of St Thomas or the Pilgrimage. This village, however, became famous as a station for the pilgrims, because on his last journey from London to Canterbury, the great Archbishop here administered the rite of Confirmation. A cross was erected to commemorate this event, and there the pilgrims knelt to pray. But Newington in St Thomas's day was better known on account of a great scandal involving the name of the convent there. This convent was held of the king, of his manor of Middleton. We read that divers of the nuns, "being warped with a malicious desire of revenge, took advantage of the night and strangled the lady abbess, who was the object of their fury and passionate animosities, in her bed; and after, to conceal so execrable an assassination, threw her body into a pit, which afterwards contracted the traditional appellation of Nun-pit." [Footnote: Philipotts, "Villare Cantianum," quoted by Littlehales, *op. cit.* p. 27.] Now whether this tale be true or an invention to explain the queer name "Nun-pit" we shall never know, but as it happens we do know that the nuns were removed to the Isle of Sheppey and that St Thomas persuaded King Henry *ii.* to establish at Newington a small house of seven secular canons to whom was given the whole manor. But curiously enough, one of these canons was presently found murdered at the hands of four of his brethren. Exactly where this convent was situated would seem to be doubtful. What evidence there is points to Nunfield Farm at Chesley, about a mile to the south of the high road.

Newington itself in its cherry-orchards is a pretty place enough to-day, with an interesting, if restored, church of Our Lady in part of the thirteenth, but mainly of the fourteenth century. It is a fine building with charming carved details and at least four brasses, one of the end of the fifteenth century (1488) to William Monde, two of the sixteenth century (1510 and 1581) and one of the year 1600. There is nothing, however, in the place to delay anyone for long, and the modern pilgrim will soon find himself once more on the great road.

On coming out of Newington such an one will find himself in about a mile at Key Street, where is the Fourwent Way, in other words the cross roads, where the highway from the Isle of Sheppey to Maidstone crosses the Pilgrims Way. Here of old stood a chapel of St Christopher or another, at which the pilgrims prayed, and remembering this, I too, at the cross roads, though there was no chapel, prayed in the words of the prayer which begins:

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St Christopher who bore Our Lord  
Across the flood—O precious Load....

So I prayed, “er I come to Sidingborne,” as Chaucer says.

The author of “Sittingbourne in the Middle Ages” tells us that, “Mediaeval Sittingbourne consisted of three distinct portions. The chief centre of population was near the church, but there was an important little hamlet called Schamel at the western extremity of the parish on the London Road ... as any traveller from London approached Sittingbourne in the Middle Ages, the first thing to attract his attention was a chapel and hermitage standing on the south side of the road, about three parts of the way up that little hill which rises from Waterlanehead towards the east; this was Schamel Hermitage and the Chapel of St Thomas Becket, to which were attached houses for the shelter of pilgrims and travellers. A small Inn called “The Volunteers” now stands upon or close to the site of this ancient chapel and this hermitage.” The chapel and hermitage it seems were first built at Schamel in the time of King John, when they were occupied by a priest named Samuel. He said Mass daily in the chapel and gave such accommodation as he had to wayfarers, by whose alms he lived. After his death the chapel fell into disrepair, but in the time of Henry III. it was rebuilt on a larger scale. A hermit named Silvester, of the “Order of St Austin,” was appointed to the house which had now attached to it four lodgings for pilgrims on the road to Canterbury. But on Silvester’s death it was realised that the chapel interfered so much with the parish church that before the end of the thirteenth century it was suppressed. It re-rose, and in Chaucer’s day would seem to have been in a flourishing condition; at any rate it continued till the spoliation.

If indeed Chaucer and his pilgrims slept in Sittingbourne, as one may well believe, it is probable that they slept either at this chapel at Schamel or at the Lion Inn in the town. This Inn was certainly in existence in his time, and there in 1415 King Henry V. was entertained on his return from Agincourt by the Squire of Milton. There, too, in all likelihood, Cardinal Wolsey rested in the autumn of 1514, and there Henry VIII., who spoiled the face of England and changed her heart, “paied the wife of the Lyon in Sittingbourne by way of rewarde iiiis. viiid.” for the accommodation given. This famous Inn stands in the centre of the town, the road passing to the south of it. Unhappily the church is less interesting, having been almost entirely rebuilt in 1762; but close by it were some old houses which apparently once formed part of another old Inn called the White Hart. Certainly much of the town must have been devoted to the entertainment of travellers.

From Sittingbourne I wandered out to Borden, lovely in itself and in its situation upon the rising ground under the North Downs. It possesses a very fine church with a low Norman tower and western door of the same date. Within is a very nobly carved Norman arch under the belfry.

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If Schamel was, as it were, the western part of Sittingbourne with its chapel and hermitage, Swanstree was the eastern part, and it, too, had its chapel of St Cross and its hospital of St Leonard. There is, however, this difference, that, whereas the priest and people of Sittingbourne did all they could to suppress the chapel and hermitage of Schamel, they on the contrary did all they could to encourage the chapel and hospital of Swanstree. Why? Because pilgrims coming from London or the north with full pockets towards Canterbury, would reach Schamel *before* passing through Sittingbourne, but Swanstree only *after* passing through the town!

Following the Pilgrim's Road out of Sittingbourne one soon comes to Bapchild, where at the exit from the village on the north side of the road of old stood an oratory, and a Leper's Hospital, of which nothing seems really to be known save that it was founded about the year 1200. According to Canon Scott-Robertson, it was dedicated in honour of St James, which is a curious dedication for a Leper House, but common enough in a Hospital for pilgrims. Oratory and Hospital have alike disappeared, but close by the place where they stood there still remains St Thomas's Well, now known as Spring Head or Spring.

So I went on through Radfield, where of old was a wayside chapel, and Green Street to the Inn at Ospringe, passing, half a mile away to the north, Stone Farm, and, nearer the road, the ruins of Stone Chapel, another of those little wayside oratories still so common in Italy and France but which nowadays in England we lack altogether.

Ospringe itself is an interesting place. To begin with, the very ancient inn by the roadside, together with the equally old house opposite were once, according to Hasted, the historian of Kent, a Hospital founded by Henry *ii.*, for the benefit especially of pilgrims. This hospital, he tells us, "was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and was under the management of a master, three brethren and two clerks existed till the time of Edward IV." Henry VIII., having seized by force all such property as this in England, gave this Hospital to St John's College in Cambridge, which still owns it to the loss of us poor travellers. No doubt what money comes to the college from this poor place goes to the support and bolstering up of the Great Tudor Myth upon the general acceptance of which most of the vested interests in England largely depend. But let us poor men lift up our hearts. The Great Tudor Myth is passing, and every day it is becoming more evident that it can be supported very little longer. Let us determine, however, that we will not be taken in again, and under the pretence of a reformation of religion fix upon our necks a new political despotism worse than the Whig and Protestant aristocracy that the sixteenth century brought into being, to the irreparable damage of the Crown and the unspeakable loss of us the commonalty. May St Thomas avert an evil only too likely to befall us. As for Ospringe, however, it was after all in some sort royal property, the Crown having anciently a Camera Regis there for the King's use when he was on his way to Canterbury or to France.

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At Ospringe I left the great road to visit Davington and to sleep at Faversham. The long spring day was already drawing in when I came into Davington, as delightful and charming a little place as is to be found anywhere along the great road. Upon a hill-top there perhaps the Romans had a temple or a villa, at any rate they called the place Durolevum, and so it stands in the Antonine *Itinerary*. There is evidence, too, that the site was not abandoned when with the failure of their administration and the final departure of the Legions, there went down the long roads, our youth and hope. Where the present church stands, in part a Norman building, there was probably a Saxon Chapel. Then in 1153 came Fulke de Newenham and founded here and built a Benedictine nunnery in honour of St Mary Magdalen. That the house was never richly endowed nor large at all, we may know from that name it had—the house of the poor nuns of Davington. We know, however, very little about them or it, but its poverty did not save it of course at the dissolution. The Priory was then turned into a manor house, and this in part remains so that we find there a part of the cloisters of the time of Edward I., and other remains of Edward III.'s time. Then in Elizabeth's day the house seems to have been practically rebuilt. As for the little church, it owes all it is to-day to its late owner and historian, Mr Willement, and though it is not in itself of very great interest it serves as a memorial of his enthusiasm and love.

Davington is less than a mile out of the town of Faversham, and therefore it was not quite dark when I made my way into that famous place. Faversham must always have been an important place from its position with regard to the great road. We have seen how the source of the greatness of Rochester lay in its position upon the Watling Street where that great highway crossed the Medway. Faversham has half Rochester's fortune, for it stands where the road touches an arm or creek of the Swale, that important navigable waterway, an arm of the sea which separates Sheppey from the mainland.

The Swale there served the road and made of Faversham a port, but the road did not cross it and therefore the Swale, unlike the Medway, was never an obstacle or a defence. Thus Faversham never became a great fortress like Rochester; it was a port, and as it happened a Royal Villa, where so long ago as 930 Athelstan held his witan. Its fate, however, after the Conquest, was to be more glorious. In 1147 Stephen and his wife, Matilda, founded an abbey of Benedictine monks here at Faversham in honour of Our Lord, and known as St Saviours, upon land she had obtained from William of Ypres, Stephen's favourite captain, in exchange for her manor of Littlechurch in this county. At the end of April 1152 she fell sick at Hedingham Castle in Essex, and dying there three days later, was buried in the abbey church at Faversham. In August of the following year her eldest son, Eustace,

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was laid beside her, and in 1154 Stephen, the King, was also buried here. The abbey was, as I have said, dedicated to Our Saviour, and this because it possessed a famous relic of the True Cross which had been the gift of Eustace of Boulogne; the abbey was thus founded "In worship of the Croys," and one might have expected some such dedication as "Holy Cross." As founder, the King, for he and his Queen had been equally concerned in the foundation, claimed after the death of the abbot certain toll such as the abbot's ring, drinking cup, horse and hound. The abbot was a very great noble, held his house "in chief" and sat in Parliament. At the Suppression Henry VIII. granted the place to Sir Thomas Cheynay. Now mark the almost inevitable end. The Cheynays were living on Church property obtained by theft; at the least they were receivers of stolen goods. Do you think they could endure? They presently sold to a certain Thomas Arden, sometime Mayor of Faversham. Upon Sunday, 15 February 1551, this man was foully murdered in the abbey house he called his own, by a certain Thomas Mosby, a London tailor, the lover of Alice Arden, Thomas Arden's wife. This tragic affair so touched the imagination of the time that not only did Holinshed relate it in detail, but some unknown writer who, by not a few, has been taken for Shakespeare himself, used the story as the plot for a play. Arden of Faversham, according to the dramatist, was a noble character, modest, forgiving, and affectionate. His wife Alecia in her sleep by chance reveals to him her adulterous love for Mosby; but Arden forgives her on her promising never again to see her seducer. From that moment she plots with her lover to murder her husband, and succeeds at last, after many failures, by killing him in the abbey house by the hands of two hired assassins, while he is playing a game of draughts with Mosby. All concerned in the affair were brought to justice, but the abbey of Faversham was no longer coveted as a place of abode.

Almost every stone has disappeared of the abbey church in which lay Stephen, his Queen, and their son. It stood on the northern side of the town, where indeed the Abbey Farm still remains. It is to the parish church of Our Lady of Charity that we must turn for any memory of the conventual house where many a pilgrim must often have knelt to venerate the relic of the Holy Cross.

The great church which remains to us is said to have been used by the monks, and if not part of the abbey itself which would seem to have stood at some distance from it, more than one thing that remains in it would seem to endorse such a theory. To begin with, the church is very spacious, and cruciform in plan, though the tower is at the west end. This, however, is a very ugly affair, dating from 1797. In the main the great church, which has been tampered with at very various times, if not rebuilt, must have been Early English in style. As we see it we have a building divided into three aisles, in nave, chancel



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and transepts. The nave as it is at present may be neglected, but in the north transept we have a curious hagioscope or other opening in the shape of a cross and there used to be some remains of paintings; the Nativity, the Virgin and Child, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Crucifixion and the holy women at the Sepulchre of Our Lord. In the chancel were other remains of paintings. There still remain the very noble stalls which seem to assure us of the monastic use of the church, and a fine altar tomb of the fifteenth century; this on the north side. On the south are very fine sedilia and piscina. Close by is a brass to William Thanbury, the vicar here, dating from 1448. The inscription considering the use of the church to-day, is pathetic; for there we read *Credo in SANCT. Eccles. CATH.*, a pleasing misreading of the true text which every one, though for different reasons, will rejoice to read.

We are told by local tradition or gossip that the tomb at the end of the south aisle is that of King Stephen. This, however, could only be true if this were indeed the church of the monastery. The tomb is Decorated in style and has a canopy, but is without inscription.

Our Lady of Charity was, however, chiefly famous for its chapel of St Thomas of Canterbury on the north side of the chancel, and for its altars of SS. Crispin and Crispian and of St Erasmus. Many pilgrims turned aside from the road to visit Faversham which was not a station on the pilgrimage, for the sake of these shrines and altars and especially to pray in the chapel of St Thomas.

It is said, indeed, that "no one died who had anything to leave without giving something to St Erasmus light." As for SS. Crispin and Crispian they were the patrons of the town and leapt into great fame after the victory of Agincourt upon their feast day, October 25, when the King had invoked them upon the field.

This day is called the feast of Crispian;  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we on it shall be remembered.

The two saints, Crispin and Crispian, are not less famous in France than in England. They were indeed Rome's missionaries in Gaul about the middle of the third century. They seem to have settled at Soissons, where now a great church stands in their honour. There they practiced the craft of cobblers and of all cobblers they are the patrons. After some years the Emperor Maximian Hercules coming into Gaul, a complaint concerning them was brought to him. They were tried by that most inhuman



judge Rictius Varno, the Governor, whom, however, they contrived to escape by fleeing to England and to Faversham, where, as some say they lived, but as others assert they were shipwrecked. For us at any rate their names are secure from oblivion, not so much by reason of the famous victory won upon their day as because Shakespeare has gloriously recorded their names with those familiar in our mouths as household words:

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Harry the King, Bedford, and Exeter,  
Warwick, and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester....

### CHAPTER V

#### THE PILGRIMS' ROAD

#### FAVERSHAM TO CANTERBURY

From Faversham at least to the environs of Canterbury, the Pilgrim's Road seems to be unmistakable, for the Watling Street runs all the way straight as a ruled line. Yet so few are the remaining marks of the pilgrimage, so little is that great Roman and mediaeval England remembered by men or even by the fields or the road which runs between them with so changeless a purpose, that at first sight we might think it all a myth. And yet everything that is fundamental or really enduring and valuable in our lives we owe to that England which was surely one of the most glorious and strong, as well as one of the happiest, countries in Europe. Yet must the disheartened voyager take comfort, for in how many small and negligible things may we not see even to-day the very mark and standard of Rome, her sign manual after all, under the rubbish of the modern world. And if you desire an example, let me give you weathercocks.

No man can walk for day after day along this tremendous road which leads us straight as a javelin thrust back through all the lies and excuses to the truth of our origins, without noticing, and especially since he must keep an eye on the wind and the weather, the astonishing number of weathercocks there be between London and Canterbury. Upon almost every steeple, chanceler towers shining in the sun and wildly careering in the winds of spring. You think that nothing at all, the most ordinary sight in modern England? But for the seeing eye it reveals, how much! Everyone of these weathercocks crows there on the tip top of the steeple over each town or village because of an order of the Pope. They were to be the sign of the jurisdiction of St Peter, and that by a Bull of the ninth century. How entrancing it is to remember such a thing as that in the midst of modern England.

In spite of the weathercocks and their watchfulness, however, the memories of the great pilgrimage between Faversham and Harbledown are dishearteningly few. One might surely expect to find something at Preston for instance, where, coming out of Faversham, one rejoins the Watling Street, but there is nothing at all to remind one of the great past of the Way. It is true that Preston church, dedicated in honour of St Catherine, is both ancient and beautiful, and once belonged to the monastery of Christ Church in Canterbury; but neither in its channel, which must once, before the eastern window was inserted in 1862, with its single lancets and sedilia, have been

extraordinarily fine, nor in the nave, is there any memory at all of St Thomas or the Pilgrims. It is not indeed until we come to Boughton that we are reminded of them.

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The older part of the parish of Boughton is South Street, where, however, nothing now remains older than the sixteenth century at the earliest. Here, however, was anciently a wayside chapel to the south of the road where now Holy Lane turns out of it. About a mile, or rather less, to the south, and clean off the road, stands on the crest of a steep, though not a high hill, the lovely village of Boughton under Blee, which, curiously enough, if we consider what is omitted, is mentioned by Chaucer,

When ended was the lyf of seint Cecyle,  
Er we had riden fully fyve myle,  
At Boghton under Blee us gan atake  
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,  
And undernethe he hadde a whyt surpys....  
It semed he had priked myles three.

This man who, with his yeoman, overtakes the pilgrims, is the rich canon, the alchemist who could pave with gold "all the road to Canterbury town." He is said to have already ridden three miles, but whence he had come it is impossible to say. That the pilgrims who had ridden not quite five miles had come from Ospringe might seem certain, and since they were overtaken by the Canon it is possible that he was coming from Faversham. It is, however, more important to explain, if we can, what the pilgrims were doing more than a mile off the true Way at Boughton under Blean. The church of SS. Peter and Paul is of some interest and of considerable beauty it is true, but so far as we may know there was no shrine there of sufficient importance to draw the pilgrims from the road, as at Faversham, nor one might think would they be easily diverted from the goal of their journey almost within reach. All sorts of routes have been given here, one going so far as to lead the pilgrims south and east quite off the Watling Street and across the old green road, the Pilgrims Way from Winchester, to enter Canterbury at last by the South Gate. This is absurd. No good explanation has yet been offered, but perhaps we may be near the truth if we suggest that Chaucer and his pilgrims never visited Boughton under Blean and the church of SS. Peter and Paul at all. After all we have in Chaucer's text (Frag. G. Canon's Yeoman Prologue) merely the name, and that in the old form, Boghton under Blee. All this wild woodland and forest country which lies on a great piece of high ground stretching north-east and south-west across the Way parallel with the valley of the Great Stour, between Faversham and Canterbury, hiding the one from the other, was known as the Blean. It is equally certain that the village of Dunkirk was known as Boughton until the middle of the eighteenth century, when a set of squatters took possession of the ground, then extra parochial as of a "free-port" from which no one could dislodge them. The district including the greater part of the forest was afterwards erected into a separate villa called the "villa of Dunkirk." Now Boughton Hill rises abruptly beyond the village of Dunkirk, and it may well be that this and not the tiny hamlet nearly a mile to the south of the great Way, was Chaucer's Boghton under Blee, where the Canon and his yeoman overtook the "joly companye," and rode in with them to Canterbury. And it is there at Mad Tom's corner that we first catch sight of the glorious city of St Thomas.

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“Mad Tom’s corner!” That name, it is needless to say I hope, has no reference to the great archbishop or the pilgrimage. Mad Tom’s corner, whence we get our first view of Canterbury, is intimately connected with the gate close by, called Courtenay’s gate, and refers to the exploits of a mad Cornishman who came to Kent and especially to Canterbury about 1832, and presently proclaimed himself to be the New Messiah and showed to his deluded disciples the sacred stigmata in his hands and feet. It was the custom of these unhappy people to meet in the woods of the Blean, and it is said one may still see their names cut upon the trees. Mad Tom, who, besides proclaiming himself to be the Messiah, claimed also to be the heir to the earldom of Devon, and called himself Sir William Percy Honeywood Courtenay, the Hon. Sydney Percy, Count Moses Rothschild and Squire Thompson, to say nothing of Knight of Malta and King of Jerusalem, was a madman, with a method in his madness and a certain reasonable truth behind his absurdities. His mission was, he said, to restore the land to the people, to take it away, that is to say, from the great rascal families of the sixteenth century, the Russells, Cavendishes and so forth, who had appeared like vermin to feed upon the dead body of the Church, to gorge themselves upon her lands and to lord it in her Abbeys and Priories. In the minds of these people Tom was not only mad but dangerous. Mad he certainly was, for all his dreams. Nevertheless he stood for Canterbury in the year of the Reform Bill and polled 275 votes, and in the following year he started a paper called the *Lion* which ran to eighteen numbers. Five years later, however, he had become such a nuisance that a warrant was safely issued against him “on the charge of enticing away the labourers of a farmer.” Tom shot one of the constables who served the warrant, and on the afternoon of the last morning of May in 1838, two companies of the 45th regiment were marched out of Canterbury to take him. They found him here in Blean Wood, surrounded by his followers. He, however, was a man of action, and he promptly shot the officer in command. The soldiers then began to fire, and next minute were charging with fixed bayonets. Tom and eight of his followers were killed, and three more died a few days later.

One may well ask what can have induced the stolid Kentish folk to follow so wild a Celt as this. We shall probably find the answer in the fact that Tom was exceedingly handsome in an Italian way, having “an extraordinary resemblance to the usual Italian type of the Saviour.” Also, without doubt, he voiced, though inanely, the innate resentment of the English peasant against the great sixteenth century robber families and their sycophants. These great families, now on their last legs and about to be torn in pieces by a host, financial and disgusting, without creed or nationality, seven times worse than they, laughed at Tom. They do not laugh at those who,

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about to compass their destruction, led by another Celt, have dugged a pit into which they trample headlong, and astonishing as it might seem, to the regret of that very peasantry which has hated them for so long. At least, and let us remember this, if they were greedy and unscrupulous their vices were ours, something we could understand. They were of our blood, we took the same things for granted, had the same prejudices, and after all the same sense of justice. They with us were a part of Europe and looked to Rome as their ancestor and original. But those who are about to displace them! Alas, whence do they come who begat them, from what have they issued out? I cannot answer; but I know that with all their faults, their sacrilege, robbery, and treason, Russell, Cavendish, Cecil and Talbot are English names, and they who bear them men of our blood, European, too, and of our civilisation. But who are those that now begin to fill their places? Aliens, Orientals and worse now received without surprise into the peerage of England and the great offices of justice. And the names which recall Elizabeth and whose syllables are a part of our mother tongue, are obliterated by such jargon as these.

These are miserable thoughts to come to a man on the road to Canterbury, but they are inevitable to-day in England of my heart. The new times belong to them. Let us then return to the old time before them and here for the first time in sight of Canterbury let us remember St Thomas, the greatest of English Saints, the noblest English name in the Roman calendar.

All that wonder which greets you from Mad Tom's corner upon Boughton Hill is, rightly understood, the work of St Thomas, and we might say indeed that the great Angel Steeple was the last of his miracles for it is the last of the Gothic in England, and it rose above his tomb, while that tomb was still a shrine and a monument in the hearts of men. For "the church dedicated to St Thomas erects itself," as Erasmus says, "with such majesty towards Heaven that even from a distance it strikes religious awe into the beholders."

So I went on my way in the mid-afternoon down hill to what in my heart I knew to be Bob-up-and-down on the far side of which lies and climbs Harbledown and the hospital of St Nicholas.

Wite ye nat wher ther stant a litel town  
Which that y-cleped is Bop-up-and-down  
Under the Blee in Caunterbury weye?

This "littel town" it might seem, has disappeared, unless indeed it be Harbledown itself, which certainly bears geographically much resemblance to that descriptive name, as Erasmus describes it in his strange book. "Know then," says he, "that those who journey to London, not long after leaving Canterbury, find themselves in a road at once



very hollow and narrow and besides the banks on either side are so steep and abrupt that you cannot escape; nor can you possibly make your journey in any other direction. Upon the left hand of this

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road is a hospital of a few old men, one of whom runs out as soon as they perceive any horseman approaching; he sprinkles his holy water and presently offers the upper part of a shoe bound with an iron hoof on which is a piece of glass resembling a precious stone. Those that kiss it give some small coin.... Gratian rode on my left hand, next to the hospital, he was covered with water; however he endured that. When the shoe was stretched out, he asked the man what he wanted. He said that it was the shoe of St Thomas. On that my friend was angered and turning to me he said, 'What, do these brutes imagine that we must kiss every good man's shoe? Why, by the same rule, they would offer his spittle to be kissed or other bodily excrements.' I pitied the old man, and by the gift of a small coin I comforted his trouble."

It is easy to see that we are there in the modern world on the very eve of the Reformation. The unmannerly Gratian was John Colet to be the Dean of St Paul's, hardly defended from the charge of heresy by old Archbishop Wareham. And like so many of his kidney he seems to have forgotten the scripture upon which, as he would have asserted, his whole philosophy and action was based,—the scripture I mean which speaks of One, "the lachet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." We shall not have the opportunity of being so proud and impatient as Dean Colet of unhappy memory, for no shoe, alas, of St Thomas or any other saint will be offered for our veneration in the Hospital of St Nicholas at Harbledown to-day. Yet not for this should we pass it by, for of all places upon the road, it best of all conserves the memory of those far away days when Chaucer came by, and half-way up the hill rested awhile and prayed, e'er from the summit he looked down upon Canterbury.

The Hospital of the Forest or Wood of Blean, dedicated in honour of St Nicholas, lies upon the southern and western side of the last hill before the western gate of the city. It was founded in 1084 by Archbishop Lanfranc, and no doubt for a time served as a hospital for Lepers, but it was soon appropriated for the use of the sick and wayfarers generally, and though nothing save the chapel remains to us from Lanfranc's day, the whole place is so full of interest that no one should pass it by.

The chapel became in time the parish church of this little place on the hillside which grew up about the hospital which itself was probably placed here on account of the spring of water known as St Thomas's or the Black Prince's well, south and west of the building. Most of the chapel is of Norman building, the western doorway for instance, the pillars and round arches on the north of the nave dating from Lanfranc's time. But the south side is later, of the thirteenth century, and the font and choir are later still, being Perpendicular fifteenth century work.

The hospital, however, as we see it, is a rebuilding of the seventeenth century, but it was fundamentally restored in the nineteenth. In the "Frater Hall," however, are some interesting remains of the old house, among them a fine collection of mazers and two



bowls of maple wood, in one of which lies perhaps the very crystal which Erasmus saw, and which was set in the upper leather of the shoe of St Thomas.

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Below the hospital in the orchard is the old well known as St Thomas's. Above it grows an elder, surely a relic of the days of the Pilgrimage. For the elder was known as the wayfaring tree and was sacred to pilgrims and travellers. It is not strange then, that it should cool with its shade the spring of St Thomas; it is only strange that the vandal has spared it for us to bless. But why the elder was sacred to travellers I do not know.

Wayfaring Tree! What ancient claim  
Hast thou to that right pleasant name?  
Was it that some faint pilgrim came  
Unhopedly to thee  
In the brown desert's weary way  
'Midst thirst and toils consuming sway,  
And there, as 'neath thy shade he lay,  
Blessed the Wayfaring Tree?

But doggerel never solved anything. In truth a very different story is told of the elder and on good authority too. For if we may not trust Sir John Maundeville who tells us that, "Fast by the Pool of Siloe is the elder tree on which Judas hanged himself ... when he sold and betrayed our Lord," Shakespeare says that, "Judas was hanged on an elder," and Piers Plowman records:

Judas he japed

With Jewish siller  
And sithen on an elder tree

Hanged himsel.

It is from the quietness and neglected beauty of this well of St Thomas that under the evening I turned back into the road and, climbing a little, looked down upon what was once the holiest city of fair England.

Felix locus, felix ecclesia  
In qua Thomae vivit memoria:  
Felix terra quae dedit praesulem  
Felix ilia quae fovit exsulem.

In that hour of twilight, when even the modern world is hushed and it is possible to believe in God, I looked with a long look towards that glory which had greeted so often and for so many centuries the eager gaze of my ancestors, but I could not see for my eyes like theirs were full of tears.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CITY OF ST THOMAS

When a man, alone or in a company, entered Canterbury at last by the long road from London, in the thirteenth, fourteenth or fifteenth century, he came into a city as famous as Jerusalem, as lovely as anything even in England, and as certainly alive and in possession of a soul as he was himself.

When a man comes into Canterbury to-day he comes into a dead city.

I say Canterbury is dead, for when the soul has departed from the body, that is death. Canterbury has lost its soul.

Go into the Cathedral, it is like a tomb, but a tomb that has been rifled, a whited sepulchre so void and cold that even the last trump will make there no stir. It was once the altar, the shrine, and as it were the mother of England, one of the tremendous places of Europe into which every year flocked thousands upon thousands upon thousands of men. The altar is thrown down, the shrine is gone and forgotten, in all that vast church the martyred Saint who made it what it was is not so much as remembered even in an inscription or a stone; and the enthusiasm and devotion of centuries have given place to a silence so icy that nothing can break it. The place is dead.

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I remember very well the first time I came to Canterbury. I was a boy, and full of enthusiasm for St Thomas, I would have knelt where he fell, I would have prayed, yes with all my fathers, there where he was laid at last on high above the altar. But there was nothing. I was shown, as is the custom, all that the four centuries of ice have preserved of the work of my forefathers; the glorious tombs of King and Bishop, the storied glass of the thirteenth century, unique in England, the litter and the footsteps of thirteen hundred years. I was led up past the choir into that lofty and once famous place where for centuries the greatest and holiest shrine in England stood. All about were still grouped the tombs of Princes; Edward, the Black Prince, the hero of Crecy, Henry IV., the usurper, Cardinal Chatillon; but of the shrine itself, of the body it held up to love and honour and worship there was nothing, no word even, no sign at all to tell that ever such a thing had been, only an emptiness and a space and a silence that could be felt.

Later I was led down into that north-west transept, once known as the Martyrdom, where St Thomas laid down his life; and left alone there, I remember I tried in all that dumbness and silence to recollect myself, to pray, at least to recall, something of that great sacrifice which had so moved Christendom that for centuries men flocked here to worship—where now no man kneels any more for ever.

I remember very well how it came to me in that tingling and icy silence that St Thomas died for the liberty of the Church, that here in England she might not become the king's chattel or anyway at all the creature of the civil power. I was too young to smile when I remembered that in the very place where St Thomas laid down his life in that cause, there sits to-day in his usurped place one who eagerly acknowledges the king as the "Supreme Governor of the Church within these realms." Yet in my heart I heard again those tremendous words, "Were all the swords of England hanging over my head you could not terrify me from my obedience to God and my Lord the Pope." They who slew him fled away, and their title, shouted in the winter darkness that filled the church, was heard above the thunder and has echoed down the ages since: Reaux! Reaux! King's men! King's men! Is it not they who now sit in Becket's place?

But to-day I am content with a judgment less bitter and less logical. Who may know what is in the heart of God? Perhaps after all, after this age of ice, Canterbury will rise again and my little son even may hear them singing in the streets, gay once more and alive with endless processions that noble old song:

Laureata novo Thoma,  
Sicut suo Petro Roma,  
Gaude Cantuaria!

[Illustration: *Canterbury cathedral from Christchurch gate*]

For though St Thomas be forgot in Canterbury, he is on high and valiant, and one day maybe he will return from exile as before, to accomplish wonderful things.

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And indeed dead as she is and silent, Canterbury is worthy of resurrection if only because she is as it were a part of him and a part, too, of our origins, the well, though not the source from which the Faith was given us. For some thirteen hundred years when men have spoken of Canterbury, they have had in mind the metropolitan church of England, the great cathedral which still stands so finely there in the rather gloomy close behind Christ Church gate, rightly upon the foundations of its predecessors, Roman, Saxon, and Norman buildings. Ever since there was a civilisation in England, there has been a church in this place; it is our duty, then, as well as our pleasure to approach it to-day with reverence.

Canterbury began as we began in the swamps and the forests, a little lake village in the marshes of the Stour, holding the lowest ford, not beyond the influence of the sea nor out of reach of fresh water. When great Rome broke into England lost in mist, here certainly she established a city that was as it were the focus of all the ports of the Straits whence most easily a man might come into England from the continent. Canterbury grew because she was almost equally near to the ports we know as Lympne, Dover, Richborough and Reculvers, so that a man setting out from the continent and doubtful in which port he would land, wholly at the mercy of wind and tide as he was, would name Canterbury to his correspondent in England as a place of meeting. Thus Canterbury increased. There in the Roman times doubtless a church arose which, doubtless, too, perished in the Diocletian persecution. That it re-arose we know, for Venerable Bede describes it as still existing when, nearly two hundred years after the departure of the Roman legions, St Augustine came into England, sent by St Gregory to make us Christians. He came, as we know, first into Kent to find Canterbury the royal capital of King Ethelbert, and when, says Bede, "an episcopal see had been given to Augustine in the king's own city he *regained possession* (*recuperavit*) with the king's help, *of a church there which he was informed had been built in the city long before by Roman believers*. This he consecrated in the name of the Holy Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, and fixed there a home for himself and all his successors." [Footnote: Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. xxviii.] This church, rudely repaired, added to and rebuilt, stood until Lanfranc's day, when it was pulled down and destroyed to make way for the great Norman building out of which the church we have has grown.

The little church which Lanfranc destroyed and which had seen so many vicissitudes, was probably a work of the end of the fourth century, at any rate in its foundations. Eadmer indeed who tells us all we know of it says that it was built on the plan of St Peter's in Rome. "This was that very church," he writes, "which had been built by Romans as Bede witnesses in his history, and which

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was duly arranged in some parts in imitation of the church of the blessed Prince of the Apostles, Peter, in which his holy relics are exalted by the veneration of the whole world." We shall never know much more than Eadmer tells us, for if the foundations still exist they lie within the present church. It is recorded, however, that in the time of St Elphege the church was badly damaged by the Danes, the archbishop himself being martyred at Greenwich. No doubt as often before, the church was patched up, only to perish by fire in 1067, the year after the Battle of Hastings.

When Lanfranc then entered Canterbury, he found his Cathedral a mere ruin, but with his usual energy, though already a man of sixty-five, he set to work to re-establish not only his Cathedral but also the monastery attached to it. He did this on a great scale, providing accommodation for three times the number of monks that had served the Cathedral in the decadent days of the Saxon monarchy, and when this was done he first "destroyed utterly" the Romano-Saxon church and then "set about erecting a more noble one, and in the space of seven years, 1070- 1077, he raised this from the foundations and brought it near to perfection." That he worked in great haste and too quickly seems certain. In fact it must be confessed that Lanfranc's church in Canterbury was a more or less exact copy of his church of St Stephen at Caen, but, built much more quickly, was too mean for its purpose. It soon became necessary to rebuild the choir and sanctuary; the nave, however, was allowed to stand until the end of the fourteenth century; but even then its design so hampered the builders of the present nave, for it had been decided to preserve one of Lanfranc's western towers, that to this day the nave of Canterbury is too short, consisting of but eight bays.

Lanfranc's choir was of but two bays and an apse. This was too obviously inadequate to be tolerated by the monks. In 1096 it was pulled down and a great apsidal choir of ten bays was built over a lofty crypt, with a tower on either side the apse and an eastern transept having four apsidal chapels in the eastern walls, two in the north arm and two in the south. All this was done in the time of St Anselm and finished in 1115, when Conrad was Prior of Christ Church.

It was this church with Lanfranc's short Norman nave, western facade and towers, and Conrad's glorious great choir high up over the crypt, a choir broader than the nave and longer too, and with two transepts, the western of Lanfranc's time, the eastern of St Anselm's, that St Thomas knew and that saw his martyrdom in 1170.

Materials for the life of St Thomas are so plentiful that his modern biographers are able to compose a life fuller perhaps in detail and fact than would be possible in the case of any other man of his time. But no account ever written of his martyrdom is at once so simple and so touching as that to be found in the Golden Legend. It was this account which the man of the Middle Age knew by heart, and which brought him in his thousands on pilgrimage to Canterbury, and therefore I give it here.

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“When the King of France had made accord between St Thomas and King Henry, the Archbishop,” Voragine tells us, “came home to Canterbury, where he was received worshipfully, and sent for them that had trespassed against him, and by the authority of the Pope’s Bull openly denounced them accursed, unto the time they came to amendment. And when they heard this they came to him and would have made him assoil them by force; and sent word over to the King how he had done, whereof the King was much wroth and said: If he had men in his land that loved him they would not suffer such a traitor in his land alive.

“And forthwith four knights took their counsel together and thought they would do to the King a pleasure and emprised to slay St Thomas and suddenly departed and took their shipping toward England. And when the King knew of their departing he was sorry and sent after them, but they were in the sea and departed ere the messenger came, wherefore the King was heavy and sorry.

“These be the names of the four knights: Sir Reginald Fitzurse, Sir Hugh de Morville, Sir William de Tracy and Sir Richard le Breton.

“On Christmas Day St Thomas made a sermon at Canterbury in his own church and, weeping, prayed the people to pray for him, for he knew well his time was nigh, and there executed the sentence on them that were against the right of Holy Church. And that same day as the King sat at meat all the bread that he handled waxed anon mouldy and hoar that no man might eat of it, and the bread that they touched not was fair and good for to eat.

“And these four knights aforesaid came to Canterbury on the Tuesday in Christmas week, about evensong time and came to St Thomas and said that the King commanded him to make amends for the wrongs he had done and also that he should assoil all them that he had accursed anon or else they should slay him. Then said Thomas: All that I ought to do by right, that will I with a good will do, but as to the sentence that is executed I may not undo, but that they will submit them to the correction of Holy Church, for it was done by our holy father the Pope and not by me. Then said Sir Reginald: But if thou assoil not the King and all other standing in the curse it shall cost thee thy life. And St Thomas said: Thou knowest well enough that the King and I were accorded on Mary Magdalene day and that this curse should go forth on them that had offended the Church.

“Then one of the knights smote him as he kneeled before the altar, on the head. And one Sir Edward Grim, that was his crossier, put forth his arm with the cross to bear off the stroke, and the stroke smote the cross asunder and his arm almost off, wherefore he fled for fear and so did all the monks that were that time at Compline. And then each smote at him, that they smote off a great piece of the skull of his head, that his brain fell on the pavement. And so they slew and martyred him, and were so cruel



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that one of them brake the point of his sword against the pavement. And thus this holy and blessed archbishop St Thomas suffered death in his own church for the right of all Holy Church. And when he was dead they stirred his brain, and after went in to his chamber and took away his goods and his horse out of his stable, and took away his Bulls and writings and delivered them to Sir Robert Broke to bear into France to the King. And as they searched his chambers they found in a chest two shirts of hair made full of great knots, and then they said: Certainly he was a good man; and coming down into the churchyard they began to dread and fear that the ground would not have borne them, and were marvellously aghast, but they supposed that the earth would have swallowed them all quick. And then they knew that they had done amiss. And soon it was known all about, how that he was martyred, and anon after they took his holy body and unclothed him and found bishop's clothing above and the habit of a monk under. And next his flesh he wore hard hair, full of knots, which was his shirt, and his breech was of the same, and the knots stuck fast within his skin, and all his body full of worms; he suffered great pain. And he was thus martyred the year of Our Lord one thousand one hundred and seventy-one, and was fifty-three years old. And soon after tidings came to the King how he was slain, wherefore the King took great sorrow, and sent to Rome for his absolution...."

Of the King's penance Voragine says nothing, but indeed it must have reverberated through Europe, though not perhaps with so enormous a rumour as the humiliation of the Emperor Henry IV. before Pope Gregory VII. at Canossa scarce a hundred years before had done. The first and the most famous of Canterbury pilgrims came to St Dunstan's church upon the Watling Street, outside the great West Gate of Canterbury, as we may believe in July 1174. There he stripped him of his robes and, barefoot in a woollen shirt, entered the city and walked barefoot through the streets to the door of the Cathedral. There he knelt, and being received into the great church, was led to the place of Martyrdom where he knelt again and kissed the stones where St Thomas had fallen. In the crypt where the body of the martyr was preserved, the King laid aside his cloak and received five strokes with a rod from every Bishop and Abbot there present, and three from every one of the eighty monks. In that place he remained through the whole night fasting and weeping to be absolved on the following day.

[Illustration: WEST GATE, CANTERBURY]

The martyrdom of St Thomas, the penance of the King, these world-shaking and amazing events might in themselves, we may think, have been enough to transform the church in which they took place, if as was thought at the time, heaven itself had not intervened and destroyed Conrad's glorious choir by fire. This disaster fell upon the city and the country like a final judgment, less than two months after the penance of the King in 1174, and within four years of St Thomas's murder.

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Something of the great masterpiece that then perished is left to us especially without, and it is perhaps the most charming work remaining in the city, the tower of St Anselm, for instance, and much of the transept beside it.

For the rest the choir of Canterbury, as we know it, the choir began in 1174 by William of Sens, is as French as its predecessor, but in all else very different. In order perhaps to provide a great space for the shrine of the newly canonised St Thomas of Canterbury, to whose tomb already half Europe was flocking, the choir was built even longer than its predecessor. The great space provided for the shrine in the Trinity Chapel behind the choir and high altar opened on the east into a circular chapel known, perhaps on account of the relic it held, as Becket's Crown. Till 1220 when all was ready, the body of St Thomas lay in an iron coffin in the crypt, and the great feast and day of pilgrimage in his honour was the day of his martyrdom, December 29, so incredibly honourable as being within the octave of the Nativity of Our Lord. But in 1220 it was decided to translate the body from the crypt to the new shrine in the Trinity Chapel in July, for the winter pilgrimage was irksome. From that year a new feast was established, the feast of the Translation of St Thomas upon July 7th, and thus in England down to our own day, St Thomas has two feasts, that of his Martyrdom on December 29, when still his relics are exposed in the great Catholic Cathedral of Westminster, and in the little church of St Thomas, the Catholic sanctuary in Canterbury, and that of his Translation upon July 7th.

