

GREATER LONDON



BEAUTIFUL ENGLAND

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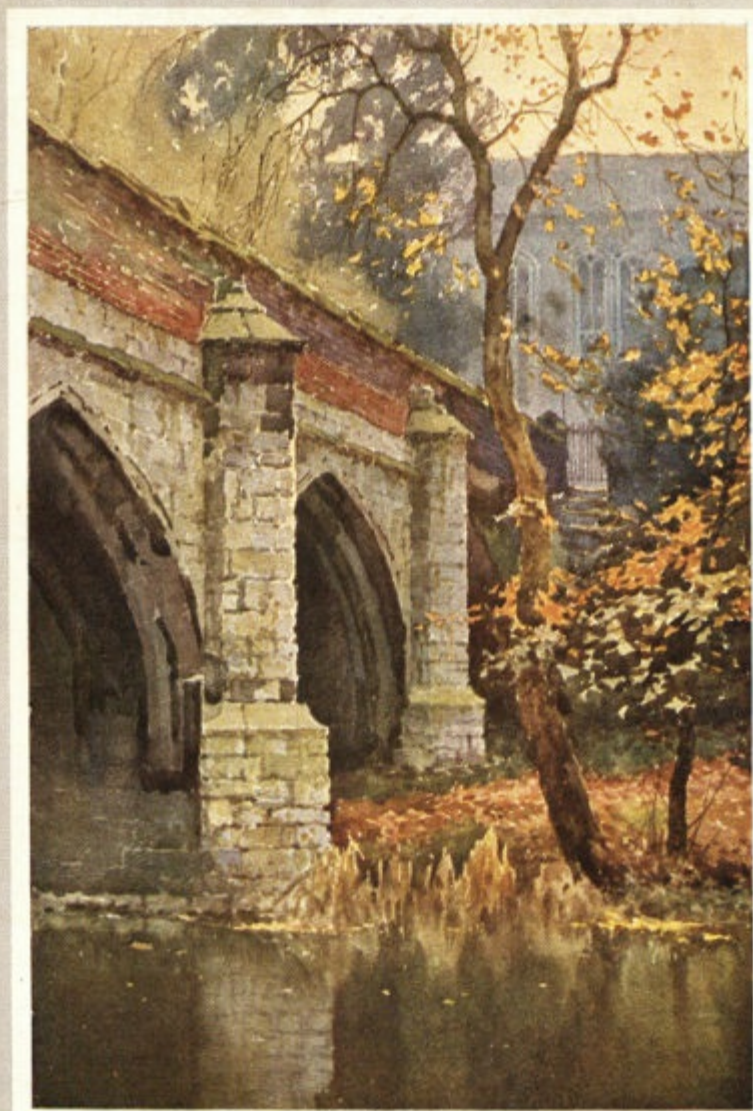
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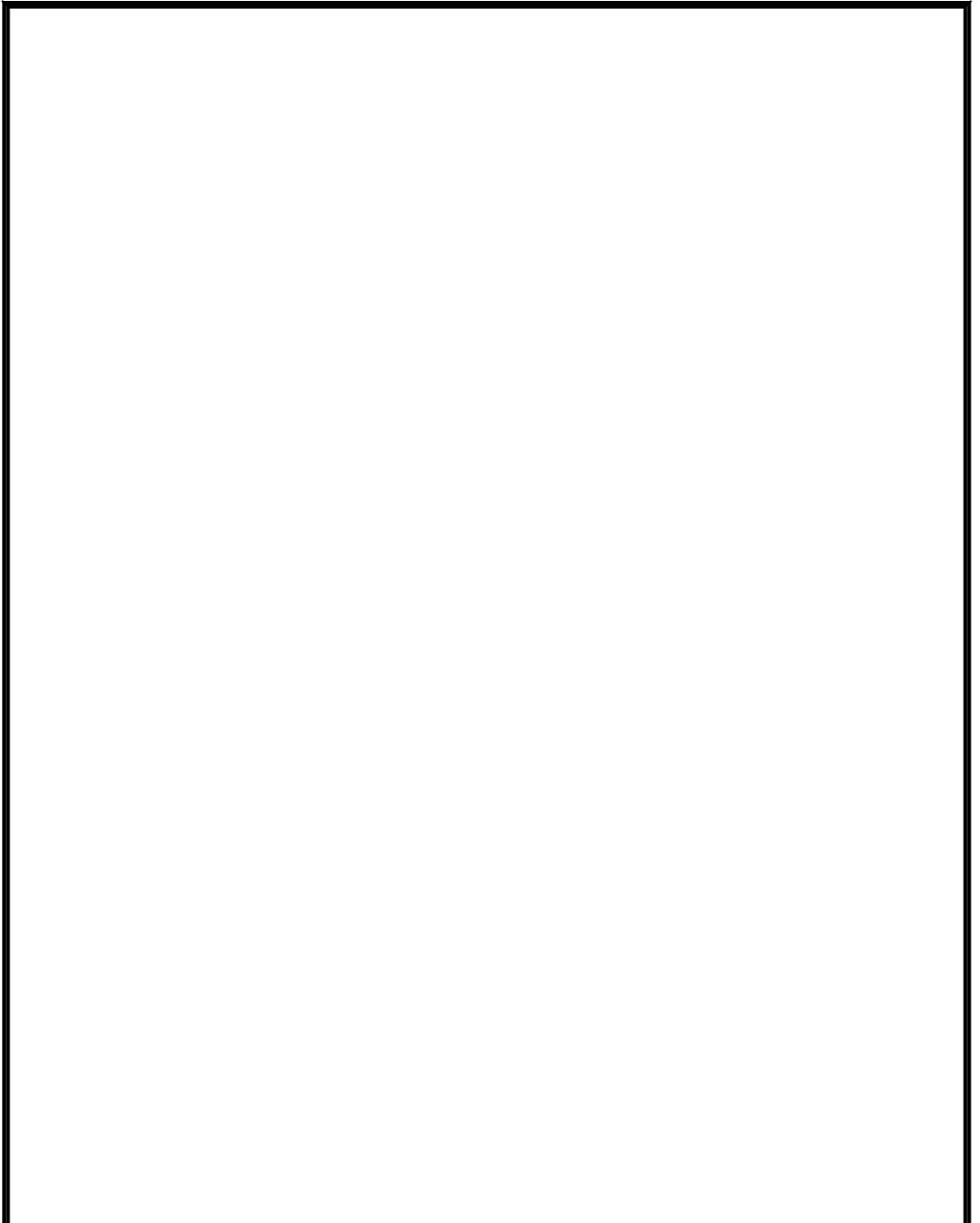
**RAMBLES IN
GREATER LONDON**

Painted by E.W. Haslehurst R.B.A.



MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT ST. GILES

At this pleasant little dwelling, where the poet completed his "Paradise Lost", are preserved many interesting relics of his period.



RAMBLES IN GREATER LONDON

**Text by Walter Jerrold
Pictures by E. W. Haslehurst, R.B.A.**



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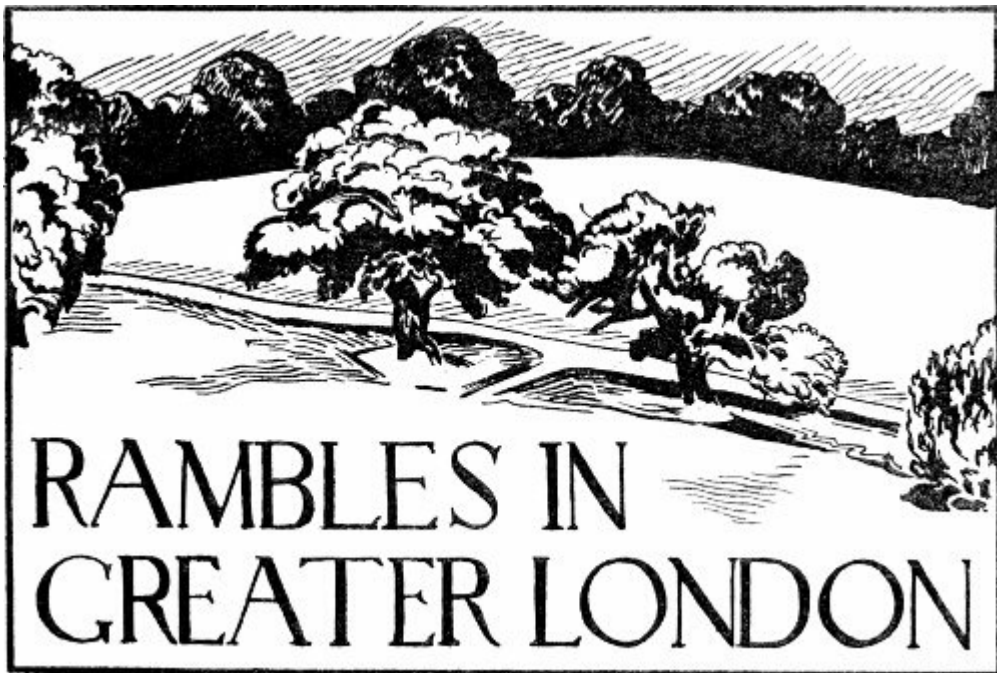
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VIEW ON HAMPSTEAD HEATH

The Heath and its immediate surroundings afford a well varied stretch of hill and dale, woodland and ponds, nearly seven hundred acres in extent.

RAMBLES IN GREATER LONDON



“They take their courses east, west, north,
south.”—*Shakespeare.*

There is something of compensation in the fact that although the country suggestive of “rambles” has for each succeeding generation during the past century or two come to be farther away from central London, it has at the same time become ever more considerable with the increasing radius of the urbanized area.

Time was when country rambles were made by dwellers in London to “merry Islington” and the ruralities of Mile End; later they were extended to Marylebone Fields or Blackheath. These and other one-time countrified places were, however, long since whelmed or hemmed in by the spreading tide of building. To-day those who would indulge in really rustic rambles must, 2 in most directions, go nigh upon a score of miles from the heart of London to get clear of the urbanizing evidence of the continuously creeping, outward-spreading tide of bricks and mortar. Here, however, the rambles that I have in mind are not necessarily rustic ones. My purpose is rather to indicate some of the places, interesting or picturesque, that lie on the fringe of London and, though at varying distance, most of them well within the radius mentioned. Some of these places are old-time villages which have become merged in London, and still retain something of their ancient character and a wealth of personal and historical association; and all have been brought within easy reach by London’s network of railway, tramway, and motor-bus routes.

