

Wanderings in Wessex eBook

Wanderings in Wessex

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ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

The following brief notes will assist the traveller who is not an expert in arriving at the approximate date of ecclesiastical buildings.

Saxon 600-1066. Simple and heavy structure. Very small wall openings. Narrow bands of stone in exterior walls.

Norman 1066-1150. Round arches. Heavy round or square pillars. Cushion capitals. Elaborate recessed doorways. Zig-zag ornament.

Transition 1150-1200. Round arched windows combined with pointed structural arch. Round pillars sometimes with slender columns attached. Foliage ornament on capitals.



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Early English 1200-1280 (including Geometrical) Pointed arches. Pillars with detached shafts. Moulded or carved capitals. Narrow and high pointed windows. Later period—Geometrical trefoil and circular tracery in windows.

Decorated 1280-1380. High and graceful arches. Deep moulding to pillars. Convex moulding to capitals with natural foliage. “Ball flowers” ornament. Elaborate and flamboyant window tracery.

Perpendicular 1380-1550. Arches lower and flattened. Clustered pillars. Windows and doors square-headed with perpendicular lines. Grotesque ornament. (The last fifty years of the sixteenth century were characterized by a debased Gothic style with Italian details in the churches and a beauty and magnificence in domestic architecture which has never since been surpassed.)

Jacobean and *Georgian* 1600-1800 are adaptations of the classical style. The “Gothic Revival” dates from 1835.

INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of Wessex; the realm of the great Alfred; that state of the Heptarchy which more than any other gave the impress of its character to the England to be, is to-day the most interesting, and perhaps the most beautiful, of the pre-conquest divisions of the country.

As a geographical term Wessex is capable of several interpretations and some misunderstandings. Early Wessex was a comparatively small portion of Alfred’s political state, but by the end of the ninth century, through the genius of the West Saxon chiefs, crowned by Alfred’s statesmanship, the kingdom included the greater portion of southern England and such alien districts as Essex, Kent, and the distinct territory of the South Saxons.

The boundaries of Wessex in Alfred’s younger days and before this expansion took place followed approximately those of the modern counties of Hants, Berks, Wilts and Dorset, with overlappings into Somerset and East Devon.

The true nucleus of this principality, which might, without great call upon the imagination, be called the nucleus of the future Britain, is that wide and fertile valley that extends from the shores of the Solent to Winchester and was colonized by two kindred races. Those invaders known to us as the Jutes took possession of Vectis—the Isle of Wight—and of the coast of the adjacent mainland. The second band, of West Saxons, penetrated into the heart of modern Hampshire and presently claimed the allegiance of their forerunners.

That seems to have been given, to a large extent in an amicable and friendly spirit, to the mutual advantage of the allied races.



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It would appear that these settlers—Jutes and Saxons—were either more civilized than their contemporaries, or had a better idea of human rights than had their cousins who invaded the country between Regnum and Anderida to such purpose “that not one Briton remained.” Or it may be that the majority of the inhabitants of south central Britain, left derelict by their Roman guardians, showed little opposition. It is difficult for a brave and warlike race to massacre in cold blood a people who make no resistance and are therefore not adversaries but simply chattels to be used or ignored as policy, or need, dictates. In 520 at Badbury Hill, however, a good fight seems to have been made by a party of Britons led, according to legend, by the great Arthur in person. The victory was with the defenders and had the effect of holding up Cerdic’s conquest for a short time. Again some sort of resistance would seem to have been made before those mysterious sanctuaries around Avebury and Stonehenge fell to the Saxon. It is possible that the old holy places of a half-forgotten faith were again resorted to during the distracting years which followed the withdrawal of the Roman peace that, during its later period, had been combined with Christianity. Whatever the cause, it is certain that something prevented an immediate Saxon advance across the remote country which eventually became Wiltshire and Dorset. But the end came with the fall of the great strongholds around Durnovaria (Dorchester) which took place soon after the Saxon victory at Deorham in 577, twenty-five years after Old Sarum had capitulated, thus cutting off from their brothers of the west and north those of the British who still remained in possession of the coast country between the inland waters and savage heathlands of East Dorset and the still wilder country of Exmoor, Dartmoor and Cornwall.

So, by the end of the sixth century, the Kingdom of Wessex was made more or less an entity, and the dark-haired, dark-eyed race who once held the country were in the position of a conquered and vassal people; for the times and the manners of those times well used by their conquerors, especially in the country of the Dorsaetas, where at the worst they were treated as useful slaves, and at the best the masters were but rustic imitators of their forerunners, the Romans. To the most careless observer a good proportion of the country people of Dorset are unusually swarthy and “Welsh” in appearance, though of the handsomer of the two or three distinct races that go to make up that mixed nation, which has among its divergent types some of the most primitive, both in a physical and mental sense, in Europe.



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In the ninth century the Kingdom of Wessex had assumed a compact shape, its boundaries well defined and capable of being well defended. The valley of the Thames between Staines and Cricklade became the northern frontier; westwards Malmesbury, Chippenham and Bath fell within its sphere, and Bristol was a border city. To the east of Staines the overlordship of Wessex extended across the river and reached within twenty miles of the Ouse at Bedford. These districts were the remnants of the united state of the first King of the English—Egbert, whose realm embraced not only the midland and semi-pagan Mercia, but who claimed the fealty of East Anglia and Northumbria and for a few years made the Firth of Forth the north coast of England. To the south-west the country that Alfred was called upon to govern reached to the valley of the Plym, and so “West Wales” or Cornwall became the last retreat of those Britons who refused to bow to the Saxon.

It will be seen how difficult a matter it is to define the district this book has to describe, so the southern boundary of the true Wessex must be taken as the coast line from the Meon river on the east side of Southampton Water to the mouth of Otter in Devon. On the north, the great wall of chalk that cuts off the south country from the Vale of Isis and the Midlands and that has its bastions facing north from Inkpen Beacon to Hackpen Hill in the Marlborough Downs. East and west of these summits an arbitrary line drawn southwards to the coast encloses with more or less exactitude the older Wessex.

Outside the limits here set down but still within Alfred’s Kingdom is a land wonderful in its wealth of history, gracious in its English comeliness, the fair valleys and gentle swelling hills of South-west Devon, wildly beautiful Dartmoor and the coloured splendour of Exmoor, the patrician walls of Bath, and the high romance of ancient Bristol. Under the Mendip is that gem of medieval art at Wells, one of the loveliest buildings in Europe, and the unmatched road into the heart of the hills that runs between the most stupendous cliffs in South Britain. Not far away is Avalon, or Glastonbury if you will, the mysteries of which are still being mysteriously unfathomed. From the chalk uplands of our northern boundary we may look to the distant vale in whose heart is the dream city of domes and spires—Oxford, and trace the trench of England’s greatest river until it is lost in the many miles of woodland that surge up to the walls of Windsor. East and south is that beautiful and still lonely country that lies between the oldest Wessex and the sister, and ultimate vassal, kingdom of Sussex; the country of the Meonwaras, a region of heather hills and quiet pine combs that stretch down to the Solent Sea and the maritime heart of England—Portsmouth.

Across the narrow bar of silver sea is an epitome of Wessex in miniature, Vectis, where everything of nature described in these following chapters may be found, a Lilliputian realm that contains not only Wessex but morsels of East Anglia and fragments of Mercia and Northumbria, combined with the lovely villages and pleasant towns that only Wight can show.

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All this storied beauty is without the scope of this book but within the greater Wessex that came to the King who is the really representative hero of his countrymen. The genius of the West Saxon became for a time, and to a certain extent through force of circumstance, a jealous and rather narrow insularity, without wide views and generous ideals, but to this people may be ascribed some of the higher traits that go to redeem our race. That their original rough virtues were polished and refined by their beautiful environment in the land that became their heritage few can doubt. That their gradual absorption and amalgamation with the other races who fought them for the possession of this "dear, dear land" has resulted in the evolution of a people with a great and wonderful destiny is manifest to the world, and is a factor in the future of mankind at which we can but dimly guess.

[Illustration: *The Dorset coast—Mupe bay.*]

The scenery of Inner Wessex is as varied as the materials that go to make it up, from the bare rolling chalk downs of Salisbury Plain to the abrupt and imposing hills around the Vale of Blackmore. To most who travel in search of the picturesque and the beautiful, the Dorset coast and the country immediately in the rear, will make the greatest appeal. The line of undulating cliffs, often towering in bold, impressive shapes, that commences almost as soon as Dorset is entered and continues without a dull mile to the eastern extremity of Weymouth, is to some minds the finest stretch of England's shore outside Cornwall, a county that depends entirely on its coast line for its claim to beauty. To some eyes, indeed, the exquisite and varied colouring of the Dorset cliffs is more satisfying than that of the dour and dark rocks of Tintagel and the Land's End. And if Wessex cannot boast the sustained grandeur of the stern face that England turns to the Atlantic waves, the romantic arch of Durdle Door, the majestic hill-cliff that rises above the green cleft of Arish Mel, and the sombre precipices of St. Aldhelm's, with the smiling loveliness of the Wessex lanes and hamlets behind them, will be sufficient recompense.

Hampshire has been given the character of having the least interesting shore of all the southern counties. This is a matter of individual taste. The surf that beats on the sands from Bournemouth to Southampton Water washes the very edge of the "Great Wood." Again, the long pebble wall of the Chesil Bank and the barrier "fleets" of middle Wessex are a real sanctuary of the wild. This is almost the longest stretch in England without bathing machine or bungalow. Remote and little visited also is the exquisite sea country that begins at the strange little settlement of Bridport Quay and ends in Devonshire. To the writer's mind there is nothing more lovely in seaward England than the scenery around Golden Cap, that glorious hill that rises near little old "Chiddick," and no sea town to equal Lyme, standing at the gate of Devon and incomparably more interesting and unspoilt than any Devon coast town.



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But the traveller in search of something besides the picturesque will not be contented until he has explored the wonderful region that enshrines the most unique of human works in Britain, belonging to remotely different ages and widely dissimilar in aspect and purpose—Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge. No one can claim to know Wessex until some hours of quiet have been spent within the walls of the ancient capital, and no one can know England until the spirit of the English countryside, the secluded and primary village of the byways with its mothering church, rich with the best of the past, has been studied, known and loved. This is the essential England for which the yeoman of England, whose memorials will be seen in almost every Wessex hamlet, have given their lives.

[Illustration: *St. Cross.*]

CHAPTER I

WINCHESTER AND CENTRAL HAMPSHIRE

The foundations of the ancient capital of England were probably laid when the waves of Celtic conquest that had submerged the Neolithic men stilled to tranquillity. The earliest records left to us are many generations later and they are obscure and doubtful, but according to Vigilantius, an early historian whose lost writings have been quoted by those who followed him, a great Christian church was re-erected here in A.D. 164 by Lucius, King of the Belgae, on the site of a building destroyed during a temporary revival of paganism. The Roman masters of Lucius called his capital, rebuilt under their tuition, "Venta Belgarum." The British name—Caer Gwent—belonged to the original settlement. The size and boundaries of both are uncertain. Remains of the Celtic age are practically non-existent beneath Winchester, though the surrounding hills are plentifully strewn with them, and if Roman antiquities occasionally turn up when the foundations of new buildings are being prepared, any plan of the Roman town is pure conjecture. The true historic interest of Winchester, and historically it is without doubt the most interesting city in England, dates from the time of those West Saxon chiefs who gave it the important standing which was eventually to make it the metropolis of the English.

The early history of Winteceaster is the history of Wessex, and when Cerdic decided to make it the capital of his new kingdom, about 520, it was probably the only commercial centre in the state, with Southampton as its natural port and allied town. As the peaceful development of Wessex went on, so the population and trade of the capital grew until in a little over a hundred years, when Birinus came from over seas bearing the cross of the faith that was soon to spread with great rapidity over the whole of southern England, he found here a flourishing though pagan town. After the conversion of King Cyneigils the first Wessex bishopric was founded at Dorchester near the banks of the Thames, but by 674 this was removed to the capital where there had been built a

small church dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, probably on the site now occupied by the cathedral and originally by the church of Lucius and its predecessor.

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The great structure we see to-day is remarkable in many ways. It is the longest Gothic building in the world, and is only exceeded by St. Peter's in Rome. In spite of the disappointment the stranger invariably experiences at his first sight of the squat tower and straight line of wall, its majestic interior, and the indefinable feeling that this is still a temple and not a mere museum, will soon give rise to a sense of reverent appreciation that makes one linger long after the usual round of "sights" has been accomplished. The war memorial, dignified and austere, that was placed outside the west front in the autumn of 1921, is a most effective foil to the singularly unimposing pile of stone and glass behind it. But, however it may lack the elegance of the usual west "screen," this end of Winchester Cathedral has the great merit of being architecturally true.

[Illustration: *Font, Winchester cathedral.*]

Of the first Saxon building nothing remains. In this Egbert was crowned King of the English in 827. It was strongly fortified by St. Swithun, who was bishop for ten years from 852. At his urgent request he was buried in the churchyard instead of within the cathedral walls. Another generation wishing to honour the saint commenced the removal of the relics. On the day set aside for this—St. Swithun's day—a violent storm of rain came on and continued for forty days, thus giving rise to the old and well known superstition of the forty days of rain following St. Swithun's should that day be wet.

Under Bishop Swithun's direction the clergy and servants of the cathedral successfully resisted an attack by the Danes when the remainder of the city was destroyed. Soon after this, in the midst of the Danish terror, Alfred became king and here he founded two additional religious houses, St. Mary's Abbey, the Benedictine "Nunnaminster;" and Newminster on the north side of the cathedral. Of this latter St. Grimald was abbot. Nearly a hundred years later, in Edgar's reign, the cathedral itself became a monastery, with Bishop Athelwold as first abbot. He rebuilt the cathedral, dedicating it to St. Swithun; it had been originally dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul. Within this fabric Canute and his wife were buried; that earlier Conqueror of the English having made Winchester his imperial capital. A few years later, on Easter Day, the coronation of St. Edward took place with great pomp. Soon after the advent of William I, who made Winchester a joint metropolis with London and was crowned in both, the building of the great Norman church by Bishop Walkelyn was begun; the consecration taking place on St. Swithun's day 1093. Of this structure the crypt and transepts remain practically untouched. The nave, though Norman at its heart, has been altered in a most interesting way to Perpendicular without scrapping the earlier work. Walkelyn's tower fell in and ruined the choir in 1107, legend says as

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a protest against the body of Rufus being placed beneath it. The present low tower immediately took its place. Bishop de Lucy was responsible for rebuilding the Early English choir about 1200. The famous Bishop Wykeham completed the work of his predecessor, Edyngton, in rebuilding the west front, and he it was who beautified the nave. The great east window dates from about 1510; the lady chapel being rather earlier in date.

[Illustration: *Plan, Winchester cathedral.*]

The extreme length of the cathedral is 556 feet; the breadth of the transepts being 217 feet, and as the nave is entered the majestic proportions of the great church will be at once appreciated. Particular notice should be taken of the black font brought from Tournai; it has the story of St. Nicholas carved upon it. The situation of this and the tombs and other details will be quickly identified by reference to the plan. On the south side is the chantry of Bishop Wykeham, now fitted up as a chapel. Farther east is a modern effigy, much admired, of Bishop Harold Browne, who died in 1891. A very beautiful iron grille that once protected the shrine of St. Swithun now covers a door on the north side of the nave. Certain of the piers in the nave were repaired in 1826-7 and the "restorer," one Garbett, inserted *iron* engaged columns on the face of that one nearest to Bishop Edyngton's chantry, it is said for the sake of economy and strength! Some of the stained glass in the nave, according to Mr. Le Coutier, dates from the time of Bishop Edyngton, and that representing Richard II is a work contemporary with Bishop Wykeham. This part of the building has been the scene of many progresses—magnificent and sad—from the coronation processions of the early kings and the slow march of their funerals to that of the wedding of Mary I, when the queen blazed with jewels "to such an extent that the eye was blinded as it looked upon her." But the most unforgettable of all was on that dreadful day when the troops of Waller marched up the nave, some mounted and all in war array, to despoil the tombs of bishop and knight of their emblems of piety and honour and to destroy anything beautiful that could be reached with pike or sword.

On the right of the choir steps is Bishop Edyngton's chantry and on the left the grave of the last Prior, Kingsmill, who afterwards became first Dean. In the centre of the choir stands the reputed tomb of William Rufus. This part of the building forms a mortuary chapel for several of the early English Kings, including Canute. Their remains, with those of several bishops, rest in the oak chests that lie on the top of the choir screen. They were deposited here by Bishop Fox in 1534. This prelate was responsible for the beautiful east window; a perfect specimen of old stained glass. The fine pulpit dates from 1520. In the choir, the scene of Edward Confessor's coronation in 1043, Mary I and Philip of Spain were married. The fine carvings of the stalls date from 1296 and their canopies from 1390. They are among the earliest specimens of their kind in Europe.



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[Illustration: *Steps from north transept, Winchester.*]

The magnificent reredos was erected by Cardinal Beaufort; it is, of course, restored. "The wretches who worked their evil will with this beautiful relic of piety had actually chiselled the ornament down to a plane surface and filled the concavities with plaster." It bore at one time the golden diadem of Canute; behind it stood the splendid silver shrine of St. Swithun, decorated with "the cross of emeralds, the cross called Hierusalem" and who shall say what other gifts of piety and devotion, all to become the spoils of that arch-iconoclast—Thomas Cromwell.

Bishop Fox's chantry was built during his lifetime. It is on the south side of the reredos, Gardiner's being on the north. Behind the reredos are the chantries of Bishop Waynflete and of the great Cardinal Beaufort. The latter claims attention for its graceful beauty and the peculiarities of character shown in the face of the effigy within. He is termed by Dean Kitchin, who draws attention to the "money-loving" nose, the "Rothschild of his day." Beaufort was the representative of England among the judges that condemned St. Joan of Arc to the flames and, at the time of writing, a memorial to the Maid is in course of preparation, to be set up near the Cardinal's tomb; an appropriate act of contrition and reparation. Beyond the space at the back of the reredos is the Early English Lady Chapel with an interesting series of wall paintings depicting the story of our Lady. Here is the chair used by Mary I at her wedding. Although it is unusual to praise anything modern, the beautiful stained glass in this part of the cathedral, forming a complete design, must be admired by the most confirmed "antiquary."

It is in the transepts that the earlier architecture can be seen at its best. This is nearly all pure Norman work, as is that of the crypt. It has been suggested that the latter antedates the Conquest so far as the base of the walls is concerned. Here is an ancient well which may have served the defenders during the Danish siege.

On the wall of the north transept is a large painted figure of St Christopher. The chapel of the Holy Sepulchre (about 1350) stands between the transept and the choir. In the south transept Izaak Walton rests beneath a black marble slab in Prior Silkstede's chantry.

The epitaph, written by Bishop Ken, may be quoted:

*Alas! HEE'S gone before
gone, to RETURNE Noe more;
our panting hearts aspire
after their aged sire,
whose well-spent life did last
full Ninety years and past.
But now he hath begun*

*that which will NERE be done:
CROWN'D with eternal BLISSE,
we wish our souls with his.*

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Near by is an old oak seat used by the monks between the services, and a modern effigy of Bishop Wilberforce which strikes a Victorian note in its general effect. The cathedral treasury was once the repository of Domesday Book, also known as The Book of Winton.

Just before the Great War commenced, the costly operation of underpinning the cathedral was brought to a successful conclusion. Much alarm had been felt after the architect's report was made public. There is little doubt that a more or less general collapse of the structure would have occurred had this very necessary operation been long deferred. Large sums were spent in the closing years of the nineteenth century in the repair of the roof and walls. A tablet recording the particulars is placed at the west end of the nave.

On leaving the cathedral some time may be spent in exploring the interesting precincts and in endeavouring to reconstruct the medieval aspect of this part of the city. The narrow "Slype," or public right of way between the south transept and the site of the ancient chapter-house, was probably made to replace a passage through the interior, an intolerable nuisance at all times, but especially during service hours. The old circuit wall of the monastery is still standing, and the entrance to the deanery should be seen; this dates from about 1220. The cloisters were destroyed for some unknown reason in 1570. The ruins of Wolvesley Castle erected by Bishop de Blois about 1150 are close to the cathedral on the south-east. It was the residence of the Bishops, and part of the buildings formed an angle of the city defences. The name *Wolves ey* or *island* is said to be a survival from early Saxon days when the tributary Welsh here made an offering of wolves' heads to their masters.

[Illustration: *Gateway, Winchester close.*]

There are some very scanty and doubtful remains of the New Minster on the north of the cathedral. This was pulled down at the dissolution of the monasteries. Nunnaminster was also swept away during this woeful time.

The College of St. Elizabeth stood near St. Mary's. Founded by Bishop John de Pontissara in 1301 it was dedicated to St. Elizabeth of Hungary. After the Dissolution it was sold to the Warden of St. Mary's for three hundred and sixty pounds, subject to the condition that the church should become a grammar school for seventy-five students, or that it should be pulled down. This fate befell the building, which had three altars and a total length of 120 feet as was shown in the dry summer of 1842 when the outline of the walls was distinct in the grass of the meadows on the south-east of Winchester College.

[Illustration: *Winchester college.*]

Winton is now as famous for St. Mary's College as for the cathedral itself, and though not the earliest foundation of all the great schools, it can claim to having taught Eton the

rules of good pedagogy. Henry VI came here to ask advice and obtain experience for his new college on the banks of the Thames. The school was founded by Wykeham in 1387 for “seventy poor scholars, clerks, to live college wise and study grammar,” and its roll contains a goodly proportion of England’s great men. Here students were taught rather more than is stated above, and “Manners Makyth Man” became the watchword of the foundation.



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It was appropriate that the first of the great schools should be established in the city of the warrior-student Alfred, the first of that semi-barbarian race of monarchs to turn to the higher things of the mind, and without losing the leadership of the nation and the love of his people in so doing. On the contrary, he gained his niche in the world's history as much for this virtue as for the heroic side of his character. The King's palace stood not far from the river bank and probably the college buildings cover part of the site. Like most Saxon domestic structures, it was of wood, and no visible traces remain, though the recent interesting discoveries at Old Windsor lead one to wonder what may lie hidden beneath the turf here.

[Illustration: *Statue of Alfred.*]

The Hero-King was buried, first in the cathedral, and then in the Newminster. After the destruction of this building by fire, his remains were removed to Hyde Abbey on the north of the city. This met the fate of most other monasteries at the Dissolution, and the site of the final interment and, according to some accounts, the actual sarcophagus itself, were desecrated by eighteenth-century vandals in order to build a lock-up!

The bronze figure of Alfred, standing with sword held aloft as a cross, on its colossal block of granite at the bottom of High Street, is an inspired work by Hamo Thornycroft. It was erected in 1901 to commemorate the millenary of the king's death and is the most successful statue in the kingdom, imposing in its noble simplicity.

High Street is still quaint and old fashioned, though it has few really ancient houses. "God-Begot House" is Tudor and the old "Pent House" over its stumpy Tuscan pillars is very picturesque. Taking the town as a whole it can hold its own in interest with the only other English medieval city worthy of comparison—Chester. The visitor must have a fund of intelligent imagination and a blind eye for incongruities and then his peregrinations will be a remembered pleasure. The beautiful gardens belonging to the houses around the close and the black and white front of Cheyney Court will be recollected when more imposing scenes have faded.

The "George Hotel," though it but modestly claims to be "old established," is said by some authorities to stand on the site of an hostelry called the "Moon" that was very ancient in the days of Richard II. The new title was given about the time of Agincourt when the battle cry—"St. George"—had made the saint popular.

The City Cross is graceful and elegant fifteenth-century work, much restored of course, and in a quaint angle of some old houses that rather detract from its effectiveness. The exact site of the inhuman execution of Mrs. Alicia Lisle in September, 1685, is unknown, but it was probably in the wider part of the High Street. This gentle old lady, nearly eighty years of age, had given shelter to two men in all innocence of their connexion with Sedgemoor, but the infamous Jeffreys ordered her to be burnt; a sentence commuted by James II to beheading.

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The City walls were almost intact down to 1760. Now we have but the fine West Gate and the King's Gate, over which is St. Swithun's church. The churches of Winchester are little more than half their former number. St. Maurice has a Norman doorway and St. Michael a Saxon sundial. St. John Baptist and St. Peter, Cheesehill, are of the most general interest. The former has a screen and pulpit over four hundred years old; transitional arches; and an Easter sepulchre. The latter is a square church mostly in Perpendicular style but with some later additions more curious than beautiful. Visitors to St. Lawrence's should read the inscription to Martha Grace (1680). St. Bartholomew's, close to the site of Hyde Abbey, shows some Norman work. In 1652 the Corporation petitioned Parliament to reduce the several city parishes into two, deeming a couple of ministers, one for each church, sufficient for the spiritual requirements of the city. In connexion with this a tract was issued describing the ghastly condition of the churches, one, St. Mary Kalendar being a garbage den for butcher's offal, another, St. Swithun's, Kingsgate, was let by the corporation as a tenement and had a pigsty within it!

[Illustration: *City cross, Winchester.*]

The ancient castle and residence of the Kings of England is now represented only by the Great Hall, dating from the early part of the thirteenth century. It is used for county business and is a good specimen of the domestic architecture of the time. The great interest of the hall is the reputed Round Table of King Arthur, placed at its west end. Experts have decided that it cannot be older than 1200. The painted names upon it are those of Arthur's Knights. These were executed in the reign of Henry VIII and replaced earlier inscriptions. The Hospital of St. John Baptist is in Basket Lane. Established by John Deverniche, one of the city fathers, in 1275 for the succour of aged wayfarers, it was suppressed at the Reformation, but reverted to its original purpose in 1829, and is thus one of the oldest living foundations of its kind in the kingdom.

Charles II desired to revive the royal glories of Winton and commissioned the erection of a palace which was unfinished when he died. After being used as a barracks, the fine building was practically destroyed in 1894 by a disastrous fire. This element was almost as great an enemy of old Winchester as the reformers themselves. On one occasion the town was fired by a defender, Savaric de Mauleon, on the approach of a French army under Louis the Dauphin. When the other, and junior, capital was receiving its cleansing by fire in 1666, Winchester was being more than decimated by the plague, which was as direful here as anywhere else.

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The city is 1,025 years old as a corporate town. Its staple business in medieval times was the sale of wool or its manufacture into cloth. Standing midway between two great tracts of sheep country, it was the natural mart for this important trade and therefore prospered and became rich. St. Giles' Fair, once famous and of great importance to cattle and sheep farmers, finally expired about the middle of the last century. In its prime it was of such a nature that the jurisdiction of the Mayor and the City Courts was in abeyance for sixteen days from the twelfth of September. It was held on St. Giles' Hill just without the town. The fair was under the patronage of the Bishop, who appointed a "Justice of the Court of Pavilion" during the period of the fair.

[Illustration: *West gate, Winchester.*]

The chief excursion that every one takes, and that every one should take, from Winchester is to St. Cross. The beautiful old Norman church and its equally beautiful surrounding buildings almost rival Winchester Close itself in their interest and charm. A short walk southwards through the suburb of Sharkford leads direct in a little over a mile to this goal of the archaeologist. A slightly longer but pleasanter route goes by the banks of the Itchen.

St. Cross is the oldest charity, still living its ancient life, that remains to us. Its charter is dated 1151, but it was founded nearly twenty years earlier by Bishop Henry de Blois. The document set forth that thirteen "poor men, so reduced in strength as to be unable to raise themselves without the assistance of another" should be lodged, clothed and entertained, and that one hundred other poor men of good conduct should dine here daily. The munificent charity of the founder was soon abused and the funds had the common habit of disappearing into the capacious pockets of absentee masters. William of Wykeham and his immediate successor, Beaufort, caused reforms in the administration and added to the foundation, the latter instituting an almshouse of "Noble Poverty," which was partly carried out by Bishop Waynfilet in 1486. The brethren of this newer foundation wear a red gown; those of the old, a black gown bearing a silver cross. Even within living memory scandals connected with the administration were perpetuated; an Earl of Guildford taking over £1,000 annually during a period of fifty years for the nominal mastership. This peer was a nephew of Bishop Brownlow North. It was in 1855 that the Hospital was put on its present footing and the charity of the hundred diners finally became the maintenance of fifty poor people of good character in the vicinity.

To the average tourist the chief interest seems to be the dole of bread and beer which must be given to whoever claims it until the two loaves and two gallons of liquor are exhausted. The well-clothed stranger who has the temerity to ask for it must not be surprised at the homoeopathic quantity which is handed to him. I am informed that the genuine wayfarer receives a more substantial dole.

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The beautiful church of the Holy Cross measures 125 feet in length, and 115 feet across at the transepts. The choir is a fine example of Transitional Norman with a square east end. The ancient high altar is of Purbeck marble. The Early English nave and the Decorated west front show the centuries through which the church grew. It is said that it was originally thatched, the lead roof being placed by Bishop Edyngton in 1340. A fine screen which now divides the chancel from the north aisle came from St. Faith's church, as did the old Norman font. The fine old woodwork and ancient tiles (some having upon them the words "Have Mynde.") are noteworthy. The chancel contains the magnificent brass of John de Campeden who was Wykeham's Master of the Hospital and who was responsible for raising the church and domestic buildings from a ruinous state to one of comeliness and good order. The mid-Victorian restorations, though fairly successful, included a detestable colour scheme which goes far to spoil the general effect of the interior and should be removed, as was done after much agitation, some years ago in St. Paul's Cathedral. It is a great pity that any attempt should be made to imitate this seemingly lost art. Far better to leave the walls of our churches to the colouring that time gives than to wash or paint them with the tints that seem to be inevitably either gaudy or dismal.

The buildings inhabited by the brothers form two quadrangles. The outer court has the "Hundred Men's Hall" on the east side, the gateway tower and the porter's lodge being on the south. From this runs an ambulatory and overhead gallery to the church. The hall porch bears the arms of Cardinal Beaufort over the centre and inside are various relics of his time, such as candlesticks, pewter dishes, black leather jacks, *etc.*, and in the centre of the hall is the old hearth. The actual dwellings of the brethren are in the inner court on the west and part of the north side. The buildings erected by Beaufort have disappeared; they were on the south of the church.

No description can give any adequate idea of the beautiful grouping of these old grey walls, which must have been the inspiration of one who was artist as well as architect. In June and through the summer months the beautiful garden and its fish pond belonging to the master's house is a sight not easily forgotten.

[Illustration: *The church, st. Cross.*]

Winchester does not make a particularly good picture from any of its surrounding hills. Its crown—the cathedral—lacks that inspiring vision of soaring, pointing spire that causes the wayfarer leaving Salisbury to turn so many times for a last glimpse of its splendour against the setting sun. Its square and sturdy tower lacks the grace of those western lanterns whose pinnacles are reflected in the waters of Severn and Wye. But the town, with the long leaden roof of the cathedral among its guardian elms,



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makes a pleasant and very English picture as we ascend the long road to St. Catherine's Hill, which rises directly east of St. Cross. This hill may be the true origin of Winchester as a settlement. It is an ideal spot for a stronghold, either for those whom the Romans displaced or for the Conquerors themselves. Its great entrenchments look down directly upon the river flowing in its several meandering channels beneath. On the other side of the hill from the river valley the Roman highway comes in a great curve from its straight run off Deacon Hill to distant Porchester, though by far the greater portion of that course has been lost. The bold clump of trees on the summit, so characteristic of the chalk hills, is visible for miles and takes the place of towers and spires to the returning Wykehamist, eager for his first glimpse of Winton. Paths may be taken to the southward across Twyford Down that eventually lead into the Southampton highways, by which a return can be made to the city.

Among the more interesting near-by villages, that will repay the traveller for the walk thither, are the "Worthy's":—Headbourne, King's, Abbot's and Martyr's. To reach the church at Headbourne Worthy from the road one crosses a running stream by a footbridge. The little building is Saxon in part and won the enthusiastic regard of Bishop Wilberforce. It is exceedingly quaint and, although restored, unspoilt in appearance. Over the porch was once a hermit's cell. The clipped and much maltreated stone Rood at the west door is Saxon work and the most interesting item in the church.

A little further away is King's Worthy, with an uninteresting and rebuilt Perpendicular church in a pretty spot on the banks of the Itchen. At the far end of the village the Roman road to Basingstoke leaves the way taken by the pilgrims from Winchester to Canterbury at Worthy Park, and the straggling houses on its sides soon become the hamlet of Abbot's Worthy, a name reminiscent of the time when the countryside was parcelled out among the great religious houses. This village was once in the possession of Hyde Abbey and afterwards became the property of that Lord Capel who defended Colchester for the King during the Civil War. Martyr's Worthy, a mile farther, has a Norman arch to the doorway of its church, but is otherwise unremarkable. "Martyr," by the way, is a misspelt abbreviation for "Mortimer." Itchen Abbas, the goal of this short journey, is not five miles from the centre of Winchester and is a great resort of fishermen. Here Charles Kingsley came to stay at the "Plough" and, I am told, wrote a good part of *Water Babies* between spells upon the trout stream near-by. Possibly these charming chapters were planned while the author watched the placid waters before him.



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The main road winds on to pleasant Alresford, where Mary Russell Mitford was born. The principal attraction of the town is a large lake, made by Bishop de Lucy in the twelfth century as an aid to the navigation of the Itchen. Not so far as this, and in the same direction, is Titchborne, quiet and remote among its trees with an old church that boasts a Saxon chancel and with memories of the Titchbornes, whose separate aisle and secret altar for the celebration of mass indicate their devotion to the old faith. But our return route passes Abbas church and crosses the river to Easton, a rambling and pleasant river-village full of mellow half-timbered houses and with a church that boasts a Norman apse and fine chancel arch. There is a unique monument in this church to the widow of William Barton, Bishop in turn of St. Asaph, St. David's, Bath and Wells, and Chichester, whose five daughters *married five bishops!* The walk across the meadows to Winnal and the city is one of the best near Winchester, but is hardly pleasant after wet weather. The hilly road, about three miles long, direct from Martyr's Worthy, affords pretty glimpses of the Itchen valley and the low Worthy Downs beyond. Just before the last descent toward Winnal there is a fairly good view of Winchester itself.

The straight, dusty and rather wearisome Roman road to Southampton runs up to a spur of Compton Down, a once lonely hill but now unsightly with the red-brick and plate glass of suburban Winchester. Near the conspicuous roadside cross—a memorial to fallen heroes—there is a distant view of the city, veiled in blue smoke, to the rear. Compton church, in the combe beyond, has made good its place in history by recording its ancient past in the porch of the building erected in 1905. The old church is actually one of the aisles of the new, and here may be seen an ancient wall painting and two piscina. A little over a mile to the south-east is picturesque Twyford on the wooded banks of the Itchen. Here Pope went to school for a time, and in the chapel of Bambridge House close by Mrs. Fitzherbert was married to the future George IV.

Twyford Church was believed by Dean Kitchen to be built on the site of a Stone circle. Two large "Sarsens" or megaliths lie by the side of the building, and a magnificent yew stands in the churchyard. Shawford Downs, that rise above the river and village, are scored with "lynchets" or ancient cultivation terraces and there is no doubt that the neighbourhood has been the home of successive races from a most remote age.

The high-road continues over hill and down dale to Otterbourne, with its memories of a celebrated Victorian writer, Miss Charlotte M. Yonge. The Rood in the rebuilt church was erected to her memory nearly twenty years ago. The tall granite cross in the pretty churchyard commemorates the incumbency of Keble, the author of the *Christian Year*, who was also vicar of Hursley, three miles away to the north-west, where a beautiful church was erected through his efforts on the site of an eighteenth-century building, and, it is said, paid for by royalties on his famous book. At Hursley Park Richard Cromwell resided during the Protectorate of his father. He is buried with his wife and children in Hursley church.



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[Illustration: *Romsey abbey.*]

A road runs westwards from near the summit of Otterbourne Hill through the beautiful woods of Hiltingbury and Knapp Hill to the valley of the Test at Romsey. There are a couple of inns and a few scattered houses, but no village on the lonely seven miles until the parallel valley is reached.

Romsey Abbey dates from the reign of Edward the Elder, and his daughter, St. Alfreda, was first Abbess. Another child of a king—Mary, daughter of Stephen—became Abbess in 1160, and her uncle, Henry de Blois of Winchester, built the greater part of the present church about 1125, the western portion of the nave following between 1175 and 1220. The building is 263 feet long and 131 feet broad across the transepts. The interior is an interesting study in Norman architecture and the change to Early English is nowhere seen to better advantage. Portions of the foundations of the Saxon church were laid bare during repairs to the floor in 1900. A section is shown beneath a trap door near the pulpit.

A peculiar arrangement of the eastern ends of the choir aisles is noteworthy. They are square as seen from the exterior, but prove to be apsidal on entering. At the end of the south choir aisle, forming a reredos to the side altar, an ancient Saxon Rood will be seen; the Figure is sculptured in an archaic Byzantine style. The Jacobean altar in the north choir aisle was once in the chancel and had above it those old-fashioned wooden panels of the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments that may still be met with occasionally. When these were removed an ancient painted reredos was found behind them. It is now placed in the north choir aisle. The subject is the Resurrection and the painting is dated at about 1380. In a glass case is the Romsey Psalter which, after many vicissitudes, has become once more the property of the Abbey.

In 1625, for some unknown reason, the two upper stages of the tower were pulled down and the present wooden belfry erected. Outside the "nuns door" is a very fine eleventh-century Rood that owes its preservation to the fact that for many years it was covered by a tradesman's shed!

Nothing remains of the conventual buildings but a few scanty patches of masonry. The history of the Abbey was not a very edifying one and, although every effort was made to save the house at the Dissolution, chiefly by the exhibition of the imposing royal charters of foundation and re-endowment, the many scandals recorded gave the despoilers an additional, and possibly welcome, excuse for their work.

A great amount of careful and reverent restoration was carried out some years ago by the late Mr. Berthon, a former vicar; but he will probably be remembered by posterity as the inventor of the portable boat that bears his name and which is still made, or was till recently, in the town. Romsey (usually called *Rumsey*) is not a good place in which to stay and, apart from the Abbey, is quite uninteresting. In the centre of the town is a

statue of Lord Palmerston, who lived at Broadlands, a beautifully situated mansion a short distance away to the south.



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A pleasant journey by road or rail can be taken up the valley of the Test between the low chalk hills of Western Hampshire to Stockbridge (or even farther north to Whitchurch or Andover, but these districts must be left until later). At Mottisfont, four miles from Romsey, was once a priory of Augustinians. Remnants of the buildings are incorporated with the present mansion. In the church perhaps the most interesting item, by reason of the alien touch in this remote corner of Hampshire, is an heraldic stone of the Meinertzhazen family brought here from St. Michael's, Bremen, at the end of the nineteenth century. The square font of Purbeck marble is of the same date as the Norman arch in the chancel. Just to the south of the village a branch line of railway follows a remote western valley to its head and then drops to the Avon valley and Salisbury. To the east is another lonely stretch of country through which the ridge of Pitt Down runs to the actual suburbs of Winchester. At the western end of this ridge, and about three miles up the Test from Mottisfont, are the villages of Horsebridge and King's Somborne on the southern confines of what was once John of Gaunt's deer park. The present bridge is higher up the stream, but the railway-station is on the actual site of the ancient road between Winchester and Old Sarum and the "horse bridge" was then lower down stream and almost immediately due west of the station. Somborne gets its prefix from the fact that an old mansion usually called "King John's Palace" formerly stood here, it may be that it belonged to John of Gaunt. Certain mounds and small sections of wall are pointed out as the remains of this house; they will be found to the south-west of the church; a much restored, but still interesting, thirteenth-century building. The font, of Purbeck marble, is very fine; of interest also are the late Jacobean chancel rails and certain crosses and monograms on the north doorway.

A road runs for six miles north-westwards up into the chalk hills by the side of the Wallop brook to the euphoniously named villages of Nether, Middle, and Over Wallop. The first and last have interesting churches, but the excursion, if taken, should be as an introduction to perhaps the most remote and unspoilt region of the chalk country. Although the Wallop valley is fairly well populated, the older people are as unsophisticated as any in southern England. The scenery is quietly pleasant, the hills away to the southwest exceeding, here and there, the 500 feet contour line. One of them, near the head of the valley, is named "Isle of Wight Hill." It is only upon the clearest of days that the distant Island is seen over the shoulder of the neighbouring Horseshoe Hill and across the long glittering expanse of Southampton Water.



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Proceeding up the fertile valley of the Test, Stockbridge is reached in another three miles. This sleepy old country town and one-time parliamentary borough occasionally wakes up when sheep fairs and other rural gatherings take place in its spacious High Street, but on other days it is the very ideal of a somnolent agricultural centre; it is, therefore, a pleasant headquarters from which to explore the north-western part of the county. The long line of picturesque roofs and broken house-fronts, in all the mellow tints that age alone can give, makes as goodly a picture as any in Hampshire. On the right-hand side, going down the street, is the Grosvenor Inn with its projecting porch. Next door is the old Market House and across the way stands the turreted Town Hall.

Alone in a quiet graveyard at the upper end of the town is the chancel of old St. Peter's church, now used as the chapel of the burying ground. Most of the removable items were taken to the new church erected in High Street in 1863, including certain fine windows and the Norman font of Purbeck marble. In a neglected corner of the old churchyard is the tombstone of John Bucket, one-time landlord of the "King's Head" in Stockbridge. It bears the following oft-quoted epitaph:

And is, alas! poor Bucket gone?
Farewell, convivial honest John.
Oft at the well, by fatal stroke
Buckets like pitchers must be broke.
In this same motley shifting scene,
How various have thy fortunes been.
Now lifting high, now sinking low,
To-day the brim would overflow.
Thy bounty then would all supply
To fill, and drink, and leave thee dry,
To-morrow sunk as in a well,
Content unseen with Truth to dwell.
But high or low, or wet or dry,
No rotten stave could malice spy.
Then rise, immortal Bucket, rise
And claim thy station in the skies;
'Twixt Amphora and Pisces shine:
Still guarding Stockbridge with thy sign.

The main street crosses the Test by two old stone bridges and from these, glancing up and down the street, one has a charming view of the surrounding hills which fill the vista at each end. The road out of the town to the east runs over the shoulder of Stockbridge Down on which is a fine prehistoric entrenchment called Woolbury Ring. Thence to Winchester is a long undulating stretch of rough and flinty track with but few cottages and no villages on the way until tiny Wyke, close to the city, is reached. One welcome roadside inn, the "Rack and Manger," stands at the cross roads about half way, and occasional ancient milestones tell us we are on the way to "Winton."



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Our itinerary through west-central Hampshire has not included that little known fragment of the county that lies to the west of Romsey and is a district of commons and woods, part of the great forest-land that we shall hurriedly explore in the next chapter. The chief interest here, apart from the natural attractions of the secluded countryside, is a simple grave in the churchyard of East Wellow, a small by-way hamlet about four miles from Romsey. Here is the last resting place of Florence Nightingale who lies beside her father and mother. The supreme honour of burial at Westminster, offered by the Dean and Chapter, was refused by her relatives in compliance with her own wish. So East Wellow should be a pilgrim's shrine to the rank and file of that weaponless army whose badge is the Red Cross.

[Illustration: *Bargate, Southampton.*]

CHAPTER II

SOUTHAMPTON WATER AND THE NEW FOREST

Bitterne is now a suburb of Southampton on the opposite side of the Itchen, but it may claim to be the original town from which the Saxon settlement arose. It is the site of the Roman Clausentium, an important station between Porchester and Winchester, and when the Saxons came up the water and landed upon the peninsula between the two rivers they probably found a populous town on the older site. This conjecture would account for the name given to the new colony—*Southhame tune*—ultimately borne by the county-town and the origin of the shire name. It is as the natural outlet for the trade of Winchester and Wessex, standing at the head of one of the finest waterways in Europe, that Southampton became the present thriving and important town.

To-day its commercial prestige, if not on a par with Liverpool, Hull or Cardiff, is sufficiently great for the town to rank as a county borough. The magnificent docks are capable of taking the largest liners, and as the port of embarkation for South Africa its consequence will increase still more as that great country develops. On the banks of the Itchen many important industries have been established during the last quarter of a century and, as a result of this and the inevitable disorder of a great port, Southampton's environs have suffered. But more than any other town in England of the same size, have the powers that give yea or nay to such questions conserved the relics of the past with which Southampton is so richly endowed. The most famous of these is the Bargate (originally "Barred" Gate), once the principal, or Winchester, entrance to the town. It dates from about 1350, though its base is probably far older. The upper portion, forming the Guildhall, bears on the south or town side a quaint statue of George III in a toga, that replaced one of Queen Anne in stiff corsets and voluminous gown. The various armorial bearings displayed are those of noble families who have been connected with the town in the past.

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Within the upper chamber are two ancient paintings said to represent the legendary Sir Bevis, whose sword is preserved at Arundel, and his squire Ascupart. Sections of the town wall may be found in several places, but the most considerable portion is on the north side of the Westgate, where, until the middle of the last century, when Westernshore Road was made, high tides washed the foot of the wall. The arcading of this portion is much admired, and deservedly so. So far as the writer is aware, no other town in England has medieval defences of quite this character remaining. The picturesque Bridewell Gate is at the end of Winkle Street and not far away is all that remains of "God's House" or the Hospital of St. Julian, "improved" out of its ancient beauty. The chapel was given to the Huguenot refugees by Queen Elizabeth; a portion of the original chancel still exists and within the Anglican service continues to be said in French. The house known as "King John's House," close to the walls near St. Michael's Square, dates from the twelfth century and is therefore one of the oldest in England. Another old building in Porter Lane called "Canute's House" is declared by archaeologists to be of the twelfth century, but Hamptonians, with some degree of probability, claim that the lower walls are certainly Saxon, so that the traditional name may be right after all. In that part of the town nearest to the docks are several stone cellars of great age upon which later dwellings have been erected, in some cases two buildings have appeared on the same sturdy base. A particularly fine crypt is in Simnel Street, with a window at its east end. At the corner of Bugle Street is the "Woolhouse," said to belong to the fourteenth century; very noticeable are the heavy buttresses that support this fine old house on its west side. Another old dwelling in St. Michael's Square may have been built in the fifteenth century. Tradition has it that this was for a time the residence of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.

[Illustration: THE ARCADES, SOUTHAMPTON.]

The reference to Canute's House brings to mind the tradition, stoutly upheld by Hamptonians, that it was at "Canute's Point" at the mouth of the Itchen, and not at Bosham or Lymington, that the king gave his servile courtiers the historic rebuke chronicled by Camden. By him, quoting Huntingdon, we are told that "causing his chair to be placed on the shore as the tide was coming in, the king said to the latter, 'Thou art my subject, and the ground I sit on is mine, nor can any resist me with impunity. I command, thee, therefore, not to come up on my ground nor wet the soles of the feet of thy master.' But the sea, immediately coming up, wetted his feet, and he, springing back, said, 'Let all the inhabitants of the earth know how weak and frivolous is the power of princes; none deserves the name of king, but He whose will heaven, earth, and sea obey by an eternal decree.' Nor would he ever afterwards wear his crown, but placed it on the head of the crucifix." There is little doubt that Southampton was one of the principal royal residences during the reign of the great Northman, and nearly a hundred years before, in Athelstan's days, it was of sufficient importance to warrant the setting up of two mints.

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The only medieval church remaining to Southampton is St. Michael's, which has a lofty eighteenth-century spire on a low Norman tower. Here is another of those black sculptured Tournai fonts one of which has been noticed in Winchester. The interior must have presented a curious appearance in the early years of Queen Victoria. During her predecessor's reign the incumbent placed the pulpit and reading-desk at the west end and reversed all the seats so that the congregation sat with their backs to the altar. The purpose of this is beyond conjecture. St. Mary's, designed by Street, was erected on the site of the old town church in 1879 as a memorial to Bishop Wilberforce. All Saints' in High Street is a classic building standing on the ground occupied by a very ancient church. Isaac Watts was deacon of Above Bar Chapel, noteworthy for the fact that the immortal hymn "Oh God, our help in ages past" was first sung within its walls from manuscript copies supplied to the congregation by the young poet. Among other famous men who were natives of Southampton may be mentioned Dibdin and Millais.

As might be expected from its geographical position and the many centuries it has been a gate to central England, Southampton has had a chequered and eventful history. Before the days of those supposedly impregnable forts in Spithead which bar to all inimical visitors a passage up the Water, the town was not immune from attack from the sea and in 1338 an allied French, Genoese and Spanish fleet sailed up the estuary and attacked the town to such good purpose that the burgesses were forced to fly and from a safe distance saw their homes burned to the ground. Another assault was made by the French in 1432, but profiting by bitter experience, the citizens had by now constructed such defences and armed them so well that this attack was an ignominious failure.

The port was the scene of several great expeditions overseas before it gave its quota to that greatest of all crusades in 1191. It saw the start of Richard Lion-Heart's transports, filled with the chivalry of England, on their way to challenge the power of Islam. The town records show that 800 hogs were supplied by the citizens for feeding the army *en route*. Perhaps the most famous of the sailings was that of the twenty-one ships that carried the English army to the victory of Crecy. Again seventy years later there was another great sallying forth to the field of Agincourt, nearly frustrated by the machinations of Richard, Earl of Cambridge. This scion of the Plantagenets and his fellow conspirators were beheaded and afterwards buried, as recorded on a tablet there, in the chapel of God's House. From Southampton the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* sailed in 1620: the latter being discarded at Plymouth.



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The modern aspect of Southampton's streets is that of the bustle and activity of a midland town, and the narrow pavements of Below and Above Bar have that metropolitan air which a crowd of well-dressed people intent on business or pleasure gives to the better class provincial city. It would seem that the inevitable accompaniment of such prosperity is the meanness of poorly-built and squalidly-kept suburbs. When the superb situation of Southampton is considered one can but hope that some day, in the new England that we are told is on the way, a great transformation will take place on the shores of Itchen and Test.

The excursion that every visitor should take is down the Water to Cowes. Few steamer trips in the south are as pleasant and interesting. In consequence of the double tides with which Southampton is favoured, the chance of having a long stretch of ill looking and worse smelling mud flats in the foreground of the view is almost negligible. Unless a very thorough knowledge of the shore is desired, the view from the deck will give the stranger an adequate idea of the surrounding country. The passing show of shipping, of all sorts, sizes and nationalities, is not the least interesting item of the passage. The writer's most vivid recollection of Southampton Water in the early summer of 1918 is not of the beautiful shores shimmering in the June sun, but of an extraordinary line of "dazzle ships" in the centre of the waterway, moored bow to stern in a long perspective, or it would be more correct to say, want of perspective, the brain and the eye being so much at variance that the ends of the line could scarcely be believed to consist of ships at all.

[Illustration: NETLEY RUINS.]

The ruins of Netley Abbey can best be seen by taking the pleasant shore road from Woolston and Weston Grove. The distance is a little over two miles from the Itchen ferry. The so-called Netley Castle was once the gate-house of the Abbey, converted into a fort when Henry VIII devised the elaborate scheme of coast defence that has dotted the southern seaboard with a more scattered (and more picturesque) series of Martello towers.

The ruins of the Cistercian Church which once graced this shore and raised above the trees its lighthouse tower, a seamark by day and a beacon by night, are among the loveliest in Wessex. Though perhaps these relics of a former splendour, when they consist of more than a few bits of broken masonry, should rather be said to be heartrending in their reminder of what we have lost.

Not so beautiful is the great pile, a mile to the south, built during the Crimean war for the invalid warriors and named after their Queen. A short distance away is another great building, or series of structures, erected during the Great War, to further our claim to the empire of the air.

[Illustration: ON THE HAMBLE.]

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The Hamble river is the only considerable stream before the barrier spit of Calshot Castle is reached. This comes down from historic Bishop's Waltham with its considerable remains of the "palace" of the earlier Bishop of Winchester. After passing Botley, an ancient market town, the river widens into an estuary haven altogether out of proportion to the stream behind it, and at Bursledon, where it is crossed by the Portsmouth highway, it becomes really beautiful: the curving banks are in places embowered in trees that descend to the water's edge. When the tide is full the scene would hold its own with many more favoured by the guide books. The fields around are devoted to the culture of the strawberry for the London market, and the crops are said to be finer than those of the better-known Kentish districts.

Two finds from the stream bed are in Botley market hall, a portion of a Danish war vessel and an almost entire prehistoric canoe.

[Illustration: GATE HOUSE, TITCHFIELD.]