Of that first summer pilgrimage to the new shrine of St Thomas we have very full accounts. It was the most glorious and the most extraordinary assemblage that had perhaps ever been seen in England. The Archbishop had given two years' notice of the event, and this had been circulated not only in all England, but throughout Europe. "Orders had been issued for maintenance to be provided for the vast multitude not only in the city of Canterbury itself, but on the various roads by which the pilgrims would approach. During the whole celebration along the whole way from London to Canterbury, hay and provender were given to all who asked, and at each gate of Canterbury in the four quarters of the city and in the four licensed cellars, were placed tuns of wine to be distributed gratis, and on the day of the festival, wine ran freely through the gutters of the streets." In the presence of the young Henry III., too young himself to bear a part, the coffin in which lay the relics of St Thomas was borne on the shoulders of the Papal Legate, the Archbishop Stephen Langton, the Grand Justiciary Hubert de Burgh, and the Archbishop of Rheims, from the crypt up to the Trinity Chapel in the presence of every Bishop and Abbot of England, of the great officials of the kingdom and of the special ambassadors of every state in Europe.

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Of bishops and abbots, prior and parsons,  
Of earls and of barons and of many knights thereto,  
Of sergeants and of squires and of his husbandmen enow,  
And of simple men eke of the land—so thick hither drew.

So was St Thomas vindicated and God avenged. And St Thomas reigned as was thought for ever on high, in the new sanctuary of his Cathedral Church.

I say he reigned on high. The choir and sanctuary of Canterbury had even in St Anselm's time as we have seen, been high above the nave. William of Sens designed the new choir, as high as the old, but very nobly raised still higher, the great altar, and higher yet the Chapel of the Trinity in which stood the shrine. St Thomas had an especial devotion to the Holy Trinity. It was in a former Trinity Chapel that he had said his first Mass, and whether on this account or another, his devotion was such that it was he who first established that Feast, till then merely the octave of Whitsunday. His shrine then was well placed in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity.

In examining the church to-day one can well understand the beauty of William of Sens' idea, and see, too, where, and perhaps understand why, it really fails or at least comes short of perfection.

William of Sens trained in Latin traditions had, and rightly, little respect, we may think, for the work of the past. He would have had all new. But by 1174, unlike Anselm in 1096, and still more unlike Lanfranc in 1070, he had in all probability a genuine English and national prejudice to meet, an English dislike of destruction and an English hatred of anything new.

It has been said that the failure of William of Sens' design was due to the meanness of the monks of Christ Church. But meanness is not an English failing; on the contrary, our great fault is the very opposite, extravagance. It was surely not meanness and at such a time and in such a cause that forced the monastery to deny William of Sens the free hand he desired; it was prejudice and a fear, almost barbaric; of destruction. The monks forced their builder to accommodate the new choir to what remained of the old work. They refused to sacrifice St Anselm's tower on the south or the tower of St Andrew on the north, therefore the wide choir of Canterbury, already wider than the nave and growing wider still as it went eastward, had to be strangled between them, and to open again as well as it could into the Trinity Chapel and the Corona. All that was old, too, and that they loved they used; the old piers of the crypt were to remain and still to support the pillars of the choir, which were thus, no doubt to William's disgust, unequally placed so that here the arches are pointed but there round. In many ways William must have considered his employers barbarians, and in the true sense of that much abused term, he was right. No man brought up in the Greek and Latin traditions would have hesitated to destroy in order to build anew. The English cannot do that; they patch and make do, and what must be new they cannot love until it is old;

their buildings are not so much works of art as growths, and there is much to be said for them. Only here at Canterbury their prejudice has been a misfortune. Not even the most convinced Englishman can look upon the twisted and constricted choir of Canterbury and rejoice.

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William of Sens, however, hampered though he was, is responsible for the work we see. It is true he died after some four years of work at Canterbury, falling one day from a scaffold, but William the Englishman who followed him only completed what was really already finished. The design, the idea, and the genius of Canterbury choir are

French, spoiled by English prejudice, but undoubtedly French for all that.

As it appeared when that great Transitional choir was finished, Canterbury Cathedral remained till 1379. It is true that the north wall of the cloister and the lovely doorway in the north-east corner were built in the Early English time. It is equally true that the lower part of the Chapter House and the screens north and south of the choir and a glorious window in St Anselm's Chapel are Decorated work, but the Cathedral itself knows nothing of the Early English or of the Decorated styles. It stood till 1379 with a low and short Norman nave and transept to the west, and a great Transitional choir and transept to the east. In 1379 Lanfranc's nave and transept were destroyed.

It may be thought that at last a great and noble nave would be built north of the Frenchman's choir. Not at all. Again the English prejudice against destruction—a lack of intellectual daring in us perhaps—prevented this. One of the western towers of Lanfranc was to remain, and therefore the new nave though loftier than the old, was no longer, and it remains a glory certainly without, but within a hopeless disappointment saved from utter ineffectiveness only by the noble height of the great choir above it. It remains without life or zest, not an experiment but a task honestly and thoroughly done in the Perpendicular style.

To the same period belong the great western screen of the choir, the Chapel of St Michael and the Warrior's Chapel in the south transept, the Lady Chapel in the north transept, the Chantry and the tomb of Henry IV. in the Trinity Chapel, the Black Prince's Chantry and the screens of the Lady Chapel in the Crypt, the upper part of the Chapter House, now lost to us by restoration, and the south-west Tower.

There remained at the end of the fifteenth century but one thing needed—the central Tower. This, as it happened, was to be the last great Gothic work undertaken in this country, and in every way it is one of the most impressive and successful. Begun in 1475 and finished in 1503, the Angel Steeple is the last of Catholicism in England, and I like to think of it towering as it does over that dead city, and the low hills of Kent, over all that was once so sacred and is now nothing, as a kind of beacon, a sign of hope until it shall ring the Angelus again and once more the sons of St Benedict shall chant the Mass of St Thomas before the shrine new made: *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino, diem festum celebrantes, sub honore beati Thomae Martyris, de cujus passione gaudent angeli et collaudant filium Dei.*

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For the great shrine, which for so long had been the loftiest beacon in England of the Christian Faith, was destroyed. It was the first work of the last Henry to avenge his namesake, and having made another Thomas martyr in the same cause, to wipe out for ever all memory of the first who had steadfastly withstood his predecessor. It is strange that the severed head of Blessed Thomas More should lie in the very church whence Henry II. set forth to do penance for the murder of the first Thomas.

We have no authentic record of the final catastrophe, such deeds are usually done in darkness. All we really know is that in 1538 "the bones, by command of the Lord (Thomas) Cromwell, were there and then burnt ... the spoile of the shrine in golde and precious stones filled two greate chests such as six or seven strong men could doe no more than convey one of them out of the church." That the shrine was of unsurpassed magnificence we have many witnesses. "The tomb of St Thomas the Martyr," writes a Venetian traveller who had seen it, "surpasses all belief. Notwithstanding its great size it is wholly covered with plates of pure gold; yet the gold is scarce seen because it is covered with various precious stones as sapphires, balasses, diamonds, rubies and emeralds; and wherever the eye turns something more beautiful than the rest is observed; nor in addition to these natural beauties is the skill of art wanting, for in the midst of the gold are the most beautiful sculptured gems, both small and large as well as such as are in relief, as agates, onyxes, cornelians and cameos; and some cameos are of such size that I am afraid to name it; but everything is far surpassed by a ruby, not larger than a thumb-nail, which is fixed at the right of the altar. The church is somewhat dark and particularly in the spot where the shrine is placed, and when we went to see it the sun was near setting and the weather cloudy; nevertheless I saw the ruby as if I had it in my hand. They say it was given by a king of France."

To carry out the theft with impunity it was first of all necessary to degrade the great national hero and saint and expose his memory to ridicule. In November 1538 St Thomas was declared a traitor, every representation of him was ordered to be destroyed, and his name was erased from all service books, antiphones, collects and prayers under pain of his Majesty's indignation, and imprisonment at his Grace's pleasure. The saint indeed is said to have been cited to appear at Westminster for treason, and there to have been tried and condemned. That seems, too superstitiously insolent even for such a thing as Henry. But we may believe Marillac, the French Ambassador, when he tells us "St Thomas is declared a traitor *because* his relics and bones were adorned with gold and stones."

So perished the shrine and memory of St Thomas, and with it the thousand year old religion of England to be replaced by one knows not what.

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With the destruction of religion went the destruction of the religious houses. Of these the chief was the Benedictine monastery of Christ Church which lay to the north of the Cathedral and whose monks from St Augustine's time had always served it. Almost nothing remains of this, save the Cloister and Chapter House and Treasury attached to the Cathedral, the Castellum Aquae, now called the Baptistery, the Prior's Chapel, now the Chapter Library, the Deanery, once part of the Prior's lodging, the Porter's gate, the Norman staircase of the King's school and the fragmentary ruins scattered about the precincts, including the remains of the Archbishop's Palace in Palace Street.

Not less venerable than the Benedictine House of Christ Church was the other Benedictine monastery, also founded by St Augustine in honour of SS. Peter and Paul, to which dedication St Dunstan added the name of St Augustine himself. This stood outside the city to the east. It is said to have been founded by St Augustine outside the walls with a view to his own interment there since it was not the Roman custom, as we know, to bury the dead within the walls of a city. So honourable a place in the Order did this great house hold that we are told the abbot of St Augustine's Canterbury sat next to the abbot of Monte Cassino, the mother house, in the councils of the Order, and none but the archbishop himself consecrated the abbot of St Augustine's, and that in the Abbey Church. This also Henry stole away, seizing it for his own use. But by 1844 what was left of the place had become a brewery, and to-day there remains scarcely more than a great fourteenth century gateway and hall, the work of Abbot Fyndon in 1300. Of the church there is left a few fragments of walling, of St Augustine's tomb, nothing whatsoever.

Less still remains to us of the smaller religious houses that abounded in Canterbury. Of the Austin Canons, the Priory of St Gregory founded by Lanfranc in 1084 near St John's Hospital, also a foundation of Lanfranc, in Northgate Street, really nothing, a fragment of old wall; of the Nunnery of St Sepulchre, a Benedictine house, nothing at all. As for the Friars' houses scarcely more remains. Of the earliest, the Dominican house, only the scantiest ruins of the convent, the refectory, however, once in the hands of the Anabaptists, is now a Unitarian chapel. Of the White Friars, nothing. Of the Franciscan house, the charming thirteenth century ruin that stands over the river to the south of St Peter's Street. That is all.

The Canterbury of St Thomas is no more, it perished with his shrine and his religion. Even the hospital he is said to have founded, which at any rate was dedicated in his honour, was suppressed by Edward VI.; it is, however, still worth a visit, if only for the sake of the wall painting recovered in 1879, in which we see the Martyrdom, and the penance of the King.

But in Canterbury to-day St Thomas is really a stranger, no relic, scarcely a remembrance of him remains; yet he was the soul of the city, he is named in the calendar of his Church St Thomas of Canterbury.



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No relic do I say? I am wrong. Let all the pilgrims of the past come in at the four gates in their thousands and their thousands; let the great processions form as though this were a year of jubilee, they shall not be disappointed. Yet it is not to the Cathedral they shall go, but to an ugly little church (alas!), in a back street, where over the last altar upon the Epistle side there is a shrine and in the shrine a relic—the Soutan of St Thomas. The place is humble and meek enough to escape the notice of all but the pilgrims who sought and seek Canterbury only for St Thomas.

Musing there in the late spring sunshine, for the church is open and quiet, and within there is always a Guest, I fell asleep; and in my sleep that Guest came to me and I spoke with Him. It seemed to me that I was walking in early morning—all in the England of my heart—across meadows through which flowed a clear translucent stream, and the meadows were a mass of flowers, narcissus, jonquil, violet, for it was spring. And beyond the meadows was a fair wood all newly dressed, and out of the wood there came towards me a man, and I knew it was the Lord Christ. And I went on to meet Him. And when I was come to Him I said: “I shall never understand what You mean ... I shall never understand what You mean. For You say the meek shall inherit the earth.... I shall never understand what You mean.”

And He looked at me and smiled, and stretching forth His hands and looking all about He answered: “But I spoke of the flowers.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VALLEY OF THE STOUR

### CAESAR IN KENT

It was upon as fair a spring morning as ever was in England, that I set out from Canterbury through the West Gate, and climbing up the shoulder of Harbledown, some little way past St Dunstan's, turned out of the Watling Street, south and west into the old green path or trackway, which, had I followed it to the end, would have brought me right across Kent and Surrey and Hampshire to Winchester the old capital of England. This trackway, far older than history, would doubtless have perished utterly, as so many of its fellows have done, but for two very different events, the first of which was the Martyrdom of St Thomas, and the other the practice of demanding tolls upon the great new system of turnpike-roads we owe to the end of the eighteenth century. For this ancient British track leading half across England of my heart, a barbarous thing, older than any written word in England, was used and preserved, when, with the full blossoming of the Middle Age in the thirteenth century, it might have disappeared. It was preserved by the Pilgrims to St Thomas's Shrine. All those men who came out of the West to visit St Thomas, all those who came from Brittany, central and southern





France and Spain, gathered at Winchester, the old capital of the Kingdom, and when they set out thence for Canterbury this was the way they followed across the counties; this most ancient way which enters Canterbury hand in hand with the Watling Street by the West Gate.

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To describe a thing so ancient is impossible. It casts a spell upon the traveller so that as he follows under its dark yews across the steep hop gardens of Kent from hillside to hillside, up this valley or that, along the mighty south wall of the North Downs to the great ford of the Medway, and beyond and beyond through more than a hundred miles to Winchester he loses himself; becomes indeed one with his forefathers and looks upon that dear and ancient landscape, his most enduring and most beautiful possession as a child looks upon his mother, really with unseeing eyes, unable to tell whether she be fair or no, understanding indeed but this that she is a part of himself, and that he loves her more than anything else in the world.

But that glorious way in all its fulness was not for me. I had determined to follow the Pilgrims' Road but a little way, indeed but for one long day's journey, so far only as Boghton Aluph, where it turns that great corner westward and proceeds along the rampart of the Downs. But even in the ten miles twixt Canterbury and Boghton, that ancient way gives to him who follows it wonderful things.

To begin with, the valley of the Stour. There can be few valleys in this part of England more lovely than this steep and wide vale, through the hop gardens, the woods and meadows of which, the Great Stour proceeds like a royal pilgrim, half in state to Canterbury, and on to the mystery of the marshes, and its death in the sea. Above Canterbury certainly, and all along my way, there is not a meadow nor a wood, nor indeed a single mile of that landscape, which has not been contrived and created by man, by the love and labour of our fathers through how many thousand years. And this is part of the virtue of England, that it is as it were a garden of our making, a pleasance we have built, a paradise and a home after our own hearts. And in that divine and tireless making we, without knowing it, have so moulded ourselves that we are one with it, it is a part of us, a part of our character and nature. There lie ever before us our beginnings, the earthworks we once defended, the graves we built, the defeats, the victories, the holy places. By these a man lives, out of these he draws slowly and with a sort of confidence the uncertain future, glad indeed of this divine assurance that there is nothing new under the sun.

Such monuments of an antiquity so great that they have no history but what may be gathered from barrows and stones, accompany one upon any day's journey in southern England, but it is only in one place that a man can stand and say: Here began the history of my country. That place as it happens lies as it should upon the Pilgrims' Road.

Beyond Harbledown, some two miles from Canterbury, the Pilgrims' Road along the hillside passes clean through earthwork of unknown antiquity. Well, it was here the Seventh Legion charged: here, indeed, we stand upon the very battlefield which saw the birth of civilisation in our island. Lying there in the early morning sunshine I considered it all over again.

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Caesar's first landing in Britain in B.C. 55 had been, as he himself tells us, merely a reconnaissance. In the following summer, however, he returned in force, indeed with a very considerable army, and with the intention of bringing us, too, within that great administration which he and his adoptive son Augustus were to do so much to make a final and in many ways an indestructible thing.

It might seem that in spite of the lack of the means of rapid communication we possess, the admirable system of Roman roads enabled Caesar to administer his huge government—he was then in control of the two Gauls—with a thoroughness we might envy. After his first return from Britain in the early autumn of B.C. 55 he crossed the Alps, completed much business in Cisalpine Gaul, journeyed into Illyricum to see what damage the Pirustae had done, dealt with them effectively, returned to Cisalpine Gaul, held conventions, crossed the Alps again, rejoined his army, went round all their winter quarters, inspected all the many ships he was building at Portus Itius and other places, marched with four Legions and some cavalry against a tribe of Belgae known as the Treviri, settled matters with them, and before the summer of B.C. 54 was back at Portus Itius, making final preparations for the invasion of Britain.

This invasion, glorious as it was to be, and full of the greatest results for us, was accompanied all through by a series of petty disasters. Caesar had purposed to set out certainly early in July, but delay followed upon delay, and when he was ready at last, the wind settled into the north-west and blew steadily from that quarter for twenty-five days. It had been a dry summer and all Gaul was suffering from drought. The great preparations which Caesar had been making for at least a year were at last complete, the specially built ships, wide and of shallow draft, of an intermediate size between his own swift-sailing vessels and those of burthen which he had gathered locally, were all ready to the number of six hundred, with twenty-eight *naves longae* or war vessels, and some two hundred of the older boats. But the wind made a start impossible for twenty-five days.

It was not till August that the south-west came to his assistance. As soon as might be he embarked five Legions, say twenty-thousand men, with two thousand cavalry and horses, an enormous transport, and doubtless a great number of camp followers, leaving behind on the continent three legions and two thousand horse to guard the harbours and provide corn, and to inform him what was going on in Gaul in his absence, and to act in case of necessity.

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He himself set sail from Portus Itius, which we may take to be Boulogne, at sunset, that is to say about half-past seven; but he must, it might seem, have devoted the whole day to getting so many ships out of harbour. The wind was blowing gently from the south-west, bearing him, his fortunes and ours. At midnight the second of those small disasters which met him at every turn upon this expedition fell upon him. The wind failed. In consequence his great fleet of transports was helpless, it drifted along with the tide, fortunately then running up the Straits, but this bore him beyond his landing-place of the year before, and daybreak found him apparently far to the east of the North Foreland. What can have been the thoughts of the greatest of men, helpless in the midst of this treacherous and unknown sea? To every Roman the sea was bitter, even the tideless Mediterranean, how much more this furious tide-whipt channel. Caesar cannot but have remembered how it had half broken him in the previous year. Very profoundly he must have mistrusted it. But his Gaulish sailors were doubtless less disturbed; they expected the ebb, and when it came, every man doing his utmost, the transports were brought as swiftly as the long ships to that "fair and open" beach where Caesar had landed in the previous summer, the long beach which Deal and Sandwich hold.

Caesar himself, as it happens, does not tell us that he landed in the same place upon this his second invasion of Britain as he had done before; it is to Dion Cassius that we owe the knowledge that he did so. It is Caesar, however, who tells us that he landed about mid-day and that all his ships held together and reached shore about the same time. He adds that there was no enemy to be seen, though, as he afterwards learned from his prisoners, large bodies of British troops had been assembled, but, alarmed at the great number of the ships, more than eight hundred of which, including the ships of the previous year and the private vessels which some had built for their convenience, had appeared at one time, they had retreated from the coast and taken to the heights. The heights must have been the hills to the south of Canterbury, nearly a day's march from the sea.

If Caesar landed, as we know from Dion Cassius that he did, in the same place as he had done in the previous year, he must have known all there was to know about the natural facilities there for camping, about the supply of fresh water for instance. But perhaps he had not considered the dryness of the summer. In any case it might seem to have been some pressing need, such as the necessity for a plentiful supply of fresh water, which forced him immediately to make a night march with his army. Leaving as he tells us, under Quintus Atrius, ten cohorts, that is, as we may suppose, two cohorts from each of his five legions, and three hundred horse to guard the ships at anchor, and to hold the camp, hastily made between

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midday and midnight, in the third watch, that is between midnight and three o'clock, he started with his five legions and seventeen hundred horse, as he asserts, to seek out the enemy. Something, we may be sure, more pressing than an attack upon a barbarian foe there was no hurry to meet, must have forced Caesar to march his army sleepless now for two nights, one of which had been spent upon an unusual and anxious adventure at sea, out of camp, in the small hours, into an unknown and roadless country in search of an enemy which had taken to its native hills. The necessity that forced Caesar to this dangerous course was probably a lack of fresh water. He was seeking a considerable river, for the smaller streams, as he probably found, could not suffice after a long drought for so great a force as he had landed.

He himself asserts that he advanced "by night" across that roadless and unknown country a distance of twelve miles. We know of course of what the armies of Caesar were capable in the way of marching; there have never been troops carrying anything like their weight of equipment which have done better than they; but to march something like fifteen thousand men and seventeen hundred horse twelve miles in about three hours into the unknown and the dark, is an impossible proceeding. That march of "about twelve miles" cannot have occupied less than from six to eight hours, one would think, and the greater part of it must have been accomplished by daylight, which would break about half-past three o'clock. As we have good reason to think, Caesar's march, however long a time it may have occupied, was in search of fresh water, and it is significant that when the Britons were at last seen, they "were advancing to the river with their cavalry and chariots from the higher ground." In other words, Caesar's march had brought him into the valley of the Great Stour, where he not only found the water he sought, but also the enemy, who had probably followed his march from the great woods all the way.

[Illustration: ON THE STOUR NEAR CANTERBURY]

The spot at which Caesar struck the valley was, as we may be sure, that above which the great earthwork stands, opposite Thannington. Here upon the height was fought the first real battle of Rome upon our soil. It was opened by the Britons who "began to annoy the Romans and to give battle." But the Roman cavalry repulsed them so that they again sought refuge in the woods where was their camp, "a place admirably fortified by nature and by art ... all entrance to it being shut by a great number of felled trees." But like all barbarians, the Britons were undisciplined and preferred to fight in detached parties, and as seemed good to each. Every now and then some of them rushed out of the woods and fell upon the Romans, who continually were prevented from storming the fort and forcing an entry. Much time was thus wasted until the soldiers of the Seventh Legion, having formed a *testudo* and

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thrown up a rampart against the British fort, took it, and drove the Britons out of the woods, receiving in return a few, though only a few, wounds. Thus the battle ended in the victory of our enemies and our saviours. Caesar tells us that he forbade his men to pursue the enemy for any great distance, because he was ignorant of the nature of the country, and because, the day being far spent, he wished to devote what remained of the daylight to the building of his camp.

Caesar speaks of this camp and rightly of course, as a thing of importance. We know from his narrative, too, that it was occupied by some fifteen thousand foot and seventeen hundred horse, with their baggage and equipment for more than ten days. Where did it stand? It must have been within reach of the river, for without plentiful water no such army as Caesar encamped could have maintained itself for so long a period as ten days; exactly where it was, however, we shall in all probability never know.

Wherever it was, there Caesar spent the night, both he and his army, sleeping soundly, we may be sure, after the sleepless and anxious nights, one spent in the peril of the sea, the other in a not less perilous night march in a roadless and unknown country.

Yet did Caesar sleep? Towards sunset the wind arose, and all night a great gale blew. This was the fourth misfortune the expedition had experienced. It had first been delayed for twenty-four days in starting; it had then lost the wind and had been for hours at the mercy of the tide, only landing at last when the day was far spent after a whole night upon the waters; it had been compelled by lack of water to quit the camp at the landing-place without rest, and utterly weary and sleepless, to undertake a perilous night march in search of water. And now in the darkness, after the first encounter with the enemy, a great gale arose.

How often during that night must Caesar have awakened and thought of the sea and his transports. It was, as he would remember, just such a storm which had ruined him in the previous summer. To avoid a like disaster he had had his boats built for this expedition, shallow of draft and with flat bottoms that they might be beached. But with the Mediterranean in his mind and the certain weather of the south, Caesar, seeing the August sky so soft and clear, had anchored and not beached the ships after all. Perhaps the late landing, the necessity of building a large camp, and finally the perilous lack of water had prevented him from calling upon his men for a task so enormous as the beaching of eight hundred ships. Whatever had prevented him, that task was not undertaken. The eight hundred ships were anchored in the shallows, when, upon that third night of the expedition, a great gale arose.

Anxious though he must have been, very early in the morning of the following day, he sent out three skirmishing parties to reconnoitre and pursue the defeated Britons of the day before; but the last men were not out of sight when gallopers came in to Caesar

from Quintus Atrius, at the camp by the shore, to report “almost all the ships dashed to pieces and cast upon the beach because neither the anchors and cables could resist the force of the gale, nor the sailors or pilots outside it, and thus the ships had dashed themselves to pieces one against another.”

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The appalling seriousness of this disaster, as reported to Caesar, was at once understood by him. He recalled his three parties of skirmishers, and himself at once returned to Quintus Atrius and the ships. He tells us that “he saw before him almost the very things which he had heard from the messengers and by letters”; but he adds that only “about forty ships were lost, the remainder being able to be repaired with much labour.” This he at once began with workmen from the Legions, and others he brought from the Continent, and at the same time he wrote to Labienus at Portus Itius “to build as many ships as he could.” Then he proceeded to do what he had intended to do at first; with great difficulty and labour he dragged all the ships up on the shore and enclosed them in one fortification with the camp. In these matters about ten days were spent, the men labouring night and day. Then he returned to the main army upon the Stour.

But that delay of ten days had given the Britons time to recover themselves and to gather all possible forces. Caesar returned to his army to find “very great forces of the Britons already assembled” to oppose him, and the chief command and management of the war entrusted to Cassivellaunus, who, though he had been at war with the men of Kent, was now placed, so great was the general alarm, in command of the whole war.

Caesar, however, cannot have been in any way daunted save perhaps by the memory of the time already lost and the advancing season. He at once began his march into Britain. We may well ask by what route he went, and to that question we shall get no certain answer. But it would seem he must have marched by one of two ways for he had to cross the Stour, the Medway and the Thames. We may be sure then that his route lay either along the old trackway which, straightened and built up later by the Romans, we know as the Watling Street, which fords the Medway at Rochester, and the Thames at Lambeth and Westminster, or by the trackway we call the Pilgrims’ Way along the southern slope of the North Downs, in which case he would have forded the Medway at Aylesford and the Thames at Brentford. The question is insoluble, Caesar himself giving no indications.

Now, when I had well considered all this, I went on to that loveliness which is Chilham; passing as I went, that earthwork older than any history called Julaber’s Grave, marked by a clump of fir trees. Here of old they thought to find the grave of that Quintus Laberius, who fell as Caesar relates, at the head of his men, on the march to the Thames; but it was probably already older when Caesar passed by, than it would have been now if he had built it.



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No one can ever have come, whether by the Pilgrims' Road or another, into the little hill-village of Chilham, into the piazza there, which is an acropolis, without delight. It is one of the surprises of England, a place at once so little, so charming and so unexpected that it is extraordinary it is not more famous. It stands at a point where more than one little valley breaks down into the steep valley of the Stour and every way to it is up hill, under what might seem to be old ramparts crowned now with cottages and houses, till suddenly you find yourself at the top in a large piazza or square closed at the end by the church, at the other by the castle, and on both sides by old lines of houses; really a walled *place*.

The church dedicated in honour of Our Lady is of some antiquity in the main and older parts, a work of the fourteenth century replacing doubtless Roman, Saxon and Norman buildings, but with later additions, too, of the Perpendicular time in the clerestory, for instance, and with much modern work in the chancel. Of old the place belonged to the alien Priory of Throwley in this county, itself a cell of the Abbey of St Omer, in Artois; but when these alien houses were suppressed, Chilham like Throwley itself went to the new house of Syon, founded by the King. To-day, apart from the English beauty of the church, not a work of art but of history, its chief interest lies in its monuments, some strangely monstrous, of the Digges family—Sir Dudley Digges bought Chilham at the beginning of the seventeenth century—the Colebrooks, who followed the Digges in 1751 and a Fogg and a Woldman, the latter holding Chilham until 1860. There is little to be said of these monuments save that they are none of them in very good taste, the more interesting being those to Lady Digges, and a member of the Fogg family, both of the early seventeenth century, in which the Purbeck has been covered with a charming arabesque and diapered pattern in relief.

[Illustration: CHILHAM]

But it was not the church, beautiful though I found it on that afternoon of spring, that made me linger in Chilham, but rather the castle, which occupies the site of a Roman camp; and perhaps of what a camp? It may be that it was here Caesar lay on the first night of his resumed march after the disaster of the ships. It may be that it was here, after all, that Quintus Laberius fell, and that here he was buried so that the ancient earthwork known as Julaber's Grave, though certainly far older than Caesar, was in fact used as the tomb of the hero whose immortality Caesar insured by naming him in his Commentaries. Who knows? If Julaber is not a corruption of Laberius as the old antiquaries asserted, and as the people here about believe, one likes to think it might be, for no other explanation of this strange name is forthcoming.

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So I went on through King's wood, and as I came out of it southward I saw a wonderful thing. For I saw before me that division or part of the world which stands quite separate from any other and is not Europe, Asia, Africa nor America, but Romney Marsh. It lay there under the sunset half lost in its own mists, far off across the near meadows of the Weald, for I was now upon the southern escarpment of the North Downs and in the foreground rose the town of Ashford where I was to sleep. It was twilight and more, however, before I reached it, for in those woods I heard for the first time that year the nightingale, and my heart, which all day had been full of Rome, was suddenly changed, so that I went down through the dusk to Ashford, singing an English song:

By a bank as I lay, I lay,  
Musing on things past, heigh ho!  
In the merry month of May  
O towards the close of day—  
Methought I heard at last—  
O the gentle nightingale,  
The lady and the mistress of all musick;  
She sits down ever in the dale  
Singing with her notes smale  
And quavering them wonderfully thick.  
O for joy my spirits were quick  
To hear the bird how merrily she could sing,  
And I said, good Lord, defend  
England with Thy most holy hand  
And save noble George our King.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WEALD AND THE MARSH

Ashford as we see it to-day, a town of thirteen thousand inhabitants, is altogether a modern place and really in the worst sense, for it owes its importance and its ugliness to the railway; it is a big junction and the site of the engineering works of the South Eastern and Chatham Company. Lacking as it is in almost all material antiquity, it has little that is beautiful to show us, a fine church with a noble tower that has been rather absurdly compared with the Angel Steeple at Canterbury—nothing more—and its history is almost as meagre. It stands, the first town of the Kentish Weald, where the East Stour flows into the Great Stour, in the very mouth of the deep valley of the latter which there turns northward through the Downs. To the North, therefore, it is everywhere cut off by those great green uplands, save where the valley, at the other end of which stands Canterbury, breaks them suddenly in twain. To the south it is cut off by a perhaps greater barrier; between it and the sea, stands the impassable mystery of Romney Marsh. In such a situation, before the railways revolutionised travel in

England, how could Ashford have had any importance? Even the old road westward from Dover into Britain, the Pilgrims' Way to Stonehenge or Winchester passed it by, leaving it in the Weald to follow the escarpment of the Downs north or west. No Roman road served it, and indeed it was but a small and isolated place till the Middle Age began to revive and recreate Europe. Even then Ashford was probably late in development.

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Its history, if one may call it history, is concerned with the owners of the manor of Ashford and not with any civil or municipal records. Indeed the earlier chroniclers, though they speak of Great Chart and Wye, know nothing of Ashford which in Domesday Book appears to have consisted of a few mills and a small church, the manor being in possession of Edward the Confessor, while St Augustine's at Canterbury and Earl Godwin held certain lands thereabout. Hugh de Montfort got what the King and Earl Godwin had possessed, after the Conquest, but the Monastery of St Augustine's seems to have continued to hold its land. We know nothing more of Ashford, which, as I have said, till late in the Middle Age consisted of a church and two mills and a dene for the pannage of hogs in the Weald. It is not one of the many owners of the Manor who is remembered to-day in Ashford as its benefactor, but the Lord of the Manor of Ripton during the Wars of the Roses, Sir John Fogge, who was Treasurer of the Royal Household and a Privy Councillor. In the fourteenth century the church had passed to Leeds Abbey, and with the abbey the church of Ashford remained until the suppression, when it passed to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. It was not, however, the Abbey of Leeds that rebuilt it as we see it, a poor example it must be confessed in spite of the nobility of the tower, of the latest style of English Gothic architecture, the Perpendicular. It was Sir John Fogge, who for this and other reasons, is the father of the town. He lies in a great tomb in the chancel. As for the Smyths, who lie in the south transept, Thomas, and Alicia his wife held the manor of Ashford in the sixteenth century. Alicia was the daughter of Sir Andrew Judde to whom the manor of Ashford had been mortgaged in the time of Henry VII. Her son, Sir Michael Smyth, lies close by. The family were later ennobled and bore the title of Viscounts Strangford.

For the outside world, however, Sir John Fogge is not Ashford's greatest son. This honour belongs surely to Jack Cade whom Shakespeare speaks of as the "headstrong Kentish man John Cade of Ashford," and who, according to the poet, if headstrong, proved in the end so feeble-minded that in Shakespeare's play we might seem to have a picture of one suffering from general paralysis of the insane. Jack Cade, however, was, as we are beginning to realise, a much greater and more significant figure than Shakespeare allows us to see.

But Ashford is not made for lingering, it is all for departure, the roads, if not the trains, lead swiftly away north, south, east and west. As for me I went by the south-west road which said twelve miles to Tenterden.

I went under a fine rain on a day of married white and blue, and even before I had forgot Ashford, which was long before I crossed the Stour, the rain had ceased, the sun shone forth and a great wind came out of the marsh and the sea full of good tidings, so that climbing up to Great Chart I laughed in my heart to be in England on such a day and on such a road.

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Great Chart, as I saw while still far off, is a village typical of this country that I love, if indeed a place so completely itself is typical of anything: a little English village, but it outfaces the whole world in its sureness of itself, its quietness and air of immemorial antiquity. Many a city older by far looks parvenu beside Great Chart. Let us consider, with tears if you will, what they are making of Rome and be thankful that our ways are not their ways. For what wins you at once in Great Chart is the obvious fact that it has always stood there on its hill over the Weald, and as far as one may see at a glance, much the same as it stands to-day. And what delights you is the church there on the highest ground, on the last hill overlooking the great Weald, a sign in the sky, a portent, a necessary thing natural to the landscape.

What you see is a rectangular building with three eastern gables over three Decorated windows, a long nave roof over square Perpendicular windows and clerestory, flat outer roofs and tall western Tower, a noble thing significant of our civilisation and the Faith out of which it has come.

Within, one finds a church like and yet unlike that at Ashford. Nave and chancel are of the same width, and the arcades run from end to end of the church really without a break, though half way a wall, borne by three arches, crosses the church separating the chancel and its chapels from the nave. The central arch of the three is of course the chancel arch, but the wall it bears does not reach to the roof so that the nave, clerestory and roof are seen running on beyond it. All this is curious rather than lovely, but like every other strangeness in England of my heart, it is to be explained by the long, long history of things still—Deo gratias—remaining to us, so that when I said that our buildings were growths rather than works of art I spoke truth.

The church of St Mary of Great Chart is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but that a church existed here in the twelfth century is certain, for even in the present building we have evidences of Norman work, for instance in the walling of the south chapel, and in the vestry doorway. According to the Rev. G.M. Livett, [Footnote: K.A.S. 26.] the Norman nave was as long as that we have, which is built in all probability on its foundation. The aisleless Norman church, however, had a central tower to the east of the present chancel arch and transepts, as well as a chancel. This church appears to have stood till the fourteenth century, when it was entirely rebuilt and reclaimed, and all the lower part of the present church built, to be heightened and lengthened at the end of the fifteenth century when the clerestory and the chancel arcade were built, a new aisle wall set up on the north and the south aisle raised, the rood loft built or rebuilt.

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We are reminded of all this history by the fine altar tomb in the north chapel where lie William Goldwell and Alice his wife (d. 1485). Their son James was Vicar of Great Chart in 1458, and became Bishop of Norwich in 1472, when he obtained from the Pope “an indulgence in aid of the restoration of Great Chart church which had been damaged by fire.” Here is the cause and the source of the fifteenth century alterations and the church we see. The brasses in the church are also interesting. Many of them commemorate the Tokes of Godinton, who founded the almshouse in the village, which, rebuilt more than once I think, we still see. All these things and more than these the great yew in the churchyard has seen as its shadow grew over the graves.

From Great Chart I went on through the spring sunshine across the Weald to Bethersden, whose quarries have supplied so much of the grey marble one finds in Kentish churches, in the monuments and effigies and in the old manor houses in the carved chimney-pieces fair to see. These quarries are now all but deserted, but of old they were the most famous in Kent, which is poor in such things. Most of the stone for the cathedrals and greater religious houses in the county came from Caen, whence it was easily transported by water; but this stone not only weathered badly, but was too friable for monumental effigies or sculpture. For these harder stone was needed, resembling marble, and this Bethersden supplied, as we may see, in the Cathedrals of Canterbury and Rochester and especially at Hythe where the chancel arcade is entirely built of it.

Something too we may learn at Bethersden of the true nature of the Weald. I shall have something to say of this later, but here at any rate the curiously difficult character of this country in regard to the going may be understood, though of course less easily now than of old. It is said that before, at the end of the eighteenth century, the excellent system of roads we still use was built up, the ways hereabouts were so bad—they are still far from good—that when spring came it was customary to plough them up in order that they might dry off. We hear of great ladies going to church in carriages drawn by teams of oxen. Hardly passable after rain, the roads, says Hasted, were “so miry that the traveller’s horse frequently plunged through them up to the girths of the saddle; and the waggons sank so deep in the ruts as to slide along on the nave of the wheels and axle of them. In some few of the principal roads, as from Tenterden hither, there was a stone causeway, about three feet wide, for the accommodation of horse and foot passengers; but there was none further on till near Bethersden, to the great distress of travellers. When these roads became tolerably dry in summer, they were ploughed up, and laid in a half circle to dry, the only amendment they ever had. In extreme dry weather in summer, they became exceedingly hard, and, by traffic, so smooth as to seem glazed, like a potter’s vessel, though a single hour’s rain rendered them so slippery as to be very dangerous to travellers.” The roads in fact were and are, little more than lanes between the isolated woods across the low scrub of the old Weald.

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The church of Bethersden is dedicated to St Margaret. It follows the local type having a nave with north and south aisles and a chancel with north and south chapels, vestry, south porch and western tower. The place is not mentioned in Domesday Book, but about 1194 we find Archbishop Herbert confirming the church of St Margaret of Beatrishesdenne, with the chapel of Hecchisdenne (Etchden) to the Priory of St Gregory in Canterbury. No sign of this Norman church remains, the building we see in Bethersden being mainly Perpendicular; but the double lighted windows at the west end of the north aisle are Early English and there is a Decorated niche under the entrance to the rood left. The tower is modern, but possesses a fourteenth century bell.

It is curious that though the church is dedicated to St Margaret and the fair, according to Hasted, was held upon July 20th, St Margaret's day, the place should be spoken of as Beatrishesdenne as though there were some local St Beatrice; but of her we know nothing.

Bethersden is connected with the Lovelaces for they owned it, Richard Lovelace, the poet, having sold Lovelace Place to Richard Hulse, soon after the death of Charles I. Three members of the Lovelace family lie in the church, their tombs marked by brasses; William Lovelace (1459) another William Lovelace, gentleman (1459), and Thomas Lovelace (1591).

From Bethersden I went on to High Halden, which stands upon a ridge out of the Weald, a very characteristic and beautiful place, with a most interesting church dedicated to Our Lady. Indeed I do not know where one could match the strange wooden tower and belfry and the noble fourteenth century porch, masterpieces of carpentry, which close on the west the little stone church of the fifteenth century. Within the most interesting thing left to us is the glass in the east window of the south chancel where we see the Blessed Virgin with her lily, part of an Annunciation. There, too, in another window are the arms of Castile and of Leon, a strange blazon to find in the Weald of Kent.

But characteristic as Great Chart, Bethersden and High Halden are of this strange wealden county, they do not express it, sum it up and dominate it as does Tenterden Town, some two or three miles to the south of High Halden.

If we look at the ordnance map we shall see that the town of Tenterden is set upon a great headland thrust out by the higher land of the Kentish Weald, southward and east towards those low marshlands that are lost almost imperceptibly in the sea, and are known to us as Romney Marsh. This great headland, in shape something like a clenched fist, stands between the two branches of the Rother, the river which flows into the sea at Rye, and which was once navigable by ships so far up as Small Hythe just under the southern escarpment of the headland upon which Tenterden stands. Hither so late as 1509 the Rother was navigable, and we find Archbishop Warham on the petition of the people licensing a small chapel there of St John Baptist still in existence,

for the use of the inhabitants and as a sanctuary or a graveyard for the burial of those wrecked on the “sea-shore” *infra predictum oppidum de Smallhyth*.



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Now in this lies all the greatness of Tenterden. Rye, which had early been added to the Cinque Ports, was a place of very considerable importance, but upon the east it was entirely cut off by Romney Marsh, upon the west, too, a considerable marshland closed by a great and desolate hill country closed it in, but to the north was a navigable river, a road that is, leading up into England, and at the head of it a town naturally sprang up. That town was Tenterden, and her true position was recognised by Henry VI., when he united her to Rye. Till then she was one of "the Seven Hundreds" belonging to the Crown. Domesday Book knows nothing of her; as a place of importance, as a town that is, she is a creation of Rye, and her development was thus necessarily late and endured but for a season. I suppose the great days of Rye to have been those of the thirteenth and fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and it was therefore during this period that Tenterden began its career as a town. After the failure of the sea, Rye sank slowly back into what it is to-day, but Tenterden would appear to have stood up against that misfortune with some success, for we find Elizabeth incorporating it under a charter.