Though a ramble suggests walking, these places are not indicated as goals towards which we may make from central London, but rather as centres in themselves, about which the rambling may be done—and much more found of interest and charm than can possibly be mentioned in any brief survey of a field well-nigh inexhaustible. Thanks to those modern facilities for urban and extra-urban travel which have been indicated, all these different centres (and many more) are readily accessible from any part of London. They offer us a goodly variety of scenery and an infinitude of interest, personal or historical, antiquarian or archæological, for they may be taken as 3 extending from beyond the county boundary into

Hertfordshire on the north, to the wooded hills of Surrey and Kent on the south, from the one-time royal demesne of Greenwich on the east to the royal domain of Windsor on the west, affording us glimpses of seven counties. Each centre might be lingered over—might, indeed, be made the subject of a separate history—but here all have to be crowded within the narrow limits of what can be no more than an indicative essay, a series of hints concerning some of the attractive places that may be visited about that circle round the Metropolis where outposts of Suburbia are more or less definitely penetrating the country. Here we must of necessity be content to touch in the briefest fashion upon places that have much to show in the present, or much that it might be interesting to recall concerning the past. Every separate suburb, which can receive bare mention or but little more, is in truth a storied centre. Our view, however, is general rather than particular, taking in as it does a broad survey of an irregular circle over thirty miles in diameter. It is not possible to do more than point out some of the salient features in any such panoramic presentation of that area which for the purpose of the Rambler may be regarded as comprised within the term Greater London.

I

“High on bleak Hampstead’s swarthy moor they started for the north.”—*Macaulay*.

Any treatment of such a broad extent of town and country as that which lies within rambling distance of central London must be more or less arbitrary, any starting point selected be more or less a matter for individual taste or convenience. Here, then, I have chosen the method of roughly dividing our great circle around London into four segments indicating those districts which lie generally speaking in the direction of the four main points of the compass. This has seemed the most natural method, and that more especially so when we consider that we have the downward course of the Thames to follow to the east, and the upward course to the west, and have the hillier ground that is within easy access to the north and the south.

If we look at some of those fascinating old engraved views of London that were made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we generally see the Thames in the foreground, and beyond the houses along its left and more populous bank there is frequently indicated in the background a fairly respectable ridge of hills—those “northern heights” which to the present-day sojourner in central London may well seem to be misdescribed as such. Rare indeed are the glimpses of those northern heights that are afforded us to-day from London’s streets. They are almost wholly cut off by the growth of the town which has occupied all the intervening space and crept up most of the slopes themselves. It is long since, in the laying out of Bloomsbury’s Queen Square, the north side was left open that

the cross-country “prospect” of Primrose Hill and Hampstead might be unobstructed. There is, however, a north-turning byway, near the western end of Oxford Street, looking up which on a favourably clear day we may still get a glimpse of the heights; and in a season of clear weather we may, from one of London’s loftier viewpoints—the Monument, the summit of St. Paul’s Cathedral, the top of the Tower Bridge, or the campanile of Westminster Cathedral—realize that the old-time engravers did not draw upon their imagination in bounding with hills their views of London. During the centuries since those engravers worked, London has grown ever outwards; its houses have climbed most of the slopes and largely hidden them from view, and with the growing of the town its means of communication have so developed that places which were a goodly walk away are now brought within a few minutes’ travelling distance.

Hampstead, thanks to its extensive high-lying Heath, and the private estates contiguous thereto, is one of the pleasantest places within easy reach of Londoners, and has long been regarded as the special paradise of the Cockney on popular holiday occasions, when “all the fun of the fair” is made available for the crowds that assemble to find in swings and round-about, cokernut-shying, donkey-riding, and such-like pastimes, means of great gregarious entertainment and merriment. Hampstead Heath on a fine Bank Holiday is, indeed, a spectacle for the sightseer, largely owing to the varied scenes which it affords of men and women and children letting themselves go in frank, unselfconscious, if somewhat noisy and sometimes obstreperous, enjoyment. For quiet appreciation of the Heath and its beauties some other time than a general holiday should be chosen. That Heath, with Parliament Hill to the east, and the lovely recent additions of Ken Wood on the

north, affords a well-varied stretch of hill and dale, woodland and ponds, nearly 700 acres in extent. From various points grand views are to be had: those from the turfy summit of Parliament Hill affording on a clear day an unrivalled outlook southwards over the vastness that is London, while, turning to the left, from the same point we look down on a wooded vale and picturesque ponds, affording a prospect not only beautiful in itself but particularly striking as a contrast. From the flagstaff, too, is to be had a wonderful view westwards and northwards, from which in favourable weather keen-sighted folk have claimed to see Windsor Castle. Much nearer may be seen, by those less far-sighted, the spired church of Harrow on its dominating hill, over the broad and shallow valley the spreading suburbs about which are largely masked by that greenery which remains, all around London, a remarkable feature of any extensive view. 7

Another famous prospect is that from the Spaniards Road, whence another contrasting scene opens before us and emphasizes the extent to which the northern suburbs are still blessed with the refreshing greenery of trees. Near the Spaniards at the north end of Hampstead is Ken Wood, the latest welcome addition to this favoured district to be secured for public enjoyment, and one rich in noble trees—cedar, beech, lime, and others. Hampstead trees, it may be recalled, provided the master of modern landscape painting, John Constable, with many subjects. When that artist was slowly winning to such measure of fame as came to him before his death, he moved to Hampstead, taking a house in Well Walk, and in Hampstead churchyard he is buried. In such personal association Hampstead is, indeed, peculiarly rich, and though inevitable rebuilding has done away with many “association” bits, 8

there is much that remains for the wanderer among old Hampstead byways, and much also of an old-world picturesqueness. In Church Row, Well Walk, Flask Walk, Burford Close, and other surprise nooks and corners of the old village, are to be found gracious and pleasing memories of many men and women of fame from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries; from the poets Blake, Keats, and Shelley, to the novelists George du Maurier, H. G. Wells, and Richard Whiteing. The famous residents or sojourners in this particularly favoured district cannot be even catalogued within my brief limits, though in having to content myself with this glance at the subject, I may recall that it was while staying at Hampstead that Samuel Johnson wrote one of his two best-remembered poems, “The Vanity of Human Wishes”.

Much, too, might be said concerning the old inns in the days when such flourished as social institutions—of Jack Straw’s Castle, the Bull and Bush, the Spaniards, each of which has its place in literature and in nineteenth-century literary biography. At the first-named Charles Dickens was fond of dining with a few of his friends, and there he would sometimes read to them chapters of that one of his stories on which he was at the time engaged. That London’s supreme novelist never tired of the charms of Hampstead Heath, we have ample evidence in the letters he wrote to his friend and biographer, John Forster.



E. W. HALLMIST

THE TOWER BUTTRESSES, STANMORE OLD CHURCH

In the pleasant country on the north-west confines of London is the still partly rustic Stanmore, the picturesque old church of which is on the north side of Stanmore Park.

In Well Walk and Flask Walk we have reminders that once upon a time Hampstead was one of the “spas” neighbouring London; those and other of the old ways, with part of the quaint twisty Heath Street, afford picturesque glimpses of what the village was like before it had become linked up with London as a mere residential extension. Down narrow ways or up linking flights of steps, we may find large comfortable houses standing in well-grown gardens, and an ever-contrasting confrontation of quaint retiring old bits with starkly modern buildings. Such contrasts meet us all about Hampstead, as they do about the neighbouring Highgate. There, too, the old village is strikingly differenced from the wide extension of a residential district up the heights, and there, in passing from the tram-clangorous road, that has come up under the Archway, to the Highgate woods, we may in a few moments, by wandering into those woods, have one of the most dramatic changes afforded by London’s suburbs. 9

Highgate, which closely neighbours Hampstead on the east, is also rich in personal, historical, and even legendary associations. It was here that Dick Whittington heard across the intervening country—it was country then—the bells of Bow Church inviting him to return, with promise of fame and fortune; and when the almshouses bearing his name were removed from the City it was here that they were fittingly re-established. Now the townward side of Highgate is towny indeed, but in the northerly directions countrified open spaces may readily be reached. At the lofty Archway, by which another 10

road is carried across the highway, far up the steep hill, is a view-point from which, on a clear morning, the early riser may obtain a magnificent view in which he may identify some part of that prospect which an Elizabethan writer saw from Highgate Hill, “the statelie citie of London, Westminster, Greenwich, the famous river of Thamyse and the country towards the south verie faire”.

North-westward from Hampstead we may follow the Heath to the neighbourhood of the Garden Suburb and Golders Green—where within recent years fields and garden-grounds have rapidly disappeared beneath the tide of building—and so reach the old village of Hendon, with a long-famous view across the broad and shallow valley of the Brent. Northwards is the pleasant old village of Mill Hill, to be reached by fairly rural footpath ways. West, away over the ever-growing suburbs, the ever-diminishing fields, rises Harrow Hill, with the spire of its lofty landmark church showing clearly, five miles off. Along the intervening Brent Valley spread London’s north-westward suburbs towards the straggling old village of Edgware, beyond which the famous mansion of Canons was erected over two centuries ago by the princely Chandos. Pope, who satirized the place as “Timon’s villa”, proved a true prophet when he foretold its demolition, but a false one when he foretold that “laughing Ceres” would “re-assume the land”, for it is but more modest buildings that threaten to cover the park of Canons. Right through the wide valley which we are overlooking from Hendon, runs in a north-westerly direction the Edgware Road, in an almost straight line from where it starts at the point on which Tyburn stood (near the Marble Arch), for upwards of five miles, to where, some distance north of Edgware, it swerves a little easterly to the pleasant village of Elstree on the

Hertfordshire border. This long, straight stretch of highway is part of that ancient Roman Watling Street, another portion of which we shall see in the neighbourhood of Greenwich and a central scrap of which retains its old name in the heart of the City. Kingsbury and Dollis Hill, Neasden and Wembley in the same valley need not detain us at the moment, though Wembley Park has won sudden world-wide fame as site of the great British Empire Exhibition of 1924; the church-topped hill of Harrow, however, is visible centre of a district inviting the rambler to exploration.

Harrow Hill, rising, as it does, more or less abruptly two hundred feet above the surrounding country, gives perhaps a greater impression of height, and with its crowning slender-spired church forms an outstanding landmark from many points. From its high churchyard, where the youthful Byron mused, we get an unusually extended view over what used to be the great wheatland of Middlesex, with distant glimpses in the most favourable, but perhaps somewhat infrequent, atmospheric conditions, of Windsor Castle in Berkshire and the hill-top clump of Knockholt Beeches in Kent. From the summit of the church tower, it has been averred, landmarks in as many as thirteen counties have been identified. Southward, towards the Thames, lie one-time villages in process of absorption, as residential or manufacturing districts, into the vastness of London: Northolt and Greenford, Sudbury and Alperton, Perivale and Twyford. 12

In Harrow itself the main interest centres in the school founded here in Elizabethan days, and the association of successive generations of famous men who as boys attended it; it must be added that there is little to be seen associated with the original

establishment here, and that as an important public school Harrow's development is comparatively recent. Near to Harrow is Pinner, another of outer London's pleasant old villages surviving as centre of a growing suburb, but still with fields and lanes in its immediate neighbourhood. Its large cruciform church is the burial-place of many minor notables, including Governor Holwell (one of the few who survived the horrors of the Black Hole of Calcutta), and Henry James Pye, that Poet Laureate of whom it was said that he was eminently respectable in everything but his poetry.



