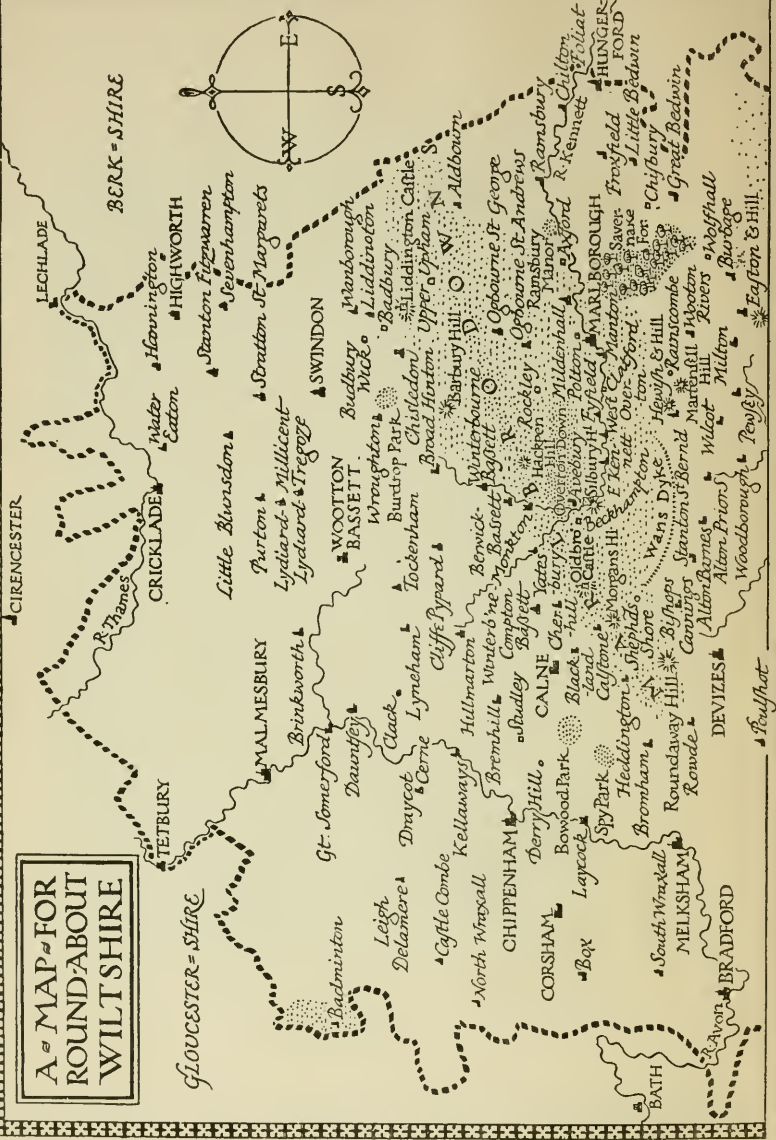
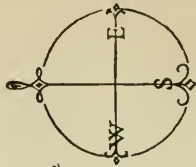