There can be but few more charming towns in Kent than Tenterden as we see it to-day, looking out from its headland southward to the great uplifted Isle of Oxney beyond which lies the sea, and eastward over all the mystery of Romney Marsh. The church which should, one thinks, have borne the name of St Michael, is dedicated in honour of St Mildred. It is a large building of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the tower, its latest feature, being also its noblest. Indeed the tower of Tenterden church, if we may believe the local legend, is certainly the most important in Kent. For it is said, and, rightly understood, there may after all be something in it, to have been the cause of the Goodwin Sands. Fuller asserts "when the vicinage in Kent met to consult about the inundation of the Goodwin Sands (date not given) and what might be the cause thereof, an old man imputed it to the building of Tenterden steeple in this county; for these sands, said he, were firm sands before that steeple was built, which ever since were overflown with sea-water. Hereupon all heartily laughed at his unlogical reason, making that effect in Nature which

was only the consequent on time; not flowing from, but following after the building of that steeple."

According to Latimer, however, it was Sir Thomas More who drew this answer from the ancient, and if this be so, it certainly fixes the date. "Maister More," says Latimer, "was once sent in commission into Kent to help to trie out (if it might be) what was the cause of Goodwin Sands and the shelves that stopped up Sandwich haven. Thither cometh Maister More and calleth the countye afore him, such as were thought to be men of experience, and men that could of likelihode best certify him of that matter,

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concerning the stopping of Sandwich haven. Among others came in before him an olde man with a white head, and one that was thought to be little lesse than an hundereth yeares olde. When Maister More saw this aged man he thought it expedient to heare him say his minde in this matter, for being so olde a man it was likely that he knew most of any man in that presence and company. So Maister More called this olde aged man unto him and sayd, 'Father,' sayd he, 'tell me if ye can what is the cause of this great arising of the sande and shelves here about this haven the which sop it up that no shippes can aride here? Ye are the oldest man that I can espie in all this companye, so that, if any man can tell any cause of it, ye of all likelihode can say most in it, or at least wise more than any other man here assembled.' 'Yea forsooth, good maister,' quod this olde man, 'for I am well nigh an hundred yeares olde and no man here in this company anything neare unto mine age.' 'Well, then,' quod Maister More, 'how say you in this matter? What thinke ye to be the cause of these shelves and flattes that stop up Sandwiche haven?' 'Forsooth syr,' quod he, 'I am an olde man. I think Tenterden steeple is the cause of Goodwin Sandes. For I am an old man syr' quod he, 'and I may remember the building of Tenterden Steeple and I may remember when there was no steeple at all there. And before that Tenterden Steeple was in building there was no manner of speaking of any flats or sands that stopped the haven; and therefore I thinke that Tenterden steeple is the cause of the destroying and decaying of Sandwich haven.'

Post hoc, propter hoc and this silly old man has been held up to all ensuing ages as an absurdly simple old fellow. But what after all if he should be right in part at least?

Tenterden church, we are told, belonged to the Abbey of St Augustine in Canterbury, which also owned the Goodwin Sands, part, it is said, of the immense domain of Earl Godwin. Now it was in their hands that the money collected throughout Kent for the building and fencing of the coast against the sea had always been placed. We learn that "when the sea had been very quiet for many years without any encroachings," the abbot commuted that money to the building of a steeple and endowing of the church in Tenterden, so that the sea walls were neglected. If this be so, that oldest inhabitant was not such a fool as he seems to look.

I slept under the shadow of Tenterden steeple and very early in the morning set out for Appledore, where I crossed the canal and came into the Marsh. I cannot hope to express my enthusiasm for this strange and mysterious country so full of the music of running water, with its winding roads, its immense pastures, its cattle and sheep and flowers, its far away great hills and at the end, though it has no end, the sea. It mixes with the sea indeed as the sky does, so that no man far off can say this is land or this is water.

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It is famous as a fifth part of the world different from its fellows. And indeed, if it resembles anything I know it is not with the wide moors of Somerset, Sedgemoor, or the valley of the Brue, nor with the great windy Fenland in the midst of which Ely rises like a shrine or a sanctuary, I would compare it, but with the Campagna of Rome, whose tragic mystery it seems to have borrowed, at least in part, whose beauty it seems to wear, a little provincially, it is true, and whose majesty it apes, but cannot quite command. It is the Campagna in little; the great and noble mountains, the loveliest in the world are sunk to hills pure and exquisite upon which, too, we may still see the cities, here little towns and villages, as Rye, Winchelsea, Appledore, Lympne or Hythe, dear places of England of my heart, and all between them this mysterious and lowly thing not quite of this world, a graveyard one might think, as the Campagna is, a battlefield as is the Trasimeno plain, a gate and certainly an exit not only out of England but from the world and life itself.

As one wanders about England here and there, one comes to understand that if its landscape is unique in its various charm and soft beauty, it is also inhuman in this, that most often it is without the figure of man, the fields are always empty or nearly always, the hills are uniformly barren of cities or towns or villages, it is a landscape without the gesture of human toil and life, without meaning that is, and we can bear it so. But no man could live in the Marsh for a day without that gesture of human life that is there to be seen upon every side. Lonely as it is, difficult as it is to cross, because of its chains and twisting lines of runnels, man is more visibly our comrade there than anywhere else in England I think, and this though there be but few men through all the Marsh. He and his beasts, his work too, and his songs, redeem the Marsh for us from fear, a fear not quite explicable, perhaps, to the mere passenger, but that anyone who has lingered there during a month of spring will recognise as always at his elbow and only kept out of the soul by the humanity which has redeemed this mysterious country, the shepherd with his flock, the dairyman with his cows, the carter with his great team of oxen in the spring twilight returning from the fields. And then there are the churches, whose towers stand up so strong out of the waters and the mist so that their heads are among the stars, and whose bells are the best music because they tell not only of God and his Saints but of man, of the steading and of home.

[Illustration: A CORNER OF ROMNEY MARSH]

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Take Appledore, for instance, with its fine old church, with its air of the fourteenth century and its beautiful old ivy grown tower, once a port they say, on the verge of the Marsh; what could be more nobly simple and homely? Within, you may, if you will, find, in spite of everything, all our past, the very altar at which of old was said the Holy Mass, the very altar tomb maybe where, upon Maunday Thursday Christ Himself was laid in the sepulchre, an old rood loft, too, certain ancient screens complete, a little ancient glass. What more can a man want or at least expect from England of my heart? And if he demand something more curious and more rare, at Horn's Place, not a mile away, is a perfect chapel of the fifteenth century which served of old some great stading, where, for a hundred years Mass was perhaps said every day and the Marsh blessed. Or take Snargate with its church of St Dunstan. It, too, has a fine western tower of the fifteenth century, but much of the church dates from the thirteenth, and upon the north chancel roof-beams are heraldic devices, among them an eagle and the initials W.R. And here is a piece of fine old glass in which we may see the Lord Christ. Or take Ivychurch; so noble and lovely a thing is the church that even without it catches the breath, while a whole afternoon is not enough to enjoy its inward beauty. Or take Brenzett, where, it is true, the church has been rebuilt, but where you will still find a noble seventeenth century tomb with its effigies in armour.

It is, however, at Romney, Old Romney and New, that we shall find the best there is to be had I think in this strange country from which the waters have only been barred out by the continual energy of man. We are not surprised to find that New Romney is older than Old Romney, it is almost what might have been expected, but no one can ever have come to these places without wonder at the nobility of what he sees.

At New Romney there were of old five churches, dedicated in honour of St John Baptist, St Laurence, St Martin, St Michael, and St Nicholas, for Romney was, in the time of Edward I., the greatest of the Cinque Ports. It fell when, as we are told, in a great storm the course of the Rother was changed so that it went thereafter to serve Rye, and New Romney fell slowly down so that to-day but one of those five churches remains, that of St Nicholas. But what a glorious church it is, and if the rest were like it, what idea must we have of the splendour of New Romney in the thirteenth century? This great Norman church of St Nicholas with its partly fourteenth century nave, its clerestory, its fine chancel with sedilia and Easter sepulchre, and noble pinnaced tower is perhaps the greatest building in the Marsh. It belonged to the Abbey of Pontigny and was served by its monks who had a cell here, and the town it adorns and ennobles, was the capital of all this district.

Nothing so glorious and so old remains in Old Romney, where the church of St Clement has nothing I think, earlier than the thirteenth century, and little of that, being mainly a building of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and yet it is not to be despised, for where else in the Marsh will you find anything more picturesque or anything indeed more English?

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Not at Dymchurch for all its Norman fragments. But Dymchurch is to be visited and to be loved for other reasons than that of beauty. It is the sentinel and saviour of the Marsh, for it holds back the sea from all this country with its great wall, twenty feet high and twenty feet broad and three miles long. Also here we have certain evidence of the Roman occupation of the Marsh, and may perhaps believe that it was Rome which first drained it.

I said that the church of St Nicholas at New Romney was the noblest building in the Marsh. When I said so had I forgotten the church of All Saints at Lydd, which is known as the Cathedral of the Marshes. No, glorious as All Saints is, it has not the antiquity of St Nicholas; it is altogether English and never knew the Norman. For all that, it is a very splendid building with a tower standing one hundred and thirty-two feet over the Marsh, a sign and a blessing. And yet before it I prefer the bell tower, built of mighty timber, aloof from the church, lonely, over the waters at Brookland. All Saints at Lydd belonged to Tintern Abbey, but All Saints at Brookland to St Augustine's at Canterbury, and as its font will tell us it dates from Norman times, for about it the Normans carved the signs of the Zodiac.

Brookland, hard to get at, stands on the great road which runs south-westward out of the Marsh and brings you at last out of Kent into Sussex at Rye. It was there I lingered a little to say farewell. As one looks at evening across that vast loneliness, so desolate and yet so beautiful and infinitely subject to the sky, lying between the hills and sinking so imperceptibly into the sea, one continually asks oneself what is Romney Marsh, by whom was it reclaimed from the all-devouring sea, what forces built it up and gathered from barrenness the infinite riches we see? Was it the various forces of Nature, the racing tides of the straits, some sudden upheaval of the earth, or the tireless energy of men—and of what men? Those seventeen miles of richest pasture which lie in an infinite peace between Appledore and Dungeness, to whom do we owe them and their blessedness? That wall at Dymchurch which saves the marshes, Romney, Welland, Guildford and Denge, who contrived it and first took advantage of those great banks of shingle and of sand which everywhere bar out the great tides of the straits and have thus created and preserved this strange fifth part of the world? Was it the Romans? May we see in Romney Marsh the greatest material memorial of their gigantic energy and art to be found in the western provinces, a nobler and a greater work than the Wall as well as a more lasting? And if this be so, how well is the Marsh named after them, for of all they did materially in our island, this work of reclamation was surely the worthiest to bear their name.

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But to these questions there can perhaps never be an answer. Certainly the very aspect of the Marsh recalls nothing so much as the Campagna of Rome, in its nobility, loneliness and infinite subjection to the sun, the clouds, and the sky, so that at evening there we might almost think that Rome herself lay only just beyond that large horizon, and that with an effort we might reach the great gate of San Giovanni e'er darkness fell. It is as though in the Marsh our origins for once and unmistakably were laid bare for us and we had suddenly recognised our home.

## CHAPTER IX

### RYE AND WINCHELSEA

Out of the vagueness and loneliness of the Marsh, with its strange level light and tingling silence, I climbed one spring evening at sunset into the ancient town of Rye, and at first I could not believe I was still in England. No one I think can wander for more than a few days about the Marsh, among those half deserted churches, far too big for any visible congregation, whose towers in a kind of despair still stand up before God against the sea, raging and plotting far off against the land, without wondering at last into what country he has strayed. In Rye all such doubt is resolved at once, for Rye is pure Italy, or at least it seems so in the evening dusk. When I came up into it in the spring twilight out of the Marsh, I was reminded of one of those Italian cities which stand up over the lean shore of the Adriatic to the south of Rimini, but it was not of them I thought when in the morning sunlight I saw those red roofs piled up one upon another from the plain: it was of Siena. And indeed Rye is in its smaller, less complete and of course less exquisite way very like the most beautiful city in Tuscany. Here, too, as in Siena, the red-roofed houses climb up a hill, one upon another, a hill crowned at last by a great church dedicated in honour of the Blessed Virgin. But here the likeness, too fanciful for reality, ceases altogether. It is true that Siena looks out beyond her own gardens and vineyards upon a desert, but it is a very different desolation upon which Rye gazes all day long, out of which she rises with all the confidence, grace, and gaiety of a flower, and over which she rules like a queen.

From the Porta Romana of Siena or the outlook of the Servi, you gaze southward across the barren, scorched valleys to the far-away mountains, to Monte Amiata, the fairest mountain of Tuscany. From the Ypres Tower of Rye or the Gun Garden below it, you look only across the level and empty Marsh which sinks beyond Camber Castle imperceptibly into the greyness and barrenness of the sea. To the east, across the flat emptiness, the Rother crawls seaward; to the west across the Marsh, as once across the sea, Winchelsea rises against the woods, and beyond, far away, the darkness of Fairlight hangs like a cloud twixt sea and sky.



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Indeed, to liken Rye to any other place is to do her wrong, for both in herself and in that landscape over which she broods, there is enough beauty and enough character to give her a life and a meaning altogether her own. From afar off, from Winchelsea, for instance, in the sunlight, she seems like a town in a missal, crowned by that church which seems so much bigger than it is, gay and warm and yet with something of the greyness of the sea and the sea wind about her, a place that, as so few English places do, altogether makes a picture in the mind, and is at unity with itself.

And from within she seems not less complete, a thing wholly ancient, delightful, with a picturesque and yet homely beauty that is the child of ancientness. Yet how much has Rye lost! The walls of Coeur de Lion have fallen, and only one of the gates remains; but so long as the church and the beautiful strong tower of William de Ypres stand, and the narrow cobbled streets full of old and humble houses climb up and down the steep hill, the whole place is involved in their beauty and sanctity, our hearts are satisfied and our eyes engaged on behalf of a place at once so old and picturesque and yet so neat and tidy and always ready to receive a guest.

A place like Rye, naturally so strong, a steep island surrounded by sea or impassable marsh, must have been a stronghold from very early times; it is in fact obviously old when we first hear of it as a gift, with Winchelsea, of Edward the Confessor's to the Benedictine Abbey of Fecamp just across the grey channel in Normandy. Both Rye and Winchelsea remained within the keeping of the Abbey of Fecamp until, for reasons of State easy to be understood, Henry III. resumed the royal rights in the thirteenth century, compensating the monks of Fecamp with manors in Gloucestershire and Lincolnshire. For before the end of the twelfth century it would seem Rye with Winchelsea had become of so much importance as a port as to have been added to the famous Cinque Ports, Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, Romney and Hastings. From this time both play a considerable part in the trade and politics of the Channel and the Straits.

It was to enable her to hold herself secure in this business and especially against raids from the sea that the Ypres Tower was built in the time of King Stephen, by William of Ypres, Earl of Kent. It was a watch tower and perhaps a stronghold, but it was never sufficient. Even in 1194 Coeur de Lion permitted the town to wall itself. Nevertheless Louis the Dauphin of France took Rye, and it may well have been this which determined Henry III. to take the town out of the hands of the monks of Fecamp and to hold it himself.

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Doubtless Rye's greatest moment was this thirteenth century, nor did she appear much less in the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. But often sacked and burned, the town was practically destroyed by the French in 1378 and 1448, when only the Ypres Tower, part of the church, the Landgate, the Strandgate and the so-called chapel of the Carmelite Friars escaped destruction. But from this blow Rye recovered to play a part, if a small one, in the defeat of the Armada, and though the retreat of the sea, which seems to have begun in the sixteenth century, undoubtedly damaged her, it did not kill her outright as it did Winchelsea, for she had the Rother to help her, and we find her prosperous not only in the time of the Commonwealth, but even to-day, when, with the help of a new harbour at the mouth of the river, she is still able to carry on her trade.

[Illustration: RYE]

Nothing in fact strikes the visitor to Rye more than the bustle and life of a place obviously so old. All the streets are steep and narrow and the chief of them, the High Street, seems always to be gay and full of business, and is as truly characteristic of Rye as those still and grass-grown ways cobbled and half deserted, which lead up to the noble great church in its curious *place*.

It is of course to this great sanctuary dedicated in honour of the Blessed Virgin, that everyone will go first in Rye. It has been called the largest parish church in England, and though this claim cannot be made good, it is in all probability the largest in Sussex, is in fact known as the Cathedral of East Sussex, and if a church became a cathedral by reason of its beauty and size it might rightly claim the title. It is certainly worthy of the most loving attention.

The church of Our Lady at Rye is a great cruciform building with clerestory, transepts, and central tower, but without western doors, the chief entrance being in the north transept. The church is of all dates from the Norman time onward, a very English patchwork, here due to the depredations, not so much of time, as of the French who have so often raided and burnt the town. The oldest part is the tower, which is Norman, as are, though somewhat later, the transepts, where certain details show the Transitional style. In this style again, but somewhat later, is the nave. The chancel and its two chapels are Early English, but with many important Decorated, Perpendicular and modern details, such as the arcade and the windows. The Early English chapel upon the north is that of St Clare, that upon the south is dedicated in honour of St Nicholas. In the south aisle of the nave is an Early English chantry, now used as a vestry. The communion table of carved mahogany is said to have been taken from a Spanish ship at the time of the Armada, but it would seem certainly not to be older than the end of the seventeenth century. The curious clock whose bells are struck by golden cherubs



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on the north side of the tower, is said to have been a gift of Queen Elizabeth and to be the oldest clock in England still in good order. It is probably of late Caroline construction, but even though it were of the sixteenth century its claim to be the oldest clock now at work in England could not be upheld for a moment, that in Wells Cathedral being far older. The pulpit is of the sixteenth century. In the north aisle is a curious collection of Bibles and cannon balls, and here, too, is a small window with glass by Burne Jones.

To the south-west of the church is the so-called Carmelite Chapel, a late Decorated building. What exactly this was and to whom it belonged, is uncertain; it was not a chapel of Carmelite Friars. The only establishment belonging to that Order within the county of Sussex was at Shoreham, founded in honour of the Blessed Virgin, by Sir John de Mowbray in 1316.

So far as we know the only religious to be found in

Rye at the time of the spoliation were the Austin Friars. Their house still stands—a building of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century—on the Conduit Hill. It has passed through many strange uses, among others that of a Salvation Army barracks. It is now the Anglican Church House. This was the only settlement of the Austin Friars in Sussex, and of its origin nothing is known. In 1368 we hear that the prior and convent of the Friars Eremites of St Austin in Rye permitted one of their brethren, a priest, to say Mass daily, at the altar of St Nicholas, in the parish church for the welfare of William Taylour of Rye, and of Agnes his wife. In 1378 the town granted them a place called “le Haltone” near the town ditch. But apart from these two facts their history is altogether wanting.

From the parish church one descends south-east to the Ypres Tower. This watch tower and stronghold was built in the time of King Stephen by William of Ypres, Earl of Kent, and is in many ways the most impressive building left to us in Rye. It is undoubtedly best seen from the river, but it and the garden below it afford a great view over the marshes on a clear day, eastward to the cliffs of Folkestone and westward to Fairlight. In itself it is a plain rectangular building with round towers at the angles, but with nothing of interest within. Yet what would Rye be without it. For many years it was the sole defence of the town.

Most of those who come to Rye enter the town, and with a sudden surprise not to be found elsewhere, by the Landgate upon the north. There were, it is said of old, five gates about the town, but this is the only one left to us. Nothing, or almost nothing, of the walls remain. Doubtless the French destroyed anything in the nature of fortification so far as they could, only the Ypres Tower they failed to pull down or to burn, and this great round towered gateway upon the north—why we do not know?

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It is the Landgate which gives to Rye its power of surprise, so that a man coming up from the railway, at sight of it, is suddenly transported into the Middle Age, and in that dream enters and enjoys Rye town, which has never disappointed those who have come in the right spirit. For besides the monuments of which I have spoken there are others of lesser interest, it is true, but that altogether go to make up the charm and delight of this unique place. Among these I will name Mermaid Street where the grass grows among the cobbles and where stands the Mermaid Inn and the half timber house called the Hospital, Pocock's School and Queen Elizabeth's Well. Better still, for me at least, is the life of the river and the shipyards, where, though Rye is now two miles from the sea, ships are still built and the life of the place and its heart are adventured and set upon the great waters.

So alluring indeed is this little town that one is always loath to leave it, one continually excuses oneself from departure. One day I delayed in order to see the famous poem in the old book in the town archives which I already knew from Mr Lucas's book. It is certainly of Henry VIII.'s time, and who could have written it but that unhappy Sir Thomas Wyatt who loved Anne Boleyn—

What greater gryffe may hape  
Trew lovers to anoye  
Then absente for to sepratte them  
From ther desiered joye?What comforte reste them then  
To ease them of ther smarte  
But for to thincke and myndful bee  
Of them they love in harte?And sicke that they assured bee  
Ehche toe another in harte  
That nothinge shall them seperate  
Untylle deathe doe them parte?And thoughe the dystance of the place  
Doe severe us in twayne,  
Yet shall my harte thy harte imbrace  
Tyll we doe meete agayne.

Then one sunny afternoon I went out by the road past Camber Castle across Rye Foreign for Winchelsea on its hill some two miles from Rye to the west.

There is surely nothing in the world quite like Winchelsea. Lovelier by far than Rye, not only in itself, but because of what it offers you, those views of hill and marsh and sea with Rye itself, like I know not what little masterpiece of Flemish art, in the middle distance eastward, Winchelsea is a place never to be left or at worst never to be forgotten. One comes to it from Rye on a still afternoon of spring when the faint shadows are beginning to lengthen, expecting little. In fact, if the traveller be acceptable, capable of appreciating anything so still and exquisite, Winchelsea will appear to him to be, as it is one of the loveliest things left to us in England, place, as Coventry Patmore so well said, in a trance, La Belle an Bois dormant. Nowhere else in

England certainly have I found just that exquisite stillness, that air of enchantment, as of something not real, something in a picture or a poem, inexplicable and inexpressible. How spacious it is, and how quiet, full of the sweetness and the beauty of some motet by Byrd. History is little to us in such a place, which is to be enjoyed for its own sake, for its own unique beauty and delight. And yet the history of Winchelsea is almost as unique as is the place itself.

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Winchelsea when we first hear of it as given by King Edward Confessor to the monks of Fecamp, was not set upon this hill-top as we see it to-day, but upon an island, low and flat, now submerged some three miles south and east of the present town. Here William the Conqueror landed upon his return from Normandy when he set out to take Exeter and subdue the West; here again two of those knights who murdered St Thomas landed in their pride, hot from the court of Henry their master. Like Rye, its sister, to whom it looked across the sea, Winchelsea was added to the Cinque Ports and was presently taken from the monks of Fecamp by Henry III. It was now its disasters began. In 1236 it was inundated by the sea as again in 1250, when it was half destroyed. Eagerly upon the side of Montfort it was taken after Evesham by Prince Edward, and its inhabitants slain, so that when in 1288 it was again drowned by the sea it was decided to refound the town upon the hill above, then in the possession of Battle Abbey, which the King purchased for this purpose. At that time the hill upon which Winchelsea was built, and still stands, was washed by the sea, and the harbour soon became of very great importance, indeed until the sixteenth century, when the sea began to retire, Winchelsea was of much greater importance than Rye. The retreat of the sea, however, completely ruined it, for it was served by no river as Rye was by the Rother.

The town of Edward I., as we may see to-day, by what time has left us of it, was built in squares, a truly Latin arrangement, the streets all remaining at right angles the one to the other. It had three gates and was defended upon the west, where it was not naturally strong, by a great ditch. It was attacked and sacked by the French as often as Rye, though not always at the same time. Thus in 1377, when Rye was half destroyed, Winchelsea was saved by the Abbot of Battle, only to be taken three years later by John de Vienne, when the town was burnt. No doubt these constant and mostly successful attacks deeply injured the place which, after the sea had begun to retreat in the sixteenth century, at the time of Elizabeth's visit in 1573, only mustered some sixty families. From that time Winchelsea slowly declined till there remains only the exquisite ghost we see to-day.

One comes up out of the Marsh into Winchelsea to-day through the Strand Gate of the time of Edward I., and presently finds oneself in the beautiful and spacious square in which stands the lovely fragment of the church of St Thomas of Canterbury.

This extraordinarily lovely building dates from the fourteenth century. As we see it, it is but a fragment, consisting of the chancel and two side chapels, but as originally planned it would seem to have been a cruciform building of chancel, choir with side chapels, a central tower, transept and nave. It is doubtful, however, whether the nave was ever built, the ruins of the transepts and of two piers of the tower only remain.

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I say it was doubtful whether this nave was ever built. It has been asserted, it is true, that it was burnt by the French either in 1380 or in 1449, but it seems more probable that it was never completed owing to the devastation of the Black Death of 1348-9, though certain discoveries made of late would seem to endorse the older theory. Certain it is that until the end of the eighteenth century, there stood to the south-west of the church a great bell tower, a detached campanile, now dismantled, whose stones are said to have been used to build Rye Harbour.

The church, as we have it, is one of the loveliest Decorated buildings in the county; the Perpendicular porch, however, by which we enter does not belong to the church but possibly came here from one of the destroyed churches of Winchelsea, St Giles's or St Leonard's. Within we find ourselves in a great choir or chancel, with a chapel on either hand, that on the right dedicated in honour of St Nicholas and known as the Alard Chantry, that on the left the Lady Chapel known as the Farncombe Chantry. The arcades which divide these chapels from the choir are extraordinarily beautiful, as are the restored sedilia and piscina with their gables and pinnacles and lovely diaper work. The windows, too, are very noble and fine, and rich in their tracery, which might seem to be scarcely English.

[Illustration: WINCHELSEA CHURCH]

In the Chapel of St Nicholas, the Alard Chantry, on the south, are the glorious canopied tombs of Gervase Alard (1300) and Stephen Alard. The first is the finer; it is the tomb of the first Lord High Admiral of England. The sepulchral effigy lies cross-legged with a heart in its hands and a lion at its feet; and about its head two angels once knelt. The whole was doubtless once glorious with colour, traces of which still remain on the beautiful diaper work of the recess. The tomb of Stephen Alard is later, but similar though less rich. Stephen was Admiral of the Cinque Ports in the time of Edward II. Another of the family, Reginald, lies beneath the floor where of old a brass marked his tomb (1354).

In the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, the Farncombe Chantry, are three tombs all canopied with a Knight in chain armour, a Lady, and a young Squire. We are ignorant whose they may be. It is certain that these tombs are older than the church, and they are said to have been brought here from old Winchelsea.

But Winchelsea has other ruins and other memories besides those to be found in the parish church.

The Franciscans, the Grey Friars, were established in Winchelsea very early, certainly before 1253; and when old Winchelsea was destroyed and the new town built on the hill by the King it was agreed that no monastery or friary should be built there save only a house for the Friars Minor. This was erected where now the modern mansion called 'The Friars' stands, the old convent having been pulled down so lately as 1819. A part

of the ruined Chapel of the Blessed Virgin remains, however, the choir and apse. Decorated work not much later than the parish church, and of great beauty. Unhappily we know absolutely nothing of the Friars in Winchelsea, except that when the house was suppressed in 1538 it was exceedingly poor.

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The Franciscans, however, were not the only Friars in Winchelsea in spite of the agreement made at the foundation of the new town. In 1318 Edward II. granted the Black Friars, the Dominicans, twelve acres on the southern side of the hill. This situation was found inconvenient, and in 1357 the Dominicans obtained six acres "near the town." Nothing, or almost nothing, remains of their house.

Besides these two religious houses, Winchelsea possessed three hospitals, those of St John, St Bartholomew and Holy Cross.

The Hospital of St Bartholomew was near the New Gate on the south-west of the town, and dated from the refounding of Edward. Nothing remains of it, or of the Hospital of Holy Cross, which had existed in old Winchelsea and was set up in the new town also near the New Gate. But the oldest and the most important of the three hospitals was that of St John. A fragment of this remains where the road turns towards Hastings to the north of the churchyard. Close by is the thirteenth-century Court House.

It is always with regret I leave Winchelsea when I must, and even the beautiful road through Icklesham into Hastings will not reconcile one who has known how to love this place, to departure. And yet how fair that road is and how fair is the Norman church of St Nicholas at Icklesham upon the way! The road winds up over the low shore towards Fairlight, ever before one, and at last as one goes up Guestling Hill through a whole long afternoon and reaches the King's Head Inn at sunset, suddenly across the smoke of Hastings one sees Pevensey Level, and beyond, the hills where fell the great fight in which William Duke of Normandy disputed for England with Harold the King. At sunset, when all that country is half lost in the approaching darkness, one seems to feel again the tragedy of that day so fortunate after all, in which once more we were brought back into the full life of Europe and renewed with the energy Rome had stored in Gaul.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

It is not often on one's way, even in England of my heart, that one can come upon a place, a lonely hill-side or a city, and say: this is a spot upon which the history of the world was decided; yet I was able on that showery morning, as I went up out of Hastings towards Battle and saw all the level of Pevensey full of rain, to recall two such places in which I had stood already upon my pilgrimage. For I had lingered a whole morning upon the battlefield where the Romans first met and overthrew our forefathers and thus brought Britain within the Empire; while at Canterbury I had been in the very place where, after an incredible disaster, England was persuaded back again out of barbarism into the splendour of the Faith and of civilisation. These places are more than English, they are European sanctuaries, two of the greater sites of the history of

Europe. Perhaps as much cannot rightly be said for the hill where the town of Battle stands, the landing-place at Pevensey and the port of Hastings.



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And yet I don't know. What a different England it would have been if William of Normandy had failed or had never landed here at all. And if such an England could have endured how changed would have been the whole destiny of Europe. I am not sure after all that we ought not to be as uplifted by the memory of Hastings as we are or should be by the memory of Caesar's advent. At any rate since Hastings was fought and won in the eleventh century any national prejudices that belong wholly to the modern world are quite as much out of place with regard to it as they are with regard to Caesar or St Augustine. And if we must be indignant and remember old injuries that as often as not were sheer blessings, scarcely in disguise, let us reserve our hatred, scorn and contempt for those damned pagan and pirate hordes that first from Schleswig-Holstein and later from Denmark descended upon our Christian country, and for a time overwhelmed us with their brutish barbarism. As for me I am for the Duke of Normandy; without him England were not the England of my heart.

Now the great and beautiful road up out of Hastings, seven miles into Battle, is not only one of the loveliest in Britain, every yard of it is full of Duke William's army, and thence we may see how in its wonderful simplicity all that mighty business which was decided that October morning on the hill-top that for so long Battle Abbey guarded as a holy place, was accomplished. For looking southward over the often steep escarpment, always between three and five hundred feet over the sea plain, we may see Pevensey Castle, the landing, Hastings, the port, and at last come to Battle, the scene of the fight that gave England to the Norman for our enormous good and glory and honour.

I say that the struggle for the English crown between Duke William of Normandy and Harold, King of England, was in no sense of the word a national struggle; on the contrary, it was a personal question fought and decided by the Duke of Normandy and his men, and Harold and his men. Indeed the society of that time was altogether innocent of any impulse which could be called national. That society, all of one piece as it was, both in England and in Gaul, was wholly Feudal, though somewhat less precisely so here than in Normandy. Men's allegiance was not given to any such vague unity as England, but to a feudal lord, in whose quarrel they were bound to fight, in whose victory they shared, and in whose defeat they suffered. The quarrel between King Harold and Duke William was in no sense of the word a national quarrel but a personal dispute in which the feudal adherents of both parties were necessarily involved, the gage being the crown and spoil of England. This is at once obvious when we remember that the ground of William's claim to the throne was a promise received from King Edward personally, unconfirmed by council or witan, but endorsed for his own part by Harold when shipwreck had placed him in Duke William's power. Such were the true elements of the dispute.

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It is true that the society of that time was, as I have said, all of one piece both in England and in Gaul, but it is certain that in England that society was less precisely organised, less conscious of itself, less logical in its structure, in a word less real and more barbarous than that of the Normans. The victory of Duke William meant that the sluggish English system would be replaced or at any rate reinvigorated by an energy and an intelligence foreign to it, without which it might seem certain that civilisation here would have fallen into utter decay or have perished altogether. The service of Duke William then, while not so great as that of Caesar and certainly far less than that of St Augustine, was of the same kind; he rescued England from barbarism and brought us back into the full light of Europe. The campaign in which that great service was achieved divides itself into two parts, the first of which comes to an end with the decisive action at Hastings which gave Duke William the crown; the second consists of three great fighting marches, the result of which was the conquest of England. I am only here concerned with the first part of that campaign, and more especially with the great engagement which was fought out upon the hill-top which the ruins of Battle Abbey still mark. Let us consider this.

Harold, the second son of Earl Godwin, was crowned King of England at Westminster upon the feast of the Epiphany in the year 1066. When Duke William heard of it he was both angry and amazed, and at once began to call up his feudatories to lend him aid to enforce his claim to the Crown of England against King Harold. This was not an easy thing to do, nor could it be done at all quickly. It was necessary to gather a great host.

Those lords who owed him allegiance had as often as not to be persuaded or bribed to fulfil their obligation; and they with their followers and dependents were not enough; it was necessary to engage as many as possible of those chiefs who did not own him as lord; these had to be bought by promises of gain and honour. Also a considerable fleet had to be built. All this took time, and Harold was therefore perfectly aware of what Duke William intended, and gathered his forces, both of ships and men, to meet him in the south of England. All through the spring and summer he waited, in vain. Meantime, soon after Easter, a strange portent appeared in the heavens "the comet star which some men call the hairy star," and no man could say what it might mean. It was not this, however, which delayed William; he was not ready. It is possible that had he been able to advance during the summer the whole history of England might have been different. As it was, when autumn was at hand with the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin, Harold's men were out of provisions and weary of waiting; they were allowed to disperse, Harold himself went to London and the fleet beat up into the Thames, not without damage and loss, against the wind, which, had he but known it, now alone delayed the Duke.

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But that wind which kept William in port brought another enemy of Harold's to England with some three hundred galleys, Hardrada of Norway, who came to support the claims of Tostig, now his man, King Harold's exiled brother, to Northumbria; for the Northumbrians had rebelled against him, and Harold had acquiesced in their choice of Morkere for lord. Neither Morkere nor his brother Edwin, with their local forces, was able to meet Hardrada with success. They attempted to enter York but at Fulford on the 20th September they were routed, and Hardrada held the great northern capital.

Meanwhile Harold had not been idle. Gathering his scattered forces he marched north with amazing speed, covering the two hundred miles between London and Tadcaster in nine days, to meet this new foe; but this almost marvellous performance left the south undefended. He entered York on September 25th, and on the same day, seven miles from the city at Stamford Bridge, he engaged the enemy and broke them utterly. Three days later William landed at Pevensey.

What could Harold do? He did all that a man could do. William had landed at Pevensey upon Thursday, September 28th. It is probable that Harold heard of it on the following Monday, October 2nd. Immediately he set out for London, which by hard riding he reached, though probably with but a few men, on Friday, October 6th, an amazing achievement, only made possible by the great Roman road between York and London. Upon the following Tuesday and Wednesday he was joined by his victorious forces from the north, who had thus repeated their unequalled feat and marched south again as they had north some two hundred miles in nine days. Upon Wednesday, October 11th, Harold marched out of London at the head of this force, and by the evening of October 13th—a day curiously enough to be kept later as the feast of St Edward the Confessor—this heroic force had marched in forty-eight hours some sixty miles across country, and was in position upon that famous hill some two hours from the coast, overlooking the landing-place of William at Pevensey and the port he had seized at Hastings. That great march has, I think, never been equalled by any British army before or since.

It might seem strange that William, who had landed at Pevensey upon the 28th of September, had not advanced at all from the sea-coast when Harold and his men appeared upon that hill after their great march from York upon October 13th. But in fact William, Norman as he was, had a very clear idea of what he intended to do. He left little to chance. He landed his men at Pevensey, seized upon Hastings and beached his ships; then for a whole fortnight he awaited the hot and weary return of Harold. Harold appeared upon the evening of October 13th. Upon the following day, a Saturday, the battle William had expected was fought, Harold was slain and his heroic force destroyed.

The story of that day is well known. Harold's forces were drawn up upon the ridge where the ruins of Battle Abbey now stand. William, upon the thirteenth, had marched out of Hastings and had occupied the hill to the east called Telham, where to-day stands

Telham Court. In those days probably no village or habitation of any sort occupied either of these heights; one of the chroniclers calls the battlefield the place of “the Hoar Apple Tree.”

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It is said that the night of October 13th was passed by Harold and his men in feasting and in jollity, while the Normans confessed their sins and received absolution. However that may be, in the full daylight, about nine o'clock of Saturday, October 14th, the battle was joined.

This tremendous affair which was to have such enormous consequences was opened by the minstrel Taellefer, who had besought leave of Duke William to strike the first blow. Between the two armies he rode singing the Song of Roland, and high into the air he flung his lance and caught it three times e'er he hurled it at last into the amazed English, to fall at last, slain by a hundred javelins as he rode back into the Norman front.

Thus was begun the most famous battle ever fought in England. It endured without advantage either way for some six hours till the Norman horse, flung back from the charge, fell into the Malfosse in utter confusion, and the day seemed lost to the Normans. But Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, retrieved it and from that time, about three o'clock, the Normans began to have the advantage. The battle seems to have been decided at last by two clever devices attributed to William himself. He determined to break Harold's line, and since he had not been able to do this by repeated charges, he determined to try a stratagem. Therefore he ordered his men to feign flight, and thus to draw the English after them in pursuit. This was successfully done, and when the English followed they were easily surrounded and slain. William's other device is said to have been that of shooting high into the air so that the arrows might turn and fall as from the sky upon the foe. This stratagem is said to have been the cause of Harold's death; for it was an arrow falling from on high and piercing him through the right eye that killed him or so grievously wounded him that he was left for dead, to be finally killed by Eustace of Boulogne and three other knights.

With Harold down there can have been little hope of victory left to his men, and indeed before night William had planted the Pope's banner where Harold's had floated and held the battlefield. There he supped among the dead, and having spent Sunday, October 15th, in burying the fallen, he set out not for London, but for Dover, for his simple and precise plan was to secure all the entries into England from the continent before securing the capital. When he had done this he marched up into England by the Watling Street, burned Southwark, crossed the Thames at Wallingford, received there the submission of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and at Berkhamstead the submission of London and the offer of the Crown which he received at Westminster at Mass upon Christmas Day; twelve days less than a year after Harold had been crowned in the same place.

One comes to Battle to-day along that great and beautiful road, high up over the sea plain, which still seems full with memories of the Norman advance from Hastings, thinking of all that great business. If one comes up on Tuesday, upon payment of sixpence, one is admitted to the gardens of the house in which lie the ruins of the abbey

William founded in thankfulness to God for his victory, the high altar of which was set upon the very spot where Harold fell: “Hic Harold Rex interfectus est.”

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It was while William was encamped upon Telham Hill, expecting the battle of the morrow, that he vowed an abbey to God if He gave him the victory. He was heard by a monk of Marmoutier, a certain William, called the Smith, who, when Duke William had received the crown at Westminster, reminded him of his promise. The King acknowledged his obligation and bade William of Marmoutier to see to its fulfilment. The monk thereupon returned to Marmoutier, and choosing four others, brought them to England; but finding the actual battlefield unsuited for a monastery, since there was no water there, he designed to build lower down towards the west. Now when the King heard of it he was angry and bade them build upon the field itself, nor would he hear them patiently when they asserted there was no water there, for, said he: "If God spare me I will so fully provide this place that wine shall be more abundant there than water is in any abbey in the land." Then said they that there was no stone. But he answered that he would bring them stone from Caen. This, however, was not done, for a quarry was found close by. Also the King richly endowed the house, giving it all the land within a radius of a league, and there the abbot was to be absolute lord free of bishop and royal officer, [Footnote: The unique privileges of the abbot of Battle included the right to "kill and take one or two beasts with dogs" in any of the King's forests.] and very many manors beside. Yet ten years elapsed before the Abbey of Battle was sufficiently completed to receive an abbot. In 1076, however, Robert Blancard, one of the four monks chosen by William of Marmoutier, was appointed, but he died e'er he came to Battle. Then one Gausbert was sent from Marmoutier, and he came with four of his brethren and was consecrated "Abbot of St Martin's of the place of Battle." Beside the extraordinary gifts and privileges which the Conqueror had bestowed upon the Abbey in his lifetime, upon his death he bequeathed to it his royal embroidered cloak, a splendid collection of relics and a portable altar containing relics, possibly the very one upon which Harold had sworn in his captivity in Normandy to support his claim to England. William is said to have intended the monastery to be filled with sixty monks. We do not know whether this number ever really served there. In 1393, but that was after the Black Death, there appear to have been some twenty-seven, and in 1404 but thirty. In 1535, on the eve of the Suppression, Battle Abbey was visited by the infamous Layton who reported to Thomas Cromwell that "all but two or three of the monks were guilty of unnatural crimes and were traitors," adding that the abbot was an arrant churl and that "this black sort of develish monks I am sorry to know are past amendment." Little more than two years later the abbot surrendered the abbey and received a pension of one hundred pounds. The furniture and so forth of the house was then very poor. "So beggary a house I never see, nor

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so filthy stuff," Layton writes to Wriothesley. "I will not 20s. for all the hangings in this house...." In August 1538 the place was granted to Sir Anthony Browne, who is said to have removed the cloak of the Conqueror and the famous Battle Abbey Roll to Cowdray. This rascal razed the church and cloisters to the ground, and made the abbot's lodging his dwelling. It is said that one night as he was feasting a monk appeared before him and solemnly cursed him, prophesying that his family should perish by fire. To the fulfilment of this curse Cowdray bears witness even to this day.

[Illustration: BATTLE ABBEY]

What spoliation, time and neglect have left of the Abbey is beautiful, especially the great fourteenth century gateway which faces the Market Green. Nothing save the foundations is left of the great church. From the terrace, doubtless, we look across the battlefield, but all is so changed, the bleak hill-top has become a superb garden, that it is impossible to realise still less to reconstruct the battle, and indeed since we can only visit the place amid a crowd of tourists, our present discomfort makes any remembrance of the fight or of the great and solemn abbey which for so long turned that battlefield into a sanctuary impossible.