THE GATEWAY, DYRHAM PARK

Originally erected in 1660 at the end of London Bridge as the triumphal arch through which Charles the Second entered the City on his restoration.

A little to the north of Pinner is one of the pleasantest bits of near-London country in Harrow Weald, with its fine stretch of tree-grown common. This, with the near-by Stanmore Common, affords a pleasant public recreation-ground, well preserved, in a tract of country the very charms of which invite its exploitation for building purposes. Still in the neighbourhood are fairly rural walks obtainable, and more particularly so if we pass by Grime's Dyke over the county border into Hertfordshire, where Bushey Heath invites to further exploration. Grime's Dyke—"a curious but obscure vestige of some very remote age"—is a ridge of earthwork traceable from near Pinner Green for over two miles to the Harrow Weald Common, one of the highest points in the district (475 feet). From parts of this Common good views are to be had over the well-wooded undulations of Charles Lamb's "pleasant Hertfordshire", while here, as I like to recall, on a fair June day some years ago, from amid the undergrowth, I first heard the day-singing of the nightingale. Bentley Priory, near by, was long a nobleman's residence, owing its name to an old traditional religious establishment. Just east of Bentley we have a slightly higher eminence, 480 feet, with the Elstree and Aldenham Reservoir bowered in trees to the north, a fine sheet of water familiar to many London anglers, and a notable haunt of many aquatic birds. We are here in a stretch of country that tempts to more extended ramblings, for immediately beyond Bentley Priory we may pass on to Bushey Heath, with Watford and Rickmansworth beyond, inviting into many countrified

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byways, with the beautiful Cassiobury Park immediately beyond the former place, and Moor Park neighbouring the latter. Yet farther to the north, somewhat beyond our limits, though it may be reached by motor bus from Golders Green, is St. Albans, with its old church restored into a new cathedral.

Returning to Hampstead and Highgate that we may indicate some of the rambling centres lying more directly north instead of those to the north-west to which we have been drawn, we find that here not less than in other directions the great city has spread out in ever-growing suburbs. The Finchley Road, which leaves St. John's Wood by the eastern side of Lord's Cricket Ground, passes immediately to the west of Hampstead and directly north through Golders Green, with houses, houses all the way. Its most noticeable characteristic is perhaps the fact that it rises rapidly along the western end of the northern heights shortly after passing Swiss Cottage and so affords occasional extensive views to the westward. This road, and that which has been already referred to as passing under the Highgate Archway, join together at Finchley and become the Great North Road, and between the converging highways at one time stretched much of that great Finchley Common which in the bad old days of highwaymen was a dangerous part for those approaching the Metropolis from the north. The Common, which was also a great camping-ground for soldiery in time of trouble, actual or threatened, has however, long since passed under the influence of the Enclosure Acts. Through Whetstone the highway takes us on to Barnet, a capital centre, with the pleasant Hadley Woods near by—a popular resort for country-seeking Londoners—and attractive byways going westward to the neighbourhood of Elstree and eastward to Enfield and the valley of the Lea. Northward by ways that branch right and left at the apex of

Wrotham Park, Hatfield and St. Albans may be reached, as is duly indicated on an obelisk that here serves incidentally as fingerpost and county boundary, though primarily placed in this position to indicate that hereabouts “was fought the famous battle between Edward the Fourth and the Earl of Warwick, April the 14th, anno 1471; in which the Earl was defeated and slain”. Of the roads alongside the park, that to the left—especially if the parkside hawthorns are displaying their wonderful wealth of scented bloom—is the more attractive. Between two and three miles along it on high ground is the pleasantly situated village of South Mimms, with a picturesque old flint and stone church. Near the hamlet of Dancer’s Hill, through which we pass on the way to South Mimms, is Dyrham or Deerham Park with an entrance gate worthy of more than passing note in that it was the triumphal arch erected in 1660 by General Monck for Charles the Second to pass under on his re-entering London on the Restoration. Six or seven miles to the east, it may be noted, there stands a far more famous arch—that Temple Bar which had for centuries stood at the meeting-point of Fleet Street and the Strand to mark the boundary dividing the City of London from the City of Westminster. Temple Bar now stands as entrance gate to Theobald’s Park near Waltham Cross.



HIGH BEECH, EPPING FOREST

This grand plantation, popularly known as High Beech, is on the highest part of the Forest ridge, 759 feet above sea-level.

Pleasant byways may be followed eastward either from Potters Bar, north of Wrotham Park on the main or Hatfield highway, or by way of Hadley Woods, with either Waltham Cross or Enfield as the objective. In either case we pass through quietly attractive country at one time part of the great domain of Enfield Chase, which was long a favourite royal hunting-ground, but was disafforested in the eighteenth century and has largely passed under cultivation. The name of Enfield Chase remains as part of Enfield—and that part which to the literary pilgrim is the most attractive, for it is there that we may see two of the later homes of Charles Lamb, while a couple of miles or so away we may visit the grave wherein he and his loved sister lie buried in the leafy churchyard of Edmonton.

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At Edmonton (with one of the most beautiful of suburban public gardens) we come out on that main travelled way which, running roughly parallel with the River Lea, goes almost directly north from the old Bishop's Gate of the City, a road which takes us through the closely overbuilt districts of Hoxton, Stamford Hill, and Tottenham and, after passing through Edmonton, goes on by Enfield Highway and Lock and so to Waltham Cross—where still stands one of the original Eleanor crosses—and Cheshunt, and so at long last out into “real country”. This much populated highway is that along which John Gilpin was carried so inelegantly by his runaway borrowed steed; and it is that along which, a century before Cowper wrote his diverting ballad, Piscator and his friends began to wander immortally in Walton's *Compleat Angler*. Still may we see—amid surroundings how changed!—the old octagonal Tottenham High Cross, but anything like the shady arbour in which Walton's trio sought shelter from the sun's violent heat and an approaching

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shower must nowadays be sought much farther afield. This long unlovely road runs, as has been said, at varying distances roughly parallel with the River Lea, the largest of the tributaries of the Thames within the neighbourhood of London, and along the high ground at the other side of the river valley about three miles away is the great extent of Epping Forest.

The course of a river is one that may generally be said to have special attractions for the Rambler—it assuredly has for many of us who have found delight in following the windings of some of the greater waterways “rennyng aie downe to the sea”. The Lea, or Lee to give it the old spelling which is still maintained by some of the authorities, has a course of but forty-six miles from its Bedfordshire source to where it reaches the Thames near Blackwall. The river, which can scarcely be said to be specially inviting to the pedestrian where it flows through the northeasterly and easterly suburbs, by the reservoirs and along the broad open space of Hackney Marshes, is one ever popular with London anglers.

There are, indeed, when we get clear of the continuous greyness of the nearer suburbs still some notable bits to be seen along what was once described as “the winding course of Lee’s delightful brook”. For nearly two-thirds of forty-six miles the Lea is navigable, thanks to canalizing, and the Lea Navigation runs irregularly parallel with its parent stream for a considerable distance. Though various places a little to the west of it—Tottenham, Edmonton, Enfield, and others—are centres of great personal and historical interest, the road from London to Ware about which they are situate is not one to be lingered over, while the towpath along the canal is not without its attraction, affording from its low elevation an outlook over the twistings

and turnings of the Lea through its marshy meadows, while beyond is the ridge of the low hills of Essex along which extends the greenery of Epping Forest.

There is a certain monotony in following the straightness of a canal—the fascination of running water and the curved lines of beauty are alike wanting—and it is not until we get beyond Enfield Lock—where the main buildings of the Royal Small Arms Factory are enislanded between the canal and the river—that the Lea can be said to retain that quiet picturesqueness on which earlier writers have commented, as near Rammey Marsh—where Middlesex, Hertfordshire, and Essex meet—and beyond where the river passes between Waltham Cross and Waltham Abbey.

II

“Eastward Ho!”

If the term “the East End” has come to stand for depressing and unlovely surroundings it is because of that seeming law in the growth of great ports by which those parts most nearly adjacent to the docks become associated with a shifting and shiftless population. The nearer suburbs when we turn eastward, either along the course of the Thames or by the main highway lying somewhat to the north of it, have little to engage our attention. Yet for those who dwell in the very considerable area covered by those suburbs there is something of compensation in the fact that it is in their direction that the unspoiled beauty of forest country is to be found most nearly neighbouring London.

Collective place-names are to a very considerable extent indicative of the general past history of a district not less surely than the single place-name frequently denotes a particular historic fact. This being so, it was pointed out many years ago how in some distant past the different parts that time has linked—as it is continuing to link with steady growth—as London, must have started as single homesteadings or groups of dwellings in clearings among the great forest which spread over what to-day we term the Home Counties. Absorbed or in process of absorption in London we find St. John’s Wood, Cricklewood, Tottenham Wood, Wood Green, Wood End, Wood Side, Norwood, Forest Gate, Forest Hill, Ken Wood, Hadley Wood, Highgate Wood, Bishop’s Wood, Scratch Wood, Harrow Weald and Northolt, to mention but those which first come to memory, without any attempt at being exhaustive. In the large

majority of these cases it is the name only that recalls the past conditions from which that name derived; in others goodly extents of tree-grown ground remain, as in the cases of Ken Wood by Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, a little to the east, and Hadley Wood some miles to the north.

In most directions it is well afield through far-stretching suburban areas that we must go nowadays to find any extensive scrap of that forest primeval which lay close at hand when London started on its portentous growth, spreading ever outwards in all directions, absorbing hamlets, villages, and towns, with their surrounding fields and woodlands. In recent times the custom has happily grown of planting trees in London's squares and streets and has been so maintained that fancy may look forward to echoing the words of the poet's *Shadow-of-a-Leaf*, "the forest has conquered, the forest has conquered".