A name better known to the majority of our readers will be that of the Meon, a further reference to which district will be found in the concluding chapter. The waters of this longer stream rise on a western outlier of Butser Hill and, draining a remote and beautiful district served by the Meon Valley Railway, reach Titchfield Haven over three miles below the Hamble. Titchfield, two miles as the crow flies from the sea (for we are now on the open waters of the Solent), is a pleasant old town with an interesting church and the gatehouse remnant of a once famous abbey of Premonstratensians. Part of the tower and nave of the church are Saxon, and the remainder is in a whole range of styles. A chapel on the south was once the property of the abbey and is called the Abbot's Chapel, this has a fine tomb of the first and second Earls and first Countess of Southampton. Perhaps of more interest to some visitors will be the flag hung near the opening to the chancel. This was the first to fly over Pretoria after the British occupation.

The western shore of Southampton Water may be accepted as the eastern boundary of the New Forest, as the straight north and south valley of the Salisbury Avon is its western barrier. From the sea at Christ-church Bay to the Blackwater valley west of Romsey is about twenty miles and all this great district partakes more or less of the character of the country seen from the Bournemouth express after it leaves Lyndhurst Road. To attempt to describe in detail this unique corner of England would be beyond the possibilities of this book or its author, and only the barest outline will be attempted.



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One authority claims 95,000 acres as the extent of the Forest. The present writer would increase this estimate considerably. About two-thirds of the more central portion are crown lands, and as will be seen by the most superficial view (from the afore-mentioned express train for instance) much of the central woodland is interspersed with farms and arable land and a large extent of open heath, as are those outlying fringes in the Avon valley and elsewhere. It is unaccountable that the word "forest" should have so altered in meaning during the course of centuries that its earlier significance has almost become lost. The word is associated in every one's mind with the density of tropical foliage or the dark grandeur of northern fir woods. Forest as a topographical suffix denotes a wild uncultivated tract of hilly or common land, more often than not quite bare of trees. The great expanse of Radnor Forest is well known to the writer and not even a thorn bush comes to the mind in picturing its miles of fern-clad billowy uplands.

The "New" Forest was first so called by the Conqueror. He brought within its bounds certain tracts that had been preserved by his predecessors, but that he "burnt and razed whole villages, and converted a smiling countryside into a wild place devoted to the king's pleasure" is extremely improbable, unless we may credit William with an altruistic care for the sport of his great-grandchildren at the expense of whatever little popularity he may have had in his own time. Undoubtedly the folk of this part of Hampshire felt aggrieved at losing their rights over a great stretch of wild common where the more democratic Saxon kings had taken their pleasure without interfering with the privileges of the churl. That certain small settlements were at some time abandoned is attested by names such as Bochampton, Tachbury, Church Walk, *etc.*, and it is said that Rufus established certain dispossessed peasantry in far-off portions of his kingdom. The Conqueror's immediate successors made cruel and arbitrary laws, in connexion with the preservation of the deer, that were much mitigated by the Forest Charter of 1217 which provided that death should no longer be the penalty for killing the King's deer, but merely a fine, or imprisonment in default.

The wild life of the Forest is much the same as that of the remoter parts of rural England, apart from the ponies and the deer. Of the latter only a few still roam the glades. An Act was passed in 1851 for their removal, when the number was reduced from nearly 4,000 to about 250 of two kinds—fallow deer and red deer. Latterly roe deer have appeared, adventurers from Milton Abbey park. The New Forest pony was a distinct breed and the writer has been told that it was the descendant of a small native horse, but its characteristics have been lost through scientific crossing with alien breeds. A legend used to be current in the Forest that the ponies were descended from those landed from the wrecked ships of the Spanish Armada, but there is a limit to what we may believe of this wonderful fleet. Most villages along the south coast having rather more than the usual proportion of dark-haired folk have been claimed as asylums for the castaway sailors and soldiers of Spain by enthusiastic amateur anthropologists.



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Before breaking-in, the Forest pony is a wild and often vicious little beast—more so, perhaps, than its cousins of Wales and Dartmoor—and a “drive,” when the little horses are corralled, is an exciting and interesting affair, human wits being pitted against equine, not always to the advantage of the former.

Small companies of rough-coated donkeys may occasionally be seen, in an apparently wild state, roaming about the more open parts of the Forest. Some years ago the breeding of mules for export was a recognized local concern, but this seems to have fallen into desuetude.

Badgers and otters are common, as is the ubiquitous squirrel. The badger, however, is seldom seen by the chance visitor by reason of its nocturnal habits, but it is said to be more numerous than in any similar wild tract in the south. The smaller wild mammals, carnivorous and herbivorous, and a truly representative family of birds, including one or two rare visitors, have here a perfect sanctuary. The forest is obviously a happy hunting ground for the lepidopterist and botanist. The latter will find many of the rarer British orchids in the central “dingles” and on the more remote western borders. During the Great War a large number of trees were felled and the usually silent woods re-echoed with the noises of a Canadian lumber camp. About this time great flocks of migratory jays from central Europe were noticed in the eastern parts of the Forest. For the pedestrian who toils over the Forest roads in the height of summer there is one form of wild life in evidence that claims his whole attention, and that is the virulent and audacious forest fly. Only the strongest “shag” and gloved hands can keep this horrible creature at bay.

The observant stranger will notice a large proportion of small, dark folk among the inhabitants of the Forest. It is a fascinating matter for conjecture that these may be remnants of the Iberians that once held south Britain or even, perhaps, of a still older people left stranded by the successive races that have swept westwards by way of the uplands to the north.

The western shore of Southampton Water has little of interest to detain the visitor. The small town of Hythe, almost opposite Netley Abbey, has nothing ancient about it, though it is a picturesque and pleasant little place. Fawley, nearly opposite the opening of the Hamble, has a fine late Norman church with much Early English addition. Calshot Castle is another of those forts of Henry VIII already mentioned, and once round the corner of this spit we are in the Solent at Stanswood Bay. A few miles farther and the beautiful estuary of the Beaulieu river runs into the recesses of the Forest. Small steamers sometimes bring holiday-makers from Southampton to the port of Beaulieu, called Bucklershard, where, over a hundred years ago, there was an attempt to make a new seaport. It is difficult to believe that this quiet creek was, during the second half of the eighteenth century,

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the birthplace of many “wooden walls of old England.” Here among other famous ships was launched the *Agamemnon*, commanded by Nelson at the siege of Celvi, where he lost his right eye. An unfortunate disagreement between the shipbuilders and the Admiralty, in which the former were so ill advised as to seek the help of the law, led to the abandonment of the yards. At St. Leonards, nearer the mouth of the estuary, is the ruin of a chapel belonging to the Cistercians of Beaulieu and also portions of their great barn, said to be the largest in England (209 feet by 70 feet). The great Abbey church, nearly four miles off, was entirely swept away during the Demolition. It was here that the wife of the King Maker took refuge after the death of her husband at the battle of Barnet. A few days before, on the actual day of the fight, arrived Margaret of Anjou with reinforcements for Henry VI. Some years later, after his repulse at Exeter, Perkin Warbeck sought sanctuary, the right of which had been granted to the monastery by Pope Innocent IV. The monks’ refectory is now the parish church and a very fine and interesting one it makes. Considerable portions of the domestic buildings remain. Palace House, the residence of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, was once the gatehouse of the abbey.

A return must now be made to Southampton, and the Christchurch road taken through Totton to Lyndhurst. The station for the latter town is over two miles away on the Southampton road, where the railway makes a wide detour to Beaulieu Road and Brockenhurst. The absurd title given to Lyndhurst by local guide-books, “Capital of the New Forest,” is uncalled for. Certainly it is nearly the centre of the district and is within convenient distance of some of the most beautiful woodlands, but nothing could be a greater contrast to the surroundings than this new-looking brick excrescence. It has one fine old Jacobean building—the “King’s House,” where the Forest Courts are held. The Verderers, of whom there are six, are elected by open ballot. They must be landowners residing in or near the Forest and may sit in judgment upon any offence against Forest laws. These Verderers Courts have been held since Norman days and the old French terms “pannage,” “turbary” and so on, are still used. Further, the old name for the court, “Swain Mote,” indicates a Saxon origin for this seat of greenwood justice.

[Illustration: THE KNIGHTWOOD OAK IN WINTER.]

The spire of Lyndhurst church can be seen for miles wherever high ground and a break in the woods render this possible. It surmounts a mid-Victorian erection of variegated bricks in about the worst possible taste for its situation. The one redeeming feature is a wall painting of the Ten Virgins by Lord Leighton.



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A little over two miles away, and on the road to the Rufus Stone, is Minstead church, which will make a different appeal to the understanding stranger. This is (or was lately) a charming survival from the days of our grandfathers with a three-decker, old room-like pews, and double galleries. Malwood Lodge, close by, is a seat of the Harcourt family, and not far away, about a mile and a half from Minstead church, is the spot where William Rufus was killed by that mysterious arrow which by accident or design, relieved England of a tyrannical and wicked king. The "Rufus Stone," as the iron memorial is called, with its terse and non-committal inscription was placed here by a former Lord de la Warr. The body was conveyed to Winchester in the cart of a charcoal-burner named Purkiss, and descendants of this man, still following his occupation, were living within bow-shot of the memorial one hundred years ago. The family "enjoyed for centuries the right to the taking of all such wood as they could gather *by hook or by crook*, dead branches, and what could be broken, but not cut by the axe." It is said that the train of accidents that befell the Conqueror's family in the Forest was considered by Hampshire folk to be a just retribution for his iniquity in "making" it. His grandson Henry, his second son Richard, and lastly his third son Rufus, all met a violent death within its glades.

A short distance westwards we reach the "Compton Arms Hotel" and Stoney Cross, from which an alternate route through beautiful Boldrewood can be taken back to Lyndhurst or a long and lonely but good road followed all the way to Ringwood, nine miles away on the Avon. The traveller who would explore the recesses of the forest remote from the beaten track should make his way north and west from Stoney Cross through the sandy heaths of Eyeworth Walk and the mysterious depths of Sloden with its dark yews of great and unknown age. Not far from Stoney Cross on the way to Fritham, are a number of prehistoric graves clustered closely together, and an interesting relic of the Roman occupation exists at Sloden where there are mounds of burnt earth, charcoal, and broken pottery. The locality has long been known as "Crock Hill" and is evidently the site of an earthenware factory. The road going south and west by Broomy Walk leads to Fordingbridge on the Avon. Here is a beautiful and interesting old church, a typically pleasant Hampshire town, and a quiet but delightful stretch of the river.

The straight high road, that runs south from Lyndhurst through the thick woodlands of Irons Hill Walk and the giant oaks of Whitley Wood, reaches Brockenhurst in four miles. This small town, to the writer's mind, is pleasanter and less sophisticated than Lyndhurst, though boarding-houses are as much in evidence and the railway station is close to the main street. The church stands on a low hill among the trees of the actual forest. Here was recently to be seen, and possibly is still, a quaintly ugly survival in the squire's pew, placed as a sort of royal box at the entrance to the chancel. The building is of various dates and contains a Norman font of Purbeck marble. The enormous yew of great age will at once be noticed in the churchyard.

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The main road continues over Whitley Ridge to Lymington nearly five miles from Brockenhurst, passing, about half-way on the left, Boldre, with an old Norman church among the thickly-set trees on the hill above Lymington River. The village and inn are at the bottom of the valley near a bridge that carries the Beaulieu road up to the great bare expanse of Beaulieu Heath.

After passing the branch railway, and about half a mile short of Lymington, is a fine circular prehistoric entrenchment called Buckland Rings. The road now drops to the one-time parliamentary borough and ancient port of Lymington, now only known to the majority as the point of departure by the "short sea route" to the Isle of Wight, and those who make the passage when the tide is out do not usually regret the shortness of their stay on this particular bit of coast. But their self-congratulation is wasted, Lymington itself is a very pleasant and clean town, even if its shore is a dreary stretch of salt marsh, grey and depressing on the sunniest day. There are some fine old houses in the picturesque High Street, though none of them remember the day in 1154 when Henry II landed on the way to his coronation. The much restored church will be best appreciated for the picture it makes from the other end of High Street.

Though a fashionable resort in those days when any seaside town was a possible future Brighton, Lymington is never likely to become crowded with visitors again, but artists find many good studies on the river and in the town and even on the "soppy" flats themselves, and there are salt baths at high tide for those unconventional holiday-makers who favour the place.

To resume the main route through the forest from Lyndhurst the western road must be taken. It presently turns sharply towards the south and penetrates the fastnesses of the woods lining the Highland Water. Here we find the celebrated Knightwood Oak and the grand beeches of Mark Ash, nearly two miles away in the depths to the right, but worth the trouble of finding. In less than six miles from Lyndhurst the traveller reaches the cross-roads at Wilverley Post on the top of Markway Hill, and in another long mile Holmsley station on the Brokenhurst-Ringwood railway. Then follows an undulating and lonely stretch of four and a half miles of mingled wood and common and occasional cultivated land to the scattered hamlet of Hinton Admiral, that boasts a station on the South Western main line to Bournemouth. There is now but an uninteresting three miles to the outskirts of Christchurch.

[Illustration: LYMINGTON CHURCH.]

The one-time Saxon port of Twyneham and present borough of Christchurch (the change of name, like several others in the country, was due to the over-whelming power of the ecclesiastical as opposed to on the secular) has a similarity to Southampton in its situation on a peninsula between two rivers before they form a joint estuary to the sea. But, alas, although the waterways of the Avon and Stour are considerable, Christchurch

Harbour long ago silted up and the long tongue of land that runs eastward across the mouth effectually bars ingress to anything in the nature of a trading vessel.

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The town, though pleasant enough in itself, has but one real attraction for the visitor and, judging by the crowds of holiday-makers brought in every day by motor, tram and train from the huge pleasure town on the west, the study of ecclesiastical architecture must be gaining favour with the British public. Or is it that the uncompromising modernity of Bournemouth, without even the recollection of a Hanoverian princess to give it antiquity, drives its visitors in such swarms to the one-time Priory, and now longest parish church in England.

The old Saxon minster, after passing through many vicissitudes (including a particularly humiliating one at the hands of William Rufus, whose creature, Flambard, made slaves of its clergy and ran the church as a miracle show!), became in the middle of the twelfth century an Augustinian priory and the choir of the new building was finished just before 1300. At the crossing of nave and transepts the usual low and heavy Norman tower had been built with the usual result—it collapsed and brought some of the choir down with it. This was again rebuilt during the fifteenth century, which period also saw the rise of the western tower that graces every distant view of the town. The transepts have beneath them Norman crypts, though the structure immediately above is of varying date, with a good deal of original work remaining, including an apsidal chapel. The Lady Chapel was built in the fifteenth century; over it is a room known as “St. Michael’s Loft.” This served for years as Christchurch grammar school.

[Illustration: NORMAN TURRET, CHRISTCHURCH.]

Every one will admire the beautiful rood screen, well and carefully restored in the middle of the last century, and the unusual reredos which represents the Tree of Jesse and the Adoration of the Wise Men. On the left of the altar is the Salisbury chantry and in front a stone slab to Baldwin de Redvers (1216). There are several fine tombs in other parts of the church including that of the last Prior, who has a chapel to himself at the end of the south choir aisle. The fine monument to Shelley at the west end of the church is as much admired for its beauty as it is criticized for its “unfitness for a position in a Christian church” (Murray). The female figure supporting Shelley’s body represents his wife. Mr. Cox in his *Little Guide to Hampshire* draws attention to the fact that the conception is “an obvious parody of a Pieta, or the Virgin supporting the Dead Christ” and therefore in the worst possible taste. The poet had no personal connexion with Christchurch. His son lived for some years at Boscombe Manor.

The custodian shows, when requested, a visitors’ book where, on one and the same page are the signatures of William II and Louis Raemaekers!

Comparatively few old buildings remain in the vicinity of the great church and the visitor will not need to make an exhaustive exploration of its environs, but before leaving Christchurch the fine collection of local birds brought together and mounted by a resident of the town should not be missed.



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Embryo watering places, the conception of the “real estate” fraternity whom Bournemouth has set by the ears, line the low shore of Christchurch Bay between Hengistbury Head and Hurst Castle. First comes Highcliffe, this has perhaps the most developed “front,” then Barton, nearly two miles from New Milton station, and lastly Milford-on-Sea, the most interesting of them all, but suffering in popularity by reason of the long road, over four miles, that connects it with the nearest stations, Lymington or New Milton; possibly its regular habitues look upon this as a blessing in disguise. Milford is well placed for charming views of the Island: it has good firm sands and a golf links. An interesting church stands back from the sea on the Everton road. The thirteenth-century tower will at once strike the observer as out of the ordinary; the Norman aisles of the church were carried westwards at the time the tower was built and made to open into it through low arches. The early tracery of the windows should be noticed. The addition of transepts and the enlargement of the chancel about 1250 made the church an exceptionally large structure for the originally small village.

Southbourne, one and a half miles south-west of Christchurch, will soon become a mere outer suburb of Bournemouth. It almost touches Boscombe, that eastern extension of the great town that has sprung into being within the last fifty years. Southbourne is said to be bracing; it is certainly a great contrast to the bustle and glitter of its great neighbour. There is a kind of snobbishness that strikes to decry any large or popular resort, seemingly because it *is* large and popular, but surely there must be some virtue in these huge watering places that attract so many year after year, and if Southbourne pleases only Tom, and Bournemouth Dick and Harry *and* their friends, well, good health to them! That their favourite town does not start off a new chapter may offend the latter, but they will perhaps admit that although it is on the west side of the Avon the town among the pines forms, with its sandy chines and the trees that gave it its first claim to popular favour, an extension and outlier of the great series of heath and woodland that has just been traversed and that it makes a fitting geographical termination to south-western Hants.

Though the pines themselves have not been planted much longer than a hundred years, they now appear as the only relics of a lonely and rather bare tract of uncultivable desert. Local historians claim that the beginnings of Bournemouth were made in 1810, but it would appear that only two or three houses existed by the lonely wastes of sand in the first few years of the Victorian era. One of these was an adjunct to a decoy pond for wild fowl. The parish itself was not formed until 1894, and although fashionable streets and fine churches and a super-excellent “Winter-garden” had been erected when the writer first saw the town, not much more than twenty



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years ago, the front was extremely “raw” and the only shelter during a shower was a large tent on the sands that, on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, collapsed during a squall upon the crowd of lightly-clad holiday-makers beneath. But this is a very dim and distant past for Bournemouth, the “Sandbourne” of the Wessex novels. The town is now as well conducted as any on the English coast. It is large enough and has a sufficient permanent population to justify its inclusion in the ranks of the county boroughs. It is becoming almost as popular as Ventnor with those who suffer from weak lungs, though it can be very cold here in January.

[Illustration: SAND AND PINES, BOURNEMOUTH.]

Bournemouth will be found a convenient centre, or rather starting point, for the exploration of the beautiful Wessex coast. From the pier large and comfortable steamers make the passage to Swanage, Weymouth, Lyme and further afield. Another advantage which these large towns have for the ordinary tourist is that he may generally count upon getting some sort of roof to cover him when in the smaller coast resorts lodgings are not merely at a premium but simply unobtainable at any price.

[Illustration: CORFE CASTLE.]

CHAPTER III

POOLE, WIMBORNE AND THE ISLE OF PURBECK

The South of England generally is wanting in that particular scenic charm that consists of broad stretches of inland water backed by high country. The first sight of Poole harbour with the long range of the Purbeck Hills in the distance will come as a delightful revelation to those who are new to this district. The harbour is almost land-locked and the sea is not in visual evidence away from the extremely narrow entrance between Bournemouth and Studland. A fine excursion for good pedestrians can be made by following the sandy shore until the ferry across the opening is reached and then continuing to Studland and over Ballard Down to Swanage.

Poole town is a busy place of small extent but containing for its size a large population. The enormous development of industry in the surrounding districts during the Great War must have brought the number of folks in and around Poole to nearly 100,000, thus making it the most populous corner of Dorset. This figure may not be maintained, but a good proportion of the work concerned with the waste of armaments has been transformed into the commerce of peace. One cause for the modern prosperity of this old town is its position as regards the converging railways from the west and north as well as from London and Weymouth.



[Illustration: POOLE.]

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Poole, like a good many other places with as much or as little cause, has been claimed as a Roman station. There seems to be no direct evidence for this. The first actual records of the town are dated 1248, when William de Longespee gave it its first charter. This Norman held the manor of Canford, and Poole church was originally a chapel of ease for that parish. The present building only dates from 1820 and for the period is a presentable enough copy of the Perpendicular style. Poole was a republican town in the Civil War and sent its levies to help to reduce Corfe Castle. The revenge of the other side came when, at the Restoration, all the town defences were destroyed, though the king was not too forgetful to refuse the hospitality of the citizens during the Great Plague.

The only remarkable relics in Poole are the Wool House or "Town Cellar" and an old postern dating from about 1460. The Town Hall, with its double flight of winding steps and quaint high porch was built in 1761. Within, as a commemoration of the visit recorded above, is a presentment of the monarch who must have had "a way with him," since his subjects' memories apparently became as short as his own.

But Poole's most stirring times were in the days when Harry Page, licensed buccaneer and pirate, made individual war on Spain to such good purpose that the natives of Poole were astounded one morning to see upwards of one hundred foreign vessels dotted about the waters of the harbour, prizes taken by the redoubtable "Arripay," as his captives termed him. Nothing flying the Spanish flag in the Channel seemed to escape him, until matters at last became so humiliating that the might of both countries was brought to bear on Poole, and the town underwent a severe chastisement, in which Page's brother was killed. This spirit of warlike enterprise descended to the great grandchildren of these Elizabethans, for in Poole church is a monument to one Joliffe, captain of the hoy *Sea Adventurer*, who, in the days of Dutch William, drove ashore and captured a French privateer. In the following year another bold seaman, William Thompson, with but one man and a cabin-boy to help him, took a Cherbourg privateer and its crew of sixteen. Both these heroes received a gold chain and medal from the King. Another generation, and the town was fighting its own masters over the question of "free imports." In spite of the usually accepted fact that smuggling can only prosper in secret, Poole became a sort of headquarters for all that considerable trade that found in the nooks and crannies of the Dorset coast safe warehouses and a natural cellaring. So bold did the fraternity become that in 1747, when a large cargo of tea had been seized by the crown authorities and placed for safe keeping in the Customs House, the free traders overpowered all resistance and triumphantly retrieved their booty, or shall we say, their property? and took it surrounded by a well-armed escort to various

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receivers in the remoter parts of the wild country north-west of Wimborne. The leaders of this attack were afterwards found to be members of a famous Sussex band and the incident led to tragedy. An informer named Chater, of Fordingbridge, and an excise officer—William Calley—were on their way to lay an information, when they were seized by a number of smugglers and cruelly done to death. For this six men suffered the full penalty and three others were hanged for the work done at Poole.

The waters of Poole Harbour are salt as the sea outside though fed by the rivers Frome and Puddle, and so of course its best aspect is when the tide is full. The erratic ebb and flow is more pronounced here than at Southampton and there are longer periods of high than low water. Brownsea Island, that occupies the centre of this inland sea, with its wooded banks of dark greenery makes an effective foil to the sparkling waters and long mauve line of the Purbeck Hills. There is always deep water at the eastern extremity of the island, to which boats can be taken. Here are Branksea (or Brownsea) Castle, an enlarged and improved edition of one of Henry's coast forts, and a few cottages. Other small islands, populated by waterfowl, lie between Brownsea and the Purbeck shore, where on a small peninsula is the pretty little hamlet of Arne, remote, forgotten and very seldom visited by tourist or stranger, but commanding the most exquisite views of the harbour and surrounding country. It is possible that in the near future the amenities of Poole Harbour may disappear or at least change their quiet aspect of to-day, for at the time of writing a scheme is afoot to deepen the channels and render the harbour capable of taking the largest ships within its sheltered anchorage.

Six miles north of Poole, in the valley of the Stour where that river is joined by the Allen or Wim, stands Wimborne Minster surrounded by the pleasant old town that bears the full name of its only title to renown. This is another claimant for a Roman send-off to its history, and with better grounds than Poole, though here again authorities differ, some maintaining that Badbury Rings, the scene of the great defeat of the West Saxons by the British, was the original Vindogladia. A Roman pavement has been discovered within the area covered by the Minster Church; whether this is a remnant of a considerable station or only of a solitary villa is unknown.

[Illustration: WIMBORNE MINSTER.]

The beautiful Minster, one of the "sights" of Bournemouth, and, although farther afield, almost as popular as Christchurch, was founded at an early date in the history of Wessex, but the actual year is unknown. It must have been very early in the eighth century that the two sisters of King Ine, Cuthberga and Cwenburh, joined in forming a sisterhood here. Both were buried in the original building and eventually became enrolled in that long list of Saxon Saints whose names have such a quaintly archaic sound and whose

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lives must have been a matter of high romance, considering the experiences through which they lived. St. Boniface asked for the help of the Wimborne sisterhood to carry on his missionary labours among the benighted tribes of Germany, and several establishments in the marshes and woodlands along the shore of the Baltic Sea were the daughter houses of this mid-Wessex abbey. The Saxon church was probably destroyed during the Danish terror, but rebuilding commenced again before the Conquest and the church became a college of secular canons.

As will be seen by a first glance at the central tower, Norman workmanship is in evidence in the exterior. The pinnacles and battlements that give the upper part such a curious and incongruous appearance were added in 1608. Previous to this it had a spire that was erected in the late thirteenth century, but in 1600, while a service was being conducted, "a sudden mist ariseing, all the spire steeple, being of very great height was strangely cast down; the stones battered all the lead and brake much timber of the rooffe of the church, yet without anie hurt to the people." The other tower at the western end was a 1450 addition, about which time several alterations were made, including a new clerestory. The soft and beautiful tints in the old stone are not the least charming feature of the exterior. Before entering the church the "Jack," a figure in eighteenth-century dress that strikes the hours on a bell, should be noticed. The medley of architecture will be seen directly one enters by the north porch. The arches of the nave are of three distinct types; those at the west end being Decorated, the three in the middle late Transitional, and that nearest the tower an earlier example of this style. The choir is a mixture of late Norman and Early English. The altar is placed unusually high and this adds much to the dignity of the church. The east window is of great interest to archaeologists. Conjectured to have been constructed about 1210-20 when the apsidal east end was pulled down, it forms one of the earliest instances of "plate" tracery. Some old Italian glass has been inserted in it. On the south side of the chancel will be seen the fine tomb of John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, grandfather of Henry VII and grandson of John of Gaunt. Above the tomb is suspended an old helmet weighing over 14 lbs. This was found during some restorations, buried in the nave. It is supposed to have belonged to the Duke. Beyond this are the canopied sedilia and piscina. On the north side is a slab of Purbeck marble which may have replaced the original memorial of King Ethelred, who was buried in the older church. The tomb on this side of the chancel is that of Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, and wife of the Marquis beheaded by Henry VIII. The oak benches that extend across the front of the sanctuary were placed here when the church was in Presbyterian keeping. They are usually covered with white wrappings, which, to the

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casual visitor, have the appearance of decorators' dust-cloths, but are really "house-ling linen." The relics that once made the Minster famous and a place of pilgrimage for the credulous were many and various. Reputed fragments of our Lord's manger, robe and cross; some of the hairs of His beard, and a thorn from His crown; a bottle containing the blood of St. Thomas a Becket, and St. Agatha's thighbone.

The fine old chest with its six different locks, one for each trustee, in the St. George's or north choir aisle, will be remarked. This is the receptacle for the deeds of Collett's Charity at Corfe Castle. Beside another very ancient chest (possibly used for "relics"), is an effigy of an unknown knight, conjectured to be a Fitz Piers, also a monument to Sir Edmund Uvedale. In the south, or Trinity, aisle is the Etricke tomb; here lies a recorder of Poole, the same who committed to prison, after his capture on one of the wild heaths near Ringwood, that one-time hope of protestant England, the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth. This Anthony Etricke was buried half in and half out of the church in pursuance of a curious whim that he should lie neither in the open nor under the church roof. He caused the date of his death to be carved upon the side of the sarcophagus but, as may be seen, the date had to be advanced twelve years when he did demise. There is a finely vaulted crypt under the altar and over the fourteenth century vestry is an interesting library where the books were once chained to the shelves. It was instituted in the seventeenth century for the use of the laity of Wimborne as well as for the minster clergy and may thus claim to be one of the very earliest libraries in existence. It contains, among other curiosities, a copy of Raleigh's *History of the World* with a hole burnt through its leaves, through the carelessness of Matthew Prior, who was a resident of Wimborne. On the wall of the western tower is a brass to this worthy.

The town has the usual pleasant and comfortable air of an English agricultural centre, with few really old buildings, however, and a sad amount of mean and jerry-built streets in the newer part near the station that does not give the stranger a favourable first impression if he comes by rail. There are some picturesque alleys and "backs" around the Minster and the walks in the rural environs of Wimborne and up the valley of the Stour are most charming. On the north-west of the town is St. Margaret's Hospital, with a restored chapel that still retains some ancient portions. This was originally a leper's hospital and the foundation dates from about 1210.

[Illustration: JULIAN'S BRIDGE, WIMBORNE.]



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A long mile east of Wimborne station is Canford Magna, the mother parish of a large district. The small church still retains a goodly portion of the original Norman structure. The fine modern stained glass is worthy of notice, but the recent additions are in poor taste and too florid a style. Near by is Canford Manor, an imposing pile belonging to Lord Wimborne and once the home of the Earls of Salisbury. The greater part of the present house was designed by Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament. The remainder dates from the early part of the nineteenth century, except "John O'Gaunt's Kitchen"—the only portion left of the ancient manor-house. Canford village is of the model variety, each house bearing the "seal" of the lord of the manor.

From quite near Wimborne station delightful walks may be taken across the park, which, under certain reasonable restrictions, is open to the public. To the south stretches the wide expanse of Canford Heath, which once upon a time extended to the sea at Canford Cliffs, now a fashionable part of Bournemouth. Eastwards, crossed by the Ringwood road, is another series of heaths, sparsely inhabited and known by the various names of Hampreston, Parley Common, St. Leonard's Common and Holt Heath. There are few parts of Southern England where is so much idle land, apart from the New Forest, as in eastern Dorset. These moors are beautiful for rambling and camping, but heartbreaking to any one with the mind of a Cobbett!

The direct Salisbury road climbs for ten miles gradually upwards, and passing Hinton Parva church on the right, and, about a mile farther, the site of a British village close to the road on the left, takes a lonely and rather dull course until it reaches the small hamlet of Knowlton, where there are the remains of a church built inside a round earthwork which has its walls *outside* the ditch, thus indicating, in all probability, a use religious rather than military and an unbroken tradition into Christian times. The way continues in a north-easterly direction until it winds past the conspicuous tumulus, said to be a temple or place of justice, on the summit of Castle Hill, just short of the one-time important, but now much decayed market town of Cranborne. The church here is an imposing and beautiful Early English erection, with some remains of an earlier Norman building. A priory of Benedictines was founded at Cranborne in Saxon times by Aylward, but nothing of this still earlier building can now be traced. The fine embattled tower dates from that era of fine towers—the Perpendicular. The west window is a memorial to the celebrated Dean of St. Paul's—Stillingfleet, a member of a family who once lived in one of the old cottages here. The ancient pulpit will be noticed; this bears the initials of an abbot of Tewkesbury, who died in 1421. Some wall paintings were discovered under a coat of distemper about twenty years ago, and there is a fine monument with recumbent figures to Sir Edward Hooper.



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[Illustration: CRANBORNE MANOR.]

The little “Crane bourne” that comes down from the lonely chalk uplands between Cranborne Chase and Pentridge Hill gives its name to the town, which in turn gives a title to the Cecils. The manor is said to have as long a history as that of the church, but the present building dates mainly from about 1520. The Jacobean west wing was built by the first Cecil to take possession. The early Stuart kings were frequent visitors, and Charles I stayed in the house just before the fight at Newbury in 1644. At Rushay Farm, near the lonely hamlet of Pentridge, William Barnes, the Dorset poet, was born, and a forefather of Robert Browning was once footman and butler to the Banks family who lived at Woodyates. A tablet in Pentridge church commemorates his death in 1746, but, needless to say, it has only been erected since his great descendant became famous. A memorial to the poet has also been placed in the church inscribed with a line from *Pippa Passes*: “All service ranks the same with God.”

Cranborne Chase, a lonely district of wooded hills that we shall approach again in our travels, is partly in Dorset and partly in Wilts. It is a remnant of the great deer forest that, originally in the possession of various feudal lords, became Crown property in the reign of the fourth Edward and remained in royal hands until the time of James I. During that long period, and for many years afterwards, it was a region where the scanty population, innocent as well as lawbreaker, lived in constant fear of the barbarous laws governing the chase. Mutilation, the dungeon or heavy fine, according to the rank of the offender, was the punishment for taking the deer. Ferocity often breeds ferocity, and the inhabitants of the forest were for long a dour and difficult race. The locality seemed destined to raise gentlemen of the road, and in the seventeenth century and during the next, the dim recesses of the woods were utilized for storing the vast quantities of goods landed free of duty at Poole and elsewhere. Wiltshire people say that the original “Moonrakers” were Wiltshire folk of Cranborne Chase, and the story goes that a party of horsemen crossing a stream saw some yokels drawing their rakes through the water which reflected the harvest moon. On being questioned they confessed that they were trying to rake “that cheese out of the river:” with a shout of laughter at the simplicity of the rustics the travellers proceeded on their way. The humour of the joke lies in the fact that the “moonrakers” were smugglers retrieving kegs of rum and brandy and that the horsemen were excise officials. But the folk-lore origin of “Moonraker” is said by the Rev. J.E. Field to belong to a very early period, probably before the day of the Saxon and to be contemporaneous with the “Cuckoo Penners” of Somerset, who captured a young cuckoo and built a high hedge round it; there they fed it until its wings had grown, when it quietly flew away, much to the astonished chagrin of the yokels. This is a widespread legend and belongs to other parts of England besides Somerset.

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The road from Wimborne to Blandford, four miles from the former town, passes on the right an imposing hill crowned with fir trees. This is the famous Badbury Rings. Here the conquering West Saxon met his most serious set-back and almost his only real defeat. The camp is undoubtedly prehistoric and was not a permanent settlement, but rather a military post of great strength for use in time of war. The ramparts consist of three rings of "wall" with a ditch to each, the outer being a mile round. The hill is noteworthy for its extensive views, reaching in clear weather to the Isle of Wight. The Purbeck Hills appear far away over the beautiful park of Kingston Lacy, the seat of the Bankes, an old county family. The house contains a fine collection of pictures not usually shown to the public.

The road it is proposed to follow leaves this demesne to the left and in two miles reaches Sturminster Marshall on the banks of the Stour. The old church with its pinnacled tower was restored so carefully that its ancient character has to a large extent been retained. The church was originally Norman, but several additions of varying dates have been made to it. As the church is entered, two fifteenth-century coffin lids will be noticed in the porch. Within is a brass to a former vicar (1581) and a slab to Lady Arundel of Nevice. The memorial to King Alfred was presented to the church a few years ago by R.C. Jackson, the antiquary, to commemorate the supposed connexion of this Stour Minster with the great king.

Passing Bailey Gate, which is the station for Sturminster, the Poole road is reached in a few minutes; turning left and following this for a mile, the pedestrian may take a rough track uphill to the right that leads to Lytchett Matravers, an out-of-the-way village with a Perpendicular church and an unpretending inn. Two miles to the south-east on the Poole-Wareham road is Lytchett Minster, remarkable for the extraordinary sign of its inn, the "St. Peter's Finger." This has been explained by Sir Bertram Windle as a corruption of St. Peter ad Vincula. The inn unconsciously perpetuates the name of an old system of land tenure, Lammas-day (in the Roman calendar St. Peter ad Vincula) being one of the days on which service was done as a condition of holding the land. The pictured sign itself, however, is very literal in its rendering of the name. One of the finest views obtainable of Poole and its surroundings is from Lytchett Beacon, and in the opposite direction, the tower in Charborough Park is a conspicuous landmark.

The direct road from Lytchett Matravers goes by Sleeping Green (we are approaching the land of queer names) and reaches Wareham in five miles after passing over the lonely Holton Heath, an outlier of the Great Heath of Dorset, that wide stretch of moorland that Mr. Hardy has made world-famous under the general appellation of "Egdon Heath."

Wareham, pleasant and ancient, is, after the capital, the most interesting inland town in Dorset. Its position between the rivers Frome and Puddle, that unite just before reaching Poole Harbour, was of value as a strategical point and from very early times,

possibly prehistoric, the town was strongly fortified by its famous “walls” or earth embankments that enclose to-day a much greater area than the town itself.

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Roman antiquities have been found of such a character as to prove its importance at that period. It was one of the towns where Athelstan's coins were made. It was accounted a first-class port by Canute and proved a place of contention between Alfred and the Danes. At one time eight churches stood within the walls and a castle erected by the Conqueror overawed the inhabitants until the tussle between John and the Barons led to its destruction. The churches that remain are three in number, and two are of much interest. St. Martin's, on a high bank at the northern entrance to the town, is a restored Saxon building, the traditional resting place, until his body was removed to Tewkesbury, of Beohtric, King of Wessex, in 800. The characteristic work of this period may be seen in the chancel arch and windows and in the "long and short" work at the north-east angle of the church.

Our Lady St. Mary's is the large and handsome church on the banks of the Frome, here crossed by an old stone bridge that carries the Corfe road across the river. The first church on this site is supposed to have occupied the space now covered by St. Edward's Chapel. Here Edward the Martyr was brought after his murder at Corfe Castle, the body being afterwards transferred to Shaftesbury with great pomp and splendour. The temporary coffin of the king may be seen near the font. It is of massive stone with a place carved out for the head. The nave and chancel have been much altered and partially rebuilt. Over St. Edward's chapel, which dates from the thirteenth century, and is supposed to be built on the site of the Saxon chapel, are the remains of another chapel with a window looking into the church. The most interesting part of the building is the Chapel of St. Thomas a Becket on the south side of the east end. This forms a receptacle for various curiosities, including several brasses, a stone cresset, a Roman lamp and a stone bearing a Scandinavian inscription, besides the piscina and sedilia that belong to the structure itself. The chapel would appear to have been made in the buttressed wall of the church. On the north side of the chancel is an effigy of Sir Henry d'Estoke and on the south a figure of Sir William of that ilk. The embossed alms dish and old earthenware plate for the communion should be noticed. An historian of Dorset—John Hutchings, once rector here—has a monument to his memory. The figures in relief upon the leaden font represent the Apostles. Antiquaries are also interested in some ancient stones built into the old Norman doorway near the pulpit. The ancient sculpture of the Crucifixion was once outside over the north porch. The inscription is said to be: "Catug consecravit Deo," but it is almost impossible to make anything of it at a cursory examination.

[Illustration: ST. MARTIN'S, WAREHAM.]

Holy Trinity Church was for a long time in a state of ruin, but it has now been repaired and is used as a mission room. All the other old churches of Wareham have been swept away by fire or decay and with one or two exceptions their very sites are lost.

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Wareham is built on the usual regular plan of a Roman town, though it is not certain that the thoroughfares follow the actual lines of the original Roman streets. Evidences of this period are too vague and uncertain to make any pronouncement. The streets to-day have the mellow cleanly look of the country town unspoilt by any taint of modern industrialism, but of actual antiquity there is none. This is due to the great fire that raged in 1762 and to all intents and purposes wiped the town out. During the Great War the narrow pavements were thronged with khaki. A great military encampment extended westwards along the north side of the Dorchester road for a considerable distance, and, judging from present appearances, part of this wooden suburb of Wareham appears of a permanent character.

The road over the old and picturesque Frome bridge passes at once into the so-called Isle of Purbeck and gradually rises toward the hills that cut across the "island." The views ahead, which include the striking conical peak called "Creech Barrow," are of increasing beauty, and when we approach the break between the long range of Knowle Hill and Branscombe Hill, the strikingly fine picture of Corfe Castle filling the gap makes an unforgettable scene. Just before reaching the hillock upon which the castle stands, and three and a half miles from Wareham, a road turns left, crossing the railway, and winds by the northern face of Nine Barrows Down to Studland.

[Illustration: THE FROME AT WAREHAM.]

The original name for Corfe was Corvesgate, or the cutting in the hills. This is its usual alias in the Wessex novels. The position was so obviously suited for a sentry post that it was probably entrenched in prehistoric times. Two small streams, the Byle brook and the Steeple brook, run northwards on each side of the mount, uniting just below it to form the Corve River. At first sight the mound appears to be artificial, so velvety smooth and regular are its green sides in contrast with the pile of ruin on its crown.

King Edgar is credited with the first fortified building; this was used as a hunting lodge by his second wife Elfrida, who perpetrated the cruel murder of her stepson Edward while he was drinking a cup of wine at her door. The horse he was riding, no doubt spurred involuntarily by the dying king, galloped away, dragging the body along the ground, until it stopped from exhaustion. The dead monarch was, as already related, buried at Wareham, but the real ruler of England, Archbishop Dunstan, had it exhumed and reburied with much solemn pomp at Shaftesbury Abbey.

During the Conqueror's reign, that great era of castle building, the keep was first erected; by the reign of Stephen it was so strong that he failed to take it from Baldwin de Redvers, who held it for Matilda. John kept the crown jewels here, good evidence of its solidity, also a few Frenchmen of high rank, of whom twenty-two were starved to death, or so tradition says. The Princess Eleanor, captive for forty years, was imprisoned here for a great part of that time by the same "Good King John" who, as a punishment for

prophesying the king's downfall, had bold Peter, the hermit of Pontefract, incarcerated in the deepest dungeon and subsequently hanged.

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During the de Montfort rebellion the castle was held against the king. Edward was kept here for a time by Isabella before his murder at Berkley. The castle then passed through several hands until the time of Elizabeth, when it was sold to Sir Christopher Hatton. During this long period, the fabric was added to and improved until little of the Norman structure remained. All the new buildings seem to have been constructed with but one purpose, that of making an impregnable fortress. The widow of Sir Christopher sold the castle to Attorney-General Sir John Banks, ancestor of the Bankes of Kingston Lacy, in whose occupation, or rather in that of his wife, it was to have its invincibility put to the test. Sir John was with the king's forces at York in 1643 when the army of the Parliament gathered upon the Knowle and East hills. During six weeks repeated attacks were made by the forces of Sir Walter Earle, but without success, and eventually the siege was raised. In 1646 treachery succeeded where honest warfare failed. Colonel Pitman, an officer of the royal garrison, admitted a number of Roundheads, who obtained possession of the King's and Queen's towers. The remainder of the building became untenable by the poorly armed defenders, who had parted with their ordnance long before as a matter of policy.

[Illustration: PLAN OF CORFE CASTLE.]

Months were spent by the victorious Parliamentary forces in mining the foundations and in the systematic destruction of the magnificent defences. As we see it to-day, the actual masonry is practically in the condition left by the explosions, so massive is the material and so indestructible the mortar.

The sketch which accompanies these brief notes will make the plan of the castle clear, but no description can give any adequate notion of the strange havoc wrought by the gunpowder. It speaks well for the good workmanship of the builders when one remembers that these leaning towers, that appear to be in immediate danger of collapse, have been in the same condition for nearly three centuries. The western tower has been carried down the hill nine feet from its original position, but is still erect and unshattered. Part of the curtain wall was completely reversed by the force of the explosive and now shows its inner face. Whoever superintended the work of demolition must have been one of the chagrined and disappointed attackers who was human enough to vent his feelings, at much expense and great risk of life and limb, on the stubborn old walls.

[Illustration: CORFE VILLAGE.]

Corfe, small town or large village, is picturesque and pleasant enough in itself without the added interest of the castle and the beauty of the surrounding country. The church is dedicated to the martyred Edward. It was rebuilt in 1860, excepting the fourteenth century tower, with its quaint gargoyles, and the Norman south porch. From the tower, shot made from the organ pipes of the church was hurled at the castle during the siege. The clock was constructed while Elizabeth was queen and curfew is still rung daily from

October to March at 8 p.m. Within the church may be seen the old altar frontal used prior to the Reformation, and the fifteenth-century font. Of much interest are the quotations from the churchwardens' accounts that are preserved in the church room.



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The old market cross is gone. On its stump there was erected in 1897 a new Latin cross to commemorate the jubilee of Queen Victoria. "Dackhams," the Elizabethan manor standing back from the Swanage road, and now called Morton House, is a fine specimen of Tudor building. The architecture of Corfe, as in most of the inland villages of the "island," is most pleasing; a distinctive note being the pillared porch with a room above.

Corfe Castle retained a mayor and eight "barons" until 1883. The last to hold office (a Bankes) was also Lord High Admiral of Purbeck, a picturesque title over three hundred years old. It will come as a surprise to most readers to hear that Corfe was admitted to rank as a Cinque Port. The town returned the usual two members in pre-reform days.

A pleasant route out of Corfe is to take a path between cottages on the left of the lane leading to West Orchard, and, crossing several meadows, to pass over the breezy Corfe common to the Kingston road. This gives the traveller a series of beautiful views and an especially fine retrospect of Corfe Castle. In a short two miles Kingston, climbing up its steep hill, is reached. The church, a landmark for many miles, was built by Lord Eldon in 1880. It was designed by Street in Early English. With its severe and lofty tower the exterior has a coldly conventional aspect not altogether pleasing. Inside, the large amount of Purbeck marble employed gives a touch of colour which, to a certain extent, relieves the austerity. Not far away is the older church built in Perpendicular style by Lord Chancellor Eldon. The seat of the Eldon family is at Encombe, a lovely cup-shaped hollow opening to the sea about a mile and a half away, and not far from the lonely Chapman's (or perhaps Shipman's) Pool, a deep and sheltered cove on the west of St. Aldhelm's Head. A path can be taken that crosses the fields until the open common, which extends to the edge of the great headland, is reached. On the summit, 450 feet above the waves, is a little Norman chapel dedicated to the first Bishop of Sherborne, whose name the headland bears and *not* that of St. Alban, as erroneously given in so many school geographies and in some tourist maps. This chantry served a double purpose, prayers being said by the priest within and a beacon lit upon the roof without, for the succour and guidance of sailors. A cross now takes the place of the ancient beacon bucket. It is said that the chapel was instituted by a sorrowing father who saw his daughter and her husband drowned in the terrible race off the headland in or about the year 1140. It was restored by the same Earl of Eldon who built the Kingston church, and is looked after by the neighbouring coast-guard. The interior is lit by one solitary window in the thick wall and in the centre is a single massive column. Some authorities have questioned its original use as a place of prayer, but tradition, and a good deal of direct evidence, point to the ecclesiastical nature of the building.



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[Illustration: ST. ALDHELM'S.]

The tale of wreck and disaster off this wild coast reached such a dreadful total that in 1881 after much agitation a light was erected on Anvil Point and declared open by Joseph Chamberlain, then President of the Board of Trade. Between the two heads, which are about four miles apart, is the famous "Dancing Ledge," a sloping beach of solid rock upon which the surf plays at high tide with a curious effect, possibly suggesting the quaint name. This section of cliff, like the whole of the Dorset coast, is of great interest to the geologist and the veriest amateur must feel some curiosity on the subject when it is apparent to him that the beautiful scenery of this shore is caused mainly by its being the meeting place of so many differing strata. The Kimmeridge clay will be noticed at once by its sombre colour, almost quite black when wet, and in times of scarcity actually used as fuel. This clay rings Chapman's Pool and extends westwards to Kimmeridge Bay. St. Aldhelm's Head is built up of differing kinds of limestone, the fine bastions of the top being composed of the famous Portland stone itself, the finest of all the limestones from a commercial point of view.

To walk from St. Aldhelm's along the cliff to Anvil Point and so into Swanage is possible but fatiguing, and perhaps not worth the labour involved. Winspit Quarry and Seacombe Cliff would be passed on the way; between the two are some old guns marking the spot where the East Indiaman *Halsewell* went down in a fearful storm in January, 1786. This tragedy was immortalized by Charles Dickens in "The Long Voyage." Out of 250 souls only eighty-two were saved by men employed at Winspit Quarry. Some of the passengers are buried in the level plot between the two cliffs.

Worth Matravers, a mile and a half from the Head and four from Swanage, is a village at the end of a by-way that leaves the Kingston road near Gallows Gore(!) cottages, a mile west of Langton Matravers. The name of both these villages connects them with an old Norman family once of much importance in south-east Dorset. It is said that one of them was the tool of Queen Isabella and the actual murderer of Edward.

Worth is famous for its fine early Norman church, also restored by the Earl of Eldon. The tower, of three stories, the nave, south door and chancel arch, all belong to this period. The chancel itself is Early English. The carved grotesques under the eaves of the roof are worthy of notice. Not the least remarkable thing about Worth is the tombstone of Benjamin Jesty, who is claimed thereon to be the first person to inoculate for smallpox (1774). Langton Matravers need not keep the stranger; its church was rebuilt nearly fifty years ago and the village is unpicturesque.

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We now approach Swanage, a delightful little town, well known and much appreciated by those of the minority who prefer a restful and modest resort to the glitter and crowds of Bournemouth. That it will never attain the dimensions of its great neighbour to the north is fairly certain. Swanage is in a comparatively inaccessible position. Barely eight miles from Bournemouth as the crow flies, it is twenty-four miles by rail and about the same by road. So that during the five years of war, when the steamer service was suspended, Swanage had no day trippers and the quietness of the town was accentuated, and the camp on the southern slopes of Ballard Down did not interfere to any great extent with this somnolence. But now the steamers pant across to Swanage pier again and unload the curious crowd who make straight for the Great Globe and Tilly Whim and pause to “rest and admire” as they breast the steep slopes of Durlston.

[Illustration: OLD SWANAGE.]

The tutelary genius of Swanage is of stone and the two high priests of the idol were Mowlein and Burt. Some undeserved fun has been poked at the shade of the junior partner, who conceived the enormous open-air kindergarten that has been formed out of the wild cliff at Durlston. For the writer’s part, while venturing to deplore certain incongruities such as the startling inscription that faces the visitor as he turns to survey the Tilly Whim cavern from the platform of rock outside, a feeling of respect for the wholehearted enthusiasm and industry of the remarkable man who was responsible for these marvels is predominant. Every guide to Swanage enumerates in exhaustive detail the objects which make the town a sort of “marine store” of stony odds and ends. The best of these cast-offs is the entrance to the Town Hall, once in Cheapside as the Wren frontage to Mercer’s Hall. The “gothic” tower at Peveril Point at one time graced the southern approach to London Bridge as a Wellington memorial. The clock at the Town Hall is said to be from a “scrapped” city church and the gilt vane on the turret of Purbeck House on the other side of the way is from Billingsgate. Not the least surprising of these relics are the lamp-and-corner-posts bearing the names of familiar London parishes.

When Swanage was Danish Swanic (it was called Swanwick in the early nineteenth century) it witnessed the defeat of its colonizers in a sea fight with Alfred. The irresponsible partners commemorated this by erecting a stone column surmounted by four *cannon balls*. A queer way of perpetuating a pre-conquest naval victory, but possibly the projectiles were less in the way here than at Millbank. Not far away, attached to the wall of the Moslem Institute, is a coloured geological map of the district, another effort at the higher education of “the man on the beach.” It is certainly a good idea, and may lead many to a further study of a fascinating science, for nowhere may the practical study of scenery be made to greater advantage than near Swanage.

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Perhaps the most graceful curve of coast line in Dorset is Swanage Bay, and to see it at its best one should stroll across the rising ground of Peveril Point. To the right are the dark cliffs of Purbeck marble that encircle Durlston Bay; to the left across the half-moon stretch of water is the white chalk of Ballard Point guarded by "Old Harry's daughter," the column of detached chalk in front. At one time this was one of a family, but "Old Harry" and his "wife" have sunk beneath the waves and the sole remaining member of the family may disappear during the next great storm. Beyond, indistinct and remote during fine weather but startlingly near when the glass is falling, are the cliffs of Alum Bay in the Isle of Wight, and the guardian "Needles."

The picturesque High Street should be followed past the Town Hall with its alien Carolean front, and the long wall of Purbeck House that is said to be made up from the "sweepings" of the Albert Memorial at Kensington. Down a lane at the side of the civic building is the old "Lock Up," with an inscription as quaint as it is direct, for it tells us that it was erected "for the prevention of Wickedness and Vice by the Friends of Religion and Good Order." Farther up High Street is a cottage, creeper-clad and picturesque, where Wesley stayed while preaching to the quarrymen. The best part of this stroll is towards the end, where a space opens out on the right to St. Mary's Church and the mill pond which is surrounded by as extraordinary a jumble of queer old roofs and gables as may be seen in Dorset. The church has been rebuilt and much altered and enlarged, but the tower is as old as it looks and has seen several churches come and go beneath it. There is no door lower than the second story and it must have been reached by a ladder. It was undoubtedly built for, and used as, a fortress in case of need.