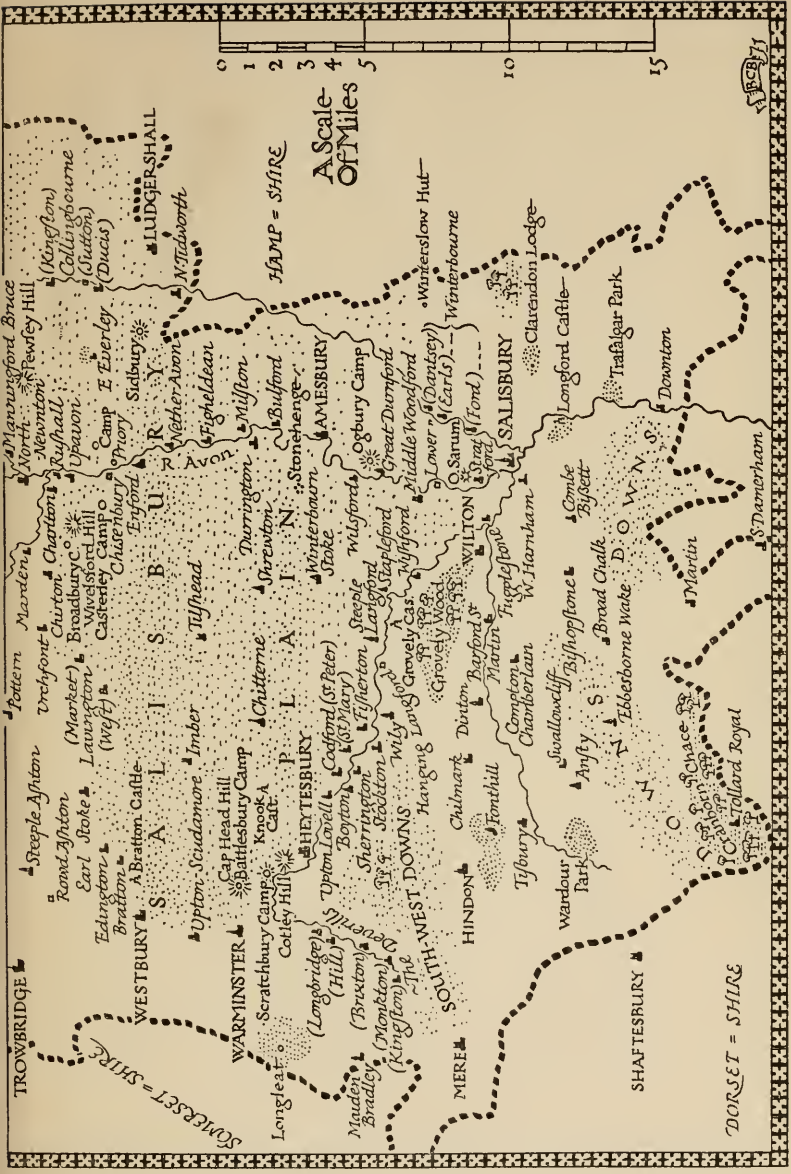
# A MAP FOR ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

GLoucester = SHIRE

Berk = SHIRE



10 Miles



0 1 2 3 4 5 10 15

A Scale of Miles

HAMP = HAMPSHIRE

DORSET = DORSET

SOMERSET = SOMERSET





IN SAVERNAKE FOREST

# ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

*Arthur  
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"HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN NORTH AND SOUTH WALES,"  
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## INTRODUCTION

NO pretension is made in these pages to an exhaustive exploitation of Wiltshire. They are the outcome rather of a long summer's ramble about a county little known but well worth knowing, and are not, I hope, too liberally flavoured with the reminiscent and personal note so seductive to an author in such frequent touch with the associations of his youth.

Wiltshire is a county towards which strangers have always seemed to me to cultivate a quite peculiar vagueness, sometimes even as regards its position on the map of England. Till the advent of the motor reopened, so to speak, the Bath Road, promoting such familiarity as the motorist may or may not achieve, and the military annexed a corner of Salisbury Plain, very few strangers, save antiquarians, took much notice of a county which the Royal and noble sportsmen of the middle ages and ensuing periods held in such pre-eminent esteem.

Wiltshire is quite beyond the circle of villa and residential counties around London, where exotic wealth and prosperity have clustered so thickly as practically to wipe out their natural conditions, create an artificial atmosphere, and to some extent even an artificial if ornate landscape—misleading altogether for any practical purpose as a type of rural England. On the other hand, it lies far short of the mountainous or semi-mountainous regions of West Britain which naturally attract

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the multitude of all degrees in holiday seasons. But Wiltshire is a county not only of considerable size but, in its way, of considerable distinction and individuality. It possesses the three mightiest prehistoric monuments, not merely in Britain, but almost in Europe; one of the most imposing Cathedrals, and quite the most beautiful forest in England.

Short, too, of the west and north there are nowhere such inspiring pastoral solitudes as in Wiltshire, nor does any county maintain the features and the habit of the old rural life of England more consistently from one end to the other. Its thatched villages are comparable in picturesqueness with any to be found, and are generally less marred by inharmonious if salutary improvements than those of districts famous for their villages but better known. The vernacular of Wiltshire is rich and characteristic. Its streams, too, are limpid and gravel bottomed, and have the quality approved of by the nobler and more fastidious fishes.