22

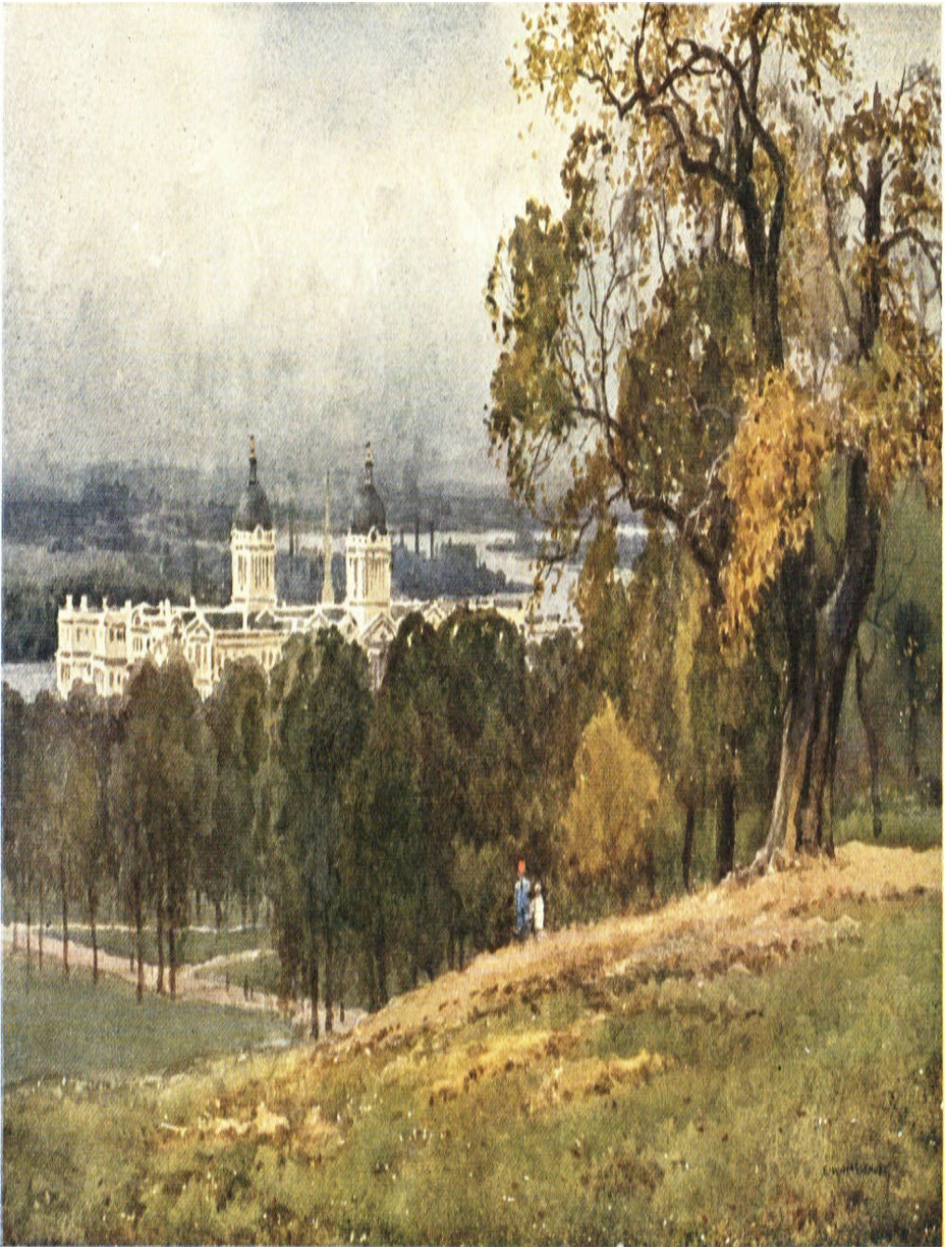
There is within easy reach of central London—little more than six miles at the nearest point—no more beautiful, varied, and extensive tract of woodland than that known as Epping Forest, upwards of six thousand acres in extent. Though this greatest of all the great city's many playgrounds is to be reached by train, by tram, or by motor bus, and though on public holidays and in pleasant weather these various means of reaching it are generally crowded to their utmost capacity, it is yet possible to go to the Forest even on a summer Bank Holiday and, after leaving one of the thronged points at which passengers are dumped, to get into sylvan solitude after but a short walk. Thus extensive is the Forest. Londoners are, generally speaking, gregarious folk even in holiday mood and keep much together in their crowds about one or other of the points of access, or to the

near neighbourhood of the main way through it. It is but the more adventurous minority that thread the woodland ways and find in this remnant of the great Waltham Forest or Forest of Essex, a wonderland of trees and flowers and wild life generally. Along the main way which bisects the forest from near Walthamstow to Epping, motor buses run in summer time—a ride of about six miles which affords a fine general impression of London's priceless possession in this grand tract, the true fascination of which can only be felt by intimate wanderings in those shyer recesses to which the herds of deer retire when their ancient domain is invaded by holiday crowds. 23

The southernmost part of Epping Forest, nearest to London, is reached through populous and mostly unattractive suburbs. Perhaps the pleasantest approach—certainly the most countrified—is that from the village of Epping, lying to the north-east of the Forest to which it gives its name. The Forest occupies much of the narrow ridge between the valleys of the Lea and the Roding. The highest part of this ridge, 759 feet above sea-level, is marked by a grand beech plantation and is known as High Beech. Nowhere else so near to London can be found such a fine variety of fine trees; oak and hornbeam are especially notable, but the woodland is greatly diversified and offers extraordinarily varied scenes to those who leave the main highway and explore the spinneys and coppices and grassy glades that invite exploration in all directions. Despite its popularity as one of the greater public playgrounds neighbouring London, the Forest is sufficiently extensive and sufficiently unsophisticated to afford much of interest to the naturalist and botanist. Here the brown fallow deer runs wild, while the roe deer was introduced after Epping Forest was dedicated to public use by the City of London in 1882. Foxes and 24

squirrels, badgers and other shy creatures may be seen by the patient observer, while in bird life the area is particularly rich, affording as it does the most considerable sanctuary within a goodly circuit of the city.

Included within the Forest bounds are the sites of two ancient encampments, one of which on the eastern side between Loughton and Epping is popularly known as Boadicea's Camp, but is rightly Ambresbury Banks (not to be confused with the famous Amesbury in Wiltshire), while the other, Loughton Camp, is attributed to pre-Roman origin. Most of the old-time villages round the forest area, Chingford, Woodford, Loughton and others, have come to be centres of ever-growing residential districts. Epping itself—famed at one time for its annual Easter Monday staghunt, and still for its sausages—retains most of its old village-like characteristics and affords nearest access to the less generally frequented parts of the Forest.



GREENWICH

With its noble Hospital fronting the Thames, and backed by the pleasant rising ground of the park, this old centre has much to remind us of the

The open greenery of Epping Forest extends some further distance southwards in the more sophisticated Walthamstow and Wanstead Flats. Hainault Forest, its neighbour to the south-east, across the small valley of the Roding, was another goodly part of the ancient Forest of Essex, but its disafforesting within the past century led to rapid diminution of its forest characteristics, and when, some twenty years ago, its remnant of about eight hundred acres was acquired for the public, by far the greater part had ceased to be woodland. Hereabouts long stood the famous Fairlop Oak (destroyed in a gale a century since) which was the centre of an annual fair that only ceased with the disafforesting of Hainault. There is now a Fairlop railway station near the western side of what remains of the forest. From the south it may be reached from those modern suburbs Goodmayes and Chadwell or from the old market town of Romford. Immediately east of Hainault is Havering-atte-Bower—a village, with stocks and other relics, which stands where was of old a royal palace much used from the time of Edward the Confessor up to that of the Tudors, when monarchs went a-hunting in their Forest of Essex. Between Hainault and Epping Forests is the village of Chigwell with the old inn which Dickens called the Maypole and in which he set some notable scenes of his *Barnaby Rudge*.

Yet a further tract of the ancient Forest of Essex has been preserved for the public, thanks to the munificence of the late Edward North Buxton, whose untiring public spirit had been displayed in the prominent part which he took in the preservation alike of Epping and of Hainault; this is some 350

acres of Hatfield Forest, with fine oaks, Scotch firs, and a beautiful lake. It lies, however, somewhat beyond the limit which we must here regard, being some thirty miles away from London, near Bishop Stortford. 26

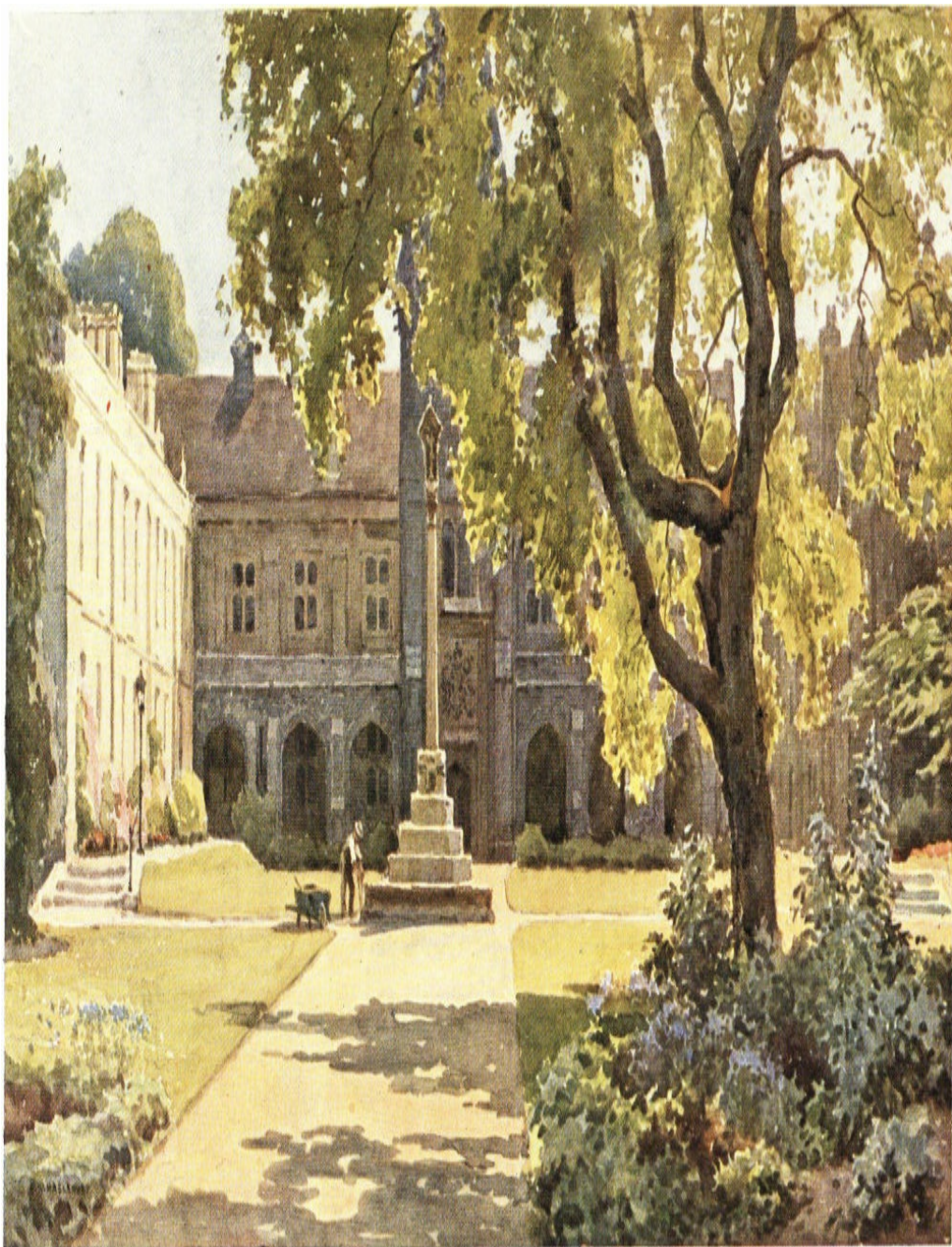
The “long, unlovely streets” of suburban London have extended far to the eastward, absorbing Ilford and reaching out to Romford, so that not until we reach Brentwood, eighteen miles away, do we get any extent of pleasant country. The old town stands high and amid well-wooded surroundings—and as far as it do London’s motor buses ply.