Although there is little of beauty in the quarries that honeycomb the hills to the west of Swanage, the industry that is carried on is of much interest as a surviving guild or medieval trades union. One of the laws of the "company," unbroken from immemorial time, is that no work may be given to any but a freeman or his son who, after seven years' apprenticeship, becomes a senior worker upon presenting to the warden a fee of 6_s_. 8_d_., a loaf of bread and a bottle of beer. The guild meet every Shrove Tuesday at Corfe to transact the formal business of the year. Each quarryman and his partner, or partners, hold the little independent working allotted to them apart from the remainder of the quarry. This obviously prevents blasting and each block of stone is cut out by manual labour.

[Illustration: TILLY WHIM.]



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Purbeck marble is famous all over southern England, and many historic buildings, from the Temple church in London to Salisbury and Exeter Cathedrals, are enriched by the beautifully polished columns of this dark-coloured limestone. The caves at Durlston, with their intriguing name, are simply abandoned quarries, although all sorts of fanciful legends have grown up about them. To any one familiar with the plan of the working of a quarry, the sloping tunnel that gives access to the cave will prove the origin to be artificial. Nevertheless, Tilly Whim is romantic enough to please the most fastidious of the steamer contingent and the scene from the platform of rock in front of the old workings is as wild and natural as could well be imagined. As for the open-air schoolroom above on Durlston Head a description is hardly necessary. That the pedagogic master mason was not without the saving grace of a sense of humour is proved by the once plain block of stone provided for those who would perpetuate their own greatness, now literally covered with names and initials. The staring red and white "castle" that crowns the cliff is a restaurant built to accommodate the day visitor, but if the evidence of discarded pastry bags and ginger-beer bottles that at times litter and disfigure the cliff and caves is to be regarded, the castle is not as well patronized as it should be. This unseemliness is kept under by what appears to be a daily clean up, though the writer has never met the public benefactor who makes all tidy in the early morning hours before the steamers have discharged their crowds. Possibly this is the same individual who keeps the tangle of blackberry and tamarisk pruned down so that while resting with "Sir Walter Scott" or "Shakespeare" we may duly admire the view across Swanage Bay.

No one should omit the glorious walk northwards across the fine expanse of Ballard Down to Studland. The coast road round the bay is taken to a path bearing to the right in the pleasant suburb of New Swanage. At the time of writing this leads through the before-mentioned, partly derelict, military camp and, after passing on the right the old Tudor farmhouse called Whitecliff, emerges on the open Down. The rearward views gain in beauty with every step, and when the summit is reached at the fence gate and the stone seat that seems to have strayed from Durlston, a magnificent and unforgettable view is obtained of Poole Harbour and the great heathland that stretches away to the New Forest. Every intricacy of the harbour can be seen as on a map, and its almost landlocked character is strikingly apparent as the eye follows the bright yellow arc of sand to the cliffs of Bournemouth. That town has most of its more glaring modernities decently hidden, and the pier and a few spires and chimneys seem to blend into the all-pervading golden brown of the Hampshire coast. In the near foreground Studland looks very alluring in its bowery foliage, but before descending the hillside the long and almost

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level Down should be followed to the right past the shooting range, provided the absence of a warning red flag gives permission. By a slight detour to the right as the ground slopes toward that extension of Ballard Down called Handfast Point, fearsome peeps may be had of the waves raging round Old Harry's daughter and the submerged ruins of her parents. Care must be taken here in misty weather, the cliffs are sheer, and unexpected gaps occur where nothing could save the unwary explorer in the event of an unlucky slip. Little is gained by following the cliff top all the way to the extreme edge of the Point, and a return may be made from hereabouts or a short cut made to the path leading to Studland.

[Illustration: THE BALLARD CLIFFS.]

Studland was until quite lately one of the most unspoilt of English villages. An unfortunate outbreak of red brick has slightly detracted from its former quiet beauty, but it is still a charming little place and claims as heretofore to be the "prettiest village in England," a claim as impossible of acceptance as some other of the challenges made by seaside towns. But it is unfair to class Studland with the usual run of such resorts; perhaps its best claims upon us are negative ones. It has no railway station, no pier, no bandstand, no parade, in fact the old village turns its back upon the sea in an unmistakable manner.

The foundations and lower parts of the walls of the church are probably Saxon. The building as we see it is primitive Norman without later additions or any very apparent attempts at restoration, though a good deal of legitimate repairing has been carried out during the last few years. The solemn and venerable churchyard yews lend an added air of great age to the building. Close to the church door is the tombstone of one Sergeant Lawrence, whose epitaph is a stirring record of military service combined with a dash of real romance, though probably the sergeant's whole life did not have as much of the essence of dreadful war as one twelve months in the career of a present-day city clerk.

A long mile west, on the northern slopes of Studland Heath, is the famous Agglestone "that the Devil while sulking in the Isle of Wight threw at the builders of Corfe Castle" or, according to another account, from Portland. Probably the confusion arose through the original reporter using the term "the Island." Natives would know that the definite article could only refer to their own locality! The stone is an effect of denudation and is similar to other isolated sandstone rocks scattered about the south of England, *e.g.*, the "Toad" Rock at Tunbridge Wells and "Great upon Little" near West Heathly in Sussex. A short distance away is a smaller mass called the "Puckstone." The derivation of the larger rock is probably Haligstane—Holy Stone. So difficult is it to contemplate the ages through which gradual weathering would bring these stones to their present shape that

scientists, as recently as the middle of the last century, were at variance as to their natural or artificial origin.

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A by-road, a little over five miles long, runs under the face of Nine Barrows Down and Brenscombe Hill to Corfe. It is a picturesque route and has some good views, but a much finer way, and but little longer, is along the top of the Downs themselves culminating at Challow Hill in a sudden sight of Corfe, backed by the imposing Knowle Hill. This walk is even surpassed by that along the hills westwards from Corfe. In this direction a similar by-road also runs under the long line of the Purbeck Hills, here so called, but on the south side of the range through Church Knowle which has an old cruciform church pulled about by “restorers” as far back as the early eighteenth century and several times since. The village is pleasant in itself and beautifully situated. A short distance farther is an ancient manor house dating from the fourteenth century. Its name—Barneston—is said to perpetuate a Saxon landholder, Berne, so that the foundations of the house are far older than this period. Over three miles from Corfe is the small church hamlet of Steeple; here a road bears upward to the right, and if the hill top has not been followed all the way from Corfe it should certainly be gained at this point. Not far away and nearer Church Knowle is Creech Barrow, a cone-shaped hill commanding a most extensive and beautiful view, especially north-westwards over the heathy flats of the Frome valley to the distant Dorset-Somerset borderlands. The narrow Purbeck range now makes obliquely for the coast, where it ends more than six miles from Corfe in the magnificent bluff of Flowers’ Barrow, or Ring’s Hill, above Worbarrow Bay. This is without doubt the finest portion of the Dorset coast, not only for the striking outline of the cliffs and hills themselves but for the beautiful colouring of the strata and the contrasting emerald of the dells that break down to the purple-blue of the water. Neither drawing nor photograph can give any idea of this exquisite blend of the stern and the beautiful.

[Illustration: ARISH MEL.]

Eastwards, Gad Cliff guards the remote little village of Tyneham from the sea; certain portions of this precipice seem in imminent danger of falling into the water, so much do they overhang the beach. At Kimmeridge Bay the cliff takes the sombre hue seen near Chapman’s Pool and the beach and water are discoloured by the broken shale that has fallen from the low cliff. It is thought that a sort of jet jewellery was made here in Roman times; quantities of perforated discs have been found about the bay—termed “coal money” by the fishermen. The greasy nature of this curious form of clay is remarkable. Naphtha has been obtained from it and various commercial enterprises have been started at Kimmeridge in connexion with the local product but all seem to have failed miserably because of the unendurable smell that emanates when combustion takes place.

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The “Tout” forms the eastern extremity of Worbarrow Bay; this boldly placed and precipitous little hill forms a sort of miniature Gibraltar and is one of the outstanding features of this bewilderingly intricate shore. On the farther or western side of the bay is the exquisite Arish Mel Gap,[1] that, taking all points into consideration, particularly that of colouring, is probably the finest scene of its kind on the English coast. Picturesquely placed at the head of the miniature valley is Lulworth Castle, grey and stern, and making an ideal finish to the unforgettable picture. A spring in the recesses of the dell sends a small and sparkling stream down to the gap, the sides of which in spring and early summer are a blaze of white and gold, challenging the cliffs in their display of colour. A path climbs gradually by an old wind-torn wood up the landward side of Bindon Hill, with gorgeous rearward views across the fields of Monastery Farm to the northern escarpment of the Purbeck Hills. The path very soon reaches the top of Bindon that seems to drop directly to Mupe Bay and its jagged surf-covered rocks. In two miles from Arish Mel the path ends directly above the delectable Lulworth Cove, and of all ways of reaching that unique and lovely little place this is the most charming. Care must be taken on the steep side of Bindon. Several accidents have taken place here. One of them is perpetuated by an inscription on a board placed upon the hillside. The path must be followed until it drops into the road leading to the landward village.

[1] Correctly—*Arish Mel*. “Gap” and “Mel” are synonyms in Dorset.

[Illustration: LULWORTH COVE FROM ABOVE STAIR HOLE.]

Lulworth bids fair, or ill, to become a “resort” apart from the descents from Bournemouth or Weymouth, which are only of a few hours’ duration. Before the Great War there was an extension of West Lulworth round the foot of Bindon Hill, but the railway at Wool is still a good five miles away and the great majority of seaside visitors seem to fight shy of any place that has not a station on the beach.

Lulworth has been described and photographed so many times that a description seems needless. It would want an inspired pen to do any portion of this coast full justice. Suffice it to say that the cove is almost circular, 500 yards across, and that the entrance is so narrow as to make it almost invisible from the open sea. The contortions of the cliff face within the cove would alone render the place famous.

More often sketched than Lulworth; perhaps because it is easier to draw, is Durdle Door or Barn Door, the romantic natural arch that juts out at the end of Barndoor Cove. The outline has all the appearance of stage scenery of the goblin cavern sort. So lofty is the opening that a sailing boat can pass through with ease. Behind it is the soaring Swyre Head, 670 feet high, and the third of that name in Dorset. Between this point and Nelson Fort on the west of Lulworth Cove is Stair Hole, a gloomy roofless cavern into which the tide pours with a terrifying sound, especially when a strong sou-wester is blowing.



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[Illustration: DURDLE DOOR.]

East Lulworth is a charming old village, three miles from the cove and two from West Lulworth. Close to it is the castle that completes the picture at Arish Mel. The church, much altered and rebuilt, is Perpendicular, and in it are interesting memorials of the Welds to whom the castle has belonged since 1641. This family are members of the Roman church, and a fine chapel for adherents of that communion was built in the park at the end of the eighteenth century. It is said to be the first erected in England since the Reformation. The ex-king Charles X of France sought and found sanctuary at Lulworth Castle in August, 1830, as Duke of Milan. He was accompanied by his heir, the Duke of Angouleme, and the Duke of Bordeaux.

[Illustration: CERNE ABBEY GATEHOUSE.]

CHAPTER IV

DORCHESTER AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The railway from Wareham to Dorchester runs through the heart of that great wild tract that under the general name of Egdon Heath forms a picturesque and often gloomy background to many of Mr. Hardy's romances. These heath-lands are a marked characteristic of the scenery of this part of the county. Repellent at first, their dark beauty, more often than not, will capture the interest and perhaps awe of the stranger. Much more than a mere relic of the great forest that stretched for many miles west of Southampton Water and that in its stubborn wildness bade fair to break up the Saxon advance, the heaths of Dorset extend over a quarter of the area of the county.

Wool is five miles from Wareham and is the station for Bindon Abbey, half a mile to the east. The pleasant site of the abbey buildings on the banks of the Frome is now a resort of holiday-makers, adventurers from Bournemouth and Swanage, who may have al-fresco teas through the goodwill of the gatekeeper, though it would appear that they must bring all but the cups and hot water with them. The outline of the walls and a few interesting relics may be seen, but there is nothing apart from the natural surroundings to detain us. The old red brick Manor House, close to the station, and in plain view from the train, was a residence of the Turbervilles, immortalized by Hardy. Of much interest also is the old Tudor bridge that here crosses the Frome.

[Illustration: PUDDLETOWN.]

At Wool the rail parts company with the Dorchester turnpike and soon after leaves the valley of the Frome, traversing a sparsely populated district served by one small station in the ten miles to Dorchester, at Moreton. Here a road runs northwards in four miles to the "Puddles" of which there are several dotted about the valley of that quaintly named

river. Puddletown, the Weatherbury of the Wessex woods, is the largest and has an interesting church, practically unrestored. The Athelhampton chapel here contains ancient effigies of the Martin

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family, the oldest dating from 1250. The curiously shaped Norman font, like nothing else but a giant tumbler, will be admired for its fine vine and trellis ornament. The old oak gallery that dates from the early seventeenth century has happily been untouched. Athelhampton Manor occupies the site of an ancient palace of King Athelstan. Though certain portions of the present buildings are said to date from the time of Edward III the greater part is Tudor and very beautiful. Affpuddle, the nearest of the villages to Moreton Station, has a perpendicular church with a fine pinnacled tower. The chief object of interest within is the Renaissance pulpit with curious carvings of the Evangelists in sixteenth-century dress. Scattered about the heath-lands in this neighbourhood are a number of "swallow holes" with various quaint names such as "Culpepper's Dish" and "Hell Pit." At one time supposed to be prehistoric dwellings, they are undoubtedly of natural formation.

Bere Regis, rather farther away to the north-east, is the Roman Ibernium. This was a royal residence in Saxon days and a hunting lodge of that King John of many houses; very scanty remains of the buildings are pointed out in a meadow near the town. Part of the manor came to the Turbervilles, or d'Urbervilles, of Mr. Hardy's romance. The church, restored in 1875 by Street, is a fine building, mostly Perpendicular with some Norman remains. Particularly noteworthy is the grand old roof of the nave with its gorgeously coloured and gilt figures, also the ancient pews and Transitional font. There are canopied tombs of the Turbervilles in a chapel and some modern stained glass in which the family arms figure. Bere Regis is the "Kingsbere" of Thomas Hardy, and Woodbury Hill, close by, is the scene of Greenhill Fair in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Here, in the oval camp on the summit, a sheep fair has been held since before written records commence. These fairs, several of which take place in similar situations in Wessex, are of great antiquity. Some are held in the vicinity of certain "blue" stones, mysterious megaliths of unknown age.

It is doubtful if any town in England has so many remains of the remote past in its vicinity as Dorchester. Probably the Roman settlement of Durnovaria was a parvenu town to the Celts, whose closely adjacent Dwyrinwyr was also an upstart in comparison with the fortified stronghold two miles away to the south; the "place by the black water" being an initial attempt to establish a trading centre by a people rather timidly learning from their Phoenician visitors. The great citadel at Maiden Castle belonged to a still earlier time, when men lived in a way which rendered trade a very superfluous thing.



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Modern Dorchester is a delightful, one might almost say a lovable, town, so bright and cheery are its streets, so countrified its air. But it is probably true that nearly every one is disappointed with it at their first visit. Historical towns are written of, and written up, until the stranger's mind pictures a sort of Nuremburg. Dorchester is a placid Georgian agricultural centre. In fact there is very little that antedates the seventeenth century and yet, for all that, it is one of the most interesting towns in the south. Its loss of the antique is due to more than one disastrous fire that swept nearly everything away. It is when the foundations of a new house are being dug that the past of Dorchester comes to light and another addition is made to the rich store in the museum. Describing "Casterbridge" Hardy says: "It is impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields or gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years." It is needless to say that "Casterbridge" and the town here briefly described are identical. To the limits laid down by the Roman, Dorchester has kept true through the ages, and until quite lately the town terminated with a pleasant abruptness at the famous "Walks" that mark the positions of the Roman Walls. The so-called Roman road, the "Via Iceniana," Roman only in the improvement and straightening of a far older track, passed through the town. This was once the highway between that mysterious and wonderful district in Wiltshire, of which Stonehenge is the most outstanding monument, and the largest prehistoric stronghold in England—the Mai dun—"the strong hill," south of Dorchester.

The South Western station is close to another fine relic of the past, though this cannot claim to have any Celtic or pre-Celtic foundation. The great circle of Maumbury Rings was the original stadium or coliseum of the Roman town; the tiers of seats when filled are estimated to have held over twelve thousand spectators. The gaps at each end are the obvious ways for entering and leaving the arena. In digging the foundations of the brewery near by, a subway was found leading toward the circus, which may have been used by the wild beasts and their keepers in passing from and to their quarters. Maumbury was the scene of a dreadful execution in 1705, when one Mary Channing was first strangled and then burnt for the murder of her husband by poison, though she loudly declared her innocence to the last. On this occasion ten thousand persons are said to have lined the banks. It is difficult at first to appreciate the size of the Rings. If two or more persons are together it is a good plan to leave one alone in the centre while the others climb to the summit of the bank. By this means a true idea of the vast size of the enclosure may be gained.

[Illustration: DORCHESTER.]



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The “Walks” are the pleasantest feature of modern Dorchester and run completely round three sides of the town, the fourth being bounded by the “dark waters” of the Frome. They are lined with fine trees planted about two hundred years ago; the West Walk, with its section of Roman Wall, is perhaps the best, though the South Walk with its gnarled old trees is much admired. They all give the town an uncommon aspect, and there is nothing quite like them elsewhere in England. The contrast on turning eastwards from the quiet West Walk into bustling High West Street is striking and bears out the claim that Dorchester still keeps more or less within its ancient bounds, for turning in the other direction we are soon in a different and “suburban” atmosphere. High West Street is lined with pleasant eighteenth century houses, the residences or offices of professional men intermixed with some first-class shops. Once these houses were the mansions of county families who “came to town” for a season when London was for several reasons impracticable. The chief buildings are congregated round the town centre; here is the Perpendicular St. Peter’s church, a building saved during the great fire in 1613 when nearly everything else of antiquity perished. Outside is the statue of William Barnes, the Dorset poet, whose writings in his native dialect are only now gaining a popularity no more than their due. The bronze figure represents the poet in his old fashioned country clergyman’s dress, knee-breeches and buckled shoes, a satchel on his back and a sturdy staff in his hand. Underneath the simple inscription are these quaint and touching lines from one of his poems (“Culver Dell and the Squire”):

“Zoo now I hope his kindly feaece
Is gone to vind a better pleaece;
But still wi’ v’ok a-left behind
He’ll always be a-kept in mind.”

The speech of the older Dorset folk is the ancient speech of Wessex. It is not an illiterate corruption but a true dialect with its own grammatical rules. But alas! fifty years of the council school and its immediate predecessor has done more to destroy this ancient form of English than ten centuries of intercourse between the Anglo-Celtic races.[2]

[2] A good example of the Dorset dialect is contained in the message sent to the King by the Society of Dorset Men at their annual banquet in London.

“TO HIS MAJESTY KING JARGE

Sire—Dree hunderd loyal men vrom Darset, voregather’d at th’ Connaught Rooms, Kingsway, on this their Yearly Veast Day, be mindvul o’ yer Grashus Majesty, an’ wi’ vull hearts do zend ee the dootivul an’ loyal affecshuns o’ th’ Society o’ Darset Men in Lon’on. In starm or zunsheen thee ca’st allus rely on our vull-heart’d zympathy an’ suppwort. Zoo wi’out any mwore ham-chammy we ageen raise our cyder cups to ee, wi’ th’ pious pray’r on our lips that Heaven ull prosper ee, an’ we assure ee that Darset

Men ull ever sheen as oone o' th' bright jools in yer Crown. I d' bide, az avoretime, an' vor all time, Thy Vaithful Sarvint,

SHAFTESBURY (President o' Darset Men in Lon'on)."

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In the porch of the church lies the "Patriarch of Dorchester," John White, Rector of Holy Trinity, who died in 1648 and who seems to have kept the town pretty well under his own control. A Puritan, he incurred the hatred of Prince Rupert's followers, who plundered his house and carried away his papers and books. He escaped to London and was for a time Rector of Lambeth, afterwards returning to Dorchester. He raised money for the equipment of emigrants from Dorchester to Massachusetts and thus became one of the founders of New England. Inside the church the Hardy tablet to the left of the door is in memory of the ancestor of both that Admiral Hardy who was the friend of Nelson and the great novelist whose writings have been the means of making "Dear Do'set" known to all the world. The monument of Lord Holles is remarkable for a comic cherub who is engaged in wiping his tears away with a wisp of garment; the naivete of the idea is amusing in more ways than one. Another curious monument, badly placed for inspection, is that of Sir John Williams. The so-called "crusaders" effigies are thought to be of a later date than the last crusade; no inscriptions remain, so that they cannot be identified. The curfew that still rings from St. Peter's tower is an elaborate business. Besides telling the day of the month by so many strokes after the ten minutes curfew is rung, a bell is tolled at six o'clock on summer mornings and an hour later in the winter. Also at one o'clock midday to release the workers of the town for dinner.

Holy Trinity Church was destroyed in the great fire. Another conflagration in 1824 removed its successor. The present building only dates from 1875 and is a fairly good Victorian copy of Early English. All Saints' was rebuilt in 1845. It retains the canopied altar tomb of Matthew Chubb (1625) under the tower. The organ here was presented by the people of Dorchester, Massachusetts, for the founding of which town John White, the rector of Holy Trinity, was mainly responsible.

[Illustration: NAPPER'S MITE.]

The County Museum, close to St. Peter's Church, should on no account be missed. Here is stored a most interesting collection of British and Roman antiquities found in and around Dorchester, and also of fossils from the Dorset coast and elsewhere, together with many out-of-the-way curiosities. "Napper's Mite" is the name given to the old almshouse in South 1615 with money left for the Robert Napper. It has a queer open gallery or stone verandah along the street front. Next door to it is the Grammar School, which owes its inception to the Thomas Hardy who is commemorated in St. Peter's, and whose benefactions to the town were many and great. Of equal interest, perhaps, is a house on the other side of the street that was once a school kept by William Barnes, surely the most serene and kindly schoolmaster that ever taught unruly youth. Barnes, in addition to his other literary work, was secretary of the Dorset

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Museum, but his incumbency at Whitcombe and the small addition to his income obtained in other ways did not amount altogether to a “living” and he was forced to take up schooling to make both ends meet. The poems were never a financial success, though they always received a chorus of praise and appreciation and led many literary lions to meet the author. After years full of sordid cares Barnes was granted a civil list pension and the rectory of Came. Here, in the midst of the peasantry he loved so well, this gentle spirit passed away in 1886.

The lodging occupied by Judge Jeffreys during the Monmouth Rebellion trials or “Bloody Assize” (1685), when seventy-four were sentenced to death on Gallows Hill of dreadful memory, and 175 to transportation to carry westward with them the bitter seeds that bore glorious fruit a century later, was in a house still standing nearly opposite the museum. This almost brings the list of historical buildings in Dorchester to a close. The County Hall, Town Hall and Corn Exchange, all unpretentious and quietly dignified, represent both shire and town. The few buildings left by the seventeenth-century fire seem to have included a highly picturesque group near the old Pump (now marked by an obelisk) and at the commencement of High East Street, where a dwelling-house went right across the highway. This was pulled down by a corporation filled with zeal for the public convenience. The improvement, regrettable on the score of picturesqueness, has given us the noble view down the London road. The other great highways that approach the town from the west and south do so through fine avenues of trees which give a distinctive note to the environs of Dorchester.

Fordington is usually described as a suburb of Dorchester; this is not strictly correct. It had always been a dependent village and was not simply an extension of the town. Its church is a fine one, with tall battlemented tower and a goodly amount of Norman work. A quaint old carving over the Norman south door is of much interest. It represents St. George as taking part in the battle of Antioch in 1098. Some of the Saracens are being mercilessly dispatched while others are pleading for quarter. The stone pulpit bears the date 1592 and the initials E.R. The late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Moule, was born at Fordington Vicarage.

Stainsford, about a mile from the Frome bridge, is the original of the scene in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Several members of the Hardy family lie in the churchyard here, and the novelist was born at Higher Bockhampton, not far away. The carving of St. Michael on the face of the church tower should be noticed. Within the building are memorials of the Pitt family.

Above the short tunnel through which the Great Western line runs to the north, and about half a mile along the Bradford Peverell road, is Poundbury Camp. “Pummary” is an oblong entrenchment enclosing about twenty acres, variously ascribed to Celts, Romans and Danes, but almost certainly Celtic, with Roman improvements and

developments. There is a fine view of the surroundings of Dorchester from the bank. It is only by the most strenuous exertions that the railway engineers were prevented from burrowing right through the camp. The cutting of this line brought to light many relics of the past, a great number of which are in the Dorchester Museum.



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[Illustration: MAIDEN CASTLE.]

On the south-west side of the town, two miles away near the Weymouth road, is the greatest of these prehistoric entrenchments; Mai-dun or "Maiden Castle" is the largest British earthwork in existence. It is best reached by a footpath continuation of a by-way that leaves the Weymouth road on the right, soon after it crosses the Great Western Railway. The highest point of the hill that has been converted into this huge fort is 432 feet; the apex being on the east. The marvellous defences, which follow the lines of the hill, are two miles round and the whole space occupies about 120 acres. From east to west the camp is 3,000 feet long and about half that measurement in breadth. On the south side there are no less than five lines of ditch and wall. On the north the steepness of the hill only allows of three. Over the entrance to the west ten ramparts overlap and double so that attackers were in a perfect maze of walls and enfiladed so effectually that it is difficult to imagine any storming party being successful. On the east the opening, without being quite so elaborate owing to the steepness of the hill, is equally well defended. The steep walls on the north are no less than sixty feet deep and to storm them would be a sheer impossibility. What makes this splendid monument so interesting is the assertion made by nearly all authorities on the subject that these enormous works must have been excavated without spade or tool other than the puny implement called a "celt." Probably wall and ditch were elaborated and improved by the Romans, and while in their occupation the name of the hill became Dunium. Blocks of stone from Purbeck, used at certain points of the defence, were no doubt additions during this period.

A pleasant journey may be taken through the Winterbourne villages that are strung along the line of that rivulet, which, as its name proclaims, flows only in the winter months. It is on the south side of Maiden Castle. The first village with the name of the river as a prefix is Came, two miles from Dorchester. Here Barnes was rector for the last twenty-five years of his life. His grave is in the quiet churchyard quite close to the diminutive tower. Within the church is a fine carved screen and several effigies. Proceeding westwards we come to Herringstone where there is an old house once the seat of the Herrings and, since early Jacobean days, of the Williams family. Then comes Monkton, close to Maiden Castle. The church is Norman, much restored. St. Martin follows; a picturesque hamlet with a fine church, the last in the west of England to dispense with clarinet, flute and bass-viol in the village choir. On sign-posts as well as colloquially this hamlet is known as "Martinstown." Steepleton boasts a stone spire, rare for Dorset, and a curious and very ancient figure of an angel on the outside wall declared by most authorities to be Saxon. The last of the villages is Winterbourne Abbas, seven miles from Winterbourne Came. The whole of the low hillsides around the hamlets of the bourne are covered with barrows, some of which have been explored with good results, though indiscriminate ravishing of these old graves is to be deplored.



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Another short excursion from Dorchester is up the valley of the Cerne. About a mile and a half from St. Peter's Church, proceeding by North Street, is Charminster, a pretty little place in itself and well situated in the opening valley of the sparkling Cerne. Here is a church with a noble Perpendicular tower, built by Sir Thomas Trenchard about 1510. The knight's monogram is to be seen on the tower. Within the partly Norman church are several monuments of the family, which lived at Wolfeton House, a fine Tudor mansion on the site of a still older building. Its embattled towers, beautiful windows and ivy-clad walls make up an ideal picture of a "stately home of England." Wolfeton was the scene of the reception in 1506 of Philip of Austria and Joanna of Spain, who were driven into Weymouth by a storm. (The incident is referred to in the next chapter.) This occurrence may be said to have founded the fortunes of the ducal house of Bedford. Young John Russell, of Bridport, a relative of the Trenchards, happened to be a good linguist, which the host was not. He was sent for, and so well impressed the royal couple that they took him with them to Windsor. Henry VII was quite as much interested, and young Russell's fortune was made. He stayed with the court until the next reign, and at the Dissolution got Woburn Abbey, a property still in the hands of his great family.

Continuing up the Cerne valley, Godmanstone, a village of picturesque gables and colourful roofs, is about four and a half miles from Dorchester. Here the valley narrows between Cowden Hill and Crete Hill. The Perpendicular church has been restored, and is of little interest. Nether Cerne, a mile further along and two miles short of Cerne Abbas, also calls for little comment, but "Abbas" (or, according to Hardy, "Abbots Cernel") is of much historic interest.

Cerne Abbey was founded in 987 by Aethelmar, Earl of Devon and Cornwall. Legend has it that the monastery originated in the days of St. Augustine, but of this there is no proof, though it is certain that a religious house nourished here for nearly a century before the Benedictine abbey was established. The first Abbot Aelfric was famous for his learning, and his Homilies in Latin and English are of much value to students of Anglo-Saxon. Canute was the first despoiler of Cerne, though he made good his plunderings tenfold when peace, on his terms, came to Wessex. Queen Margaret sought sanctuary here in 1471 with her son, the heir to the English throne. At the Abbey, or on the way thither from Weymouth, the courageous Queen learned of the defeat of the Lancastrian army at Barnet. From Cerne she went to lead a force against the Yorkists at Tewkesbury. There she was defeated, her son brutally murdered and all hope lost for the cause of her imprisoned husband, the feeble and half-witted Henry VI.



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A most beautiful relic of the Abbey is the Gatehouse, a fine stone building that has weathered to the most exquisite tint. The grand oriel window and panelled and groined entrance are justly admired. The remaining ruins, however, are almost negligible. The Perpendicular church is remarkable for its splendid tower, on which is a niche and canopy enshrining an old statue of the Virgin and Child. Within is a good stone screen and a fine oaken pulpit dating from 1640. Cerne town seems never to have recovered its importance after the loss of the Abbey. For its size, it is the sleepest place in Dorset and its streets are literally grass grown. The surroundings are beautiful in a quiet way, and the town and neighbourhood generally provide an ideal spot for a rest cure. North-east of the town is a chalk bluff called Giant's Hill, with the figure of the famous "Cerne Giant," 180 feet in height, cut on its side. "Vulgar tradition makes this figure commemorate the destruction of a giant, who, having feasted on some sheep in Blackmore and laid himself down to sleep, was pinioned down like another Gulliver, and killed by the enraged peasants on the spot, who immediately traced his dimensions for the information of posterity" (Criswick). An encampment on the top of the hill and the figure itself are probably the work of early Celts. The "Giant" is reminiscent of the "Long Man of Wilmington" on the South Downs near Eastbourne. An interesting experiment in the communal life was started in 1913 near the town. After struggling along for five years it finally "petered out" in 1918, helped to its death, no doubt, by the exigencies of the last year of war.

A return may be made by way of Maiden Newton, about six miles south-west of Cerne, passing through Sydling St. Nicholas, where there is a Perpendicular church noted for its fine tower with elaborate gargoyles. The old Norman font and north porch are also noteworthy. Close to the church is an ancient Manor-house with a fine tithe barn. This belonged in 1590 to the famous Elizabethan, Sir Francis Walsingham. Maiden Newton is a junction on the Great Western with a branch line to Bridport.

The beautiful churchyard is the best thing about Maiden Newton. The village had seen, prior to the late war, a good deal of rebuilding; relative unattractiveness is the consequence. This seems to be the almost inevitable result of the establishment of a railway junction. The church stands on the site of a Wrest Saxon building, and is partly Norman with much Perpendicular work. Cattistock, a long mile north, is unspoilt and pretty both in itself and its situation. It has a fine church, much rebuilt and gaudily decorated, with a tower containing no less than thirty-five bells and a clock face so enormous that it occupies a goodly portion of the wall.



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If the railway is not taken one may return by the eight miles of high road that follows the Frome through Vanchurch and Frampton to Charminster and Dorchester. The first named village though pleasant enough, calls for little comment, but Frampton (or Frome town) is not only picturesquely placed between the soft hills that drop to the wooded banks of the river, but has also other claims to notice. The church, though it has been cruelly pulled about, has an interesting old stone pulpit with carvings of monks bearing vessels. A number of memorials may be seen of the Brownes, once a renowned local family, and of their successors and connexions, among whom were certain of the Sheridan family, of which the famous Richard Brinsley Sheridan was a member. Near Frampton in the closing years of the eighteenth century a Roman pavement was discovered, bearing in its mosaic indications of Christian designs and forms.

The straight and tree-lined Roman road that runs west from Dorchester is, except for fast motor traffic and a few farm waggons bringing produce to the great emporium of Dorset, usually deserted, for it has no villages of importance on the fourteen miles to Bridport. Winterbourne Abbas is more than four miles away and Kingston Russell, exactly half-way to Bridport, is the only other village on the road. This was once the home of the Russells who became Dukes of Bedford. Here was born Sir T.M. Hardy and here died J.L. Motley, author of the *History of the Dutch Republic*. The poor remnants of the old manor house are to be seen in the farm near the hamlet.

[Illustration: WEYMOUTH HARBOUR.]

CHAPTER V

WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND

The fashionable Weymouth of to-day is the Melcombe Regis of the past, and quite a proportion of visitors to Melcombe never go into the real Weymouth at all. The tarry, fishy and beery (in a manufacturing sense only) old town is on the south side of the harbour bridge and has little in common with the busy and popular watering place on the north and east. Once separate boroughs, the towns are now under one government, and Melcombe Regis has dropped its name almost entirely in favour of that of the older partner.

How many towns on the coast claim their particular semicircle of bay to be “the English Naples”? Douglas, Sandown and even Swanage have at some time or other, through their local guides, plumed themselves on the supposed resemblance. It is as inapplicable to these as it is to Weymouth, though the latter seems to insist upon it more than the rest. Apart from the bay, which is one of the most beautiful on the coast, boarding-house Weymouth is more like Bloomsbury than anywhere else on earth, and a very pleasant, mellow, comfortable old Bloomsbury, reminiscent of good solid

comfortable times, even if they were rather dowdy and dull. Not that Weymouth is dull. In the far-off days of half-day excursions from London



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at a fare that now would only take them as far as Windsor, the crowds of holiday-makers were wont to make the front almost too lively. But away from such times there are few towns of the size that make such a pleasant impression upon the chance tourist, who can spend some days here with profit if he will but make it the headquarters for short explorations into the surrounding country and along the coast east and west, but especially east.

The first mention of Weymouth in West Saxon times is in a charter of King Ethelred, still existing, that makes a grant of land "in Weymouth or Wyke Regis" to Atsere, one of the King's councillors. Edward Confessor gave the manor to Winchester, and afterwards it became the property of Eleanor, the consort of Edward I. The large village slowly grew into a small town and port.

[Illustration: WYKE REGIS.]

Wool became its staple trade, and in 1347 the port was rich enough to find twenty ships for the fleet besieging Calais. At this time Melcombe Regis began to assume as much importance as its neighbour across the harbour. The only communication between the two was then a ferry boat worked hand over hand by a rope. Henry VIII built Sandsfoot Castle for the protection of the ports, and while Elizabeth was Queen the harbour was bridged and the jealousy between the towns brought to an end by an Act passed to consolidate their interests. Soon after this the inhabitants had the satisfaction of seeing the great galleon of a Spanish admiral brought in as a prize of war, the towns having furnished six large ships toward the fleet that met the Armada.

During the reign of the seventh Henry a violent storm obliged Philip of Castile and his consort Joanna to claim, much against their will, the hospitality of the town. The Spanish sovereigns, who were not on the best terms with England, were very ill, and dry land on any terms was, to them, the only desirable thing. They were met on landing by Sir Thomas Trenchard of Wolveton with a hastily summoned force of militia. King Philip was informed that he would not be allowed to return to his ship until Henry had seen him, and in due course the Earl of Arundel arrived to conduct the unwilling visitors to the presence of the king. As we saw while at Charminster, this incident led to the founding of a great ducal family.

It is to George III that Weymouth owes its successful career as a watering place, although a beginning had been made over twenty years before the King's visit by a native of Bath named Ralph Allen, who actually forsook that "shrine of Hygeia," to come to Melcombe, where "to the great wonder of his friends he immersed his bare person in the open sea." Allen seems to have been familiar with the Duke of Gloucester, whom he induced to accompany him. So pleased was the Duke with Melcombe, that he

decided to build a house on the front—Gloucester Lodge, now the hotel of that name—and here to the huge delight of the inhabitants, George, his



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Queen and three daughters came in 1789. An amusing account of the royal visit is given by Fanny Burney. The King was so pleased with the place that he stayed eleven weeks, and by his unaffected bourgeois manner and approachableness quickly gained the enthusiastic loyalty of his Dorset subjects. Miss Burney's most entertaining reminiscence of the visit is the oft-repeated account of the King's first dip in the sea. Immediately the royal person "became immersed beneath the waves" a band, concealed in a bathing machine struck up "God save Great George our King." Weymouth is in possession of a keepsake of these stirring times in the statue of His Hanoverian Majesty that graces(?) the centre of the Esplanade. It is to be hoped that the town will never be inveigled into scrapping this memorial, which for quaintness and unconscious humour is almost unsurpassed. A subject of derisive merriment to the tripper and of shuddering aversion for those with any aesthetic sense, it is nevertheless an interesting link with another age and is not very much worse than some other specimens of the memorial type of a more recent date. It has lately received a coat of paint of an intense black and the cross-headed wand that the monarch holds is tipped with gold. The contrast with the enormous expanse of white base, out of all proportion to the little black figure of the King, is strangely startling.

Not much can be said for St. Mary's, an eighteenth-century church in St. Mary's Street which carries the Bloomsbury-by-Sea idea to excess. The church has a tablet, the epitaph upon which seems quite unique in the contradictory character it gives to the deceased:

UNDETH LIES YE BODY OF
CHRISR. BROOKS ESQ. OF JAMAICA
WHO DEPARD. THIS LIFE 4 SEPR. 1769
AGED 38 YEARS, ONE OF YE WORST OF MEN
FRIEND TO YE DISTRESD.
TRULY AFFECTD & KIND HUSBAND
TENDER PART. & A SINCR. FRIEND

The artist was unfortunate in his choice of abbreviations and strangers are sometimes sorely puzzled; some, indeed, never guess that "worst" has any connexion with "worthiest." The altar piece, difficult to see on a dull day, was painted by Sir James Thornhill, a former representative of the borough in Parliament. Sir Christopher Wren was also for a time member for Weymouth, and portraits of both, together with the Duke of Wellington and George III, adorn the Guildhall, a good building at the west end of St. Mary's Street. The twin towns were unique in their choice of members; in addition to the great architect and famous painter, a poet—Richard Glover, author of *Leonidas*—of no mean repute in his own day, was chosen and the *original* Winston Churchill, father of the great Duke of Marlborough, also sat for Weymouth.

[Illustration: OLD WEYMOUTH.]

Within the Guildhall is to be seen a chest from the captured Armada galleon and an old chair from Melcombe Friary, of which some poor remnants existed in Maiden Street almost within living memory. On the other side of the harbour is Holy Trinity Church, built in 1836. This has another fine altar painting of the Crucifixion, thought by some authorities to be by Vandyck.



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Certain portions of old Weymouth are very picturesque, with steep streets and comfortable old bow-windowed lodging-houses patronized almost exclusively by the better class of seafarer; merchant captains, pilots and the like. A few of the lanes at the upper end of the harbour may be termed "slums" by the more fastidious, but it is only to their outward appearance that the word is applicable. Some of these cottages are of great age and a number have been allowed to fall to ruin. In Melcombe Regis at the corner of Edmund and Maiden Streets may be seen, still embedded in the wall high above the pavement, a cannon ball shot at the unfortunate town during the Civil War, in which unhappy period much damage was done, the contending parties successively occupying the wretched port to the great discomfort of the burgesses.

Radipole Lake is the name given to the large sheet of water at the back of Melcombe, formed by the mouth of the Wey before it becomes Weymouth Harbour. The name is actually "Reedy Pool," so that "lake" is a tautology reminding one of a similar blunder, often made by folks who should know better, in speaking of "Lake" Winder_mere_. Radipole is spoilt by an ugly railway bridge and some sidings belonging to the joint railways that lie along the eastern bank for some distance. The water is enlivened by a large colony of swans and also in the summer by boating parties, who prefer the quietude of the pool to the possible discomforts of the bay. But the bay is the reason for holiday Weymouth, not only for the beauty of its wide sweep and the remarkable colouring of the water, but for the firm sands with occasional patches of shingle that lie between shore and sea from the harbour mouth almost to Redcliff Point.

The chief excursion from Weymouth is to Portland, and of course every one must take it, but there are other and finer ways out of the town, most of which show the "island" at its best—as an imposing mass of rock in the middle distance.

[Illustration: PORTLAND.]

A ferry plies between the steamer quay, just beyond Alexandra Gardens and the Nothe, the headland extremity of the peninsula upon which old Weymouth is built. This is one of the best points from which to view the bay. Portland is also well seen "lying on the sea like a great crouching animal" (Hardy). The commanding parts of the Nothe are heavily fortified and the permanent barracks are always occupied by a strong force. On the south are Portland Roads, usually interesting for the number of warships congregated there. There are exceedingly powerful defences at the ends of the breakwaters and the openings can be protected from under-water attack by enormous booms. The first wall took twenty-three years to build by convict labour and it explains the origin of the prison at Portland, which was not established as some think, because of the difficulty of escape, but solely for the convenience of "free labour." It is said that the amount of stone used in the oldest of the breakwaters was five million tons.

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If the road is taken into Portland the village of Rodwell, at which there is a station, is at the parting of the ways, that to the left leading to the shore at Sandsfoot Castle, one of Henry's block houses that played a part in the Civil War. It is not a particularly picturesque ruin, though its purchase by the Weymouth corporation will prevent any more of the wanton damage it has suffered in the past. The other route goes direct to Wyke Regis, upon the hill above East Fleet and the Chesil Bank. Wyke is the mother church of Weymouth and is a fine Perpendicular structure in a magnificent position. Its list of rectors starts in 1302, so that the church must be on the site of an earlier building. The churchyard is the resting place of a large number of shipwrecked sailors who have met their death in the dread "Deadman's Bay," as this end of the great West Bay is termed.

The road into Portland is across a bridge built in 1839, the first to connect the island-peninsula with the mainland. Then follows a long two miles of monotony along the eastern end of Chesil Beach, and the most ardent pedestrian will prefer to take to the railway at least as far as Portland station if not to the terminus at Easton. The lonely stretch of West Bay, in sharp contrast to the animation of the Roads, cannot be seen unless the high bank of shingle on the right is ascended. Portland Castle is on the nearest point of the island to the mainland. This also was built by Henry VIII and is in good repair and inhabited by one of the officers of the garrison.

The road ascends to Fortune's Well, as uninteresting a "capital" as could well be imagined and for the sheer ugliness of its buildings and church probably unsurpassed. Its only claim to notice is the extraordinary way in which its houses are built on the hillside, one row of doorsteps and diminutive gardens being on a level with the next row of roofs, so steep is the lie of the land. Above the village is the great Verne Fort occupying fifty acres on the highest point of the island and commanding all the approaches to the Roads.

[Illustration: ON THE WAY TO CHURCH OPE.]

The route now bears right and soon reaches a high and desolate plateau littered with the debris of many years quarrying. The only saving grace in the scenery is the magnificent rearward view along the vast and slightly curving Chesil Bank which stretches away to Abbotsbury and the highlands of the beautiful West Dorset coast. The prison is still farther ahead to the left. There would be fewer visitors to Portland were it not for a morbid desire to see the convicts. Parties are often made up to arrive in time to watch the men as they leave the quarries in the late afternoon. Soldiers and warders mount guard along the walls and the depressing sight should be shunned as much for one's own sake as for that of the prisoners. Good taste, however, is a virtue that usually has to give way before curiosity.



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The road now descends to Easton, a place of remarkably wide streets and a number of well-built churches, not all of the Establishment, however. The solid old houses, consisting entirely of the local stone, are not uninteresting and are in keeping with the dour and bleak scenery of the island. The mistake of importing alien red bricks of a most aggressive hue has not been made here. Those that flame from the hill slope above Portland station only succeed in emphasizing the general bleakness of their surroundings. At Easton clock tower a street called "Straits" turns left and east and presently a broad road leads downhill to the right to the gates of Pennsylvania Castle, built, it is said, at the suggestion of George III by John Penn, Governor of Portland, and a descendant of the great Penn in whose honour it was named. A narrow passage by the castle wall brings us to Rufus, or "Bow and Arrow" Castle, to which the third name of "Red King's Castle" has been given by Hardy in *The Well Beloved*. Its picturesque ivy-clad shell is perched on a crag at the head of Church Hope Cove, really "Church Ope" or opening. In the grounds of Pennsylvania Castle, shown on application, are the ruins of an ancient church, destroyed by a landslip. The disaster brought to light the foundations of a far older building. Near the ruins is a gravestone with the following mysterious epitaph:

"IN LIFE I WROATH IN STONE;
NOW LIFE IS GONE, I KNOW
I SHALL BE RAISED
BY A STONE AND B
SUCH A STONE AS GIVETH
LIVING BREATH AND SAVETH
THE RIGHTEOUS FROM THE
SECOND DEATH."

Gravestones of the twelfth century, thought to be the oldest headstones in England, were brought to light in excavations consequent on the landslip.

The Cove will possibly be considered the only pleasant place in Portland. It is well wooded, of perfect outline, and with a miniature beach where shingle, rocks and greenery mingle in picturesque confusion and a remarkably crystalline sea laves the milk-white stones and gravel. Cave Hole, near by, is a fine sight in rough weather.

[Illustration: BOW AND ARROW CASTLE.]

The road continues to the small hamlet of Southwell and paths lead onward amid rather tame surroundings to the flattened headland known to the world as Portland Bill, but to all Portlanders as the "Beal." This headland is crowned by a lighthouse which has replaced two older and discarded buildings. In wild weather the scene at the Beal is magnificent, in spite of the low altitude of the cliff. Pulpit Rock is the quite appropriate name given to the curiously shaped block of limestone which stands close to the water. The "Shambles" lightship, about three miles from the Beal, warns the mariner off the

long and dangerous sandbank known by that ominous name on which so many good ships have perished. Around the bank, in February, 1653, the Dutch and English fleets under van Tromp and Blake, circled and fought for three days until the Hollanders had lost eleven ships of war and thirty merchantmen.

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To return on foot to Portland station or the mainland, the best way is to keep along the edge of the western cliffs for the sake of the grand forward views. The tall tower in the centre of the island in sight from the higher parts of the roads is Reforne, the chief parish church, built in 1706. Near the prison is St. Peter's Church crowned by a dome and built by convict labour. The fine mosaics in the chancel were worked by a female convict. As a rule the domestic architecture is as dour as the huge rock upon which the cottages are built, though a few of the older dwellings are picturesque with their heavy stone roofs clothed in gold and green moss, but as the quarries have grown in size and importance most of them have been swept away. As uncompromising as their island are the Balears—the Slingers—who kept invaders, Roman, Saxon and Dane, for long at a respectful distance with the ammunition that lay close at their feet. Underground habitations of the British period were found about forty years ago and ancient trackways of prehistoric time were to be seen in those days when the island was merely a great sheep-walk and before gunpowder and chisel obliterated them. The Romans named the island Vindilis. Many traces of their occupation have been found, including several sarcophagi.

Insular customs and prejudices among the islanders are various and strange. Intermarrying until quite lately was the rule, and it must be annoying to eugenists to find that the natives are such a hardy and vigorous race. The "Kimberlin," as all foreigners from the mainland are called, is still looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion, and oftener than not advances are met with a surliness that must be understood and so forgiven. Heredity is stronger in remote and insular districts than in those where the channels of communication are free, but the long story of brave and self-sacrificing endeavour to save life on their inhospitable shores more than counterbalances any lack of manners in this ancient race, which is probably very nearly identical with that of the old men who lived in the rock chambers under Verne. That stain on the honour of so many dwellers on the coast—a strange and unaccountable throwback—the crime of wrecking, has never been charged against the Portlander.

One of the most fearful storms ever recorded on this shore was that of November, 1824, when Weymouth esplanade was practically destroyed, and cutters and fishing boats were tossed into the main streets, one of 95 tons being washed right over the Chesil Bank. On Portland Beach in November, 1795, several transports, with troops for the West Indies on board, were stranded, and two hundred and thirty-four men drowned.

Dissent is strong in the island as the several squarely plain meeting-houses testify. The constant repetition of three names on the stones in the burying grounds—Attwooll, Pearce and Stone—will bring home to the stranger the insularity of the "Isle of Slingers."



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The royal manor of Portland antedates the Conquest. It then included Wyke, Weymouth and Melcombe. It is semi-independent of Dorset, being governed by a Reeve, who is appointed by male and female crown tenants from among themselves. The "Reeve-Staff" is an archaic method of recording the payments of rates, and is similar to the old Exchequer tallies, to the burning of the many years' stores of which, and consequent conflagration, we owe our present Houses of Parliament. The Reeve Court is still held at the old "George Inn" in Reforne. Among the old customs to be mentioned is that of the "Church-gift," in which the parties to a sale of property meet in the church and in the presence of two witnesses hand over deeds and purchase money. The transaction is then as complete as it is legal.

Inigo Jones first discovered the virtues of Portland stone and built Whitehall with it. Sir Christopher Wren was so struck with its good qualities that he decided to use it for the new St. Paul's and many of the city churches and public buildings. It is now the most widely used building stone in this country, and though it lacks the beautiful colouring of West of England sandstone, to "Bath" stone and the rest it is immeasurably superior in wearing qualities. Apart from the crown quarries, where convict labour is employed, the stone is worked by a kind of guild, very similar to that in operation near Swanage; the employment being handed down from father to son.

To make a brief exploration of the country east of Weymouth the road should be taken that keeps close to the shore until the coastguard station at Furzy Cliff is reached. Here a path, much broken in places, ascends the cliff, and continues to Osmington Mills, the usual goal of the summer visitor in this direction. Not far away is the great fort on Upton Cliff, built to command the Eastern approaches to Portland Roads. Holworth Cliff was, in the twenties of the last century, the scene of a curious outbreak of fire. The inflammable nature of the strata caused the miniature Vesuvius to smoulder for a long time, with dire effect upon the atmosphere for many miles around. It is possible for the pedestrian to proceed to the beautiful coast that culminates in the lovely region about Lulworth Cove. About eight miles from Weymouth the path reaches one of the several Swyre Heads in Dorset. This commands wide views over a remote and seemingly deserted countryside. From this point one may penetrate inland by bridle-ways, in two miles, to the village of Chaldon Herring, situated in a pleasant combe to the North of Chaldon Down. The church is remarkable for the new fittings, all designed by and for the most part the work of, a former incumbent. The Saxon font and Norman chancel arch are also of much interest.



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The highroad from Wareham to Dorchester makes a wide loop southwards from the railway at Wool and approaches Chaldon a mile away to the north. Between the village and the turnpike is a ridge upon which are the remarkable tumuli called "The Five Maries." From this spot is another wide and beautiful view embracing the greater part of Dorset, and in its absence of habitations emphasizing the loneliness of the central portion of the county. The highroad may now be taken by Overmoigne to Warmwell Cross on the return to Weymouth, but a better way, covering about nine miles in all, is, for those who can sustain the fatigue of "give and take" roads with rather indifferent surface, to take the hill top to near Poxwell. This is a delightful village with a very beautiful Manor House dating from 1654. The situation of this house, backed by the smooth Down, is exquisite, and the building reminds one of many fine old houses that stand just below the escarpment of the Sussex Downs. On the hill beyond the village is a small prehistoric circle of fifteen stones within a miniature wall and ditch; from this point there is a good marine view toward Weymouth and Portland. The direct road to these places now passes through Osmington, rapidly becoming suburban, although three miles from the town centre. The rebuilt church is of little interest, but its immediate surroundings are very pleasant. In the churchyard is a small portion of the wall of the old Manor House. An inscription on the church wall should be noticed, it runs thus:

MANS LIFE.
MAN IS A GLAS. LIFE IS
A WATER THATS WEAKLY
WALLED ABOUT: SINNE BRING
ES DEATH: DEATH BREAKES
THE GLAS: SO RUNNES
THE WATER OUT
FINIS.