It is a county, too, whose landscape, for the most part, can stand the test of winter, owing much of its merit to its spaciousness and solitude. Its country towns are mostly eloquent of the past; its social life in all grades is less affected than in other comparatively accessible regions by change and the industrial activity of the last century. Indeed Wiltshire has lost no small fraction of its population in feeding what Cobbett called the "accursed wen," and in helping to swell those industrial hives that have somewhat altered the English character, lowered the national physique, and created the social problems that so trouble men's minds to-day.

In conclusion, I will take this opportunity of thanking the many friends and acquaintances throughout the county who have in various ways contributed to make easier and pleasanter what was in itself to me a sufficiently pleasant task.



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# ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

## CHAPTER I

### MARLBOROUGH

NO proper name in the English language could well be more familiar to English ears than the one which heads this chapter. Even its orthodox pronunciation trips easily from the tongue of all but the vulgar, which is the more remarkable as its orthography, after ringing many changes through several centuries, ultimately subsided, like so many British names, into a permanent form at variance with polite utterance. Marlborough had been previously spelt in no less than twenty-nine different ways. What with a great dukedom of renowned origin, a tolerably famous public school, a suffragan bishopric, to say nothing of a host of clubs, public-houses, music-halls, streets, and crescents all over the empire; what with trade marks on collars, cuffs, straw hats, overcoats, boys' suits, spirituous liquors, bicycles, pony-traps, and other articles of commerce innumerable, the ancient burghers of Merleberg, great no doubt as was their self-esteem, would be amazed could they see how famous the name of their town had now become.

This is all very well, but "Where is Marlborough?" still demand the ninety and nine, or those of them, that is to say, whose curiosity may have been fortuitously awakened. Every one knows that the duke lives at Blenheim, while most churchmen know, or should know, that the bishop's sphere of action lies in the metropolis, though as a matter of fact the title has, I believe, been recently extinguished. As for the school it is only

## 2      ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

natural that the uninterested outsider should assume that, like another and not very distant Victorian foundation, this one, too, had been erected on some breezy no-man's land, with a sandy soil and sufficient water-supply, and like its younger neighbour, called after a famous hero in our island story. Indeed, I do not think the academic significance of the name suggests to most people any corresponding topographical significance whatever. The ancients of Merleberg might exult for the moment, but when they came to look into the matter they would find, I am afraid, that their little town, so favoured, fleeced, and bechartered by successive Angevin and Plantagenet kings, so envied and hated and badly used by Charles the First, so popular and fashionable as a resting-place on the road to Bath, had lost in civic notoriety what it had gained in unsought spurious fame. It is in some sort smothered under the notoriety gained by others who have borrowed its name. Its ducal, episcopal, and academic godchildren, not merely by their respective notoriety, but by their very detachment from each other have further confused the ninety and nine, and helped to obscure the identity of a fine old English market town in the public mind.

But Marlborough, too, has shrunk, in that it has not sensibly increased. Three thousand souls constituted a wealthy and important country town in the Stuart period. Such figures now are of small account ; but the situation makes, at any rate, for those æsthetic qualities which it possesses in a high degree. However the men of Merleberg might grieve over their loss of commercial rank could they behold it, I have heard no regrets whatever from the men of Marlborough, civic or academic. On the contrary, there is a praiseworthy consensus of opinion among the enlightened element, at any rate of both, that there is no place like it on the face of the earth, which in these days when everybody goes everywhere and local patriotism is put to severe tests is saying much. Indeed, I think the very seclusion of the place geographically, and even that degree of mystery which is associated with its whereabouts, is rather cherished by Marlburians. So far from being ruffled

during their walks abroad, I believe they are secretly gratified when confronted by the oft-put question, "Where is Marlborough, exactly?" Now, the terminal word is a mere subterfuge, a concession to politeness on the part of a tactful person as if he only wished to ascertain the precise part of Wiltshire in which it is situated, whereas he is, in fact, stealthily groping after the right county with a mind tolerably blank upon the subject. But such gentle readers as I may count among the ninety and nine, if indeed these figures are in truth quite fair to the geographical intelligence of the reading public, will have already grasped by inference that Marlborough is in Wiltshire. I shall endeavour, before I have travelled far with him, to show some cause for this strong local attachment which the place and neighbourhood inspires not only among actual natives, but to an almost equal degree among those whom the duties of life have brought and retained there for any length of time.