Nor indeed are we more fortunate in the parish church which was originally built by Abbot Ralph in the twelfth century. It has been so tampered with and restored that little remains that is unspoilt. There, and I think most fittingly, lies that Sir Anthony Browne who got Battle Abbey from the King who had stolen it.

Now when I had seen all this I went on my way, and because I was unhappy on account of all that theft and destruction, and because where once there had been altar and monks to serve it, now there was none, and because what had once been common to us all was now become the pleasure of one man, I went up out of Battle into the hills by the great road through the woods and so on and up by Dallington and Heathfield and so down and down and down all a summer day across the Weald till at evening I came to Lewes where I slept. I remember nothing of that day but the wind and the hills and the great sun of May which went ever before me into the west so that I soon forgot to be sorry and rejoiced as I went.

## CHAPTER XI

### LEWES AND SIMON DE MONTFORT

I do not know of a more beautiful town than Lewes in all the wide south country; it is beautiful not only in itself but in its situation, set there upon an isolated hill over the Ouse and surrounded, as though they were great natural bastions set there in her



defence, by Malling Hill on the north, Mount Caburn on the west, the broken heights of the Downs to the south, through which the Ouse flows towards Newhaven and the sea, and on the east by Mount Harry under which was fought the very famous battle of Lewes in which Simon de Montfort took his king prisoner.

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The natural strength and beauty of this situation has been much increased by the labour of man, for Lewes is set as it were all in a garden out of which it rises, a pinnacle of old houses crowned by the castle upon its half precipitous hill. It is a curiously un-English vision you get from the High Street for instance, looking back upon the hill or from the little borgo of Southover or from Cliffe, and yet there can be few more solidly English places than Lewes.

That the Romans had here some sort of settlement there can be no doubt, that Lewes was a place of habitation in the time of the Saxons is certain, indeed in Athelstan's day it boasted of two mints, but the town, as it appears to us in history, grew up about the Cluniac Priory of St Pancras under the protection of the Castle, and to these it owes everything except its genesis.

Whatever Lewes may have been before the Conquest that revolution saw it pass into the power of one of the greatest of William's nobles, that William de Warenne who was his son-in-law. It was he and his wife Gundrada, generally supposed to be the Conqueror's daughter, who founded the Priory of St Pancras at Southover. It is probable, even certain, that a chapel, possibly with some sort of religious house attached to it, existed here before William de Warenne obtained from the Conqueror the rape and town of Lewes. In any case it can have been of small importance. But within ten years of the Conquest William de Warenne and his wife determined to found an important monastery at the gates of their town, and with this intention they set out on pilgrimage for Rome to consult, and to obtain the blessing of, the Pope. They got so far as Burgundy when they found that it was impossible to go on in safety on account of the war between the Pope and the Emperor. When they found themselves in this predicament they were not far from the great Abbey of SS. Peter and Paul at Cluny.

Now the Cluniac Congregation, the first great reform of the Benedictine Order, had been founded there in the diocese of Macon in 910, and it was then at the height of its power and greatness. Cluny was the most completely feudal of the orders, for the Cluniac monks were governed by Priors each and all of whom were answerable only to the Abbot of Cluny himself, while every monk in the Order had to be professed by him, that mighty ecclesiastic at this time can have been master of not less than two thousand monks. Cluny's boast was its school and the splendour of its ceremonies and services; God was served with a marvellous dignity and luxury undreamed of before, and unequalled since Cluny declined. It was to this mother house of the greatest Congregation of the time that William de Warenne turned with his wife when war prevented them on the road to Rome, and we cannot wonder that they were so caught by all they saw that they determined to put the monastery they proposed to build under the Abbot of Cluny and to

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found a Cluniac Priory at the gates of their town of Lewes. They therefore approached the Abbot with the request that he would send three or four of his monks to start the monastery. They did not find him very willing; for the essence of Cluny was discipline, the discipline of an army, and doubtless the Abbot feared that, so far away as Sussex seemed, his monks would be out of his reach and might become but as other men. But at last the Conqueror himself joined his prayers to those of William de Warenne, and in 1076 the Abbot of Cluny sent the monk Lanzo and three other brethren to England, and to them William de Warenne gave the little church of St Pancras especially rebuilt for their use with the land about it, called the Island, and other lands sufficient to support twelve monks. But the Abbot of Cluny had no sooner agreed to establish his congregation in England than he seems to have repented. At any rate he recalled Prior Lanzo and kept him so long that William de Warenne, growing impatient, seriously thought of transferring his foundation to the Benedictines; but at length Prior Lanzo returned and all was arranged as was at first intended. The monastery flourished apace and grew not only in wealth but in piety. Prior Lanzo proved an excellent ruler, and the Priory of St Pancras at Lewes became famous for its sanctity through all England.

To the same William de Warenne Lewes owes the foundation or the refoundation of its Castle the second centre about which the town grew.

A glance at the map will assure us that Lewes could not but be a place of great importance, increasing with England in wealth and strength. The South Downs stand like a vast rampart back from the sea, guarding South England from surprise and invasion. But this great wall is broken at four different places, at Arundel in the west where the Arun breaks through the chalk to find the sea, at Bramber where the Adur passes seaward, at Lewes where the Ouse goes through, and at Wilmington where the Cuckmere winds through the hills to its haven. Each of these gaps was held and guarded by a castle while the level eastward of Beachy Head was held by Pevensey. Of these castles I suppose the most important to have been Lewes, for it not only held the gap of the Ouse but the pass by Falmer and in some sort the Cuckmere Valley also.

[Illustration: LEWES CASTLE]

But the great day of Lewes Castle was that of Simon de Montfort—I shall deal with that later. Here it will be enough to point out that only a fragment of the great building with its double keep, whose ruin we see to-day, dates from the time of the first De Warenne, the rest being a later work largely of Edward I's. time.

Let me now return to the Priory which, in the development of the town, played a part at least as great as that of the Castle.

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The Priory had always been famous for its piety, and in 1199, Hugh, who had been Prior there till 1186, was raised to be Abbot of Cluny itself. This is interesting and important for we have thus an ex-Prior of Lewes as Abbot of Cluny during the great dispute between the Order and the Earl of Warenne. In 1200 Lewes was without a Prior, and Abbot Hugh appointed one Alexander. For some reason or other De Warenne refused to accept him and even went so far as to claim that the appointment lay with him, an impossible pretension. Yet even within the Priory he is said to have won support, certain of the monks claiming that, save for a tribute of one hundred shillings a year to Cluny, they were independent. The Pope was appealed to and he of course gave a clear decision, not in the English way of compromise, which is the way of a barbarian and a coward, but like an honest man deciding 'twixt right and wrong. His judgment was wholly in favour of the Abbot of Cluny. The Earl then began to bluster and to attempt to appeal beyond the Pope; he even dared to place armed men at the Priory gate and to stop all communications with Cluny. The Abbot replied by an interdict upon Lewes, and things were in this confusion when the Pope appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Chichester and Ely to hear what De Warenne had to say in excuse for his violence. The Abbot of Cluny himself came over and was insulted in Lewes by De Warenne's men. In appointing English judges to hear the case the Pope must have known that all would end in a compromise. At any rate this is what happened, and it was decided that in future, when a vacancy occurred, the Abbot of Cluny should nominate two candidates of whom De Warenne should choose one for Prior. This ridiculous judgment decided nothing. Of two things, one; either the Abbot was right or he was wrong. If he were right why should he forego his claim, to satisfy De Warenne who was wrong? A decision was what was needed. In 1229 the Pope rightly declared the compromise null and void, and the Abbot of Cluny regained his rights. At once the moral condition of the house improved, and when it was visited in 1262 everything was reported to be satisfactory, and unlike any other Cluniac house in England this of Lewes was not in debt.

The turning point in the history of the Priory would seem to have been the one great moment in the story of the town; the appalling affair in which it was involved by Simon de Montfort in 1264 when he took the town, then Henry III.'s headquarters, and captured the King and young Prince Edward. It would seem that De Montfort's soldiers had very little respect for holy places, for we read that not only were the altars defiled but the very church was fired and hardly saved from destruction.

The quarrel between the King and his barons would seem, too, to have involved the monks, for we find the sub-prior and nine brethren were expelled from Lewes for conspiracy and faction and went to do penance in various houses of the Congregation. Indeed such was the general collapse here that before the end of the century the Priory was practically bankrupt.

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That Lewes suffered severely from the Black Death of 1348-49 is certain, but we know very little about it, and indeed the history of the house is negligible until, in the beginning of the fifteenth century the whole system of Cluny was called in question and it was claimed on behalf of Lewes that it should be raised to an abbacy with the power to profess monks. It will be remembered that the Abbot of Cluny—the only Abbot within the Congregation—alone could profess, and in times of war, such as the fourteenth century, this must have been very inconvenient. Indeed we read of men who had been monks their whole life long, but had never been professed at all. It is therefore not surprising that such a claim should at last have been put forward. It is equally not surprising that such a claim was not allowed. The Abbot of Cluny refused to raise Lewes to the rank of an abbey, but he granted the Prior the privilege of professing his monks; this in 1410. So things continued till in 1535, the infamous Layton was sent by Thomas Cromwell to inquire into the state of the Priory of Lewes, to nose out any scandal he could and to invent what he could not find. His methods as applied to Lewes are notorious for their insolence and brutality. He professes to have found the place full of corruption and rank with treason. And in this he was wise, for his master Cromwell wanted the house for himself. Upon November 16, 1537, the Priory of St Pancras at Lewes was surrendered. It was then served by a Prior and twenty-three monks and eighty servi; and it and its lands were granted by the King to Thomas Cromwell.

Such was the end of the most famous Cluniac house in England, the sanctuary founded by that De Warenne who had built up Lewes between his Castle on the height and his monastery in the vale. Almost nothing remains to-day of that great and splendid building, but in 1845, in building the railway, the coffins of the founders De Warenne and his wife Gundrada were found. These now lie in St John's Church, here in Southover close by, which belonged to the Priory. It was originally a plain Norman building of which the nave remains, the rest of the church as we see it, being for the most part either Perpendicular or altogether modern.

Of course the Priory of St Pancras was not alone in the fate that befell it at the hands of the Tudor in 1537. The only other religious house in Lewes suffered a like fate. This was the convent of the Franciscans, dedicated, as most authorities agree, in honour of Our Lady and St Margaret. The Friars Minor were established in Lewes before 1249, and their convent was one of the last to be surrendered, in 1538.

From St John's Church, the visitor, not without a glance at the old half timber house close by said to have been the residence of Anne of Cleves, will pass up to the High Street where, under the Castle, stands the parish church of St Michael, the only ancient part of which is the round Norman tower, a rare thing. A fourteenth century brass to one of the De Warennes is to be seen within. Further west is the Transitional Norman church of St Anne, with curious capitals on the south side of the nave. Here is a fine basket-work Norman font, and in the south aisle at the east end a vaulted chapel. To the north of the chancel is a recessed tomb.

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But it is not in the churches we have in Lewes that we shall to-day find the symbol, as it were, of that old town, still so fair a thing, which held the passage of the Ouse through the Downs and in the thirteenth century witnessed the great battle in which Simon de Montfort, mystic and soldier, defeated and took captive his king. For that we must go to the Castle ruin that crowns Lewes as with a battlement.

The Castle is reached from the High Street near St Michael's church by the Castlegate. It was founded, as I have said, by the first De Warenne, but the gate-house by which we enter is later, dating from King Edward's time, the original Norman gate being within. The Castle had two keeps, a rare feature. Only one of these remains, reached by a winding steep way, and of this only two of the fine octagonal towers are left to us. These two are thirteenth century works. From the principal tower, now used as a museum, we may get the best view of the famous battlefield under Mount Harry, one of the most famous sites of the thirteenth century in England, for the battle that was fought there seemed to have decided everything; in fact it decided nothing, for its result was entirely reversed at Evesham by the military genius of Prince Edward.

The cause contested upon these noble hills to the north-west of Lewes is one which continually recurs all through English history; the cause of the Aristocracy against the Crown. The monarchies of western Europe, which slowly emerged from the anarchy of the Dark Ages and helped to make the Middle Age the glorious and noble thing it was, are, if we consider them spiritually at least, democratic weapons, or rather, politically, they seem to sum up the national energy and to express it. In them was vested, and this as of divine right, the executive. Without the Crown nothing could be done, no writ issued, no fortress garrisoned. In the Crown was gathered all the national ends, it was a symbol at once of unity and of power. Against this glorious thing in England we see a constant and unremitting rebellion on the part of the aristocracy. It was so in the time of King John when the rascal barons curbed and broke the central government; it was so in the time of Henry III. when Simon de Montfort led, and for a time successfully, the rebellion. It has been so always and not least in the Great Rebellion of the seventeenth century so falsely represented as a democratic movement, when the parvenu aristocracy founded upon the lands and wealth of the raped Church in the sixteenth century, broke the Crown up and finally established in England a puppet king, a mere Venetian Doge incapable, as we have seen in the last few years, of defending the people against an unscrupulous and treasonous plutocracy led by a lawyer as certainly on the make as Thomas Cromwell. The infamous works of such men as these have most often been done under the hypocritical and lying banner of the rights of the people as though to gain his ends the devil should bear the cross of Christ. It is so to-day; it was so in the time of Simon de Montfort.

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I have said that the King was the fountain of all power in the England of Simon; it was therefore his supreme object to get possession of the King's body that he might have control of the executive machinery of the country and thus in fact be king *de facto*. It was this which he achieved upon the battlefield of Lewes in 1264.

For some ten years before that battle the Barons of England had been restless under the yoke of the central government, the Crown, which stood not for them but for us all. They had already wrung from Henry III. under compulsion, when he was within their power and not a free agent, certain concessions which now he refused to confirm to them. They called him liar and covered him with the same abuse that their successors hurled at Charles I.; but Henry stood firm, he refused what had been dragged from him by force, and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, raised an army not from the people but from his own feudal adherents and his friends and took the field, striking into the valley of the Severn, where he seized Hereford, Gloucester, Worcester and Bridgnorth with their castles. Then he marched straight upon London where, among the Guilds, he had many adherents and friends. War seemed inevitable, but, as it happened, a truce was called, and the question which Simon had made an excuse for his rising, the question of the King's refusal to confirm the grant of privileges wrung from him by force, was submitted for decision to St Louis of France, undoubtedly the most reverent, famous, and splendid figure of that day. St Louis, unlike an Englishman, decided not with a view to peace as though justice were nothing and right an old wives' tale, but according to law and his conscience, honestly and cleanly before God like an intelligent being. Of two things one, either the King was right or he was wrong. St Louis decided that the King was right, and this upon January 23rd, 1264.

Simon refused to abide by the decision. This man in his own conception was above law and honour and justice, he was the inspired and privileged servant of God. In this hallucination he deceived himself even as Oliver Cromwell did later and equally for his own ends. He, too, would break the Crown and himself govern England. He, too, was brutal beyond bearing, proud and insolent with his inferiors, imperious even to God, a great man, but one impossible to suffer in any state which is to endure, a dangerous tyrant.

This great mystical soldier at once took the field, and when Henry returned from Amiens, where the court of St Louis had sat, he found all England up, the Cinque Ports all hot for Simon, London ponderous in his support, and in all south-eastern England but one principle fortress still in loyal hands, that of Rochester.

North and west of London, however, things were less disastrous, and Henry's first move was to secure all this and to cut off London, the approach to which he held on the south-east in spite of everything, since he commanded Rochester, from the Midlands and the West. Simon's answer was the right one; he struck at Rochester and laid siege to it. Down upon him came King Henry to relieve it and was successful. Simon swept back

upon London, there he gathered innumerable levies and again advanced into the south against the King.



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Henry having relieved Rochester, marched also into the south, doubtless intent upon the reduction of the Cinque ports; for this, however, Simon gave him no time. He came thundering down, half London weltering behind him, across the Weald, and Henry, wheeling to meet him, came upon the 12th of May up the vale of Glynde and occupied Lewes. On the following day Simon appeared at Fletching in the vale of the Weald, some nine miles north of Lewes; there he encamped. Very early in the morning of the 14th May, Simon arrayed his troops and began his march southward upon the royal army. Dawn was just breaking when his first troopers came over the high Down and saw Lewes in the morning mist, the royal banners floating from the Castle—all still asleep. Slowly and at his ease Simon ordered his men. Upon the north, conspicuously, he set his litter with his standard above it and about it massed the raw levies of London. Upon the south he gathered the knights and men-at-arms led by the young Earl of Gloucester. As for himself he remained with the reserve. Then when all was ready he gave the order and both wings, north and south, began to advance upon the town “hoping to find their enemies still abed.”

Simon's plan was a simple one, he hoped to surprise his foes and he intended in any case to throw his main strength southward upon the Priory of St Pancras, while pretending that his main attack was to be upon the Castle. He did not altogether succeed in surprising his foes, but in everything else he was successful. The royalists were aware of his approach only at the last moment, so that when they poured out of the Castle and Priory and town they were in some confusion. Then Prince Edward, observing the standard of Simon over the litter, flung himself upon the Londoners, who broke and fled while he pursued them, nor did he stay his hand till he was far away from Lewes. He returned at last victorious and triumphant to find Simon's banner floating from Lewes Castle, the King of the Romans and the King of England in Simon's hands and the day lost. Weary though he was, he attempted with all the impetuosity of youth to reverse that verdict. Through the streets of Lewes he fought, till at length he was forced to take refuge in the church of the Franciscans, where indeed Simon found him.

Such was the battle of Lewes, which gave all England to De Montfort for more than a year; till indeed Lewes was reversed, by Prince Edward who, escaping from his hands at Hereford, gathered a new army about him and forced Simon to meet him upon the field of Evesham where, when the great soldier-mystic saw the royal banners upon the dawn, he cried out that last great word of his, “The Lord have mercy on our souls for our bodies are Prince Edward's”: to be answered when he demanded mercy, “there is no treating with traitors.”

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DOWNS

## LEWES TO BRAMBER

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Perhaps after all the most fundamental truth about Lewes is that she is the capital of the South Downs, and the South Downs are the glory of the South Country; from the noble antiquity of Winchester to the splendour of Beachy Head they run like an indestructible line of Latin verse beneath the blazon of England. They stand up between the land and the sea, the most Roman thing in England, and of all English land it is their white brows that the sun kisses first when it rises over the sea, of all English hills every morning they are the first to be blest.

The most Roman thing in England I call them; and indeed this “noble range of mountains” has not the obvious antiquity of the Welsh mountains or the Mendip Hills, nor the tragic aspect as of something as old as time, as old as the world itself, of the dark and sea-torn cliffs of Cornwall, or the wild and desolate uplands of Somerset and Devon. The South Downs seem indeed not so much a work of Nature as of man; and of what men! In their regular and even line, in their continuity and orderly embankment, in their splendid monotony of contour they recall but one thing—Rome; they might be indeed only another work of that mighty government which conceived and built the great Wall that stretches from the Solway to the Firth of Forth which marked the limit of the Empire and barred out its enemies. And this wall of the South Downs, too, marked but another frontier of the same great government; beyond it lay the horizons unknown, and it barred out the sea.

But how much older than Rome are the South Downs! Doubtless before the foundation of Rome, e'er Troy was besieged, these hills stood up against the south and served us as a habitation and a home. Nor indeed have we failed to leave signs of our life there so many thousand years ago, so that to-day a man wandering over that great uplifted plateau which slopes so gradually towards the sea, though he seem to be utterly alone, as far as possible from the ways and the habitations of men, immersed in an immemorial silence, in truth passes only from forgotten city to forgotten city, amid the strongholds and the burial places of a civilisation so old that it is only the earth itself which retains any record or memory of it. Here were our cities when we feared the beast, before we had knowledge of bronze or iron, when our tool and our weapon was the flint.

The man, our ancestor, who chipped and prepared the flints for our use at Cissbury for instance, doubtless looked out upon a landscape different from that we see to-day and yet essentially the same after all. The South Downs in their whole extent slope, as I have said, very gradually seaward and south, and there of old were our cities chiefly set, but northward their escarpment is extraordinarily steep, rising from time to time into lofty headlands of which the noblest, the most typical and the most famous is Chanctonbury. Standing above that steep escarpment a man to-day

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looks all across the fruitful Weald till far off he sees the long line of the North Downs running as it were parallel with these southern hills, and ennobled and broken by similar heights as that of Leith Hill. Between, like an uneven river bed with its drifts and islands of soil, running from west to east, lies the Weald, opening at last as it were into the broad estuary of Romney Marsh, half lost in the sea. And what we see to-day our neolithic forefathers saw too—with a difference. Doubtless the Downs then were as smooth and bare as they are now, but the Weald, we may be sure, was different, wilder and certainly fuller of woodland, though never perhaps the vast and impenetrable forest of trees of which we have been told.

I say that the Downs, now deserted save by the shepherd and his flock, were of old populous, and of this fact the evidence is plentiful. There is indeed not one of the five main stretches of the Downs that does not bear witness to the immemorial presence of man. To say nothing of the discoveries about Beachy Head, the earthworks there, and the neolithic implements and bronze weapons discovered about East Dean and Alfriston, we have in the Long Man of Wilmington, that gigantic figure cut out in the chalk of the hill-side, something comparable only with the Giant of Cerne Abbas in Dorset and the White Horses of Wiltshire. That figure is some two hundred and forty feet in height and holds in each hand a stave or club two hundred and thirty feet long. It would seem impossible to be certain either of its age or its purpose, but we may perhaps be sure that it lay there upon the Downs above Polegate before the landing of Caesar, and it may have been the foundation of one of those figures described by him as formed of osiers and filled with living men to be destroyed by fire as a sacrifice for our barbarian gods.

Nor is this all. The whole range of the Downs as I say is scattered thick with the work of our pre-historic forefathers. In Burlough Castle and Mount Caburn we have fortresses so old that it is impossible to name the age in which they were contrived and built, nor can we assert with any confidence who they were that first occupied the camp upon Ditchling Beacon, the highest point of the South Downs, or who first defended Wolstanbury. And it is the same with those most famous places Cissbury Ring and Chanctonbury. But the flint mines upon Cissbury give us some idea of the neolithic men, our forefathers, which should and does astonish us. The Camp itself is less wonderful than the mines upon the western side of it. Here we have not only numerous pits from ten to seventy feet in diameter and from five to seven feet deep, but really vast excavations leading to galleries which tap a belt or band of flints. That these mines were worked by neolithic man it is impossible to doubt, but he may not have discovered or first used them. They may be older than he, though all record even upon that marvellous hill-side,

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has been lost of those who first exploited them. Nor is Chanctonbury, though it cannot boast of mines such as these, less astonishing or less ancient. The camp set there following the contour of the hill can only have been one of the most important in south-east England. It commands the camps at Cissbury, the Devil's Dyke, High Down and White Hawk, the whole breadth of the Weald lay beneath it and a signal displayed upon Leith Hill upon the North Downs could easily be answered from this noble mountain; Mount Caburn itself was not more essentially important.

It has been thought that the Romans may have used Chanctonbury, but if so they have left but little mark of their occupation, and indeed, though the Downs as a whole far off are stamped with so Roman a character, there is but one spot in their whole length where we may say; here certainly the Legions have been. That spot lies upon the last division of the Downs towards the west, the line of hills which stands between Chichester and the Weald.

It is certain that the Romans were, in Sussex, most at home on that great sea plain towards which the Downs slope so gradually southward. Here indeed they built their town of Regnum, and perhaps towards the end of their occupation of Britain they laid out the only purely military highway which they built here from Regnum to London Bridge. This great Roman road, known as the Stane Street, coming out of the eastern gate of Chichester, takes the Downs as an arrow flies, crossing them between Boxgrove and Bignor, nor is the work of Rome even to-day wholly destroyed, for there under Bignor Hill we may still see the pavement of their Way, while at Bignor itself we have perhaps the best remains of a Roman villa left to us in Sussex.

[Illustration: THE DOWNS]

But though all these marks and signs, the memory and the ruins not only of our forefathers, but of those our saviours who drew us within the government of the Empire so that we are to-day what we are and not as they who knew not the Romans, make the Downs sacred to us, it is not only or chiefly for this that we love them or that in any thought of Southern England, when far away, it is these great hills which first come back into the mind and bring the tears to our eyes. We love them for themselves, for their beauty and their persistence certainly, but really because we have always known them and they more than any other thing here in the south remind us and are a symbol of our home. A man of South England must always have them in his heart

for every day of his childhood they have filled his eyes. And to-day more especially they stand as a sign and a symbol. For not only are they the first great hills which the Londoner sees, but they offer the nearest relief and repose from the modern torture and noise of that enormous place which has ceased to be a city and become a mere asylum of landless men. From the mean and crowded streets he seeks

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with an ever increasing eagerness the space of the Downs, from the noise and confusion and throng, this silence and this emptiness; from the breathless street, this free and nimble air, which is better than wine. And so to-day more than ever the Downs have come to stand as a symbol of an England half lost, which might seem to be passing away, but that is, as indeed these hills assure us, eternal and indestructible, the very England of our hearts, which cannot die. There are some doubtless who grumble at this invasion and are fearful lest even this last nobility should be destroyed by the multitude or this last sanctuary desecrated by the rapacity of the rich, or this last silence broken by the brutal noise of the motor car. But the Downs are too strong, they have seen too many civilisations pass away, and the men and the ages that built upon their hill-sides have become less than a dream in the morning. They remain. And is it nothing that in our day if a man hears a bird sing in a London street in spring it is of the Downs he thinks, if the wind comes over the gardens in some haggard suburb it is these hills which rise up in his mind, these hills, which stand there against the south, our very own from everlasting to everlasting.

But to possess the Downs at least as a symbol, to dream of them as a refuge, it is not necessary to know them in all their secret places, to have seen all their little forgotten homesteads, or to be able to recognise all their thousand steep tracks one from another.

For me indeed the Downs, long as I have known them, remain most dear as a spectacle, but this you will miss altogether if you are actually upon them, lost amid their rolling waves of green turf with only the sky and the wind and the sun for companions. Therefore when I set out from Lewes to go westward I did not take the way up past the race-course over the battlefield south of Mount Harry towards Ditchling Camp and Beacon. Let me confess it, I followed the road. And what a road! In all South England I know no other that offers the traveller such a spectacle, where above him, in full view, that great rampart stands up like a wall, peak speaks to peak, till presently with a majesty and a splendour, not to be matched I think in our island, Chanctonbury stands forth like a king crowned as with laurel towering upon the horizon.

Now this road I followed passes westward out of Lewes and then turns swiftly north, climbing as it goes, under the Downs beyond Offham, turning west again under Mount Harry and so on past Courthouse Farm and Plumpton church, which stands lonely in a field to the north of the road, till suddenly by Westmaston church under Ditchling Beacon it turns north again towards the Weald and enters the very notable village of Ditchling. All that way is worth a king's ransom, for it gives you all the steepness of the Downs upon their steepest side, their sudden north escarpment, towering up over the Weald some seven hundred feet or more. On a spring morning early I know no way more joyful.

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Ditchling Beacon itself stands some eight hundred and fifty feet above the sea and is the highest point in all the range of the South Downs, though it lacks the nobility of Chanctonbury. The earthworks here are irregular and not very well defined, but there is a fine dewpond to the east of the camp though perhaps this has not much antiquity, a seemingly older depression now dry in the north-west corner is rather an old rainwater ditch than a dewpond. Altogether it might seem that Ditchling Camp was rather a refuge for cattle than a military fortress.

Ditchling village is charming, with more than one old half-timber house, and the church of St Margaret's is not only interesting in itself, but, standing as it does upon rising ground and yet clear of the great hills, it offers you one of the finest views of the Downs anywhere to be had from the Weald. It consists of a cruciform building of which the north transept and the north wall of the nave were rebuilt in the thirteenth century. The chancel, however, has some beautiful Early English work to show and the nave is rather plain Transitional. The eastern window and most of the windows in the nave are of the early Decorated period, the window in the south chancel aisle being somewhat later.

Something better than Ditchling church awaits the traveller at Clayton where the little church of St John the Baptist possesses a most interesting chancel arch, round and massive, that may well be Saxon. The chancel itself is of the thirteenth century with triple lancets at the western end with two heads, perhaps of a king and queen on the moulding. Here, too, on the south chancel wall is a fine brass of 1523 in which we see a priest holding chalice and wafer. In the nave are the remains of frescoes of the Last Judgment.

Right above Clayton rises Wolstanbury, a hill-top camp or circular work some two hundred and fifty yards in diameter. It is interesting because it is curiously and cleverly fortified, the rampart being built up below and outside the fosse, owing to the steepness of the hill. To the left are certain pits which may have been the site of dwellings; certainly many neolithic implements have been found here.

Below Wolstanbury which thrusts itself out into the Weald like a great headland nearly seven hundred feet in height, lies Pyecombe to the south-west. This little place which lies between the heights of Wolstanbury and Newtimber Hill is celebrated for two things, its shepherds' crooks and the Norman font of lead in the little church whose chancel arch is Norman too. You may see here even in so small a place, however, all the styles of England, for if the font and chancel arch are Norman, the lancets in the chancel are Early English, the double piscina is Decorated and the windows of the nave are Perpendicular while the pulpit is of the seventeenth century.

Pyecombe is hard to reach from Clayton without a great climb over the Downs, but there is a way, though a muddy one, which turns due west out of the Brighton road where the railway crosses it. This leads one round the northern side of Wolstanbury (and this is the best way from which to visit the camp on the top) and so by a footpath

past Newtimber Place, a moated Elizabethan house well hidden away among the trees west of the road to Hurstpierpoint.



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From Pyecombe there is a delightful road winding in and out under the Downs about Newtimber Hill to Poynings. Poynings is, or should I say was, one of the loveliest, loneliest and most unspoiled villages to be found here under the Downs, but of late it has been accessible by railway from the Devil's Dyke and Brighton. Nothing, however, can spoil the beauty and interest of its church which is, I suppose, one of the earliest Perpendicular works in the county, built before 1368 by the third Baron de Poynings, some remains of whose old manor-house may still be found east of the churchyard. The church is a Greek cross with central tower, and is dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity. Everything in it is charming, especially the beautiful eastern window, the triple sedilia and the piscina; but the pulpit and altar rails are of the seventeenth century as is the great south window which once stood in Chichester Cathedral. The Poynings lie in the south transept, but their tombs have been defaced. The north transept is the Montagu Chapel; here in the window is some old glass in which we may see the Annunciation.

The Devil's Dyke, which stands right above Poynings, is a great trench in the Downs, dug according to the legend by the devil, whose genial intention it was to drown holy Sussex by letting in the sea. He was allowed from sunset to sunrise to work his will, but owing to the vigilance of those above who had Sussex particularly in their keeping, the cocks all began to crow long before the dawn, and the devil, thinking his time was spent, went off in a rage before he had completed his work. This would seem to prove what I have often suspected that the devil is as great a fool as he looks.

The camp above the Devil's Dyke is of the usual design of a hill-top fortress, the defence following the natural line of the hill, the look-out having been apparently upon the north-west, whence a remarkably extensive view is to be had both over the Weald and the Downs. But as no water would seem to have been conserved here it is difficult to believe that this camp was ever a permanent fortress which only a very large number of people could have defended. Nevertheless a great number of neolithic implements have been found there.

From Poynings in full view of Chanctonbury the beautiful road runs all the way at the foot of the Downs to that great gap through which the Adur seeks the sea, and which of old was guarded by Bramber Castle. On the way it passes through the loveliest of villages, to wit, Edburton, where in the Early English church of St Andrew is the second of the three Norman fonts of lead within this county. The church is altogether interesting, for if it is for the most part of the thirteenth century, it has a charming Decorated eastern window and it is said that Archbishop Laud himself presented the pulpit and altar rails. What the two low side windows were for I know not, but the chapel on the north was dedicated in honour of St Catherine of Alexandria.

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It was already dusk when I came out of Edburton church, the late dusk of a day in early May; and so, liking the place passing well, I determined to sleep there and soon found a hospitable cottage. In the morning I liked the place better still, and remembering the “tarmac” and the sophistication (alas!) of Steyning, I decided to stay where I was two or three days and to visit thence a place in the Weald it had long been my desire to see. And so having made up my mind, before nine o'clock I set out on my way.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE WEALD

There can be no one who has stood upon one of the great heights of the Downs north and south, upon Ditchling Beacon, Chanctonbury or Leith Hill, who, looking across the Weald, has not wondered what this country, lying between the two great chalk ranges, might be, what is its nature and its history and what part it has played in the great story of England. For even to the superficial onlooker it seems to differ essentially not only from the great chalk Downs upon which he stands, but from any other part of England known to him. It lies, thickly sprinkled with scattered and isolated woodlands, a mighty trench between the heights, not a vast plain but an uneven lowland diversified by higher land but without true hills, and roughly divided west and east into two parts by a great ridge known by various names, but in its greater part called the Forest, St Leonard's Forest, Ashdown Forest, Dallington Forest, and so forth. This country which we know as the Weald is obviously bounded north and south by the Downs which enclose it, as they do, too, upon the west, where between Winchester and Petersfield and Selborne the two ranges narrow and meet. Thence, indeed, the Weald spreads eastward in an ever widening delta till it is lost in the marshes and the sea.

Such is the aspect of this great country as we see it to-day from any of the heights north and south of it; but what is its true character and what is its history?

We hear of it first under a Saxon name, Andredeswald, whence we get our name of the Weald, and we find it always spoken of not only by the Saxons, but by the Romans before them as an obstacle, though not, it would seem, an insurmountable one. It was, in fact, a wild forest country of clay containing much woodland, everywhere covered with scrub, and traversed by various sleepy and shallow streams. That it was difficult to cross we have Roman evidence; that it was a secure hiding-place we know from the Saxons; but as we look upon it to-day neither of these historic facts is self-evident, and therefore a curious myth has grown up with regard to the Weald; and the historian, seeking to explain what is not to be understood without time and trouble and experience, tells us that the Weald was once an impenetrable forest, a whole great woodland and undergrowth so thick that no man might cross it without danger. Such an assertion is merely an attempt on the part of men, who do not know the Weald, to explain the facts of which I have spoken, namely, that the Weald appears as an obstacle

in our early history, though not insurmountable, and that it continually offered a secure hiding-place and refuge to the fugitive.

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The Weald as it appears to us first, is the secure home of those who first smelted the ironstone in which it abounds, and as such it remained during many ages. But the two main facts about it which help to explain everything in its history are first that it consisted for the most part of clay, and secondly that it was everywhere ill watered. Let us consider these things.

The Weald, even as we see it to-day, tilled and cultivated and tended though it be, remains largely a country of scattered woodland, very thickly wooded, indeed, as seen in a glance from any height of the Downs, but revealing itself, as we traverse it, as a country of isolated woods, often of oak, and with here and there the remains of a wild and rough moorland country, of which, as we may think, in the Roman times, it, for the most part, consisted. It later possessed some six forests properly so called, but itself was never a legal forest nor in any sense of the words an impenetrable wood. It always possessed homesteads, farms and steadings, but almost nowhere within it was there a great or populous town; men lived there it is true, but always in a sort of isolation. And this was so not because the Weald was an impassable forest of woodland and undergrowth—it was never that; but because of its scarcity of water or more accurately its uncertainty of water and its soil, the Wealden clay. The state of affairs anciently obtaining in the Weald does not fundamentally differ from what obtains to-day, and in a word it was and is this: in dry weather there is no water, but the going is good; in wet weather there is plenty of water, but the going is impossible. Of course, these conditions have in modern times been modified by the building of roads and the sinking of wells and the better embankment and preservation of the rivers, but in Roman times, as later, the Weald was an obstacle because it was difficult, though never impossible, to cross on account of the badness of the going or the lack of water. It was a secure hiding-place for such a fugitive as a Saxon king because he could not be pursued by an army; he himself with a few followers could move from steading to steading and enjoy a certain amount of state, but a pursuing army would have perished.

Evidence in support of this explanation of the secret and character of the Weald is not far to seek. The Weald lay between the Channel and its ports, that is to say, the entries into England from the continent, and the Thames valley; it was then an obstacle that had to be overcome. Had it been merely a great woodland forest, it would not have troubled the Romans who would merely have driven a great road through it. But the Romans had more to face than an impenetrable woodland or the roughness of the country; they had to overcome the lack of water, and therefore in the Weald their day's march of some twelve miles was pressed to double its normal length. The French armies, according to Mr Belloc, do exactly the same

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thing in the Plain of Chalons to-day. And indeed a man may see for himself, even yet, what exactly the Weald was if in summer he will cross it by any of the winding byways that often become good roads for a mile or so and then lapse again into lanes or footpaths. Let him follow one of these afoot and drink only by the wayside. And then in winter let him follow the same tracks if he can. He will find plenty of water, but his feet will be heavy with clay. For an army or even a regiment to go as he goes would be almost impossible, and this not because of the woodland or undergrowth, but because of the lack of water, the lack of towns or large villages and the clay underfoot.

Such then was the nature of the barrier which lay between the ports of the Channel and the valley of the Thames. The Weald was indeed inhuman, and this helps to explain why it was not only a barrier but a refuge.

We read in the rude chronicle of the Saxons of two men who sought refuge in the Weald, in the seventh and eighth centuries. The first of the three was Caedwalla, (659?-689) a young man of great energy, according to Bede, and probably a dangerous aspirant to the West-Saxon throne. At any rate he was exiled from Wessex and he took refuge with his followers in the forest of Anderida, that is to say in the Weald. There about 681 he met St Wilfrid who had fled, too, from the West Saxon kingdom. Wilfrid was busy converting the South Saxons, and Caedwalla, going from steading to steading with his followers, saved from any considerable pursuit by the nature of the country, became great friends with him. This, however, did not prevent him in 685 from ravaging Sussex, slaying the South Saxon king and at last succeeding his old enemy Centwine upon the West Saxon throne. Caedwalla, after conquering the Isle of Wight and putting to death the two sons of King Arvaldus, having allowed them first to be baptised, was himself converted, and to such purpose that he laid down his crown, went on pilgrimage to Rome, and was baptised under the name of Peter, by the Pope, on the vigil of Easter 689. He died, however, before Domenica in albis, and was buried in Old St Peter's, nor was he the only English king that lay there.

All this came out of the Weald; but it is most significant for us because it allows us to understand the nature of this refuge and what it offered in the way of safety to an exile.

This is confirmed by the experience of Sigebert, King of the West Saxons. He, too, first took refuge in the Weald when deposed by his witan. He fled away and was pursued, we read, by Cynewulf, so that he took refuge in the forest of Andred where he was safe from pursuit by many men, being killed at last at Privet near Petersfield in Hampshire by a swineherd in revenge for his master's death. Such then was the nature of the Weald and such fundamentally it remains, a stubborn and really untameable country, even to-day not truly humanised, still largely empty

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of towns and villages but scattered with isolated farms and steadings. And the essential inhumanity of the true heart of the Weald is borne out by the scarcity of religious houses there. Only the little Priory of Rusper, a small Benedictine nunnery perhaps founded by one of the De Braose family before the end of the twelfth century, and the small Benedictine nunnery of Easebourne founded in the thirteenth century may be said to belong to the true Weald; of the others, such as the Abbey of Robertsbridge, the Priories of Michelham and Shulbred, the Abbeys of Otham, Bayham, and Dureford not one is really old or stands really within the true Weald. Nor are they of very much importance. The greatest of these houses was the Cistercian Abbey of Robertsbridge founded in 1176 by Alfred de St Martin, Sheriff of the rape of Hastings, within which the abbey stood, really upon the last of the forest ridge towards the Level of Pevensey. It is true that this abbey played a considerable part in history during the first years of its existence; for it was the Abbot of Robertsbridge who set out with the Abbot of Boxley to search for Coeur de Lion in 1192 and who found him in Bavaria, and we find the Abbot of Robertsbridge employed more than once again as an ambassador; but its fame soon dwindled, and though it escaped the first suppression and indeed survived till 1538 it could boast then of but eight brethren.

[Illustration: THE WEALD OF SUSSEX, NORTH OF LEWES]

The only other houses as old as Robertsbridge are those of Otham and Dureford, houses of Premonstratensian Canons, neither in the heart of the Weald, and both dating from the twelfth century. The other religious houses, Michelham and Shulbred of the Augustinian Canons, Easebourne of Augustinian nuns and Bayham the successor of Otham, all date from the thirteenth century, and indeed no more belong to the true Weald than do the rest. It is, in fact, only to-day that a great monastery stands in the heart of the Weald, and of all wonderful things that is a Carthusian House of the like of which Pre-reformation England boasted but twelve, and Sussex none at all.

It was one day as I came over the Adur by Moat Farm that I became aware of this great establishment, for there suddenly, as I turned a corner, by the Lord, the road was full of Carthusian monks all in their white habits, a sight as marvellous as delightful once more upon an English road. And so I found my way to the great house of St Hugh at Parkminster.

One should learn to be astonished at nothing in England of my heart, for it will beggar one's admiration. But Carthusians! Was it not this Order which Henry II. had brought into England as part of his penance for the murder of St Thomas? Was it not this Order which had first been established in my own Somerset, and alone of all Orders in England by a Saint, and which there at Witham and at Hinton, still so fair and lovely, built its first two houses in England, of which all told there were but twelve? Was it not

this Order that had faced and outfaced Henry Tudor to the last so that the monks of the London Charterhouse were burnt at the stake at Tyburn?