Apart from the happily secured stretches of the old forest land already indicated, outer London in the easterly segment of our great circle drawn round the city has most attractions along the seaward windings of the tortuous Thames. It is true that at first the river flows between but dingy wharves and warehouses with place-names hinting of a more picturesque past. Cherry Gardens, for instance, speaks of a time when the white spilth of May’s blossoming orchards in the Garden of England was to be seen a mile or so away across the river from the ramparts of the Tower of London. A journey down the river, through the shipping, past the great dock entrances and storied districts that have become dingy and even sordid, reveals an aspect of London of which comparatively few Londoners get more than occasional glimpses. Even many of us who find most that is fascinating about London along its river highway have but infrequent occasion to visit those parts which are the London best known to those who go down to the sea in ships. Yet there is a constant succession of picturesque scenes in the coming and going of ships and barges, while behind the river frontages of stark warehouses and grimy wharves on either side 27

are places well worth the visiting, for things to be seen or associations to be recalled. The busy reach of the river that flows for about a mile and a half between Wapping and Bermondsey, Shadwell and Rotherhithe, is known as the Pool—a gathering-place for vessels from many waters, a name familiar in all the Seven Seas. Deptford, which has an important place in Britain’s maritime history, where Francis Drake entertained his Sovereign on the *Golden Hind*, and where Christopher Marlowe was slain in early manhood, need not long detain us, so changed it is, though literary pilgrims may like to be reminded that Marlowe lies buried in the church of St. Nicholas there.

Greenwich, on the right bank about five miles below London Bridge, is the most notable down-river centre about which the rambler may find much to linger over. With its noble Hospital fronting the Thames and backed by its pleasant park, this historical old town—now merged in the vastness of London—has changed much, and yet retains much to remind us of the past when it was the site of a royal residence much concerned with the Tudor chapter of England’s history. Here the eighth Henry was born and here he was twice married; here his only son, Edward the Sixth, died, and here his two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, were born. In the following century the second Mary to become queen was also born here. Greenwich Palace, with which these memorable events were associated, had been built by the good Duke Humphrey in the early part of the fifteenth century and had been given the name of Placentia. Under the Tudors, when the atmosphere was as yet unladen with the fumes from a million “sea-coal” fires, it came to be the best appreciated of royal residences within easy reach of London, the river forming a simple highway communication.

With the seventeenth century, Greenwich Palace came to be less used, until Charles the Second had it demolished and got Inigo Jones to design him a new one—which he did not live to see completed. Then, under William and Mary, the many victims of the battle of the Hogue inspired the Queen with the idea of establishing a hospital for sailors maimed in their country's service, and she suggested the adapting of the Palace to that purpose. When she died, William carried out her idea as a memorial to his consort:



DULWICH OLD SCHOOL

Though greatly added to, there still stands, in its well-wooded grounds, that richly endowed college founded at Dulwich early in the seventeenth century

“A plan was furnished by Wren; and soon an edifice, 29
surpassing that asylum which the magnificent Lewis had provided for his soldiers, rose on the margin of the Thames. Whoever reads the inscription which runs round the frieze of the hall will observe that William claims no part of the merit of the design, and that the praise is ascribed to Mary alone. Had the King’s life been prolonged till the works were completed, a statue of her who was the real foundress of the institution would have had a conspicuous place in that court which presents two lofty domes and two graceful colonnades to the multitudes who are perpetually passing up and down the imperial river. But that part of the plan was never carried into effect; and few of those who now gaze on the noblest of European hospitals are aware that it is a memorial of the virtues of the good Queen Mary, of the love and sorrow of William, and of the great victory of La Hogue.”

Macaulay’s words may well be recalled as we visit the place to-day, when it has become primarily the Royal Naval College, with but a portion still preserved as hospital for aged and infirm seamen. Here are to be seen many relics of our naval heroes, models of old-time ships, naval portraits, and other museum treasures associated with Britain’s sea-story.

At Greenwich Park some two hundred pleasant acres remain, forming one of the most agreeable of the public 30
pleasances of London’s suburbia. On a hill in the park stands the Royal Observatory, established here in 1676 and built on the site of an observation tower erected more than two centuries earlier by the good Duke Humphrey. North and south

through Greenwich Observatory runs the zero line from which are reckoned the British meridians of longitude, and from the Observatory, too, is reckoned Greenwich Mean Time. The pleasant park is a popular resort in summer, and from the Observatory hill is to be had a peculiarly fine view, looking up the river and over London. This hill is the last of the down-river eminences affording a wide prospect of the valley of the Thames where it widens out over Essex on the north and Kent on the south.

Some four miles farther downstream, and still within the Metropolitan area, is Woolwich, with its old Royal Dockyard and its great Royal Arsenal and many establishments connected therewith. Beyond are Plumstead and Erith, with goodly acreage of woods, commons, and open marshland in the neighbourhood—but the sinuous Thames, “rennyng aie downe to the sea”, with its constant succession of ever-varying craft, affords the main interest. Here we may see inward or outward bound great ocean-going steamers, occasional survivals of the past in sailing vessels in tow of demonstrative energy embodied in squat tugs, and barges with rich red-brown sails that give a note of pleasing colour to an ever-fascinating scene. 31

Turning to some of the inland places that neighbour more or less closely the riverside towns and villages, we may find some pleasant ruralities still within reach of the rambler. Near Dartford, which has become largely an industrial town, is Dartford Heath, from the rising ground of which may be had wide views, and here too may be seen some of those deep quarryings which were long looked upon as relics of a prehistoric pit-dwelling people, but are now more generally believed to be the abandoned chalk-workings of earlier

generations. Similar or more extensive pits, caves, and deneholes are known to exist at Crayford, Blackheath, and Chislehurst, in this area. Dartford was the point at which, in the fourteenth century, smouldering indignation at many grievances, fanned by the preaching of John Ball, burst into flame as the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler. Southwards from Dartford, by Wilmington and Swanley, are large tracts of cherry orchards unforgettable by those who have seen them in their full blooming.

The ancient Roman highway, Watling Street, passed through Dartford, and a few miles to the north, where it reaches the little River Cray, is Crayford, where the invading Saxon Hengist so thoroughly overthrew the native Britons that, as an old chronicler put it, they “fled Kentland and fled with much fear to London”, some fourteen miles away. Southward, by pleasant ways that take us through orchards and hop gardens and well-wooded ground, the various Crays may be visited—North Cray, Foot's Cray, and St. Mary's Cray. All these places are “growing points” on the outer fringe of London, which each few years see further Londonized. Nearer town Eltham is notable for its fine moated Banqueting Hall, the remaining portion of a royal residence dating from the fifteenth century. The open timber roof and the oriel windows are among the more notable features of this interesting survival. Eltham fell into disuse as a royal dwelling-place when Henry the Eighth migrated to Greenwich.

Still nearer town, about five miles from St. Paul's, is Blackheath—dingy with a new nigrity since it originally received its name. This common land of nearly 270 acres, which adjoins Greenwich Park on the east, was crossed by the ancient Watling

Street, and was for centuries a popular gathering-ground in time of trouble and a notable place for the meeting and greeting of distinguished foreign visitors who had journeyed by road from Dover. Among the many interesting associations that may be recalled, is the tradition that it was on Blackheath that John Ball, Wat Tyler's incendiary preacher, inflamed the peasantry with his attack on the nobles, summed up in his celebrated distich:



ELTHAM PALACE

The fine moated Banqueting Hall is the remaining portion of an old-time royal residence. Its open timber roof and oriel windows are particularly notable.

“When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?”

33

Another tradition says that the now triumphant game of golf was first played in England here when introduced into his new realm by James the First.

Near to the Crays is Orpington, suggesting to those who have not visited it a celebrated breed of “utility” poultry, and leaving in the memory of those who have, an impression of broad, open, sloping fields of strawberries. Between the Crays and Eltham are Sidcup and Chislehurst, centres of comfortable residential districts where, by means of generous gardens and the conservation of trees, something of an unselfconscious garden-suburb character has been maintained. Chislehurst Common is a pleasant open space amid wooded surroundings. At Camden Place, on the edge of it, died—two centuries and a half apart—William Camden, the patient antiquarian of Tudor days, and Napoleon the Third, the last Emperor of the French.

At Chislehurst are notable examples of those deep pits and caves in the chalk already referred to. Utilized in the Great War for storage of high explosive, they have been made again available for exploration by visitors, who can penetrate them and speculate as to whether the earlier romantic, or later utilitarian, theory is likely to be the more correct—whether they were homes of prehistoric troglodytes, or quarries for supplying chalk to early builders.

34

The district in which we are here is considerably to the south of east, and is to be reached by south-going railway or motor-bus routes, but places brought within the four segments of our division of Greater London must necessarily overlap in rambling practice. Thus this district of the Crays and Chislehurst and Orpington is readily reached from Bromley, which comes more fittingly into our next section. Beyond the places named comes much of that cultivation in orchards and fruit-growing fields that has won for the county of Kent the name of the Garden of England, and a very pleasant walk may be taken by footpath and road through this rich orchard country from Swanley by way of Chelsfield and down the hill to the River Darenth by the beautiful park of Lullingstone and its old church. A little farther down the river is Eynsford, with remains of an old castle, now a centre of the paper-making industry—the mills of which it must be said considerably lessen the beauty of Darenth's pleasant valley. Yet farther down stream is the charming old valley-village of Farningham. Along the Darenth valley ancient remains testify to the importance of this part of the country as far back as the Roman times. The three fords across the Darenth, denoted by Otford, still farther to the south, Eynsford, and Dartford, indicate why this should have been so. But the valley and its story are tempting us beyond our limits.

III

“And looking to the South.”—*Tennyson*.