Marlborough is, in truth, very much in Wiltshire, and by that I mean it possesses, in the highest degree, the flavour of a county which, though little known, has its unique and peculiar place among English counties; its outstanding characteristics physical and human, that are only shared in part or whole by a narrow fringe of certain neighbouring provinces. Wiltshire, however, falls physically into two sharp divisions—downland and lowland, widely differing in quality and aspect. The latter occupies, at a rough estimate, about a third of the county, and forms, speaking freely again, its northern portion. It is through its uplands, however, that Wiltshire mainly speaks to those who feel their influence; those great undulations of pastoral solitude traversed with narrow richly timbered valleys, in which old manor houses and sequestered thatch-roofed villages lie grouped around their ancient churches by the margin of pellucid streams. Other counties have their chalk downs in narrow ridges or sometimes even in expanded tracts; but Wiltshire is pre-eminently the land of downs and all that the word means. It stands or falls in the stranger's estimation, by his mental attitude towards this type of scenery, which again is



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very strongly a matter of temperament when habit is not involved; for habit, in this particular case, is an almost sure road to affection. A down country either repels or fascinates, for there would scarcely seem to be a middle attitude; and by this I do not mean a single range of downs running through a fat country, as in Kent or Sussex, where the element of solitude is scarcely a factor and the fancy is neither kindled nor depressed by its influence. But I have in mind rather that quality of landscape with which Wiltshire, far more than any other county, is associated, since over its larger portion the fat country forms but interludes in the wild.

Marlborough then, as Mr. Stanley Weyman pertinently remarks in his stirring romance, "The Castle Inn," "lies in the lap of downs." So it does, and more than this, for it stands on the banks of that famous trouting stream the Kennet, and on the edge of Savernake, the noblest forest in England. It is seventy-four miles from London on the old Bath road, eleven from Hungerford, where this once celebrated and now resuscitated highway enters the county on the east, and the same from Swindon, which lies to the north, where the outer ramparts of upland Wiltshire drop abruptly into the plain. Fourteen miles to the westward, over a wild and striking country, perched on a ledge beneath it and overlooking the north-western portion of the Wiltshire lowland and more besides stands Devizes. To the southward there is no place of note till the traveller reaches Salisbury, distant twenty-seven miles, two-thirds of his progress being over its famous plain. Marlborough is on no great main line; you cannot locate it as the next station to Mugby junction, or the first stop after Barchester. The writer can remember it as severed from all railway communication by distances varying from eleven to fourteen miles according to the quarter of England the traveller had in view, and still sorrowfully reminiscent of the departed glories of the period when forty coaches changed horses there daily. Cross lines, however, by degrees and not without tribulation, found their way here.

I can remember also the advent, or to be literal, the exit

of the first train whose discordant scream awoke the echoes of the Kennet valley, and pierced the leafy shades of Savernake, and how incredible it all seemed. It was laden, this first train, with all the bigwigs of the town and neighbourhood, and was bound not on a time connection with the Great Western Railway at Savernake, but on a trip of pure rejoicing, a triumphal progress, in short, worthy of so momentous an occasion. Whether the quality or the quantity of that august burden was too much for the engine, history does not say, but it failed so persistently in its first efforts to mount the incline running out of the station, that the solemnity of the occasion was somewhat marred. The irreverent made merry, the superstitious augured evil things which happily have not been fulfilled; but history does relate that a dog belonging to one of the great ones, who, unused to this unfamiliar method of progress, had started to run by the side of the train, arrived at Savernake long before his master. There are now two stations at Marlborough, or happily I should say well outside it, modest unpretentious structures, and with such a painful family resemblance, though they belong to quite different families, and at once so near and so far from one another as to tempt betimes the unwary stranger in a hurry to his undoing. But hundreds, nay thousands, whom this and later enterprises would never have been the means of introducing to Marlborough, have in recent years made practical acquaintance with its whereabouts, and not wholly in a fashion acceptable to the natives, who, as I have said, are almost jealous of their seclusion. The whistle of the locomotive, even though tempered by the intervention of a friendly hill, which was once resented by the more fastidious, is now almost musical to the ear, in the background of all the tooting and whirring of motors, which in fine seasons riot along its wide and once sleepy street. For the Bath road, which was popularly supposed a decade or two ago, to have achieved quite a healthy growth of turf on one or two of its Wiltshire sections, has now burst into an activity, such as it could scarcely have known even in its palmiest days. The cycle to be sure had already brushed away the grass