Beyond the village, a startling apparition breaks upon the view to the right. This is the hero of Weymouth on his white Hanoverian horse. "Although the length is 280 feet and its height 323 feet, yet the likeness of the King is well preserved and the symmetry of the horse is complete." The fact that the horse is galloping away from Weymouth has often been remarked; this was a blunder on the part of "Mr. Wood, bookseller, who carried the great work to a successful conclusion."

Sutton Poyntz, in a charming situation between spurs of the hills, has been spoilt by the erection of the Weymouth Waterworks. This is the "Overcombe" of Hardy's *Trumpet Major*. Chalbury Camp, to the west of the village, is a prehistoric hill fort with traces of pit-dwellings within the entrenchment. To the south-east of the camp, on a spur of the hill and in the direction of Preston, is a remarkable and extensive British cemetery, from which numbers of cinerary urns and other relics have been excavated. It is to be hoped that this sort of curiosity has now exhausted itself and that these resting places of dead and gone chieftains will be allowed to remain unmolested in the peaceful solitudes which their mourners chose for them.



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Preston is a little over two miles from Weymouth. There are still a number of old thatched cottages here and a Perpendicular church with a Norman door. The visitor will notice the ancient font; also a hagioscope and holy water stoup. At the foot of the village is an old one-arched bridge over the brook that comes down from Sutton Poyntz. It is said to be of Norman date and was even supposed at one time to be Roman. Not far from the church is a Roman villa with a fine pavement, unearthed in 1842. Breston is supposed to be on or near the site of Clavinium.

The monotonous line of the Chesil Beach that has been seen from Portland is, in its extreme length, from Chesil Bay under Fortune's Well to near Burton Bradstock, where it may be said to end, more than eighteen miles long and the greatest stretch of pebbles in Europe, ranging from large and irregular lumps at Portland to small polished stones at the western extremity. It is said that a local seafarer landing on the beach in a fog can tell his whereabouts to a nicety by handling the shingle. For about half the distance, that is to Abbotsbury, the Fleet makes a brackish ditch on the landward side. Behind this barrier is a country of low hills and quite out-of-the-world hamlets seldom visited or visiting. Chickerell, the nearest of them to Weymouth, has a manufactory of stoneware and a golf-course, so that it is not so quiet and remote as Fleet, Langton Herring and the rest, which depend almost entirely on the harvest of the sea for a livelihood.

The first place of any importance west of Weymouth is Abbotsbury. The best method of getting there is by the branch railway from Upwey Junction, which for some occult reason is at Broadwey, leaving Upwey itself a mile away to the north. Here is the "Wishing Well" beloved of the younger members of the char-a-banc fraternity who come in crowds from Weymouth to drink part of a glass of very ordinary water and throw the remainder, at the instance of the well keeper, over the left shoulder. As far as the writer is aware there is no particular history attached to this spring. The arch and seats have been erected for the benefit of the visitor. But there are less harmless ways of spending a summer afternoon, and for those who have no "wish" to make, a visit to the sixteenth-century church will be appreciated. Here is some ancient woodwork, a pulpit dating from the early seventeenth century, and three carved figures of the apostles in quaint medieval costumes.

Nottingham, a mile to the south of Broadwey, was once a spa, first resorted to as far back as the reign of George I. The well house, visited by the third George, is now a residence and the pleasant surroundings are made picturesque by an old water mill.

The railway penetrates a lonely stretch of country with one wayside "halt" on the way to Portesham (indifferently "Porsham" or "Posam"). This is a convenient station from which to visit the Blackdown district. The large village was the birthplace of Admiral Hardy, whose ugly monument upon the hill does not improve the landscape. The Norman and Early English church has a fine tower with a bell turret. A good Jacobean pulpit and panelled ceiling are among the details of the interior. The brook that runs down the street gives a pleasant individuality to a village otherwise uninteresting.



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[Illustration: PORTESHAM.]

Blackdown is 789 feet above the sea, and the Hardy column, 70 feet high, is a conspicuous landmark over a wide circumference. This hill and its outliers are a museum of stone circles and dolmens, the best known of which is the "Helstone," or Stone of the Dead. On Ridge Hill, north of Abbotsbury, are the five large stones, almost lost in a tangle of nettles and undergrowth, called the "Grey Mare and her Colts."

Abbotsbury is famous for its Abbey, St. Catherine's Chantry, and the Swannery. The latter is probably the most attractive of the sights to the majority of visitors, and it is certainly worth seeing. Application must be made, during the afternoon as a rule, to the keeper. On a board near the gate is a record of the great sea flood during the storm of 1824, when the country around was inundated to a depth of 22 feet. Besides the sight of the long lines of white swans on the Fleet, there is an interesting decoy for trapping wild duck, the procedure being explained by the courteous attendant. The history of the Swannery takes us back to Elizabeth's days, when one John Strangeways was in possession not only of the swans but of the abbey and much else besides. It is still in the possession of his descendant, Lord Ilchester, to whom the new Abbotsbury Castle belongs. This was destroyed by fire about nine years ago and has since been rebuilt. The original "Castle" is a small prehistoric entrenchment west of St. Catherine's Chapel. The grounds of Lord Ilchester's mansion are very fine, the sub-tropical garden being of especial interest, and contains many rare plants and trees. Admission is granted at certain times, and advantage should, if possible, be taken of the permission.

The sixteenth-century church with its sturdy embattled tower is interesting. In the doorway will be noticed the lid of a sarcophagus that has the presentment of an abbot carved upon it, but nothing to show who the one-time occupant was. Some old stained glass still remains in the windows and an archaic carving of the Trinity may be seen upon the wall of the tower. It is conjectured that this was removed from the abbey at the time of the Dissolution.

A skirmish took place within the church during the Civil War and marks are pointed out in the Jacobean woodwork of the pulpit as those of bullets fired during the fight. Doubts have been thrown upon this, and the damage placed to the account of amateur decorators at the time of harvest festivals! The writer prefers the more romantic explanation, but is open to correction. The sounding board over the pulpit is contemporary with the base and is a fine piece of work.

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Close to the churchyard is Abbey Farm. Portions of the buildings include remains of the once famous Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter, founded about 1040 by Orc, a one-time steward of Canute and afterwards in the service of Edward the Confessor. At the Dissolution the abbey came into the possession of an ancestor of the Strangeways who owned the Swannery when that first became known to history. The abbey, like many others, is said to have been built on the site of an older religious house, dating from very ancient days. There is a gatehouse, with an arch of later date, remaining, besides the fragmentary portions in the farmhouse. Many houses in Abbotsbury have pieces of ecclesiastical stonework or carving built into their heavy walls, and arched windows seem to have been transplanted bodily from the dismantled abbey to the dwellings in the village.

By far the most notable building in Abbotsbury is the fifteenth-century Monastic Barn, a fine structure 276 feet long. Its plan is as perfect as its simple but imposing architecture; the ecclesiastical appearance is heightened by the lancet windows between the heavy buttresses and the slight transeptal extensions that give the structure the form of a cross. The abbey fish pond, fed by the stream that runs through Portesham street, till remains below the tithe barn, and though its farmyard surroundings are very different to those it had when the brethren gathered around the banks on Thursdays of old, it is still, with its island centre of old trees, a picturesque finish to the scene.

St. Catherine's Chapel on the hill above the sea is an erection in a situation similar to that of the far older building on St. Aldhelm's Head. Its appearance, however, is quite different, and it is Perpendicular in style. The turret at the north-west corner, the two porches and clerestory, are very evidently of another age to the heavy Norman of St. Aldhelm's, though St. Catherine is solidly built and has weathered many a fierce storm without suffering any apparent damage. The walls are nearly four feet thick and the buttresses are sturdy in proportion. The fine stone roof is greatly admired and is a wonderful piece of work. The turret was probably used as a beacon, and the chapel seems to be identical in everything but style with St. Aldhelm's. On the east side of the south door are three curious depressions in the stonework said to be "wishing holes," one for the knee and the higher ones for the hands.

[Illustration: ST. CATHERINE'S CHAPEL.]

The views of the Dorset seaboard during the climb to this exposed eminence are as fine as one would imagine. The contrast between the hilly country to the west and the long sweep of the Chesil Beach backed by the "fleets" is very striking. From our vantage point the stretch of coast immediately to the west is shown to be quite bare of hamlet or settlement of any kind beyond a few isolated houses. Puncknoll, which we shall reach in the next chapter, is the nearest village, fully four miles from St. Catherine's and nearly half that distance from the sea.

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Winding lanes, solitary also of human kind and delightful to wander in for the sake of their treasures of flower and insect life, meander across White Hill and its sister ridge. One of them passes within a short distance of the "Grey Mare" and her children and, farther on, another group of mysterious stones. This way would take us to Little Bredy, a village which, of no interest in itself, has been made a scene of much beauty by the artificial widening of the little Bride just below its source as it passes through the grounds of Bridehead. The last resting places of our Neolithic ancestors are scattered in great numbers about the heights that enfold the narrow cleft of the infant stream.

[Illustration: THE CHARMOUTH ROAD.]

CHAPTER VI

WEST DORSET

The branch line of the Great Western from Maiden Newton makes a wide detour northwards to reach Bridport, passing through a very charming and unspoilt countryside where old "Do'set" ways still hold out against that drab uniformity that seems to be creeping over rustic England. In this out-of-the-way region are small old stone-built villages lying forgotten between the folds of the hills and rejoicing in names that makes one want to visit them if only for the sake of their quaint nomenclature.

The first station is laconically called Toller. It serves the two villages Toller Fratrum and Toller Porcorum. The Toller of the Brothers is charmingly situated on the side of a low hill. It once belonged to the Knights of St. John, whence its name. The Early English church has an old font sculptured with the heads of what may be saints, a possible relic of Saxon times; some antiquaries have declared the work to be British of the later days of the Roman occupation. In the church wall is a curious tablet representing Mary Magdalene wiping our Lord's feet. The manor house was built by Sir James Fulford, the great opponent of the Puritans. It is a delightful house in an equally delightful situation and the beautiful tints of the old walls will be admired as well as the admirable setting of the mansion.

Toller of the Pigs may only mean the place where hogs were kept in herds. The village is of little interest and has not the fine site of the other. In the church is a font that is supposed to have once served as a Roman altar.

Over the hills to the south-east is the little village of Wynford Eagle, so called from the fact that it once belonged to that powerful Norman family, the de Aquila, who held Pevensey Castle in Sussex after the Conquest. The church is an exceedingly poor erection of 1842, but preserves a Norman tympanum from the former building. The carving represents two griffins or wyverns facing each other in an attitude of defiance.

Wynford Manor House is a beautiful building of the early seventeenth century. Under the stone eagle that surmounts the centre gable is



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the date 1630. This was the home of the great Thomas Sydenham, the founder of modern medicine. He was wounded while serving in the army of the Parliament at the battle of Worcester and, probably in consequence of the ill success that followed the bungling treatment he received, determined to practise himself and adopt rational methods for the treatment of disease and injury. He died in London in 1689, aged 65, and lies in the churchyard of St. James', Piccadilly.

Three miles or more to the north of Toller are the villages of Wraxall and Rampisham (pronounced "Ramsom"). The former has near it two interesting old houses—the Elizabethan manor of Wraxall and an old farmhouse that was a manor in the reign of King John, though the present building was not erected until 1620. Rampisham is in a lovely situation at the bottom of a wooded and watered dingle. Here is another picturesque old mansion and an interesting stone cross in the churchyard with a platform for open-air preaching. The base of the cross is carved with representations of the martyrdoms of St. Stephen, St. Edmund and St. Thomas a Becket, though they are so worn that one must accept the identification on trust. Another carving is of St. Peter and the cock, with figures of monks, knights and fools. Within the church are some brasses worthy of inspection.

Hidden away among the hills of Western Dorset is Beaminster, a little town so placed that it may be visited from several different railway stations without much to choose in mileage or roads; possibly Crewkerne on the main line of the South Western Railway is that most used. It is about six miles from Toller, Bridport and Crewkerne, and therefore as quiet as one would expect it to be. But "Bemmister" is not by any means a dead town and is, for all its want of direct railway transport, of some importance as the centre of a rich dairy country. The situation at the bottom of a wooded amphitheatre is delightful:—

"Sweet Be'mi'ster that bist abound
By green and woody hills all round,
Wi' hedges reachen up between
A thousan' vields o' zummer green
Where clem's lofty heads do show
Their sheades vor hay-meakers below
An' wild hedge-flowers do charm the souls
O' maidens in their evenin' strolls."

(Barnes.)

The Perpendicular church has a remarkably handsome tower of yellow-brown stone with sculptured figures showing the chief events in the life of our Lord. Part of the interior is Early English. Monuments of the Strodes, a great local family, will be noticed,



and also some good stained glass. The church, and the old “Mort House” attached to it, were fortunately spared in the several disasters by fire that, as in Dorchester, have removed almost everything ancient. The present smart and modern appearance of the main street is the consequence of the last conflagration in 1781, though this was not so serious as two others in the seventeenth century. The first of these started during the fighting between the forces of King and Parliament.



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[Illustration: BEAMINSTER.]

Charles II stayed at the “George” in his groom’s disguise during the flight after Worcester. This inn was rebuilt during the last century. About a quarter of a mile out of the town to the south-west is the Tudor Manor of the Strodes, standing in Parnham Park. Certain portions of the house are older than the sixteenth century, and a window bears the name and date “John Strode 1449.” Mapperton House is another fine old mansion. It stands two miles to the southeast in a secluded dingle lined with closely-growing trees and the beautiful colour of the early sixteenth-century stone building is a delightful contrast to the greenery around. The finely designed entrance gateway is surmounted by two eagles in the act of rising from the posts. The old house forms two sides of a picturesque quadrangle, Mapperton church being on the third.

Three miles north-westwards of Beaminster is Broadwindsor, amidst scenery pleasant enough from the farmers’ point of view, for these are “fat lands,” but more tame than that seen between Toller and the former town. Not far away, however, are the finely-shaped summits of Pilsdon Pen and Lewsdon Hill, nearly of the same height and remarkable alike from certain aspects. “Pilsdon Pen,” says an old writer, “is no less than 909 feet above the sea, and therefore 91 feet short of being a mountain!” Who gave the 1,000 feet contour line that arbitrary nomenclature is unknown. Usually in Britain double that height is taken as the limit, but it is perhaps more fair to allow each countryside its own standard. Pilsdon is much more imposing than some of the “lumps” that are double its altitude on the table-land of central Wales, where the bed of the Upper Wye is not many feet below the height of the “Pen.” That, by the way, is a Celtic suffix; it would be interesting to know if the word has continued in constant use since British times.

The chief claim to fame on the part of Broadwindsor is that the famous Thomas Fuller, witty writer and wise divine, was its royalist parson and that he preached from the old Jacobean pulpit in the parish church. This building has been well restored by the son of a former vicar. The usual Perpendicular tower surmounts a medley of Norman and Early English in the body of the church.

But this is a long way from the Tollers, and the road must now be taken by Mapperton, back to the train that provokingly burrows through cuttings, with an occasional flying glimpse of lovely wooded dell and tree-crowned hill, on the way to Powerstock or, according to Dorset—“*Poor stock.*”

The well-restored church here is interesting. There is a very early Norman arch in the chancel with beautifully sculptured pillars and capitals. Upon the hill top above the village is the site of Powerstock Castle that was built within the ramparts of an ancient earthwork by King Athelstan. A short distance to the south-east is Eggardon Hill (820 feet) with a great series of entrenchments upon its summit which deserve to rank with those of Maiden Castle and Old Sarum. The fortifications have a strong resemblance, on a smaller scale, to the first-named stronghold.



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[Illustration: EGGARDON HILL.]

Our present goal—Bridport—is one of those pleasant old English towns, cheerful and bright, and to outward seeming entirely prosperous, which make the average Londoner who has to earn his living long for the chance to try his fortune there. For the traveller on his first visit a great surprise is in store; with a name such as this one pictures in advance a place of quays on a sluggish river, fairly wide and very muddy, opening to the sea, with the conventional loungers, tarry and fishy scents and a fringe of lodging houses. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Here is no evidence of the sea at all, and although West Bay, the real “quay” of Bridport, is less than two miles from the High Street, the town seems to be surrounded by hills and to be solely concerned with the neighbouring farmers and their interests. The only direct relation with marine affairs is the important manufacture of fishing nets and “lines” for which Bridport has been noted for many years. To say “he was stabbed with a Bridport Dagger” was a polite way of breaking the news that your acquaintance had been hung! Leland was quite deceived by this old joke, probably ancient in his time—the sixteenth century, and refers to the dagger industry in perfect good faith. The arms of the town are three spinning hooks behind a castle; this proves that the industry is no modern one and until lately hemp was one of the staple products of the country immediately around.

Ten pounds only were spent on the defences during the Civil War and the inhabitants seem to have made as half-hearted an attempt in opposing the Royalist besiegers as in the preliminaries of warfare. Charles II arrived here in his flight towards Sussex and rested at the George Inn, but the identity of this hostelry seems in doubt. There is a “George” at West Bay that claims the honour of sheltering Charles. The one in High Street has been pulled down save a small portion incorporated in a chemist’s shop. When leaving, the party of fugitive Royalists turned northwards down Lee Lane, their pursuers continuing along the Dorchester road. A memorial stone by the wayside records the escape of the King, who was in his groom’s dress with Mrs. Coningsby riding pillion behind.

[Illustration: BRIDPORT.]

A skirmish in which the Duke of Monmouth’s officers, with the exception of Colonel Wade, emerged with but small credit to themselves took place on the morning of June 14, 1685. After marching through the night from Lyme the unfortunate yokels who made up the Duke’s “army” displayed much coolness and bravery in the fight recorded on a memorial in the church to “Edward Coker Gent, second son of Robert Coker of Mapowder, Slayne at the Bull Inn at Bridport, June the 14th An. Do. 1685, by one Venner, who was a Officer under the late Duke of Monmouth in that Rebellion.”

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Bridport is first known to history in the year preceding the Conquest when it had a priory (St. Leonard's) and a mint. These have entirely disappeared and almost all the medieval structures except the church—a good Perpendicular building with Early English transepts. The only monument of interest, except that of Edward Coker, is a cross-legged effigy of one of the de Chideocks in the north transept. The handsome pulpit and reredos are modern. An old house in South Street called “Dungeness” was contemporary with the Priory, and near by is a fine old Tudor house, once the Castle Inn, but now used as a club.

The picturesque Town Hall with its clock turret is the best known feature of Bridport and lends quite a distinctive air to the broad High Street which has the vista of its west end filled by the cone-shaped Colmers Hill. South Street leads to West Bay, at the mouth of the diminutive Bride or Brit. The little town of late, mainly through the exertions of the Great Western Railway, has made an attempt to transform itself into a watering place. The coast is attractive and possibly at some future date the railway and the local landowner will have their way, but at present West Bay is in a state of transition. Many who knew the primitive aspect of the tiny port before the paved front and its shelters came to keep company with the hideous row of lodging houses that stand parallel with the Bride, will deplore the change, or hope for the time when that change will be complete and nothing is left to remind them of the lost picturesqueness of Bridport Quay.

Burton Cliff is the name of the odd rounded hill on the east that has been cut neatly in half by the slow wearing of the waves. On the other side of it is Burton Bradstock, nearly two miles from West Bay station. This place is unremarkable in itself but must be mentioned for its beautiful and picturesque situation. It has been found by the holiday-maker, and houses of the red brick villa type are likely to increase in number unless the local builder can be prevailed upon to use local material. The restored cruciform church, Perpendicular in style, has a modern addition in its clock, a relic of the old building of Christ's Hospital in the City of London.

[Illustration: PUNCKNOLL.]

Away to the north beyond the small village of Skipton Gorge, is Skipton Beacon, a hill with a striking and imposing outline. Equally fine, though on a much smaller scale, is Puncknoll, away to the east of Swyre. The hill or knoll is usually called Puncknoll Knob by the country people and, very absurdly, Puncknoll Knoll by some of the guide books. It commands a perfectly gorgeous view of the sea and shore as far as Abbotsbury and over West Bay to the hills around Lyme. The village that takes its name from the hill is behind it to the north. In the small church is an old Norman font covered with carvings of interlaced ropes and heads; also some memorials of a local family, the Napiers, one of which is a refreshing change in regard to its inscription, which runs:



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READER, WHEN THOU HAST DONE ALL THAT THOU
CANST, THOU ART BUT AN UNPROFITABLE SERVANT.
THEREFORE THIS MARBLE AFFORDS NO ROOM FOR
FULSOME FLATTERY OR VAINE PRAISE.

SR. R.N. (Robert Napier).

Behind the church is a beautiful old manor house, and the village has some delightful examples of the unspoilt and typical thatched stone cottage of Dorset.

A lane to the north leads down to the valley of the Bride and the direct road back to West Bay. A mile to the east is Litton Cheyney and, a mile farther, Long Bredy up among the hills where the Bride rises. Turning west from the lane end, the road descends the valley toward the sea amid beautiful surroundings, and reaches Burton Bradstock in a short three miles.

Bradpole village is a mile north of Bridport Town station. The rebuilt church is hardly worth the short journey, but mention must be made of the monument in the churchyard wall to W.E. Forster, who was born in a cottage not far away. Another tablet commemorates the flight of Charles II through the village. Lodors, a mile farther, and Uploders, a continuation on the other side of the Dorchester railway, are worth a visit. The former was once the seat of a Benedictine priory founded in the reign of Henry I. The church has a hagioscope and a square Norman font. A doorway and window of this period in the chancel were uncovered during restorations. The winding stairway to the chamber over the porch will be noticed and a representation of the Crucifixion on the lower stage of the tower.

The road from Bridport to Lyme Regis has been described as the best and the worst in the south of England. For the occupant of a touring car the way is a succession of changing views as charming as they are varied. For a loaded horse the eight and a half miles of switchback must be a long-drawn-out agony in which the descent of the last hill into Lyme is worse than the terrible pull to its summit. The writer knows this road only from the point of view—and pace—of the pedestrian, and he knows of few more lovely or more tiring. Fanny Burney described the drive as “the most beautiful to which my wandering feet have sent me; diversified with all that can compose luxuriant scenery, and with just as much approach to the sublime as is in the province of unterrific beauty.” The long ascent of “Chiddick” Hill commences soon after leaving the mill pool just outside Bridport. To the right, a turning leads to Symondsburry, where there is an old cruciform church with a central tower and, in the chancel, the tomb of Bishop Gulston, uncle of Addison. Away to the left and near the sea is Eype in a delightful combe that ends in the sea at Eype Mouth. On Eype Down is an ancient earthwork of much interest to archaeologists. It was from this hill that Powell, the aeronaut, was blown out to sea in a balloon nearly forty years ago.

[Illustration: CHIDEOCK.]

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After a long wind round the side of Chideock Hill the high road descends towards the village of that name. A stile on the left gives access to a footpath to the “Seatown” of Chideock. The pedestrian should enter the meadow to rest and admire the perfect view down the V-shaped combe to the sea. Away to the left Thurncombe Beacon lifts its dark summit. The answering height to the right is lordly Golden Cap. Its well-named crown is more than 600 feet above the waves that dash against Wear Cliffs below.

Chideock is a clean pleasant street of houses most of whose occupants let lodgings or cater for the passing traveller in one way or another. The Perpendicular church was restored in a rather drastic manner about forty years ago; this brought to light a crude wall painting. At the east end of the south aisle will be seen a black marble effigy of a knight in plate armour. This is Sir John Arundell, an ancestor of the Lords Arundell of Wardour in Wiltshire. The de Chideocks were the original owners of the countryside and in a field beyond the church to the north-east is the moat which once surrounded their castle, dismantled soon after the close of the Civil War as a punishment for the annoyance it caused the army of the Parliament in interfering with the communications of Lyme. It changed hands several times during the war, but while held by the Royalists it seriously compromised their opponents on the west.

The Manor House is a seat of the Welds, a Roman Catholic family. In the grounds of the manor is a very ornate church belonging to that communion and a cemetery that has an interesting chapel, the walls of which are covered with paintings.

The scenery is now becoming Devonian in character, of the softly pleasant aspect of the south, lines of hill occasionally rising into picturesque hummocky outline; wide troughed valleys richly timbered, with mellow old farmhouses here and there about their slopes, connected by deep narrow flowery lanes extraordinarily erratic in direction, or want of it. The cider country is still far off, however; for Dorset, though the soil and climate are well suited to it, has not yet looked upon the culture of the apple as an important item in farming, and orchards of any sort are few and small in size.

The Lyme road climbs up from Chideock round the steep face of Langdon Hill and reaches its summit level, over 400 feet, about a mile out of the village. In front, to the right, is Hardown Hill and to the left, Chardown. Out of sight for the present, but soon to come into view again, is Golden Cap which may be reached by one of the roundabout lanes going seawards, with a short stiff climb at the last. The view from the summit is as glorious as it is wide. In clear weather the extremities of the great bay—Portland Bill and Start Point—can be seen, and most of the beautiful coast between them. Passing between Hardown and Chardown the road drops to Morecombelake,



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an uninteresting village in a charming situation. The lane to the right goes down to Whitchurch Canonicorum in Marshwood Vale. Here is the interesting church of St. Wita (or St. Candida), Virgin and Martyr. The chancel, part of the nave and south door are Transitional, about 1175, the transepts being built about twenty-five and the tower two hundred years later. The chief interest in the church is the so-called shrine of St. Candida opened twenty years ago during repairs to the church wall. Within a stone coffin was found a leaden casket containing a number of bones declared to be those of a small sized female. Upon one side of the box was the following inscription:

Hic . Requesct . Relique . sce . Wite

The bones were placed in a new reliquary and again deposited within the restored shrine. The three openings in the front were made to receive the offerings of the faithful and pilgrims from afar. There are several monuments here to the De Mandevilles; John Wadham, Recorder of Lyme (1584); Sir John Geoffry of Catherstone (1611) and others. The terrific name of this small village simply indicates that the canons of Salisbury and Wells claimed the parish tithes. Across the valley from Whitchurch rise the outstanding eminences—"Coney" (Conic or King's) Castle and Lambert's Castle, the latter crowned with a fine clump of trees. The name of the valley seems to have deceived some old writers into thinking it a region of chills and agues and of cold sour soil. It has always been famous for its oaks, but perhaps it may claim a greater fame as a minor Wordsworth country, for on the north side of the vale is Racedown Farm, the home of the poet for about two years. Dorothy Wordsworth said it was "the place dearest to my recollections" and "the first home I had." Perhaps the most striking view in this part of Dorset is that one from the Axminster road at the point on Raymond's Hill called Red Cross. At dusk, when the intervening fields and woods are shrouded in gloom, Golden Cap takes on a startling shape against the evening sky. The huge truncated cone and the separate bays on either side—mostly differing entirely in colour—make the centre of as fine a prospect as any in the south. This road, Roman for the most part, has the rare feature of a tunnel, cut to make the steep ascent to Hunter's Lodge Inn practicable for modern traffic.

[Illustration: CHARMOUTH.]

The Marshwood Vale ends at Charmouth, to which the road from Morecombelake now descends round the northern slopes of Stonebarrow; on the far side of this hill is the derelict parish of Stanton St. Gabriel, with a ruined church and two or three cottages in a superb situation under the shadow of Golden Cap. Charmouth is one long street running up the hill on the Lyme side of the Char. It is one of those pleasantly drowsy places that even the advent of the public motor from Bridport fails to excite. That its restfulness is appreciated is evidenced by the number of houses



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that let apartments. The distance from the railway at Lyme and Bridport will effectually bar any "development." Jane Austen's description still holds good:—"Its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and, still more, its sweet retired bay, backed by dark cliffs where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide; for sitting in unwearied contemplation." (*Persuasion*.)

The picturesque old George Inn on the right-hand side of the street is sometimes pointed out as the lodging occupied by Charles II, but this was at the "Queen's Arms" nearly opposite; it is now a Congregational Manse. "Everything was in readiness for the departure at midnight, but Captain Limbry, master of the ship, came ashore just after dark for his luggage. Questioned by his wife he foolishly admitted that he was concerned with the safety of a dark gentleman from Worcester. Without more ado the good woman pushed him into his bedroom and turned the key upon him." Charles and his friends waited in vain at the inn, the "dark gentleman" as insouciant as ever, the rest of the party greatly perturbed. Urgently advised by Ellesdon (organizer of the escape) to wait no longer, the party took to the Bridport road, and so in the early morning the fugitives rode up and down the hills these pages have just traversed, in an endeavour to find sanctuary in a ship, the only inviolable one, that they were not to gain until far distant Brighthelmstone was reached.

[Illustration: LYME FROM THE CHARMOUTH FOOTPATH.]

Charmouth Church is as ugly as one would expect of an erection of the last year of the Sailor King. Within are preserved some of the monuments from the old building. It is said that a Roman station was established somewhere on this hill, and that after fierce fighting in the bay the Danes captured and held the Char valley for some years. It is possible that many of the country people have a strain of the wild northern blood in their veins. Close to the church and the Coach and Horses Hotel, the unpretentious but comfortable hostelry on the left of the street, a lane leads to the coastguard station and beach.

The shore can be followed to Lyme, but only at low water. By far the best way is to keep to the high road, passing through the cutting made in the hill for the better passage of the coaches, and named by the more proper "Windy Gap," and by the rest "The Devil's Bellows." In a storm the wayfarer is likely to be blown back to Charmouth. At the top of the hill a path turns leftwards to the open cliff and affords the traveller the most exquisite views of Lyme, the bay and the surrounding hills. This path eventually rejoins the main road near the cemetery. Within is a fine Celtic cross erected to commemorate those who perished in the *Formidable* in 1915.

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It is only during the last twenty years that Lyme has found itself as a popular resort. It must have been a tragic business to the select few, that opening of the light railway from Axminster in 1903. Before that time enthusiasts, among them Whistler and several other famous artists, braved the six miles of rough road from the nearest station to reach the picturesque old town on the Buddle, and possibly formed some sort of league to keep their "find" dark. Happily the place is still unspoilt and the hand of Jerry has not descended. The visitor who arrives by the South Western after a delightful trip, all too short, on the miniature Alpine line that burrows through hillsides and swerves across valleys, over the last by a highly spectacular viaduct, is agreeably surprised to find himself at a terminus while apparently still in the wilds. If the little motor train went down to the seaside it could never pant back again. But the eye is unoffended in the long walk down the steep road to the shore, and in these days when the canons of good taste seem to have some weight with property owners and builders it is probable that the growth of Lyme will be effected with circumspection. As it is, the snug little town is almost unaltered, except for a slight and necessary clearance at the river mouth, from the days when Louisa Musgrove lived at Captain Harville's house. Every one who stays at Lyme must buy or borrow a copy of *Persuasion*. It is wonderful how an old-fashioned tale such as this novel of Jane Austen will delight and interest the most blase of readers when he or she can identify the scenes depicted in its pages, and how the early Victorian atmosphere of the book will seem to descend on the quaint streets that have altered so little since it was written.

Lyme seems to have started life in the salt boiling line, and to distinguish it from Uplyme was called Netherlyme-supra-mare. The first patrons of the industry were the monks of Sherborne Abbey. This was in the days of Cynwulf of Wessex. Five hundred years later it became "Regis," a haven and chartered borough under Edward I, and from this far-off time dates the unique stone pier called the "Cobb," restored many times since. The town suffered much from French attacks and revenged itself by sending ships to harry the commerce of the then arch-enemy. The Cobb had been allowed to fall into such a state of disrepair in the reign of Elizabeth that that irate lady refused to renew the borough charter until the townsfolk made good the damage. This was done and Lyme soon redoubled its importance in the eyes of the Government, so much so that on the outbreak of the Civil War it was looked upon as an almost indispensable possession both by Royalists and Parliamentarians. Its vigorous resistance to the King is one of the outstanding incidents of the war; Blake, afterwards Admiral, conducting the marine defence. The besieged were successful after two months of the most desperate fighting, and the women of Lyme proved Amazonian in the help they gave their menfolk. In 1672 the Dutch gave the English fleet a trouncing within sight of the town.

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The most famous event connected with the Cobb was the landing of Monmouth thereon in June, 1685. The ill-starred prince knelt on the stones and thanked God “for having preserved the friends of liberty and pure religion from the perils of the sea.” Not many days passed before some enthusiasts from Lyme who had followed the gallant lad were brought back to the Cobb and hanged there in sight of their neighbours. John Tutchin, author of the *Observer*, was sentenced by Jeffreys to be whipped through Lyme and every other town in the county, to be imprisoned seven years, and pay a fine of one hundred marks. He petitioned to be hanged, and was pardoned. But these poor men were avenged three years later when William of Orange landed a number of his troops on the same spot. A few days afterwards that narrow, dull, conscientious, well-intentioned and wholly religious Roman Catholic, James II, fled from his throne and country.

During early Hanoverian days Lyme seems to have languished. Privateering; the trade with France and Spain; the industries of the town, weaving and lace making; all dwindled to vanishing point. Half the houses became ruinous, and the population had decreased to an alarming extent when that saviour of half the old coastwise towns of England—the valetudinarian—came upon the scene about 1770, and by the commencement of the Victorian era Lyme had embarked upon a time of modest but steady prosperity which still continues. Its fine air and superb situation would, if the town were fifty miles nearer London, result in “developments” that would soon ruin its character.

[Illustration: LYME BAY.]

Lyme church is Perpendicular, though the tower is far older, the vestry room being part of the ancient church. Of much interest is the tapestry on the west wall representing the marriage of Henry VII. On the front of the gallery (1611) and on the Jacobean pulpit (1613) are inscriptions setting forth the names of their donors and the dates. The rood-screen is modern but the old double lectern is interesting; chained to it is a “Breeches” Bible and Erasmus’ “Paraphrase.” One of the stained-glass windows is a memorial to that celebrated daughter of Lyme—Mary Anning, who with the enthusiasm of a greybeard hammered and chipped at the cliffs around in a most ungirlish style, but to such good purpose that she unearthed the Ichthyosaurus that now astonishes the visitor to the Natural History Museum in Kensington.

In Pound Street is an auxiliary church that in 1884 was converted out of a stable into the present beautiful and uncommon little building. Of particular merit are the fine tapestries and the altarpiece of Venetian mosaics. In Church Street stands an old house once belonging to the Tuckers, merchants and benefactors of the town. It is now named Tudor House and is really of that date, although its exterior hardly looks its age. The Assembly Rooms at the end of Broad Street mark the time when Lyme was starting



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upon a career of fashion. In the new Town Hall erected on the old site to commemorate the first Victorian Jubilee is an ancient door from the men's prison, and a grating from the women's quarters, let into the wall; in the Old Market stands an ancient fire engine and the stocks, removed here from the church. Near by is the "Old Fossil Shop" devoted to the sale of fossils and fish, as quaint a combination of trades as one could imagine. The old houses around the Buddle are of dark and mysterious aspect. This part of the town has always had a romantic air, here and there slightly flavoured with squalor, though of late, especially about the course of the river, improvements have effected a change. Curious customs of great antiquity such as the Saxon Court Leet and the Court of Hustings, a copy of a London civic institution dating from the first charter of the town, have continued to present times.

The other famous girl of Lyme, besides Mary Anning, was Jane Austen, who lived with her parents at Bay Cottage, the white house near the harbour. Here it is supposed that *Persuasion* was written. Captain Coram, the bluff seaman and tender-hearted philanthropist who spent his small fortune on the Foundling Hospital, and Sir George Somers, who colonized the Bermudas, were both local worthies. The latter died in the West Indies, but his body was brought home to Dorset and buried at Whitchurch Canonicorum.

The beautiful coast west of the Cobb is described in the next chapter, but mention must be made of the Landslip Walk. Several falls of the cliff, here resting on a precarious foundation of sand and blue has clay, have from time to time occurred and have produced this wide tract of broken and tumbled ground, only to be equalled in its picturesque confusion by the better known Undercliff in the Isle of Wight. The greatest "slip" took place in 1839 on Christmas Day and the country people were awakened during the night by loud and continuous noises like the rumble of distant artillery. It was found the next morning that a chasm nearly a mile long and about 400 feet wide had been formed parallel with the shore. This subsidence continued for a couple of days and took with it, without loss of life, several cottages. The wildly erratic disorder has been covered with a lovely profusion of flowers and plants in the sheltered valleys and ravines of this miniature Switzerland, and the whole undercliff as far as Rousdon and beyond is a wonderland of beauty.

Uplyme, three-quarters of a mile beyond the station, is in Devon. This may have been one of the pleas put forward a few years ago when strenuous efforts were made to get Lyme Regis transferred to the western county. The pretty village is about a mile and a half from Lyme Esplanade on the Axminster road. The church has been judiciously restored, but there is nothing of great interest to be seen apart from the old yew tree in the churchyard. Not far away is a beautiful old manor house called the "Court Hall"; it is now a farm house. The fine porch and queer old chimneys make a picture worth turning aside to see.



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[Illustration: OTTERY CHURCH.]

CHAPTER VII

EAST DEVON

To go from one Dorset or East Devon coast town to another by rail involves an amount of thought and a consultation of time-tables that would not be required for a journey from London to Aberystwyth, and unless the traveller hits on a particularly lucky set of connexions he will find that he can walk from one town to the other in less time than by taking the train. From Lyme to Seaton by the Landslip is barely seven miles; by rail it is fifteen, involving two changes. From Seaton to Sidmouth is nine miles by road and twenty-four by rail, with two changes and a possible third. Each of these sections can be comfortably tramped by the average good walker in a morning or afternoon with plenty of time for "side issues" and rambling about the towns themselves in the evening. One word of warning to those who adopt this method of seeing their own land, the only effective way in the writer's opinion. Do not be deceived into thinking that a mile on the map is a mile on the road. In this country of hills and valleys the distance can be added to considerably by these "folds in the tablecloth." A contour map in colours such as Bartholomew's "half inch" is a great help in this matter.

From Lyme the walk westwards by the cliff is, of course, the most beautiful way. Our present route, by the high road, passes between Rousdon, *the* great house of the neighbourhood, and Combpyne, where there is a station, the only one between Lyme and Axminster. This is a pleasant place, lost between hills, and quite out of sight from the railway. It has a church, built about 1250, with a gabled tower and with a hagioscope in the chancel. The communion plate dates from before the Reformation and is said to have been in constant use for more than four hundred years. In the thirteenth century a convent stood here; part of the buildings are now a farmhouse, but the villagers still point out the "Nuns' Walk" close by. A series of lonely and delightful lanes, difficult to follow without a good map (directions given by a rustic require a super-brain to remember their intricate details), lead down to the high road just short of the bridge over the Axe. Here a turn to the right leads to picturesque old Axmouth. The houses climb up a narrow combe down which tumbles a bright stream from the side of Hawksdown, the hill which rises to the north-east and is crowned by an ancient encampment. The church was originally Norman, but only the north door and south aisle remain of this period. In the chancel, which is in the Decorated style, is the effigy of a priest within a recess, and in a chantry chapel a monument to Lady Erle of Bindon. The curious wall paintings were discovered during the restoration of the church some years ago. An old standard measure for corn called the "Lord's Measure" is kept in a recess in the churchyard wall. Turning to the

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left from the church are some ancient cottages. On one of the chimneys will be seen the date 1570 and a motto: "God giveth all." Not far away is the entrance to Stedcombe, a house designed by Inigo Jones, which replaced an older building destroyed in the Civil War. Bindon, the home of Sir Walter Erle, a famous officer of the Parliamentary army, is about a mile from the village in the direction of the Landslip. It is a fine sixteenth-century mansion, now a farmhouse, a chapel attached to which is more than a hundred years older than the original building.

[Illustration: AXMOUTH FROM THE RAILWAY.]

A road by the east bank of the Axe leads in a mile to Seaton, which is at the actual Axe mouth. This is a town almost without a history, although it still makes the not-proven assertion that it is the site of Moridunum. Some years ago the townsmen, with the idea that the label is the principal thing, stuck the word along the Esplanade wall in letters of black flint. Although the claim is not an impossible one, the probabilities point to the junction of the two great roads, the Fosse Way and the Icknield Way, near Honiton, as being the actual site of the Roman station. The remains of a villa of this period, together with various relics, pottery and coins, were found sometime ago at a place called Hannaditches just outside the town, so that the ubiquitous Latins were at any rate here.

Seaton is quite a different town to Lyme; it has practically no ancient buildings and the few old cob cottages that made up the original village have entirely disappeared. A "restoration" of the church in 1866 destroyed most of the old features, including a beautiful screen. The main fabric belongs to the Decorated period with some Perpendicular additions and very scanty remains of the original Early English building. The hagioscope in the chancel appears as a window in the outer wall. The Perpendicular tower replaces an older erection on the south side, of which the base alone remains. A flat gravestone in the churchyard has the following curious inscription:

—
JOHN STARRE

Starre on Hie
Where should a Starre be
But on Hie?
Tho underneath
He now doth lie
Sleepinge in Dust
Yet shall he rise
More glorious than
The Starres in skies



1633

The main streets of the town are pleasant enough, though most of the houses are small and of the usual lodging-house type. Seaton depends for its deserved popularity upon its open position, in which it differs from most Devon and Dorset resorts; its bracing air, due to the wide expanse of the Axe valley, and above all to the beautiful surrounding country. Treasure hunts along the beach for garnets and beryls are among the excitements of a fortnight in Seaton.



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The unimposing way in which the Axe enters the sea will be remarked at once. It is supposed that the Danes made use of the river mouth as a harbour for their pirate ships and it was without doubt a port of some importance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For the siege of Calais it provided two ships. But Leland (temp. Henry VIII) remarks that the silting up of the Axe had made the harbour useless for all but "small fisschar boates." The river now has great difficulty in getting to the sea at all through the high bank of shingle.

A good deal of Honiton lace is made both here and at Beer, though this East Devon industry is slowly dwindling in the several localities in which it was once an important commercial item.

[Illustration: SEATON HOLE.]

The environs of Seaton are beautiful and interesting. The most popular excursion is to the Landslip at Dowlands. The nature of the scenery is so strange and bizarre, as well as beautiful, that it would impress the most stolid and sophisticated as something quite out of the common. North of the town are the villages of Colyford and Colyton; visitors are usually content to view these from the train, but they are worthy of closer inspection. The first-named is now a small village two miles from the sea. It is on the high road from Lyme Regis to Exeter and was once an important borough with a charter dating from the reign of Edward I. Colyton, a mile farther, is a queer old place with narrow, crooked streets. Its Perpendicular church is of much interest, and seems to have been designed by an architect with original ideas who, however, has not been preeminently successful in its details. The square battlemented tower with its octagonal lantern above is poorly executed, but otherwise the uncommon conception arrests attention and is worthy of praise: The parvise chamber over the porch, like many others, was for a long period the town school. The nave, rebuilt about the middle of the eighteenth century, is of no interest, but the Perpendicular arches between the chancel and aisles are very elaborate and fine. The Pole chapel is formed out of the eastern end of the south aisle and separated from the other portions by a stone screen of elaborate and beautiful workmanship. Within are the ornate figures of Sir John Pole and his wife. On the other side of the chancel is the Jacobean mausoleum of the Yonges, a great local family during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Gothic tomb with the recumbent figure of a girl upon it is known locally as "Little Chokebone." Margaret Courtenay, daughter of an Earl of Devon, was said to have been suffocated by a fish-bone, but the tradition has been doubted. From the armorial bearings above the tomb it would appear that the figure represents one of the daughters, or possibly the wife, of the sixth Earl of Devon. An interesting inscription in the south transept perpetuates the name of John Wilkins, who was minister from 1647 to 1660 when, as a Nonconformist, he was deprived of the living.



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The vicarage was originally built in 1529 by Canon Brerewood, who erected the stone screen of the Pole chapel. It has been altered and partly rebuilt, but the porch retains the original inscription placed there by the Canon—" *Meditatio totum; Peditatio totum.*"

Colcombe Castle, half a mile from the town, is now Colcombe Farm. It was once the seat of the Courtenays and the headquarters of Prince Maurice during the Civil War. In 1680 the Duke of Monmouth stayed either here or at the Great House near by, now a farm, but once occupied by the Yonges. An old stone arch in a field above the castle covers a spring of clear cold water.

Seaton Hole, the western extremity of Seaton Bay, lies under White Head, which is not white but brownish grey. Up the steps from the beach, a path leads from the "Hole" for a mile of steep up and down walking and then the explorer reaches Beer, famous for its "free trade" and its memories of a prince of smugglers—Jack Rattenbury; the 'Arrypay of Seaton Bay. His adventures, though not on the grand scale of the hero of Poole, were exciting enough, from his capture by the French, while ship's-boy on a local coaster, to his attempted arrest by a posse of soldiers in a Beer inn, where his escape was effected by the women of the village raising the cry "A wreck! a wreck!" and diverting his captors' attention. Rattenbury died in 1833 after receiving the princely sum of one shilling per week pension during the last years of his life from Lord Rolle. During this period he dictated his memoirs for publication in Sidmouth, to an editor who unconsciously gave the book a delicious touch of humour by putting into the mouth of this son of a Devon shoemaker the grandiloquent phrases of an early Victorian divine.

[Illustration: BEER.]

The picturesque and unspoilt little beach and the village street leading down to the sea are in great contrast to the new houses built on the hill behind, and the fine new church erected at the instance of the Lord of the Manor, one of the Rolle family. This replaced an ancient chapel dedicated to St. Michael, from which two old memorial tablets were transferred; one is to "Edward Good, late an Industrious fisherman," who left twenty pounds in trust for the poor of Beer and Seaton in 1804, and the other to "John, the fifth sonn of William Starr of Bere, Gent., and Dorothy his wife, which died in the plague was here bvried 1646." The dwelling of this Starr family was the Tudor house at the end of the main street which bears on it the design of a star, the rebus of the one-time owners.

A firm tradition is current among the fishermen, most of whom gain a livelihood in the summer by boat hire, that their forefathers were Spaniards shipwrecked in the Cove just after Beer had been depopulated by the plague, and that they settled in the empty houses, intermarrying with the maids of Devon left in the village. The story is certainly made convincing by the remarkably dark and foreign appearance of the villagers, especially in the case of the older men.



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The famous quarries, from which the stone for Exeter Cathedral was taken, are about a mile from the village. The subterranean quarries are not now worked. They were used by the Romans and possibly before. The passages extend for a long distance under the hill and are said to communicate with the shore. They were no doubt of great value to the smugglers. It is extremely dangerous to attempt the penetration of the mysterious passages and caves without a competent guide and a dependable light. Holes of unknown depth filled with water are met with in the passages and a fatal accident is possible in any unwary exploration.

Bovey House is about a mile to the north. It is chiefly remarkable for a well about 180 feet deep which has a square chamber, 30 feet down, undoubtedly built as a hiding place. Another secret chamber in one of the chimneys is traditionally said to have hidden Charles II, but it has been proved that he did not pass this way.

[Illustration: THE WAY TO THE SEA, BEER.]

Beer Head is the last outpost of the chalk and is a dazzling contrast to the prevailing reddish yellow of the Devonian coast. On the other side of the airy common that crowns the head, and that is known as South Down, is the delightful village of Branscombe (usually pronounced "Brahnscoom") built in the three valleys that unite at Branscombe mouth, the opening to the sea under the shadow of Bury Camp. The fine cruciform church is mainly Norman but with Early English and still later additions. It is supposed that the base of the tower is of Saxon workmanship. A monument (1581) in the transept is to Joan Tregarthen, her two husbands and nineteen children. One of the sons of her second marriage was the founder of Wadham College, Oxford. In the churchyard is a rough pillar usually described as a coffin-lid. It is probably a "Sarsen," indicating that the church site was used for worship in prehistoric times or at least that it was a place of sepulture. There are two headstones of very early date—1579 (?) and 1580, and the tomb of Joseph Braddick (1673) bears the following curious epitaph:

"STRONG AND IN LABOUR
SUDDENLY HE REELS
DEATH CAME BEHIND HIM
AND STRUCK UP HIS HEELS.

SUCH SUDDEN STROKES
SURVIVING MORTALS BID YE
STAND ON YOUR WATCH
AND BE ALLSO READY."

There are several other curious records here that will repay perusal by their quaintness and unconscious pathos. One is rather ferocious:



“STAY, PASSENGER, AWHILE AND READ
YOUR DOOM I AM
YOU MUST BEE DEAD.”

The dedication and the name of the village are in some doubt. Authorities make claim for St. Brendan as the patron, hence Branscombe. A chapel was built at Seaton in honour of this traveller saint.

[Illustration: BRANSCOMBE CHURCH.]

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The coast at Branscombe is wildly beautiful, and an interesting ramble may be taken at low tide among the masses of rock that form a sort of undercliff; the miniature valleys between are carpeted with rare and beautiful flowers. It is not practicable to continue by the shore except at the expenditure of much exertion. The road to Sidmouth should be taken by way of the few houses that constitute Weston, and then by the highly placed Dunscombe Farm and the picturesque ruin near it. These winding lanes lead eventually to the lonely little church hamlet of Salcombe Regis—"King Athelstan's salt-works in the Combe." This is one of those sweetly-pretty lost villages by the sea which one hesitates to mention lest a speculator should investigate with the idea of an elaborate "simple life" hostel in his mind. But Salcombe is too difficult of approach, even for faddists, although only a nominal two miles separates it from the South Western terminus on the other side of the hill. The church dates from 1150, though aisles were added a hundred years later and the tower in 1450.

We now approach the borders of the older Wessex, the limit for which for want of definite evidence to the contrary the writer has had to fix arbitrarily at the mouth of the Otter. The last of the coast towns in this region is one of the best centres in south-east Devon for a detailed exploration of the countryside. That is, the best if a coast town must be chosen. To the writer's mind a better plan is to make a break from this established usage and get quarters in one of the quiet old places about eight or ten miles inland, such as Ottery or Axminster. But Sidmouth is an exceedingly pleasant spot, in which one need never feel dull or bored, and in which the vulgarities one associates with the "popular" watering place are entirely absent. The bright and clean appearance of the stuccoed houses, nearly always painted white, contrasting with the red of the cliffs and the green foliage with which the town is embowered, is very effective and even beautiful. The houses are grouped in a compact and cosy way between the two hills, although of late years a number of new and, at close quarters, staring red brick efforts at modernity have been made on the hillsides. But these are decently covered, in any general view of the town, in the wealth of trees that climb the lower slopes.

[Illustration: SIDMOUTH.]

Certain quarters of Sidmouth have an air of antique and solid gentility that is a heritage from those days when it was a select and fashionable resort before the terraces of Torquay were built on the lines of its parent—Bath. After Lyme it was the first of the western coast towns to bid for the custom of the habitués of such inland resorts as Tunbridge Wells, Cheltenham and the like. The Victorian-Gothic building known as Royal Glen, originally Woolbrook Cottage, was for several years the home of the Duke and Duchess of Kent and the infant Princess Victoria. The Duke died here in 1820 and Queen Victoria caused a window to be placed to his memory in the rebuilt parish church.



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The town is mentioned in Thackeray's *Pendennis*, and was the home of the immortal Mrs. Partington, an old acquaintance of Sidney Smith; she is supposed to have lived in one of the cob cottages that used to be on the front. Like the Lords with Reform, so was Mrs. Partington with the Atlantic Ocean, which she tried to keep out of her front door with a mop. "She was excellent at slop or puddle, but should never have meddled with a tempest." If she was an actual character the good dame's house probably stood where now the fine esplanade runs its straight course between Peak Hill and the Alma Bridge over the Sid. At the bridge the shingle bank baulks the stream from a clear course into the sea and usually forces it into an ignominious and green scummed pool that slowly filters through the stony wall. From the bridge a path ascends to the Flagstaff, where there is perhaps a better view than that from the much higher Peak Hill on the west. Torbay, Start Point, and the south Devon coast are in full but distant view across the bay, but Teignmouth and Dawlish hide behind the promontory called Black Head.

The direct Honiton road goes up the valley of the Sid through pleasant Sidford, which has a fine old farmhouse called Manstone and a number of picturesque cottages, and through Sidbury, beneath the encampment called Sidbury Castle. The Early Norman church at Sidbury is interesting. Alterations at various dates have given the building thirteenth-century transepts and a roof and aisles dating from two hundred years later. The fine Norman tower was entirely rebuilt about forty years ago when the two figures of SS. Peter and Giles were found and placed on the new west face. A Saxon crypt was discovered under the chancel when that portion was restored and a trap door gives access to this chamber from the floor. The church porch has a room over it known to the villagers as the "Powder Room." It is thought that this formed a sort of magazine for the troops quartered in the neighbourhood during the Napoleonic wars.