London's "south side" has for long meant an ever-growing extent of fanwise-spreading suburbs. Though in earliest times it was limited to Southwark and Lambeth, beyond which lay various more or less isolated hamlets and villages, certain of these hamlets and villages early grew to coalescing point—and that growth has gone on with great rapidity during the past hundred years or so. In the eighteenth century citizens of London who could afford to dwell at a few miles distance, or who followed the new fashion of having a country "villa", settled in Clapham or Brixton, Camberwell, Denmark Hill, or other of the outlying villages. In the nineteenth century the movement became accelerated, and that it is still going on is to be seen in a large number of the nearer Kent and Surrey centres. Less than a hundred years since, Balham was still a place in which Londoners could establish a country retreat—now the semi-rural belt must be sought in a southerly direction some ten miles farther away; thanks to improved means of communication Banstead is now as near to London as Balham was.

36

Not very many years ago it was easy to fix on the limit of ramble points round London as the terminal places that were to be attained by means of the old horse buses. Since the coming of the motor bus this is less easy, for in almost every direction—with certain change of vehicles at linking points—it is now said to be possible to go from London to the coast in all directions. Most assuredly is that so towards the south. With but two

changes *en route*, the leisurely traveller can now go from London to Brighton by motor bus, seeing far more of all that goes to make up the countryside than is possible from the railway. If, therefore, we consider here the country within bus-reach of London to-day it would be necessary to cover the whole of the Home Counties, and perhaps much beyond. We must, however, in this as in other directions, be content to select some of the attractive and interesting places that are about the southerly fringes of London and to glance at others that may be reached within a radius of about a score of miles from the centre. For at least half that distance we find that linking residential suburbs have spread over market gardens and farmlands, eaten into great estates, and diminished the woodlands, and are ever continuing this devastating transmogrification of the country into the town.

The immediate southern suburbs of London include several districts rich in historical and personal associations, though they may retain little of such interest as calls for ocular observation. Within the past century, village after village has disappeared, suffered a change into something new and strange, becoming part of that broad belt of mostly undistinguished building which has come to be known as Suburbia. Generally the new suburb retains the name, and frequently but little more, of the old village that has become engulfed in the tide of building. We may pass in this direction Newington, Kennington, Camberwell and Peckham, Stockwell, Brixton and Clapham, all of which were long since thus engulfed, and the fanwise spreading of the tide has further taken in Lewisham and Dulwich, Streatham, Balham and Tooting. Fortunately, however, in many of these places greens and commons, parks and other open spots of the greenery of turf and trees have been permitted to remain enislanded

among far-spreading houses, for London in the south has been peculiarly well served in this retention of open spaces, some of them of considerable extent. Some, such as Kennington Park, are maintained as well-kept public gardens, affording to dwellers in the district a beautiful “hint that Nature lives”, while others, such as Tooting Common, have retained something of their original picturesqueness.

38

Did space permit, much might be said of each one of these villages-become-suburbs, of the associations of Clapham with the protagonists of the anti-slavery movement; of the associations of Camberwell and Denmark Hill with Robert Browning and John Ruskin respectively. The villages in which those men had much of their upbringing have become more or less mythical, while the men they nourished have become immortal.

At Dulwich, however, despite the change wrought within the past few decades, still stands in its well-wooded grounds that richly endowed college which was founded early in the seventeenth century by Edward Alleyn the actor, and has grown greatly during the past three centuries. Part of its beautiful grounds have been made a public pleasance, while the establishment by later benefactors of a fine gallery of art has given further distinction to Dulwich. It may be noted, too, that when the Pickwick Club was dissolved and its eponymous hero decided on retirement to “some quiet pretty neighbourhood in the vicinity of London” he finally fixed upon Dulwich as best deserving of that description. Beyond Dulwich comes the rising ground of Sydenham with, on the summit of its hill, that Crystal Palace which, after housing in Hyde Park the Great Exhibition of 1851 at which all the world wondered, was

39

transferred to this dominating site, affording a landmark visible in fine weather right across London from the northern heights. Glancing down by-ways from the Strand, passers-by have frequently glimpsed something of the firework displays so long a popular feature in connection with the Crystal Palace. Though its distance from central London has resulted in Sir Joseph Paxton's palace of glass having but a chequered career as a popular resort, its extensive hillside grounds supply a further welcome open space which breaks the continuity of the great city's extension on the south.

South-east of Sydenham lie Penge and Beckenham, Shortlands and Bromley, all developed or developing into residential suburbs, but inviting to pleasant rambling places yet farther afield, some of which may be more directly indicated later. At Shortlands I can recall first hearing the song of the nightingale, and that not as a rarity, for night after night the birds were answering each other across fields now covered with houses. That was a goodly few years ago—and possibly we should have to go out a few miles farther, to Hayes or Keston, to hear him now-a-nights. West of Sydenham and the neighbouring Norwood is Streatham with a small but pleasant common, a suburb-submerged village which in Dr. Johnson's time was sufficiently far out to be a place for a country residence; it was here that the great lexicographer was looked upon as "lost to his old friends" when he went visiting the Thrales, with whom he found, Boswell says, at "an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing". West again of Streatham comes Tooting with its attractive common. Not far from it on the London side the neighbouring commons of Wandsworth and Clapham give further evidence of the extent to which open spaces have been preserved about the

southern districts of the Metropolis.



WHITGIFT HOSPITAL, CROYDON

Often threatened with demolition, owing to its situation in the centre of the town, this happily still remains an interesting survival of Tudor philanthropy and architecture.

To glance farther afield, we find that London has reached out to the old market town of Croydon, which has in effect become but one of the outer suburbs, though before steam and petrol had been utilized to diminish distances it was a separate town of some importance. In the distant days before “sea-coal” came to be our staple fuel, Croydon was indeed the market centre from which was forwarded to London much of the charcoal into which the woods of the Sussex and Kentish Weald were converted. Furthermore, the fact that here, and at nearby Addington, long dwelt successive Archbishops of Canterbury, gave something of special distinction to the district. One of those archbishops has left a very definite impression on the town in the centre of which the old Whitgift almshouse forms a very picturesque feature. Though often threatened with demolition, owing to its position, this remains a notable survival from Elizabethan days, while the neighbouring Whitgift Grammar School, though as a foundation it dates from the same great time of noble endowments, is a modern building. By rapid growth during recent decades Croydon has reached out to neighbouring places and made of them as it were but extensions of itself—Purley and Shirley, Sanderstead and other places—yet are there pleasant rambles to be had in the country a little beyond, which though partially sophisticated by the growth of self-conscious groups of extra-urban dwellings yet has pleasant lanes and footpaths up along the hill ridges or along the Caterham valley. Eastward, where the county of Surrey soon merges into that of Kent, many attractive places may be found

scattered between this southern centre and the country touched upon in the closing portion of the preceding section.

From Croydon by the pleasant Shirley Hills and West Wickham (with memories of Anne Boleyn in the days when the bluff king was courting her) we may get to Hayes and Keston Commons, with their pines, bracken, and gorse-beautiful neighbouring open spaces retaining in a great measure their old-time rural charm, though now made accessible to Londoners by motor bus. This delightful tract, one of the pleasantest within a dozen miles or so of central London, may be more directly reached from Bromley, passing near by that Hayes Place wherein the great Lord Chatham died and wherein his greater son, William Pitt, was born. Keston Common, with its fine trees and ponds, has long been regarded as one of the notable beauty spots on London's outer fringe. The shaded ponds are fed by a spring on the common, traditionally known as Cæsar's Well, and from the farthest of the three ponds issues the Ravensbourne, which, running northerly by Bromley and Lewisham, reaches the Thames at Deptford.

42

Immediately south of Cæsar's Well a high stile gives access to Holwood Park, in which is an old Roman camp, and through which by tempting footpath ways a route may be followed to Cudham with its grand church yews, and so across to Knockholt Beeches, growing in a cup-shaped hollow 770 feet above sea-level. Below on the south stretches the pleasant Westerham valley. Passing through Holwood Park we may pause at a stone seat on which it is recorded that it was at that spot a momentous decision was taken. The inscription is in the form of an extract from a letter by William Wilberforce: "I well remember, after a conversation with Mr. Pitt, in the open air, on the root of an old

tree at Holwood, just above the steep descent into the Vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice, on a fit occasion, to bring forth the abolition of the slave trade.” Between Holwood and Cudham is Downe, an attractive old village, where the house that was for many years the home of Charles Darwin is still to be seen; west of Cudham village, and indeed in the same parish, is Biggin Hill, where an aerodrome was established during the Great War, and immediately west of that again is the easterly one of the hill ridges which has been referred to as running south from near Croydon. 43

Along that ridge near Warlingham, Woldingham, and other one-time village centres, Londoners who are able to dwell at some distance from town have built them pleasant residences. The western slope of it in parts goes steeply down to where the railway runs along the Caterham valley, and in its side are considerable chalk quarryings. Keeping to the high ground we find it takes us to the steep descent of Titsey Hill down to Limpsfield Common—long popular with the golfing fraternity—and so to Westerham, an attractive old market town with ever-living memories of Quebec Wolfe; whence farther southwards and well out of our present bounds, delightful woodland ways can be followed over the hills to Edenbridge or Sevenoaks.

The chalk ridge which has led us thus far from Croydon by way of Warlingham rises in parts to close upon 900 feet above sea-level and affords fine views from several points, as from the wind-swept gorsy tract of Worms Heath. Other of these downland ridges to the south of Croydon, Riddlesdown, Coulsdon, and Merstham (which forms the western boundary of the well-wooded Caterham valley) invite to well-varied excursions into the chalk country and to some parts of that 44

fascinating Pilgrims' Way which in days of demonstrative devotion linked Winchester with the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, and was still earlier, it is said, the route by which merchandise was brought from the west. Where the old Way may be traced along the hillside to the north of the village, is the point at which the pilgrims from the west were probably nearest to London in that long journey which they entered upon for the soul's sake and by which no doubt the body greatly benefited. Within the rambling area we have here set ourselves, other parts of the Pilgrims' Way may be interestingly traced out for some miles to the eastward, along the hills forming the north side of the Westerham valley to where it crossed, of old, Chevening Park, home of that Lady Hester Stanhope, "Chatham's fiery grand-daughter", who after acting as châtelaine for her uncle, William Pitt, spent her later life in proud isolation on the slopes of Mount Lebanon. That portion of the Pilgrims' Way which crossed Chevening Park was closed as long ago as 1780, and present-day rambles who would follow in the path of the pilgrims have to make considerable divagation to the south.



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THE MILL, KESTON COMMON

The old windmill is on the west side of a common long familiar to London pedestrians as one of the notable beauty spots of the easily accessible country-side.