if grass there really were, between Hungerford and Calne, and now the motors throb their dusty course along as well-beaten a highway as there is in rural England.

I have brought the reader thus abruptly to Marlborough, not I trust from mere partiality, though such would be in my case only human, but for the better reason that it is one of the two or three centres best situated for prosecuting an acquaintance with the unexploited charms of Wiltshire. That it is a place well worth a sojourn, for its own sake, is I think undeniable ; but as a point from which to range North-East and Mid Wilts, from Salisbury Plain to the vales of Swindon, and the White Horse, it has paramount advantages. For if these cross lines do not get you to London with that headlong speed the pampered modern seems to think indispensable, they will convey you to Swindon in the North Wilts low country on the one side, or to the edge of Salisbury Plain upon the other, almost before you have finished your morning pipe, while a change on to the main line at either point, opens unlimited opportunities to the pedestrian, or to the cyclist.

Marlborough lies, as I have remarked, in the valley of the upper Kennet, and at the edge of the great forest of Savernake. Its population varies from under three to nearer four thousand souls, not because any great industrial enterprises within its borders ebb and flow thus violently, but wholly in accordance with the date of the census takes advent : whether, that is to say, he descends upon the borough during the term or holiday time of its now dominant institution. The population having remained stationary since the Civil War, when the figures spelled considerable importance, the streets and open spaces occupy almost precisely the situations they then did, nor are there any of those inharmonious approaches to the old town, bordered on both sides by atrocities of the jerry builder, who has here acquired but scant footing. The streets terminate apparently, where they have terminated for all time that matters and precipitate you at once into the country, or on to the downs. In short, it is as compact as it is venerable of aspect, for if the individual houses are not all old, replacement and repair being



HIGH STREET, MARLBOROUGH





inevitable to human existence, there is almost invariably a veteran at hand to catch the eye, and even to impart something of its mellowness and composed demeanour to its neighbours of a more prosaic day. Marlborough is, in truth, held to be by those who have seen it as among the quaintest and most picturesque of English country towns. The long half mile of wide street that is at once its glory and its greater half runs eastward from the college precincts, which from their ancient feudal site command the whole of it, a situation quite in keeping with its ancient story.

Parallel with the street, and a bow shot from it, the Kennet rolls its deep and clear chalk waters beneath the bowery margins of a score of pleasant gardens to a scene of rush and turmoil amid the timbers, and in the great hatch hole of the old town mill. If Marlborough High Street is only among the quaintest, it is certainly quite the widest of its kind in England. At its extremity, the old church of St. Peter's, surrounded by its graveyard, sits comfortably within it, without inconveniencing the traffic to any appreciable degree. The street is tilted sideways at such an angle, that the natives of rival Wiltshire towns, in their lighter moments, were accustomed to profess alarm at the prospect of encountering it in a two-wheeled trap. At its further and upper end, rising from a fine confusion of gabled rooftrees, the ancient church tower of St. Mary's, still scarred as tradition has it with the bruises of Cavalier cannon balls, looks down upon the imposing town hall, which marks the parting of the ways—the one to toil painfully up to the common and the open downland; the other to drop downwards to the Kennet bridge, and so to London or Salisbury, but to Savernake forest in either case. The town may with sufficient accuracy be likened to the letter Y; the broad stem being the High Street, resting on St. Peter's church, and the college precincts, the upper church and the town hall, a modern replica to some extent of an ancient predecessor, set in the fork. Within the arms, however, is a spacious green tilted sideways, like the High Street, and traversed by lime-bordered walks, while around it stand with pleasant irregularity of scheme