The "Sid Bury" is the tree-clad hill on the west. Upon its crown is an encampment with a ditch, its bottom 45 feet from the summit of the wall. The view, except down the Sid valley to the sea, is restricted, but in every direction it is beautiful.

About half a mile north of the village is a fine old mansion called Sand, belonging to the Huish family and erected in the closing years of the sixteenth century. It is now a farmhouse, but practically unaltered from its ancient state.

The coast from Sidmouth to the mouth of the Otter bends south-westwards in a long sweep and encloses within the peninsula thus formed the small and uninteresting village of Otterton that has on the other side of the river a station on the line running from Ottery St. Mary through Budleigh Salterton to Exmouth. The fine Peak Hill has its western slopes running down to the Otter valley just north of Bicton Park, where is a magnificent arboretum. The line from Sidmouth climbs round the northern slopes of the hill and drops into the valley at Tipton St. John's. The train then follows the waterside as closely as may be to Ottery St. Mary. This beautifully placed town is as delightful and convenient to stay in as any in Devon.



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Ottery's proud boast is that it has the grandest church, apart from the great fane at Exeter, in the county. It is said that it owes its plan and general appearance to the inspiration of the Cathedral, and there is a striking resemblance on a small scale to that beautiful and original building. Not that St. Mary's is a small church; for the size of the town which it dominates it is vast. Erected during the period when national ecclesiastical art was at its most majestic and imposing, the Early English style of the greater portion of the structure is given diversity by certain Decorated additions. The beautiful stone reredos is at present empty of figures. Behind the altar the Lady Chapel, which has a stone screen, contains an old minstrels' gallery. The carving here, and the vaulting throughout the church, but especially in the chapel on the north side, is deservedly famous. During the time of Bishop Grandisson, about 1340, the church was made collegiate. In 1850 a so-called restoration by Butterfield did much damage, and some of the woodwork then introduced could well be "scrapped" and the church again restored to something of its previous simple dignity. The painting of the nave and chancel roofs has a peculiarly "cheap" and tawdry effect.

Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have lived in the town for a time, and during the Civil War it was for a month the head-quarters of Fairfax, who turned the church tower into a temporary fortress. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a native of Ottery and the son of one of its vicars. The poet was only nine when his father died in 1781. He was then placed in the Bluecoat school and there met his lifelong friend, Charles Lamb. The theological studies that at first seemed to be his natural bent were no doubt a consequence of his early environment. Near the church is a house now occupied by Lord Coleridge. Thackeray spent his school holidays at Larkbeare, the house of his stepfather, Major Carmichael Smith, and afterwards used Ottery ("Clavering St. Mary") as the scene of part of *Pendennis*.

The steep, narrow streets around the church have lost many of their picturesque old buildings, though a few of the smaller houses remain in the side turnings. The pleasant aspect of the town is greatly increased by the beauty of the river and of its banks both above and below the bridge. The stream is a great favourite with anglers, and Otter trout have a great reputation.

The great high road from Exeter to London passes a short distance north of Ottery and follows the river valley on its way to the old town under the shadow of Dumpdon Hill. Honiton is of world-wide fame in connexion with the beautiful lace that is still made in the vicinity. The long and broad High Street is practically all there is of the town, except for a few shops and smaller houses on the way to the railway station. Save on market day Honiton sleeps the hours away, or seems to do so; possibly there is an amount of business done behind doors, and in a quiet way, to account for the comfortable appearance of the burgesses (for this is a municipal borough). By reason of its sheltered position from any breeze that may be blowing aloft and its open arms to the sun, the town has, on an ordinary summer's day, the hottest High Street in England; that fact may partly account for its air of somnolence.

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The Perpendicular cruciform church suffered greatly from fire some years ago, though happily the tower escaped. A beautiful old screen and several other interesting details were entirely destroyed. The black marble tomb of Thomas Marwood commemorates a fortunate physician who cured the Earl of Essex of an illness and was rewarded by Queen Elizabeth with a house and lands near the town. On the Exeter road is St. Margaret's Hospital, endowed by Thomas Chard, Abbot of Ford (1520), for nine old people. It was originally a lazar-house founded about 1350. The chapel was built by its later benefactor.

A curious custom is kept in Honiton Fair week, usually held the third week in July. On the first day of the Fair a crier goes about the streets with a white glove on a long wand crying:

“O yes the Fair is begun
And no man dare be arrested
Until the Fair is done.”

It is said that this strange privilege is still respected.

The high road to Axminster climbs up the long ascent of Honiton Hill (there is an easier way over the fields to the summit for pedestrians), and with beautiful views on the left keeps to the high lands almost all the way until the drop into the valley of the Yarty.

Axminster is on a low hill surrounded by the softer scenery of typical Devon. The by-ways near the town are narrow flowery lanes such as are naturally suggested to one's mind whenever the West Country is mentioned. Axminster has given its name to an industry that has not been carried on in the town for over eighty years, though “Axminster” carpets are still famous for their durability and their fine designs. The whole period during which the manufacture was carried on in the town did not cover a century. The carpets were made on hand-loom and the house, now a hospital, that was used as the factory is opposite the churchyard.

The church is said to have pre-Norman work beneath the tower. The building as it stands is mostly Perpendicular, but with certain Decorated details in the chancel and a Norman door. The sculptured parapet of the north aisle is interesting. On it are the arms of many ancient families of the county. The two effigies in the chancel are supposed to represent Gervase de Prestaller, once vicar here, and Lady Alice de Mohun. In the churchyard is a tombstone with two crutches; this is the grave of the father of Frank Buckland, the famous naturalist, who was born here in 1784.

[Illustration: AXMINSTER.]

The town suffered greatly during the Civil War. It was taken by the Royalists and used as a head-quarters during the investment of Lyme Regis. It was the resting-place of

William “The Deliverer” on his way from Lyme northwards. He is said to have stayed at the “Dolphin” while it was the private residence of the Yonges.



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Close to the Axe and to the main line of the railway are the scanty ruins of Newenham Abbey, once of great renown. Founded in 1245 by the de Mohuns, it met with the usual fate at the Great Dispersal. A mile farther, on the Musbury road, is Ashe Farm, which once belonged to the Drake family. A daughter of the house married one Winstone Churchill, and here in 1650 was born John, afterwards to become the great Duke of Marlborough. These Drakes were claimed by Sir Francis as his relatives, but they rather fiercely repudiated the claim, and this obscure county family took proceedings against the great Seaman for using their crest—a red dragon. Gloriana, however, retaliated by giving her bold Sir Francis an entirely new device showing the dragon cutting a most undignified caper on the bows of his ship. The effigies of three of these Drakes, with their wives in humble attitudes beside them, are to be seen in Musbury church, another mile farther on.

Somewhere in this fertile and beautiful valley, between Axminster and Colyton, was waged the great battle of Brunanburgh between the men of Wessex led by Athelstan and the Ethelings, and Anlaf the Dane, an alien Irish King, who captained the Picts and Scots. Five Kings (of sorts), seven Earls, and the Bishop of Sherborne were killed, but the victory was with the defenders. Athelstan founded a college to commemorate the battle and its result, and caused masses to be said in Axminster church for ever (!) for the repose of the souls of those of his friends who fell.

The London road from Honiton runs a beautiful and lonely course of fourteen miles up hill and down dale to Chard in Somersetshire, passing, about half way, the wayside village of Stockland. The hills that here divide the valleys of the Otter and the Yarty are crossed by the high road and involve several steep “pitches” up and down which the motorist must perforce go at a pace that enables him for once to view the landscape o’er and not merely the perspective of hedge in front of him. The remote little village of Up-Ottery is away to the left on the infant stream surrounded by the southern bastions of the Blackdowns. Here is the fine modern seat of Viscount Sidmouth. Beacon Hill (843 feet), to the north of the village, commands a celebrated view, as wide as it is lovely.

[Illustration: SHERBORNE.]

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOMERSET, DEVON AND DORSET BORDERLAND

Chard is a place which satisfies the aesthetic sense at first sight and does not pall after close and long acquaintance. The great highway from Honiton to Yeovil becomes, as it passes through the last town in South Somerset, a spacious and dignified High Street with two or three beautiful old houses, among a large number of other picturesque

dwellings which would sustain the reputation of Chard even without their aid. First is the one-time Court House of the Manor, opposite the Town Hall. Part of the building

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is called Waterloo House. It was built during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. A very beautiful and spacious room with two mullioned windows and a fine moulded ceiling graces the interior. This apartment is panelled with the most delightful carvings of scenes from the Old Testament, and with birds, animals and heraldic designs above the noble fireplace. The back of this house is even more charming than the front and the visitor should pass through the porch and passage-way for the sake of a glimpse at its old gables and mellow walls. The Choughs Inn at the west end of the town, not far from the church, is another fine example of late medieval architecture. Here also one should not be content with a mere passing glance. The interior is well worth inspection, as the old woodwork and queer guest rooms of the ancient hostelry have been jealously preserved. The present Town School was erected in 1671, but a pipe bears the date 1583, indicating an earlier building on the site.

The early fifteenth-century church is cruciform if we regard the high porches as transepts. The whole building, including the tower, is very low in proportion to its length. The fine gargoyles will be noticed before entering; equally elaborate is the roof of the chancel, but perhaps the most striking item is the magnificent tomb of William Brewer (1641) in the north transept.

As at Honiton, the mile of High Street is undeniably a true section of the Fosse Way, though at each end the modern road departs from the old way and shirks the hills. The geographical position of the street is interesting in that it stands on a "great divide." During rain the gutters take the water in two directions, to the English Channel and the Severn Sea. There is no clear evidence of the existence of a Roman station hereabouts, though it is more than probable that such was the case. The name of the town proves it to have been a Saxon settlement. Bishop Joscelyn of Wells made its fortune by his endowments and the gift of a borough charter. Chard bore its part in the Civil War and Charles I was obliged to stay here for a week, in his retreat from the west country, awaiting the commissariat that Somerset had failed to provide. "Hangcross Tree," a great oak, stood within living memory in the lower town on the way to the South Western station. This was the gibbet upon which twelve natives of Chard, followers of Monmouth, paid the penalty for their rebellion.

[Illustration: FORD ABBEY.]

The excursion *par excellence* is to Ford Abbey, situated about four miles away on the banks of the Axe. (Prospective visitors who wish to see more than the exterior must make preliminary inquiries.) The situation is beautiful, as was usually the case with those chosen by the Cistercians. Unlike most of the great abbeys despoiled by the iconoclasts of the Dispersal, Ford fell into the hands of successive families who have added to and embellished the great

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pile without entirely doing away with its ancient character. A good deal of alteration was carried out by Inigo Jones who destroyed some of the older work and inserted certain incongruities more interesting than pleasing. The imposing appearance of the south front amply atones for any disappointment the visitor may experience at his first sight of the buildings from the Chard road. Over the entrance tower is the inscription:

ANO' D'NI MILLESIMO QUINQUESIMO VIC'MO OCTA'O
A D'NO FACTUM EST THOMA CHARD ABB.

The beautiful cloisters are much admired and the magnificent porch is one of the finest entrances in England. In the "state" apartments the grandeur of the ceiling in the Banqueting Hall is almost unique. The great Staircase was designed by Inigo Jones; this leads to the Grand Saloon in which are five Raphael tapestries, the finest in England; unsurpassed for the beauty of their colouring. The original cartoons are in South Kensington Museum. The visitor is conducted through the Monks' Dormitory to the Transitional Chapel, the resting place of Adeliza, Viscountess of Devon, who founded the Abbey for some homeless monks, wayfarers from Waverley in Surrey, who had unsuccessfully colonized at distant Brightley and were tramping home. This was in 1140. In 1148 the church was completed. The carved screen is elaborately beautiful and there are several interesting memorials of the families who have held this splendid pile of buildings, now the property of the Ropers. The traveller by the Exeter express has a charming glimpse of the picturesque "back" of the abbey, should he make his journey in the winter. In summer the jealous greenery hides all but a stone or two of the battlements.

Chard is surrounded by a number of small and secluded villages. Most of them are delightfully situated on the sides of wooded heights or between the encircling arms of the hills. The most charming is perhaps Cricket St. Thomas on the south of the Crewkerne road. On the other side of this highway, on the headwaters of the River Isle, is another beautifully situated hamlet called Dowlish Wake, after the ancient Somerset family of that name who flourished here in the fourteenth century. A short distance north is Ilminster, an ancient market town with a beautiful Perpendicular church crowned with a poem in stone that is of surpassing loveliness even in this county of lovely towers. White Staunton, four miles away to the west towards the Blackdown country, has a church remarkable for the number of interesting details it contains, though the fabric itself is rather commonplace. Its treasures include a very early Norman font, curious pewter communion vessels, a squint having an almost unique axis, some ancient bench ends and medieval tiles in the chancel. St. Agnes' Well, a spring near the church, is said to be tepid, and to have healing qualities. Near by is an old manor house dating from the fifteenth century. In its grounds are the foundations of a Roman Villa discovered about forty years ago.

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[Illustration: TOWER, ILMINSTER.]

Proceeding along the London road over Windwhistle and St. Rayne's Hills, and with delightful views by the way, Crewkerne is reached in eight miles from Chard. This is a pleasant little market town of no great interest apart from its noble fifteenth-century cruciform church which has an uncommonly fine west front, with empty niches, alas! but beautiful nevertheless. The porch is another interesting feature of its exterior. Here are quaint figures of musicians playing upon various instruments. At the end of the south transept is a small chamber, the actual purpose of which is unknown; it may well have been the cell of an anchorite.

The first impression on entering the church is one of light and airiness, due to the size and number of the windows, of which that at the west end is the finest. The wooden groining of the tower is curious, and the base of the walls show the existence of a former building that lacked the present aisles. The ancient font belongs to the older structure. A figure of St. George, that was once outside and over the west window where the dragon is still *in situ*, two old chests, and a number of brasses complete the list of interesting objects within. To the north of the church are the old buildings of the grammar school, now removed to a site outside the town to the east.

About two miles to the north is the curious old church of Merriott, built during several periods. The extraordinary carving over the vestry door called the "fighting cocks" is in the eyes of the villagers its chief merit! There are also some interesting gargoyles and a very ancient crucifix. A mile farther is the pleasant village of Hinton St. George. The fine village cross, though much mutilated, still retains enough of its former splendour to make us regret the many we have lost. The old thatched house known as the "Priory" is a delightful building. Hinton House is the home of the Pouletts, a famous family who came originally from the North Somerset sea-lands. Part of the house dates from the reign of Henry VIII. The family came into prominence about that time, for a member named Amyas was knighted after the fight at Newark. He became more famous still perhaps for his collision with Wolsey when the latter was a young man, for he had the misfortune to put the future great prelate in the stocks! The family became pronounced Protestants and one of the grandsons of Amyas was gaoler of Mary Queen of Scots. These beruffed and torpedoe-bearded Elizabethans are in Hinton Church, a fine and dignified building that, like many other Somerset churches, is more imposing outside than within.

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South Petherton is about three miles north. Here is another fine church with an uncommon octagonal tower placed upon a squat and square base. Of more interest is the beautiful house, known as "King' Ine's Palace," which dates from the fifteenth century. It may have been erected on the site of one of that Saxon monarch's many houses. There are one or two ancient buildings in this village as also at Martock, another delightful hamlet still farther north. But we are being tempted outside our arbitrary boundary and must return to the Yeovil road that wanders up hill and down again into the charming vales of the Somerset borderland by way of East Chinnock and West Coker. In the latter large and rambling village is a church of note for the unique horn glazing of the small windows in its turret. The Decorated building has a squat tower out of all proportion to its size. The manor dates from the fourteenth century and belongs to the Earl of Devon.

There is an alluring sound about the name of Yeovil; a name suggestive of ancient stone-walled houses with roofs clothed in russet moss with, perhaps, a hoary ruined keep on a guardian mound and a clear swift moorland stream flowing between encircling hills. But the reality is very different. Many years ago, when two great railways took the town into their sphere of influence, factories and streets began to appear as if by magic and just before the Great War a fresh impetus was given to Yeovil by the development and extension of certain well-known local firms. In fact the present appearance of the town is that of an industrial centre of the smaller and pleasanter sort, but with the inevitable accompaniment of mean houses and uninviting suburbs. The main streets of the newer parts are spacious and clean, but are reminiscent of an ordinary London suburb.

The great glory of Yeovil is its church, the interior of which is one of the most impressive in Somerset. Its lofty and graceful arches and wonderful windows belong to a period when the Perpendicular style was at its best and purest. The crypt beneath the chancel is of much interest. The single central pillar supports a fine groined roof. The church has few interesting details, but the magnificent lectern with its undecipherable inscription and a couple of brasses will be noticed. There are but few old houses in the centre of the town.

[Illustration: YEOVIL CHURCH.]

The usual excuse of disastrous fires is offered, and one did occur in 1449 when 117 houses were destroyed, but more probably ruthlessness on the part of eighteenth-century owners is responsible for this dearth. In Middle Street is the George Inn, an old half-timbered house, and, opposite, the still older "Castle," said to have been a chantry house. The Woborne Almshouses were founded about 1476, but no portion of the early buildings remain.



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One of the most delightful views in South Somerset is that from Summerhouse Hill, about half a mile away; another, magnificent in its extent, can be had from the Mudford road that runs in a north-easterly direction. The great central plain is spread before one with distant Glastonbury Tor on the horizon. The environs of Yeovil are delightful. One of the best short excursions is to East Coker, the birthplace of William Dampier, two miles to the south. The church and Court are beautifully placed above the old village and a picturesque group of almshouses line the upward way to them.

Five miles north of Yeovil on the Fosse Way, where a branch road leaves the ancient Bath-Exeter highway for Dorchester, stands the old Roman town of Ilchester, or Ivelchester. An unimportant one at that, for the Romans made but little attempt to build in the wild and remote country that was to be the home of an obscure Saxon tribe—the Somersetas. Ilchester to-day is strangely uninteresting and we have to depend entirely upon the imagination for even a plan of the Roman town, of which no vestiges remain. Possibly these disappeared during the Civil War when the town was fortified. The church has an octagonal tower with the rare feature that its sides are the same form from base to parapet. The older portions of the building are Early English, but it has suffered from a good deal of pulling about. This is the only one remaining of the five churches of which Ilchester could once boast. A much maltreated market cross stands in the main street with a sundial stuck on the summit of its shaft. Otherwise there is little to detain the stranger. Roger Bacon, philosopher and scientist, was a native of the town or immediate neighbourhood. At Tintinhull, two miles to the south-west, are some fine old houses, ancient stocks, and an Early English church of much interest. The church's tower is on the north side, an unusual position. Bench-ends, brasses and ancient tiles are among the objects likely to interest the visitor of antiquarian tastes. Montacute, still farther south and on the road from South Petherton to Yeovil, should be visited if possible. Here is a beautiful Elizabethan house, the seat of the Phelipses. Its east front is decorated with an imposing row of heroic statues; its west front is almost as magnificent. Taken altogether it is perhaps the grandest Tudor house in the county. The interior well bears out the sumptuous appearance of the great pile from the outside. A great gallery, one hundred and eighty feet long, extends through the whole length of the building, and the hall is equally grand.

[Illustration: MONTACUTE.]

This great house replaces a one-time Cluniac monastery founded in 1102, though in 1407 the establishment abandoned the foreign rule of Cluny and became an ordinary English Priory. All that is left of the ancient buildings is a beautiful gateway with turrets and oriels dating from the fifteenth century. St. Michael's Hill, or "Mons Acutus," is remarkably like Glastonbury in outline, and is the scene of a wonderful legend. Here was found the sacred Rood that was eventually taken in the days of Canute to distant Waltham in Essex, where afterwards there arose the great Abbey of the Holy Cross.

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Montacute Church is a building that has seen much legitimate “tinkering,” not of the restorer’s brand but of the sort that delights the antiquary. The earliest work is very early Norman. This is seen in the chancel arch and then we come down through the various stages of architectural history—Early English transepts, a Decorated window on the south side and, what is almost inevitable for Somerset, the Perpendicular nave. The tower is also “Somerset,” and very dignified and beautiful.

From the hill of Hamdon near by we obtain one of those exquisite prospects of this English countryside that few can look upon unmoved. The beautiful hills of Somerset and Dorset, fading into the gentlest tones of soft purple and blue, ring the horizon on every side. Alfred’s tower, built to commemorate the victory over the Danes, is far away on the Wiltshire border, but appears startlingly close for some rare moments when winter rain is near. Away to the west are the distant Quantocks and the hills of “dear Dorset,” fold after fold, in the south. Close under the steep northern face of Hamdon is Stoke, with a quaint, and delightful inn known as the “Fleur de Lis,” and a beautiful old church with a Norman tympanum, an elaborate chancel arch of the same date, and many other gracious and interesting details. If the direct road is taken from Montacute to Yeovil we pass through Preston Pucknell with its small and over-restored Decorated church. Of more interest is the fine tithe-barn close by, and a beautiful old medieval house with delightful porch and elaborate chimney.

Three miles north-east of Yeovil is the interesting church and manor house at Trent. In the latter the fugitive Charles II was hidden, and his hiding-place can still be seen. The stone spire of the church is a rare feature hereabouts and within will be found many interesting items, including the finely carved screen and bench ends, some bearing the words “Ave Maria”; the pulpit carved with scenes from the life of Christ and the chantry chapel and tombs, one of Sir Roger Wyke, *temp.* Edward III. The very beautiful churchyard contains an old chantry house built in the reign of Henry VI and the shaft and steps of an ancient cross.

About four miles south-east of Yeovil is the village of Yetminster, with a station on the Weymouth line of the Great Western Railway. To reach it we may pass through the village of Bradford Abbas, where the abbots of Sherborne once had a residence. The moated house still exists as Wyke Farm. A short distance away is a tithe-barn of noble proportions. The church has one of the finest towers in Dorset (for here we are again across the border). The west front is remarkable for its canopied niches. Within is a stone screen and beautifully panelled roof. Yetminster churchyard is worth the climb thither for the sake of the lovely view without the added attraction of the beautiful Perpendicular church, restored about thirty years ago. Within will be



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noticed some ancient wooden benches with the Tudor badge at their ends, spared by the restorer, who has here done his work carefully and well. On the chancel arch may be seen the gaps left in the stonework where the old wooden screen once stood, also the stone brackets for the rood-beam. The ancient colouring, mellowed and softened by long time, still remains on the beams of the roof. The fine west window will be noticed and also other windows, small and curiously placed. The church has a north door, possibly a "Devil's Door," through which the exorcised spirit passed at the baptismal service. About two miles south-east of Yetminster is the small village of Leigh, with a sixteenth-century church and the remains of two ancient crosses. In the vicinity is a remarkable "maze" or prehistoric "Troy Town."

The Weymouth Railway could be taken from Yeovil to Evershot, nine miles to the south, among the beautiful hills and valleys of what may be described, for want of a better name, as the Melbury Downs. The ridges of these North Dorset highlands are traversed to a large extent by good roads from which most delightful views may be had, delightful not only for their great extent but for the exquisite near peeps at the remote and lost villages and hamlets that sleep in their deep combs. The western extremity of this particular group of hills is Cheddington, about three miles from Beaminster, where is, perhaps, the most extensive view in Dorset. Evershot village is a mile and a half to the west of the station and within a few minutes' walk of St. John's Spring, the source of the Frome. The rebuilt church contains an interesting brass to William Grey (1524), rector, and depicts him in pre-reformation vestments holding the sacred elements in his raised hands. A road leads north through the lovely glades of Melbury Park, Lord Ilchester's seat, to Melbury Sampford. Melbury House is of three main periods—fifteenth century in the older and hidden portions, sixteenth century as regards the main building erected by Sir Giles Strangeways, and late seventeenth century when the Corinthian pillars were added to the east front. The beautiful sheets of water—feeders of the Yeo (for we have crossed the "divide") lend an added grace to a park rich with groves of magnificent trees. One of them, called "Billy Wilkins," is a famous oak, thirty-seven feet in girth. Sampford church is a cruciform Decorated building with some interesting monuments to the Strangeways, the family of Lord Ilchester. The late peer was the donor of the beautiful modern reredos, and the decoration of the chancel is due to him. Melbury Bubb stands a mile or more to the east under the shadow of the imposing Bubb Down. Its diminutive church has been much restored and has little of interest, except some ancient glass that has been left in the windows. A glorious walk could be taken eastwards by lonely little Batcombe with its marvellous legends of "Conjuring Minterne," whose grave is in the churchyard. Thence the solitary hill-way goes by the mysterious stone called "Cross in Hand" along the tops of the hills past High Stoy (860 feet), an outstanding bastion, Ridge Hill and Buckland Newton.



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[Illustration: BATCOMBE.]

The short five miles of road from Yeovil to Sherborne passes over the curiously named Babylon Hill. A proposal was made at an Academy dinner a short time ago to label the small towns and villages of Britain with artistic signs giving the name of the place and denoting pictorially or otherwise its leading characteristic. The idea is a good one, though it is capable of being carried to extreme lengths and abused. In wandering over the English countryside one is often at a loss, even with a good map in the pocket, to know the name of the hamlet or village one is entering. It is insulting to the villager and humiliating to oneself to ask "What place is this?" The well-known black and yellow signs of the Automobile Association label such villages as stand on a high road. But the obscure by-way hamlet, perhaps of more interest, is quite incognito. However, Babylon Hill is clearly marked on the map if not on the roadside, and we proceed through a pleasant country quite unlike the district we have just traversed and partaking more of the character of Leicester and the "Loamshire" of the novelist than of Somerset. The beautiful Abbey Church of Sherborne, the town of the "Scir bourn" or Yeo, is not well seen from the approach on the west, for we are on the wrong side of the long slope on which it is built. The town itself is attractive and pleasant, and has several old and beautiful houses to delight the traveller, but every other interest is dwarfed by its magnificent Abbey. Originally founded as the Cathedral of the see of Sherborne in 705, it had as its first bishop the great and learned Aldhelm. At this time the then city was the capital of the new western extension of Wessex and an important and strategic stronghold in the long and bitter struggle with the Danes. The earlier bishops were not only priests but soldiers, and seem to have acquitted themselves well as leaders in battle and generals in council in the many engagements that took place between the Channel and the Severn. More than one fell fighting and one, Bishop Ealhstan, totally defeated the invaders and did much to keep Wessex for the English. A successor of his—Asser—reverted to the tradition of learning established by the first of the Saxon prelates; he was the contemporary of Alfred, and to him we owe a great deal of our knowledge of the King. During this period the trade and industry of the city (it had an important manufactory of cloth) had grown steadily with its rise as a military and ecclesiastical centre, but when the see was removed to Old Sarum in 1075, Sherborne received a blow from which it never recovered.

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In some respects there is a similarity between the Abbey of Sherborne and the Cathedral at Winchester. In certain portions of each building the same extraordinary transformation has taken place in the same interesting way. The original heavy Norman piers of the nave have been pared and carved into the soaring lines and panel work of the Perpendicular period. This alteration was carried out here by Abbot Ramsam about the year 1500. In the north transept is the organ, a fine and famous instrument. The ceiling of the south transept was presented by the last Earl of Bristol and is composed of black Irish oak. The Earl's monument with his effigy and that of his two wives, stands beneath. There will be noticed on the south wall a memorial to two children, the offspring of Lord Digby; the lines of the epitaph were written by Pope. The window above is a modern work by Pugin. On the east of this transept is the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. The font is singular if, as is stated, it was formerly ornamented with brass plates. They are said to have been fixed within the quatrefoils on five sides, the remaining three being plain.

The magnificent choir shows the essential beauty of Perpendicular—the aspiring line—at its very best. The vaulting seems to carry the upward flow, as it were, of the stonework to the roof centre without any loss of the soaring effect. The beautiful windows are all modern but they are entirely in keeping with the old work. The stalls are original fifteenth-century carving and the miserere seats and canopies above should be particularly noticed. The reredos contains two modern designs in alto-relievo. A peculiar russet tint in the stonework near the roof is said to have been occasioned by a fire which took place during one of the many quarrels between the monastery and the town, due mostly to a difference of opinion as to the ownership of the nave. An arrow with a fiery tail, shot by one of the clergy of the town church, lodged in the temporary thatched roof of the new choir and caused the fire which did much damage, even melting the bells in the tower.

Behind the high altar, let into the floor of the old processional path, is a brass thus inscribed:

NEAR THIS SPOT WERE INTERRED
THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
ETHELBALD AND ETHELBERT HIS BROTHER
EACH OF WHOM IN TURN SUCCEEDED TO THE
THRONE OF ETHELWOLF THIER FATHER KING OF THE
WEST SAXONS AND WERE SUCCEEDED IN THE KINGDOM
BY THIER YOUNGEST BROTHER ALFRED THE GREAT.

In the beautiful Wickham Chapel is the monument to Sir John Horsey, the temporary owner of the Abbey at the Dissolution. He at once sold the church to the town for one hundred marks, the equivalent then of about seventy pounds. St. Katharine's, sometimes called the Leweston Chapel, contains the Renaissance tomb of John Leweston and his wife. Bishop Roger's Chapel is on the north of the choir. This is Early

English so far as the walls actually belonging to the chapel are concerned. It contains the battered effigy of Abbot Clement (1163) and some others unknown.



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Perhaps the most interesting item in the great church is the doorway on the north side of the west wall, which is said to be an actual portion of the ancient Saxon cathedral of St. Aldhelm. The extension of the Abbey westwards of this wall was known as Alhalowes and was the town church until the break-up of the monastery rendered it superfluous. It had a tower of its own in which the secular priests caused a bell to be rung during the devotions of the monks, to the great annoyance of the latter. The Chapel of Our Lady of Bow and the portion of the Lady Chapel itself that escaped demolition at the Dissolution was at that time separated from the Abbey and made part of the adjoining school buildings. The great tower is one hundred feet in height and holds a peal of eight bells with two extra—the sanctus and the fire-bell. The latter is inscribed:

LORD, QUENCH THIS FURIOUS FLAME
ARISE, RUN. HELP. PUT OUT THE SAME.

The tenor bell was given by Cardinal Wolsey, once rector of Limington, eight miles away in Somersetshire, and recast in 1670. Around the rim runs the following:

BY WOOLSEY'S GIFT, I MEASURE TIME FOR ALL,
TO MIRTH, TO GRIEF, TO CHURCH, I SERVE TO CALL.

The school referred to above is believed to date back to the year 705, that of the foundation of the Cathedral. Those portions of the monastery buildings that had fallen into private ownership were handed over to the school authorities in the middle of the last century. They comprise the Abbot's Hall, Guest Hall, Kitchen and Abbot's apartments. The Abbey Conduit at the end of Chepe Street dates back to 1360. It is a charming survival with groined stone roof and open arcade around, and it gives a very picturesque and special character to this end of the street.

The Hospital of SS. John Baptist and John Evangelist was founded on the site of a much older establishment by Henry VI in 1437. The modern buildings were erected in 1866. The Chapel, Governor's Room, and some of the ancient dormitories remain. A fine screen divides the chapel from the ante-chapel and some beautiful and ancient glass still exists in the south window. A tryptych, depicting the miracles, that once stood in the chapel, may be seen in the Governor's Room.

[Illustration: SHERBORNE CASTLE.]

During the Civil War Sherborne decided for the king, and consequently the old castle, which stood beyond the suburb of Castleton, was dismantled, and its ruins used for building the present castle, the home of the Digbys. The original building was erected by Roger of Caen and had seen some history from the time of its siege in 1139 by King Stephen. It became for a short period the home of Sir Walter Raleigh. In the fine park the infant Yeo is dammed and broadened into a graceful sheet of water. Here also is



the eminence known as Jerusalem Hill and the seat where Raleigh is said to have sat smoking to be discovered by a scared retainer, who threw a pot of ale over his master, thinking him on fire. Pope was for a time the guest of one of his patrons—Lord Digby; and the Prince of Orange stayed here on his progress from Devon to London. The Gate-house of the old Castle is a picturesque ruin, Norman in style with inserted Perpendicular windows.



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Sherborne is a pleasant and healthy town with many quaint nooks other than the immediate precincts of the Abbey. Although perhaps not as central as Yeovil for the exploration of the more interesting villages of South Somerset, it is a good place in which to stay for a few days or even longer. Perhaps the most lasting impression made by the town will be that of hush and silence; not that it is stagnant or utterly decayed, but even the main streets are saturated with the grave air of a cathedral close, a fitting atmosphere for a place which retired from active city life over eight hundred years ago.

An interesting excursion may be made to Cadbury Castle, five miles north of Sherborne. A round of about fifteen miles, to include the villages of Marston Magna, West and Queen's Camel, Sparkford (with a station on the Great Western) North and South Cadbury, Sutton Montis and Sandford Orcas, would take the explorer through a delightful countryside dotted with beautiful old houses—some of them fallen from high estate to the status of comfortable and roomy farmhouse, but usually with a fabric well cared for—and quaint and ancient churches. Of these North Cadbury, Marston and Sandford claim the most attention. The first is a large and dignified Perpendicular building with finely carved tabernacles in the chancel and several interesting features, including a curious brass to Lady Magdalen Hastings. Close by is a beautiful old manor house. Marston is much older than the generality of Somerset churches and has the scanty remnants of "herring-bone" work in the outside wall of the chancel. At Sandford is a delightful manor house with the loveliest of terraces and gardens and an old gate-house with an upper chamber. The interesting church contains a curious tablet depicting a knight in white armour and two ladies, one holding a skull. This is Sir William Knoyl and his two wives, the one with the skull being his first. The goal of the journey, Cadbury Castle, is, according to strong local tradition, no less a spot than Camelot, the palace and castle of the king of romance and hero of the British—Arthur. It will be remembered that to Camelot came the sword Excalibur "that was as the light of many candles." In the moonlight, the twelve knights, led by their prince, ride round the hill on horses shod with silver and then away through the trees to Glastonbury. As they disappear, the thin notes of a silver trumpet came back on the midnight air. Some are of opinion that the hill is hollow, and that Arthur and his company sleep within, awaiting the day of impending doom for Britain. Then they will break the chains of slumber and come to her aid. Some say that of late the Prince and his followers *did* come forth. Every intelligent native for miles round knows that the hill is indeed hollow, for this can be proved by calling to your companion through the opening of Arthur's Well high on the eastern face of the hill while he stands at St. Anne's Well away on the other side. Another legend has it that the hill is not full of men but of gold, the treasure house of the fairies, but this is a belief that will only appeal to grosser minds.

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The marvellous earthworks that crown the hill were undoubtedly prehistoric in their origin and, like the walls of Maiden Castle, they have been faced at a later date with stone. There are four lines of wall and ditch, and they enclose an area of nearly twenty acres. Old Leland becomes enraptured at the sight: "Good God! what vast ditches! what high ramparts! what precipices are here!" It will be seen at a glance how well adapted this eminence was for defence. There is nothing to the north but the great expanse of the Somerset plain broken by the isolated Glastonbury Tor. In the wide and beautiful view from the earthworks the Mendip range runs away toward the Severn Sea on the right; to the left front are the broken summits of the Quantocks and to the extreme left the beautiful hills of the Somerset-Dorset borderland.

The Shaftesbury road passes through pleasant country, with no particular features but with occasional good views, to Milborne Port, not quite three miles to the east. A few new buildings on the outskirts of the little town have failed to rob it of its medieval air. It can actually boast of a Norman guildhall, or at least the building has a doorway of that period, which is near enough. The poor battered and despoiled remains of a market cross stand in the centre of the street. This mere village once sent two members to Westminster, and its former importance as a market town and county centre is shown by its magnificent and ancient church. Although the nave has been rebuilt and the chancel is not the most perfect form of Perpendicular, the centre of the church will repay scrutiny, for it is of peculiarly solid and majestic appearance. It is even thought by some authorities to be Saxon. The Norman details to be noticed include the fine south door, the arches of the transepts and the windows in the south arm. The old font and the piscina in the wall of the nave, as well as other piscina in the chancel, are noteworthy.

The Shaftesbury road goes by the parklands and early eighteenth-century mansion of Venn, the seat of the Medicotts, and then bears south-east towards the village of Caundle Purse. There are several Caundles in this part of Dorset, but "Purse" is the only one of much interest. It lies just off the road to the right, under the wooded Henover Hill. Its sixteenth-century manor house bears the name of "King John's House," as do several others over the length and breadth of England. It is probable that a hunting lodge used by the Angevin kings once stood hereabouts, as this countryside was in their time the great forest of the White Hart. The church is small and over-restored, but it contains a few interesting brasses.



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The main road soon forks, the right-hand branch winding over a two-mile stretch of tableland and then dropping to Stalbridge. The main route goes directly over Henstridge Down and descends the hill to the large village of Henstridge on a main cross-country road and with a station on the Somerset and Dorset Railway, making it a convenient point from which to take two interesting side excursions—northwards to the hill-country beyond Wincanton and south to the upper valley of the Stour. The old Virginia Inn at the cross roads claims to be the actual scene of the “quenching” of Sir Walter Raleigh. Henstridge church is much restored, or rather, rebuilt, but still contains the fine canopied altar tomb of William Carent and his wife.

Proceeding northwards first we may take the road by Templecombe that was once a preceptory of the Knights Templars and now has a station on the main line of the South Western Railway, to Wincanton, a small market town on the Cale (“Wyndcaleton”) at the head of the Vale of Blackmore. Though of high antiquity it does not seem to have had much place in history, apart from its relation to Sherborne in the Civil War, when it became a base for operations against the Royalist garrison there. An old house in South Street is pointed out as the lodging of the Prince of Orange on his journey towards London. A sharp fight took place between his followers and a small body of Stuart cavalry, resulting in the utter rout of the latter. A poor and uninteresting old church has been altered out of all likeness to the original (much to the advantage of the building) and there is very little of antiquity in the town.

The station next to Wincanton is Cole, within easy reach of the old towns of Castle Cary and Bruton. A public conveyance meets the trains for the latter, a little over a mile away. The situation of Bruton, in the picturesque valley of the Brue between Creech and Redlynch Hills, is extremely pleasant. A goodly number of ancient houses survive and the church, at one time a minster, is of much beauty and interest. Its west tower is of great splendour and its nave of the stateliest Perpendicular. The contrast of the chancel to the rest of the building is more peculiar than pleasing. At the Dissolution the monks’ choir seems to have been allowed to fall into ruin, and the present restoration was made in 1743 in a debased classic style. Effigies of Sir Maurice Berkeley, Constable of the Tower (1585), and his wives are in a recess. He became the owner of the abbey after the Dissolution. A portion of a medieval cope is shown in the nave and two chained books (Erasmus and Jewel). The ancient tomb at the west door is that of Gilbert, first Abbot after the status of the Priory was raised (1510). The small north tower, an uncommon feature, is a relic of the older portion of the Priory, originally founded by William de Mohun in 1142. All that remains of the conventual buildings are a columbarium or stone dove-cote on a hillock just outside the town and the Abbey Court-house on the south side of High Street. On the front will be seen the arms of de Mohun and the initials of Prior Henton.



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[Illustration: BRUTON BOW.]

Close by Bruton Bow, an extremely picturesque medieval bridge over the Brue, is the school founded by Fitz-James, Bishop of London. It was suppressed with the abbey and refounded by Edward VI. The Sexey Hospital was established by a native of Bruton who was penniless when he left the town and rose to be Auditor of the Household to Queen Elizabeth and James I. The beautiful Hall-chapel is panelled in black oak, and the buildings make a quaint and pleasing picture.

Castle Cary, nearly three miles west of Cole station, does not fulfil the expectations raised by its name. Until 1890 the very site of the castle had been lost. The lines of the keep are now marked by a row of pillars in a meadow at the foot of Lodge Hill. A fortress of the Lovells, it was attacked and taken by Stephen. Soon afterwards it seems to have been dismantled or destroyed. The church is well placed on an eminence but has been practically rebuilt and is of little interest.

Ditcheat and Evercreech, respectively two and five miles to the north, are beautiful and interesting places. The latter has a church with one of the most glorious towers in Somerset, but here again we are leaving our arbitrary boundary and wandering too far afield. The road from Cary to Wincanton runs through Bratton Seymour and keeps to the summit of a ridge of low hills, commanding here and there lovely views, especially near "Jack White's Gibbett" at the cross roads above Bratton. The Bruton-Wincanton road is even more interesting, as it passes within a short distance of Stavordale Priory. The church, which is still intact, and also a good portion of the conventual buildings, are exquisitely situated under the great hill of Penselwood, part of the line of hills that runs from above Bourton almost to Longleat and that forms the high boundary of Somerset and Wiltshire. The ridge is crowned by a number of entrenchments, and prehistoric remains are frequent. Ballands Castle and Blacklough Castle are succeeded by Jack Straw's Castle close to "Alfred's Tower" on Kingsettle Hill. This tower was built by a Mr. Hoare in 1766 and commemorates the historic spot where in 879 the cross was raised against the pagan Dane.

ALFRED THE GREAT A.D. 879
ON THIS SUMMIT ERECTED HIS STANDARD AGAINST DANISH INVADERS
TO HIM WE OWE THE ORIGIN OF JURIES AND THE CREATION OF A NAVAL
FORCE
ALFRED, THE LIGHT OF THE BENIGHTED AGE
WAS A PHILOSOPHER AND A CHRISTIAN
THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE
AND THE FOUNDER OF
THE ENGLISH MONARCHY AND LIBERTIES.

The eye ranges over a magnificent expanse of western England. If the tower is ascended one may stand just a thousand feet above the sea. The door is usually



locked, but the key may be obtained from a lodge near by, down the slope to the east. This walk can with profit be extended to Long Knoll (945 feet) over two miles north-east; beyond is Maiden Bradley, an interesting village not far from the confines of Longleat, the famous and palatial seat of the Marquis of Bath; but this country must be left for another chapter.



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After this long divergence a return must be made to Henstridge, where a walk of less than two miles takes one over the Dorset border to Stalbridge, a sleepy old town that is not troubled by the fact that it has a station on the Somerset and Dorset Railway and that fast expresses from the north roar down the Blackmore Vale to Bournemouth and the sea. The church will not detain the visitor, for it was rebuilt in 1878. The old cross on four steps in the centre of High Street, with its rough carvings, is of more interest. It dates from about 1350. Above the town on a hillside is the mansion at one time inhabited by Sir James Thornhill, and not far away an obelisk erected by the painter in honour of his patron George II, which used to be known as "Thornhill Spire."

The Blandford high-road makes a wide loop to the south-west by Lydlynch. A shorter route following the line of the railway takes us in less than five miles to Sturminster Newton, where the Blackmore Vale ends and the Stour flows in a narrow trough between low hills.

[Illustration: MARNHULL.]

Sturminster is a small and ancient town on the eastern bank of the Stour. "Newton" is on the west side of the river and looks as old as its neighbour. The two are connected by a medieval bridge of six arches. Sturminster Church was almost entirely rebuilt, except for the tower, nearly a hundred years ago. Newton Castle was once a stronghold of the Kings of Wessex. A few scanty remnants of the fortress can still be seen close to the road and river. A road to the north passes by Hinton St. Mary, with a rebuilt church high up on a breezy hill, and reaches Marnhull, the "Marlott" of Thomas Hardy. The Early English church has some remains of an early Norman building and some later insertions. The tower is a landmark for many miles around. A careful restoration some years ago brought to light several interesting details that had been hidden for some two hundred years or more; including a stairs to the rood-loft, a squint, and the piscina. The alabaster effigies on a cenotaph are believed to represent Lord Bindon and his wives (about 1450). The following remarkable epitaph on a former clerk is said to have been written by his rector:

HERE UNDER THIS STONE
LIE RUTH AND OLD JOHN
WHO SMOKED ALL HIS LIFE
AND SO DID HIS WIFE:
AND NOW THERES NO DOUBT
BUT THEIR PIPES ARE BOTH OUT
BE IT SAID WITHOUT JOKE
THAT LIFE IS BUT SMOKE;
THOUGH YOU LIVE TO FORESCORE
TIS A WHIFF AND NO MORE.

A short distance to the north, through the hamlet of Flanders, is the fine sixteenth-century mansion called Nash Court.



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An alternative road to the Blandford highway follows the river and rail through Shillingstone, an interesting village that had a year or two since (and may still have) a maypole; a beautiful village cross; and a much restored Norman and Early English church containing a pulpit presented by a Londoner who sought sanctuary from the great plague. The road then goes by Broad Oak and over Sturminster Common to Okeford Fitzpaine, Banbury Hill Camp being passed on the right about half way. Okeford has a church interesting to the antiquary. It has a Decorated west window that is said to have been turned inside out. Part of the ancient screen and rood-loft still remain, together with a piscina in the chancel. It is said that the upper part of the pulpit was at one time used as a font. The old font, restored, for many years formed part of the wall of the churchyard. The road continues up the long tongue of Okeford Hill with wide retrospective views. At the summit a by-way turns to the right along the ridge, which gradually increases in height until it reaches its summit three miles away at Bulbarrow Hill (902 feet) just above Rawlsbury Camp. The magnificent view up Blackmore Vale and northwestwards toward Yeovil is worth the journey to see. Rawlsbury is a prehistoric circular entrenchment with a double wall and ditch. Stoke Wake village is just below and Mappowder is about two miles away by the fields, but much farther by road. This last is an old-world hamlet eight miles from a railway, where curfew is still rung in the winter. In the church is an interesting miniature effigy that probably marks the shrine of a crusader's heart.

Continuing over Okeford Hill the road presently drops to Turnworth House at the head of a long narrow valley leading down to a string of "Winterborne" villages (or more correctly—Winter_bourne_). The situation of the mansion and village is very beautiful and very lonely. Few seem to wish to brave the long ascent of the hill and one can pass from Okeford to Turnworth many times without meeting a solitary wayfarer. Turnworth Church is Early English, rebuilt on the exact lines of the old fabric and retaining the ancient tower.

The first of the Winterbournes—Strickland, lies a long mile beyond Hedgend Farm, where we turn sharp to the left and traverse a very lonely road, sometimes between close woods and rarely in sight of human habitation until the drop to the Stour brings us to Blandford Forum, a pleasant, bright and clean town built within a wide loop of the river that here begins to assume the dignity of a navigable stream, crawling lazily among the water meadows, with back-waters and cuts that bring to mind certain sections of the Upper Thames. The two fine thoroughfares—Salisbury and East Streets—which meet in the wide market place are lined with buildings, dating from 1732 or later, for in 1731 a great fire, the last of a series, destroyed almost the whole of the town and its suburbs. The old town pump, now a drinking



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fountain, records that it was “humbly erected ... in grateful Acknowledgement of the Divine Mercy, That has since raised this Town, Like the Phoenix from its Ashes, to its present flourishing and beautiful State.” Several lives were lost in this disaster and the great church of SS. Peter and Paul perished with everything that previous fires had spared. The present erection is well enough as a specimen of the Classic Renaissance, but need not detain us. At one time Blandford was a town of various industries, from lace making to glass painting, but it is now purely an agricultural centre.

[Illustration: BLANDFORD.]

Blandford St. Mary is the suburb on the west side of the Stour. The Perpendicular church has a tower and chancel belonging to a much earlier period. A former rector was an ancestor of the great Pitt, and one of the family—“Governor” Pitt, is buried in the north aisle. The family lived at Down House on the hills to the westward. A more ancient family, the d'Amories, lived at Damory Court near the town. The famous Damory's Oak is no more. Its hollow trunk served as shelter for a whole family who were rendered homeless by the great fire. An old barn not far from the Court is said to have been a chapel dedicated to St. Leonard; it still retains its ecclesiastical doors and windows.

[Illustration: MILTON ABBEY.]

The seven miles of undulating and dusty road westwards from Blandford, that we have partly traversed from Winterbourne Strickland, leads to Milton Abbas, a charming village surrounded by verdured hills and deep leafy combes. Here is the famous Abbey founded by King Athelstan for Benedictines. The monks' refectory, all that remains of the conventual buildings, indicates the former splendour of the establishment. The abbey church, built in the twelfth century, was destroyed during a thunderstorm after standing for about two hundred years; the present building is therefore a study in Decorated and Perpendicular styles. It is, after Sherborne and Wimborne, the finest church in Dorset. The pinnacled tower is much admired, but the shortness of the building detracts from its effectiveness. It is not certain that the church ever had a nave, though the omission seems improbable. The interior is usually shown on Thursdays, when the grounds of the modern “Abbey” are open to the public. Within the church the fifteenth-century reredos, the sedilia and stalls, and the pre-Reformation tabernacle for reserving the consecrated elements (a very rare feature) should be noticed. Two ancient paintings of unknown age, probably dating from the early fifteenth century, and several tombs, complete the list of interesting items. The ancient market town that once surrounded the Abbey was swept away when the mansion was erected in 1780, so that the present village is of the “model” variety and was built by the first Earl of Dorchester soon after his purchase of the property over one hundred and fifty years ago. Church, almshouses and inn, all date from the same period. Time has softened the formality of



the plan, and Milton is now a pleasant old-world place enough, somnolent and rarely visited by the stray tourist, but well worthy of his attention. The church contains a Purbeck marble font from the abbey, but otherwise is as uninteresting as one might expect from its appearance. Milton was originally Middletown from its position in the centre of Dorset.



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Three miles down stream from Blandford, near Spettisbury, is the earthwork called Crawford Castle. An ancient bridge of nine arches here crosses the Stour to Tarrant Crawford, where was once the Abbey of a Cistercian nunnery. Scanty traces of the buildings remain in the vicinity of the early English church. This village is the first of a long series of "Tarrants" that run up into the remote highlands of Cranborne Chase. Buzbury Rings is the name of another prehistoric entrenchment north of the village; it is on the route of an ancient trackway which runs in a direction that would seem to link Maiden Castle, near Dorchester, with the distant mysteries of Salisbury Plain.

For the traveller who has the time to explore the Tarrant villages a delightful journey is in store. Although there is nothing among them of surpassing interest, the twelve or fifteen-mile ramble would be a further revelation of the unspoilt character and quiet beauty of this corner of Dorset. Pimperne village, on the Blandford-Salisbury road, where there is a ruined cross on the village green and a rebuilt church still retaining its old Norman door, is on the direct way to Tarrant Hinton, just over four miles from Blandford. Here a lane turns right and left following the Tarrant-brook that gives its name to the seven hamlets upon its banks. Hinton Church is beautifully placed on the left of this by-way which, on its way to Tarrant Gunville, presently passes Eastbury Park, a mile to the north. Only a fragment of the once famous house is left. The original building was a magnificent erection comparable with Blenheim, and built by the same architect—Vanburgh—for George Dodington, one time Lord of the Admiralty. The property came to his descendant, the son of a Weymouth apothecary named Bubb, who had married into the family. George Budd Dodington became a *persona grata* at court, lent money to Frederick Prince of Wales, and finished, at a cost of £140,000, the building his grandfather had commenced. This wealthy commoner, after a career at Eastbury as a patron of the arts, was created Lord Melcombe possibly for his services to the son of George II. At his death the property passed to Earl Temple who was unable to afford the upkeep and eventually the greater portion of this "folly" was demolished. The lane that turns south from the Salisbury high-road goes through Tarrants Launceston—Monckton—Rawston—Rushton and Keynston and finishes at Tarrant Crawford that we have just seen is in the valley of the Stour.

Two roads run northwards to Shaftesbury from Blandford. One, the hill way, leaves the Salisbury road half a mile from the town and, passing another earthwork on Pimperne Down, makes for the lonely and beautiful wooded highlands of Cranborne Chase, with but one village—Melbury Abbas—in the long ten miles of rough and hilly road. The other, and main, highway keeps to the river valley as far as Stourpaine, and then bears round the base of Hod Hill, where there is a



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genuine Roman camp inside an older trench. Large quantities of pottery and coins belonging to the Roman period have been found here and are stored in various collections. The way is now picturesquely beautiful as it goes by Steepleton Iwerne, that has a little church lost behind the only house in the hamlet, and Iwerne Courtenay. The last-named village is off the main road to the left, but a by-path can be taken which leads through it. The poorly designed Perpendicular church (with a Decorated tower) was erected, or rather rebuilt, as late as 1641. The building is famous as the prison for those guerilla fighters of the Civil War called "Clubmen," who consisted mostly of better class farmers and yeomanry. They had assembled on Hambledon Hill, the great entrenched eminence to the west of the village, and seem to have been officered by the country clergy. At least they appear to have greatly chagrined Cromwell, although he spoke of them in a very disparaging way, and deprecated their fighting qualities. Iwerne Minster, the next village on the road, possesses a very fine cruciform church of dates varying from Norman to Perpendicular, though the main structure is in the later style. The stone spire is rare for Dorset. Iwerne Minster House is a modern mansion in a very beautiful park and is the residence of one of the Ismays of steamship fame. Sutton Waldron has a modern church, but Fontmell Magna, two miles from Iwerne Minster, will profitably detain the traveller. Here is an actual village maypole, restored of course, and a beautiful Perpendicular church, also restored, but unspoilt. The lofty tower forms an exquisite picture with the mellow roofs of the village, the masses of foliage, and the surrounding hills. The fine east window is modern and was presented by Lord Wolverton, a one-time Liberal Whip, who was a predecessor of the Ismays at Iwerne Minster House. The west window is to his memory. Compton Abbas, a mile farther, has a rebuilt church. The charm of the situation, between Elbury Hill and Fontmell Down, will be appreciated as the traveller climbs up the slope beyond the village toward Melbury Down (863 feet), another fine view-point. As the road descends to the head waters of the Stour, glimpses of the old town on St. John's Hill are occasionally obtained on the left front and, after another stiff climb, we join the Salisbury road half a mile short of High Street.