Though reference has been made to the chalk downs, there is quarried in the Merstham neighbourhood a strong sandstone which long since, as firestone, came to be famous for architectural purposes owing to its property of further hardening under exposure to the atmosphere. The old church of Merstham—one of the infrequent churches erected actually on the Pilgrims' Way—will show us how this local stone weathered. It is recorded that “so highly was the stone valued at one time that the Crown took possession of the quarries. Edward the Third in 1359 issued a patent authorizing John and Thomas Prophete to dig stone here for the work at Windsor Castle, and commanding the sheriff and others to aid them, and if any men refused to work, to arrest them and send them in safe custody to Windsor Castle. Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster was built of Merstham stone.” It is worth noting, furthermore, that the first iron railway laid down in England is said to have been made so that the stone which was quarried here might be more easily taken hence. It was placed in horse-drawn trolleys running along the rails, and so conveyed to Wandsworth. 45

A rather more westerly way southwards would take us from London through Clapham and Tooting—both closely-built suburbs, though, as has been said, possessing goodly commons—by way of Mitcham, one of London's old-time nursery gardens, long the centre of the district in which “sweet-blooming lavender” was grown, to Sutton and other populous centres to the west of Croydon which have yet within easy 46

access much that is still attractive countryside. Sutton is linked with Croydon by way of Carshalton, Wallington, and Beddington, whence the little Wandle River meanders Thamesward by way of Mitcham, Merton, and Wandsworth.

A little beyond hillside Sutton, we can get up on to the grand open expanse of Banstead Downs, on which is that estate known as The Oaks, that long since gave its name to one of the “classic” races annually run at neighbouring Epsom. Beyond The Oaks, high on the Downs, are the villages of Banstead and Woodmansterne—the latter with local pride in the fact that its rectory is on a level with the cross surmounting St. Paul’s Cathedral, and that it can therefore, in a way, “look down on London”. Banstead Downs merge in Epsom Downs, and these again with Walton Heath and Mickleham Common, tempting us well out of the rambling limits we have set, to all the varied wonderland of Box Hill, Dorking, and that pleasant valley which runs westward between the parallel ridges of chalk and sand by way of Shere to Guildford. This further beautiful district of central Surrey is easily accessible by railway or motor bus—and I must leave it at that.

47

On Epsom Downs we find what may be termed the world’s most famous centre of horse-racing—for not even the fame of older Newmarket can be said to equal that of Epsom, which goes far beyond that of circles ordinarily taking an interest in “the sport of kings”. Wonderful is the scene on the downs in the neighbourhood of the racecourse at race times, and more especially during that week of the Epsom Summer Meeting in earliest June, when the classic races of the Derby and the Oaks are run. The high, bare, rolling down, with the great racecourse, the thousands of vehicles, and the vast gathering of people,

afford a sight alike impressive as a whole and interesting in detail, whether in the fashionable assemblage about the Grand Stand or in the groups of gipsies and others who seek by various side-shows, licit or otherwise, to profit by the occasion of London's great extra-urban Saturnalia. From the summit of the Grand Stand on a clear day, I am told, the view extends northwards beyond where St. Paul's Cathedral dominates the city and westward to where, far up the course of Thames, is seen Windsor Castle. The attention of those who throng the stand is generally sufficiently occupied by the more immediate foreground of the Downs and its racecourse, of which it affords an unforgettable bird's-eye view.

Strange is the contrast afforded here between the busy times of horse-racing and those intervals during which the great stretches of wind-swept turf are frequently a solitude. Take what direction we may, whether keeping to the downs or passing into the valleys, we shall find attractive footpaths and byways through a countryside rich in many trees, with goodly estates imparting an air of prosperity to the district, and here and there newly-built places where well-to-do Londoners set up homes at a distance from the

“exhalations of dirt and smoke,
And all the uncleanness that doth drown
In pestilential clouds a populous town”.

Before winning world-wide fame as a racing centre, it may be added, Epsom enjoyed for some time the reputation of a fashionable spa, and though its fame as such was less sustained than that of other places at a greater distance, the medicinal properties of its water, first discovered in 1618, are now

everywhere known in Epsom salts. It was, no doubt, the waning vogue of Epsom as a spa and the growing popularity of Bath and Cheltenham that many years ago gave rise to the apocryphal story of a tombstone at one of the latter places being inscribed with some such remorseful quatrain as:

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“Here I lie with my three daughters
All through drinking of Bath waters;
Had we stuck to Epsom salts,
We shouldn’t be lying in these here vaults.”

IV

“And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny.”—*Wordsworth*.

Real “country”—which some of us who have lived long in London regard as being a place where, in the “pretty ring time”, primroses may be found blooming in copse and hedgerow—is but infrequently to be found within a dozen miles of central London, and in most directions we must go some few miles yet farther afield for country so truly rural as to fulfil that qualification. I was indeed struck—and that even some seven or eight years ago—when motoring from a point some fourteen miles south-west of London to East Anglia, by the fact that we had passed through houses, houses all the way for about thirty miles before we attained to the freedom of fields on both sides of the road. Thus it is that in dealing with that greater irregular outer circle within which the term rambling seems appropriate we find ourselves at times far from streaming London’s central roar and are frequently tempted to divagate still farther.

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Although directly westward in these days we must pass well beyond the boundaries of Middlesex into the bosky ways of Buckinghamshire to find the primrose path of true rustic enjoyment, this western segment of our great circle has early attractions both of association to appeal to the mind and of picturesqueness to gladden the eye. It includes many miles of the course of the winding Thames, and still happily retains liberal tracts of parkland and common within easy reach of one or other of the river’s banks. When we are stepping westward from

London, it is, indeed, natural to think first of the river and the places interesting from associations to be recalled or things to be seen. To deal in any way adequately with all of these would, of course, be far beyond the scope of this book. Much must of necessity be merely touched upon or glanced at, much even ignored. London itself stretches closely along the river for a considerable distance in this as in the easterly direction at which we have already glanced, and every village grown into a suburb has its story to detain those who have leisure.



STRAND-ON-THE-GREEN AND KEW BRIDGE

From the old Thames-side hamlet, a quaint survival hemmed in by modern suburbia, is to be had a fine impression of the beautiful proportions of the new

Kew Bridge.

Going up river from Chelsea and Battersea, where, though close in town, the river yet maintains on either bank a pleasant wealth of greenery, we come to Fulham, with its old episcopal palace, and Putney, linked by a noble bridge. Beyond Putney's broad stretch of villadom is the high ground of Putney Heath, neighbouring the greater expanse of Wimbledon Common which spreads westward close to that noble extent of Richmond Park which we shall come upon in more leisurely fashion by following the upward course of the Thames. Along the river we go by Barnes and Mortlake on the south side, by Hammersmith and Chiswick on the north, and so, either by the riverside towing-path or by roads that for some distance keep us well away from the river bank, arrive at Kew. 51

Shortly before Hammersmith merges in Chiswick, among the old houses near the river path we may see where it was that William Morris installed his famous Kelmscott Press, and a little beyond is the pleasant house—certainly a house of pleasant and gracious memories—in the coachhouse attached to which some of us recall the poet-artist and dreamer of a social Arcadia putting forth his views. A little farther along and we may find fact blending with fiction scarcely less real in looking out the seminary of Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley, where, according to the great novelist satirist, other things than the seeds of learning were sown. Beyond again are Chiswick church, where William Hogarth is buried, and the house in which the great pictorial satirist dwelt. Here, too, we come to a recent public acquisition of considerable importance, in the Duke's Meadows—part of the grounds of the long famous 52

Chiswick House and familiar to the crowds that throng the riverside to see the final section of the great annual rowing contest—from Putney to Mortlake—between rival crews from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Here in process of development is what promises to be a very fine riverside boulevard.

Immediately beyond riverside Chiswick is Strand-on-the-Green, a picturesque hamlet preserved in the suburbia that has grown up around it on all sides except where it has retained much of its old-time character along the Thames front, though its waterside trees have been much cut down, and other changes are threatened which may tend to lessen the quaintness of this bit that has long been a favourite subject with artists. Standing on the path that separates the small irregular houses from the river it is difficult to realize that but a short distance away is the busy high road, traffic-thronged, that leads to Brentford, Hounslow, and the west. From Strand-on-the-Green we get a fine impression of the beautiful proportions of Kew Bridge where it crosses the river in a noble curve a short distance farther upstream, while from the bridge looking back we have a very picturesque stretch of the river with Strand-on-the-Green facing across the water to the open Surrey bank, and the distance filled with the greenery of Chiswick and Mortlake trees masking from view any reminder of how near we still are to the crowded town.

Kew Bridge links the eastern end of house-crowded Brentford with the pleasant openness of Kew Green, with its enislanded brick church. On the west side of the green is the principal entrance to the Royal Botanic Gardens—those popular Kew Gardens which form perhaps the most variedly beautiful of all

London's chief show places. Here we can enter as it were a veritable fairyland of flowers, a world of beauty made manifest in bloom and foliage. These gardens, close upon three hundred acres in extent, embrace within their bounds living examples of the vegetable kingdom, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that groweth out of the wall; from the little Glory-of-the-Snow, the clean blue of which is earnest of spring's lavish largess in northern latitudes, to orchid marvels from tropical forests, and the gigantic lily that needs the steaming atmosphere of some equatorial pool. In woodland and shrubbery, rock-garden and parterre, greenhouse, hothouse, and conservatory we may find, it is said, representatives of some four-and-twenty thousand of the different species into which patient botanists have classified and systematized the vegetable world. Classification and botanical nomenclature, it may well be believed, concern but little the vast majority of the visitors, for although Kew may be said to have established itself as the centre of the world's botanical gardens, most people are attracted thither by beauty made manifest rather than by any hunger for scientific facts concerning plants. In May those who accept the poet's invitation and "come down to Kew in lilac time" find it a veritable wonderland of floral colour, whether they go by the woodland walk where wild hyacinths form vistas of "dim blue goodness", or to that wonderland of joyous detail, the rock-garden. Later, the riverside rhododendron walk gives massed beauty of colour, the rose-borders afford infinite variety, and on all hands are floral beauties that make one echo the quaint conceit of the seventeenth-century poet who said:

"Who, that hath reason and his smell,
Would not among roses and jasmin dwell?"

On the farther side of the river from Kew are the wharfs and breweries of Brentford, partly shut off by a tree-grown islet, and affording a striking contrast with Kew's extensive greenery. A little farther upstream are the extensive parklike grounds of Syon House, belonging to the Duke of Northumberland, of which a fine view is to be had from the towing-path between 55 Kew Gardens and the river. The mansion is surmounted by a sculptured lion that long stood on the Charing Cross front of Northumberland House until half a century ago it was removed to its present position after that house was demolished. Alongside Kew Gardens is the open greenery of the Old Deer Park of Richmond, diversified with some goodly elms and other trees. The farther side of the park is separated from the old town itself by a railway line, while from the towing-path along its river front may be seen across the water the most attractive aspect of Isleworth, still a centre of London's rapidly diminishing circle of market gardens.