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Well is this monastery dedicated in honour of St Hugh. And if you do not know why let me write it here. It is well known that after the murder of St Thomas and Henry II.'s public repentance for his part in all that evil, Pope Alexander III. gave him for penance a crusade of three years in the Holy Land, but when that was found not to be convenient he commuted it for the building of three monasteries of which one was to be Carthusian, for the Carthusians at that time had no house in England. This Order had been founded at Grenoble in 1086 by St Bruno, who had been sent by St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, to a desert spot in the Alps 14,000 feet above the sea. There St Bruno founded his monastery known as the Grande Chartreuse. His monks were hermit monks, each had, as each has still, his own little dwelling. The Order, which has never been reformed—*Cartusia nunquam reformata Quia nunquam deformata*—and has uniformly followed the Rule approved by Pope Innocent XI., recognises three classes of brethren, the fathers, the conversi or lay brethren, and nuns. Each house is governed by a Prior and each monk lives, as I have said, in a separate dwelling of five little rooms and a tiny cloister, or rather ambulatory, facing a little garden. His food is given him through a hatch at the foot of the stairs leading to his rooms. He attends Mass in Choir, Matins and Vespers too, but the other Hours are said in his cell. As the Carthusians were when they first came into England so they are to-day.

But it is not in honour of St Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, that the monastery at Parkminster is dedicated, but of quite another saint.

When Henry II. set out to found a Carthusian house in England in obedience to the Pope, the place he chose for it was Witham in Selwood, a solitude, for the Rule of the Order demanded it, and that is also why we have this monastery in the Weald to-day. It bears witness as nothing else could do to-day, perhaps, to the true character of the Weald.

Witham, it is true, was not so desolate as the Grande Chartreuse, but it was in the heart of the Forest, far from the abode of men. Even to-day Witham is not easy to reach by road. This house, thus founded did not flourish; whether the place was too hard for the monks, or whether there was some other cause we know not, but the first two priors, though both from the Grande Chartreuse, failed to establish it. Then King Henry was advised to beg of the mother-house her great and shining light, Hugh of Avalon, not of Avalon in England, but of Avalon in Burgundy. He was successful in his request. The Bishop of Bath and Wells, his ambassador, then in the Alps, was able to bring Hugh home with him, though the loss of that "most sweet presence," as the Prior declared, widowed his house; and Hugh came to England and to Witham and was received as "an angel of the Lord." It is in honour of this great and holy man, later Bishop of Lincoln and known as St Hugh of Avalon, that the Carthusian



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monastery of Parkminster is dedicated. I have here no room to speak of him, the true founder of the Order in England, of his holy, brave and laborious life in Selwood or of his rule there of ten years. He is forgotten even at Witham and his name no longer, alas, means anything to us whom he served. Only the Carthusians have not forgotten, and to the keeping of no other saint in the Calendar could they so honourably have entrusted their new house.

This monastery, founded in the Weald, upon October 17, 1877, is a great, if not a beautiful, pile of buildings, and is, in fact, one of the largest houses of the Order in the world. The visitor rings at the gate, and is admitted by a lay-brother dressed in the beautiful white habit, caught about the waist by a leathern girdle from which a rosary hangs. Upon his feet are rough shoes and his head is shorn but he greets you with a smile of welcome and leads you into a large quadrangle, where before you is the great Romanesque church with a chapel upon one side and the refectory upon the other, and all about are cloisters. Here over the entrance to the church is a statue of St Hugh. Within, the church is divided by a screen into two parts, the choir for the Fathers, the nave for the lay-brothers. Over the screen is a rood, and beneath, two altars, dedicated in honour of St John the Baptist, who went into the desert, and St Bruno, the founder of the Order. From the church one is led to the Chapter House, in which there stands an altar and Crucifix, and there upon the walls are depicted scenes from the martyrdom of the London Carthusians in the time of Henry VIII. From the Chapter House one is led to the Chapel of the Relics, where there is a beautiful silver reliquary that belonged to the English Carthusians before the Reformation, and in it is a relic of St Thomas of Canterbury. Here, too, is the stole of St Hugh and a bone of St Bruno.

The monastery proper lies behind the church, where a vast quadrangle, the Great Cloister, some three acres in extent, opens out, surrounded on three sides by the little houses of the monks, with the graveyard in the midst. Here the monks live, and are buried without coffin or shroud in their white habits, the hood drawn over the face. The cells are delightful to look upon, "a solitude within a solitude"; each consists of five rooms, two below and three above, reached by a staircase, the whole approached from a passage closed by a door giving on to the Great Cloister. Here live and pray some thirty-six monks, with a like number of conversi or lay-brothers.

I do not know in all England a place more peaceful than this one, more solemn and salutary to visit in the confusion of our modern life. Here is one of the lightning conductors that preserves the modern world from the wrath of God. Let others think as they will, for me the monastery of St Hugh in the Weald is holy ground.

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And at any rate, even though you may not agree with me so far, in this at least I shall carry you with me, when I say that this monastery, and especially because it is Carthusian, bears out the old character of the Weald and endorses it. I have said the Weald was ever a wild and inhuman place where only few men could go together, without great towns and with only infrequent villages; not a thick or impenetrable woodland but a difficult and a lonely country sparsely scattered with steadings. Well, it is such places that the Carthusians have ever sought out for their houses, such was Witham and such was the Grande Chartreuse also. That a Carthusian monastery should have been founded to-day in the midst of the Weald proves, if anything can, that it has not yet wholly lost its character.

### CHAPTER XIV

#### TO ARUNDEL AND CHICHESTER

From my little quiet retreat at Edburton, I set out one May morning to follow the road under the Downs, through Steyning for Arundel and Chichester, because it is one of the fairest ways in all the world, and, rightly understood, one of the most interesting. And to begin with, I found myself crossing one of those gaps in the South Downs, each of which is held by a castle. The one I now crossed was that made by the Adur, and it was held by the Castle of Bramber.

Now Bramber, merely beautiful to-day, must in the old times always have been of importance, for it holds an easy road through the rampart of the Downs, one of the great highways into Normandy, because of the harbour of Shoreham at the mouth of the Adur, one of the principal ports upon this coast. Of immemorial antiquity, the harbour of Shoreham, first of Old Shoreham, perhaps the Roman Portus Adurni, and then when that silted up of New, has played always a great part in the history of South England. That the Romans knew and used it is certain. It was probably here that the Saxon Ella and his three sons Cymne, Cissa, and Wlencing, landed in 477, and it is not likely that it was neglected by the Normans, who, in fact, built here a very noble cruciform church, dark and solemn, indeed, rather a fortress than a church. It was at Shoreham certainly that John landed when he returned to England to make himself king after the death of Coeur de Lion, and we may gather some idea of the real importance of the port from the fact that it furnished Edward III. with twenty-six ships for his fleet in 1346. Thereafter the place declined, but history repeated itself when Charles II., in flight in 1651 and anxious to reach the French coast, set out from Shoreham and landed at Fecamp. Shoreham thus was an important way in and out of England, but the road by which it lived was not in its keeping at all, but in the power of the Castle of Bramber which dominated and held it on the north side of the Downs, where it issued out of the pass or gap made by the Adur.

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Bramber Castle stands upon a headland thrust out into the valley and the Weald in the very mouth of the pass; and even in its ruin, only an old gateway tower and a fragment of the lofty barbican in which is a Norman window remain. It is easy to understand how important and how strong it must once have been. Indeed, Norman though these remains are, it was by no means the Normans who first fortified this promontory and held this pass. It is probable that the Castle of Bramber occupies the site of a Roman Castellum and a Saxon fortress, some say a palace of the Saxon kings. After the Conquest the castle came into the hands of the great William de Braose, lord of Braose, near Falaise in Normandy, who received such great estates in England from the Conqueror. He fixed his seat, however, here at Bramber, and built or rebuilt the Castle which became the greatest fortress in his possession. Later, by marriage, it passed to the Mowbrays, and from them descended to the Dukes of Norfolk, the present Duke, indeed, still holding it. It is, however, of William de Braose we think in Bramber; for he not only built the great Castle which gives its character to the place even to-day, but the church of St Nicholas also, under the Castle, of which the nave and tower of his time only remain. He built it indeed as a chapel to his Castle, and to serve it he founded there a small college of secular canons under a dean, and endowed it with the church of Beeding and many tithes, among them those of Shoreham. But about 1080 William de Braose seems to have repented of what he had done, for he then granted to the Abbey of St Florent in Saumur the reversion of the church of St Nicholas here, when the last of the canons then living in his college at Beeding should have died. It was thus that the Abbey of St Florent came to establish a Priory at Beeding, or Sele as the monks called it, and this about 1096; and William's son Philip confirmed them in his father's gifts, and before the end of the twelfth century this alien priory possessed the churches of Sele, Bramber, Washington, Old Shoreham and New, to say nothing of the little chapel of St Peter on the old bridge between Bramber and Beeding.

This old bridge over the Adur is worth notice, for it is said to have been first established by the Romans upon a road of theirs that ran under the north escarpment of the Downs from Dover to Winchester. Certain Roman remains have indeed been found there, and the chapel of St Peter *de veteri ponte* was doubtless founded in order to guard it and keep it open and in order.

Evil days fell upon the Priory with the rise of nationalism and the wars of the fourteenth century. Like every other alien house it came under suspicion of spying, and being near the coast, indeed, at the very threshold of an important gate, it was seized by the Crown. At last, in 1396, Richard II. permitted it to naturalise itself, and its only connection thereafter with St Florent was the payment of a small annual

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tribute. But the misfortunes of the Priory were not over. For sixty years or more all went well, but in 1459 the Bishop of Winchester bought the patronage of the place from the Duke of Norfolk, and won leave from the Pope and the Bishop of Chichester to suppress it and appropriate it to his new College of St Mary Magdalen in Oxford. The suppression, however, was not to take effect till the last monk then living should die, and this came to pass in 1480. For thirteen years the Priory was unoccupied, and then in 1493 the Fellows of Magdalen allowed the Carmelite Friars of Shoreham to use the place, their own house in Shoreham having been engulfed by the sea. These White Friars were the poorest in all Sussex; so poor were they that they failed even to maintain themselves at Sele. In July 1538, when the Bishop of Dover came to visit the place, he found "neither friar nor secular, but the doors open ... and none to serve God." Such was the end of the house William de Braose had built in the first years of the Conquest. What remains of it will be found in the church of St Peter in Upper Beeding, an Early English building of no great interest save that it contains many carved stones from the Priory, a window and a door also from the same house, upon the site of which the vicarage now stands.

William de Braose, who made Bramber his chief seat, must have had an enormous influence upon building in this neighbourhood, which abounds in Norman churches such as those of Botolphs and Coombes, to say nothing of those at Shoreham Old and New; but he was by no means the only renewer of life here.

The most beautiful thing in the still beautiful village of Steyning is the great church of St Andrew, but with this the Lord of Bramber has nothing to do; the Benedictine Abbey of Fecamp rebuilt this noble sanctuary, but its foundation is said to be due to an English saint, St Cuthman, who, having been a shepherd boy, upon his father's death came out of the west into Sussex bearing his mother, who was crippled, in a kind of barrow which he dragged by a cord. A thousand queer stories are told of him as he went on his way, happily enough it seems, until he came to Steyning, where the cord of his barrow broke. There he built a hut for his mother, and constructed a little church of timber and wattles in which at last he was buried. In his life he had performed divers miracles so that his grave became a place of pilgrimage, and it is said to have been about this shrine that the village and church of Steyning grew up. It remained a holy place, and Ethelwolf, the father of Alfred, is said to have been buried there, his body later being removed to Winchester.

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That the place was of some sort of importance would seem to be evident, for we find Edward the Confessor, granting the manor and churches of Steyning to the Benedictines of Fecamp, Harold taking it from them, and the Conqueror restoring it. Two churches at Steyning are spoken of in the Domesday Survey, and it has been thought that the second of these is really that at Warminghurst. But we find a church in Steyning in the thirteenth century served by secular canons. This was, however, in all probability the church of St Andrew we know, which in 1290 was a royal free chapel answerable neither to the Archbishop nor to the Bishop of Chichester, but to the Abbot of Fecamp only. The College of Canons had by then, if indeed it ever served this church, been dissolved. At the suppression of the alien priories in the fifteenth century Steyning passed to the new Abbey of Sion.

There can be no doubt that the church we have at Steyning is due to the Benedictines of Fecamp, and it is one of the noblest buildings in the county. Of the earlier church they built here much would seem to remain, the rudely carved arches at the eastern end of the aisles, the Norman window on the north, and much of the aisle walls. This church was probably cruciform and may have been larger than that we now see. It was rebuilt again by the monks in the middle of the twelfth century, when the great chancel arch we have, the beautiful nave arcades and clerestory were built, with the fine mouldings and capitals and dog-tooth ornament. The font, too, would seem to be of about this time. The tower only dates from the sixteenth century, and the chancel is modern.

Now Steyning lies under Chanctonbury, but I resisted the temptation to spend the afternoon in the old camp there looking over the "blue goodness of the weald," for I wished especially to visit the church of Wiston, and to see, if I might, Wiston House, which Sir Thomas Shirley built about 1576, and where those three brothers were born who astonished not only Sussex and all England, but Rome itself and the Pope by their marvellous daring and adventures.

The old manor house is delightfully situated in its beautiful park under the dark height of Chanctonbury, and though much altered, retains on the whole its fine Elizabethan character. The manor originally belonged to the De Braose, from whom it passed by marriage to the Shirleys. In the church, a small Decorated building, there is a fine brass of 1426 to Sir John de Braose, on which over and over again we read Jesu Mercy: this in the south chapel. His little son is buried under an arch on the north, where there is a curious effigy of him. The first Shirley, whose monument we find here, though only in part, is that of Sir Richard, who died in 1540; but it was Sir Thomas, who also has his monument, that built Wiston and was the father of those three remarkable sons. He was the great-grandson of Ralph Shirley of Wiston, and the son of William Shirley, who died

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in 1551. Till his time the family had of course been Catholic; it was he who first abandoned the Faith; perhaps it was this spirit of adventure so unfortunate in him which descended to that famous "leash of brethren" and drove them out upon their adventures. The least remarkable and the most unfortunate of these sons of his was the eldest, Thomas, whose life, however, as a soldier and freebooter, both on shore in the Low Countries and at sea, is sufficiently full of adventure to satisfy anyone. He came, however, to utter grief at last, and had to sell Wiston, retiring to the Isle of Wight, where he died in 1630.

It was his brother Anthony who really made the Shirleys famous. He had graduated at Oxford in 1581, and having, as he said, "acquired those learnings which were fit for a gentleman's ornament," he went to the Low Countries with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and was present at the battle of Zutphen, where Sir Philip Sidney fell. In 1591 he was in Normandy with the Earl of Essex, whom he devotedly followed, in support of Henry of Navarre, who made him a knight of St Michael. For accepting a foreign knighthood without her leave, Elizabeth locked him up in the Fleet, and only let him out when he promised to retire from the Order. This he actually did, but his title stuck to him, and he was always known as Sir Anthony. He then married Elizabeth Devereux, a first cousin of his patron, the Earl of Essex; but the marriage was unfortunate; he could not abide his wife, and in order to "occupy his mind from thinking of her vainest words," in 1595 he fitted out with Essex's aid and his father's a buccaneering expedition to the Gulf of Guinea. But in something less than two years after the most amazing adventures he came home to Wiston under the Downs, "alive but poor," and with his passion for adventure in nowise abated. In 1597 he accompanied Essex on the "Islands voyage," but, seeking more paying adventure, in the winter of 1598 he consented at Essex's suggestion to lead a little company of English adventurers to assist Cesare D'Este to regain his Duchy of Ferrara, then in the hands of the Pope. He set forth, but upon reaching Venice found that Cesare had submitted. Again he was out of employment; but it was upon the quays of Venice that he conceived the most astonishing enterprise that even an Englishman has ever undertaken. He proposed to set out for Persia with the object of persuading the Shah to ally himself with Christendom against the Turk, and hoped also to establish commercial relations between England and Persia. Upon this astonishing Crusade he left Venice with his brother Robert and twenty-five Englishmen disappointed of a row in Ferrara, on May 29, 1599, for Constantinople. Thence he went on to Aleppo, and so down the Euphrates, to Babylon, to Isapahan and Kazveen, where he met the Shah Abbas the Great. There, thanks to the Shah's two Christian wives, he had a good reception; the rank of Prince was conferred upon him, and he



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won the concession, for all Christians, of the right, not only to trade freely, but to practise their religion in Persia. For five months he remained at the court of the Shah, and then returned to Europe as his ambassador to invite all Christian powers to ally themselves with Persia against the Turk. He went first to Moscow, where he was, however, treated with contempt, as was his mission. He went to Prague and was well received. At last, in 1601, after visiting Nuremberg, Augsburg, Munich, Innsbruck, and Trent, he arrived in Rome, and, professing enthusiasm for the Faith his father had repudiated, was well received. The truth was, he was in grave money difficulties, and indeed in 1603 was arrested by the Venetians and imprisoned "in a certain obscure island near unto Scio." The English Government, however, came to his aid and obtained his release, but refused him permission to return to England. He went to Prague, and thence on the business of the Emperor to Morocco. There he was received in great state and remained five months. Before leaving, however, he released certain Portuguese whom he found in slavery, and sailed with them for Lisbon, where he hoped to reimburse himself for their ransom. In this he was disappointed, so on he went to Madrid, where he was made very much of and promised the Order of Sant'Iago. In the service now of Spain, he went to Naples in 1607, after a visit to the Emperor at Prague where he was created a Count of the Holy Roman Empire. He seems to have travelled considerably in Southern Italy, and after a brief visit, to obtain money, to Madrid, set out for Sicily in command of a fleet to attack the Moors and Turks. He achieved nothing and was dismissed. In 1611 he appeared again in Madrid in utter poverty, but the King took compassion upon him and gave him a pension, and in Madrid he remained writing an account of his adventures till he died in beggary. The English ambassador notes in 1619, "The poor man sometimes comes to my house and is as full of vanity as ever he was, making himself believe that he shall one day be a great prince." It might indeed seem a long road from Wiston under the Downs to the Gulf of Guinea, the Quays of Venice, Constantinople, the Euphrates, Babylon, Moscow, Prague, Rome, and Morocco, to die at last a beggar in purse, but in heart a great Prince in Madrid.

Now, when I had been reminded of all this, I was directed to visit Buncton Chapel to the north of Wiston Park, where I found indeed some Norman work in the nave and chancel arch. And so I went on my way through the failing afternoon by that beautiful road within sight of the high Downs to the Washington Inn, where I slept, for it is a quiet place not to be passed by.

And on the morrow I went on my way, still through as fair a country as is to be found in all South England, through Storrington, and so by way of Parham Park, with its noble Elizabethan house and little church with the last leaden font in Sussex, a work of the fourteenth century, to Amberley in the meads of the Arun, a dear and beautiful place.

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Amberley boasts a Castle and stands right in the mouth of one of those gaps in the Downs as Bramber does, the gap of the Arun, and it might well be thought that Amberley held this pass. As a fact she did not. That gap is held by Arundel; the Castle at Amberley was a palace of the Bishop of Chichester, granted to the Bishop of Selsey long before the Conquest; it was only castellated in the fourteenth century. It is none the less an interesting ruin, very picturesque, with remains of a chapel, while the beautiful house built within the castle walls early in the sixteenth century is altogether lovely. And as for the church, I can never hope to tell of all its interest and beauty. Certainly a Norman church once stood here, of which the nave of that we see was part, as was the very noble chancel arch; but the chancel itself, the south aisle, and the tower are of the thirteenth century, while the south door is very early Decorated, most beautifully carved. There is not surely in all Sussex a more delightful spot than this lying so quietly in the meads, with its beautiful church, its ruined castle, and fine old Elizabethan house, where Arun bends slowly and lazily towards the Downs and the sea.

It was with real regret that on that May morning I left Amberley, turning often to look back at it, and last from the great seven-arched bridge over the Arun, whence one may look down stream upon the wooded slopes of Arundel Park. Then I went on up the road that winds through the steep village of Houghton swiftly up on to the Downs, wooded here very nobly, and so at the top of Rewell Hill I turned to the left and made my way through the noble park to the little town of Arundel.

Now I cannot say why, but in spite of its seduction, which is full of splendour, of its noble history and great buildings, I have never been able to love Arundel. One is there always I feel too much in the shadow of that mighty Castle which for the most part is not old at all, too much in the power of that great new church that surely was never built by English hands, which has altogether blotted out the older sanctuary, and which, Catholic though it be, has never won my affection. Arundel itself is all in the shadow of these two things, each of which is too big for it, too heavy for free laughter and light-heartedness. So it seems to me.

All I can find in Arundel that pleases me lies in the little town itself, and in the old church of which one half, the chancel, has been closed to all who do not hold the Duke's written permission to enter it—as though the house of God, even though it be the property of a Catholic duke, were not by nature as it were free to all. And so there is a kind of sorrowfulness about Arundel that spoils my pleasure in it, yes, even in the very noble remains of the old Castle that are hidden away within the sham Gothic affair of 1791. Even in the beautiful old church, of which one half is closed, even in the steep little town which might have been as gay as Rye, I felt, overwhelmed by the new Castle and the new church, neither of which has any antiquity, tradition, or beauty.



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[Illustration: ARUNDEL CASTLE]

The old Castle, with its great circular Norman keep within the huge sham “fortress” of the eighteenth century, beneath which the town lies like one afraid to ask for mercy, should not be left unvisited, for it was probably built by that Roger de Montgomery, who led the Breton centre at Hastings, and has thus nearly a thousand years of history behind it, to say nothing of three sieges, that of 1102, when it was surrendered to Henry I., that of 1139, when Stephen there held Matilda prisoner and allowed her to pass out, and that of 1643, when Waller took it after seventeen days.

Nor indeed should anyone fail to visit the beautiful parish church of St Nicholas, a glorious cruciform building, Perpendicular in style, built in 1380. It, too, has a long history. The church was originally served by secular canons, but in 1177 the then Earl of Arundel introduced in their place four or five monks under a Prior from St Martin of Seez. In the fourteenth century, however, these alien monks withdrew to their mother house, and in 1380 the Priory of St Nicholas in Arundel was reconverted into a collegiate church. This college consisted of a master and sub-master, ten chaplains, two deacons, two sub-deacons, and five choristers. The choir of the church was the chapel of the college, the remainder being parochial. The college survived the general suppression, but was eventually bought by the Earl of Arundel, who had previously offered a thousand pounds for it. And so it was that after a long law-suit in 1880 the chancel of the parish church of Arundel was given up to the Duke of Norfolk.

I did not sleep in Arundel, but, though it was already afternoon, I set out westward once more through the great park, and just before sunset I came to the great church of Boxgrove, which stands between the road I had followed from Arundel and the Roman Stane Street, where they approach to enter the East Gate of Chichester together at last. This great and beautiful sanctuary, gives one, I think, a better idea of what the great monastic churches really were, than any other building left to us in Sussex. It is like a cathedral for solemnity, and for size too, though it is only a fragment, and its beauty cannot be forgotten.

In its foundation the church is very ancient, a small college of secular canons serving it in Saxon times. But all was changed when Robert de Haza, to whom Henry I. had granted the honour of Halnaker, in 1105 bestowed the church upon the Abbey of Lessay, which sent hither its Benedictines and built for them a new sanctuary. Boxgrove was thus an alien priory from 1108 till in 1339. Richard II. affirmed its independence, and this was confirmed by the Pope in 1402. It seems then to have been in a bad way, but later recovered. In the thirteenth century it had boasted nineteen monks, but at the time of the suppression it only mustered eight priests, who seem to have kept a school for the children of the neighbourhood. What remains of the Priory, not much more than a gateway, for most of it was destroyed in 1780, stands to the north of the church.

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The original Norman church here was cruciform. Of this building we still see the tower, the transepts and the lower part of what remains of the nave, and the arcade to the south. This Norman church was greatly enlarged in the twelfth century, when the nave now destroyed was built, the tower piers were then cased in the Transitional style and the arches which carry the tower were altered. Later, about 1235, the chancel we see and its aisles, as lovely as anything in southern England, were added in the Early English style, that often reminds one of Chichester Cathedral. To the fourteenth century belong the south porch and more than one window in the aisles, while the font and other windows are Perpendicular.

I had often read of the unique vaulting of the choir of Boxgrove Priory, but the twilight was so deep in the church, for it was already evening, that I could not see it. I saw, however, the empty tomb, very fine and splendid, of the Earl de la Warr, who begged Boxgrove of Thomas Cromwell unsuccessfully; and then I went out and marched on into Chichester, the East Gate of which I entered not long after dark.

## CHAPTER XV

### CHICHESTER

The mere plan of Chichester proclaims its Roman origin. It is a little walled city lying out upon the sea plain of Sussex, cruciform by reason of its streets, North Street, South Street, East Street, and West Street, which divide it into four quarters, of which that upon the south became wholly ecclesiastical: the south-west quarter being occupied by the Cathedral and its subject buildings, while the south-east quarter was the Palatinate of the Archbishop. As for the quarter north-east it was appropriated to the Castle and its dependencies, of which however, nothing remains, while the quarter north-west was occupied by the townspeople, and to-day contains their parish church of St Peter Major. These four quarters meet at the Market Cross, whence the streets that divide the city set out for the four quarters of the world.

To come into Chichester to-day even by the quiet red-brick street— South Street—from the railway station, the least interesting entry into the city, is to understand at once what Chichester is; one of those country towns that is to say, cities in the good old sense, because they were the seat of the Bishop, which are not only the pride of England, but perhaps the best things left to her and certainly the most characteristic of all that she truly means and stands for. If such places are without the feverish and confused life of the great industrial centres of modern England, let us thank God for it, they have nevertheless a quiet vitality of their own, which in the long run will prove more persistent and strong than the futile excitement of places noisy with machinery and wretched with the enslaved poor. Such places as Chichester may indeed stand for England in a way that Manchester, for instance, with its cosmopolitan

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population and egotistical ambition, its greed, its helplessness, and appalling intellectual mongrelism and parvenu and international society, can never hope to do. England truly remains herself, the England of my heart, because of such places as Chichester, Winchester, Salisbury, Wells, and those dear market towns which still remember and maintain her great past and renew the ways of our forefathers. All are very old, co-eval with England, all have sturdy and unforgotten traditions, and in these, if we but knew it, lies our best hope for the future.

Among these dear places Chichester is no exception, rather is she most typical; she has an immemorial past, and out of it she will contrive somehow or other to face and to outface whatever the future may bring. Like everything that is best in England, that is indeed most typical of ourselves, her origins are not barbarian, but Roman. Her ancient name was Regnum, the city, it is said, first of Cogidubnus, King of the Regni and Legate in Britain of Claudius Caesar. That the Romans built and maintained an important town here cannot be doubted; the very form of the city to-day would be enough to establish this, apart from the notable discoveries of buildings, pavements, urns, inscriptions, and I know not what else belonging to the whole of the Roman occupation of Britain. It is obvious that Chichester played a great part in the Roman administration of South Britain; its port was large, safe and accessible, while it was the first town upon the east of that great group of creeks and harbours which run up out of Spithead and Southampton Water. Throughout the Middle Ages, Bosham, the port of Chichester, maintained its position, while even in the eighteenth century Chichester harbour was sufficiently important to warrant the cutting of the canal which unites the Arun with Chichester Channel. There is, however, something else which must always place beyond doubt the importance of Chichester in Roman times. It was from Chichester, out of the East Gate, that the great Roman road set forth for London, the road we know as the Stane Street, chiefly, as we may suppose, a great military way. This was the only Roman road over the South Downs, the only road that connected London with the greater harbours of the South Coast. Its terminus was Chichester.

[Illustration: THE MARKET CROSS, CHICHESTER]

Of the early connection of the town with Christianity there is to say the least high probability. An inscription found in North Street, and now preserved at Goodwood, recording the dedication of a Temple by the College of Smiths to Neptune and Minerva, would seem to refer to that Claudia and that Pudens mentioned by St Paul, and thus to connect them with Regnum. However that may be, we know that it with the rest of Britain must have been a Christian city long before the failure of the Roman administration.

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With that failure and the final departure of the Legions, Regnum fell on evil days. Its position as the key to those harbours which had given it its importance now exposed it to the first raids of the pirates. These barbarians, according to legend, were Ella and his three sons, one of whom, Cissa, is said to have given Chichester her name—Cissa's camp, Cissa's Ceaster. Of Chichester's story during the Dark Ages we know as little as we know of most of the cities of England, but that it was destroyed utterly, as has been asserted, common sense refuses to allow us to believe. It certainly continued to exist, in barbarous fashion perhaps, but still to live, till with the conversion of the English it began to take on a new life, and with the Conquest was finally established as the seat of the Bishop.

The apostle of the South Saxons, St Wilfrid, wrecked upon the flat and inhospitable shore of Selsey, was, as we know, their first bishop. He established his See, however, not at Chichester, but at Selsey where it remained until the Conqueror began to reorganise England upon a Roman plan, when more than one See was removed from the village in which it had long been established to the neighbouring great town. So it was with the Bishopric of Sussex, which in the first years of the Norman administration was removed from Selsey to Chichester.

Thus Chichester was restored in 1075 to the great position it had held in the time of the Romans. Its lord was that Roger de Montgomery who received it from the Conqueror, together with more than eighty manors, and to him was due the castle which stood in the north-east quarter, and the rebuilding of the Roman walls, which continually renewed and rebuilt, still in some sort stand, upon Roman foundations, and mark the limits of the Roman town.

Of the South Saxon cathedral church at Selsey we know almost nothing. It seems to have been established as a Benedictine house under an abbot who was also bishop, but later the monks were replaced by secular canons. Then when in 1075 the See was removed from Selsey to Chichester the old church dedicated in honour of St Peter, which stood upon the site of the present cathedral, was used as the cathedral church, and the Benedictine nuns, to whom it then belonged were dispossessed in favour of the canons. This, however, did not last long; by 1091 a new Norman church, the work of Bishop Ralph, whose great stone coffin stands in the Lady Chapel, had been built upon this site and dedicated in honour of the Blessed Trinity, the old church being commemorated in the nave, which still was used as the parochial church of St Peter Major. This new building, however, was soon so badly damaged by fire that it was necessary to rebuild it—this in 1114; but a like fate befell it in 1187, and again the church was restored, this time by Bishop Seffrid. Then in the thirteenth century came Bishop Richard. He was consecrated in 1245, and ruled the diocese for eight years. This man was a saint, and in 1261 he was canonised. Thus Chichester got a shrine of its own, which became exceedingly famous and attracted vast crowds of pilgrims, and thus indirectly brought so much money to the church that great works, such as the

transformed Lady Chapel, and the many chapels which the Cathedral boasts, were able to be undertaken.

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St Richard of Chichester was not a Sussex man; he was born about 1197, at Droitwich in Worcestershire, and thus gets his name Richard de Wyche. His father, a man well-to-do, died, however, when Richard was very young, and he being only a younger son fell into poverty. We find him, according to his fifteenth-century biographer, labouring on his brother's land, and to such good purpose, it is said, that he quite re-established his family, and withal such love was there between the brothers that the elder would have resigned all his estates in favour of the younger. But Richard would not consent, preferring to go as a poor scholar to Oxford, where, we learn, that he lived in the utmost poverty sharing indeed a tunic and a hooded gown with two companions, so that the three could only attend lectures in turn. At Oxford he seems chiefly to have devoted himself to the study of Logic, and for this purpose he presently went to Paris, returning, however, to Oxford to take his degree. Thence once more he set out, this time to study Canon Law at Bologna, where he not only won a great reputation, but was appointed a public professor of that faculty. So beloved and respected was he in that great university, where there was always a considerable English contingent, that his tutor offered him his daughter in marriage, and gladly would he have taken her, but that marriage was not for him. So he set out for England and Oxford, where he was joyfully received and indeed such was his fame that he was made chancellor of the university. In truth, he was in such great demand that both Canterbury and Lincoln wished to secure him, and at last Archbishop Edmund Rich succeeded where Robert Grosseteste failed, and Richard became chancellor of Canterbury and the dear friend of the Archbishop. They were indeed two saints together, and even in their lifetime were greeted as "two cherubim in glory." Together they faced the king, when he continued to allow so many English bishoprics to remain vacant, and together they went into exile to Pontigny, and later to Soissy, where St Edmund died. Heart-broken by the loss of so dear a friend Richard retired into a Dominican house in Orleans and immersed himself in the study of Theology. There he was ordained priest, and there he founded a chapel in honour of St Edmund. But Boniface of Savoy, who had succeeded St Edmund in the archbishopric of Canterbury, besought him to return. He obeyed, and was appointed rector of Charing and vicar of Deal in 1243, becoming once more Chancellor of Canterbury. But still there remained the enmity of the King. Two good things Henry III. gave us, Westminster Abbey and Edward I.; but he was almost as difficult as Henry II., with regard to investitures. Fortunately he was not so obstinate, or we might have had a martyr instead of a confessor in Chichester, as we have in Canterbury.

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In the year 1244 the See of Chichester fell vacant by the death of Bishop Ralph Neville, and at the King's suggestion the canons elected their archdeacon, a keen supporter of his. Boniface at once held a synod, quashed the election, and recommended his chancellor Richard as Bishop, to which the chapter agreed. The king was, of course, furious. Richard, who was received by him, could do nothing with him, and so immediately appealed to the Pope, Innocent IV., it was, who consecrated him at Lyons upon March 5, 1245. Even this did not move the King. Richard returned to England, found the temporalities of his See disgracefully wasted by the King, sought and obtained an interview with Henry, but achieved nothing. For a time he lived at Tarring with a poor priest named Simon, for in his own diocese he was a beggar and a stranger as it were in a foreign land. In 1246, however, the Pope having threatened excommunication, the King gave way, and Richard at once began to reform his diocese, to discipline his priests, and to restore the ritual of his cathedral, and indeed of all the churches in his diocese. He lived a life of severe asceticism, and gave so much in alms that he was always a beggar. Usurers were punished by excommunication, and Jews were forbidden to build new synagogues. It was he, too, who first established the custom of the Easter offering contribution from the faithful to the Cathedral, known later as St Richard's pence. He loved the Friars, more especially the Dominicans, who had befriended him at Orleans, and to which Order his confessor belonged. He ardently preached the crusade and was eagerly loyal to St Peter. It was, indeed, as he was journeying through southern England, urging men to take the Cross, that at Dover he fell ill and died there during Mass in the Hospitium Dei. His body was buried in a humble grave, we read, near the altar he had built in honour of St Edmund, his friend, in the Cathedral of Chichester. And from the moment of his death he was accounted a saint. Miracles were performed at his tomb, which even Prince Edward visited, and in 1262, in the church of the Franciscans at Viterbo, Pope Urban IV. raised him to the altar. In June 1276 St Richard's body was taken from its grave in the nave of Chichester Cathedral, and in the presence of King Edward I. and a crowd of bishops, was translated to a silver gilt shrine. Later, this was removed to the tomb in the south transept.

St Richard was not only a popular hero and saint both before and after his death, to him and his shrine is due very much that is most lovely in the Cathedral, and it was he who really reformed the chapter there.



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Chichester had always been served by a dean and chapter of secular canons. The canons were originally, of course, resident, but the chapter had always been poorly endowed, and as time went on residence was actually discouraged. Perhaps then arose the canon's vicars who represented the canons and chanted in choir. The vicars choral were, however, not incorporated until 1465; they were assisted by ten or twelve boy choristers, whose chief business it was, I suppose, to sing the Lady-Mass in prick-song. Beside this company of canons, vicars and choristers directly serving the cathedral, a number of chaplains served the various altars and chantries within it, which at the Dissolution numbered fifteen. St Richard not only reorganised the cathedral staff, but also established the "use" of Chichester, which he ordered to be followed throughout the diocese. This "use" was followed until 1444, when, by order of the archbishop, that of Sarum, was established.

With the Reformation, of course, everything but the Cathedral itself and the form of its administration and government was swept away. Nor was it long before even what Henry and Elizabeth had spared was demolished. In 1643 Chichester was besieged by Waller and taken after ten days. His soldiers, we read, "pulled down the idolatrous images from the Market Cross; they brake down the organ in the Cathedral and dashed the pipes with their pole-axes, crying in scoff, "Harke! how the organs goe"; and after they ran up and down with their swords drawn, defacing the monuments of the dead and hacking the seats and stalls." Indeed, such was their malice that it is wonderful to see how much loveliness remains.

No cathedral, I think, and certainly no lesser church in England is so completely representative of the whole history of our architecture as is Chichester. In Salisbury we have the most uniform building in our island, in Chichester the most various, for it possesses work in every style, from the time of the Saxons to that of Sir Gilbert Scott.

It was Bishop Ralph who before 1108 built the church we know, and completed it save upon the west front, where only the lower parts of the south-western tower are Norman. But work earlier than his, Saxon work, may be seen in the south aisle of the choir, where there are two carved stones representing Christ with Martha and Mary and the Raising of Lazarus. Bishop Ralph's church was badly damaged by fire in 1114, and it would seem that the four western bays of the nave date from the following rebuilding and restoration. Then in 1187 the Cathedral was burnt again, and Bishop Seffrid vaulted it for the first time—till then only the aisles had been vaulted—building great buttresses to support this and re-erecting the inner arcade of the clerestory. Apparently the apse and ambulatory which till then had closed the great church, on the east had been destroyed in the fire. At any rate Bishop Seffrid replaced them with the exquisite retro-choir we have, and square eastern chapels. He did the same with the old apses of the transepts, and he recased the choir with Caen stone, using Purbeck very freely and with beautiful effect. All this work is very late Transitional, the very last of the Norman or Romanesque.



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Then in the thirteenth century, which was to see St Richard Bishop of Chichester, the beautiful south porch was built, a pure Early English work, the north porch almost as lovely and of the same date, and later the sacristy beside the south porch. In St Richard's own day the south-west tower was built as we see it. The Norman tower over the crossing was destroyed and a lighter one built in its place as we see, and the galilee was set up before the western doors. Then, too, the chapels were built out from the nave aisles, upon the north those of St Thomas, St Anna, and St Edmund, upon the south, those of St George and St Clement, things unique in England, and all largely works of the second half of the thirteenth century and the early Decorated style, which indeed give to the Cathedral, with its dark Norman nave, all its charm, its variety and delight.

Not much later than this transformation of the nave, though the nave itself was not touched, was the rebuilding or rather the lengthening and transformation of the Lady Chapel. Fundamentally this beautiful Decorated chapel is a Norman work, transformed into a Transitional one, to be glorified and transfigured in the very end of the thirteenth century, and now spoilt as we see. All this was done either by St Richard himself, or with the money gathered at his shrine.

In the first half of the fourteenth century little would appear to have been built, save that certain beautiful windows, as that in the end of the south aisle of the choir and that in the south transept, with Bishop Langton's tomb beneath it, were inserted, and the fine stalls were built in the choir.

In the Perpendicular period the detached campanile was erected to the north-west and the Cathedral was crowned by the great spire, a noble work lost to us in our own time and replaced by the copy of Sir Gilbert Scott. Later still, in the sixteenth century, a great stone screen, now destroyed, was erected across the church, with chantries, and the cloister was built. There, over a doorway on the south, is a shield, with the arms of Henry VII., and two figures kneeling before the Blessed Virgin, attended by an angel holding a rose.

A few tombs of interest or beauty, which the Puritans failed to destroy, remain to this great Catholic building. These are the tombs of St Richard, of which I have spoken, in the north transept against the choir, the restored Arundel Chantry and tomb of Richard Fitzalan in the north aisle of the nave, and the exquisite Decorated tomb in the chapel of St John Baptist at the eastern end of this aisle; little beside.

It must indeed be confessed that when all is said and done, essentially romantic as the Cathedral of Chichester is with its so various styles of architecture, lovely as certain parts of it are still, it must always have been a building rather interesting than beautiful, and it has suffered so much from vandalism and restoration that it cannot be accounted a monument of the first order. Nevertheless, I always return to it with delight and am reluctant to go away, for in England certainly a cathedral, even of the second order, of

restricted grandeur and spoilt beauty, may be a very charming and delightful and precious thing as indeed this church of Chichester is.

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At any rate it is by far the most interesting thing left to us in the city. The other churches, except perhaps St Olave's, are not worth a visit; even in St Olave's everything has been done to make it as little interesting as possible.

The best thing left to us in Chichester, apart from the Cathedral and its subject buildings, is, I think, St Mary's Hospital, a foundation dating from the time of Henry II., which possesses a noble great hall, and a pretty Decorated chapel, with old stalls, which is still used as an almshouse. It stands upon the site of the first Franciscan house established in Chichester. In 1269 the Friars Minor left this place and moved to the site of the old Castle. There they built the church of which the choir still remains, a lovely work ruined at the dissolution and used as the Guildhall. It is now a store room. Nothing in Chichester is more beautiful than this Early English fragment, which seems to remind us of all we have lost by that disastrous revolution of the sixteenth century, whose latest results we still await with fear and dread.

But let who will be disappointed in Chichester, I shall love it all my days; not so much for these its monuments, but for itself, its curiously sleepy air of disinterested quiet, its strong dislike of any sort of enthusiasm, its English boredom, even of itself, its complete surrender to what is, its indifference to what might be. May it ever remain secure within sight of the hills, within sight of the sea, steeped in the Tudor myth, certain in its English heart, that twice two is not four but anything one likes to make it, nor ever hear ribald voices calling upon it to decide what after all it stands for in the world, denying it any longer the consolation it loves best of finding in the conclusion what is not in the premises, or, as the vulgar might put it, of having its cake and eating it too.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SELSEY, BOSHAM AND PORCHESTER

It was my good fortune, while I was in Chichester, to be tempted to explore the peninsula of Selsey, which most authorities declare to have no beauty and little interest for the traveller to-day. For St Wilfrid's sake, I put aside these admonishments, and one morning set out upon the lonely road to Pagham, across a country as flat as a fen, of old, as they say, a forest, the forest of Mainwood, and still in spite of drainage and cultivation very bleak and lonely with marshes here and there which are still the haunt of all kinds of wild-fowl.