Shaftesbury is not only Shaston to Mr. Hardy, but to the natives also, and, as will be seen presently, it had at least two other names in the distant past. It is one of the most romantically placed inland towns in England and would bear comparison with Bridgenorth, were it not that the absence of a broad river flowing round the base of the hill entirely alters the character of the situation. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth it was founded by Hudibras, son of the builder of Caerleon, and was called Mount Paladur (Palladour). It was without doubt a Roman town, as the foundations



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of Roman buildings were discovered while excavations were being made in High Street about twenty years ago. Alfred rebuilt the town and founded St. Mary's Abbey, with his daughter Aethelgiva as first abbess. The removal of the body of the martyred Edward hither from Wareham, after his murder at Corfe Castle, gave Shaftesbury a wide renown and caused thousands of pilgrims to flock to the miracle-working shrine. For a time it was known as Eadwardstow and the Abbess was a lady of as much secular importance as a Baron. The magnificent Abbey Church was as imposing as any we have left to us, but not a vestige remains except the fragmentary wall on Gold's Hill and the foundations quite recently uncovered and surveyed. One of the most interesting discoveries is that of a twisted column in the floor of the crypt that is thought to be part of the martyr's shrine.

[Illustration: GOLD HILL, SHAFTESBURY.]

Shaftesbury once had twelve churches, but one only of the old structures remain. This is a fine Perpendicular building of simple plan, chancel and nave being one. The tower is noble in its fine proportions and the north side of the nave aisle is beautifully ornamented and embattled. Holy Trinity and St. James' are practically new churches, although rebuilt on the ground plans of the original structures. On the west side of the first-named is a walk called "The Park" that would make the fortune of any inland health resort, so magnificent is the view and so glorious the air. The hill on which the town is built rises abruptly from the valley in a steep escarpment, so that the upper end of High Street is 700 feet above the sea. There is therefore only one practicable entrance, by way of the Salisbury road. Of actual ancient buildings there are few, although at one time there was some imposing medieval architecture in this "city set on a hill," if we may believe the old writers. It once boasted a castle besides the Hostel of St. John Baptist and its many churches. It may have been in this castle that Canute died in 1035.

The station for Shaftesbury is Semley, just over the Wilts border, but it is proposed to take the longer journey to Gillingham, nearly four miles north-west, which is the next station on the South Western main line. This was once the centre of a great Royal "Chase," disforested by Charles I. It was also the historic scene of the Parliament called to elect Edward Confessor to the throne, and at "Slaughter Gate," just outside the town, Edmund Ironside saved Wessex for the Saxons by defeating Canute in 1016. The foundations of "King's Court Palace," between Ham Common and the railway, show the site of the hunting lodge of Henry III and the Plantagenet kings. Gillingham church was spoilt by a drastic early nineteenth-century restoration. The chancel belongs to the Decorated period. There are several interesting tombs and a memorial of a former vicar over the arch of the tower. He was dispossessed as a "malignant" during the Commonwealth, but returned at the Restoration.



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Gillingham cannot show many old houses and it has the appearance of a busy and flourishing manufacturing town of the smaller sort without any of the sordid accompaniments of such places. Its commercial activities—pottery and tile-making, breweries and flour mills, linen and silk manufacture, are mostly modern and have been fostered by the exceptional railway facilities. In its Grammar school, founded in 1526 by John Grice, it still has a first-rate educational establishment with the added value of a notable past, for here was educated Clarendon, the historian of the Great Rebellion, and several other famous men.

[Illustration: SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.]

CHAPTER IX

SALISBURY AND THE RIVERS

There are three obvious ways of approaching Salisbury from Shaftesbury and the west: by railway from Semley; by the main road, part of the great trunk highway from London to Exeter via Yeovil; and by a kind of loop road that leaves this at Whitesand Cross and follows the valley of the Ebble between the lonely hills of Cranborne Chase and the long line of chalk downs that have their escarpment to the north, overlooking the Exeter road. These are all good ways, but there is even a fourth, only practicable for good walkers, that keeps to the top of the Downs until the Salisbury Race Course above Netherhampton is reached. This is a splendid route, with magnificent views to the left and north, and some to be lingered over in the opposite direction, and the finest of all when the slender needle of Salisbury spire pierces the blue ahead.

Three miles out of Shaftesbury a road leaves the main route on the left for Donhead St. Mary; another by-way from this village joins the highway farther on and adds but a mile or so to the journey. The church, high up on its hill, is an interesting structure, mainly Norman and Early English with some sixteenth-century additions. The round font belongs to the older style. A memorial to one Antonio Guillemot should be noticed. He was a refugee Carthusian, who came here with some brother monks during the French Terror. They found sanctuary at a farm-house placed at their disposal by Lord Arundell of Wardour, and now called the "Priory," because of its associations. Not far from the village is Castle Rings, an encampment from which there is a grand view of the Wilts and Somerset borderland. In one of the chalky combes just below the hill is an old Quaker burial ground, as remote and lonely as the more famous Jordans ground was before the American visitor began to make that a place of pilgrimage. Donhead St. Andrew, a mile from St. Mary's, is in an entirely different situation to the latter, the Perpendicular church being at the bottom of a deep hollow. Both villages are very charming.



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The main route continues amid surroundings of much beauty, with the well-named White Sheet Hill to the right and the wooded and hummocky outline of Ansty Hill to the left, until the turning for the latter makes a good excuse for leaving the high road once more. Ansty village, seven miles from Shaftesbury, is unremarkable in itself, but has close by it one of the most picturesque and historic ruins in Wiltshire. The demolition of Wardour Castle came about in this wise. At the outbreak of the Civil War the owner, Sir Thomas Arundell, was away from home with the army around the King. Lady Arundell decided to defend the Castle with the small force at her disposal, barely fifty men all told, but helped and sustained by the women servants, who kept the garrison fed and supplied with ammunition. This handful of defenders held at bay for five days a well-armed force of 1,300 men commanded by Sir Edward Hungerford, and made good terms for itself before marching out. These, however, were not faithfully kept by the Roundheads who, in occupying the Castle, were commanded by Edmund Ludlow. Sir Thomas (or Lord Arundell, his title had not then received formal recognition) died of wounds received in one of the western battles just after the capitulation and his son in turn laid siege to his own home. The resistance was as stubborn as his mother's had been, the force within the Castle being many times as great. All hope of dislodging the Roundheads being lost, the New Lord of Wardour resolved to blow up the walls with mines, placed beneath them under cover of darkness. This was done to such good purpose that the garrison, or all that was left of it, was forced at once to surrender.

[Illustration: WARDOUR CASTLE.]

The castle and estates had been acquired from the Grevilles by the Arundells, an old Cornish family, in the early sixteenth century. The Arundells were convinced Catholics, and the first of the family to own Wardour was beheaded in 1552 "as a rebel and traitor" or rather, "as his conscience was of more value to him than his head." As we see the building to day it forms a fine example of fifteenth-century architecture, despite its dismantled state. The walls are fairly perfect and the eastern entrance with its two towers, approached by a stately terrace, is most imposing. The gateway is surmounted by an inscription referring to the two Arundells of the Great Rebellion; above is a niche containing a bust of Christ and the words "SUB NOMINE TUO STET GENUS ET DOMUS." The entrance to the stairs, an arch in the Classic Renaissance style, is a picturesque and much-admired corner of the ruin.

Not much can be said for the aspect of the new Castle, a building erected in the eighteenth century. It is a museum of art and contains many treasures by Rembrandt, Holbein, Velasquez, Vandyke and other great masters and, most interesting of all, a portrait of Lady Blanche Arundell, the defender of the Castle. She was a granddaughter of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and so came of an heroic and kingly line. Another famous relic is a wooden chalice made from the Glastonbury Thorn, and the splendid (so-called) Westminster chasuble is preserved in the chapel.



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On the high road Swallowcliffe; Sutton Mandeville, with a partly Norman church; Fovant, nearly opposite Chislebury Camp and with another (restored) Norman church; and Compton Chamberlaine are passed, all being a short distance off the road to the left, before it drops for the last time into the valley of the Nadder. Near the last village is Compton Park, the home of that Colonel Penruddocke who, in 1655, led a small body of horsemen into Salisbury and proclaimed Charles II, at the same time seizing the machinery of law and government. But the "rising" was not popular; the Colonel got no assistance from the townspeople and the affair led to his death upon the scaffold.

The most profitable way of approaching Salisbury is to continue northwards from Ansty by a lane that eventually descends to Tisbury on the headwaters of the Nadder. This small town has a station on the South Western main line and a large cruciform church, situated at the foot of the steep hill on which the town is built. Its present nave is Early English, but an earlier Transitional building once stood on the site. The tower is more curious than beautiful and the quaint top story may be contemporary with the chancel, an addition of the early seventeenth century. The latter has an elaborately ornamented ceiling and is the resting place of Lady Blanche Arundell and also of Sir Thomas, first Lord Wardour, who distinguished himself as a late crusader in 1595 at the battle of Gran in Hungary, when he captured a Turkish standard. His helmet is fixed to the wall above his tomb. Place House, once a grange of Shaftesbury Abbey, at the end of the village, is an early Tudor manor. The fine gate-house and the tithe-barn at the side of the entrance court are good specimens of the domestic architecture of the period. The buildings form a picturesque group and the all too brief glimpse of them from the railway has probably caused many travellers thereon to break their journey.

A short two miles to the north of Tisbury, in a lovely district of wooded hills, is Fonthill Giffard. The church, erected in the Early English style in 1866, will not detain the visitor, though one might well be disposed to linger in the charming village. The great "lion" of this district was the famous and extraordinary Fonthill Abbey, an amazing erection in sham Gothic, built by Wyatt, that "infamous dispoiler, misnamed architect" to the order of the eccentric author of *Vathek*—William Beckford, heir of a wealthy London merchant who was twice Lord Mayor and died a millionaire. Contemporary prints are occasionally met with in curiosity shops that bring vividly before us this specimen of the "Gothic madness" of our great grandfathers. An enormous octagonal tower arises from the centre of the strange pile of buildings, which is in the form of a cross with arms of equal length. Pinnacle and gargoyles, moulding and ornaments, all clashing and at war with each other, are stuck on anywhere and everywhere; the nightmare dream of a medievalist. If this was the fruit of Beckford's brain nothing more need be said. If that of Wyatt's, we can but be thankful that he did not live long enough to have the commission for building the present Palace of Westminster. A pile that as it is, is only too reminiscent of the florid imaginings of the Gothic revival.



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The expensive eccentricities of Beckford—he was a collector of everything costly—brought about the sale of Fonthill and a retirement to Bath. Not long after the new owner, a millionaire named Farquhar, had entered into possession, the central tower fell and ruined most of the “gingerbread” beneath. Perhaps the best thing Wyatt ever did was his architectural work in the foundations of this sham “abbey.”

The present Fonthill House has a small portion of Wyatt’s building incorporated with it. Half a mile away is the new Fonthill Abbey (so-called). It was erected by the Marquis of Westminster in 1859 and is in the Scottish Baronial style. The situation, overlooking a sheet of water formed out of one of the feeders of the Nadder, is beautiful in the extreme. To the north-west is Beckford’s Tower—one of the many he built (he is buried under one of them at Bath)—from which there is a glorious view of the hills, woods and waters of this fair country side. Hindon, about two miles north-west of Fonthill Giffard, is a small town fallen from the ancient state that it held when it refused Disraeli the honour of representing it in Parliament. Its pleasant situation in the midst of the wooded hills that surround it on all sides, the quiet old houses and dreamy main street beneath the shady trees that were planted in honour of the marriage of Edward VII, make its only claim on the notice of the passing tourist. Not far from Hindon and about three miles from Fonthill Giffard is East Knoyle, the birthplace of Sir Christopher Wren in 1632. He was a son of its rector.

From Tisbury a road goes eastwards down the valley of the Nadder through the small hamlet of Chicksgrove to Teffont Evias, or Ewyas, the name of the former lords of the manor. This village is most delightfully situated on high ground above the Nadder. The sixteenth-century manor house, the rectory and the beautiful church, are all of much interest. The church was built in the fifteenth century and has a fine western tower and spire. The Ley Chapel contains a number of monuments to that family, and the mosaics representing the Angelic Choir over the east window strike an uncommon note for a country church. Beyond Teffont Magna, where there is a very small and ancient church, are the famous quarries which supplied some of the stone for Salisbury Cathedral and were almost certainly worked by the Romans. They are now roomy caverns, that, like Tilly Whim at Swanage, have every appearance of being natural.

Continuing towards Salisbury, the first village passed through is Dinton, the birthplace of Clarendon, historian of the Civil War. Then comes Baverstock, with a restored Decorated church, and lastly, before reaching Wilton, Barford St. Martin. Here is an Early English cruciform church with one or two interesting features, including an ancient effigy near the altar, in what appears to be a winding sheet. The road through these villages, or rather tapping them—the

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first two are slightly off the main route to the left—keeps to the north side of the Nadder valley, at first under the wooded escarpment of the Middle Hills where are the prehistoric remains of Hanging Langford Camp, Churchend Ring and Bilbury Ring: and then under the great expanse of Grovely Wood, which clothes the lonely hills dividing the valleys of Wylve and Nadder, covered with evidences of an age so far away that the Roman road from Old Sarum, traversing the summit of the hills, is a work of yesterday by comparison.

Wilton is an exceedingly interesting place if one considers its history. It took its name from the Wylve and gave it to the shire. It was the ancient capital of the Wilsaetas and antedated Old Sarum as the seat of their bishop. It only just missed being the first town of the county when Bishop Poore preferred an entirely fresh site for his new Cathedral after shaking the tainted dust of Old Sarum from off his feet.

The position of the town, on the tongue of land between the two rivers just above their meeting place, is ideal as a stronghold and an imposing position in other ways, but the Wilton of to-day is small and rather mean in its streets and houses and without any important remains of its ancient past. Its history begins with the battle of Ellandune between Mercia and Wessex, in which the victor—Egbert of the West Saxon line—made good his claim to be overlord of England. It was here that the greater West Saxon, Alfred, defeated the Danish invaders, and here again Sweyn turned the tables and burnt and slew in true pirate fashion. A house of Benedictine nuns was founded in Wilton at an early date and was enlarged and re-endowed by Alfred. St. Edyth, one of the nuns, was a daughter of King Eadgar and Wulftrude, who had been a nun herself. When the Queen died Wulftrude refused to become the King's consort, and eventually became Abbess of Wilton. The site of the Abbey is now occupied by Wilton House.

[Illustration: WILTON HOUSE. HOLBEIN FRONT.]

According to Leland "the chaunging of this (Ickniel) way was the total course of the ruine of Old Sarisbyri and Wiltoun, for afore Wiltoun had twelve paroches churches or more, and was the hedde town of Wilshire." This refers to the new bridge built at Harnham to divert the route to the south-west through the new city. Still, the collapse was not utter and the position of the town was enough to save it from total ruin. Cloth making and the wool trade generally persisted for many years, and the making of carpets ("Wilton Pile") has persisted to the present day, despite competition and some anxious years for the manufacturers.



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Of the few unimportant relics of the past may be mentioned the old Town Cross that stands against the churchyard wall, and the chapel of St. John in Ditchampton, part of a hospital founded in 1189 by Bishop Hurbert of Sarum. St. Giles' Hospital, originally for lepers, was founded by Adeliza, consort of Henry I, and rebuilt in 1624. Wilton church is as unusual as it is imposing. It was built by Lord Herbert of Lea while still the Hon. Sidney Herbert. Though the style seems out of keeping with an ordinary English countryside there is something about the high banks of foliage surrounding the town that gives the Italian campanile an almost natural air. The church is in the Lombardic style and the grand flight of steps, the triple porches and beautiful cloisters connecting the tower with the main building, are exceedingly fine. No less imposing is the ornate and costly interior. In its wealth of marbles and mosaics it is almost without parallel in England. The two handsome tombs of alabaster in the chancel are those of Lord Herbert of Lea and his mother. Not the least interesting feature of this unique church is the fine stained glass in the windows of the apse, dating from the thirteenth century.

Wilton House stands in a beautiful park that comes almost up to the doors of the town. The waters of the Nadder as they flow through the glades have been broadened into a long lake-like expanse spanned by a very beautiful Palladian bridge. This is the home of the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. Their ancestors were an ancient Welsh family and great friends of their compatriots, the Tudor sovereigns. Here, as constant and welcome guests, came Ben Jonson, Edmund Spencer and Philip Massinger, who was a son of one of the Earl's servants. Here *As You Like It* is said to have been played before James I, with Shakespeare himself as one of the company. Gloriana was a visitor in 1573 and attempted to flirt with Sir Philip Sidney, brother-in-law of the host, presenting him with one of her auburn locks. Here Sir Philip wrote a good part of the *Arcadia*. It will be seen that Wilton was a home for all who had the divine fire within them. Gentle George Herbert, a relative and esteemed friend, could often come from near-by Bemerton, and Izaak Walton, who was here collecting material for the "Life" of his hero, no doubt spent some happy days in contemplation of the clear waters of the Nadder. Charles I was another visitor, and by him certain suggestions are said to have been made for some of the alterations and additions of the seventeenth century. The original building which followed the dismantled Abbey was designed by Holbein, but this has almost disappeared except for the central portion over the gateway. Wyatt was allowed to stick some of his sham Gothic enormities over the older work about the time he was designing Fonthill, but an era of better taste soon got rid of these and the present fronts are Italian in style and very lordly and imposing. The great hall contains the Vandyck portraits for which Wilton is preeminently famous, but there are other great masters, including Rubens, Titian and del Sarto to be seen by those interested, besides a collection of armour hardly to be surpassed in the country. These treasures are shown at certain times.



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[Illustration: BEMERTON CHURCH.]

Although a pleasant and retired little place, Bemerton would not be of much interest were it not for its associations with the “singer of surpassing sweetness,” the author of *The Temple*. George Herbert became rector here in 1630 and died two years later, aged 42. He lies within the altar rails of the church and the tablet above is simply inscribed G.H., 1633. The lines on the Parsonage wall and written by the parson-poet were originally above the chimney inside. They run thus:—

“If thou chance for to find
A new house to thy mind,
And built without any cost,
Be good to the poor
As God gives thee store
And then thy labour’s not lost.”

In the garden that slopes down to the river there was quite recently, and may be still, an old and gnarled medlar planted by Herbert. The well-known painting “George Herbert at Bemerton” by W. Dyce, R.A., in the Guildhall Art Gallery, gives an excellent picture of the calm grace of the surroundings and of the heavenly spire of the Cathedral soaring up into the skies a mile away. The fine new memorial church at Bemerton is used for the regular Sunday services and Herbert’s little old church for worship on weekdays. It is pleasant to think that the bells which sound so sweetly across the meadows, as we take the footpath way to Salisbury, are those that were rung by Herbert when he first entered his church.

The City of Salisbury, or officially, New Sarum, is a regularly built, spacious and clean county capital that would be of interest and attraction if there were no glorious cathedral to grace and adorn it. As a matter of fact, cathedral towns away from the immediate precincts suffer from the overshadowing character of the great churches, that take most of the honour and glory to themselves. This is, of course but right, and the discerning traveller will keep the even balance between the human interest of court and alley and market place and the awed reverence that must be felt by the most materialistic of us when we come within the immediate influence of these solemn sanctuaries, of which Salisbury is the most perfect in the land.

[Illustration: OLD SARUM.]

It is impossible to give the merest outline of the history of Salisbury without first referring to that of Old Sarum, or Sorbiodunum, two miles to the north. The huge mound on the edge of the Plain was doubtless a prehistoric fortress, though of a much simpler form than the three-terraced enclosure of twenty-seven acres that we see there to-day. In Roman times the importance of this advanced outpost of chalk, commanding the approach to the lower valley of the Avon, would be appreciated. But it would appear



from recent investigations that little was done to elaborate the defences. Nevertheless Sorbiodunum was an important Roman town and stood on the junction of two great thoroughfares—the Icknield Way and the Port Way. The recent excavations, interfered with to a large extent by the late war, have been so disappointing in the lack of Roman relics that a suggestion has been made by Sir W.H. St. John Hope that the true site of the Roman town may have been at Stratford, just below the mound to the north-west. It is possible that further excavations will settle the question.



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After the Saxon invasion, Sarobyrig, as it was then called, probably assumed its present outline so far as the foundation of the walls are concerned. That a mint of Canute (who according to one tradition, died here and not at Shaftesbury) and again of Edward Confessor was set up, and that the town became the seat of the Bishop of Sherborne, was a proof of its established importance. The smaller central mound of the citadel itself would appear to have been a work of the Normans, who divided the space occupied within the outer defences into two parts; that on the east belonging to the military works, and the western half pertaining to the Bishop and having within it the original Salisbury Cathedral. Here was instituted by Bishop Osmund the new English ritual or "use of Sarum," and here commenced those endless squabbles between clergy and soldiers that at last resulted in the men of peace leaving the fortress city.

("Quid Domini Domus in Castro, nisi foederis arca
In Templo Baalim? Carcer uterque locus,
Est ibi defectus aquae, sed copia cretae,
Saevit ibi ventus, sed philomela silet.")

The commission to inquire into the proposed change was appointed by the Pope in 1217, and from this year begins the rapid decay of Old Sarum. The Cathedral was dismantled and much of the material was used in the new structure in the plain. That the original was a noble building existing records and ultimate discoveries amply prove. The ground plan was well seen in the dry summer of 1834, when measurements were taken and the total length found to be 270 feet. The first church was seriously damaged by a thunderbolt five days after its consecration, and the original plan was much elaborated in the rebuilding—

"So gret lytynyge was the vyfte yer, so that al to nogt
The rof of the chyrch of Salesbury it broute,
Ryght evene vyfte day that he yhalwed was."

(Robert of Gloucester.)

Of the castle not so much is known. Leland says in 1540:—"Ther was a right fair and strong castella within *Old-Saresbyri* longing to the Erles of Saresbyri especially the Longerpees. I read that one Gualterus was the first Erle after the conquest of it. Much ruinus building of this castelle yet ther remayneth. The dich that environed the old town was a very deepe and strong Thyng," and again "*Osmunde*, erle of *Dorchestre*, and after Bishop of Saresbyri, erected his Cathedrale church ther in the west part of the town; and also his palace; whereof now no token is but only a chapel of Our Lady yet standing and mainteynid.... Ther was a paroch of the Holy Rode beside in *Old-Saresbyri* and another over the est gate Whereof some tokens remayne. I do not perceyve that there are any mo gates in Old-Saresbyri than 2; one by est and another by west. Without eche of these gates was a fair suburbe. On the est suburbe was a



parochie church of S. John; and ther yet is a chapel standing. The river is a good quarter of a myle from Old-Saresbyri and more, where it is nerest on to it, and that is at Stratford village south from it. Ther hath bene houses in tyme of mind inhabited in the est suburbe of Old-Saresbyri; but now there is not one house neither within Old-Saresbyri nor without it inhabited.”

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It will be seen that in comparison with other English towns Salisbury is not old. Like several others its foundations were entirely ecclesiastical, for as soon as the builders of the new Cathedral started upon their work the civil population of Old Sarum migrated to the water meadows with as little delay as possible, and the Bishop's architects planned for them a town with regular streets and square blocks of dwellings all much of a size, a characteristic that will strike the most unobservant traveller and which differentiates this from most other English towns in a marked degree.

[Illustration: SALISBURY MARKET PLACE.]

From whichever side Salisbury has been entered; by either of the great roads; or by the railway that, from the east, makes a long tour of the north side of the town in kindly purpose, it would seem, to give the passer-by a good view—there rises before him the glorious spire that, whatever the boast of uniformity of style or perfection of design, really gives the exterior of the building its unique beauty and without which it would be cold and dull. To the Cathedral then, as its spire is calling so insistently, the stranger must inevitably make his way before troubling about anything else in the town. Our approach happens to coincide with that of the traveller who arrives by rail, and down Fisherton Street, an unusually winding thoroughfare for Salisbury, over the Avon bridge and through the High Street Gate we enter the most beautiful of those abodes of beauty—the English cathedral closes. The guide books advise the tourist to make the first approach by way of St. Anne's Gate, when the gradual unfolding of the north front of the building makes a perfect introduction to the Cathedral, but so does that of the sudden view of the whole, with the tower and spire as an exquisite centre, as we leave the row of well-ordered houses, mixed with a few quiet shops, that line the approach from High Street to the north-west angle of the Close. A pleasing presentment of Edward VII now looks down this old by-street from the High Street Gate and is Salisbury's tribute to that lover of peace. The Close is bordered by beautiful old houses, some quite noble in their proportions, but likely to be overlooked by all but the most leisured visitor. It is so difficult to look at anything but the tower and spire, and it is best to forget that another tower, a campanile, similar to that at Chichester, once stood on this greensward, to be wantonly destroyed by James Wyatt. This is said to have been garrisoned by the Parliamentary army during the Civil War. The Deanery, opposite the west door, is a quaintly charming building and the gabled King's House is said to date from the fourteenth century. No incongruous note ever seems to mar the serenity of the great green square. The passers-by all apparently fit their environment; schoolgirls in their teens, fresh faced and happy; clergy of the Chapter, true type of the modern intellectual priest; an occasional workman



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employed about the Cathedral, upon whom its impress has visibly descended; quaint imps in Elizabethan ruffles playing a seemingly sedate game upon the lawn while their companions are singing in the choir; the ordinary sightseers who, apart from bank holidays, always seem to arrive at the same times and in the same twos and threes, and put on, as do the inevitable butchers' and bakers' youths, a cloak of decorous quiet when they enter the guardian gateways.

[Illustration: HIGH STREET GATE.]

The Cathedral was commenced in 1220 by Bishop Poore and took about forty years to build, but this period did not include the erection of the tower and spire which were later additions. The fine and generally admired west front is, from an architect's point of view, the only part of the exterior that is not admirable. It is in actual fact, fraudulent, just as the whole of the upper wall of St. Paul's Cathedral is an artistic untruth. The west wall of Salisbury is a screen without professing to be one. The porches are very small in relation to the great flattish expanse of masonry above them; the dullness of this was much relieved by the series of statues placed in the empty niches about the middle of the last century. The original medieval figures almost all disappeared through the zeal of the Puritans.

Even the most careless glance down the long outline of the walls, artistically broken by the two transepts, but never losing the regular continuity of design, will show the observer that this perfect Early English building was an inspiration of one brain and that the many hands that worked for that brain carried out their tasks as a religious rite. The glory of the tower as we see it was not part of the original plan, though that undoubtedly included some such crown and consummation of the noble work beneath. But although the tower and spire are of a later period—the Decorated, they blend so harmoniously with the earlier building that all might have arisen in one twelve months instead of being labours spread over one hundred years. The rash courage which raised this great pyramid of stone, four hundred and four feet above the sward, on the slender columns and walls that have actually bowed under the great weight they uphold, has often been commented upon. It has been said that the tower would have fallen long ago had it not been for the original scaffolding that remains within to tie and strengthen it. In the eighteenth century a leaden casket was discovered by some workmen high in the spire, containing a relic of our Lady, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated. In the summer of 1921 the steeplejacks employed to test the lightning conductor found that the iron cramps had rusted to such an extent as to split the stonework. A band of iron within the base of the spire in process of rusting is said to have raised the great mass of stone fully half an inch. The iron is now being replaced by gun-metal.

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The great church is entered by the north porch, and the immediate effect of august beauty is not at first tempered by the impression of coldness that gradually makes itself felt as we compare, from memory, the interior with that of Winchester or even some of the less important churches we have visited. But this is perhaps only a temporary fault, and when the windows of the nave are rejewelled with the glorious colours that shone from them before the Reformation, the cold austerity of this part of the great church will largely disappear. The extreme *orderliness* of the architectural conception, the numberless columns and arches ranged in stately rows, vanishing in almost unbroken perspective, make Salisbury unique among English cathedral interiors. An old rhyme gives the building as many pillars, windows, and doors as there are hours, days, and months in the year.

In addition to his other questionable traits, James Wyatt must have had something of the Prussian drill-sergeant in his nature. Under his "restoration" scheme the tombs of bishops and knights that once gave a picturesque confusion to the spaces of the nave were marshalled into precise and regular order in two long lines between the columns on each side. For congregational purposes this was and is an advantage, but Wyatt actually lost one of his subjects in the drilling process and so confused the remainder that the historical sequence is lost.

[Illustration: PLAN OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.]

It is not proposed to describe these tombs in detail. A glance at the sketch plan on the preceding page will make the position of each quite clear. Especially notice should be given to (10) William Longespee, 1st Earl of Salisbury; (14) Robert, Lord Hungerford; (13) Lord Charles Stourton, who was hanged in Salisbury Market Place with a silken halter for instigating the murder of two men named Hartgill, father and son. A wire noose representing the rope used to hang above the tomb. (3) The reputed tomb of a "Boy Bishop," but possibly this is really a bishop's "heart shrine." Salisbury seems to have been in an especial sense the home of the singular custom of electing a small lad as bishop during the festival of Christmas. According to Canon Fletcher in his pleasant little book on the subject lately published, no less than twenty-one names are known of Boy Bishops who played the part in this cathedral. Several modern memorials of much interest upon the walls of the nave explain themselves. One, to the left of the north porch as we enter, is to Edward Wyndham Tempest, youthful poet and "happy warrior" who was killed in the late war. Another will remind us that Richard Jefferies, although buried at Broadwater in Sussex, was the son of a North Wilts yeoman and a native of the shire.



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The arches at the western transepts will be found to differ from those of the nave; they were inserted to support the weight of the tower by Bishop Wayte in 1415 and are similar to those at Canterbury and Wells. A brass plate was placed in the pavement during the eighteenth century to mark the inclination of the tower, 22-1/2 inches to the south-west. It is said that the deflection has not altered appreciably for nearly two hundred years. The exactness of the correspondence of the architecture in the transepts to that of the nave almost comes as a surprise by reason of its rarity to those who are acquainted with other English cathedrals, and brings before one very vividly the homogeneity of the design. A number of interesting monuments, several of them modern, occupy the two arms of the transepts. The choir roof-painting, sadly marred by Wyatt, has been restored to something of its former beauty, but it would seem that time alone can give the right tone to mural decoration in churches, for there is now an effect of harshness, especially farther east in the so-called Lady Chapel, that is not at all pleasing. The screen of brass leading to the choir, the greater part of the stalls, and the high altar and reredos, are seen to be modern. The altar occupies its old position and was restored as a memorial to Bishop Beauchamp (1482). The Bishop's chantry was destroyed by Wyatt, who had shifted the altar to the extreme end of the Lady Chapel, if we may use the name usually given to the eastern extension of the Cathedral, but as the dedication of the whole building is to the Virgin, that part may have been called originally the Jesus, or Trinity Chapel. On the north side of the choir is the late Gothic chantry of Bishop Audley and opposite is that of the Hungerfords, the upper part of iron-work. On the north side of the altar is the effigy of Bishop Poore, founder of the Cathedral; the modern one under a canopy is that of one of his late successors, Bishop Hamilton.

[Illustration: GATE, SOUTH CHOIR AISLE.]

The choir transepts are now reached. That on the north side, with its inverted arch, contains, among others, the tomb of Bishop Jewel (died 1571) who despoiled the nave windows of their colour. He was the first post-Reformation Bishop of Salisbury. Just within the entrance is the interesting brass of Bishop Wyville, builder of the spire. It records the recovery, through trial by combat, of Sherborne Castle for the church. The slab of the Saint-Bishop Osmund's tomb (1099), one of those wantonly interfered with by Wyatt and a relic of the Cathedral of Old Sarum, has been brought from the nave to its present position near the end of the north choir aisle and not far from its former magnificent shrine. The chief beauty of the Lady Chapel consists in the slender shafts of Purbeck marble that support the roof. The tryptych altarpiece is modern, also the east window in memory of Dean Lear. Opinion will be divided as to the merit of the roof decoration, but time will lend its aid in the colour scheme. In this connexion may be mentioned the means taken here as elsewhere to remove the curious "bloom," that comes in the course of a generation or two, upon the Purbeck marble columns. They are oiled!

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Attention is again called to the sketch plan for the tombs hereabouts, and in the south choir aisle, where especial notice should be taken of the canopied tomb of Bishop Giles de Bridport. The muniment room, reached from the south-east transept, contains a contemporary copy of Magna Carta, besides many other interesting manuscripts and treasures. The Cathedral Library is above the cloisters. Its collection of manuscripts is magnificent, some dating as far back as the ninth century. The windows in the cloisters are of very fine design, and some fragments of old glass in the upper portions show that they were once glazed. The original shafts of Purbeck marble had so decayed by the middle of the last century that it was decided to replace them with a more durable stone. Very beautiful is the octagonal chapter house, entered from the east walk. The bas-reliefs below the windows and above the seats for the clergy are of great interest. The sculptures in the arch of the doorway should also be particularly noticed. From a door in the cloisters there is a charming view of the Bishop's Palace and the beautiful gardens that surround it.

An enjoyable stroll can be taken southwards to the Harnham Gate and the banks of the Avon, and a return made by the old Hospital of St. Nicholas, founded in 1227 by a Countess of Salisbury, and then by Exeter Street to St. Ann's Gate at the east side of the close. Fielding, whose grandfather was a canon of the Cathedral, is said to have lived in a house on the south side of the gate. Dickens was acquainted with Salisbury, but not until after he had made it the scene of Tom Pinch's remarkable characterization—"a very desperate sort of place; an exceedingly wild and dissipated city." It must not be forgotten that Salisbury is the "Melchester" of the Wessex Novels and that Trollope made the city the original of "Barchester."

[Illustration: THE POULTRY CROSS, SALISBURY.]

Continuing northwards, a wide turning on the left is termed The "Canal." This takes us back to that time when the citizens' chief concern was probably that of drainage, not of the domestic sort—that did not worry them—but the draining of the water-meadows upon which they had built their homes. About thirty years ago an elaborate scheme for the relief of the city from this natural dampness was successfully carried out. In this wide and usually bustling street the first house on the right is the Council Chamber, and on the other side of the way is the fine hall of John Halle, now a business house. The interior should be seen for the sake of the carved oak screen at the farther end of the banqueting room and the great stone fireplace. The beautiful ceiling is also much admired. This was the home of a rich wool merchant of the town, who built it about 1470. Although it has passed through many hands and has seen many vicissitudes it has always been known by his name. A turn to the right at the end of this street will



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bring the explorer to the old Poultry Cross. The square pillar surmounted by sundial and ball which for years supplanted the original finial has in turn been replaced by a new canopy and cross. The original erection has been variously ascribed to two individuals, Lawrence de St. Martin and John de Montacute Earl of Salisbury, in each case for the same reason, namely, as a penance for "having carried home the Sacrament bread and eaten it for his supper," for which he was "condemned to set up a cross in Salisbury market place and come every Saturday of his life in shirt and breeches and there confess his fault publicly." Not far away is the church of St. Thomas of Canterbury, the only really interesting ecclesiastical building in the city apart from the Cathedral. It is a very beautiful specimen of Perpendicular and replaced a thirteenth-century church founded by Bishop Bingham. The painting of the Last Judgment over the chancel arch was covered with whitewash at the Reformation and the Tudor arms were placed in front of it. About forty years ago this disfigurement to the church was removed and the picture brought once more into the light of day. The old font would seem to have originally belonged to another church, as its style antedates the foundation (1220) of St. Thomas' church. A few fragments of old stained glass remain in the east window and in that of the Godmanstone aisle, in which aisle is an altar tomb of one of the members of that family. Of the other churches St. Martin's, in the south-eastern part of the city not far from the Southampton road, is the oldest, and has an Early English chancel. St. Edmund's, originally collegiate, was founded in 1268; it has been almost entirely rebuilt. The Church House, near Crane Bridge, is a Perpendicular structure, once the private house of a leading citizen and cloth merchant named Webb. Other fine old houses are the Joiners' Hall in St. Anne's Street and Tailors' Hall off Milford Street. The George Inn in High Street has been restored, but its interior is very much the same as in the early seventeenth century and part of the structure must be nearly three hundred years older. It will be remembered that Pepys stayed here and records that he slept in a silk bed, had "a very good diet," but was "mad" at the exorbitant charges. He was much impressed with the "Minster" and gave the "guide to the Stones" (Stonehenge) two shillings. In 1623 a pronouncement was made that all theatrical companies should give their plays at the "George." Cromwell stayed at the inn in 1645. Salisbury seems to have been fairly indifferent to the cut of her master's coat; Royalist and Republican were equally welcome if they came in peace. Only one fight is worth mentioning during the whole course of the Civil War—in which the city was held by each party in turn—and that was the tussle in the Close, along High Street, and in the Market Place, when Ludlow, with only a few horsemen, held his own against overwhelming odds.



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The “Catherine Wheel” long boasted a legend of a meeting of Royalists during the Commonwealth, at which, the toast of the King having been drunk, one of the company then proposed the health of the Devil, who promptly appeared and amid much smoke and blue fire flew away with his proposer out of the window. This story rather hints at a republican spirit on the part of the townspeople. That was certainly manifested when Colonel Penruddocke led his “forlorn hope” into the city and, long before, when the Jack Cade rebellion gained a great number of adherents in Salisbury.

The city had a number of these fine old inns, famous centuries before the great days of the Exeter road. Nearly all have disappeared, but the “White Hart” in John Street is little altered and the “Haunch of Venison” is said to be the oldest house in the city.

In our peregrinations of the streets we have passed two statues neither of great merit but each perpetuating the memory of men of more than local fame. The bronze figure in front of the Council House is that of Lord Herbert of Lea, better known perhaps as Sydney Herbert, Minister during the Crimean War. The other is a very different manner of man—Henry Fawcett. The memorial of the blind Postmaster-General and great political economist stands in Queen Street, close to his birthplace. The Blackmore and Salisbury Museums are in St. Anne’s Street. Both are most interesting; the first named has an important collection of Palaeolithic and Neolithic remains.

The history of Salisbury, happily for the citizens, has not been very stirring, apart from the few incidents already briefly mentioned. Executions in the Market Place seem to have had an unenviable notoriety. The most dramatic of these was the beheading of the Duke of Buckingham in 1484. A headless skeleton dug up in 1835 during alterations to the “Saracen’s Head,” formerly the “Blue Boar,” was popularly supposed to be his, though records appear to show that his corpse was in fact taken to the Greyfriars’ Monastery in London. In Queen Mary’s time there was a burning of heretics in the space devoted to violent death, a space which afterwards saw many others as needlessly cruel. One is extraordinary in its details. A prisoner sentenced to the lock-up lost control of himself—possibly he was innocent—and threw a stone at the judge. He was at once sentenced to death and removed to the Market Place, his right hand being cut off before he was hanged. As lately as 1835 two men here suffered the extreme penalty for arson. To the hanging of Lord Stourton, a just and well-merited punishment, reference has already been made. But perhaps the most vindictive execution of all was that of a boy of fifteen in 1632 when Charles I was in the town. The lad was hanged, drawn and quartered for saying he would buy a pistol to kill the King.



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Royal visits have been many. Henry III probably came here when he granted the charter of New Sarum. When Henry VI visited the city the inhabitants were ordered to wear red gowns, possibly a piece of sharp practice on the part of the city fathers, who were nearly all clothiers or cloth-merchants. Richard III was here at the time of Buckingham's execution, and Elizabeth under happier circumstances, in 1574, when she was presented by the Corporation with a slight honorarium of twenty pounds and a gold cup, but James I, who was here several times on his way to the stag hunting in Cranborne Chase only obtained a silver cup. Unlike his predecessor, however, he possessed a consort and the royal pair were presented with twenty pounds each. James' unfortunate son held here one of those unsuccessful councils of war that seemed always to turn events in favour of the enemy. The second Charles came twice in a hurry. The first time was after the battle of Worcester on his flight to the coast, and again he came for sanctuary with his whole court when the plague was ravaging the capital. He was almost the only traveller from London or the east that the authorities would allow, during that dreadful time, within the city boundaries; even natives returning home were obliged to stay outside in quarantine for three months. James II lodged at the Bishop's Palace on his way to intercept the Prince of Orange, and here, a month later, William III stayed in his turn while the previous guest fled the country. It is said that on the day James arrived in Salisbury an ornamental crown on the facade of the Council House fell down.

[Illustration: LONGFORD CASTLE.]

Several delightful excursions can be taken in each direction from Salisbury. Southwards one may proceed along the Avon valley by the Fordingbridge road to Britford, passing East Harnham, where the fine modern church is a memorial to Dean Lear. Britford church is of the greatest interest to archaeologists, for within it are three arches which have been claimed variously as Saxon and Roman work. The remainder of the building is of the Decorated period. An altar tomb was at one time supposed to contain the body of the executed Duke of Buckingham. Longford Castle, the seat of the Earl of Radnor, is just over a mile to the south. The magnificent park extends along the banks of the Avon in scenery of much quiet beauty. The castle, although much altered, dates from 1590, and contains a famous collection of paintings and is especially rich in Holbein's works. Perhaps the most celebrated of the many treasures housed at Longford is the "Imperial Steel Chair," once the property of the emperor Rudulf II. It is one of the most elaborate specimens of metal work in England. Rather more than a mile west of Longford is the Early English church at Odstock. It has a fine west tower and several points of interest. The pulpit dated 1580 bears the following couplet:

"God bless and save our Royal Queen
The lyke on Earth was never seen."



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The churchyard contains the grave of one Joseph Scamp, executed for a crime to which he pleaded guilty; but really committed by his son-in-law.

The route is now by a lane that follows the course of the river through Charlton, with Clearbury Camp a mile away to the right, and on to Downton where we cross the bridge to the large and interesting cruciform church built at many different periods. The Transitional nave becomes Early English at the east end and the transepts are made up of Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular work. The chancel is entirely of the last-named style and very fine in its proportions and details. The Norman font of Purbeck marble should also be noticed. The village was one of the old-time "rotten" boroughs and returned two members to Parliament. Southey was once elected but declined the honour. Downton was evidently of some importance in still earlier days, for on the outskirts of the village, in private grounds, is an earthwork used in Saxon times as a folk-mote, or open-air local parliament. It is probable that this was originally a British fort, for about a mile away is the ancient ford over the Avon where a great battle was fought in the days of the West Saxon invasion and in which the attackers were held. Thirty-seven years elapsed before any further advance was made into Wiltshire. Downton is also one of the places of which that curious myth story "The Pent Cuckoo" is told.

The road to the south can be followed down the river to Fordingbridge (see Chapter II), but it is proposed to return by the east bank of the river past Burford Park and Trafalgar, the renamed Standlynch Manor, bestowed on Earl Nelson in 1814, to the neighbourhood of Alderbury, over three miles out of Salisbury on the Southampton road. The scenery of this part of the Christchurch Avon is very pleasant in a quiet way, the wide views towards the chalk hills on each side and the distant spire of the Cathedral, visible from every point of vantage, make the walk especially enjoyable. Alderbury is said to be the original village of the "Blue Dragon" of Mrs. Lupin and Mark Tapley, immortalized by Charles Dickens, though some claim Amesbury to be the original of this scene. It is difficult to say that any particular village could be in the novelist's mind if, as seems probable, he had not seen Wiltshire when *Martin Chuzzlewit* was written. St. Mary's Grange, on the Salisbury road, is suggested as the original of Mr. Pecksniff's residence. Alderbury House was built from the demolished campanile of Salisbury Cathedral.

To obtain a really good idea of the hill country, apart from that of the Plain, a walk should be taken, by those who are impervious to fatigue, to Broad Chalke, about seven miles from East Harnham, or even farther to Berwick St. John, more than six miles higher up the stream. The river Ebble itself, if river it can be called, is rarely in evidence, but the valley it drains is beautiful and, though it contains quite



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a string of villages, is so remote as to be seldom visited by anyone not on business bent. The vale seems to end naturally at Coombe Bisset, though the river flows on through Honnington and Odstock for four miles farther before it reaches the Avon. The church, set picturesquely on its hill at Coombe, is an old Transitional Norman building with some later additions. The village in the hollow below appeals to one as a happy place in which to end one's days. So also appears Stratford Tony, farther up the vale, where, as its name suggests, the Roman road from Old Sarum to Blandford once cut across the valley in the usual Roman manner. Bishopstone, the next village, has a very fine cruciform church, most interesting in its general details. The patron of the living was the Bishop of Winchester; thus the village gets its name. It is possible that some of the bishops took special interest in the building and that would account for its elaboration. The style is Decorated passing into Perpendicular in the nave. The chancel and transepts are peculiarly fine and the vaulting of the first-named will be much admired, as also the beautiful windows. The south door of the chancel with its handsome porch and groined roof; the vaulted chamber, or so-called cloister, outside the south transept, the use of which is unknown; the recessed tomb in the north transept and the grand arch on the same side of the church; all call for especial notice.

The right-hand road at Stoke Farthing leads direct to Broad Chalke, or a longer by-way on the other side of the stream takes us to the same goal by way of Bury Orchard, a village as delectable as its name. Chalke likewise boasts of a fine church, also cruciform and dating, so far as the chancel and north transept are concerned, from the thirteenth century. In that transept the old wooden roof still remains. The nave is Perpendicular, solid and plain; the roof quite modern, though the corbels that supported the old one, carved with representations of angels singing and playing, were not disturbed. The sedilia in the chancel and the aumbry in the north transept should be seen. The lych-gate was erected to the memory of Rowland Williams of *Essays and Reviews* fame. John Aubrey, antiquary and nature lover, who was a native of Easton Pierce in North Wilts, was a resident here for a long time, and a modern literary association is found in the fact that the Old Rectory has been the home of Mr. Maurice Hewlett for some years.

The hills now begin to close in upon the road and another valley penetrates into the highlands which form the northern portion of Cranborne Chase. In this vale, in a lovely hollow between the rounded hills, is the small village of Bower Chalke. Westwards, up the main valley, we pass through Fifield Bavant, where the church is one of the many that claim to be the smallest in England. Ebbesborne Wake, the next hamlet, lies cramped in a narrow gully between Barrow Hill and Prescombe Down. The restored church is not of great interest, but an unnamed tomb within bears these very pertinent lines:



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AS THOU DOST LYVE, O READER DERE,
SO DYD I ONCE WHICH NOW LYE HEARE;
AND AS I AM SO SHALT THOU BE
FOR ALL IS FRAYLE AS THOU MAYST SEE.

Alvedeston, the last village actually in the valley, lies under a spur of Middle Down from which there is a magnificent view of the “far flung field of gold and purple—regal England.” Alvedeston church is an old cruciform building containing the tomb of a knight in full armour. This is one of the Gawen family. The Gawens were for many years lords of Norrington, a beautiful old house near by. Aubrey suggests that they were descended from that Gawain of the Round Table who fought Lancelot and was killed. The last village, Berwick St. John, is high upon the hills and close to Winklebury Camp. Its Early English church, as is usual in this district, has transepts. The Perpendicular tower, though rather squat, is of fine design and the interior has several interesting monuments and effigies, including effigies of Sir John Hussey and Sir Robert Lucie clad in mail. A pleasant custom obtains here of ringing a bell every night during the winter to guide home the wanderer upon the lonely hills. This was provided for in the will of a former rector—John Gane (1735). From Berwick the hill walk to Salisbury, spoken of in the earlier part of this chapter, should be taken.

[Illustration: DOWNTON CROSS.]

Another valley worth exploring is that of the Bourne, north-east of Salisbury, down which the main railway line from London passes for its last few miles before reaching the city. The Bourne is crossed by the London road nearly two miles from the centre of the town. About half a mile up stream is the ford where the old way crossed the river to Sarum. The London road rises to the right and traverses the lonely chalk uplands to the Winterslow Hut, lately known as the “Pheasant,” a reversion to its old name. Here lodged Hazlitt, essayist and recluse, for a period of nine years, and here several of his best known dissertations were penned, including the appropriate “On Living to One’s Self.” Charles Lamb, accompanied by his sister, visited him here. We, however, do not propose to travel by the great London highway, but to turn to the left just across St. Thomas’ Bridge, and soon after passing the railway we cross the old Roman road where it appears as a narrow track making direct for the truncated cone of Old Sarum away to the west across the valley. Figsbury Rings is the name of the camp-crowned summit to the east of our road. The first three villages are all “Winterbournes”—Earls, Dauntsey and Gunner. The first two have rebuilt churches, but the third—Gunner—has a Transitional building of some interest. The name is a corruption of Gunnora, spouse of one of the Delameres who were lords hereabouts in the early thirteenth century. Farther on, Porton will not detain us very long, but Idmiston has a church that is a fine example of the style so well called Decorated.



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The tower, indeed, is Norman, but the clustered columns of the nave with their carved capitals and bases are beautiful specimens of fourteenth-century architecture. The Early English chancel has a triple east window and side lancets. The two-storied porch is late Decorated or early Perpendicular. A tomb of Giles Rowbach and tablets to the Bowie family are of interest. One of the Bowles, a vicar of the church, was a notable Spanish scholar and made a translation of *Don Quixote*. Boscombe Rectory was once occupied by “the judicious” Hooker and the first part of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* was written here. Another theologian—Nicholas Fuller—famous in his day, held the living of the next village—Allington. At Newton Tony, over eight miles from Salisbury, the pleasant scenery of the Bourne may be said to end. Beyond, we reach an outlying part of the Plain that is seen to better advantage from other directions. Newton Tony has a station on the branch line to Amesbury and Bulford Camp. Wilbury House, on the road to Cholderton, was erected in the Italian style in the early seventeenth century by the Bensons, a noted family in those days, one of whose members is commemorated by a brass in the church. The house was the home of the late Mr. T. Gibson Bowles, formerly the member for King’s Lynn.

[Illustration: LUDGERSHALL CHURCH.]

The valley goes on to Cholderton, Shipton Bellinger and Tidworth, where are situated the head-quarters of the Southern Military Command. The Collingbournes—Ducis and Kingston—are much farther on, right at the head of the valley, and eighteen miles from Salisbury. If the explorer has penetrated as far as Tidworth a train can be taken three miles across the Down to Ludgershall, a very ancient place near the Hampshire border. It would seem to have been of some importance in earlier days. “The castell stode in a parke now clene doun. There is of late times a pratie lodge made by the ruines of it and longgethe to the king” (Leland). To this castle came the Empress Maud and not far away the seal of her champion, Milo of Hereford, was found some years since. All that is left to show that Leland’s “clene doun” was a slight exaggeration is a portion of the wall of the keep built into a farm at the farther end of the little town. The twelfth-century church is interesting. Here may be seen the effigy of Sir Richard Brydges, the first owner of the Manor House (or “pratie lodge”) which succeeded the castle. The picturesque appearance of the main street is enhanced by the old Market Cross which bears carved representations of the Crucifixion and other scenes from the New Testament.

[Illustration: STONEHENGE.]

CHAPTER X

STONEHENGE AND THE PLAIN



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The direct route from Salisbury to Amesbury is (or was) the loneliest seven miles of highway in Wiltshire. No villages are passed and but one or two houses; thus the road, even with the amenities of Amesbury at the other end is, under normal conditions, an ideal introduction to the Plain. The parenthesis of doubt refers to that extraordinary and, let us hope, ephemeral transformation which has overtaken the great tract of chalk upland encircling Bulford Camp. The fungus growth of huts which, during the earlier years of the Great War, gradually crept farther and farther from the pre-war nucleus and sent sporadic growths afield into unsuspected places, will undoubtedly vanish as time passes, just as the unnaturally busy traffic of the road will also disappear. Some of the gaunt incongruities visible from near Stonehenge have, happily, already vanished and in this brief description they will be, as far as is possible, ignored. Certain it is that those readers who have had the misfortune to be connected with them by force of "iron circumstance" will not wish for reminders of their miseries.