At Richmond we reach a storied old town which has of itself provided materials for special histories. On the Green—cut off by short alley ways from the main street—are some pleasant substantial houses of Queen Anne's time and some more pretentious and less attractive ones of later date. Here too are remains of the old Tudor palace wherein Queen Elizabeth died. By way of the twisting main street we come to the famous Richmond Hill, passing the end of the beautiful old bridge that picturesquely links the town with the Middlesex bank and leads to many familiar riverside centres along it—St. Margarets, Marble Hill, Twickenham, and others. At the top of Richmond Hill, passing on the way a beautifully laid out public garden on the steep hillside, we reach the fine avened terrace with 56 its grand view along the Thames valley in which

spreading suburbs and villages are lost to sight among the seemingly continuous growth of trees, broken chiefly by the broad westward stretching reach of the silvery Thames, which from this height and under certain atmospheric conditions appears most thoroughly to deserve the adjective. This is perhaps the most celebrated of all the view-points within a radius of a dozen miles of mid-London, and has frequently inspired artists, from Turner onwards. Hence, on a clear day, Windsor Castle may be seen, a little to the north of west, at a crow's-flight distance of some thirteen miles.

Between the terrace and the entrance to the park has been raised the stately pile of the new Star and Garter Home, built for maimed victims of the Great War. The hospital, which retains the name of a long-celebrated hotel that stood on the site, shows like a grand red and white palace from the flat riverside meadows towards Petersham. At the entrance to the noble domain of Richmond Park, a lane-like road slants down to the right leading by pleasant riverside places by Petersham and Ham to Kingston, and so to many delightful Surrey centres, the very name of each of which is an invitation: the Dittons and Esher and Oxshott with their far-spreading commons of open gorse-land and close-grown woodland, offering wonderfully varied and beautiful walks a little off the broad highway—the Ripley or Portsmouth road—in either direction. At the moment we must not be tempted so far afield.

Richmond Park is a wonderland by itself. From its high ground, especially along the ridge where the woodland slopes rapidly riverwards, we get farther grand views over the wonderfully well-wooded valley and away into Surrey's countryside. In all its parts, about its woodland glades, its coppices, its bracken-

grown open spaces, its beautiful ponds, there is beauty to be found at all seasons, while its great extent—well over two thousand acres—makes it rival Epping Forest as a sanctuary of wild life near London.

Returning to the Middlesex side of the river we have, a little above Richmond, St. Margarets and Twickenham, linked as it were in one large and ever-growing suburb of terraced villas with some pleasant old houses reminding us of the days when it was a district of those “villas” in stately grounds, which were the country retreats of well-to-do Londoners in the early eighteenth century, and later when Horace Walpole at neighbouring Strawberry Hill could write of:

“Twit’nam the Muse’s fav’rite seat,
Twit’nam the Graces’ loved retreat”,

and when Alexander Pope and Sir Godfrey Kneller dwelt in the neighbourhood. Still keeping to the winding course of the Thames, we find that Twickenham merges in Strawberry Hill, famous for the Gothic residence of that prince among the *dilettanti*, Horace Walpole, and this again in Teddington, one of the favourite near-London boating centres. So on to Hampton Wick, Hampton Court, and old Hampton itself, all of them giving access to the fine extent of Bushey Park, with its famous avenue of chestnuts, and its scarcely less impressive avenue of limes—one more of those grand tree-grown spaces preserved for public use along the western course of London’s river. On the opposite side of the Thames from Hampton is Hurst Park, while a mile or so farther west is Kempton Park—two of the highly popular racecourses to which Londoners most resort.

Hampton Court, which of all these places glanced at is the one that specially attracts and holds the visitor, has in its palace, garden-grounds, and park, varied beauties and four centuries of story to engage the attention-beauties and story at which there is here no space to do more than hint. In its grand State apartments, its splendid collection of priceless works of art, and its wealth of architectural detail, from those of the days when Cardinal Wolsey designed his lordly pleasure-house, to those of the days when Christopher Wren rebuilt much of it nearer to the heart's desire of William the Third, in its flowerful gardens and its spreading lawns, is much to be lingered over. Approaching by the western moated gateway, we have in front of us the broken lines and varied detail of the older Tudor palace, and after passing through stately courts and corridors and emerging on the other side, we look back on the rich regularity of the eastern frontage of the great rebuildder.



THE PORCH, STOKE POGES CHURCH

It was in the God's Acre of this old church that Thomas Gray found inspiration for his famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard".

The Thames is so much the stream of pleasure for a goodly distance up its westward course that we may hastily glance at other of the variedly urbanized centres along its banks. Beyond Hampton come Sunbury and Shepperton on the Middlesex side, Walton and Weybridge on the Surrey one—each a popular place for boating folks, and each a place with literary and other associations tempting to a lingering stay. Behind the Surrey places named lies pleasant well-wooded country, with St. George's Hill affording extensive views along the valley of the Wey. Farther upstream are Chertsey, with memories of an old Abbey; Laleham, where Matthew Arnold is buried, and Staines, with beyond, Runnymede, where Magna Carta was signed seven centuries ago, and then the dominating Castle of Windsor which has for a still longer term of centuries been the chief residence of England's sovereigns. 59

The winding course of the Thames has taken us well away from the more directly westerly districts, and it is perhaps not unnatural that it should do so, for it is in the neighbourhood of the river that much of that which is most picturesque or that which is most interesting from personal or historical association is to be found. In the direct westward spread of suburbia, old houses have disappeared, old estates been cut up, and though most of the submerged villages or districts have interesting histories, but little remains of outstanding importance to hold the attention here. Thus Acton and Ealing, now closely-built suburbs, were a few generations ago merely villages on that 60

great western road along which travellers set out for Oxford. Here were important schools where in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many men of fame had their early training, and here were pleasant garden-girt houses in which dwelt people of importance in their day. At Ealing, for example, Henry Fielding lived, and there he wrote *Tom Jones*, and at Ealing Thomas Henry Huxley was born in 1825. Huxley's father was a master at a school that counted among its pupils W. M. Thackeray, Cardinal Newman, Captain Marryat, Bishop Selwyn, Sir Henry Lawrence, W. S. Gilbert, and many celebrities of last century—a record sufficiently remarkable to call for mention even in the most summary account. At Ealing, too, for many years lived Austin Dobson, the daintiest lyricist of our time, and there he died in 1921. To-day, Ealing, with its green common and other pleasant open spaces (including a golf course), and Acton have become but part of the extensive western spread of London, largely residential, but with considerable factory development to the north and farther west at Southall, Hayes, and other places which many of us can recall as far-reaching market gardens and farmlands. Here and there we may seek out places of interest still remaining, the little church at Perivale on the River Brent which turns south near Hanwell to reach the Thames at Brentford, and in villages off the main roads, such as Cranford—which has no association with Mrs. Gaskell's story of that name—Harlington, Harmondsworth, and others, may still be found attractive and picturesque old buildings.

It is not until we approach the Buckinghamshire border that our western extension from London affords a combination of places that are not only interesting for their past but show us something of the attractions of country surroundings in the present. At

Uxbridge we reach the Colne, which forms the boundary between the two counties, and there are many pleasant and picturesque bits to be found by following the course of the stream downwards to where it reaches the Thames nearly opposite Runnymede, or upwards by Denham towards Rickmansworth and the country touched upon in an earlier section. In this north-western corner of the country is some of the most attractive of the remaining countryside of Middlesex, with old villages still retaining some of the characteristics of such: Ickenham with picturesque pump on its green, and in the neighbourhood the grand old Jacobean mansion of Swakeleys; Ruislip, and Harefield with memories of John Milton. Crossing the county boundary into Buckinghamshire is to pass into a country of inviting highways and byways, of pleasant woodland and picturesque villages, and also of places rich in association. On the opposite side of the Colne valley from Harefield are the Chalfonts, and at Chalfont St. Giles we may visit the cottage in which Milton dwelt and where he finished *Paradise Lost*. Happily preserved much as it was in the poet's lifetime, the cottage contains many interesting relics of the period. Near Chalfont, too, is Jordans, intimately associated with Quaker history, and burial-place of William Penn. To the south is Beaconsfield—which has been described as a new suburb for London's intelligentsia—from which the great Victorian politician took his title, and where the greater statesman of an earlier age, Edmund Burke, lies buried. Here in the county of beech trees are many inviting ways that would take us far beyond our prescribed limits. About three miles or so to the south—on the way to Windsor—is what may be described as a veritable bit of “London detached”, to use the old map wording, for there is the fine sylvan tract of Burnham Beeches purchased towards the end of last century by the

Corporation of the City of London, for public enjoyment. Nearly two centuries ago the grand old beeches of Burnham were described as having been “discovered” by the poet Thomas Gray, who wrote thence to Horace Walpole “both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds”. Gray talks of reclining (*il penseroso*) against the trunk of one of the beeches while writing, and it was possibly there that he mused over the subject of that *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard* which was inspired by the neighbouring God’s acre of Stoke Poges, and which makes the church there a place of pilgrimage for visitors from far and near. When Gray was living at Stoke Poges he described it as a place so countrified that “even the ordinary tattle of the town arrives not till it is stale”; in the “Elegy” it was “far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife”. Eighteen miles was a greater distance then than now, and though much of pleasant country rambling may still be had in this southern corner of leafy Buckinghamshire, it is now possible to include in a half-day’s outing a pilgrimage to Gray’s own grave in the churchyard he has immortalized, and a visit to the grand old Burnham Beeches which form the most westerly possession of the people of London.

Though Burnham Beeches are a little beyond the score of miles from central London that I have set as our limit, the fact that they form a fascinating piece of woodland country that is a public possession in the guardianship of the Corporation of the City of London makes them an appropriate limit in this direction. To the south of them four or five miles are Eton and Windsor—the one on the Buckinghamshire, the other on the Berkshire side of the River Thames, the one with its grand old college buildings, the

other with the massive stateliness of that Castle which has been the centre of the kingdom's historic life for many centuries. The home of England's kings may be regarded as the chief of the show places of that extended London area which has been placed by our modern travel means within an hour or so of the centre, while for the rambler its magnificent park, always open, offers at every season the varying and unfailing charms of fine avenues and woodland glades, and emphasizes for us anew the way in which, despite its colossal growth, London has retained within easy reach considerable tree-grown tracts.

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Transcriber's Notes

- Research into publication date and location determined that this book is in the public domain.
- Corrected a few palpable typographical errors.

[The end of *Rambles in Greater London* by Walter Jerrold]