It is only to the man who finds pleasure in the Somerset moors, the fens of Cambridgeshire or the emptiness of Romney Marsh that this corner of England will appeal, but to such an one it is full of interest and certainly not without beauty. Pagham, however, of which I had read, with its creek and harbour, its curious Hushing Well, its golden sands, and extraordinary melancholy, as it were a ruin of the sea, sadly disappointed

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me. Only its melancholy remains. Its harbour, where of old we read the sea-fowl were to be seen in innumerable flocks, and the whole place was musical with the cry of the wild-swan, has been wholly reclaimed, and the famous Hushing Well no longer exists at all. This last was a curious natural phenomenon and must have been worth seeing. It consisted apparently of a great pool in the sea, one hundred and thirty feet long by thirty feet broad, boiling and bubbling and booming all day long. This was caused, it is said, by the air rushing through a bed of shingle beneath which was a vast cavern from which the sea continuously expelled the air as it rushed in. Nothing of the sort exists at Pagham to-day; it has disappeared with the reclamation of the harbour, which itself was formed, we are told, in the fourteenth century by a tidal wave, when nearly three thousand acres were inundated. The only thing which the continual fight of man against water in this peninsula has left us that is worth seeing in Pagham to-day is the church of St Thomas of Canterbury. This is an Early English building much spoiled by restoration, the best thing remaining being the beautiful arcade of the end of the twelfth century. But the eastern window which consists of three lancets is charming, as is the fourteenth-century chantry at the top of the north aisle, founded in 1383 by John Bowrere. In the chancel is a curious slab with an inscription in Lombardic characters, perhaps a memorial of a former rector. The font is Norman. The church was probably built by one of the early successors of St Thomas in the See of Canterbury; for Pagham belonged to the Archbishops until the Reformation, and certain ruins of their palace remain in a field to the south-east of the church. At Nyetimber, on the Chichester road, a mile out of Pagham, are the ruins of a thirteenth-century chapel.

To reach Selsey and its old church of Our Lady, what remains of it, from Pagham is not an easy matter, the footpaths across the fields being sometimes a little vague. The walk, however, is worth the trouble it involves, for you may thus gather some idea of the history of this unfortunate coast, which the sea has been eating up for at least fifteen hundred years. Indeed, in the time of St Wilfrid the peninsula was probably nearly twice as big as it is to-day, and Selsey was undoubtedly a little island, probably of mud, divided from the mainland at least by the tide. It was here, St Wilfrid was shipwrecked in 666, and it is from his adventures in Sussex that we learn of the extraordinary barbarism of the South Saxons, two generations after the advent of St Augustine.

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St Wilfrid's ship, it seems, was stranded on the mud flats, and the quite pagan South Saxons attacked him and the crew, and it was only the rise of the tide which floated the ship that saved them, with a loss of five men. It was not till 681 that Wilfrid, really a fugitive, came again into Sussex, and this time as to a refuge, for Ethelwalch, king of the South Saxons, and his queen were then Christians, though their people were still pagan. There was a certain monk, however, probably an Irishman, who had a small monastery at Bosham encompassed by the sea and the woods, and in it were five or six brethren who served God in poverty and humility; but none of the natives cared either to follow their course of life or to hear their preaching. Of these heathen St Wilfrid at once became the Apostle. For, as Bede tells us, he "not only delivered them from the misery of perpetual damnation, but also from an inexpressible calamity of temporal death, for no rain had fallen in that province in three years before his arrival, whereupon a dreadful famine ensued which cruelly destroyed the people. In short, it is reported that very often forty or fifty men, being spent with want, would go together to some precipice, or to the sea-shore, and there hand in hand perish by the fall, or be swallowed up by the waves. But on the very day on which the nation received the baptism of faith there fell a soft but plentiful rain; the earth revived again, and, the verdure being restored to the fields, the season was pleasant and fruitful. Thus the former superstition being rejected, and idolatry exploded, the hearts and flesh of all rejoiced in the living God and became convinced that He who is the true God had, through His heavenly grace, enriched them with wealth, both temporal and spiritual. For the bishop, when he came into the province and found so great misery from famine, taught them to get their food by fishing; for their sea and rivers abounded in fish, but the people had no skill to take them except eels alone. The bishop's men having gathered eel-nets everywhere, cast them into the sea, and by the blessing of God took three hundred fishes of several sorts, which, being divided into three parts, they gave a hundred to the poor, a hundred to those of whom they had the nets, and kept a hundred for their own use. By this benefit the bishop gained the affections of them all, and they began more readily to hear his preaching and to hope for heavenly good, seeing that by his help they had received that good which is temporal. Now at this time King Ethelwalch gave to the most reverend prelate Wilfrid, land of eighty-seven families, which place is called Selsey, that is, the Island of the Sea-Calf. That place is encompassed by the sea on all sides, except the west, where is an entrance about the cast of a sling in width; which sort of place by the Latins is called a peninsula, by the Greeks a chersonesus. Bishop Wilfrid, having this place given him, founded

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therein a monastery, which his successors possess to this day, and established a regular course of life, chiefly of the brethren he had brought with him; for he, both in word and actions, performed the duties of a bishop in those parts during the space of five years, until the death of King Egfrid. And forasmuch as the aforesaid king, together with the said place, gave him all the goods that were therein, with the lands and men, he instructed them in the Faith of Christ and baptised them all. Among whom were two hundred and fifty men and women slaves, all of whom he by baptism, not only rescued from the servitude of the devil, but gave them their bodily liberty also and exempted them from the yoke of human servitude.”

The church and monastery which St Wilfrid thus founded at Selsey, thereby establishing the bishopric of Sussex, have long since disappeared beneath the sea. Camden, however, tells us that he saw the foundations at low water; they lay about a mile to the east of the little church of Our Lady, which remained complete until the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was all pulled down except the chancel which we see to-day in the graveyard which it serves as chapel. It is a work of the fourteenth century, and within is the fine sixteenth-century monument of John Lews and his wife. The old Norman font has been removed to the new church of St Peter at Selsey, built largely out of old materials. There, too, is an Elizabethan chalice and paten of the sixteenth century.

Thus nothing at all remains at Selsey, not even the landscape as it was in St Wilfrid's day. Till yesterday, however, one might realise in the loneliness and desolation of this low, lean headland something of that far-off time in which the great bishop came here and had to teach that barbarous folk even to fish. Now even that is going, or gone, for the new light railway from Chichester is bringing a new life to Selsey, which, after all, it would ill become us to grudge her.

By that railway indeed I returned to Chichester, and then at once set out westward for Bosham, where I slept. Bosham is perhaps the most interesting place in all this peninsula as well as probably the most ancient. That Bosham was a port of the Romans seems likely, but that it was the earliest seat of Christianity in Sussex after the advent of the pagans is certain. There, as Bede tells us, St Wilfrid, when he came into Sussex in 681, found a Scottish (most probably Irish) monk named Dicul, who had, in a little monastery encompassed by the sea and the woods, five or six brethren who served God in poverty and humility. With the conversion of the South Saxons that monastery flourished, the house grew rich, and Edward the Confessor bestowed it upon his Norman chaplain Osbern, Bishop of Exeter, whom, of course, the Conqueror did not dispossess. Indeed, the place became famous and appears in the Bayeux tapestry, in the very first picture, where we see “Harold

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and his Knights riding towards Bosham” to embark for Normandy. Bosham, indeed, was one of Harold’s manors, his father, according to the legend, having acquired it by a trick. *Da mihi basium*, says Earl Godwin to the Archbishop Aethelnoth, thus claiming to have received Bosham. That Earl Godwin held Bosham we are assured by the Domesday Survey, which also speaks of the church, presumably the successor of the old monastery of Dicul. This, as I have said, and as Domesday Book tells us, Bishop Osbern of Exeter “holds of King William as he had held it of King Edward.” The Bishop of Exeter still held it, “a royal free chapel” in the time of Henry I. Then was established here, in place, as I suppose, of the monks, a college of six secular canons, the Bishop being the Dean. Exeter, indeed, only once lost the church of Bosham, and that in a most glorious cause, the cause of St Thomas. For when Henry II. quarrelled with Becket [Footnote: Herbert of Bosham, possibly a canon of Bosham, was St Thomas’ secretary and devoted follower, and was certainly born in Bosham.] he deprived the Bishop of Exeter, who took his part, of this church and bestowed it upon the Abbot of Lisieux, who held it till 1177, when it came once more to the Bishop of Exeter, who held it, he and his successors till the Reformation. In 1548 the college was suppressed, only one priest being left to serve the church, with a curate to serve the dependent parish of Appledram.

The church, as we have it to-day upon a little sloping green hill over the water, is of the very greatest interest. The foundations of a Roman building have been discovered beneath the chancel, and the foundation and basis of the chancel arch may be a part of this building. But the greater part of the building we have is undoubtedly Saxon; the great grey tower, the nave, the chancel arch, one of the most characteristic works of that period, and the chancel itself, though enlarged in later times, are without doubt buildings of Saxon England. Mr Baldwin Brown in his fine work upon “The Arts in Early England,” thus speaks of it: “The plan, as will be seen at a glance, has been set out with more than mediaeval indifference to exactness of measurements and squareing, and the chancel diverges phenomenally from the axis of the nave. The elevations are gaunt in their plainness, and the now unplastered rubble-work is rough and uncomely, but the dimensions are ample, the walls lofty, and the chancel arch undeniably imposing.” Of the bases here he says: “These slabs are commonly attributed to the Romans, but it is not easy to see what part of a Roman building they can ever have formed. The truth is that they bear no resemblance to known classical features, while they are on the other hand, characteristically Saxon. The nearest parallel to them is to be found in the impostes of the chancel arch at Worth in Sussex, a place far away from Roman sites. The Worth impostes, like the bases at Bosham, are huge and ungainly, testifying both to the general love of bigness in the Saxon builder and to his comparative ignorance of the normal features which in the eleventh century were everywhere else crystallising into Romanesque. Saxon England stood outside the general development of European architecture, but the fact gives it none the less of interest in our eyes.”



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The church of Holy Trinity, Bosham, is thus the most important Saxon work left to us in Sussex, indeed save for the aisles and arcades and the Norman and Early English additions to the chancel, that glorious eastern window of five lancets, which in itself is worth a journey to see, the clerestory, and the furniture we have here really a complete Saxon work. The font is later Norman and not very interesting; but the exquisite recessed tomb with the effigy of a girl lying upon it is a noble work of the thirteenth century, said to mark the grave of Canute's daughter. The crypt dates also from that time. Near the south door is another fine canopied tomb, said to be that of Herbert of Bosham. The windows are Norman in the clerestory and Early English and Decorated elsewhere throughout the church. The stalls in the chancel are Perpendicular. But here if anywhere in south-eastern England we have a church dating from the Dark Age, in which happily we were persuaded back again within the influence of the Faith and of Rome. Bosham then for every Englishman is a holy place only second to Glastonbury and Canterbury: it is a monument of our conversion, of the re-entry of England into Christendom, of that Easter of ours which saw us rise from the dead.

A few ruins, mere heaps of stones, mark the site of the college to the north of the church. Of Earl Godwin's manor-house only the moat remains near an ancient mill towards the sea; and there, upon the little green between the grey church and the grey sea, one may best recall the reverent past of this lovely spot. Little is here for pride, much to make us humble and exceeding thankful. God was worshipped here between the sea and the greenwood when our South Saxon forefathers were not only the merest pagans, but so barbarous that they knew not even how to fish, when they were so wretched that in companies they would cast themselves into the sea because there was no light in their hearts and nothing else to do. Out of that darkness St Wilfrid led them, but even before he came with the light of Christ and of Rome, in some half barbarous way in this little place men prayed and Mass was said, and there was the means of deliverance though men knew it not, being barbarians.

It is as though at Bosham we were able to catch a glimpse, as it were, of all that darkness out of which we are come by the guiding of a star.

[Illustration: BOSHAM]

That Bosham was a harbour in Roman times, and that it had more than a little to do with the founding of Regnum, and the building perhaps of the Stane Street, I had long since convinced myself. All these creeks and harbours were probably known and used even then, and certainly all through the Middle Ages Bosham was of importance as a port; and the series of creeks, the most eastern of which it served, and the most western of which is Southampton Water, with Portsmouth Harbour between them, was still among the greatest ports in England, easily the greatest, I suppose, in the south country.



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In order to see something of this low and muddy coast, which has seen so much of the history of England, I set out from Bosham very early one morning, intending to make my way through Emsworth and Havant, by the Roman road which joins Chichester and Southampton and runs across the north of these creeks, which may perhaps be considered as one great port of which only the more western part is famous still.

That way has little to recommend it, and indeed I learned little, for the modern world has obliterated with its terrible footsteps nearly all that might have remained of our humble and yet so glorious past, and it was still early morning when I crossed the Hampshire boundary and came into the little town of Emsworth, once famous for its trade in foreign wines, now, I suppose, best known as a yachting station. Emsworth was originally of far less importance than Warblington, of which it was a hamlet. There the fair was upon the morrow of the feast of the Translation of St Thomas of Canterbury, to which saint the parish church of Warblington is dedicated. This is a very beautiful and interesting building, but it is obvious at once that it cannot always have stood in the name of St Thomas, for part of its central tower—the church consists of chancel, and nave, with a tower between them, north chancel, vestry, north and south nave-aisles, and north porch—is of Saxon workmanship. Only one stage of this, however, now remains, the lower part having been altogether rebuilt. This tower was originally a western tower, the Saxon church standing to the east of it. There is no sign of Norman work here, and it seems probable that the Saxon church remained until in the first years of the thirteenth century a new nave and aisles were built to the west of the old tower, the lower part of which was then removed and the tower supported by arches in order to open a way into the nave of the old church, which thus became the chancel of the new. It was then in all probability that the church was newly dedicated in honour of St Thomas. The whole of the old church, nave and chancel together, however, was destroyed before the end of the thirteenth century, and a large new chancel built with a chapel or vestry at the eastern end upon the north; at the same time the aisles of the nave were rebuilt. Later in the fourteenth century the eastern arch bearing the tower was rebuilt, and thus appeared the church which in the main we still see. The difference in the north and south arcades of the nave is, though, very striking here, because of the great contrast between the exquisite and delicate beauty of the south with its clustered columns of Purbeck and the plain round stone columns of the north, common enough. Tradition has it that the church was built by two maiden ladies who lived in the old castle near the church, and that each built a side of the church according to her taste. One is said to lie in the chapel at the east end of the south aisle, where there is

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a tomb with effigy, the other in a tomb in the north aisle. The “castle” came in 1551 to Sir Richard Cotton, whose son George entertained Queen Elizabeth there for two days in 1586. In 1643 a Richard Cotton held the “strong house” of Warblington against the Parliament till it was taken by “sixty soldiers and a hundred muskets.” All that remains of the place to-day is a beautiful octagonal tower of red brick and stone, once part of the main gateway.

Now when I had seen all this I went on into Havant, and there at the cross-roads I found the church of St Faith close by an old sixteenth-century half-timbered house—the Old House at Home. Havant is, in spite of the modern world, a place of miracle; for it possesses a spring to the south-west of the church, called, I think, St Faith’s, which never fails in summer for drought, nor in winter for frost. But for all that the most interesting thing in the town remains the church. This is a cruciform building with a tower over the crossing, and is as, we have it, of Norman foundation, though it seems to stand upon a Roman site, coins having been found when the old nave was destroyed in 1832 and Roman brick and cement and foundations. The church we see, however, dates absolutely from the late twelfth century, and is nowhere, it would appear, older. Unhappily much is far later, the nave being really a modern building and even the central tower has been entirely taken down and rebuilt, and indeed all periods of English architecture would seem to have left their mark upon the church between the end of the twelfth century and our own day. The manor of Havant belonged when Domesday Survey was made to the monks of Winchester. But it is not of them but of William of Wykeham we think here, for his secretary, Thomas Aylward, was rector of this parish and in 1413 was buried here in the north transept, where his brass still remains, showing his effigy vested in a cope. He was not the only notable rector of Havant, for in 1723 Bingham, the author of the “Antiquities of the Christian Church,” was holding the living when he died. Three years before he had been wrecked in the South Sea Bubble, and this is supposed to have caused his death. His work was put into Latin, and was, I think, one of the last English works to be translated into the universal tongue.

Out of Havant I went, nor did I stay now on my way until a little after noon I reached Porchester; but in Bedhampton I did not forget to pray for the soul of Elizabeth Juliers, who died there after a most unfortunate and most wretched life in 1411. This lady, daughter of the Marquis of Juliers and widow of John Plantagenet, Earl of Kent, took the veil in her widowhood at Waverley. Then appears Sir Eustace Dabrieschescourt, and she being young, in spite of her vow, marries him. And having repented and confessed she devoted her life to penance, being condemned daily to repeat the Gradual and the Penitential Psalms, and every year to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas. This penance, with others, she performed during fifty-one years. She was married to Dabrieschescourt in the church of Wingham in Kent, and died here in Bedhampton, and was buried in the church of St Thomas, for the manor was her father’s and part of her first dower.

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Porchester, where I found myself late in the afternoon, is a very interesting and curious place. What we really have that is ancient there is a great walled green about six hundred feet square. We enter this area to-day on the west, the outer gate being thus opposite to us in the eastern wall, the castle keep and bailey on our left in the north-west corner, and the church to the south-east. All this is mediaeval work, but the origins of Porchester are far older than that; the place was a fortress of the Romans.

It is certain that a Roman road ran, as I have said, from Southampton to Chichester, which it entered by the West Gate, and met the Roman military highway, the Stane Street which entered Chichester by the East Gate, whither it had come from London' Bridge. This Roman road doubtless served many a little port upon these creeks and harbours that lie between Southampton Water and Chichester Harbour, but undoubtedly the most important port upon that road, apart from the two cities which it joined, was the Roman Porchester.

It has been suggested, and not without reason, that the Stane Street itself dates only from the latter part of the Roman occupation of Britain, that it was, in fact, a purely military way built for the passage of troops, which until the fourth century were certainly not needed in any quantity in southern Britain. That they were needed then was due to the Saxon pirates. The same pagan robbers, who, when the Legions left us never to return in the first years of the fifth century, might seem to have overrun the whole country. Now it seems fairly certain that Roman Porchester was a military and perhaps a naval fortress, built not earlier than the fourth century here at the western extremity of what the Romans called the Litus Saxonicum, and for the purpose of defending southern Britain from the raids of these barbarous and pagan rogues. If so, it might seem to be of one piece with that presumably purely military Way the Stane Street, and to give it its meaning.

At any rate, the mediaeval builder of Porchester Castle used, with the help of rebuildings and patchings, the Roman fortifications, which did not perhaps differ very much, and not at all in form, from those we see. Roman Porchester was just what mediaeval Porchester was, a great fortress, not a "city," nor a village, but a port similar to the others that lined the Saxon shore from the Wash to Beachey Head.

Of what became of the place in Saxon times we are entirely ignorant. The Domesday Survey speaks of it as a "halla," but in the first half of the twelfth century the Normans built a castle in the north-west corner of the Roman enclosure, which in 1153 Henry II. granted to Henry Manduit, and from that time it appears as the military port, as it were, of the capital, Winchester; Henry II. Richard I. John and Henry III. not only frequently taking up their residence at Porchester, and there as in a strong place, transacting the most important business, but they all of them most frequently set out thence for the Continent in days when a king of England was as often abroad as at home. Except Edward I. there is scarcely an English king from Henry II. to Henry VIII. who did not use Porchester, and Elizabeth, the last royal visitor, held her court in the Castle.

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As we see it to-day the keep of Porchester Castle resembles that of Rochester, not only in its appearance, though there it comes short, but in its arrangement. It is, however, surrounded by some later ruins of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the use of which has, I think, never been ascertained.

The whole place is extraordinarily impressive, and not less so on account of its containing a church within the Roman walls, possibly occupying the site of a Roman sanctuary. The church of Our Lady of Porchester, however, as we see it, was, of course, a Norman building, built not later than 1133 when Henry I. gave it to the Austin Canons as their priory church, but about 1145 the canons were removed to Southwick, where a house was built for them. They must, indeed, have been very much in the way within so important a fortress seeing how international the interests of their congregation were. The church, of course, remained. It was originally a cruciform building, with central tower, but the south transept has been destroyed as has the chapel east of the north transept where now the vestry stands. The eastern apse, too, has been replaced by a square end. Apart from these changes, however, the church remains largely as it was in the time of Henry I., the west front being especially fine, and the font with its relief of the Baptism of Our Lord, a very notable Romanesque work. I lingered long in Porchester, indeed till sundown. Nothing in all England rightly understood is more reverent than this great ruin, not even the Wall. It, too, like that great northern barrier, was built in our defence by our saviours against our worst foes the barbarians, the pagans. It, too, was an outpost of civilisation and of the Faith against the darkness. Wherever Rome has passed, there a flower will blow for ever, wherever Rome has been, there is light, wherever Rome has built, there is something which moves us as nothing else can do, and not least here in England of my heart upon the verge of the Saxon shore, while we recall the past at evening and question the future, the future which will not be known.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SOUTHAMPTON

When I left Porchester I went on into Fareham to sleep, and next morning set out by train, for it was raining, to go to Clausentum. Before I left the railway, however, the weather began to clear, and presently the sun broke through the clouds, so that when I came into Clausentum the whole world was again full of joy.

Clausentum, which even to-day, is not without charm was as I understand it, the mother of Southampton, a Roman, perhaps even a Celtic foundation, for its name Clausentum is certainly of Celtic origin. Of its high antiquity there can at least be no doubt, for there we may still see parts of the Roman walls near nine feet thick and innumerable Roman remains have been found within them.

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The situation of Clausentum, too, was rather Celtic than Roman. It stands upon a tongue of land thrust out into the Itchen from the left bank, between Northam and St Denys on the right bank; the river washed its walls upon three sides, north, south and west, but upon the landward side to the east it was protected by two lines of defence, an outer and an inner, the one nearly three hundred yards from the other. At first this arrangement might seem rather Celtic than Roman, and in fact, it may well be that the Romans occupied here earthworks far older than anything built by them in Britain, and yet it seems perhaps more probable that they are responsible for all we have here, un-Roman though it seems, and that the true explanation is that the outer defences, while their work, are the older of the two; that with the decline of their administration in the fourth century, with the building of the Stane Street and the general walling of the Roman towns this older and larger defence was abandoned, and the place, whatever it may have been, reduced to a mere fort to hold which upon the landward side the inner defence was there built.

Of the fate of Clausentum in the Dark Age we know nothing; if it was a mere fort with no life of its own it may or may not have been abandoned; but it would seem certain that with the renewal of civilisation in southern England, by the return of Christianity, a town was established upon the right bank of the estuary opposite Clausentum. This town was the first Southampton, and there Athelstane is said to have established mints. This town, however, does not seem to have occupied the same site as the Southampton we know, but rather to have been gathered about St Mary's church to the north-east as Leland was told when he visited Southampton in 1546. The place was probably burnt by the Danes, and it is to one of them, to Canute, that we owe the foundation of the town we know. If Canute was the founder of Southampton, however, it was the Normans who really and finally established it, the greatness of the place as a port really dating from the Conquest. The Normans seem to have settled there early in considerable numbers, and their energy and enterprise began the development which continued throughout the Middle Age and the Renaissance. In the seventeenth century, however, Southampton rapidly declined, and this continued till in the time of our grandfathers it was arrested and Southampton rose again, to become the chief port of southern England. So extraordinary indeed has been her modern development that it has completely engulfed the great town of the Middle Age, which, for all that, still forms the nucleus as it were of the modern city, though no one, I suppose would suspect it at first sight.

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Of the greatness of Southampton in the Middle Age, however, there can be no doubt. It was the best exit out of that England into Normandy, the natural port of the capital Winchester, and its whole record is full of glory. It was in a very real sense the gate of England. Hither came the great ships from the South and the East, from the ports of Normandy and Anjou, from Bayonne and Venice, with wine and Eastern silks, leather from Cordova, swords and daggers from Toledo, spices from India, and coloured sugars from Egypt. Here the merchants disembarked to trade in the capital or to attend the great fair of St Giles; hither came the pilgrims, thousands upon thousands, to follow the old road from Winchester to the Shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury; while out of Southampton streamed the chivalry of the Crusades; hence “cheerly to sea” sailed the fleets of Coeur de Lion for Palestine, of Edward III. for France, the army that won at Crecy, the army that won at Agincourt. All the glory of mediaeval England Southampton has seen pass by.

That the abandonment of Guienne and Aquitaine by the English was a severe blow to Southampton is certain, but still it had the Venice trade, the “Flanders Galleys” laden with the spoil of the East, the wines of the Levant, the “fashions of proud Italy”; and the real decline of Southampton dates from the moment when Venice too was wounded even to death by the discovery of the Cape route to the East and the rise of Portugal.

As it happens we have at the time of her greatest prosperity a description of the town from the hand of Leland. “There be,” he writes, “in the fair and right strong wall of New Hampton, eight gates. Over Barr Gate by north is the *Domus Civica*, and under it the town prison. There is a great suburb without it, and a great double dyke, well watered on each hand without it. The East Gate is strong, not so large as Barr Gate, and in its suburb stands St Mary’s Church, to the South Gate joins a Castelet well ordinated to beat that quarter of the haven. There is another mean gate a little more south called God’s house gate, of an hospital founded by two merchants joined to it; and not far beyond it is the Water Gate, without which is a quay. There are two more gates. The glory of the Castle is in the dungeon, that is both fair and large and strong, both by work and the site of it. There be five parish churches in the town. Holy Rood Church standeth in the chief street, which is one of the fairest streets that is in any town in England, and it is well builded for timber building. There be many fair merchants’ houses, and in the south-east part was a college of Grey Friars. Here was also an hospital called God’s House, founded by two merchants, appropriated since to Queen’s College, Oxford.”



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Of all this what remains? Happily more than might seem possible considering the enormous modern development of the place. The town of Southampton stood looking south-west upon a tongue of land thrust out south into the water with the estuary of the Itchen upon the east, and Southampton Water upon the west, upon the south were the vast mud-flats swept by every tide which the great modern docks now occupy. The town was, as we have seen, enclosed by walls, perhaps by Canute, certainly by the Normans, and these seem to have been enlarged by King John, and rebuilt and repaired after the French raid of 1338. They formed a rude quadrilateral, roughly seven hundred yards from north to south, and three hundred from east to west, were from twenty-five to thirty feet high and of varying thickness. Something of them still remains, especially upon the west of the town over the quays. Here we have two great portions of the old wall which is practically continuous from the site of the Bugle Tower upon the south, to the site of the Bigglesgate about half-way up this western side. This portion includes two of the old gates, the West Gate and the Blue Anchor Postern. Beyond the site of the Bigglesgate the old wall has been destroyed as far as the Castle, but from there it still stands all the way to the Arundel Tower at the north-west corner of the town. So much for the western front. Upon the north the wall is broken down at the western end, the Bargate, which still stands, being isolated, but beyond two portions remain complete as far as the Polymond Tower at the north-east angle. Upon the east of the town there is very little standing until we come to the southern corner, where God's House Tower and the South-East Gate remain. Upon the south almost nothing is left.

Southampton in its mediaeval greatness had eight gates, of which, as we see, four remain: two upon the west, the West Gate and the Blue Anchor Postern; one upon the north, the Bargate; upon the east, or rather at the south-eastern angle of the walls, God's House or South-East Gate; upon the south none at all.

The West Gate is a plain but beautiful work of the fourteenth century, a great square tower over a pointed arch, under which is the entry. The tower within consists of three stages, the last being embattled and now roofed, while the first is reached by a picturesque outside stairway of stone, which served both it and the ramparts. Close by, against the wall, is a timber building upon a stone basement, called the guard-room, dating from the fifteenth century.

The best portions of the old wall run northward from the West Gate over the western shore road. This is Norman work added to in the fourteenth century. Here is the Blue Anchor Postern, or as it is more properly called, simply the Postern, little more than a round archway within the great arcading and the wall itself. Just to the south of this gate is the twelfth-century building known as King John's Palace. We

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follow the grand old wall till it ends upon the site of the Bigglesgate, where we turn eastward a little into the town and come to the Castle, of which, unhappily, almost nothing remains. It consisted of a great Keep in the midst of an enclosure, entered by two gates, the Castle Gate upon the north-east where now is Castle Lane, and the Postern over the site of which we have entered the Castle Green. The decay of this fortress dates, at least, from the sixteenth century, and apparently before the Civil War it had been pulled down.

The walls still enclose the Bailey of the Castle upon the west. There, in some sort, still stands the Castle Water Gate, a mere fragment, within which is a great vaulted chamber some fifty feet long and twenty-five feet high, with only one small window. From this fragmentary gate the wall sweeps away to the salient, for the most part Norman; but beyond the salient its character changes, two towers appear—the Catchcold Tower of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, and the fine Arundel Tower, now only a curtain of fourteenth-century work in the Decorated style.

It is in these western walls of the town that we shall get our best idea of what mediaeval Southampton was, and if we add to our impression by an examination of the two remaining gates, one upon the north and the other at the south-east angle, we may perhaps understand how formidable it must have appeared standing up out of the sea armed at all points.

Mediaeval Southampton had eight gates, of these, as I have said, but four remain, the most notable of which is undoubtedly the Bargate, upon the north. This is a fine work of various periods in two stages, the lower consisting of a vaulted passage-way of fine proportions, a work of the fourteenth century and the upper of a great hall, the Guildhall now used as a court room. The original gate, of course, was Norman, and this seems to have endured until about 1330 two towers were built on either side, without the gate, and a new south front added. In the first years of the fifteenth century a new north front was contrived, and this remains more or less as we see it. Of old the gate was reached by a drawbridge across a wide moat.

Beyond the Bargate we come to the Polymond Tower or the Tower of St Denys, beautiful with creepers. This would seem to be in some way connected with the Priory of St Denys which held all the churches in the town, as we shall see. As for its other name of Polymond, it would seem to get it from that John Polymond, who, in the fourteenth century, from which time the tower, as we see it, dates, was nine times mayor of Southampton.

As for the God's House Gateway, to reach it we must cross the town. It is a plain but charming work of two periods, the gate proper being of the thirteenth century, while the



tower with the two-storied building attached to it is of the fourteenth. From the beginning of the eighteenth century until 1855 it was used as the town gaol.

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The old town of Southampton, a town within a town, is a fascinating study, the interest of its gates and old walls is inexhaustible, but apart from these it has little architectural beauty to boast of. For all that it is amusing to linger there, if only to solve the problems that time has contrived for us. Among these not the least is that of the first site of the town. Not one of the churches in Southampton is of any great beauty or interest, but it is astonishing to find that the mother church is not in the town at all, but at least half a mile outside it upon the north. Leland, as I have already said, was told, when he was in Southampton in 1546, that the first town did not occupy the site of that we see but was further to the north, where St Mary's stands. The fact that St Mary's is the mother church would seem to confirm this. Moreover, there is no mention in the Domesday Survey of any church at all within the borough of "Hantune," and though we may think that the church of St John then existed, St John's was never the mother church; this was St Mary's which possessed all the tithes of the town. In the time of Henry II. we find the King granting to the Priory of St Denys, founded in 1124 by Henry I., a Priory of Austin Canons, his "chapels" of St Michael, the Holy Rood, St Laurence and All Saints, that is all the churches save St John's already granted to the Abbey of St Mary of Lire, in Southampton. But that these chapels had some relation to the mother church of St Mary might seem certain. Indeed the rector of St Mary's was continually in controversy with the canons as to his rights, and eventually, in the thirteenth century, he won the day. In any case the mother church of Southampton was St Mary's, outside the walls of the town. That a Saxon church stood upon this site is certain, and this was possibly represented in Leland's time by the chapel of St Nicholas, "a poor and small thing," which then stood to the East of "the great church of Our Lady," which he saw and which probably dated from the time of Henry I. This church was, alas, destroyed by the town only a few years later because its spire was said to guide the French cruisers into Southampton Water, and the stones were used to mend the roads. It may be that the chancel escaped, or it may be that a new and much smaller church was erected in 1579. This, whichever it was, was much neglected till in 1711 a nave was built on to it. Then in 1723 the chancel was destroyed, and a new one built. In 1833 this was rebuilt, and then in 1878 a new church was built, in place of the old which was pulled down, by Street. Thus in St Mary's church, the mother church of Southampton to-day, we have only a lifeless modern building.

Much the same fate has befallen the churches within the walls of Southampton. The oldest, that of St John, was pulled down in the seventeenth century, that of Holy Rood, in the High Street, was rebuilt about fifty years ago, so was St Laurence, while All Saints was destroyed in the eighteenth century. The only ancient church remaining is that of St Michael, which, though not destroyed, was ruined in 1826. It remains, however, in part, a Norman building, with an interesting font of the twelfth century, a lectern of the fifteenth century, and a fine tomb with the effigy of a priest in mass vestments.

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The same fate which has so brutally overtaken the churches of Southampton has, with perhaps more excuse, fallen upon the old religious houses. The Priory of St Denys, founded by Henry I., upon which all these churches within the walls were in a sense dependent, has been totally destroyed, a piece of ruined wall alone remaining, the present church of St Denys dating from 1868.

Nor does much remain of the Hospital of St Julian or God's House, founded for the poor in the town, by Gervase le Riche, in 1197. It was one of the most important hospitals in the diocese of Winchester, and in 1343 the King, its protector, gave it to Queen's College, Oxford, just founded by Queen Philippa. As the possession of this college it survived the suppression, and was still carrying on its good work in 1560. About 1567, however, certain Walloons, refugees from the Low Countries, settled in Southampton, and these were granted the use of St Julian's Chapel by Queen's College.

The house should have remained to us, but that in 1861, by as black an act of vandalism as was ever perpetrated, this seat of learning swept away all the old domestic buildings of the hospital, which dated from its foundation, and in their place erected what we might expect, at the same time "restoring" the chapel of St Julian, of course, out of all recognition. May St Julian forget Queen's College, Oxford, for ever and ever.

[Illustration: THE TUDOR HOUSE, OPPOSITE ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, SOUTHAMPTON]

Not far from this hospital for the poor the Grey Friars built their house in 1237, or rather the burgesses of Southampton built it for them, including a cloister of stone, but nothing remains at all of this house.

For the most part, too, the great houses that of old filled Southampton, and helped to glorify it, are gone. "The chiefest house," writes Leland, "is the house that Huttoft, late customer of Southampton, builded on the west side of the town. The house that Master Lightster, chief baron of the King's exchequer, dwelleth in, is very fair; the house that Master Mylles, the recorder, dwelleth in, is fair, and so be the houses of Niccotine and Guidote, Italians." Of these, what remains? Nothing. The only noble dwelling is that called Tudor House, in St Michael's Square, a fine half-timbered building, and of this nothing is known.

No, the only thing to be enjoyed in Southampton to-day is the old wall with its gateways, that upon the west still valiantly outfaces the modern world and recalls for us all that noble great past out of which we are come. And yet I suppose Southampton is fulfilling its purpose to-day more wonderfully than ever before. It was once the port of England for those dominions oversea we held in France. They are gone, but others we have since acquired, though less fair by far, remain. It is to these Southampton looks to-day, south and east, as of old over how many thousand miles of blue water.

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### CHAPTER XVIII

#### BEAULIEU AND CHRISTCHURCH

While I was in Southampton, I made up my mind to visit a place which I had all my life desired to see, but which I had never yet set eyes upon, I mean Beaulieu Abbey in the New Forest. To this end I set out early one morning, by steamboat, across Southampton Water, and landed at Hythe, whence I had only to cross the eastern part of Beaulieu Heath, a walk of some five miles, to find myself where I would be.

The day was fair, the tide at the flood; in the woods, across the water, I could see where Netley Abbey, another Cistercian house, younger than Beaulieu, once lifted up its voice in ceaseless praise of God, the Maker of all that beauty in which it stood, scarcely spoiled even now by the amazing energy of the modern world. It was then with a light heart that I set out by a byway under Furze Down, and so across the open heath, coming down at last through the woods to the ruins of the abbey and the river of Beaulieu.

There can be no more delicious spot in the world. St Bernard loved the valleys as St Benedict the hills, and as St Bernard was the refounder of the Cistercian Order to which Beaulieu belonged, it, like Waverley, Tintern, Netley, and a hundred others in England, was set in one of those delicious vales in which I think England is richer than any other country, and which here, in England of my heart, seem to demand rather our worship than our praise.

Beaulieu Abbey had always interested me. In the first place it was one of the greatest, though not the earliest, houses in England of the Cistercian Order, that reform of the Benedictines begun as William of Malmesbury bears witness by an Englishman, Stephen Harding, sometime a monk of Sherborne. And then it was the only religious house within the confines of the New Forest. It seems that in the year 1204, just a year after he had given the manor of Faringdon in Berkshire to St Mary of Citeaux, and established there a small house of Cistercian monks, King John founded this great monastery of St Mary of Beaulieu for the same Order, making provision for not less than thirty brethren, and giving it Faringdon for a cell. John endowed the house with some six manors and several churches, gave it a golden chalice, and many cattle, as well as corn and wine and money, and besought the aid of the abbots of the Order on behalf of the new house. To such good purpose, indeed, did he support Beaulieu, that Hugh, the first abbot, was alone his friend, when Innocent III., in the spring of 1208 placed England under an interdict. This Hugh went as the King's ambassador to Rome, and having received promises of submission from the King, who awaited his return in the mother house of the Order in England, at Waverley, was successful in reconciling him with the Pope. In return the King gave him a palfrey among other presents, and the interdict being lifted, contributed nine hundred marks towards

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the building of Beaulieu, to be followed by other even more generous offerings. Nor was Henry III. neglectful of the place, so that in 1227 upon the vigil of the Assumption, the monks were able to use their church, though it was not till nineteen years later that the monastery was completed, and dedicated in the presence of the King and Queen, Prince Edward and a vast concourse of bishops, nobles, and common folk, by the Bishop of Winchester. Upon that occasion, Prince Edward was seized with illness, and, strange as it may seem, we are told that the Queen remained in the abbey, to nurse him, for three weeks. But the house was always under the royal protection. Edward I. constantly stayed there, and the abbots were continually employed upon diplomatic business. From 1260 to 1341, when he asked to be freed from the duty, the abbot of Beaulieu sat in Parliament, and in 1368 Edward III. granted the monks a weekly market within the precincts. One other privilege, unique in southern England, Beaulieu had, the right to perpetual sanctuary granted by Innocent III., and this seems to have been used to the full in the Wars of the Roses, at least we find Richard III. inquiring into the matter in 1463. There it seems Perkin Warbeck had found safety, as had Lady Warwick after Barnet, and at the time of the Suppression there were thirty men in sanctuary in the "Great Close of Beaulieu," which seems to have included all the original grant of land made to the abbey by King John. Beaulieu evidently very greatly increased in honour, for in 1509 its abbot was made Bishop of Bangor but continued to hold the abbey, and when he died the abbot of Waverley, the oldest house of the Order in England, succeeded him, the post being greatly sought after. The Act of 1526 suppressing the lesser monasteries, in which so many Cistercian houses perished, did not touch Beaulieu, but Netley fell early in the following year, and the monks were sent to Beaulieu. Many then looked for the spoil of the great abbey, among them Lord Lisle who besought Thomas Cromwell for it, but he was denied. Indeed there seems to have been no idea of suppressing the house at that time. But the Abbot Stevens was a traitor. In 1538 he eagerly signed the surrender demanded by the infamous Layton and Petre, and the site was granted to Thomas Wriothesley, afterwards Earl of Southampton, from whose family it came in the time of William III. to Lord Montagu, and so to the Dukes of Buccleuch, who still hold it.

Nothing can exceed the beauty of the remains of the house there by the river, in perhaps the loveliest corner of southern England. The great abbey church has gone, destroyed at the Suppression, but not a little of the monastery remains. The great Gate House called the abbot's lodging and now the Palace House, the seat of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, a fine Decorated building with a beautiful entrance hall, may sometimes be seen. From this one passes across the grass to the old Refectory, now fitted up as the parish church, a noble work of the Early English style of the thirteenth century, as is the fine pulpit with its arcade in the thickness of the wall. Here of old the monk read aloud while his brethren took their meagre repast.

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From the Refectory one comes into the ruined cloisters, lovely with all manner of flowers, and so to the site of the old Chapter House, of the sacristy and the monastic buildings. All that remains is in the early Decorated style of the end of the thirteenth century. Here, too, upon the north stood the great abbey church, three hundred and thirty-five feet long, a cruciform building consisting of nave with two aisles, central tower, transepts with aisles, chancel with circular apse and chapels, now marked out in chalk upon the grass. All about are the woods, meadows, fishponds and greens of the monks who are gone.

I do not know how this strikes another who shall see it to-day, in all its useless beauty, in the midst of our restless and unhappy England; but what I felt has already been expressed and by so good an Englishman as William Cobbett.

“Now ... I daresay,” he writes, “that you are a very good Protestant; and I am a monstrous good Protestant too. We cannot bear the Pope, nor “they there priests that makes men confess there sins and go down upon their marrow-bones before them.” But let us give the devil his due; and let us not act worse by these Roman Catholics (who by the by were our forefathers) than we are willing to act by the devil himself. Now then here were a set of monks. None of them could marry, of course none of them could have wives and families. They could possess no private property; they could bequeath nothing; they could own nothing but that which they owned in common with the rest of their body. They could hoard no money; they could save nothing. Whatever they received as rent for their lands, they must necessarily spend upon the spot, for they never could quit that spot. They did spend it all upon the spot; they kept all the poor. Beaulieu and all round about Beaulieu saw no misery, and had never heard the damned name of pauper pronounced as long as those Monks continued.

“You and I are excellent Protestants; you and I have often assisted on the 5th of November to burn Guy Fawkes, the Pope and the Devil. But you and I would much rather be life holders under Monks than rackrenters....”