Old Sarum is on the left of, and close to, the road. It can be most conveniently visited from this side. At present the most interesting part of the great mound is the actual fosse and vallum. The interior, while excavations are in progress, is too much a chaotic rubbish heap to be very inviting. But again this is merely a passing phase and soon the daisy-starred turf will once more mantle the grave of a dead city. The valley road turns off to the left a short distance past the railway and goes to Stratford-sub-castle, just under the shadow of the great mound to the west. This forms a pleasant enough introduction to the scenery and villages of the Upper Avon. The Manor House at Stratford is associated with the Pitt family, for the estate came by purchase to the celebrated Governor Pitt, the one-time owner of the diamond named after him. His descendant, the Earl of Chatham, was member for Old Sarum when it was the most celebrated, and execrated, of all the "rotten boroughs." For many years the elections took place under a tree in a meadow below the hill. This tree was destroyed in a blizzard during the winter of 1896. The Early English and Perpendicular church is quaint and picturesque. On its tower will be seen an inscription to Thomas Pitt and within, an ancient hour-glass stand. The old Parsonage has the inscription over the entrance:—

PARVA SED APTA DOMINO

1675

The road now crosses the Avon bridge at a point where the western road from Old Sarum once forded the river, and follows the valley to the three Woodfords, Lower, Middle, and Upper. Just past the middle village, in a loop of the Avon, is Heale House, now rebuilt. In the old mansion Charles took refuge during his flight after Worcester. The secret room in which he hid was preserved in the reconstruction. Lake, a beautiful old Tudor House, lately burned, but now restored, stands near the river bank south of Wilsford, through which village we pass to reach West Amesbury, eight miles from

Salisbury. The fine modern mansion not far from Wilsford is the seat of Lord Glenconner.



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[Illustration: GATE-HOUSE, AMESBURY ABBEY.]

Another route which keeps on the east bank of the Avon through a sometimes rough by-way, starts from the Salisbury side of the Avon bridge, close to Old Sarum, and passes through the hamlets of Little Durnford, Salterton and Netton to Durnford, where there is a fine church, partly Norman, with an imposing chancel arch and north and south doors of this period. The remainder of the building is mainly Early English. Some old stained glass in the Perpendicular windows of the nave should be noticed and also the chained copy of Bishop Jewel's *Apologie or Answer in Defense of the Church of Englande*, dated 1571, in the chancel. The pulpit dates from the early seventeenth century and is a well-designed piece of woodwork with carving of that period. A brass to Edward Young and his family, two recessed tombs in the south wall, a few scraps of wall painting, and the fine Norman font with interlaced arches and sculptured pillars, are some of the other interesting items in this old church. Ogbury Camp rises above the village to the east; a lane to the north of it leads in rather more than three miles to Amesbury.

In the mist of legend and tradition that surrounds the towns and hamlets of the Plain the origin of Amesbury is lost. The name is supposed to be derived from Ambres-burh—the town of Aurelius Ambrosius—a native British king with a latinized name who reigned about the year 550. In the *Morte d'Arthur* "Almesbury" is the monastery to which Guinevere came for sanctuary, and romantic tradition asserts that Sir Lancelot took the body of the dead Queen thence to Glastonbury. We are on firmer ground when we come to the time of the tenth-century house of Benedictine nuns dispersed by Henry II for "that they did by their scandalous and irreligious behaviour bring ill fame to Holy Church." It had been founded by a royal criminal, that stony-hearted Elfrida of Corfe, who murdered her stepson while he was a guest at her door. But very soon there was a new house for women and men—a branch of a noted monastery at Fontevrault in Anjou—of great splendour and prestige in which the women took the lead. To this Priory came many royal and noble ladies, including Eleanor of Brittany, granddaughter of Henry II and Eleanor of England, widow of Henry III. The Priory met the same fate as most others at the Dissolution and its actual site is uncertain. Protector Somerset obtained possession of the property and afterwards a house was built by Inigo Jones, most of which has disappeared in subsequent additions and alterations. While the Queensberry family were in possession the poet Gay was a guest here and wrote, in a sham cave or grotto still existing on the river bank, the *Beggar's Opera*, that satire on certain aspects of eighteenth-century life which, strangely enough, became lately popular after a long period of comparative oblivion.



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Amesbury Church once belonged to the Priory. Its appearance from the outside gives the impression that it is unrestored. This is not the case, however, for the drastic restoration and partial rebuilding has taken place at various times. The architecture is Norman and Early English with Decorated windows in the chancel. The double two-storied chamber at the side of the north transept consists of a priest's room with a chapel below. The grounds of the Priory at the back of the church are very lovely, the river forming the boundary on one side. Amesbury town is pleasant and even picturesque, and the Avon in its immediate neighbourhood may be described as beautiful. It is the nearest place to Stonehenge in which accommodation may be had and is also a good centre for the exploration of the Plain. The western road runs in the direction of Stonehenge. On the crown of the hill to the right, just before reaching West Amesbury, the so-called "Vespasian's Camp" is seen. This is undoubtedly a prehistoric earthwork.

[Illustration: AMESBURY CHURCH.]

The description of Salisbury Plain in the *Ingoldsby Legends* is hardly accurate now:—

“Not a shrub nor a tree,
Not a bush can we see,
No hedges, no ditches, no gates, no styles,
Much less a house or a cottage for miles.”

The usual accompaniment of the chalk—small “tufts” of foliage, that become spinneys when close at hand, dot the surface of the great plateau. Green, becoming yellow in the middle distance and toward the horizon french-grey, are the prevailing hues of the Plain, but at times when huge masses of cloud cast changing shadows on the short sward beneath, the colours are kaleidoscopic in their bewildering change. This immense table-land, from which all the chalk hills of England take their eastward way, covers over three-fifths of Wiltshire if we include that northern section usually called the Marlborough Downs.

We now approach the mysterious Stones that have caused more conjecture and wonder than any work of man in these islands or in Europe and of which more would-be descriptive rubbish has been written in a highfalutin strain than of any other memorial of the past. Such phrases as “majestic temple of our far-off ancestors,” “stupendous conception of a dead civilization” and the like, can only bring about a feeling of profound disappointment when Stonehenge is actually seen. To all who experience such disappointment the writer would strongly urge a second or third pilgrimage. Come to the Stones on a gloomy day in late October or early March when the surface of the great expanse of the Plain reflects, as water would, the leaden lowering skies. Then perhaps the tragic mystery of the place will fire the imagination as no other scene the wide world over could. Stonehenge is unique whichever way one looks at it. In its age, its uncouth savage strength, and its secretiveness. That it will hold that secret to the

end of time, notwithstanding the clever and plausible guesses of archaeologist and astronomer, is almost beyond any doubt, and it is well that it should be so.



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The appearance of Stonehenge has been likened to a herd of elephant browsing on the Plain. The simile is good and is particularly applicable to its aspect from the Amesbury road—the least imposing of the approaches. The straight white highway, and the fact that the Stones are a little below the observer, detract very much from the impressiveness of the scene. The usual accompaniments of a visit, a noisy and chattering crowd of motorists, eager to rush round the enclosure quickly, to purchase a packet of postcards and be off; the hut for the sale of the cards, and the absurdly incongruous, but (alas!) necessary, policeman, go far to spoil the visit for the more reverent traveller. But if he will go a little way to the south and watch the gaunt shapes against the sky for a time and thus realize their utter remoteness from that stream of evanescent mortality beneath, the unknown ages that they have stood here upon the lonely waste, the dynasties, nay, the very races, that have come and conquered and gone, and the almost certainty that the broad metalled highway which passes close to them will in turn disappear and give place, while they still stand, to the turf of the great green expanse around; then the awe that surrounds Stonehenge will be felt and understood.

The early aspect of Stonehenge was far more elaborate than as we see it to-day, and the avenues that led to the inner circles and the smaller and outer rings have to a large extent disappeared. The stones are enclosed in a circular earthwork 300 feet across. The outer circle of trilithons, 100 feet in diameter, is composed of monoliths of sandstone originally four feet apart and thirty in number. Inside this circle is another of rough unhewn stones of varying shapes and sizes. Within this again, forming a kind of “holy place,” are two ellipses—the outer of trilithons five in number and the inner of blue stones of the same geological formation as the rough stones of the outer circle. Of these there were originally nineteen.

[Illustration: PLAN OF STONEHENGE (RESTORED).]

Near the centre is the so-called “altar stone,” over fifteen feet long; in a line with this, through the opening of the ellipse, is the “Friar’s Heel,” a monolith standing outside the circles. The larger stones or “sarsens” are natural to the Marlborough Downs, but the unhewn or “blue” stones are mysterious. They are composed of a kind of igneous rock not found anywhere near Wiltshire. A suggestion by Professor Judd is that they are ice-borne boulders accidentally deposited on the Plain during the southward drift of the great ice cap. One of the sarsen stones is stained with copper oxide, and this fact has been taken to point to Stonehenge being erected somewhere in the Bronze Age—that is, not longer ago than 2000 B.C. Excavations about twenty years ago brought to light a number of stone tools, fragments of pottery, coins and bones. Belonging to a long period of time, the finds were inconclusive. It is quite possible that the ring of rough blue stones were erected by a primitive race of stone men and that a continuous tradition of sanctity clung to the spot until, in the time of those heirs and successors of theirs who used bronze weapons and were acquainted with the rudiments of engineering, the imposing temple that we call Stonehenge came into being.



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It will be well at this point to make brief reference to the interpretation placed on Stonehenge by various writers. Henry of Huntingdon (1150) calls it Stanhenges, and terms it the second wonder of England, but professes entire ignorance of its purpose and marvels at the method of its construction. Geoffrey of Monmouth (1150) ascribes its origin to the magic of Merlin who, at the instance of Aurelius Ambrosius, directed the invasion of Ireland under Uther Pendragon to obtain possession of the standing stones called the "Giants' Dance at Killaraus." Victory being with the invaders, the stones were taken and transported across the seas with the greatest ease with Merlin's help, and placed on Salisbury Plain as a memorial to the dead of Britain fallen in battle. Giraldus Cambrensis, Robert of Gloucester and Leland all give a similar explanation. About 1550, in Speed's *History of Britain* and Stow's *Annals*, Merlin and the invasion of Ireland are dropped and sole credit given to Ambrosius for the erection. Thomas Fuller (1645) ridicules tradition and considers the stones to be artificial and probably made of sand (!) on the spot. Inigo Jones about the same time attributes the erection to the Romans. His master, James I, having taken a philosophic interest in the Stones, had desired him to make some pronouncement upon them. This monarch's grandson, in his flight, is said to have stopped and essayed to count the stones, with the usual result on the second trial. Pepys a short time after went "single to Stonehenge, over the Plain and some great hills even to fright us. Come thither and find them as prodigious as any tales I ever heard of them, and worth going this journey to see, God knows what their use was! they are hard to tell but may yet be told."

About the middle of the eighteenth century the Druid temple legend began to gain ground and many great men gave support to their interpretation; it is not yet an exploded idea. Stukely, the archaeological writer, gives a definite date—460 B.C.—as that of their erection, and Dr. Johnson, writing to Mrs. Thrale, says:—"It is, in my opinion, to be referred to the earliest habitations of the island as a druidical monument of, at least, two thousand years, probably the most ancient work of man upon the island." In the last part of this sentence the great doctor either forgets, or shows his ignorance of, the antiquities at Avebury. Sir Richard Hoare, at the close of the century, is equally convinced that this explanation is the right one. Other theories current about this time were—that it was a monument to four hundred British princes slain by Hengist (472); the grave of Queen Boadicea; or a Phoenician temple; even a Danish origin was ascribed to Stonehenge. Perhaps the most curious fact connected with the literary history of Stonehenge is that it is not mentioned in the Roman itineraries or by Bede or any other Saxon writer.

In 1824 the following interesting article by H. Wansey appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.



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“In my early days I frequently visited Stonehenge to make observations at sunrise as well as by starlight. I noticed that the lower edge of the impost of the outer circle forms a level horizontal line in the heavens, equi-distant from the earth, to the person standing near the centre of the building, about 15 degrees above the horizon on all sides.” Stonehenge stands on rather sloping ground; the uprights of the outer circle are nearly a foot taller on the lower ground or western side than they are on the eastern, purposely to keep the horizontal level of the impost, which marks great design and skill. The thirty uprights of the outer circle are not found exactly of equal distances, but the imposts (so correctly true on their under bed) are each of them about 7 cubits in length, making 210 cubits the whole circle. “If a person stands before the highest leaning-stone, between it and the altar stone looking eastward, he will see the pyramidal stone called the Friar’s Heel, coinciding with the top of Durrington Hill, marking nearly the place where the sun rises on the longest day. This was the observation of a Mr. Warltire, who delivered lectures on Stonehenge at Salisbury (1777), and who had drawn a meridian line on one of the stones. Mr. Warltire asserted that the stone of the trilithons and of the outer circle are the stone of the country, and that he had found the place from whence they were taken, about fourteen miles from the spot northward, somewhere near Urchfont. “If the person so standing turns to his left hand, he will find a groove in one of the 6-foot pillars from top to bottom, which (in the lapse of so many ages, and swelled by the alternate heat and moisture of two thousand years, has lost its shape) might have contained in it a scale of degrees for measuring; and the stone called the altar[3] would have answered to draw those diagrams on, and this scale of degrees was well placed for use in such a case, for one turning himself to the left, and his right hand holding a compass, could apply it most conveniently. With all this apparatus the motions of the heavenly bodies might have been accurately marked and eclipses calculated, a knowledge of which, Caesar says, they possessed in his time. “Wood and Dr. Stukeley both make the inner oval to consist of nineteen stones, answering to the ancient Metonic Cycle of nineteen years, at the end of which the sun and the moon are in the same relative situation as at the beginning, when indeed the same almanack will do again. “In my younger days I have visited Stonehenge by starlight, and found, on applying my sight from the top of the 6-foot pillars of the inner oval and looking at the high trilithons, I could mark the places of the planets and the stars in the heavens, so as to measure distances by the corners and angles of them....

“It is very remarkable that no barrow or tumulus exists on the east side, where the sun (the great object of ancient worship) first appears.”



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[3] "Dr. Smith says that he has tried a bit of this stone, and found that it would not stand fire. It is, therefore, very improbable that it should have been used for burnt sacrifices."

The theory put forward in this article has in late years been upheld by no less an authority than Sir Norman Lockyer, who thinks that the practice of visiting Stonehenge on the longest day of the year—a pilgrimage that goes back before the beginnings of recorded history, essayed by a country people not addicted to wasting a fine summer morning without some very strong tradition to prompt them—goes far to bear out the theory that Stonehenge was a solar temple. If this is so, the mysterious people who erected it were civilized enough to have a good working knowledge of the movement of the heavenly bodies, and probably combined that knowledge with a not unreasonable worship and ritual. Sir Norman Lockyer's calculations give the date of the erection as about 1680 B.C.

Lord Avebury considers that it is part of a great scheme for honouring the famous dead, and many modern writers have adopted the same view. That the Plain near by is a great cemetery is beyond doubt, but then so are more or less all the chalk hills of Britain.

There is more than one explanation of the probable method of the construction of the trilithons. A writer in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* (W. Long) puts forward the theory that an artificial mound was made in which holes were dug to receive the upright pillars. When these were in position the recumbent block could easily be placed across the two and, all the trilithons being complete, the earth could be dug away, leaving the stones standing. Professor Gowland, however, does not favour this view in the light of his recent discoveries and is inclined to credit the builders with a greater knowledge of simple engineering.

[Illustration: STONEHENGE DETAIL.]

In 1918 Stonehenge, which hitherto had formed part of the Amesbury Abbey estate of Sir Cosmo Gordon Antrobus, was sold to Sir C.H. Chubb, who immediately presented it to the nation. The work of restoration is being carried out by the Office of Works, and the Society of Antiquaries are, at their own expense, sifting every cubic inch of ground under those stones that are being re-erected—to the dismay of many of that body—in beds of concrete! Much apprehension has been felt by archaeologists that this renovation will have deplorable results, but it is promised that nothing is to be done in the way of replacement which cannot be authenticated. At the time of writing the work is still in progress and all is chaos. When the hideous iron fence is replaced by the proposed ha-ha, or sunk fence, and new sward grows about the old stones the general effect will be greatly improved. The excavators have re-discovered certain depressions shown in Aubrey's Map (1666) and which had long since disappeared to outward view. There is little doubt that they held stones more or less in a circle with the "Slaughter Stone." It is conjectured that, as in the case of the inner blue stones, this outer ring was

constructed before the more imposing trilithons were erected, perhaps at a period long anterior. Each of the holes already explored contain calcined human bones.



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Stonehenge Down; Wilsford Down to the south; Stoke Down westwards, and, in fact, the whole of the great Plain is a maze of earthworks, ditches, tumuli and relics of a past at which we can only guess. Here, if anywhere in Britain, is haunted ground and perhaps the silence of earlier writers may be explained by the existence of a kind of “taboo” that prevented reference to the mysteries of the Plain.

The exploration of the upper Avon may be extended from Amesbury to Durrington (one mile from Bulford station), where is an old church containing fine carved oak fittings worth inspection. Across the stream is Milston, where Addison was born and his father was rector. Higher up the river is pretty Figheledean with its old thatched cottages embowered among the huge trees that line the banks of the stream, and with a fine Early English church. The monuments in the Decorated chancel are to some of the Poores, once a notable family. The church also contains certain unknown effigies. These were discovered at some distance from the church, probably having been thrown away during some earlier “restoration!”

[Illustration: ENFORD.]

Netheravon is famous for its Cavalry School. Of its Norman and Early English church Sydney Smith was once a curate, to his great discomfort. The tower here is very old and some have called it Saxon. The student of *Rural Rides* will remember that here Cobbett saw an “acre of hares!” Fittleton is another unspoilt little village, and Enford, or Avonford, the next, has a fine church unavoidably much restored after having been struck by lightning early in the nineteenth century; the Norman piers remain. All these villages gain in interest and charm to the pedestrian by being just off the high road that keeps to the west bank of the river. Upavon, however, is on a loop of this highway and sees more traffic. Here is a church with a Transitional chancel; it is said that the contemporary nave was of wood. The fine tower and present nave belong to the thirteenth century. The Norman font with its archaic carving and the fifteenth-century crucifix over the west door should be noticed. Upavon was the home of a kindred spirit to Cobbett, for here was born the once famous “Orator Hunt,” farmer and demagogue—rare combination! He was chairman of the meeting in Manchester that had “Peterloo” as its sequel. Near Upavon, but down stream, is the small and ancient manor house of Chisenbury, until lately the property of the Groves, one of whose ancestors suffered death for his participation in the rising of Colonel Penruddock during the Commonwealth.



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At Rushall the narrow valley of the Avon, guarded by the opposing camps of Casterley and Chisenbury, is left for the transverse vale of Pewsey, on the farther side of which are the Marlborough Downs. A number of chalk streams drain the vale and go to make up the head-waters of the Avon; in fact two streams, both bearing the old British name for river, meet hereabouts; the one rising about two miles from Savernake station and the other about the same distance from Devizes. Along the northern slope of this vale the canal made to join the Kennet and Thames with yet another, the Bristol Avon, runs its lonely course. Five miles west of Rushall is the divide between the waters of the English Channel and the Severn Sea, and the Bristol Avon receives the stream that rises but a mile from its namesake of Christchurch Bay. High in one of the combs at this end of the valley is the small village of All Cannings, said to have been of much importance in the dark ages as a Saxon centre. All it has to show the visitor now is a cruciform church with Norman and Early English fragments and a good Perpendicular tower.

The villages of Pewsey Vale are many and charming. All are well served by the "short-cut" line of the Great Western, over which the Devon and Cornwall expresses now run. Across the vale, in an opposite direction to the iron way, runs the Ridgeway, a road probably in use when Stonehenge was not, and Silbury Hill, that mystery of the Marlborough Downs, was yet to be. On the western side of this old road are the villages of Patney and Chirton. At the latter is a very beautiful Transitional church. Near Beechingstoke, close to the Ridgeway, is a famous British village, the entrenchment containing about thirty acres. The old road comes down from the northern highlands between Milk Hill (964 feet) and Knap Hill, the two bluffs that rear their great bulk across the vale. Here beneath the "White Horse," a modern one cut at the beginning of the nineteenth century, are the old churches of Alton Priors and Alton Berners, the latter partly Saxon.

The road north-east from Rushall runs through Manningford Bruce. The church here is possibly Saxon; it has a semi-circular apse. On the north wall of the chancel is a tablet to Mary Nicholas with arms bearing the royal canton. This was her reward for helping Charles in his flight after the battle of Worcester. Manningford Abbots once belonged to the Abbot of Hyde. The rebuilt church is only of interest in possessing a very fine pre-Reformation chalice. Two miles farther is Pewsey, a pleasant town surrounded by the chalk hills. From those to the eastward Cobbett, when he beheld the vale stretched out before him, broke into one of those simple but graphic descriptive touches that help to make the *Rural Rides* immortal, "A most beautiful sight it was! Villages, hamlets, large farms, towers, steeples, fields, meadows, orchards and very fine timber trees. The shape of the thing was



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this: on each side downs, very lofty and steep in some places, and sloping miles back in other places, but on each side out of the valley are downs. From the edge of the downs begin capital arable fields, generally of very great dimensions and in some places running a mile or two back into little cross valleys formed by hills of downs. After the corn-fields come meadows on each side, down to the brook or river. The farmhouses, mansions, villages and hamlets are generally situated in that part of the arable land that comes nearest to the meadows. Great as my expectations had been, they were more than fulfilled. I delight in this sort of country..... I sat upon my horse, and I looked over Milton and Easton and Pewsey for half an hour, though I had not breakfasted."

Pewsey Church has a Transitional nave and Early English chancel; the oblong tower being Perpendicular. The carved reredos was designed and worked by Canon Pleydell-Bouverie, who also made the communion rails from some timbers of the *San Josef*, a ship taken by Nelson at the battle of Cape St. Vincent. The roof of the organ chamber and vestry are of much interest; they are part of the refectory roof of Ivychurch Priory.

The country to the north of the little old town is very beautiful. The precipitous wall of the Marlborough Downs, with several lovely and little-known villages at its foot, is a remarkable feature of the landscape. The high road to Marlborough, that climbs the hills for three fatiguing miles, passes through the small village of Oare, where there is a modern red-brick church. Not far away to the west are the hamlets of West and East Towel, lost in the lonely by ways beneath the hills. Above them in a fold of the Downs is Huish, dropped down amidst memorials of a long vanished past. Dewponds, earthworks and "hut circles" cover the hills in all directions. At Martinsell, the camp-crowned hill to the east of the high road, until recent days a festival was held, the beginnings of which may have been in Neolithic times. On Palm Sunday young men and maidens would ascend the hill carrying boughs of hazel. They would, no doubt, have been scandalized if told that the ceremony had anything but a Christian significance. The prospect of the Vale from this hill-side, or from the high road itself, is not easily forgotten, and the beech-woods and parklands of Rainscombe, that fill the broad but sheltered hollow below, make a lovely foreground to the view.

We must now return to the lower end of the Vale of Wylve which has been noticed at Wilton, where the river, road and rail come down a narrow defile from Heytsbury and Warminster. This valley has on the north and east the familiar aspect of Salisbury Plain. On the south and west are those wooded hills that are seen also from the neighbourhood of Fonthill, and though both sides of the valley are made of the same material—the current chalk of Wiltshire—they are very unlike in their superficial scenery. The Wylve is perhaps the most beautiful of Wiltshire rivers, and although it has an important cross-country railway running close to it for the greater part of its length, the villages and hamlets upon the banks are peculiarly calm, secluded and unspoilt.



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The high road from Salisbury to Warminster turns northwards at Fugglestone past the two Wilton stations, without entering that town and, passing through Chilhampton and South Newton, reaches the hamlet of Stoford, which has an old inn close to the river bank. A short half mile westwards is the picturesque old village of Great Wishford, said to be derived from "welsh-ford," where the church has been so much restored that it is practically a new one. The chancel with its fine triple lancet window is Early English. The altar tomb of Sir Thomas Bonham has his effigy in a pilgrim's robe which is said to commemorate that knight's seven years' sojourn in Palestine. An incredible tradition, current among the country people, says that Lady Bonham gave birth to seven children at one time, and that the sieve, in which they were all brought to the church to be christened, hung in the old nave for many years. The fine tomb in the chancel is that of Sir Richard Grobham (1629). His helmet and banner are suspended upon the opposite wall; an old chest in the south aisle is said to have been saved from a Spanish ship by this knight.

The main road continues up the valley to Stapleford, where is a fine cruciform church with Norman arches on the south of the nave and with a door of this period on the same side. The fine sedilia and piscina in the fourteenth-century chancel should be noticed, and also the well-proportioned porch that has within it a coffin slab bearing an incised cross. Here the valley of the Winterbourne comes down from the heart of the Plain at Orcheston through Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St. James; a lonely and thinly populated string of hamlets seldom visited by the ordinary tourist, but of much charm to those who appreciate the more unsophisticated type of English village that, alas! is becoming more rare every day. Both Berwick and Stoke have interesting old churches.

Continuing up the Wylde we reach Steeple Langford, situated in the most beautiful part of the valley. Here is a Decorated church with good details and a remarkable tomb-slab bearing an incised figure of an unknown huntsman, also a fine altar tomb of the Mompessons. The rector here in the days of the Parliament was ejected in the depth of winter with his wife and eleven children, suffering great hardship before succour reached them. Little Langford is across the stream in an exquisite situation. Deeply embowered among the trees is the small cruciform church with an interesting Norman door, showing in the tympanum, a bishop, said to represent St. Aldhelm, in the act of benediction. We may keep to the road that closely follows the railway on the south side of the stream to Wylde, a quiet little place half way up the vale. Here is a Perpendicular church with a pinnacled tower and an Early English east end. The Jacobean pulpit stood in the old church at Wilton and was brought here when that was rebuilt. A famous pre-Reformation chalice is preserved among

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the church plate, and the village is proud of its bells. One bears the words “Ave Maria”; another not so old is inscribed “1587 Give thanks to God.” Across the stream the hamlet of Deptford stands on the main road, which goes by Fisherton de la Mere to Codford St. Mary. Here another quiet valley opens up into the Plain and leads to the remote villages of Chitterne St. Mary and All Saints, among many relics of the prehistoric past—“British” villages and circles, tumuli and ditches. Codford St. Mary Church, though partly rebuilt, is still of interest and has a Transitional Norman chancel arch and fine Norman font. The Jacobean pulpit and Tudor altar tomb of Sir Richard Mompesson should be noticed. The altar is said to have been made from the woodwork of a derelict pulpit from St. Mary’s, Oxford. Cobbett was enthusiastic about the well-being of the country and its farmers hereabouts, and was especially delighted with the rich picture that this part of the Wylde makes from the Down above. Codford is the village taken by Trollope for the scene of *The Vicar of Bulhampton*.

Codford St. Peter, where there is a railway station, has a much-restored church, practically rebuilt. The ancient sculptured stonework in the chancel, discovered during the rebuilding, is said to be Saxon. The font with its curious Norman carvings is noteworthy. On the other side of the vale are three interesting villages, beautifully placed—Stockton, Sherrington and Boyton. Stockton Church is Transitional with an Early English chancel. Its screen was erected by the former Bishop of Worcester, Dr. Yeatman-Biggs, in memory of his wife and brother. The wall separating nave and chancel is uncommon in its solidity, the small opening being more in the nature of a doorway than of a chancel arch. Two squints made it possible for the people to see the movements of the minister at the altar. In the north aisle is the canopied tomb of John Topp (1640) and on the other side of the church, that of Jerome Poticary. Both these worthies were wealthy clothiers, and the first-named built the beautiful manor house which we may still see near by. The old panelling and moulded ceilings of this mansion are very fine specimens of seventeenth-century workmanship. Jerome Poticary also built himself a fair dwelling that is now a farmhouse. The picturesque Topp almshouses and pleasant old cottages together with the charm of the natural surroundings make this village a delightful one. Sherrington once had a castle owned by the Giffards, but all that is now to be seen is the green mound where once it stood, close to the little old church. Boyton church is a fine example of the Decorated style. It has some older Early English portions. The windows in the Lambert chapel are much admired. Here are also two altar tombs; that with a figure in chain armour, cross-legged, represents the crusading Sir Alexander Giffard. An interesting discovery was made of a headless skeleton under the chancel floor, supposed to have been the remains of a Giffard who lost his head for rebellion in the reign of Edward II. Boyton Manor, a beautiful old house, is not far away. It was built in the early seventeenth century and was for a time the residence of Queen Victoria’s youngest son.



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[Illustration: BOYTON MANOR.]

Upton Lovell, about a mile from Codford St. Peter, has a church, the nave of which was built in the seventeenth century. The chancel belongs to the original Transitional building. An altar tomb with an effigy in armour is supposed to be that of a Lovell of Castle Cary. The manor was held by this family and from them the village takes its name. An unhappy story is told of one of the family, a participant in the Lambert Simnel rebellion, who managed to find sanctuary here, and, perhaps through his retainers being in ignorance of his whereabouts, was starved to death in the secret chamber in which he had hidden himself. His skeleton was discovered long afterwards seated at a table with books and papers in front of it. Knook is the next village, a mile below Heytesbury. Here is a church that, in spite of ruthless restoration, has retained its Norman chancel and a south door with a fine tympanum. Also the old manor house has still much of its former dignity in spite of its change of station. Away to the north, on one of the rounded summits of Salisbury Plain, is Knook Castle, a prehistoric camp that was utilized by the Romans and possibly by the Saxons after their invasion of the west.

Heytesbury or Hegtredebyri, seventeen miles from Salisbury, has a station half-way between the old town and Tytherington on the south, and is an ancient place that had seen its best days before the dawn of the nineteenth century. It was another of the "rotten" boroughs and fell into a period of stagnation from which the railway seems to have lately rescued it. Many new roads and houses have sprung up without, however, spoiling the appearance of this pleasant little place. The church, dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, is chiefly Early English with Transitional work in the chancel and Perpendicular in the nave. In the north transept is the Hungerford chantry, to whose founder is due the chantry seen in Salisbury Cathedral. The south transept contains a tablet in memory of William Cunnington (1810), to whose researches the antiquaries of Wiltshire owe a great deal of their information. This church was made collegiate by Bishop Joscelyn in the twelfth century. Heytesbury Hospital was founded by Lord Treasurer Hungerford, whose badge, two sickles, may be seen over the entrance. In the beautiful park are some magnificent beeches and a group of cedars below the fir-clad Copley Hill which is crowned by a prehistoric camp.

At Tytherington there is another church, very small and old and once a prebend of Heytesbury. In the early days of the last century service was only performed here four times a year, and a legend was once related to the writer of a dog that had been accidentally shut up in this church at one service and found alive and released at the next, ten weeks later! A mile farther is Sutton Veny, where there are two churches, a fine new one, and an old ruined building of which the chancel is kept in repair as



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a mortuary chapel. The manor house is picturesque and rambling, as is the village itself, straggling along the road to Warminster. At the upper end of the street a cross road on the right leads to Morton Bavant and to the main route on the north side of the stream. The partly rebuilt church is of little interest, excepting perhaps the arch of chalk that supports the fourteenth-century tower, but the village deserves the adjective "sweet." The stream, although now of small size, and the surrounding hills that rise close by into Scratchbury Camp, make a lovely setting for the mellow old cottages and bright gardens that one may hope are as good to live in as they are to look at. Close by the village certain Roman pavements were found in 1786, but the site is now uncertain and the mosaics have been lost. At the cross roads just referred to, the left-hand road climbs the hill to the Deverills—Longridge, Hill, Buxton, Monkton and Kingston, pleasant hamlets all, of which the first has the most to show. Here is a fine church partly built of chalk and containing the tomb of the Sir John Thynne who made Longleat. The old almshouses were founded by his descendant, Sir James, in 1665. In Hill Deverill Church is a monumental record of the Ludlows. To this family General Ludlow, of the Army of the Parliament, belonged. Beyond the last of the Deverills is Maiden Bradley, alone with its guardian hills, which ring it round with summits well over 800 feet above the sea. Long Knoll is the monarch of this miniature range and well repays the explorer who climbs to its summit with a most delightful view. In Maiden Bradley Church is the tomb of Sir Edward Seymour, Speaker of the House in the reign of Charles II, and a fine Norman font of Purbeck marble.

Resuming the route northwards from Sutton Veny, Bishopstrow is soon reached. Above the village to the north is the great rounded hill called Battlesbury Camp, crowned with the usual entrenchments and surrounded by the curious "lynchets" or remains of ancient terrace cultivation. Bishopstrow Church dates from 1757, when it replaced a building with Saxon foundations and east end. The main road is now taken on the north bank of the stream and in two miles, or twenty-one *direct* from Salisbury, we arrive at the old town called, no one knows why, Warminster. It may be that the Were, the small stream or brook running into Wylve gives the first syllable, but that St. Deny's Church was ever a minster there is no evidence, though it is occasionally so called by the townspeople. Now quite uninteresting, the church was rebuilt some thirty years or more ago. In High Street, close to the Town Hall, is the chantry of St. Lawrence, still keeping its old tower but otherwise rebuilt. For its age and situation Warminster retains little that is ancient, but it is a pleasant and very healthy town, 400 feet above the sea. Here, in the early nineteenth century, two eminent Victorians—Dr. Arnold and Dean Stanley—received



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their first education at the old Grammar School. St. Boniface College, established in 1860, is a famous house of training for missionaries. Warminster has “no villainous gingerbread houses running up and no nasty shabby-genteel people; no women trapesing about with showy gowns and dirty necks, no Jew-looking fellows with dandy coats, dirty shirts and half heels to their shoes. A really nice and good town” (Cobbett).

The great show-place and excursion from Warminster is Longleat. To reach the great house and famous grounds we take the western road which reaches the confines of the park in a little over four miles and passes under the imposing mass of Cley Hill, an isolated eminence of about 900 feet, on the summit of which a curious “ceremony” used to take place, as at Martinsell, on Palm Sunday. The boys and young men from neighbouring villages would ascend the hill to play a game with sticks and balls. Not one could say why, but that it was “always done.” Undoubtedly this was an unconscious reminiscence of a pagan spring festival.

Longleat is indeed a “stately home of England” and one of the most famous of those larger mansions that are more in the nature of permanent museums for the benefit of the public than of homes for their fortunate possessors. In normal times the galleries are open on two or three days in the week, according to the seasons, and holiday crowds come long distances to see the magnificent house and its still more splendid surroundings, perhaps more than to inspect the art treasures which form the nominal attraction. Still these are very fine and should, if possible, be seen.

[Illustration: LONGLEAT.]

The origin of “Long Leat”—the long shallow stream of pond and lakelets artificially widened and dammed—was, like that of so many other great houses, a monastic one. An Augustinian Priory stood here before the Dissolution, but when the Great Dispersal took place it had already decayed and no great tragedy occurred. Protector Somerset had a young man attached to his retinue, and in his confidence, named Sir John Thynne who, when his master lost his head, very adroitly kept his own, afterwards marrying the heiress of a great London merchant—Sir Thomas Gresham. This enabled the husband to add greatly to the small property he had already purchased, which included the old priory buildings, and the altered state of his fortunes prompted him to erect a stately residence on the old site. His first efforts were destroyed by a disastrous fire, but in 1578 the stately house was finished and, as far as the exterior is concerned, was practically as we see it to-day. The interior was entirely remodelled at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Sir Jeffrey Wyatville. James Thynne—“Tom of Ten Thousand”—was the Lord of Longleat in 1682. He was engaged to the beautiful sixteen-year-old widow of Lord Ogle, when she had the misfortune to attract the attention of Count Konigsmark, a Polish adventurer,



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whose hired assassins waylaid and shot Thynne in Pall Mall. The Count escaped punishment, but his instruments were hanged upon the scene of the crime. The property then passed to a cousin who became the first Viscount Weymouth. The third Viscount was made Marquis of Bath when he was the host of George III in 1789. A famous guest of the first Viscount was Bishop Ken, who stayed at Longleat for many years as an honoured visitor.

Amongst the treasures on the walls of the corridors and saloons are several Holbeins, portraits of contemporaries of his, including Henry VIII. There are also a number by Sir Peter Lely, one being of Bishop Ken and another of his friend and host; several interesting paintings of celebrated men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and some good representative examples of great artists from Raphael to Watts. The grand staircase and state drawing-room are of admirable proportions and form part of the work of Wyattville. In the drawing-room is treasured a cabinet of coral and a writing tablet which belonged to Talleyrand. The great hall, which contains a collection of armour and ancient implements of war of much importance and value, has a fine wooden roof and minstrels' gallery. Among the stags' horns that decorate the walls will be seen two mighty headpieces that once belonged to Irish elks and were discovered in a peat bog. The chimney-piece here belongs to the period before Wyattville began his transformation of the interior.

Not least of the attractions of Longleat are its surroundings. The park is sixteen miles round, and a large portion of this great space is taken up by garden and pleasure, as distinct from the deer park itself. The approach from Warminster and the north is by a wooded ascent with Cley Beacon to the right and past "Heaven's Gate," a favourite view-point with Bishop Ken, who, it is said, composed the morning hymn associated with his name while contemplating the inspiring scene before him. Almost as fine is the approach from the south through the arched gateway on the Horningsham road. This route passes through groves of magnificent timber and by the string of delightful ponds that give the place its name.

The road that hugs the Plain on its western side goes almost directly north from Warminster and, passing Upton Scudamore, reaches Westbury in less than four miles. The history of this old town is closely bound up with that of the kings of Wessex and at Westbury Leigh is a site called the "Palace Garden," encircled by a moat said to have once been the residence of these monarchs. The Westbury White Horse is supposed to have been cut as a memorial of the great victory of Alfred over the Danes in 890 (or 877). In the later Middle Ages, this town, like many others in the west, was a centre of the cloth trade, and, later, iron foundries were a feature of the place.



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The handsome cruciform church, in the midst of its fine chestnut trees, is of much interest. Originally Norman, the greater part of the present building is early Perpendicular. The dingified central tower and the spaciousness of the interior will be admired. On the south of the chancel is the Willoughby Chapel, on the north, that of the Maudits. The south transept contains a monument of Sir James Ley, created Earl of Marlborough by Charles I. The chained book, a copy of Erasmus' *Paraphrase*, and also the fine, though modern, stained glass in the east and west windows is worthy of notice.

A new suburb has grown up on the western side between the original town and the railway junction nearly a mile away and the immediate surroundings of the station, as we enter it from the south, are reminiscent of a northern industrial town. Smoke and clangour, and odours not often met with in Wiltshire, are very insistent. Not so many years ago Westbury was in a backwater, if that term may be applied to railways, but now that it is on the new main route to Devon and Cornwall the industrial aspect of the town may increase greatly during the next few years.

Frome, six miles away over the border in Somersetshire and on this same new way to the west, has shaken off its ancient air of bucolic peace and now prints books and weaves cloth and does a little in the manufacture of art metal work. The town, nevertheless, is very pleasant despite its strenuous endeavour to make money in a way Mercian rather than West Saxon. Its broad market place and steep and picturesque streets leading thereto, especially that one named "Cheap," and the rural throng that congregates on market and fair days is distinctly that of Wessex. Frome Church is more beautiful within than without. It is approached, however, by a picturesque and steep ascent of steps, on the left-hand wall of which are sculptures of the Stations of the Cross. The church is extraordinary for the number of its side chapels and its amazing mixture of styles, but the interior has an air of much dignity and even beauty, which was greatly added to by a restoration which took place during the fifties of the last century. Perhaps the most interesting item about the church is the tomb of Bishop Ken, who was brought here from Longleat "at sunrise." His body lies just without the east window and the grave is thus described by Lord Houghton:—

A basket-work where bars are bent,
Iron in place of osier;
And shapes above that represent
A mitre and a crosier.

[Illustration: FROME CHURCH.]



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Again we have been tempted too far afield and must return to the eastern road out of Westbury that follows the Great Western Railway to Bratton, not far from Edington station. Above to the right, on one of the western bastions of the Plain, is the White Horse just mentioned. It is of great size—180 feet long and 107 in height. It was “restored” many years ago and the ancient grotesque outline altered by vandals who should have known better. Above the figure is the great entrenched camp called Bratton Castle, containing within its walls 23 acres. Bratton Church is built in a peculiar situation against the side of the Down. The fine cruciform structure, with a handsome four storied central tower, dates from about 1420 and occupies the site of an older building, probably Norman. The brass to Seeton Bromwich (1607) should be noticed. We now proceed by the northern foot of the hills to Edington, where is one of the most beautiful churches in Wiltshire, exceeding in its proportions and dignity some of our smaller cathedrals. It was originally the church of a monastery of Augustinians founded in 1352 by William of Edyngton, Bishop of Winchester. A tragedy took place here in 1450 during the Cade rebellion, when the Bishop of Salisbury (Ayscough) was seized by the rioters while he was celebrating mass, taken to the summit of the Downs and there stoned to death. A chapel was afterwards built on the spot, but the exact site is uncertain. The Bishop’s fault was that, being constantly with the Court, his diocese was neglected and his flock suffered.

The church was both conventual and parochial; the nave, as usual in such cases, being the people’s portion. The chancel, both in proportions and detail, is a very fine example of the Decorated style. In the south transept is a beautiful altar tomb with a richly carved canopy; the occupant is unknown. So is the resting-place of Bishop Ayscough. Another fine monument is that in the nave to Sir Ralph Cheney (1401). The beautiful and original fourteenth-century glass should be noticed and also the Jacobean pulpit. Of the conventual buildings nothing remains, but a few fragments of the succeeding mansion of the Pauletts are now incorporated in a neighbouring farmhouse. A magnificent yew in the churchyard probably antedates the present church, and may have been contemporary with an earlier parish church of which all record has been lost.

[Illustration: WESTBURY WHITE HORSE.]

The road goes onward through the charming villages nestling under the northern bastions of the Plain that is still on the right hand as it was at Heytesbury. We are now on the opposite side with lonely Imber four miles away over the hills, the only settlement between the former town and Edington. “If one would forsake the world let him go to Imber,” says a modern writer, and an old couplet runs “Imber on the Down, four miles from any town.” After passing Coulston and Erlestoke (a gem among



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beautiful hamlets), from rising ground near by, may be obtained truly glorious views of the west country toward Bath and Bristol and the distant Severn Sea. A lane now turns left to Cheverell, where is a fine old mansion with an interesting courthouse and cells for prisoners, and an Early English church with a Perpendicular tower. Within the church is a tablet to Sir James Stonehouse, of interest to those who have explored the Plain, for this was the “Mr. Johnson” of Hannah More’s *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* and the cottage in which the shepherd—David Saunders—lived is still shown in the village.

We now approach a parting of the ways. The Salisbury-Devizes road crosses that we have been travelling, which runs west and east from Frome to Andover. Southwards toward Salisbury is the pleasant little town of West Lavington. Here is a famous college for farmers known as the Dauntsey School. It was endowed in 1895, partly from certain moneys left by Alderman Dauntsey who flourished in the fifteenth century. The Dauntsey almshouses were also an institution associated with this benevolent merchant. The church is an interesting building of various dates, from Norman to Perpendicular. The Dauntsey chapel was erected on the south side in the early fifteenth century for the family of that name; another, called the Beckett chapel, stands to the south of the chancel. A fine altar tomb, one of two in the south transept, bears a recumbent effigy of Henry Danvers. Among other objects of interest is the memorial of Captain Henry Penruddocke, shot by soldiers of the Parliament, while asleep in one of the houses of the village. The road through West Lavington leads to the heart of the Plain at Tilshead, passing at its highest point St. John a Gore Cross, where a chantry chapel once stood, a shrine where travellers might make their orisons before braving the terrors of the great waste. Tilshead met with a curious misfortune in 1841, according to the inscription on one of the cottages. A great flood, caused by a very sudden thaw which liberated some miles of snow-water on the higher portions of the Plain, tore down the narrow (and usually waterless) valley and caused great destruction in the tiny village; the old Norman church being the only building that was quite undamaged. Market Lavington is farther east on the Pewsey road. It was once of some importance and is one of those decayed towns that almost justify Cobbett’s claim that the population in the valleys around the Plain was very much greater in olden days. The church here has a fine Perpendicular tower, and is partly of this style and partly Decorated. Within will be observed a squint, an ancient credence table in the chancel, and a stoup in the vestry.

[Illustration: PORCH HOUSE, POTTERNE.]



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Our road now runs northward past Lavington station to Potterne, three miles from the Lavington cross roads and eleven from Westbury. This is one of the most attractive villages in Wiltshire; remarkable for its half-timbered houses of the fifteenth century, especially that known as "Porch House," purchased and restored by the late George Richmond. This is supposed to be identical with the old Pack Horse Inn that once stood in the village. Potterne Church is a fine example of Early English, and the natural dignity of the building is enhanced by its domination of the village around it. It is said to have been built by the same Bishop Poore who erected Salisbury Cathedral, and is the only church on the present site. An earlier building was once in the old churchyard. The Perpendicular tower will be admired for its proportions and detail. When restorations were in progress in 1872 the archaic tub-shaped font, now standing at the end of the church, was discovered under the present font. Around the rim are inscribed the words of the ancient baptismal office:—SICUT. GERVUS. DESIDERAT. AD. FONTES AQUARUM. ITA. DISIDERAT. ANIMA. MEA. AD. TE. DS. AMEN. (Psalm xlii. 1). There are several interesting brasses and memorials in the church and outside on the north side will be seen an old dole table for the distribution of alms.

Two miles of pleasant undulating road now bring us to Devizes upon its hill beyond the railway. The town kept, until about a hundred years ago, its old style "The Devizes"—Ad Divisas,[4] the place where the boundaries of three manors met. This is the generally accepted explanation of the name, though there is still room for conjecture. Remains, considerable in the aggregate, of the Roman period have been discovered in the town and immediate neighbourhood. It is quite possible that a Roman origin of the town itself may be looked for; but it is as a feudal stronghold hold that Devizes began to make its history and as a humble dependency of that stronghold the modern town took its beginning. The castle was built by Bishop Roger in the early years of Henry I, and its chief function seems to have been that of a prison. Robert, the eldest son of the Conqueror, was shut up in it. Soon afterwards, its builder, having taken the side of Maud in her quarrel with Stephen, was imprisoned in a beast house belonging to the castle, when the king, in one of his smaller successes, took possession. Another notable prisoner was Hubert de Burgh, who escaped and flew to St. John's Church for sanctuary; his gaolers recaptured him at the altar, but soon afterwards gave him liberty on being threatened with the wrath of the Church. During the reign of Edward III the nephews of the French king were kept here as hostages. Its last appearance in history was during the Civil War, when the keep was defended by Sir Edward Lloyd for the King, but according to Leland it must by that time have fallen into evil state, for, in 1536, he writes: "It is now in



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ruine and parte of the front of the towres of the gate of the kepe and the chapell in it were caried full unprofitably, onto the buyldynge of Master Baintons place at Bromeham full four miles of,” and after Cromwell had “slighted” it, the remnants, goodly enough even then, were used as a free quarry by anyone desiring to build. The mound and ditch that surrounded the outer walls and a few fragments of the masonry of a dungeon is all that can be seen to-day, but the mound is crowned by a modern and rather imposing castellated building.

[4] An ancient countryman may occasionally be met with who will direct the pedestrian to “the ‘Vize.”

The Castle church was St. John’s, though of course the fortress had its own chapel within the walls. Originally a Norman building, St. John’s was much altered during the fifteenth century, when the present nave was erected and the Tudor chapels of the chancel were added. The tower is one of the finest and most dignified that we have in the older style. The ceiling of the south chapel, added to the church by Lord St. Amand, is a beautiful example of the woodwork of the early Tudor period, as is that of the present vestry and one-time chapel on the north side. An extension of the nave took place in 1865, when the old west front was much altered.

[Illustration: ST. JOHN’S, DEVIZES.]

St. Mary’s, the town church, has a Norman chancel and Perpendicular nave and tower. On the beautiful old roof of the nave is a record of the actual date and the builder’s name:—

ORATE PRO AIA WILLI SMYTH QUI ISTA ECCLIAM FIERI FECIT,
QUI OBIIT PRIMO DIE MENSIS JUNII ANNO DNE MILLO CCCCXXXVI.

A fine statue of the Virgin will be noticed in the eastern gable of the nave. The Transitional south porch has a not unpleasing upper story dating from 1612.

The streets between the two churches have some good old houses in them, and the first traversed is called the “Brittox,” said to be derived from “Bretesque,” the name for the outer defences of the castle. The broad market place is one of the most spacious in the kingdom, and a very interesting sight on market days. Here one may see the shepherd of Salisbury Plain, or rather, of the Marlborough Downs, in typical costume—long weather-stained cloak and round black felt, almost brimless, hat, described by Lady Tennant as having a bunch of flowers stuck in the brim, but this the writer had never the fortune to see until the summer of 1921 when the shepherd was also wearing his own old cavalry breeches and puttees! In the centre of the throng rises the mock Gothic pinnacled market cross, presented to Devizes in 1814 by Henry Addington,



afterwards Viscount Sidmouth, who succeeded Pitt as Premier. There is a remarkable inscription upon one side of the pedestal which, for the benefit of those unable personally to peruse it, a portion is here appended:—



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On Thursday the 25th of January 1753
Ruth Pierce of Pottern, in this County agreed with
Three other women to buy a Sack of Wheat in the Market
Each paying her due proportion toward the same.
One of these women, in collecting
The Several Quotas of Money discovered a Deficiency,
And demanded of Ruth Pierce the sum which was wanting
To make good the amount: Ruth Pierce protested
That she had paid her share and said "She wished
That she might drop down dead if she had not."
She rashly repeated this awful wish, when, to the
Consternation and Terror of the surrounding Multitude
She instantly fell down and expired, having the Money
Concealed in her hand.

The "Bear" is a spacious inn made out of two fine old houses, and is famous as the hostelry where the father of Sir Thomas Lawrence was at one time landlord. He was a man of literary tastes and public-spirited withal, for he is said to have erected posts upon the lonely hills hereabouts to guide wayfarers to civilization. Those who have seen Salisbury Plain in its winter aspect will appreciate what this meant at the end of the eighteenth century, when cultivation, and the consequent fence, was not in existence thereon, and to be lost on the Downs in the snow was a serious adventure. The account of the Lawrence family in Fanny Burney's Diary is of much interest and throws an intimate light on certain aspects of English provincial life at that time.

Besides a large number of pleasant and dignified houses of the eighteenth century, Devizes has a few older ones, principally in the alleys at the back of St. John Street; and some fine public buildings that would not disgrace a town of more consequence. Foremost among these is the Corn Exchange, close to the "Bear." On its front will be noticed a statue of the goddess of agriculture. The edifice over which she presides is of imposing size and shows how great an amount of business must have been transacted here in the past. The Town Hall contains several objects of interest which are shown to the visitor, including a fine set of old corporation plate. The ancient hall of the wool merchants' Guild is near the castle. Its purpose has long forsaken the old walls, but under the care of the present occupiers the well-being of the building is assured. The museum is well worth seeing. Here is the famous "Marlborough Bucket," said to be of Armorican origin. It was discovered near Marlborough by Sir R.C. Hoare, and its contents proved it to be a cinerary urn of a date probably not much anterior to the Roman occupation of Britain. The geological collections—stones and fossils; and some interesting models of Avebury and Stonehenge, and particularly the Stourhead antiquities—British and prehistoric—should on no account be missed.

An old diary of royal progresses gives the following account of a foreign visit in 1786:—



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“On September 25 the Archduke and Duchess of Austria with their suite arrived in town from Bath. On the road, as they came through the Devizes, they met with a singular occurrence, which afforded them some entertainment. A custom has prevailed in that place, of which the following story is the foundation: A poor weaver passing through the place without money and friends, being overtaken by hunger and in the utmost necessity, applied for charity to a baker, who kindly gave him a penny loaf. The weaver made his way to Coventry, where, after many years' industry, he amassed a fortune, and by his will, in remembrance of the seasonable charity of the Devizes, he bequeathed a sum in trust, for the purpose of distributing on the anniversary of the day when he was so relieved a halfpenny loaf to every person in the town, gentle and simple, and to every traveller that should pass through the town on that day a penny loaf. The will is faithfully administered, and the Duke of Austria and his suite passing through the town on the day of the Coventry loaf, on their way from Bath to London, a loaf was presented to each of them, of which the Duke and Duchess were most cheerfully pleased to accept, and the custom struck the Archduke so forcibly as a curious anecdote in his travels that he minuted down the circumstance, and the high personages seemed to take delight in breakfasting on the loaf thus given as the testimony of gratitude for a favour seasonably conferred.”