St Thomas Aquinas has told us that there were three things for a sight of which he would have endured a year in Purgatory, not unwillingly: Christ in the flesh, Rome in her flower, and an Apostle disputing. Christ in the flesh, I would indeed I might have seen, and Rome in her flower were worth even such a price, but for me an Apostle disputing would, let me confess it, have little attraction. Instead I would that I might see England before the fall, England of the thirteenth, fourteenth or fifteenth century, England of my heart, with all her great cathedrals still alive, with all her great monasteries still in being, those more than six hundred houses destroyed by Henry, and not least this house of the Cistercians in Beaulieu. And if I might see that, I should have seen one of the fairest things and the noblest that ever were in the world.

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From Beaulieu I set out in the afternoon across the Forest, and at first over the western part of Beaulieu Heath for Brockenhurst. The road across the heath is not in itself of much beauty, but it affords some glorious views both of the Forest and the sea. As I drew nearer to Brockenhurst, however, I came into the woods, and the sylvan beauty of the vale, through which the Lymington River flows southward, was delicious. Brockenhurst itself is charmingly embowered and is surrounded by some of the loveliest of the woodlands. The church stands high, perhaps as a guide, over a woodland churchyard, and is the evident successor of a Norman building, as its south doorway and font of Purbeck bear witness and the chancel arch too, unless indeed this be earlier still. The chancel, however, dates from the fourteenth century, a good example in its littleness of the Decorated style, but it is half spoiled by the enormous pew which blocks the entrance. The tower and spire and a good part of the nave are completely modern. The great yew in the churchyard must date at least from Edward I.'s time, and perhaps may have seen the day on which Red William fell.

From Brockenhurst, on the following morning, I set out again over the open heath for Boldre southward. Many a fine view over the woods I had, and once, as I came down Sandy Down, I caught sight of the Isle of Wight. Then the scene changed, and I came through meadows, and past coppices into Boldre. In the midst of a wood, as it were, I suddenly found the church, and this interested me more than I can well say, for here again I found what at one time must have been a complete Norman building. Surely if the history-books are right this is an astonishing thing; but then, as I have long since learned, the history one is taught at school is a mere falsehood from start to finish. There is probably no schoolboy in England who has not read of the awful cruelty and devastation that went with the formation of the New Forest, by the Conqueror in 1079. It is generally spoken of as only less appalling than the burning of Northumberland. It is said that more than fifty-two parish churches within the new bounds of the New Forest were destroyed, and a fertile district of a hundred square miles laid waste and depopulated to provide William with a hunting-ground. Now if this be true how does it come that upon my first day in the Forest I find a Norman church at Brockenhurst with something very like a Saxon chancel arch, and that upon my second day I walk right into another church in part Norman too? This is surely an astonishing thing. It is also, I find, a fact that much of the New Forest had been a royal hunting-ground in the Saxon times, and that the afforestation of William is not so much as mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle. The whole story of the devastation of this great country would seem to rest upon the writings of William of Jumieges or Ordericus Vitalis, neither of whom was alive at the time of the afforestation. This



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must have been known surely to our modern historians; but so is the history of England written. Our real grievance against William was not his afforestation, but his cruel Forest Law, which demanded the limb of a man for the life of a beast, a thing I think unknown in England before his advent. It was this harsh law, so bitterly resented, which at last, as we may think, cost William Rufus his life. But the old tale remains, and therefore I was greatly astonished in Boldre Church.

Doubtless the original Norman church consisted of a nave, chancel and north and south aisles. The south aisle remains, as does the arcade which separates it from the nave. In the Early English time the north aisle was rebuilt or added, perhaps, for the first time, and the chancel rebuilt. Later the church was lengthened westward, and the tower built at the eastern end of the Norman aisle. In that aisle there is a tablet to William Gilpin, the author of "Forest Scenery," who was vicar of Boldre for a generation, dying in 1804 aged eighty years. He is buried in the churchyard.

Boldre is certainly a place to linger in, a place that one is sorry to leave, but I could not stay, being intent on Lymington. Therefore I went down through the oak woods, over Boldre Bridge, to find the high road, which presently brought me past St Austin's once belonging to the Priory of Christchurch, under Buckland Rings to the very ancient borough of Lymington, with its charming old ivy-clad church tower at the end of the High Street. The church, in so far as it is old of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has little to boast of, for it has been quite horribly restored. In the long street of Lymington I slept.

There seemed to be nothing to keep me in Lymington, and therefore, early upon the following morning, I set out for Milford, five miles away by the sea, and there I wonderfully saw the Needles and the great Island and found another Norman church, Norman that is to say in its foundations. All Saints, Milford, consists to-day of chancel with north and south chapels west of it, transepts, nave with north and south aisles, and a western chapel on either side the western tower, and a south porch. It is a most beautiful and interesting building. Doubtless there originally stood here a twelfth-century Norman church, consisting of nave with aisles and chancel, of which two arches remain in the south arcade of the nave. Then in the thirteenth century the church was rebuilt, as we see it, and very beautiful it is, in its Early English dress, passing into Decorated, in the chancel and transepts.

From Milford, through a whole spring day, I went on by the coast as far I could, westward to Christchurch. All the way, the sea, the sky, and the view of the island and of Christchurch bay closed by Hengistbury Head in the west, and the long bar on which Hurst Castle stands in the east were worth a king's ransom. They say all this coast has strong attractions for the geologist; but what of the poet and painter? Surely here, when the wind comes over the sea and the Island, showing his teeth, to possess the leaning



coast, one may see and understand why England is the England of my heart. At least I thought so, and lingered there so long that twilight had fallen before I found myself under the darkness of the great Priory of Christchurch, the goal of my desire.

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It was not without due cause and reason that I wished to see, instead of an Apostle disputing, England before the fall. Indeed I am sure that I should not have been unwise to exchange "Rome in her flower" for such a sight as that; Christchurch proves it.

We march up and down England and count up our treasures, of which this Priory of Christchurch is not the least; but we never pause perhaps to remember what, through the damnable act of Thomas Cromwell and Henry Tudor, we have lost. What we have lost! hundreds of churches, hundreds of monasteries as fine as Christchurch, and hundreds far more solemn and reverent. Reading, which now gives a title to an Isaacs, (God save us all!) was, before the fall, just a great monastery, a Norman pile as grand as Durham or Ely. What of Glastonbury and Amesbury, older far, and of those many hundred others which stood up strong before God for our souls—without avail? They are gone; Christchurch in some sort remains.

Christchurch stands in the angle where the rivers Avon and Stour meet, and it is thus secured upon the north, east, and south; its great and perhaps its only attraction is the great Priory church in whose name that of the town, Twyneham, has long been lost; but there are beside a ruined Norman house, and a pretty mediaeval bridge over the Avon, from which a most noble view of the great church may be had. This, which dates in its foundation from long before the Conquest, is to-day a great cruciform building consisting roughly of Norman nave and transepts, the nave buttressed on the north in the thirteenth century, fifteenth-century chancel and western tower, and thirteenth-century north porch—altogether one of the most glorious churches left to us in England.

Its history, as I say, goes back far beyond the Conquest, when it was served by secular canons, as it was at the time of the Domesday Survey, when we find that twenty-four were in residence. But in the time of William Rufus, Ranulph Flambard, the Bishop of Durham, his chief minister, obtained a grant of the church and town of Christchurch, and soon had suppressed all the canonries save five, and would have suppressed them all but for the timely death of the Red King, which involved the fall and imprisonment of his rascal minister. After an interval, in which the church was governed by Gilbert de Dousgunels, who set out for Rome to get the Pope's leave to refound the house, but died upon the journey, Henry I. gave manor, town and church to his cousin, Richard de Redvers, who proved a great benefactor to the Priory, and established a Dean over the canons, one Peter, who was succeeded by Dean Ralph. Then in 1150 came Dean Hilary, who as Bishop of Chichester, petitioned Richard de Redvers to establish Christchurch as a Priory of Canons Regular of St Austin. This was done; a certain Reginald was appointed first prior, and he ruled Christchurch for thirty-six years till, in 1186, he was succeeded by Ralph. It was not, however, till the time

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of the third Prior that the high altar of the new church begun by Gilbert and continued by Richard de Redvers and his priors was dedicated upon the feast of St Thomas of Canterbury, 1195. This would seem to prove that the Norman choir was not finished until then; similar consecration of other altars would lead us to believe that perhaps the vault and the clerestory of the nave were completed in 1234. At the same time the beautiful north porch was built and the north aisle was buttressed. To the fourteenth century we owe the fine rood screen restored in 1848, but the next great period of building was the fifteenth century, when the Lady Chapel, with the chapels north and south of it, were built, and later in the same century the great choir was entirely re-erected.

Thus Christchurch Priory grew until the Reformation. It escaped the first raid of Cromwell in 1536, but in spite of the petition of John Draper, the last Prior, in 1539 the house was demanded of him and he surrendered it. The report of the vandals and sacrilegious persons who received it is worth copying, if only to show their character. "We found," they wrote, "the Prior a very honest, conformable person, and the house well furnished with jewels and plate, whereof some be meet for the king's majesty in use as a little chalice of gold, a goodly large cross, double gilt with the foot garnished, and with stone and pearl; two goodly basons double gilt. And there be other things of silver.... In thy church we find a chapel and monument curiously made of Caen stone, prepared by the late mother of Reginald Pole for her burial, which we have caused to be defaced, and all the arms and badges to be delete." It is consoling to note that one of the rascals that signed that report, Dr London, was shortly afterwards exposed in his true colours and openly put to penance for adultery before he died in prison, where he lay for perjury.

The report stated that the church was superfluous. It was the only true word written there. When a religion is destroyed, its temples are certainly superfluous. However, there was a considerable influence brought to bear by the people of the neighbourhood, and the church itself was granted them for their use. The Priory, which stood to the south of the church, was, of course, destroyed.

One might stand a whole month in that glorious building with this only regret, that it is in the hands of strangers. The use to which it is put is not that for which it was intended, and half the delight of the place is thus lost to us. But no one can pass down that great avenue of elms to the glorious north porch, a master-work of the thirteenth century, without rejoicing that when all is said the church was saved to us. The great Norman nave, with its thirteenth-century clerestory, and alas, modern stucco vaulting, the Norman aisles and north transept, are too reverent for destruction, the fifteenth-century choir and eastern chapels too lovely.

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A certain amount of the old furniture remains to the church in the restored screen of the fourteenth century, and the reredos over the communion table and another in the Lady Chapel; here, too, is the old altar stone of Purbeck. The chantry of the poor Countess of Salisbury, who was beheaded for high treason in 1541, so brutally defaced by Dr London and his infamous colleagues, stands there too upon the north; and close by in the north chapel is the tomb with fine alabaster effigies of Sir John and Lady Chydroke (d. 1455), removed from the nave, and in the Lady Chapel lie its founders, Sir Thomas and Lady West. Of the modern restorations and additions I have nothing to say, and more especially of the monument to Shelley; a parody of a Pieta merely blasphemous, beneath the tower.

Now when I had seen all this, to say nothing of the old school-room over the Lady Chapel and the Norman house and castle mound of the De Redvers, somewhat sorrowful for many things, I began to think again of the Forest, and immediately set out where the road led to Lyndhurst, and this just before midday.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE NEW FOREST AND ROMSEY ABBEY

All day I went through the Forest, sometimes by green rides, enchanted still, such as those down which Lancelot rode with Guinevere, talking of love, sometimes over heaths wild and desolate such as that which knew the bitterness of Lear, sometimes through the greenwood, ancient British woodland, silent now, where the hart was once at home in the shade, and where at every turn one might expect to come upon Rosalind in her boy's dress, and think to hear from some glade the words of Amiens' song:

Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat;  
Come hither, come hither, come hither....

There are days in life of which it can only be said, that they are blessed; golden days, upon which, looking back, the sun seems to shine; they dazzle in the memory. Such was the day I spent in the byways of Holmsley and Burley, in the upper valleys of Avon water, Ober water and Black water, forest streams; in the silent woods, where all day long the sun showered its gold, sprinkling the deep shade with flowers and blossoms of light, where there was no wind but only the sighing of the woods, no sound but the whisper of the leaves or the rare flutter of a bird's wings, no thoughts but joyful thoughts filling the heart with innocence.

Who doth ambition shun,  
And loves to live i' the sun,  
Seeking the food he eats  
And pleased with what he gets;  
Come hither, come hither, come hither....

At evening I came to Lyndhurst.

Lyndhurst is the capital of the Forest; as its name implies it was established in a wood of limes, a tree said to have been introduced into England only in the sixteenth century. It is already spoken of in the tenth century Anglo-Saxon ballad of the Battle of Brunanburh!



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Athelstan king,

Lord among earls,  
Bracelet bestower and  
Baron of barons;  
He with his brother  
Edmund Atheling  
Gaining a lifelong  
Glory in battle.  
Slew with the sword-edge,  
There by Brunanburh,  
Broke the shield wall,  
*Hew'd the lindenwood,*  
Hack'd the battleshield,  
Sons of Edward with hammered brands.

Oak, beech, and holly, which so largely make up the woodland of the New Forest we have always had in England, but the limes which named Lyndhurst it is said we owe to someone else, and if so it can only be to the Roman.

What the Forest was when the Romans administered the land we know not; but in Anglo-Saxon times it was doubtless a royal hunting ground, *terra regis* and *silva regis*, for spoiling which by fire as for killing the game therein fines must be paid. These royal hunting grounds, of which the great Forest in Hampshire was certainly not the least, only became legal "forests" with the Conquest, when they were placed under a new Forest law of extraordinary harshness, which even in the Conqueror's time indeed demanded an eye or a hand for the taking of game, and in the days of the Red King the life of a man for the life of a beast.

The Conqueror, as we know, greatly enlarged the old "royal hunting ground" here in Hampshire when he made the New Forest, and that act of his which brought an immensely larger area than of old under a new and incredibly harsher forest law gradually produced a legend of devastation and depopulation here which, as I have already said, can no longer be accepted as true. Henry of Huntingdon (1084?-1155) asserts that "to form the hunting ground of the New Forest he (William) caused churches and villages to be destroyed, and, driving out the people, made it a habitation for deer." It is true that the Conqueror forged a charter purporting to date from Canute in which the king's sole right to take beasts of chase was asserted, and to this he appealed as justifying his harsh new laws; but it is untrue that he depopulated and destroyed a thriving district to make a wilderness for the red deer. "We shall find," says Warner, "that the lands comprised in this tract (the New Forest) appear from their low valuation in the time of the Confessor to have been always unproductive in comparison with other parts of the kingdom; and that notwithstanding this pretended devastation they sunk (in many instances) but little in their value after their afforestation. So that the

fact seems to have been, William, finding this tract in a barren state and yielding but little profit, and being strongly attached to the pleasures of the chase, converted it into a royal forest, without being guilty of those violences to the inhabitants of which Henry of Huntingdon, Malmesbury, Walter Mapes, and others complain.”

Of this great New Forest, Lyndhurst was made the capital and the administrative centre, and such it is still. In Domesday Book we read: “The King himself holds Lyndhurst, which appertained to Amesbury, which is of the King’s farm.”

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The King granted a small part, namely, one virgate to “Herbert the Forester,” before 1086, and this Herbert is generally supposed to have been the ancestor of those Lyndhursts who for so long held the wardenship of the Forest. The King’s house, a fine building of Queen Anne’s time, is the successor of the old royal lodge at least as old as the fourteenth century, and is now occupied by the Deputy Surveyor of the Forest. In the Verderers’ Hall close by, the forest courts of the verderers are still held. There, too, may be seen the old dock, certain trophies of the chase and “the stirrup-iron of William Rufus,” really the seventeenth century gauge “for the dogs allowed to be kept in the forest without expeditation, the ‘lawing’ being carried out on all ‘great dogs’ that could not pass through the stirrup.”

Lyndhurst itself, as we see it to-day, is devoid of interest; even the church dates but from 1863, and its greatest treasure is the wall-painting by Lord Leighton of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in the chancel. A church, a chapelry of Minstead, certainly stood here in the thirteenth century, but was destroyed, and a Georgian building erected—in its turn to give place to the church we see.

Lyndhurst, though almost without interest itself, is undoubtedly the best centre for exploring the Forest, or, at any rate, perhaps the most beautiful and certainly the most interesting parts of it. So by many a byway I went northward to Minstead in Malwood, where I found a most curious church, rather indeed a house than a church, with dormer windows in the roof, an enormous three-decker pulpit within, galleries, and two great pews, one with a fireplace, and I know not what other quaint rubbish of the eighteenth century. All this I found enchanting, and more especially because the nave and chancel seemed to me to be originally of the thirteenth century, and certainly the font is Norman. But the church with its eighteenth-century tower is perhaps the most amazing conglomeration of the work of all periods since the twelfth century to be found in southern England.

From Minstead I went on up the Bartley water to Stone Cross, nearly four hundred feet over the Forest, from which by good fortune I saw the mighty Abbey of Romsey in the valley of the Test, where I intended to sleep. Then I went down past Castle Malwood to where stands Rufus’ Stone. There I read:

“Here stood the oak-tree on which an arrow shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell at a stag glanced and struck King William II., surnamed Rufus, on the breast, of which stroke he instantly died on the 2nd August 1100.” “King William II., surnamed Rufus, being slain as before related, was laid in a cart belonging to one Purkess and drawn from hence to Winchester and buried in the cathedral church of that city.” “That where an event so memorable had happened might not hereafter be unknown this stone was set up by John Lord Delaware who had



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seen the tree growing in this place anno 1745. "This stone having been much mutilated and the inscriptions on the three sides defaced, this more durable memorial with the original inscription was erected in the year 1841 by him. Sturges Bourne, warden."

The memorial and inscription are of iron.

The most famous thing that ever befell in the New Forest was this strange murder or misfortune which cost the Red King his life. It haunts the whole forest, and rightly understood fills it with meaning and can never have been or be far from the thoughts of anyone who wanders there, even as I have done in the excellent days of Spring.

[Illustration: IN THE NEW FOREST]

No less than three members of the Conqueror's family were killed in the New Forest; first Richard, one of his sons, then another Richard, bastard son of Duke Robert of Normandy, this in May 1100; and in August of the same year, his son and successor William, surnamed Rufus. All these deaths are said to have been caused by accidents, all were caused by arrows; it is a strange thing.

All we really know about the death of William Rufus may be found in the English "Chronicle." "On the morrow was the King William shot off with an arrow from his own men in hunting." Whether the arrow, as tradition has it, was shot by Walter Tyrrel or no, whether it was aimed at the King or no, can never now be known. The most graphic account of the affair is given to us by Ordericus Vitalis, who, however, was not only not present, but at best can have been but a child at the time, for he died in 1150. For all that he doubtless had access to sources of which we now know nothing, and the whole atmosphere of his story suggests that, as we might expect, the King was murdered because of his general harshness and oppression, perhaps especially exemplified in his Forest Law. It was he and not the Conqueror who demanded the life of a man for that of a beast; his father had been content with an eye or a limb.

It would seem, according to Ordericus, that the whole country was full of stories of terrible visions concerning the end of the King long before his sudden death. Henry of Huntingdon, for instance, tells us that "blood had been seen to spring from the ground in Berkshire," and adds that "the King was rightly cut off in the midst of his injustice," for "England could not breathe under the burdens laid upon it." Ordericus himself says that "terrible visions respecting him were seen in the monasteries and cathedrals by the clergy of both classes, and becoming the talk of the vulgar in the market-places and churchyards, could not escape the notice of the King."

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He then gives a particular instance: "A certain monk of good repute and still better life, who belonged to the Abbey of St Peter at Gloucester, related that he had a dream in the visions of the night to this effect: 'I saw,' he said, 'the Lord Jesus seated on a lofty throne, and the glorious host of heaven, with the company of the saints, standing round. But while, in my ecstasy, I was lost in wonder, and my attention deeply fixed on such an extraordinary spectacle, I beheld a virgin resplendent with light cast herself at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and humbly address to Him this petition, "O Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, for which Thou didst shed Thy precious blood when hanging on the Cross, look with an eye of compassion on Thy people, which now groan under the yoke of William. Thou avenger of wickedness, and most just judge of all men, take vengeance I beseech Thee on my behalf of this William and deliver me out of his hands, for as far as lies in his power he hath polluted and grievously afflicted me." The Lord replied, "Be patient and wait awhile, and soon thou wilt be fully avenged of him." I trembled at hearing this and doubt not that the divine anger presently threatens the King; for I understood that the cries of the holy virgin, our mother the Church, had reached the ears of the Almighty by reason of the robberies, the foul adulteries and the heinous crimes of all sorts which the King and his courtiers cease not daily of committing against the divine law.'"

On being informed of this, the venerable Abbot Serle wrote letters which he despatched in a friendly spirit from Gloucester informing the King very distinctly of all the monk had seen in his vision.

William of Malmesbury also records that the King himself the day before he died, dreamed that he was let blood by a surgeon, and that the stream, reaching to heaven, clouded the light and intercepted the day. Calling on St Mary for protection he suddenly awoke, commanded a light to be brought and forbade his attendants to leave him. They then watched with him several hours until daylight. Shortly after, just as the day began to dawn, a certain foreign monk told Robert Fitz Haman one of the principal nobility that he had that night dreamed a strange and fearful dream about the King: "That he had come into a certain church, with menacing and insolent gesture as was his custom, looking contemptuously on the standers by. Then violently seizing the Crucifix he gnawed the arms and almost tore away the legs; that the image endured this for a long time, but at length struck the King with its foot, in such a manner that he fell backwards; from his mouth as he lay prostrate issued so copious a flame that the volumes of smoke touched the very stars. Robert, thinking that this dream ought not to be neglected as he was intimate with him, immediately related it to the King. William, repeatedly laughing, exclaimed, 'He is a monk and dreams for money like a monk; give him a hundred shillings.'"

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"Nevertheless," adds William of Malmesbury, "being greatly moved, the King hesitated a long while whether he should go out to hunt as he designed; his friends persuading him not to suffer the truth of the dreams to be tried at his personal risk. In consequence he abstained from the chase before dinner, dispelling the uneasiness of his unregulated mind by serious business. They relate that having plentifully regaled that day, he soothed his cares with a more than usual quantity of wine."

All this, I suppose, befell in the Castle of Malwood.

After dinner the King prepared to hunt. "Being in great spirits," says Ordericus, "he was joking with his attendants while his boots were being laced, when an armourer came and presented him six arrows. The King immediately took them with great satisfaction, praising the work, and unconscious of what was to happen, kept four of them himself and held out the other two to Walter Tyrrel. "It is but right," said he, "that the sharpest arrows should be given to him who knows best how to inflict mortal wounds with them." This Tyrrel was a French knight of good extraction, the wealthy lord of the castles of Poix and Pontoise, filling a high place among the nobles, and a gallant soldier; he was therefore admitted to familiar intimacy with the King and became his constant companion. Meanwhile as they were idly talking and the King's household attendants were assembled about him, a monk of Gloucester presented himself and delivered to the King a letter from his abbot. Having read it, the King burst out laughing and said merrily to the knight just mentioned, "Walter, do what I told you." The knight replied, "I will, my lord." Slighting then the warnings of the elders, and forgetting that the heart is lifted up before a fall, he said respecting the letter he had received, "I wonder what has induced my lord Serlo to write me in this strain, for I really believe he is a worthy abbot and respectable old man. In the simplicity of his heart he transmits to me, who have enough besides to attend to, the dreams of his snoring monks and even takes the trouble to commit them to writing and send them a long distance. Does he think that I follow the example of the English, who will defer their journey or their business on account of the dreams of a parcel of wheezing old women?"

"Thus speaking, he hastily rose and mounting his horse rode at full speed to the forest. His brother, Count Henry with William de Bretanel, and other distinguished persons, followed him, and having penetrated into the woods the hunters dispersed themselves in various directions according to custom. The King and Walter Tyrrel posted themselves with a few others in one part of the forest and stood with their weapons in their hands eagerly watching for the coming of the game, when a stag suddenly running between them the King quitted his station and Walter shot an arrow. It grazed the beast's grizzly back, but glancing from it mortally wounded the king, who stood within its range. He immediately fell to the ground, and, alas! suddenly expired."

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William of Malmesbury gives a somewhat different account of the King's death. "The sun was declining when the King, drawing his bow and letting fly an arrow; slightly wounded a stag which passed before him; and keenly gazing followed it still running a long time with his eyes, holding up his hand to keep off the power of the sun's rays. At this instant, Walter, conceiving a noble exploit, which was, while the King's attention was otherwise occupied, to transfix another stag which by chance came near him, unknowingly and without power to prevent it—oh gracious God!—pierced his breast with a fatal arrow. On receiving the wound the King uttered not a word; but breaking off the shaft of the weapon where it projected from his body, fell upon the wound by which he accelerated his death. Walter immediately ran up, but as he found him senseless and speechless he leaped swiftly upon his horse, and escaped by spurring him to his utmost speed. Indeed, there was none to pursue him; some consented in his flight, and others pitied him, and all were intent on other matters. Some began to fortify their dwellings; others to plunder, and the rest to look out for a new king. A few countrymen conveyed the body, placed on a cart, to the cathedral at Winchester, the blood dripping from it all the way. Here it was committed to the ground within the tower, attended by many of the nobility though lamented by few. Next year [really in 1107] the tower fell; though I forbear to mention the different opinions on this subject, lest I should seem to assent too readily to unsupported trifles, more especially as the building might have fallen through imperfect construction even though he had never been buried there. He died in the year of our Lord's Incarnation, 1100, of his reign the thirteenth, on the fourth before the nones of August, aged above forty years."

So died the Red King. Whose arrow it was that slew him, whether it came aforethought from an English bow or by chance from that of Walter Tyrrel, we shall never know. The Red King fell in the New Forest and there was no one in all broad England to mourn him. William of Malmesbury says that a few countrymen carried his body to Winchester. We may well ask why not to Malwood Castle, which was close by? We may ask, but we shall get no answer. According to a local legend it was a charcoal burner of Minstead, Purkess by name, who found the King's body and bore it away, and ever after his descendants have remained in Minstead, neither richer nor poorer than their ancestor. As for Sir Walter, he is said to have sworn to the Prior of St Denys de Poix, a monastery of his foundation, that he knew nothing of the King's death. Leland tells us that in his day not only did the tree still exist against which, according to him, the arrow glanced off and struck the King, but a little chapel remained there then very old, in which Mass was wont to be offered for the repose of the King's soul. I wish that I might have seen it, for it would have pleased me.

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Now when I had well considered all this, not without an orison for that misguided King, I set off for Cadnam, and holding now only to the road, marching fast, for it was late, I came over the ridge beyond Black water into the valley of the Test, and so entered Romsey a little after it was dark.

[Illustration: ROMSEY ABBEY]

Romsey, as I soon found on the following morning, has nothing at all to offer the traveller except one of the most solemn and noble Norman churches in all England, monastic too, for it was the church of the great Benedictine Nunnery of Our Lady of Romsey. It is impossible to exaggerate the impression this astonishing Norman pile, of vast size and unsurpassed age and reverence, makes upon the traveller. One seems in looking upon it to see before his eyes the foundation of England. I cannot hope to describe it or to convey to another what it meant to me. It is at once grandiose and reverent, of enormous, almost incredible size and weight and strength larger than many a cathedral, heavy as a kingdom, stronger than a thousand years. It seems to have been hewn bodily out of the cliffs or the great hills.

It is enormously old. The house was founded or perhaps refounded more than a millennium ago by Edward the Elder in 907; his daughter was abbess here, and here was buried. In 967 Edgar his grandson gave the house to the Benedictines. It remained English after the Conquest, for William seems not to have dealt with it and in 1086 the sister of Edgar Atheling became abbess. Out of it Henry I. chose his bride that Abbess's niece Maud a novice of Our Lady of Romsey. Said I not well that it was as the foundation of England?

We know little of the Abbey for near a hundred years after that, and then in 1160 the daughter of King Stephen, Mary, whose uncle, Henry of Blois, was Bishop of Winchester, became abbess, and it was decided to rebuild the place. Thus the great Norman church we have, arose in the new England of the twelfth century. Mary, princess and abbess, was, however, false to her vows. How long she was abbess we do not know, perhaps only a few months or even days. At any rate, in the very year she became abbess, the year of her mother's death,[Footnote: See supra under Faversham.] she forsook her trust and married the son of the Earl of Flanders, and by him she had two daughters. Then came repentance; she separated from her husband and returned to Romsey as a penitent.

The great religious house which had grown up thus with England, continued its great career right through the Middle Ages, about forty nuns serving there in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though this number had dwindled to twenty-three at the time of the Surrender in 1539. How this surrender was made we do not know; but whether with or without trouble the result was the same, the great convent was utterly destroyed. Many of the lands passed to Sir Thomas Seymour, and the people of Romsey, who had always had a right to the north aisle of the church, which indeed they

enlarged at their own expense in 1403, bought the whole from the Crown, for one hundred pounds, in 1554.

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I have said that there was undoubtedly a great Saxon church here, where the Norman Abbey of Romsey now stands, and part of the foundations of this great building were discovered in 1900. That building, founded by Edward the Elder, rebuilt by Edgar and restored by Canute, stood till the building of the present church in 1125. The older part of this building (1125-1150) is to the east of the nave, and consists of sanctuary and transepts: the nave was begun towards the end of the twelfth century, the church being finished in the beginning of the thirteenth. The church is cruciform, two hundred and sixty-three feet long and one hundred and thirty-one wide; it consists of a great sanctuary with aisles ending in chapels, square without, apsidal within, wide transepts each having an eastern apsidal chapel, nave with aisles, and over the crossing a low tower which was once higher, having now a seventeenth century polygonal belfry. To the east of the sanctuary stood two long chapels destroyed since the Suppression. We have here, as I have said, one of the most glorious Norman buildings in the world, Norman work which at the western end passes into the most delightful Early English. The cloister stood to the south of the nave, to the north stood of old the parish church, growing out of the north aisle as it were, built so in 1403. This has been destroyed and the north aisle wall has been rebuilt as in 1150.

The church possesses more than one thing of great interest. The old high-altar stone is still in existence, and is now used as the communion table. In the south transept is a fine thirteenth century effigy of a lady, carved in purbeck. At the end of the south aisle of the choir is a remarkable stone Crucifix that evidently belonged to the old Saxon church; about the Cross stand Our Lady, St John and the Roman soldiers, above are angels. A later Rood is to be seen in the eastern wall of the old cloister which abutted on to the transept; this dates from the twelfth century. In the north aisle of the choir is a very fine painting which used to stand above the high altar in Catholic times. There we see still the Resurrection of Our Lord with two angels, above are ten saints, among them St Benedict and St Scholastica, St Gregory, St Augustine of Canterbury, St Francis and St Clare. This fine work, which of old showed, above, Christ in Glory, is of the end of the fourteenth century.

Now when you have seen Romsey Abbey thus as it were with the head; then is the time to begin to get it by heart. In all South England you may find no greater glory than this, nor one more entirely our very own, at least our own as we were but yesterday. It may be that such a place as Romsey Abbey means nothing to us and can never mean anything again. But I'll not believe it. For to think so is to despair of England, to realise that England of my heart has really passed away.



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There are two ways by which a man may go from Romsey, in the valley of the Test to Winchester, in the valley of the Itchen. The more beautiful, for it gives you, if you will, not only Otterbourne, Shawford and Compton to the west of the stream, but Twyford to the east, the Queen of Hampshire villages, is that which makes for the Roman road between Winchester and Southampton, and following up the valley of the Itchen enters Winchester at last, by the South Gate, after passing St Cross in the meads. The shorter road, though far less lovely, is in some ways the more interesting; for it passes Merdon Castle and Hursley, where the son of Oliver Cromwell lies, and for this cause I preferred it.

Merdon Castle, of which some few scanty ruins remain, was built by the Bishop Henry of Blois about 1138, and no doubt it served its purpose in the anarchy of Stephen's time, but thereafter it seems to have become rather a palace than a fortress. The manor of Merdon had always belonged to the See of Winchester, it is said, since 636, when it was granted to the Bishop by King Kinegils. It remained with the Bishopric until the Reformation, when it was granted to Sir Philip Hoby to be restored to the Church by Queen Mary, and then again regranted to the Hoby family about 1559. The manor had passed, however, by 1638 to Richard Major, a miser and a tyrant, who "usurped authority over his tentant" and more especially, for he was a fanatic Roundhead, "when King Charles was put to death and Oliver Cromwell was Protector of England and Richard Major of his Privy Council, and Noll's eldest son, Richard, was married to Mr Major's Doll." Thus Merdon came into the Cromwell family, another piece of Church property upon which that very typical sixteenth-century family had already grown exceedingly wealthy. Richard Cromwell (as he called himself) lived at Merdon a good deal, till he succeeded his father in the usurped governance of England. But when he was turned out in 1660 he found it safer to return to Merdon, but only for a little while, France offering him, as he wisely thought, a more secure asylum, not only from a charge of High Treason, but from his creditors. While he was abroad, we learn he went under another name; not a new experience for one of his family, which seems to have had no legitimate name of its own, its members, Oliver amongst them, signing in important personal matters such as getting hold of the dowries of their wives, "Williams *alias* Cromwell." It would, therefore, be interesting to know under what alias this latest descendant of the infamous minister of Henry VIII. corresponded with the wife and family he had left at Merdon. He did not return to Merdon till 1705, upon the death of his son Oliver. His wife had died in 1676, and his time was soon to come. He died at Cheshunt in 1712, and was buried with considerable pomp in Hursley church, where we may still see his monument, moved from the old church and re-erected in that built by the efforts of John Keble, vicar of this parish for thirty years, from 1836 to 1866.



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And so considering all these strange things I went on to Winchester.

### CHAPTER XX

#### WINCHESTER

I do not know what it is that moves me so deeply in the old cities of Southern England, in Canterbury, Rochester, Chichester, most of all, perhaps, in Winchester, unless it be that they sum up in a way nothing else can do the England that is surely and irrevocably passing away. How reverently we approach them, with what hesitation and misgiving we try to express what we feel about them! They are indeed the sanctuaries of England, sanctuaries in which it is wiser to pray than to exult, since their beauty and antiquity, their repose and quietness, fill us with an extraordinary uneasiness and amazement, a kind of nostalgia which nothing really our own can satisfy. For if Winchester appeals to us as the symbol of England, it is not the England of our day for which she stands. Let Manchester or Sheffield stand for that, places so unquiet, so meanly wretched and hopeless, that no one has ever thought of them without a kind of fear and misery. Alas, they are the reality, while Winchester gradually fades year by year into a mere dream city, as it were Camelot indeed, too good to be true, established, if at all, rather in the clouds, or in our hearts, than upon the earth we tread. And if in truth she stands for something that was once our own, it is for something we are gradually leaving behind us, discarding and forgetting, something that after four centuries of disputation and anarchy no man any longer believes capable of realisation here and now. Yet Winchester endures in her beauty, her now so precarious loveliness, and while she endures it is still possible to refuse to despair of England. For she is co-eval with us; before we knew ourselves or were aware of our destiny she stood beside the Itchen within the shadow of her hills east and west, in the meads and the water meadows. She saw the advent of the Roman, she claims to be Arthur's chief city, as later she was the throne of the Saxon kings; in her council chamber England was first named England.

Of what indeed she was before the Romans came and drew us within their great administration, we are largely ignorant; but we know that they established here a town of considerable importance, which they called Venta Belgarum, larger than Silchester, if we may believe that the mediaeval walls stand upon Roman foundations, and certainly a centre of Roman administrative life. Four Roman roads undoubtedly found in her their goal and terminus, coming into her Forum from Sorbiodunum (Old Sarum) upon the west, from Calleva (Silchester) upon the north, from Porchester upon the south, and from Clausentum upon the south-west. Her chief Temple in Roman times, before the advent of Christianity, was that of Apollo, which is said to have occupied the site of the Cathedral, close by was the Temple of Concord, while it is impossible

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to believe that a town so plentifully supplied by nature with water was without considerable baths. Legend has it indeed that Winchester was the capital of the King Lucius, who is said in the second century to have introduced Christianity into Britain. The first Christian church, which he erected, traditionally stood upon the site of the Cathedral. But alas, Lucius is a myth, his cathedral a church never built with hands. We know nothing of any Christian church in Roman Winchester, and though we may be sure that such a building certainly existed, no excavation has so far laid bare its foundations. Indeed we are almost as ignorant of Roman as we are of Celtic Winchester. Even the lines of its walls are conjectural, we suppose them to be the same as those of the Middle Age, yet such foundations of Roman buildings as have been discovered, lie not only within an area much more restricted than that which the mediaeval walls enclosed, but in certain instances outside them. No discoveries of Roman foundations have been made to the north of the High Street. This fact, however, formidable though it be, does not of itself prove that the Roman walls did not coincide with the mediaeval fortifications; it is even probable that they did, except at the south-west corner, where stood the mediaeval castle. In any case, the Roman walls, built we may think in the fourth century, enclosed an irregular quadrilateral, and possessed four gates out of which issued those four roads to Old Sarum, to Silchester, to Clausentum and to Porchester.

In the beginning of the fifth century the Roman administration which had long been failing, to which one may think the building of those walls bears witness, collapsed altogether, and with the final departure of the Legions full of our youth and strength, Britain was left defenceless. What happened to Winchester in the appalling confusion which followed, we shall never know. It is said that in 495, three generations that is to say after the departure of the Legions for the defence of Rome, Cerdic and his son, Cymric, landed upon the southern coast, and presently seized Winchester within whose broken walls they established themselves. In the year 519, according to the "Saxon Chronicle," "Cerdic and Cymric obtained the kingdom of the West Saxons; and the same year they fought against the Britons where it is now named Cerdicsford. And from that time forth the royal offspring of the West Saxons reigned." That is all we know about it, and it is not enough upon which to build an historical narrative or from which to draw any clear idea even of what befell. All we can say with any sort of certainty is that the Saxons, through long years of probably spasmodic fighting, very gradually established themselves in southern England, and out of it carved a dominion, the kingdom of Wessex, whose capital was Winchester. Until the year 635 this kingdom, such as it was, was pagan. In that year St Birinus converted the West Saxons and their King

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Kynegils to Christianity. Though Kynegils seems immediately to have begun to build a church in Winchester in which he established monks and endowed it with the whole of the land for a space of seven miles round the city, Winchester did not become an episcopal See until the year 662. Till then, Dorchester in the Thames Valley had been the seat of the Bishop of Wessex, but in that year Kynewalch, the son and successor of Kynegils, completed the church of Winchester, in which he had been crowned, and his father buried, as for the most part were their successors, and there he established a bishop.

It was now that Winchester began her great career. She rose with the fortunes of the Wessex kingdom until, in the time of Egbert, she appears as the capital of the new kingdom of England which is so named, and for the first time in her witan.

The com kyng Egbryth  
Ant wyth batyle ant fyht  
Made al Englund yhol  
Falle to ys oune dol;  
Ant sethe he reignede her  
Ahte ant tuenti folle yer:  
At Wynchestre lyggeth ys bon,  
Buried in a marble-ston.

Egbert triumphed and established England none too soon. As early as the year 787, according to the "Saxon Chronicle," "ships of the Northmen" had reached our southern coasts, and Egbert had scarcely named his new kingdom when they imperilled it. His son, Ethelwulf, who came to his throne in 836, was to see Winchester itself stormed before the invaders were beaten off; but beaten off they were, and it was in Winchester that Alfred was to reign, to give forth his laws and to plan his campaigns against the same enemy. He was victorious, as we know, and at Ethandune not only broke his pagan foes, but dragged Guthrum, their leader, to baptism. And in his capital he made and kept the only record we have of the Dark Ages in England, the "Saxon Chronicle," begun in Wolvesey Palace; founded the famous nunnery of St Mary to the north-east of the Cathedral in the meads; and provided for the foundation, by Edward his son, of the great New Minster close by, where his bones at last were to be laid. The three great churches with their attendant buildings must have been the noblest group to be seen in the England of that day. Thus Winchester flourished more than ever secure in its position as capital, so that Athelstan, we read, established there six mints, and Edgar, reigning there, made "Winchester measure" the standard for the whole kingdom: "and let one money pass throughout the king's dominions, and let no man refuse; and let one measure and one weight pass, such as is observed at London and Winchester."

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Such was Winchester at the beginning of the ninth century; before the end of that century she was to suffer violence from the Danes; and in the first years of the tenth century to fall with the rest of England into their absolute power, and to see a Danish king, Canute, crowned in her Cathedral. There, too, at last, that Danish king was buried. He was a generous conqueror, and a great benefactor to his capital, and with him passes much of the splendour of Winchester. Edward the Confessor, though hallowed at Winchester, looked upon London as his capital and there built the great abbey which was thenceforth to see the crowning of England's kings. For St Edward was at heart a Norman, and Winchester, beside summing up in itself all the splendour of pre-Norman England, had been given by Ethelred to the widow of Canute, Emma, the mother of St Edward. She allied herself with the great Earl Godwin to oppose the Norman influence which St Edward had brought into England, and it was only when she died that the king came again into Winchester for Easter, and to hold a solemn court. During that Easter week Earl Godwin died, and was buried in the Cathedral. He was the last champion of Saxon England to lie there.

Nothing marks the change that England had passed through during the first half of the eleventh century more certainly than the fact that William Duke of Normandy was crowned King of England, not in the old Minster of Winchester but in that of St Peter, Westminster, which Pope Nicholas II. in King Edward's time had constituted as the place of the inauguration of the kings of England. It is true that William was later crowned again in Winchester, as were Stephen and Coeur de Lion, but the fact remains that from the time of William the Conqueror down to our own day, as the Papal Bull had ordered, Westminster and not Winchester has been the coronation church of our kings. This Bull marks, as it were, the beginning of the decline of Winchester. Little by little, in the following centuries, it was to cease to be the capital of England. Little by little London was to take its place, a thing finally achieved by Edward I., when he removed the royal residence from Winchester.

Norman Winchester was, however, by no means less splendid than had been the old capital of the Saxon kings. There Domesday Book was compiled, and there it was kept in the Treasury of the Norman kings, and the only name which it gives itself is that of the "Book of Winchester." There the great Fair of St Giles was established by the Conqueror, which attracted merchants from every part of Europe, and there in 1079 Bishop Walkelin began, from the foundations, a new cathedral church completed in 1093, of which the mighty transepts still remain. In 1109 the monks of New Minster, which had suffered greatly from fire and mismanagement, removed to a great new house without the walls upon the north, and since this new site was called Hyde Meads, New Minster was thenceforth known as the Abbey of Hyde; and certainly after the fire in 1141, if not before, the great Benedictine Nunnery of St Mary was rebuilt.

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As for the Castle of Wolvesey, Bishop Henry of Blois rebuilt it in 1138. It was indeed in his time that Winchester suffered the most disastrous of all its sieges, as we may believe, and this at the hands of the Empress Matilda in 1141. The greater part of the city is then said to have been destroyed; the new Abbey of Hyde was burned down not to be rebuilt till 1182; the old Nunnery of St Mary was destroyed also by fire; and we are told of more than forty churches which then perished. "Combustibles were hurled from the Bishop's Castle," William of Malmesbury tells us, "in the houses of the townspeople, who, as I have said, rather wished success to the empress than to the bishop, which caught and burned the whole abbey of nuns within the city and the monastery which is called Hyde without the walls. Here was an image of Our Lord crucified, wrought with a profusion of gold and silver and precious stones, through the pious solicitude of Canute, who was formerly king and presented it. This being seized by the flames and thrown to the ground was afterwards stripped of its ornaments at the command of the Legate himself; more than five hundred marks of silver and thirty of gold, which were found in it, served for a largess to the soldiers."

It would, perhaps, be untrue to say that Winchester never really recovered from the appalling sack and pillage which followed the flight of Matilda; but it is true to assert that time was fighting against her, and that the thirteenth century did not bring the splendid gifts to her that it brought to so many of our cities. One great ceremony, the last of its kind, however, took place in her Cathedral in 1194; the second coronation of Coeur de Lion. "Then King Richard," we read, "being clothed in his royal robes, with the crown upon his head, holding in his right hand a royal sceptre which terminated in a cross, and in his left hand a golden wand with the figure of a dove at the top of it, came forth from his apartment in the priory, being conducted on the right hand by the Bishop of Ely, his Chancellor, and on the left by the Bishop of London. ... The silken canopy was held on four lances over the King by four Earls. ... The King being thus conducted into the Cathedral and up to the High Altar, there fell upon his knees, and devoutly received the archbishop's solemn benediction. He was then led to the throne, which was prepared for him, on the south side of the choir. ... When Mass was finished the King was led back to his apartments with the solemnities aforesaid. He then laid aside his robes and crown, put on other robes and a crown that were much lighter, and so proceeded to dinner, which was served in the monks' refectory."

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Winchester's next glory was the birth of Henry III., known to the day of his death as Henry of Winchester—this in 1207. In 1213 the city was the scene of the reconciliation of King John and Archbishop Stephen, but in 1265 she was sacked by the younger de Montfort, and this seems finally to have achieved her overthrow. When Edward I. came to the throne in 1272 he abandoned Winchester. The city never regained its place, London was too strong for it both geographically and economically. Its trade, which remained very considerable until the latter part of the fourteenth century, chiefly owing to its wool and cloth, was, however, slowly declining, and politically the history of the city becomes a mere series of incidents, among the more splendid of which were the marriage of Henry IV. with Joan of Navarre in 1403; the reception of the French ambassadors by Henry V. before Agincourt in 1415; the rejoicings for the birth in Winchester of Arthur Tudor the son of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York in 1457; the meeting of the Emperor Charles V. and Henry VIII. in 1522; and the marriage of Mary Tudor to Philip of Spain in 1554. At that great ceremony, the last Catholic rite the old Cathedral was to witness, there were present, according to the Venetian Envoy, "the ambassadors from the Emperor, from the Kings of the Romans and Bohemia, from your Serenity, from Savoy, Florence, and Ferrara and many agents of sovereign princes. The proclamation was entitled thus: Philip and Mary, by the grace of God, King and Queen of England, France, Naples, Jerusalem, Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Prince of Spain, Archduke of Austria, *etc.*"

But when Queen Elizabeth visited the city in 1560 (she was there four times during her reign), she said to the mayor, "Yours Mr Mayor is a very ancient city"; and he answered, "It has abeen, your Majesty, it has abeen," and in spite of bad grammar he spoke but the truth, Winchester's great days were over. Yet it saw the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603, and the town having been taken by Waller in 1644 the Castle was besieged by Cromwell himself in 1645. "I came to Winchester," he writes, "on the Lord's Day the 28th of September. After some disputes with the Governour we entered the town. I summoned the Castle; was denied; whereupon we fell to prepare batteries, which we could not perfect until Friday following. Our battery was six guns; which being finished, after firing one round, I sent in a second summons for a treaty; which they refused, whereupon we went on with our work and made a breach in the wall near the Black Tower; which after about two hundred shot we thought stormable; and purposed on Monday morning to attempt it. On Sunday morning about ten of the clock the Governour beat a parley, desiring to treat, I agreed unto it, and sent Colonel Hammond and Major Harrison in to him, who agreed upon these enclosed articles."



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Cromwell presently departed and the city caught a glimpse of the Royal Martyr, the victim of the great families, as he passed from Hurst Castle to Windsor and the scaffold in Whitehall. With the Restoration, which was most gallantly welcomed in the old royal city, Charles II. came to Winchester, and having been burnt out at Newmarket was, according to Evelyn, "all the more earnest to render Winchester the seat of his autumnal diversions for the future, designing a palace there where the ancient castle stood.... The surveyor has already begun the foundation for a palace estimated to cost £35,000...." But Charles died too soon to finish this new house, which, it is said, Queen Anne wished to complete, liking Winton well, but again death intervened.

In spite of these royal fancies, however, Winchester, which had suffered badly in the plague of 1667, continued to decline in importance and in population, and to depend more and more upon the two great establishments which remained to it, the Cathedral, founded by Kynegils in 635 and re-established under a new Protestant administration in the sixteenth century, and the College of St Mary of Winchester founded by William of Wykeham in connection with the College of St Mary, Winton, in Oxford, called New College, for the education of youth and the advancement of learning. Winchester is, of course, as it ever has been, the county-town of Hampshire, but it still maintains itself as it has done now these many years chiefly by reason of these two great establishments.

Certainly to-day the traveller's earliest steps are turned towards these two buildings, and first to that which is in its foundation near eight hundred years the older—the Cathedral church once of St Swithin, the Bishop and Confessor (852-863) and now since the Reformation of the Holy Trinity.

To come out of the sloping High Street past the ancient city Cross, through the narrow passage-way into the precincts, and to pass down that great avenue of secular limes across the Close to the great porch of the Cathedral, is to come by an incomparable approach to perhaps the most noble and most venerable church left to us in England. The most venerable—not I think the most beautiful. No one remembering the Abbey of Westminster can claim that for it, and then, though it possesses the noblest Norman work in England and the utmost splendour of the Perpendicular, it lacks almost entirely and certainly the best of the Early English. Its wonder lies in its size and its antiquity. It is now the longest mediaeval church not only in England, but in Europe, though once it was surpassed by old St Paul's. It is five hundred and twenty-six feet long, but it lacks height, and perhaps rightly, at least I would not have it other than it is, its greatness lying in its monotonous depressed length and weight, an enormous primeval thing lying there in the meads beside the river. Winchester itself might seem indeed to know nothing of it. The city does not rejoice in it as do Lincoln and York in their great churches; here is nothing of the sheer joy of Salisbury, a Magnificat by Palestrina; the church of Winchester is without delight, it has supremely the mystery and monotony of the plainsong, the true chant of the monks, the chorus of an army, with all the appeal of just that, its immense age and half plaintive glory, which yet never really becomes music.

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And Winchester, too, has all and more than all, the surprise of the plainsong; the better you know it the more you are impressed. No one certainly has ever come by the narrow way out of the High Street, down the avenue of limes to the West Front without being disappointed; but no one thus disappointed has ever entered into the church without astonishment, wonder and complete satisfaction. It was not always so. That long nave was once forty feet longer and was flanked upon either side by a Norman tower as at Ely. Must one regret their loss? No, the astonishment of the nave within makes up for everything; there is no grander interior in the world, nor anywhere anything at all like it. Up that vast Perpendicular nave one looks far and far away into the height, majesty and dominion of the glorious Norman transept, and beyond into the light of the sanctuary. It has not the beauty of Westminster Abbey, nor the exquisite charm of Wells, but it has a majesty and venerable nobility all its own that I think no other church in England can match.

Of the old Saxon church, so far as we really know, the only predecessor of the present church, nothing really remains. This, as I have said, had been founded by King Kynegils upon his conversion, by St Birinus in 635. We know very little about it, except that it was enlarged or rebuilt in the middle of the tenth century by St Aethwold, and if we may believe the poetical description of Wolstan, we shall be inclined to believe the church was enlarged, for it appears to have been a very complex building with a lofty central tower, having a spire and weathercock, in accordance with the Bull of Pope Urban, and a crypt, both the work of St Elphege. This church, which, like its successor until the Reformation, was served by monks, stood till the year 1093, when it was destroyed as useless, for the new Norman church of Bishop Walkelin begun in 1079 was then far enough advanced to be used. It is thus practically certain that the two churches did not stand on the same site, the newer, it would seem, rising to the south of the older building. But the sacred spot which, it would seem, every church, that may ever have stood in this place, must have covered is the holy well, immediately beneath the present high altar in the crypt of the Norman building. This surely was within the Saxon building as it must have been within any church that may have stood here in Roman times?

The two great shrines of the Saxon church were, however, those of St Birinus, the Apostle of Wessex, and of St Swithun, Bishop of Winchester in the ninth century, the day of whose translation, July 15th, was, till the Reformation, a universal festival throughout England. In his honour the Saxon church, till then known as the church of SS. Peter and Paul, was rededicated in 964.



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The great Norman church which Bishop Walkelin built to take the place of the Saxon minster cannot fundamentally have differed very much from the church we see, at any rate so far as its nave and transepts were concerned. The eastern arm was, however, different. It consisted of four bays, with north and south aisles at the end of which were rectangular chapels, an apse about which the aisles ran as an ambulatory, and beyond the apse an eastern apsidal chapel. Of this church all that really remains to us is the crypt and the transept. In the crypt we divine the old eastern limb of the church, and are doubtless in the presence of the earliest work in the Cathedral. It is, however, in the double aisled transepts that we can best appreciate how very glorious that first Norman church must have been; there is nothing in England more wonderful; and so far as I know there is nothing in Europe quite to put beside them. If only the whole mighty church could have remained to us!

The first disaster that befell Bishop Walkelin's building was the fall of the central tower in 1107, which all England, at the time, attributed to the burial beneath it of William Rufus. The tower was rebuilt, though not to its original height, but in the reconstruction, the parts of the transept nearest to the tower were also rebuilt, and thus we have here two periods of Norman work; the main building of 1107 and the reconstruction after that date.

Of the Transitional work of the second half of the twelfth century very little is to be seen at Winchester. It was for the most part the period of that great Bishop Henry of Blois, and he was probably too much immersed in the brutal politics of his time, too busy building and holding his castle to give much thought to the Cathedral. The font, however, dates from his time, and perhaps a door in the north-western bay of the south transept.

The earliest Gothic work in the Cathedral is the chapel of St Sepulchre, which was built upon the northern wall of the choir before the north transept. There we may still see wall paintings of the Passion of Our Lord. Not much later is the retro-choir. This consists of three bays, and is the largest in England. It was begun in 1189 by Bishop Godfrey de Lucy, and we must admit at once that it is wholly without delight, and yet to build it the Norman apse was sacrificed. According to Mr Bond, this was probably a very popular destruction. The reversion, says he, "to the favourite square east end of English church architecture was popular in itself. Almost every Norman cathedral ended in an apse; and in the apse, high raised behind the high altar, sat the Norman bishop facing the congregation; the hateful symbol of Norman domination." This may have been so, but considering that the monastic choir of Winchester occupied not one, as the choir does to-day, but three bays of the nave from which it was separated by a vast rood screen, though the Bishop had been as high as Haman, he would have been scarcely visible to the populace in the western part of the nave. Popular or no, however, the apse was sacrificed and the low retro-choir built with the Lady Chapel in the Early English style.

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The next thing undertaken was to place in the old Norman choir the magically lovely choir stalls (1245-1315) which happily still remain to us. Perhaps it was their enthusiastic loveliness which led about 1320 to the rebuilding of the Presbytery and the lovely tabernacle in the back of the wall of the Feretory. When all this was done there remained of the old Norman church only the transepts and the nave. The transepts remain to us still, but the nave was transformed, in the very beginning of the Perpendicular time. It was transformed not rebuilt. Bishop William of Wykeham has obliterated Bishop Walkelin, but fundamentally the nave of Winchester remains Norman still. The Perpendicular work is only a lovely mask, or rather just the sunlight of the fourteenth century which has come into the dark old Norman building. The most notable change is the roof, in Norman times a flat ceiling, now a magnificent vault. But that century was not content with transforming the nave, it littered it with the first of its various delights, those chantries which are among the greatest splendours of this Cathedral, and which still, in some sort, commemorate Bishop Edingdon (1366), Bishop Wykeham (1404), Bishop Beaufort (1447), Bishop Waynflete (1416), Bishop Fox (1528) and Bishop Gardiner (1555) the last Catholic Bishop to fill the See.

[Illustration: NORTH TRANSEPT, WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL]

The transformation of the nave, which occupied full an hundred years, was not, however, the last work undertaken in the Cathedral before the change of religion. Bishop Courtenay, in the last years of the fifteenth century, lengthened the Lady Chapel, and finally Bishop Fox in the very beginning of the sixteenth century began the transformation of the early fourteenth century Presbytery, but got little further than the insertion of the Perpendicular windows. He did, however, transform the Norman aisles there, and screened them, and upon the screens in six fine Renaissance chests he gathered the dust of the old Saxon saints and kings.

But apart from its architecture the church is full of interest. Where can we find anything to match the exquisite iron screen of the eleventh century which used to guard St Swithin's shrine but which, now that is gone, covers the north-west doorway of the nave? Is there another font in England more wonderful than that square black marble basin sculptured in the twelfth century with the story of St Nicholas? Is there any series of chantries in England more complete or more lovely than these at Winchester, or anywhere a finer fourteenth century monument than that of Bishop Wykeham? Nowhere in England certainly can the glorious choir stalls be matched, nor shall we easily find a pulpit to surpass that in the choir here dating from 1520. If the restored retable over the high altar is disappointing in its sophistication, we have only to pass into the Feretory to discover certain marvellous fragments of the original reredos which

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are so beautiful that they take away our breath—that broken statue of the Madonna and Child, for instance, perhaps the loveliest piece of fourteenth century sculpture to be found in England. No, however we consider the great church of Winchester, it stands alone. As a mere building it is more tremendous and more venerable than anything now left to us upon English soil; as a burial place it possesses the dust not only of the Apostle of the heart of England but of the greatest of the Saxon kings, while beneath its mighty vault William Rufus sleeps, the only Norman king that lies in England. And as a shrine of art it still possesses incomparable things. It stands there as the Pyramids stand in the desert, a relic of a lost civilisation; but by it we may measure the modern world.

It is, too, when you consider it, utterly lonely. The revolution we call the Reformation upon which the modern world turns and turns as upon a pivot, while it spared Winchester Cathedral, though reluctantly, swept away all the buildings which surrounded it. The great monastery is gone, scarcely a sign of it remains. Nothing at all is left of the famous nunnery of St Mary. Of Wolvesey Castle there are a few beautiful ruins, of Hyde Abbey, all has been swept away, even the stones, even the bones of Alfred. Nor have the other and later religious houses, with which Winchester was full, fared better. It is difficult to find even the sites of the houses of the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Austin Friars, the Carmelites. And what remains of the College of St Elizabeth, and, but for a Norman doorway, now in Catholic hands, of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalen? Only the Hospital of St John remains at the east end of the High Street, still in possession of its fine Hall and Chapel, and the great school founded by William of Wykeham in 1382, “for seventy poor and needy scholars and clerks living college-wise in the same, studying and becoming proficient in grammaticals or the art and science of grammar.” It remains without compare, the oldest and the greatest school in England, whose daughter is Eton and whose late descendant is Harrow.

To say that the Cathedral, the College and the Hospital of St John are all that remains of mediaeval Winchester would not, perhaps, be strictly true; but it is so near the truth that one might say it without fear of contradiction. Most of the old churches even have perished. There remain St John Baptist, which can boast of Transitional arcades, and fifteenth century screen and pulpit; St Maurice with a Norman doorway; St Peter with its twelfth and thirteenth century work; St Bartholomew with some Norman remains near the site of Hyde Abbey; and in the High Street there is more than one fine old house. The fact that so little remains cannot altogether be placed to the discredit of the Reformation and the Puritan fanatics. Until the eighteenth century something remained of Hyde Abbey, much of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalen; the city walls were then practically perfect, having all their five gates, north, south, east and west, and King’s gate; now of all these only the Westgate of the thirteenth century remains to us with the King’s gate over which is the little church of St Swithin.

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But in spite of vandalism, forgetfulness and barbarism, often of the worst description as in the mere indifference and ignorance that scattered Alfred's bones, no one has ever come to Winchester without loving it, no one has ever been glad to get away. Its innumerable visitors are all its lovers and the most opposite temperaments find here common ground at last. Walpole praises it, and so does Keats. "We removed here," writes the latter in 1819 to Bailey, "for the convenience of a library, and find it an exceedingly pleasant town, enriched with a beautiful cathedral and surrounded by fresh-looking country.... Within these two months I have written fifteen hundred lines, most of which, besides many more of prior composition, you will probably see next winter. I have written two tales, one from Boccaccio called the 'Pot of Basil' and another called 'St Agnes Eve' on a popular superstition, and a third called 'Lamia' (half-finished). I have also been writing parts of my 'Hyperion,' and completed four acts of a tragedy."

"This Winchester," he writes again, "is a place tolerably well suited to me. There is a fine cathedral, a college, a Roman Catholic chapel ... and there is not one loom or anything like manufacturing beyond bread and butter in the whole city. There are a number of rich Catholics in the place. It is a respectable, ancient, aristocratic place, and moreover it contains a nunnery." "I take a walk," he writes to his family, "every day for an hour before dinner, and this is generally my walk; I go out the back gate, across one street into the cathedral yard, which is always interesting; there I pass under the trees along a paved path, pass the beautiful front of the cathedral, turn to the left under a stone doorway—then I am on the other side of the building—which, leaving behind me, I pass on through two college-like squares, seemingly built for the dwelling-place of dean and prebendaries, garnished with grass and shaded with trees; then I pass through one of the old city gates and then you are in College Street, through which I pass, and at the end thereof, crossing some meadows, and at last a country of alley gardens I arrive, that is my worship arrives, at the foundation of St Cross, which is a very interesting old place.... Then I pass across St Cross meadows till I come to the most beautiful clear river."

That walk, or rather that over the meads to St Cross, is for every lover of Winchester that which he takes most often I think, that which comes to him first in every memory of the city. Its beauty makes it sacred and its reward is an hour or more in what, when all is said, is one of the loveliest relics of the Middle Age anywhere left to us in England, I mean the hospital and church of St Cross in the meads of the Itchen.

Doubtless we are the heirs of the Ages, into our hearts and minds the Empire, the Middle Age and the Renaissance have poured their riches. Doubtless we are the flower of Time and our Age, the rose of all the Ages. That is why, in our wisdom, we have superseded such places as St Cross by our modern workhouses.

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St Cross was founded by the great Henry of Blois in 1133 for the reception, the clothing and the entertainment of thirteen poor men, decayed or past their strength, and the relief of an hundred others; it was a mediaeval workhouse, called a hospital in those days, and in its beauty and its humanity and its success it cannot, of course, compare with the institutions which, since we have not been able to abolish poverty altogether, we have everywhere established for the reception of our unfortunate brethren. It would be odd indeed if eight hundred years of Christian government, four hundred of them enjoying the infinite blessings bestowed by the Reformation and the Protestant religion, had not vastly improved these institutions for the reception of the very poor. It is, in fact, in such establishments as our workhouses that our “progress” is to be seen most clearly.

[Illustration: ST CROSS, WINCHESTER]

Well, it is something to be assured of that; and yet, let me confess it, St Cross has a curious fascination for me. I feel there, it is true, that I am in a world different from that in which we do so well to rejoice, but such is my perversity I cannot help preferring the old to the new. This is a mere prejudice, quite personal to myself, and comes perhaps of being a Christian. When I look at St Cross I am vividly reminded that this was once a Christian country with a Christian civilisation; when I look at one of our great workhouses I know that all that has passed away and that we have “progressed” so fast and so far that Christianity has been left some four hundred years behind us. St Cross is, as it were, a rock of the old Christian time still emerging from the grey sea of the modern world.

Bishop Henry de Blois intended, as I have said, to provide, by the foundation of the Hospital of St Cross, for the maintenance of thirteen poor men and the relief of an hundred others. His design was perverted in the thirteenth century, but gloriously restored by the founder of Winchester College and his successor in the Bishopric, Cardinal Beaufort, who added to the original foundation the almshouse of Noble Poverty, in which he hoped to support thirty-five brethren with two priests and three nuns to minister to the inmates. The hospital, by the merest good fortune, escaped suppression at the Reformation, but during most of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and through many years of the nineteenth its revenues were enjoyed by men who, as often as not, had never seen the place, and so the poor were robbed. Perhaps the most insolent abuse of the kind occurred between 1808 and 1815. In the former year Bishop Brownlow North, of Winchester, appointed his son Francis, later Earl of Guildford, to be master. This man appropriated the revenues of the place to the tune of fourteen hundred pounds a year, and when at last the scandal was exposed, it was discovered that between 1818 and 1838 he had taken not less than fifty-three

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thousand pounds in fines on renewing leases, a manifest and probably wilful breach of trust, that ought, one may think, to have brought him to the Old Bailey. The exposure of this rascal led to a reformation of the administration, which is now in the hands of trustees who elect thirteen brethren provided for by Bishop Henry of Blois. These wear a black gown with a silver cross. St Cross also still maintains certain brethren of Noble Poverty, and these wear a red gown, and not less than fifty poor folk, who do not live within its walls, while a very meagre wayfarer's dole is still distributed to all who pass by so far as a horn of beer and two loaves of bread will go. Each of the Brethren of St Cross beside a little house and maintenance receives five shillings a week.

All this sounds, if you be poor, too good to be true. It is too good to owe its origin to the modern world, but not extraordinary for the Middle Age, which was eagerly and even violently Christian. And just as the institution seems in itself wonderful to us in our day, so do the buildings, which, if one would really understand how gloriously strange they are, should be carefully compared with the county workhouse.

One enters the Hospital by a gate, and, passing through a small court, comes to the great gatehouse of Cardinal Beaufort, consisting of gateway, porter's lodge and great square tower. Here and there we still see Cardinal Beaufort's arms and devices, while over the gate itself are three niches, in one of which a kneeling figure of the Cardinal remains. Within this gatehouse is a large quadrangle, about three sides of which the hospital is set with the church upon the south, between which and the gatehouse runs a sixteenth century cloister. The whole is wonderfully quiet and peaceful, a corner of that old England, England of my heart, which is so fast vanishing away.

The noblest building of this most noble place, and the only one now left to us which dates from its foundation by Bishop Henry of Blois is the church. This is a great Transitional building, one of the finest examples of that style in England, and dates from about 1160 to 1292. It is a cruciform building with central tower, the nave and chancel being aisled, the transepts, aisles and all, vaulted in stone in the fourteenth century. The earliest part of the church is the chancel, which has a square eastern end, and the lower parts of the transepts probably date from the same time. These transepts were finished a little later, when the nave was begun and finished, and the north porch built in the thirteenth century. The clerestory of the nave dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, and so does the great western window. Much of the furniture of the church is interesting, such as the fourteenth century tiles, the curious Norman bowl that does duty as a font, the fourteenth century glass in the clerestory window of the nave, and that, little though it be,



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of the fifteenth century in the north transept, the fine fifteenth century screen between the north-choir aisle and the chancel, the foreign sixteenth century woodwork in the south-choir aisle, the curious wall painting of the Martyrdom of St Thomas in the south transept, and the old Purbeck altar stone that now serves as the communion table. Here, before the altar, lies John de Campeden, appointed Master of St Cross by Bishop William of Wykeham in 1383, his grave marked by a good brass.

Much, too, within the hospital is interesting, and the old men who eagerly show one all these strange and beautiful things are most human and delightful. Nevertheless, though the church would anywhere else claim all our attention for a whole morning, and an afternoon is easily spent poking about the hospital, it is not of the mere architecture, beautiful though it be, that one thinks on the way back into Winchester, across the meads beside the river which has seen and known both the Middle Age and this sorrowful time of to-day, but of that wondrous institution where poverty was considered honourable and destitution not an offence or even perhaps a misfortune, where it was still remembered that we are all brethren, and that Christ, too, had not where to lay His head. All of which seems nothing less than marvellous to-day.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SELBORNE

I set out from Winchester early one June morning by Jewry Street, as it were out of the old North Gate to follow, perhaps, the oldest road in old England towards Alton, intending to reach Selborne more than twenty miles away eastward on the tumble of hills where the North Downs meet the South, before night.

I say the road by which I went out of Winchester and followed for so many miles, through King's Worthy and Martyr Worthy, Itchen Abbas, New Alresford and Bishops Sutton, is perhaps the oldest in England; in fact it is the old British trackway from the ports of the Straights and Canterbury to Winchester and Old Sarum, the western end, indeed, of the way I had already followed from Canterbury to Boughton Aluph up the valley of the Great Stour, known to us all as the Pilgrim's Way. For though it is older than any written history, it was preserved from neglect and death when the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were making all new, here as elsewhere, by the pilgrims, who, coming from Western England, from Brittany and Spain to visit St Thomas' shrine, used it as their road across Southern England from Winchester to Canterbury.

Now, though for any man who follows that road to-day it is filled with these great companies of pilgrims, there are older memories, too, which it evokes and which, if the history of England is precious to him, he cannot ignore.

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To begin with the exit from Winchester: there in Jewry Street a Roman road overlies the older British way, not indeed exactly, but roughly, certainly as far as King's Worthy, whence it still shoots forth straight as an arrow's flight over hill over dale to Silchester. The very street by which he leaves the city, as it were, by the now destroyed North Gate, is Roman, one of the four roads which met in the Forum of Venta Belgarum and divided Roman Winchester into four quarters, though, perhaps because of the marshes of the Itchen, not into four equal parts as in Chichester. The present name of this road, Jewry Street, indicates its character all through the Middle Ages, when here by the North Gate, upon the road to London, the Jews had their booths, and the quarter of Winchester which this road served was doubtless their ghetto, the richest quarter of the city.

It was not, however, of the Middle Age, but of the Dark Age I thought as I issued out of Winchester where, not much more than a hundred years ago, the old North Gate still held the way. In the year 1001, after the battle of Alton, in which the men of Hampshire were utterly broken by Sweyn and his Danes, this road was filled with the routed Saxons in flight pouring into the city of Winchester. The record of that appalling business is very brief in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," a few lines under the date 1001. "A. 1001. In this year was much fighting in the land of the English, and well nigh everywhere they (the Danes) ravaged and burned so that they advanced on one course until they came to the town of Alton; and then there came against them the men of Hampshire and fought against them. And there was Ethelward the King's high-steward slain, and Leofric at Whitchurch and Leofwin the King's high-steward and Wulfhere the bishop's thane, and Godwin at Worthy, Bishop Elfry's son, and of all men one hundred and eighty; and there were of the Danish men many more slain, though they had possession of the place of slaughter." A mere plundering expedition, we may think, but it foretold with certainty the rule of the Danes in England, which as we know came to pass, and was not the catastrophe it might have been, because of the victory of Alfred at Ethandune, a century and a half before, when he had made Guthrum and his host Christians. Till the year 1788 Alfred's bones lay beside this very gate through which the beaten Saxons poured into his city in 1001. For though Hyde Abbey was destroyed at the Reformation his bones seem to have been forgotten, to be discovered in the end of the eighteenth century in their great leaden coffin and sold, I know not to whom, for the sum of two pounds.

I considered these unfortunate and shameful things as I went on along this British, Roman, Saxon and English way, the way of armies and of pilgrims into Headbourne Worthy, whose church stands by the roadside on the north.



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This little church dedicated in honour of St Swithin is all of a piece with the road, and illustrates it very well. Its beauty alone would recommend it to the wayfarer, but it also possesses an antiquity so great that nothing left to us in Winchester itself can match it. For in plan, and largely in masonry too, it is a Saxon sanctuary, though a late one, dating as it would seem from the early part of the eleventh century. What we see is a beautiful little building consisting of nave with curious western chamber, chancel, south-western tower and modern south porch. The original church probably did not differ very much in plan from that we have, but only the north and west walls of the nave of the original building remain to us; the latter having the original doorway of Binstead stone. The south wall of the nave and the tower were rebuilt in the thirteenth century, as was the chancel, which is now a modern building so far as its north and eastern walls are concerned. In the late fifteenth century the western chamber was added to the nave as in our own day the south porch. The best treasure of the church is, however, the great spoilt Rood, with figures of our Lady and St John, upon the outside of the west wall of the Saxon nave, to preserve which, in the fifteenth century, the western chamber was built. The western chamber was originally in two stages, the lower acting as a porch to the church, the upper as a chapel with an altar under the Saxon rood. It is needless to say that the Reformers, Bishop Horne of Winchester it is said, the accursed miscreant who ordered the destruction of all crucifixes in his diocese, defaced this glorious work of art and religion, cutting the relief away to the face of the wall so that only the outline remains. Nevertheless it is still one of the most imposing and notable things left to us in southern England.

Headbourne Worthy, granted to Mortimer after the Conquest, was the most important of the three little places grouped here in a bunch which bear that name. King's Worthy, where the road first turns eastward and where the church, curiously enough, stands to the south of the way, [Footnote: According to Mr Belloc (*The Old Road*) this modern road does not exactly represent the route of the Pilgrim's Way which ran to the south of King's Worthy church] was but a hamlet and of Martyr Worthy, Domesday knows nothing. Little that is notable remains to us in either place, only the charming fifteenth century tower of King's Worthy church and a fourteenth century font therein.

Much the same must be said of Itchen Abbas, Itchen A Bas, where the road falls to the river, the small Norman church there having been both rebuilt and enlarged in or about 1863, while an even worse fate has befallen the church of Itchen Stoke, two miles further on, for it has disappeared altogether. Nor I fear can much be said for the church of New Alresford or the town either, for apparently, owing to a series of fires, it has nothing to show us but a seventeenth century tower, a poor example of the building of that time, the base of which may be Saxon, while the windows seem to be of the thirteenth century.

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New Alresford would seem only to have come into existence as a town in the end of the twelfth century, when it was re-established by Bishop Godfrey de Lucy (1189-1204). The old road did not pass through it as the modern road does; for as Mr Belloc seems to have proved the Pilgrim's Way, which descended to the river at Itchen A Bas as we have seen, crossed the ford at Itchen Stoke, Itchen Stakes that is, and proceeded east by south where the workhouse now stands, coming into the modern road again at Bishop Sutton. But though the Pilgrim's Way knew it not, New Alresford is of high antiquity. Local tradition has it that it owes its existence, as distinct from Old Alresford, "to a defeat inflicted by the Saxons on a party of Danes near the village of West Tisted about five miles (south) east of Alresford. The Saxons granted quarter to the defeated enemy on condition that they went to the ford over the River Alre [Footnote: It is curious that Guthrum was baptised at Aller and then his Danes in the Alre] to be baptised. In commemoration of the victory a statue of the Virgin was then erected in the churchyard of Old Alresford." [Footnote: V.C.H., Hampshire, vol. 3, p. 350.] Local tradition cannot, at any time, be put lightly aside, and when as here it preserves for us one of the great truths of the early history of modern Europe we should rejoice indeed. For here we have the obvious reality of the eighth century when Europe, slowly recovering itself and beginning to realise itself as Christendom, was everywhere attacked by hordes of pagans. The work of Charlemagne, of Offa and of Alfred was not merely the conquest of the barbarians, but really since they could not be wholly destroyed, their conversion, and thus alone could Christendom be certainly preserved. So after Ethandune Guthrum must be christened at Aller, and after the fight here on the Alre the defeated heathen must be christened at the ford. Since New Alresford has preserved for us a memory of this fundamental act we can easily forgive her lack of material antiquity.

The little village thus founded, certainly still existed in the time of the Conquest, and such it would always have remained but for Godfrey de Lucy, Bishop of Winchester, who, among his many achievements, numbers this chiefly that he made the Itchen navigable not only from Southampton to Winchester but here also in its headwaters, and this by means of the great reservoir, known as Alresford Pond, into which he gathered the waters of many streams to supply his navigation. In return, King John not only gave him the royalty of the river, but a weekly market here for which he rebuilt the place and called it New Market a name which was soon lost, the people preferring their old name New Alresford. So the market town of New Alresford came into existence, and, but for the unfortunate fires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would bear upon its face the marks it now lacks of antiquity.

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Bishop Godfrey de Lucy was constantly in residence at Bishop Sutton in the palace there. The road passes through this delightful village a mile or more to the east of New Alresford and something remains, the ruins of the kennels it is said, of the palace. This was doubtless "the manour-house ... a verie olde house somtyme walled round aboutte with stone now decaied well waterid with an olde ponde or moote adjoyning to it," of which we hear in the time of Edward VI. It seems to have been destroyed in the Civil war, but even in 1839 much remained of it. "Within the memory of many persons now living," writes Mr Duthy in 1839, "considerable vestiges of a strong and extensive building stood in the meadows to the north of the church, which were the dilapidated remains of an ancient palace of the Bishops of Winchester. The walls were of great thickness and composed of flints and mortar, but it was impossible to trace the disposition of the apartments or the form of the edifice." Bishop Sutton had belonged to the church of Winchester since King Ine's day, but in the early part of the eleventh century it was held by Harold, and after the Conquest by Eustace of Boulogne. Bishop Henry de Blois regained it for the church by exchange, in whose possession it has remained but for a few brief intervals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in one of which John Evelyn bought it, until to-day.

It is probably to this fact we owe the beauty and preservation of the church here, with its fine twelfth century nave, not fundamentally altered, and its chancel still largely of the thirteenth century. Especially notable are the two Norman doorways in the nave and curious supports of the belfry there, four naked and massive posts.

[Illustration: SELBORNE FROM THE HANGER]

Bishop Sutton was the last place I was to see upon the old road, for a mile beyond that village I left it where it turned northward, to go east into Ripley and so by the byways to climb into the hills, and crossing them to descend steeply at evening into the village of Selborne by the Oakhanger stream just before it enters that narrow brief pass into the Weald. There in the twilight I stayed for awhile under the yew tree in the churchyard to think of the writer, for love of whom I had made this journey all the way from Winchester.

"In the churchyard of this village," writes Gilbert White in "The Antiquities of Selborne," "is a yew-tree whose aspect bespeaks it to be of great age; it seems to have seen several centuries and is probably co-eval with the church, and therefore may be deemed an antiquity; the body is squat, short and thick, and measures twenty-three feet in the girth, supporting a head of suitable extent to its bulk. This is a male tree, which in the spring sheds clouds of dust and fills the atmosphere around with its farina.... Antiquaries seem much at a loss to determine at what period this tree first obtained a place in churchyards.

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A statute was passed A.D. 1307 and 35 Edward I., the title of which is “Ne rector arbores in cemeterio prosternat.” Now if it is recollected that we seldom see any other very large or ancient tree in a churchyard but yews, this statute must have principally related to this species of tree; and consequently their being planted in churchyards is of much more ancient date than the year 1307. As to the use of these trees, possibly the more respectable parishioners were buried under their shade before the improper custom was introduced of burying within the body of the church where the living are to assemble. Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, was buried under an oak—the most honourable place of interment —probably next to the cave of Machpelah, which seems to have been appropriated to the remains of the patriarchal family alone. The further use of yew trees might be as a screen to churches, by their thick foliage, from the violence of winds; perhaps also for the purpose of archery, the best long bows being made of that material, and we do not hear that they are planted in the churchyards of other parts of Europe, where long bows were not so much in use. They might also be placed as a shelter to the congregation assembling before the church doors were opened, and as an emblem of mortality by their funeral appearance. In the south of England every churchyard almost has its tree and some two; but in the north we understand few are to be found.”

Even in that passage, full as it is of all the quietness of the English countryside, something of the secret of Gilbert White, his ever living incommunicable charm may be found: his extraordinary and gentle gift of becoming, as it were, one with the things of which he writes, his wonderfully sympathetic approach to us, his so simple and so consummate manner. The man might stand in his writings for the countryside of England, incarnate and articulate. He not only leads you ever out of doors, but he is just that, the very spirit of the open air, the out-of-doors of a country where alone in Europe one can be in the lanes, in the meadows, on the hills under the low soft sky with delight every day of the year. He teaches, as Nature herself teaches; we seem to move in his books as though they were the fields and the woods, and there the flowers blow and the birds sing. It is not so much that his observation is extraordinarily wide and accurate, but that we see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and the phenomena, beautiful or wonderful, which he describes, we experience too, and because of him with something of his love, his interest and carefulness. What other book ever written upon Natural History can we read, who are not Naturalists, over and over and over again, and for its own sake, not for the myriad facts he gathered through a long lifetime, the acute observation and record of which have won him the homage of his fellow scientists, but for the pure human and literary pleasure we find there, a pleasure the like of which is to be found nowhere else in such books in the same satisfying quantity, and at all, only because of him.

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And so on the next morning the first place I went to see was The Wakes, the house where this great and dear lover of England of my heart lived, dying there in 1793, to lie in his own churchyard, his grave marked by a simple headstone bearing his initials "G.W." and the date. In the church is a tablet to him and his brother Benjamin, who has also placed there in memory of him the seventeenth century German triptych over the altar. But he needs no memorial from our hands; all he loved, Selborne itself in all its beauty, the exquisite country round it, the hills, the valleys, the woods and the streams are his monument, the very birds in their songs remind us of him, and there is not a walk that is not the lovelier because he has passed by. Do you climb up through the Hanger and admire the beeches there? It is he who has told us what to expect, loving the beech like a father, "the most lovely of all forest trees whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage or graceful pendulous boughs." Do you linger in the Plestor? It is he who tells you of the old oak that stood there, and was blown down in 1703 "to the infinite regret of the inhabitants and the vicar who bestowed several pounds in setting it in its place again; but all this care could not avail; the tree sprouted for a time then withered and died." Or who can pass by Long Lythe without remembering that it was a favourite with him too. For he loved this place so well, that as Jacob waited for Rachel so he for Selborne. He had been born there, where his grandfather being then vicar, aged seventy-two years and eleven months, he was to die in 1720. He went to school at Farnham and Basingstoke, and then in 1739 to Oriel College, Oxford, where in 1744 he was elected to a Fellowship. Presently benefice after benefice was offered him but he refused them all, having made up his mind to live and die at Selborne. Selborne must then have been a very secluded place, the nearest town, Alton, often inaccessible in winter one may think, judging from the description Gilbert White gives of the "rocky hollow lane" that led thither, but it is perhaps to this very fact that we owe more than a few of those immortal pages ever living and ever new. Since he was cut off from men he was able to give himself wholly to nature. He is less a part of the mere England of his day than any man of that time; he belonged only to England of my heart. Yet the events of his time, though they touched him so little, were neither few nor unimportant. The year of his birth was the year of the South Sea Bubble. When he was a year old the great Duke of Marlborough died. His eighth birthday fell in the year which closed the eyes of Sir Isaac Newton. He was twenty-five in the "forty-five," when Prince Charles Edward held Edinburgh after Preston Pans. He saw the change in the calendar, the conquest of India by Clive, the victory and death of Wolfe at Quebec the annexation of Canada, the death of Chatham, the loss of the American Colonies, the French Revolution. And how little all this meant to him!

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But anything connected with Selborne interested him, and he wrote of and studied its “antiquities” as well as its “natural history.” Nor were these antiquities so negligible as one might think. In his day the church was still an interesting building, and he has left us an interesting account of it. But he does not forget to tell us, too, of the Augustinian Priory of Selborne, that was founded in 1233 and stood to the east of the village, the way to it lying through his beloved Long Lythe, and the site of which is now occupied by Priory Farm, a few ruins remaining. Nothing, indeed, that concerned his beloved village was to him ungrateful. It is, without doubt, this careful love of his for the things that were his own, at his door, common things if you will, common only in England of my heart, that has endeared him to innumerable readers, many of whom have never set foot upon our shores and would only not be utter strangers here if they did, because of him. Such at least is the only explanation I can give of his immortality, his constant appeal to all sorts and conditions of men.

Day by day as I wandered through the lanes and the woods that he had loved with so wonderful and unconscious an affection, in a repose that we have lost and a quietness we can only envy him, I tried to discover, I tried to make clear to myself, what it really is that on a dull evening at home, in a sleepless night in London, or in the long winter evenings anywhere, draws me back again and again to that curious book. But even there in Selborne the secret was hidden from me. In truth one might as well inquire of the birds why they delight us, or of the flowers why we love them so; for in some way I cannot understand Gilbert White was gently at one with these and spoke of them sweetly like a lover and a friend having a gift from God by which he makes us partakers of his pleasure.

And so spring drew to a close as I lingered in Selborne, for I could not drag myself away. And when, at last, I determined to set out, the Feast of St John was already at hand, so that I made haste once more across the hills for Winchester on my way to Old Sarum and Stonehenge, where I would see the sunrise on midsummer morning.