[Illustration: BISHOP'S CANNINGS.]

St. James' Church, with its fine Perpendicular tower, will be passed if the main road is taken toward Avebury. A better way for the traveller on foot is to go by the beautiful avenue called Quakers' Walk to Roundway Down and Oliver's Camp, the last named being actually an ancient encampment, given its present name because the battle for Devizes in the Civil War took place close by. The fight was not a Parliamentary success and Waller was forced to retire before the King's men under Lord Wilmot. The Down was in consequence renamed "Runaway" by the jubilant Cavaliers. Below the face of the hill to the south-west is the picturesque village of Rowde, famous for its quaint old inn. If the Roundway route is chosen a descent should be made to Bishop's Cannings lying snugly under the steep side of Tan Hill. Here is a magnificent church of much interest and beauty. The cruciform building is in the main Transitional and Early English. The dignified central tower has a spire of stone. The corbels supporting the roof are carved with representations of Kings and Abbots. The interior is impressive in its splendid proportions and graceful details, and of especial beauty are the Perpendicular arches inserted in the nave. The fine triple lancets of the chancel, transepts and west end also call for notice. To the east of the south transept is the former chapel of Our Lady of the Bower. This has been the Ernle chantry since 1563. It contains monuments of



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this family and an ancient helmet bearing their crest hangs on the wall. The south transept has a piscina and in the north transept is a curious old carved chair, said to have been used by the guardian of a shrine, but whose or what shrine is unknown. The two-storied building on the north-east of the chancel, consisting of a sacristy and priest's room, is the oldest part of the church. James I was entertained in the village during one of his progresses by the vicar who, with the help of his parishioners, rendered some of his own compositions for the edification of the King.

The Avebury road now ascends the sparsely inhabited chalk hills, part of the range known under the general designation of the Marlborough Downs. To the left, on the northern slopes of Roundway Down, have been erected a number of gaunt and lofty wireless masts, visible for a great distance. They may be said to stand in a cemetery, so numerous are the round barrows scattered about the surrounding hills. After passing a reservoir on the left the road reaches the lonely "Shepherd's Shore," nearly 600 feet up. Just past this point the mysterious Wansdyke is crossed. Hereabouts the Dyke runs in a fairly straight line east and west, where this direction keeps to the summit of the hills. It is well seen from our road as it descends on the right from Horton Down. To the east it eventually becomes lost in the fastnesses of Savernake Forest. Westwards it is, for some distance, identical with the Roman road to Bath. The "Wodensdyke" appears to have been made to protect south-western England from foes coming out of the midlands, but whether it was the work of Brito-Roman or West Saxon is unknown. Our way now drops past three conspicuous barrows on the left, with the Lansdown Column showing up on the summit of Cherhill Down beyond. This was erected to commemorate the birth of Edward VII. Presently, in the other direction, to the right front, appears the dark mass of Silbury Hill, perhaps another monument to a great monarch, but of an age too distant for conjecture.

Seven miles from Devizes we reach the Bath road at Beckhampton, first crossing the track of the old Roman Bath-Silchester way about three-quarters of a mile before it joins the modern road. We are now in the valley of the Kennet, which here turns east after an infant course under the long line of Hackpen Hill and through the out-of-the-way villages of Winterbourne Basset, Monkton and Berwick Basset. The "winter bourne" is actually the baby Kennet, that in dry summers hardly makes an appearance. Berwick has a family connexion with Wooton, over the hills and far away to the north-west. Hackpen is almost the final effort of the chalk in this direction. At its northern end it rises to 884 feet, an isolated section being crowned by Barbury Camp, ringed by its beech trees, from which there is a grand view north and west. From this point the general trend of the chalk escarpment is north-east to the Lambourn



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Downs, between Lambourn and Wantage. Along the brow of this long ridge wanders that fascinating old track indifferently termed Ridgeway and Icknield Way, which only leaves the highlands to cross the Thames at Streatley. But we are off our own track now and must return to Avebury, or Abury as the natives have it. The village is a mile from Beckhampton, and a short distance up the by-road the first glimpse of our goal may be had on the left in the two “Long Stones” just visible across a field. A little farther one gets the best distant view of Silbury Hill—one which shows its artificial character and true shape to great advantage. The sombre tone of the turf that clothes it is remarkable; when seen against the pale sweep of the Downs behind, its sides do not appear to *reflect* light at all.

[Illustration: SILBURY HILL.]

“As a cathedral is to a parish church,” Aubrey’s comparison of Avebury with Stonehenge is difficult to understand upon merely a casual visit. To grasp the unique character of this, the oldest prehistoric monument in Europe, and perhaps in the world, we must take for granted the investigations and discoveries of antiquaries and archaeologists during the last 250 years, and if the comparison between their conjectural but approximately correct plans and the present aspect of this mysterious relic of the Stone Age is disappointing and perplexing, we can only be thankful that the work of Farmer Green and Tom Robinson, the two despoilers mentioned by the earliest investigators, has been prevented in their descendants, and that though the circles are incapable of restoration, the few stones that remain will be preserved for all time.

Avebury is undoubtedly older than Stonehenge and must belong to the true Neolithic period, whether the former does or not. Of the original six hundred and fifty megaliths eighteen are standing and about the same number are buried. Some are nearly 17 feet high, and the rampart that encloses the Temple is no less than 4,500 feet round and from 10 to 20 feet in height, though it is computed that from the bottom of the ditch to the wall must have originally been nearly 50 feet. The modern village, built of some of the missing stones, is partly within the circular earthwork. This rampart is the only part of the great work which can be readily comprehended by the visitor. A circle of one hundred stones is said by the archaeologist Stukely to have stood around the edge of the enclosure, forty-four still standing in his time (1720). The same writer asserts that within the great circle were two other separate rings consisting of thirty stones, and each containing an inner circle of twelve stones. The northern of these rings had three large stones in the middle; the southern, one enormous stone 27 feet high and nearly 9 feet round. One, or possibly two, avenues of stones led south-east and south-west; that going in the direction of West Kennet may still be traced



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and fifteen stones remain, but the other is conjectural, if it existed at all. The two megaliths seen from the Beckhampton road may be a remnant of it. The purpose of all this intricate and elaborate work is a puzzling problem and, like the mystery of Stonehenge, will probably remain a secret to the end. The literature of Avebury, not quite so copious as that of the stones of the Plain, is also more diffident in its guessing. Avebury has given a title to the most modest and thorough of its students, and his writings on this and the other prehistoric monuments of Wiltshire, a county that must have been a holy land some thousands of years ago, should be studied by all who have any concern in the long-buried past of their country.

Avebury Church, just without the rampart, was originally a Saxon building, its aisles being Norman additions. The chancel was rebuilt in 1879, but certain old features are preserved. The fine tower is Perpendicular. The font may be Saxon, though the ornamentation is of a later date. Avebury Manor House, beyond the churchyard, is a beautiful old sixteenth-century dwelling; it marks the site of a twelfth-century monastery.

About one mile south of Avebury rises the extraordinary mound called Silbury Hill, as wonderful in its way as either of the two great stone circles of Wiltshire and perhaps part of one plan with them. It is said to be the largest artificial hill in Europe and bears comparison, as far as the labour involved in its erection is concerned, with the Pyramids. The mound is 1,660 feet round at the base and covers over five acres. It is now just 130 feet high, but when made it is probable that the top was more acute and consequently higher. A circle of sarsens once surrounded the base, but these have almost all disappeared. Pepys repeats an old tradition that a King Seall was buried upon the hill; but it is extraordinary that Avebury and Silbury were less known to our forefathers than Stonehenge, and the first mention of these two places, as being of antiquarian or historic interest, is in the seventeenth century. Excavations during recent years have done little or nothing to clear up the mystery of Silbury. The fact that the Roman road (which leaves the Bath road just west of Silbury) here deviates slightly from its usual straightness is significant and proves that the mound was in existence when the road was made. The villagers around used to ascend the hill on Palm Sunday to eat "fig cakes" and drink sugar and water. It has been suggested that this ceremony had some connexion with the gospel story of the barren fig tree, but it is much more probable that the tradition has a very early origin. As a matter of fact the cakes were mostly made with raisins which are called figs by natives of Wessex.

[Illustration: DEVIL'S DEN.]



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To the south-east of Silbury is the "Long Barrow," one of the most famous in England. This tumulus is over 330 feet long and about 60 feet wide. When the stone chamber was opened some years ago, four skeletons were found within. Vestiges of a small stone circle remain on the South of the Bath road, between it and the Kennet, and almost on the track of the Ridgeway. If the Way is followed northwards towards the slopes of Overton Hill we reach the "quarry" where most of the megalithic monuments of Wiltshire originated. These extraordinary stones, thickly scattered over the southern slopes of the Marlborough Downs, are generally known as the "Grey Wethers," or "Sarsens." At one time supposed to have been brought to their present position by glacial action, they are now said to be, and undoubtedly are, the result of denudation. They are composed of a hard grey sandstone which once covered the chalk; the softer portions wearing away left the tough core lying in isolated masses upon the hills. Not far away in Clatford Bottom is the "Devil's Den," a cromlech upon the remains of a long barrow; the upper slab measures nine feet by eight. The Downs above Fyfield form a magnificent galloping and training ground for the racing stables near by. Our road, the Bath highway, now follows the Kennet into Marlborough, six miles from Avebury.

[Illustration: MARLBOROUGH.]

CHAPTER XI

THE BERKSHIRE BORDER AND NORTH HAMPSHIRE

Marlborough is in Wiltshire, but it will be legitimate to start a slight exploration of the middle course of the Kennet from the old Forest town. Here the clear chalk stream, fresh from the highlands of the Marlborough Downs, runs as a clear and inviting little river at the foot of the High Street gardens. For Marlborough is a flowery and umbrageous town in its "backs," however dull it may appear to the traveller by the railway, from which dis-vantage point most English towns look their very worst.

Although the river was never wide enough to bring credit or renown to Marlborough, the borough had another channel of profit and good business in its position on the Bath Road. The part that great highway played in the two hundred years which ended soon after Queen Victoria commenced her long reign seems likely to have a renewal in these days of revived road travel. Ominous days are these for the iron ways that, for almost a century, have half ruined the old road towns of England, but at the same time left them in such a state of suspended animation that they are mostly delightful and unspoilt reminders of another age.

The fine and spacious High Street that once echoed with the horns of a dozen coaches in the course of an afternoon now hums with the machinery of half a hundred motors in an hour, and if they do not all stop, some do, and leave the worthy burgesses a greater amount of wealth and a cleaner roadway than their more picturesque predecessors.



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The municipality is very ancient and still retains some quaint customs. Not that, however, of the medieval fee for admission to the corporation consisting of two greyhounds, two white capons, and a white bull! The last item must have given the aspirant for civic honour much wearisome searching of farmyards before he found the acceptable colour. Like so many of the old towns through which we have wandered, Marlborough has suffered from fire; one in the middle of the seventeenth century was of particular fury, for, with the exception of the beautiful old gabled houses on the higher side of the sloping main street, the town was then practically destroyed. "Two hundred and fifty dwellings and Saint Mary's church are gone, and over three hundred families forced to crave the hospitality of the neighbouring farmers and gentry, or wander about the fields vainly looking for shelter. Every barn and beast-house filled to overflowing."

The tradesmen of High Street say that theirs is the widest street in England. This may be so. It is undoubtedly one of the most pleasant and picturesque, and "the great houses supported on pillars," to which Pepys refers in his Diary, still remain on the north side.

Marlborough had not actually a Roman beginning. The station known as Cunetio was nearly three miles away to the east. But the castle hill antedates this period considerably and is supposed to be an artificial mound of unknown antiquity, perhaps made by the men who reared Silbury Hill. It is said that within lie the bones of Merlin. Quite possibly this idea arose from the resemblance of the ancient form of Marlborough—"Merlebergh" to the name of the half legendary sorcerer. The real origin of the town-name is supposed to be the West Saxon "Maer-leah" or cattle boundary. Here was erected in the earlier years of the Conqueror's reign a castle that was strengthened and rebuilt in succeeding generations until, somewhere about the rise of the Tudor power, it was allowed to fall into decay. It was probably in the Castle Chapel of St. Nicholas that King John was married to Isabella of Gloucester in 1180, and in the church at Preshute, the parish church of the Castle, is an enormous font of black marble brought from this chapel. A tradition has it that King John was baptized in it. The only real fighting recorded as taking place around the Castle, while it was in existence, was during the time of Fitz Gilbert, who held it for the Empress Maud. Of more importance was the sallying forth, during the Civil War, of the Royalists, who had fortified a mansion which had arisen from the Castle ruins, against the republican town, capturing and partly burning it. The soldiers displayed great savagery, fifty-three houses being destroyed. The garrison of "the most notoriously disaffected town in Wiltshire" was the first taken in the War. The Castle was also famous as the place of meeting for the Parliament of Henry III which passed the "Statutes of Marlborough," the Charter for which Simon de Montfort had risked and suffered so much.



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Of more living interest are the ancient and beautiful buildings of Marlborough School, instituted in 1843 by a number of public-spirited men, headed by a priest of the Church of England—Charles Plater. The school is the scene of Stanley Weyman's *The Castle Inn*, for it was formerly that historic hostel, one of the finest and most famous in England, before the disappearance of the road traveller caused the collapse of the old-fashioned posting-houses. Before the year 1740 it had been a mansion, originally built by Lord Seymour during the reign of Charles II. It afterwards passed through several hands, and, while in the possession of Lady Hertford, saw the entertainment of some of the literary lions of the day, including Thomson of *The Seasons* and Isaac Watts. In 1767, when it had become the largest inn in England, it was the headquarters of Lord Chatham who, while on the road, developed an attack of gout and, shutting himself up in his room, remained there some weeks. "Everybody who travelled that road was amazed by the number of his attendants. Footmen and grooms, dressed in his family livery, filled the whole inn and swarmed in the streets of the little town. The truth was that the invalid had insisted that during his stay all the waiters and stable boys of the 'Castle' should wear his livery." The fine school chapel was added in 1882 and several extensive and necessary additions have been made to the original buildings. Among famous headmasters may be mentioned Dean Bradley and Dean Farrar.

[Illustration: GARDEN FRONT, MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE.]

King Edward the VI Grammar School is at the far end of the town. The old buildings were pulled down in 1905. In this school Dr. Sacheverell, who was born in Marlborough, received his education. The present St. Mary's Church practically dates from the great fire of 1653, and is a very poor specimen of debased Perpendicular. The chancel was added in 1874. A Norman doorway at the west end should be noticed. The tower of the church shows traces of the Royalist attack on the town in 1642. St. Peter's Church, not far from the College, is Perpendicular, and from its high and finely designed tower, curfew still rings each night through the year. Within, the groined roof and beautiful design of the windows are worthy of notice.

Beautiful in the extreme is the walk through Savernake Forest which, if it is not to be compared with the New Forest either in size or wildness, does in one particular surpass the latter, namely in its magnificent vistas and beech avenues. The central walk between Marlborough and Savernake is unsurpassed in England and probably in Europe. It leads to Tottenham House, situated at the eastern extremity and belonging to the Marquis of Ailesbury. This mansion stands on the site of an old house of the Seymours, to whom the Forest passed from the Plantagenet Kings (it was a jointure of Queen Eleanor). By marriage the estates afterwards went to the Bruces, who still hold them.



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Herds of deer roam the open glades, and wild life is abundant and varied. In some parts of the Forest the thickets and dense undergrowth are reminiscent of the district between the Rufus Stone and Fording-bridge in the greater Forest, but the highest beauty of Savernake lies in the avenues of oak and beech which extend for miles and meet about midway between Durley and Marlborough. Here are no fir plantations to strike an alien note. Rugged and ancient trees that were saplings in Stuart times or before and the dense young growth of to-day are all natural to the soil. The column that stands on high ground, a little over a mile from Savernake station, commemorates, among other events, the temporary recovery of George III from his mental illness.

Great Bedwyn was once a Parliamentary borough and, in more remote times still, a town of importance. It has a station on the Reading-Taunton Railway and can be reached by circuitous roads from Savernake Forest. Although nominally still a market town, it is really but a large village. It is mentioned in the Saxon records as the scene of a battle between the men of Wessex and those of Mercia in the great struggle for domination in 675. The cruciform church is a fine structure, mostly built of flint and dating from Transitional times. The chancel is Early English and the transepts Decorated, but the nave is of the older style with fine ornamentation. In the chancel will be noticed the effigy of Sir John Seymour (1536), the father of Protector Somerset. A brass commemorates another John Seymour, brother of the Protector. There is also a monument to a daughter of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. In the south transept is an effigy, cross legged, of Sir Adam de Stokke (1312) and a plain slab with an incised cross of another of his family. The church has a quantity of stained glass of much beauty. An ancient Market Hall once stood in the centre of the spacious main street; while it stood the villagers were reminded of the vanished glories of Bedwyn. The road proceeds past Chisbury Hill, a prehistoric camp on the Wansdyke. Within the earthwork is a barn that was once the Decorated church of St. Martin. Mr. A.H. Allcroft thinks that the original building was erected shortly after the drawn battle between Wessex and Mercia that took place on the Downs hereabouts in 675. Froxfield is reached just short of the Berkshire border and the way accompanies the railway and canal through Little Bedwyn, where is a stone-spired church dating from the early thirteenth century. Froxfield Church is outside the village on a hill. It is a small and ancient Norman building, quaint and picturesque. The old Somerset Hospital here was founded in 1686 by Sarah Duchess of Somerset for thirty widows of the clergy and others; about half that number are now maintained in the beautiful old buildings, grouped round a quadrangle high above the road.



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At Hungerford, the first town in Berkshire, over nine miles *direct* from Marlborough, we return to the Kennet. The townsmen are proud of the fact that their liberties were given them by John of Gaunt, who held the Royal Manor, which afterwards became the property of the town, and as proof of the charter they still show the stranger a famous horn presented to the burgesses by the great Duke of Lancaster. A fierce battle is said to have raged on the banks of the Kennet between West Saxons and Danes, where now anglers whip the stream for the fat trout that this part of Kennet breeds. The historic *Bear Inn* was the lodging of William of Orange on the night of December 6, 1688, when he received the messengers of James II. Hungerford Church is now of small interest. It has been rebuilt within recent times and contains little from the old building. A cross-legged effigy is supposed to represent Sir Robert de Hungerford (1340).

In coming from Marlborough to Hungerford the valley of the Kennet has been left to the north, but only for the purpose of noting the beauties that lie around Savernake Forest and the course of the Avon Canal. The Kennet in its upper course is equally beautiful and, if possible, an additional journey should be made through the picturesque village of Axford, passing on the way Mildenhall, the one-time Cunetio. The site of the Roman station is now marked by Folly Farm. The most attractive place on this part of the river is Ramsbury, six miles from Marlborough and five from Hungerford. That this little town was evidently of great antiquity is proved by the important place it held in the tenth century, when it was a "stool" of the Bishop of Wiltshire. Originally the name of the town was Hrafensbyrig or Ravensbury. The Early English church contains a number of interesting relics of the supposed cathedral discovered in the restoration of the existing building. They consist of sculptured stones of fine design and well preserved. In the Darell Chapel is an altar tomb and others to various members of this once famous family. A canopied tomb of William de St. John stands in the chancel. Other interesting items are the finely sculptured font and stoups at the north and south doors. Ramsbury Park has been passed on the way here from Marlborough. In it is the manor house, a seventeenth-century building, containing a famous collection of armour. The Kennet is at its best as it flows through the park.

On the Hungerford side of Ramsbury, and to the south of the Kennet, is the famous Littlecote Manor, a magnificent and unexcelled sixteenth-century house. Built by the Darells it passed to the Pophams, one of whom was a leader of the Parliamentarians. A gruesome and probably true story is told of the last of the Darells—"Wild Dayrell." A midwife deposed that she had been fetched blindfold to attend a lady at dead of night. When her offices were over, a wild-looking man seized the infant and hurled it in a blazing fire. Afterwards apprehended, Darell by some trick managed to defeat justice.



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A beautiful side excursion can be taken soon after leaving Ramsbury to Aldbourne, three miles from the Hungerford road. This small town, which boasts a fine church of much dignity and interest, is situated at the end of the lonely expanse of Aldbourne Chase. From the heights above views may be had of the distant Cotswold and Malvern Hills. Chilton Foliat, picturesquely placed on the river bank, is the only village passed on the way to Hungerford. Its church contains a number of monuments to the Popham family and a cross-legged effigy of an unknown person.

Kintbury is three miles from Hungerford on the road which follows the canal and railway toward Newbury. The interesting and partly Norman church was pulled about in a shameful manner in the middle of the last century. Another restoration about forty years ago repaired the mischief as far as was possible. The Norman doorways remain much in their original condition, also the chancel arch and the two squints. Kintbury is a pleasant and typical Berkshire village, little altered by the railway, which seems to have spared these old towns and villages in the Kennet valley in a remarkable way, possibly because "desirable villadom" has taken itself entirely to the banks of the Thames away to the north.

The road may be now taken northwards over the Kennet Bridge in two miles to Avington, which is only about two miles from Hungerford direct and just off the main Newbury road. The church here should on no account be missed. It is a perfect gem of pure Norman architecture, the only portion of later date being the Tudor south porch and arch near the font; the priest's door; vestry arch and window, and a low side window. It will be noticed that the chancel arch is broken at the top. The font has grotesque sculpture upon it, the subjects being doubtful. The early carvings and arabesques in the church are of great interest and will repay careful scrutiny. Avington is one of the smallest of hamlets, but wonderfully pretty in its setting of green on the river-bank. The picturesque rectory is close to the church.

The Newbury road runs about half a mile north of the river past Stock Cross and Benham Park to Speen, generally supposed to be identical with Spinae, the Roman station at the junction of the roads from Bath and Cirencester to Silchester. Not far from the rebuilt church is an ancient well over which has been erected in recent years a Gothic arch. One mile farther, eight from Hungerford, and we are in Newbury, perhaps the "new burb" in comparison with the older settlement of Speen. A castle built in 1140 was in existence but a few years. It was destroyed by King Stephen after being held for the Empress Maud during a three months' siege. Newbury took part in the Wars of the Roses and stood for the House of York. When the Lancastrians entered the town in 1460 the partisans of York were put to the sword. Every one has heard of "Jack of Newbury." He was a rich cloth merchant named John Smallwood



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who lived in North-Brook Street at a time when the town was famed for its woollen trade. His patriotism led him to gather one hundred and fifty of the youth of Newbury and, himself marching at their head, took part with his men in the battle of Flodden. His house still stands, although greatly altered to outward appearance; in its old rooms Henry VIII was received as a guest and proffered to the worthy clothier a knighthood in recognition of his services to the state, an honour which Smallwood sturdily refused.

During the Marian persecutions the Master of Reading School—Julian Palmer, with others, was burnt at the stake. But the stirring events of the Civil War eclipse the earlier historical interest. Two important battles were fought in the near vicinity of the town. The first took place on September 20, 1643. The Londoners, under Essex, were returning to the capital after raising the siege of Gloucester, and had taken the longer, and southern, route as being the most open and practicable. News of the approach reached the King at Oxford and it was decided to stop them and give battle. Essex had led his men out of Hungerford the day before and in the evening he found his way barred by the Royalist cavalry at Newbury Wash. The Parliamentary forces bivouacked on Crockham Heath and next morning opened the attack. They were fortunate enough to be able to seize the high ground commanding the Kintbury road before the King's men awoke to the importance of the position. The Life Guards under Biron charged up the hill with great valour, but failed to shift the stubborn townsmen, and brave and gentle Falkland was killed in the melee. On the Highclere road, about a mile out of Newbury, stands the monument to this noble and pathetic figure, whose heart seems to have been broken by the wretched times in which he lived.

On the other side of the field Prince Rupert, after repeated attempts to cut a way through the London infantry, met with as little success as the Guards, and the vanguard of the Parliamentary Army had forced its way steadily along the London road, so that, when night fell, after a day of heroic fighting on both sides, the King decided to retire into Newbury, and the way into London was open to the Republicans.

The second battle took place after a year had passed, on October 27, 1644. The King's cause had been victorious in the west, and his army had afterwards successfully relieved Donnington Castle. The Royal forces were in a strong position to the north of Newbury, between Shaw House and the Kennet, with Donnington in the centre of the defences. The Army of the Parliament, under the joint command of Essex and Manchester, and numbering among the sub-commandants Cromwell and the redoubtable Waller, made a concerted attack from front and rear. In this fight the honours may be said to have lain with the King as, with the exception of the artillery, the Royal losses were small and a successful retreat during the night quite defeated the object of the Republican attack, which was to smash, once and for all, the army opposed to them.



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Beautiful old Shaw House, one of the finest in Berkshire, still shows traces of the fight in the earthworks that partly encircle it. The mansion was built by another celebrated clothier of Newbury, one Thomas Dolman, whose namesake and descendant was knighted at the Restoration.

Newbury Church was rebuilt by "Jack of Newbury," and the date of its completion (1532) may be seen on a corbel. This was after Smallwood's death, the work being finished by his son. The clothier's brass (1519) may be seen among others. The appointments of the church are fine and imposing; the Jacobean pulpit, dated 1607, should be noticed, also the history of the church, in the form of an illuminated chart, on the west wall. The hero of the town was married in the chapel of the old Hospital of St. Bartholomew which was turned into a school in the reign of Edward VI. Some of the school buildings are of a later date than this. The most picturesque old house in the town, which really contains few that are ancient, is Newbury Museum, once the Cloth Hall. There is a pleasing glimpse of the Kennet from the short high bridge in the main street and a still pleasanter view of the bridge itself from the river path below.

[Illustration: CLOTH HALL, NEWBURY.]

A charming excursion can be taken to Lambourne, up in the heart of the chalk hills to the north-west. This was one of King Alfred's towns, and until the coming of the light railway one of the most unknown and remote in the kingdom. Railway and road follow the course of the Lambourne, a delightful river, clear and cold from the chalk and never seeming to run dry, as do other streams of a like nature in exceptionally hot summers. Another railroad goes directly north from Newbury and forms the main route between Oxford and Winchester. This also penetrates the heart of the Berkshire uplands and taps a district inexhaustible in charm and interest, in the centre of which is Wantage, famous as the birthplace of Alfred. But this country has been fully described by Mr. Ditchfield in "Byeways in Berkshire."

The Bath road in a little over three miles from Newbury reaches Thatcham, once, by all accounts, a large and prosperous market town, but this was in the days of the Angevin kings. The great market square probably dates from their time and the battered remains of the old market cross may have replaced a still more ancient one. The fine church has a Norman door and Transitional arcading, but a very thorough "restoration" has obliterated most of the ancient features. The Danvers and Fuller tombs should be seen, also an interesting brass to Thomas Loundye. The fabric of a chantry chapel at the other end of the village dates from 1334, but it was much altered in externals in the early eighteenth century, when it was turned into a school.



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The Bath-London road that we have travelled from Marlborough now approaches the most beautiful stretches of the Kennet, lined with fine parklands on the gentle northern slopes of the valley. The high hedges and fences are in places very jealous of the beauties they encircle, but there are charming glimpses here and there of this pleasant countryside. Woolhampton, with a modern church of no particular interest, is passed four miles from Thatcham, and two miles farther comes Aldermaston Station, where we leave the great highway and turn south to Aldermaston Wharf on the Kennet Canal. This is a most pleasant spot, and to enhance the charm of the surroundings a large sheet of ornamental water has been formed, close to, and fed by, the channel. Aldermaston village is nearly two miles to the south-west and well-placed among the wooded hills that march with the Hampshire border. The aspect of the village is as unspoilt as any in the old Berkshire by-ways. At the southern end of the street are the gates of Aldermaston Park; a picturesque expanse of broken ground with several fine avenues, and populated by herds of deer. The old Jacobean mansion was burnt down in 1843, although a few of the ancient features were saved and incorporated in the new house. Close to the park is the church, the foundations of which are Norman, as are also the very fine and uncommon west door and two blocked-up doors in the chancel and nave. In the chapel on the south side is the tomb of Sir George Forster and his lady (1526) with their twenty attendant children. The knight's feet rest against his favourite hound and a lap dog is pulling at the lady's dress. There are also brasses to some other members of the Forster family which owned the manor during Elizabethan days. The pulpit and sounding board belong to this period. The lancet windows of the chancel date this portion of the church as about 1270. There are some ancient frescoes, faint and dim by contrast with the modern scheme of decoration; they represent St. Christopher carrying our Lord, and, below, a mermaid and fish.

Silchester is about four miles to the south-east by winding ways that lead over the hills of the Hampshire border. The traveller who comes prepared to find the actual ruins of the Roman Calleva spread before him will be grievously disappointed. The economic necessities of to-day have rendered the surrender of the site to the agriculturist as necessary as it is appropriate. The sandy soil of North Hants is a better protection to these remnants of a former civilization than all the tarpaulins or sheds that would otherwise have to be used. Minute and accurate plans of the foundations, that include those of a small Christian Basilica, were made in sections, as they were uncovered, over a period extending from 1864 to 1910. For a detailed study of the surveys, and of the many antiquities capable of removal, those interested must visit the Reading Museum. It has been found that the walls of Calleva followed the irregular outline of a former British stronghold, and instead of the usual square plan the outline of the city was seven-sided. The remnants of the flint walls are nearly one and three-quarter miles round and contain within their circumference about 100 acres. Within the east gate is an old farmhouse and the interesting parish church of Silchester, dating mostly from the thirteenth century.



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The beautiful fir woods that are such a feature of the surrounding landscape make rambles in any direction most delightful. By-ways may be taken eastwards to the Stratfields—Mortimer, Saye and Turgis. The second is well known as the residence of the great Duke of Wellington and his successors, who hold it by presenting a flag to the King on the anniversary of Waterloo.

About three miles south of Silchester is an interesting church at Bramley. It is more than probable that the ruins of the former place were used by the builders of this church. The older portions, the north side of the nave and the font, are Norman. Part of the chancel is Early English and the tower, built of brick, just antedates the Civil War. The ugly Brocas chapel on the south side was erected in the opening years of the nineteenth century. It contains a “monstrous fine” sculpture of one of the family and bears on the roof their gilded Moor’s head crest as a vane. The most interesting detail in the church is a series of wall paintings, including one of the martyrdom of St. Thomas a Becket. The west gallery was added in the early eighteenth century and is a handsome erection. Not far away is the fine old Manor House, now divided into tenements, but still a gracious and dignified “black-and-white” building.

A by-way going westwards through “Little London” eventually leads to a number of interesting villages, among them Pamber and Monk Sherborne, which form one parish. The church used by Pamber is a remnant of the old Priory church founded by Henry I, and consists of the ancient choir and tower dating from the end of the twelfth century. Within are a few relics of this period, including several old coffin slabs, a font and a wooden cross-legged effigy belonging to the thirteenth century. Monk Sherborne Church has a Norman door and chancel arch and also a piscina of this period. The remainder of the much-restored fabric is mainly Early English.

For our present goal—Kingsclere—the way is circuitous, but extremely pleasant. (In fine weather it is possible to take a short cut by field paths for the greater part of the distance.) After crossing the almost obliterated Port Way, as the road from Silchester to Old Sarum is called, and nearly eight miles of cross country rambling from Bramley, a main highway is reached at Wolverton, where the church is reputed to be a work of Sir Christopher Wren. This is unlikely, but the design of the tower is familiar to anyone acquainted with London City and dates, with the remainder of the fabric, from 1717. The red-brick walls relieved by white stone are a little startling at first in such an out-of-the-way village, but their effect is not unpleasing, and when the church is entered its fine proportions will be admired by anyone not slavishly bound to the worship of “Gothic.” The powers that once ruled here evidently thought otherwise, for several attempts have obviously been made to do away with some of the classic details. The fine contemporary woodwork of the chancel and other irreplaceable details were destroyed or seriously damaged by a destructive fire about twelve years ago.



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[Illustration: WOLVERTON.]

In another two miles Kingsclere is reached. This is a very ancient town and was under the Saxon Kings, as its name proclaims, a royal manor. Its "papers" go back to the eighth century. After the Conqueror's day it passed into the hands of the church, and Rouen Canons were its overlords. When they became aliens in political fact, the manor passed to William de Melton. King John had one of his hunting lodges at Freeman tie on the south of the town. No history has been made at Kingsclere since Charles passed the night of October 21, 1644, here, on his way to Newbury, but there is an air of "far-off things and battles long ago" about the quiet little town and its grey and solemn Norman church. The stern square church tower is a fine example of early twelfth-century work, majestic in its simplicity, but apart from this the exterior appears to have been scraped clean of ancient details by a drastic restoration. Within, the spacious and fine proportions of the building atone for a great deal that has been lost by the mistaken zeal of Victorian renovators. The font, pulpit and Norman north door are of especial interest; of less ancient details, the Jacobean pulpit and the great chandelier, dated 1713, call for notice.

The Downs to the south of Kingsclere are of much beauty and comparatively unknown to the tourist. Although of no great height and unremarkable in outline, the splendour of the colouring, especially after August is past, of the woods that cover the sides of the undulating billows of chalk is unforgettable. The Port Way, ignoring all hills and dales in its uncompromising straightness, occasionally shows itself as a rough track along the open side of a spinney, or as a well-marked score in the escarpment of a Down, but never as a modern highway east of Andover. The road winding and up and down westwards from Kingsclere is a pleasant enough adaptation of a possible British trackway, and brings us in a short four miles to Burghclere, where there is a station on the Great Western Railway between Newbury and Winchester. At Sydmonton, half a mile short of the railway, a grassy lane leads up to Ladle Hill (768 feet), the bold bastion of chalk to the south. Here we may obtain a fine view of the characteristic scenery of northern Hampshire. The curving undulations of the chalk have many a hut circle and tumulus to tell of the fierce life that once peopled these solitary wastes. Then the valleys were shunned as inimical to human kind. Now the depths of almost every wrinkle and fold has some habitation, and many a small hamlet lies out of sight among the trees, unguessed at from the hill-road above. Away to the south is Great Litchfield Down—literally the "Dead-field"; perhaps the scene of a great battle, but more probably the cemetery of a forgotten race. The still higher Beacon Hill (853 feet) appears close at hand, as does Sidown, on the other side of Burghclere, where is perhaps an even



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finer view. The old church down by the railway station was “polished up” in a very painstaking way about fifty years ago, but still retains a Norman nave which seems to have resisted the sandpapering process. Highclere Park and Castle form a show-place of the first rank; the park being beyond all praise. The slopes of the Downs and some of their summits are within this beautiful domain of the Earls of Carnarvon. Far away from the Castle the park is entirely natural and unconfined, but around the house—for an actual “castle” is non-existent—magnificent avenues of rhododendrons make a perfect blaze of colour in the early summer. The “Jacobean” pile high on the hillside is so only in name, for it was built by the architect of Big Ben. Once a favourite residence of the Bishops of Winchester, the Castle passed to the Crown in the sixteenth century and then, after purchase by Sir Robert Sawyer, to the Herberts by intermarriage with the last-named knight’s family. Highclere Church is a new building designed by Sir Gilbert Scott and stands just outside the park. It replaces an erection of the late seventeenth century which used to stand within a stone’s throw of the castle upon the site of another building of great antiquity.

It is possible to make a way past the woods of Sidown and by the Three Legged Cross Inn to Ashmansworth, where a few years ago a number of wall paintings, one an unique depiction of Pentecost, were discovered on the walls of the little old church that are supposed to have Roman materials built into them. From here we may continue more or less along the summits of the chalk uplands until the famous Inkpen, or Ingpen, Beacon is reached, in an isolated corner of north-western Berkshire. But alas! the former glory, on the map, of the Beacon has departed. Until quite recently it was thought that this, the highest section of the chalk in England, exceeded that mystic 1,000 feet that gives such a glamour to the mere hill and makes of it a local “mountain.” An added slur was cast upon Inkpen in the handing to the neighbouring Walbury Hill Camp of an additional five feet by these interfering Ordnance surveyors. The new maps now read—Walbury Camp 959 feet; Inkpen, 954. But the loss of 18 yards or so does not seem to have altered the glorious view from the flat-topped Down or to have made its air less sparkling. The grand wooded vista down the Kennet valley toward Newbury is a sharp contrast to the bare uplands north and south. Walbury Camp, a fine prehistoric entrenchment, is distinct from Walbury Hill, slightly lower, on which is Combe Gallows, a relic of the past kept in constant repair by a neighbouring farmer as a condition of his land tenure. Inkpen village is more than a mile away to the north. Here is a church once old but now smartened up to such an extent that its ancient character is not apparent. The building, however, has not lost by the change. The modern appointments are both beautiful and costly.



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[Illustration: THE INKPEN COUNTRY.]

At the back of the Beacon is the lonely little village of Combe, sunk deep in a hollow of the hills that rise all around it. It has a small Early English church of little interest, but the village is worth a long detour to see because of its unique position. Here was once a cell of the Abbey of Bec in Normandy. A stony hill-road goes out of the settlement southwards, between the huge bulk of Oat Hill (936 feet) and Sheepless Down, back into Hampshire. The road eventually leads to Linkenholt, another hamlet lost in the wilderness of chalk, and then by Upton to the Andover highway at Hurstbourne Tarrant on one of the headwaters of the Test. The map name is rarely used by the natives, who term the place "Up Husband"; it was officially spelt "Up Hursborn" as lately as 1830. It is a village in a delightful situation and delightful in itself, though of late years the architecture of the "general stores" has replaced some of the old timber-framed houses on the main street. But the George and Dragon, even if it shows no timbers on its long front, wears an old-fashioned air of prosperity that belongs to the coaching past. Tarrant Church, like so many others hereabouts, has been sadly "well restored," but still retains a Transitional south door and some rather remarkable wall paintings.

The Andover road rises through Dole's Wood and passes over the hill to Knight's Enham and Andover. The last-named busy little town of to-day owes much of its prosperity to the fact that it is an important meeting place of railways connecting three great trunk lines. To outward view Andover is utterly commonplace; everything ancient has been ruthlessly improved away, and that curse of the railway town, an appendix of mean red-brick villas, mars the approach from the west. It has a past, however, which goes back to such remote times that its beginnings are lost in those "mists of antiquity" which shroud so much of the country described in our preceding chapter. The "dover" in the town-name is probably the pre-Celtic root which meets the traveller when he arrives at Dover and greets him again in unsuspected places from the "dor" in Dorchester and the Falls of Lodore to the "der" in Derwent and smoky Darwen. All have the same meaning—*water*; and "an," strangely enough, is a later and Celtic word for the same element, the equally ubiquitous "afon." So that Andover should be a place of many waters, which it is not. A small stream—the Anton—flows almost unnoticed through the town, though its name seems to have been given occasionally to the whole of the longer Test that it meets a few miles to the south.



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Written records of Andover before Wessex became a kingdom do not exist. But scraps of tessellated pavement in the vicinity show that it was a locality well known to the Romans, and the Port Way, that great thoroughfare of the Empire, passed within half a mile of the modern railway junction. In 994, Olaus, King of Norway, is said to have been baptized here, his sponsor being Ethelred the Unready. The town received its charter from King John and took part in the disagreement between Stephen and Matilda, when it had the misfortune to be burnt. It saw two of the Stuarts when the evil days for each were reaching their culmination. Charles I stayed here on his way to the last battle of Newbury, and James II slept at Priory House while retiring from Salisbury to London just before the arrival of William of Orange. The town returned two members to Parliament before the Reform Act, and afterwards one until 1885. Half legendary are some of the tales of the hustings at Andover in those days of “free and open” voting, and the old “George” seems to have been a centre of the excitement on election days, where most of the guineas changed hands and where most free drinks were handed to the incorruptibles. It was here during the candidature of Sir Francis Delaval that his attorney had occasion to send him the following bill—

“To being thrown out of the window of the George Inn, Andover; to my leg being broken; to surgeon’s bill, and loss of time and business; all in the service of Sir Francis Delaval

L500.”

This rough treatment was in consequence of the poor lawyer having, at his patron’s instigation, invited the officers of a regiment quartered in the town, and the mayor and corporation, to a dinner at the “George,” *each in the other’s name*. At this same inn Cobbett, in one of his *Rural Rides*, had an adventure with mine host and pushed his opinions down the throat of the assembled company in his usual manner. This inn, and the “Angel,” were great places in the posting days, when the Exeter Road was one of the most important arteries in England. They are among the pleasant survivals of eighteenth-century Andover, for there is nothing that appears on the surface older than that period, except the Norman door of the churchyard—all that is left of the fine building pulled down in 1840 to make way for the present imitation Early English church—and a piece of wall on the north side, a remnant of a cell belonging to the Benedictine Abbey of Saumur. About three miles west of Andover is Weyhill, a village celebrated for its fair and immortalized in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It at one time claimed to be the largest in England, but in these changed days its rural importance has diminished. The fair takes place in October and now covers four consecutive days instead of the original six. The first day is Sheep Fair followed by “Mop” (hiring), Pleasure, and Hop Fairs with horses every day and several side-shows such as “Cheese Fair” and the like. It has been thought possible that Weyhill is referred to in *The Vision of Piers Plowman*—“At Wy and at Wynchestre I went to the Fair.”



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We now propose to turn eastwards for the last time and to follow the main London road along the northern boundary of Harewood Forest through Hurstbourne Priors ("Down Husband") and then past the wide expanse of Hurstbourne Park, in which stands the seat of the Earl of Portsmouth and which clothes the northern slopes of the Test valley for more than a mile with its beautiful woods and glades. Its eastern boundary is close to Whitchurch, seven miles from Andover. Whitchurch was another famous posting centre and, like Andover, a rotten borough. Here an important cross-country route from Oxford to Winchester tapped the Exeter road and here the modern ways of the Great Western and South Western cross each other at right angles. At the famous "White Hart" Newman wrote the opening part of the *Lyra Apostolica* while awaiting the Exeter coach in December, 1832. The great tower of All Hallows still stands, but little besides of the old building. While the restoration was in progress a Saxon headstone was brought to light. It bears a presentment of our Lord's head with the following inscription:

HIC CORPUS FRIDBURGAE REQUIESCAT
IN PACE SEPULTUM

[Illustration: WHITCHURCH.]

The old chapel of Freefolk, little more than a mile out of the town, dates from 1265 and came into existence because the winter floods on the infant Test prevented the good folk of the vicinity getting into Whitchurch. The famous Laverstock Mill, where the paper for Bank of England notes has been made for two hundred years, is not far away by the side of the high road. The owners of the Mill, and of Laverstock Park, are a naturalized Huguenot family named de Portal, whose ancestors came to England and settled in Southampton during the persecution of the Protestants that followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. When Cobbett rode by the Mill he made the following unprophetic utterance:—"We passed the mill where the Mother-Bank paper is made! Thank God! this mill is likely soon to want employment. Hard by is a pretty park and house belonging to 'Squire' Portal, the *paper-maker*. The country people, who seldom want for sarcastic shrewdness, call it 'Rag Hall!'"

Nearly four miles from Whitchurch comes Overton, once a market but now a quiet village that shows signs of activity (apart from the ceaseless procession of motor traffic) only on one day in the year, July 18, when a great sheep fair takes place. For Overton is a centre of the great sheep-down country of north Hampshire. The church is unremarkable except that the nave has Norman pillars with arches of a later date above them. The fine old manor house near the railway station is called Quidhampton.

After passing Ashe we reach Deane, where a road to the right leads in a mile and a half to Steventon, at the rectory of which village Jane Austen was born in 1775, her father holding the incumbency for many years. As we rejoin the main road Church Oakley lies to the right at the source of the Test. Here stands a church built about 1525 by

Archbishop Warham, whose ancestors lived at Malshanger, nearly two miles away to the north. After passing Worting, ten miles from Whitchurch and two from Basingstoke, that we are nearing a large town becomes apparent, and soon the gaunt and curious clock tower of Basingstoke Town Hall comes into view, a land-mark for many miles.



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[Illustration: HOLY GHOST CHAPEL, BASINGSTOKE.]

The “Stoke Bare-hills” of Thomas Hardy has changed the tenor of its way several times in history. It started by sending members to Parliament three hundred years before it became a borough in the reign of the first Stuart, when it was already famous as a manufactory of silks and woollens. A time of inanition followed until the great period of road travel set in, when it became the most important centre between London and Salisbury. Then with the iron way came another phase that at one time threatened to bring the town into line with Swindon, Crewe and other railway “wens”; but except for some miles of small red-brick villas, packed close together on the bleak wolds that surround the town, it has not greatly suffered and is still essentially agricultural. Quite lately a new industry has grown up here, the manufacture of farming implements.

Close to the railway station are the ruins of the chapel of the Holy Ghost, founded by Bishop Fox in 1525. They stand in the ancient cemetery which dates from the time of the Papal Interdict (1208) when, in consequence of King John’s quarrel with the Pope, burial in churchyards was suspended. Basingstoke Church was built in the early sixteenth century and contains some of the old glass from the Holy Ghost Chapel.

The most interesting place in the vicinity of Basingstoke is Old Basing, two miles to the east, and ever memorable as the scene of the defence of Basing House. This magnificent mansion had been built by William Paulet, first Marquis of Winchester, on the site of the original Norman castle of Basing. When the Civil War broke out, the fifth Marquis, John Paulet, decided to defend the house for the King, and gathering his friends and retainers about him, amply provisioning his cellars and “writing ‘Aimez Loyalte’ on every pane of his windows with the diamond of his ring,” he calmly awaited the Roundheads, who were soon in possession of Basingstoke. Two hundred and fifty Royalist soldiers had already joined the garrison when the actual siege began in July, 1643. The attackers under Waller numbered seven thousand, but by December, after great losses, they were forced to withdraw. The following spring another determined effort was made to starve out the garrison, but the arrival of Colonel Gage with reinforcements from Oxford put fresh heart into the “nest of hornets,” and the news that their fortress had been renamed “Basting House” by their admiring friends stiffened their resolve. During the next few months, however, religious differences within led to a weakening of the heroic defence and to the beginning of the end, and after two thousand lives had already been lost, Basing House fell to the redoubtable Cromwell in person on October 14, 1645, about one hundred of the defenders being killed in the final assault and some three hundred prisoners taken.

Of this historic site there remain but a few walls and the Gate-house. The area covered by the entrenchments was about fourteen acres and the garden must have been a place of beauty before the litter of the siege marred the trim walks and parterres. The country people were bidden help themselves when the victors departed with their prisoners, and the work of ruin was quickly complete.



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[Illustration: BASING.]

Basing church, which was used in the attack on the House, is of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and contains many memorials of the Paulet family. Its outside is much more striking and handsome than its interior, which has a rather empty and featureless appearance. Not far from Basing is the great entrenchment of Winklebury Castle, over 3,000 feet round. From the edge of its commanding vallum Cromwell took the observations for his successful assault on Basing House.

Sherborne St. John, two miles north of Basingstoke, has an old church, with an ugly tower built in 1833. The Brocas brasses and the fine Jacobean pulpit are interesting. The Vyne, a celebrated mansion, is one mile farther along our road. The greater part of the building is four hundred years old, though certain additions and alterations are due to Inigo Jones. Its beautiful chapel has some old French glass, inserted in the windows in 1544, and other details of much interest.

Between the hills to the south, nearly four miles from Basingstoke, is the small village of Herriard and the neighbouring park named after it. Its Transitional church has been much rebuilt, but still contains several items of interest, including a fine chancel arch and some old stained glass. North-east of the park is the old and partly Saxon church of Tunworth, about four miles direct from Basingstoke. The Herriard road continues in a little over six miles to Alton, a pleasant and out-of-the-way old town, but with little left of its former picturesque streets. Alton is famous for its ale made from the hops grown in the immediate neighbourhood. The church has a door covered with bullet marks, a legacy from the Civil War, when the troops of the Parliament under Waller attacked the Royalists, who had fled to the church for sanctuary. A good deal of Norman work is visible in the base of the tower. The Jacobean pulpit and misericords in the choir call for remark and also the interesting "memorial" on a pillar of the nave to the "Renowned Martialist"—Richard Boles—who defended the church during the attack referred to above.

From Alton the Meon Valley Railway follows the high road to distant Fareham on the shores of Portsmouth Harbour, and penetrates a lonely countryside, perhaps the least-known portion of Hampshire. For the first ten miles the railway and road traverse the uplands that are a continuation of the Sussex Downs and part of the great chalk range of southern England. In one of the nooks of this tableland, two miles from the station at Tisted and four from Petersfield, is Selborne, made for ever famous by Gilbert White, who lived at The Wakes, the picturesque rambling old house opposite the church. At West Meon the actual valley from which the railway takes its name is entered. The infant stream, here a mere trickle under the hedgerows, comes down from East Meon, three miles away, where there is a cruciform church containing a black Tournai



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font, and an old stone pulpit dating from the fifteenth century. Close by is a manor house, once the property of the Bishops of Winchester. Warnford, a mile below West Meon, has a church of great interest. It is a Norman building on the site of the first sanctuary erected for the converted Meonwaras by Wilfred of York. Several noteworthy features may be seen, including a Saxon sundial from the original church. At Corhampton two miles further south, a Saxon church still remains, though it has lost its early apsidal chancel.

[Illustration: CORHAMPTON.]

The building has apparently been erected on a mound, possibly prehistoric. Droxford station is within a four-mile walk of Hambledon where, in 1774, modern cricket was first played. Droxford Church is another fine old building that, with those just enumerated, lends an added interest to this delightful valley, the scenic charm of which would alone be sufficient recompense for the trouble involved in exploring it. Customs and beliefs are more primitive and the forms of speech more archaic than in the region beyond the New Forest, and the natives have a goodly amount of the old Jutish blood in their veins, possibly more than their relatives of the Isle of Wight. The swelling hills of that delectable land fill the vista as we descend between Soberton and Wickham, where the valley divides the main portion of the ancient Forest of Bere from the scattered woodlands of Waltham Chase and, at the last-named village, widens into the lowlands that stretch between Tichfield and Fareham and the busy activities of Portsmouth.

We now near the end of our brief exploration of Wessex and, returning to Basingstoke, take the last sixteen miles of our course over the great road, straight and lonely of houses, that runs across the hills to Winchester. The Romans built up the solid foundations of the greater part of this highway which passes through no villages, though it has several within a short distance of its straight hedges and interminable telegraph posts. Near the *Sun Inn*, high on the chalk hills five miles from Basingstoke, a lane turns left to Dummer, worth visiting for the sake of the old unrestored church dating mostly from the early thirteenth century. The old beams and the large sixteenth-century gallery have escaped "improvement." The oak pulpit is said to date from the early fifteenth century. The most striking feature of the interior is a canopy over the chancel arch, a relic of the rood that once stood beneath it. Several interesting brasses of the At Moores, and a squint at the back of a recess, or image niche, should be noticed. George Whitfield's first ministry was in this church. Close by is the ancient manor house, partly of the fourteenth century, and on the Basingstoke side of the village is Kempshott Park, a "hunting lodge" of George IV. The bare rolling Downs reach a height of over 650 feet east of Dummer, in the neighbourhood of Farleigh Wallop and Nutley.



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On the other side of the Winchester highway North Waltham has a rebuilt church in “Norman” style. Steventon, the birthplace of Jane Austen, already mentioned, is but a short distance farther. East Stratton is another out-of-the-way village off the high road to the left and just beyond Stratton House, a seat of the Earl of Northbrook. A magnificent avenue of beech trees leads to Micheldever village, and also, in the opposite direction to the station, to that point on the South Western Railway where the traveller to Southampton notes that the exhausted pant of the engine has changed to an easy glide as the train passes the summit tunnel and rolls down to Winchester. The dim recesses of Micheldever wood extend to the east of the Roman road on its undulating but perfectly straight course until it drops to Headbourne Worthy.

As we descend the last few miles the ancient capital of Wessex and of England is seen ahead lying in the lap of its enfolding hills. The blunt and stern outline of the grey cathedral is softened by the misty veil, shot with mingled gold and pearl, that rests softly over the valley and that obliterates everything mean and unworthy in the scene before us. Just as the memories of great and famous days that cling round the old towns of Wessex—threads of faith and chivalry, valour and high endeavour—make an opalescent robe to hide for a moment the futilities of the present.

[Illustration: MAP OF WESSEX.]

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