and design several modest mansions, and some old timbered houses of less pretension, but greater antiquity. The former might be loosely described as Georgian, though you never know in Marlborough as in similar places, what the front of a house may hide. At any rate they are suggestive, and not without cause of bygone worthies, who never flinched from their port, held stoutly to their opinions, and expressed them when necessary in forcible language. Marlborough was a warm little town in the posting and coaching period, and indeed for long before that; some very snug people lurked within it, and there were lashings of meat and drink.

If you could see it, dear reader, even as it now stands together with a proper grasp of its geographical situation, and could then throw your mind back a century, you would recognize at once a place eloquent of fine old prejudices, of warm affections and deathless feuds, of strong stomachs and stronger heads, of unshakable convictions, and a passionate attachment to the British constitution, and a proper hatred of Frenchmen and Popery. There are plenty of people still living, who can remember enough to construct with a little help of their imaginations, a racy picture of Georgian Marlborough. But all this has vanished. Not so, however, the habitations where these virile virtues flourished, and the panelled rooms that echoed their sentiments. But it is not the interiors nor the old oak within them, nor the odd bits of garden, with their ruddy mellow walls hidden away behind, though there are plenty of both, that chiefly catches the fancy of visitors to Marlborough, and binds its friends so closely to it, but the general old-world air of the place, from one end to the other. That all the houses which line both sides of the long-drawn High Street are Tudor, Jacobean, Queen Anne, or even Georgian cannot be truly asserted, but most of them are. Even if many of their fronts have been converted to the needs of the passing hour, and if the medley is considerable, the whole effect is excellent. It is wide open, too, to the light of heaven and the south, and the sunshine streams all over its cheerful aspect of contentment and well-nourished unambitious old age.

Its archæological merits do not lie in dark and tortuous wynds and alleys, that have subsided into slums, nor, on the other hand, in embattled walls and hoary towers. There are no slums to speak of, and its embattled towers have vanished. It looks as if it had nothing to hide, and could not hide it were there such. There are no jerry-built suburbs, or scarcely any, nor yet any industrial enterprises of a kind to besmirch its outskirts, and injure its complexion.

It is not often a country town can maintain this equable condition without some harrowing evidences of decay. But a kindly Providence provided Marlborough, when decline stared it in the face some sixty odd years ago, with an unlooked for instrument for its preservation, of which more anon. The story of Marlborough is a prodigiously full one, and curiously enough it mainly centres on the delightful precincts now owned and occupied by the flourishing school which so happily and fortuitously linked its fortunes with the place. For though the Roman town of Cunetio stood on the heights to the eastward, above the Kennet valley, at the junction of other roads with the great highway to Bath, little, of course, is known of it. Marlborough, so far as we need concern ourselves here, sprang from a Norman keep, probably in the first instance of wood, which some of these invaders planted without loss of time on the huge prehistoric tumulus whose now bosky summit towers above the college buildings. Probably the Saxons, too, had a fortress here on this "burh," which accounts for the termination in the name of the town, for we do know there was a place of some kind and a church at Merleberg even in their time. To be literal, however, the importance of Marlborough, so far from beginning with the Normans, or even the Romans, reaches away back into unthinkable ages. For those primitive races who clustered so thickly in Wiltshire did not throw up the second largest mound in Britain for nothing or in a spot of no repute. Nor dare we pass over in silence the derivation of a name which has so often challenged the attention of antiquaries and provoked much friendly controversy. The ancients simplified the matter by fathering the place on Merlin, and no

doubt attributed the existence of the mound to his unaided efforts, no great one when his achievements at Stonehenge are borne in mind. I prefer, however, to follow my friend, Mr. A. C. Champneys, an authority not only on the Marlborough mound, but also an expert in Anglo-Saxon, who pronounces very decidedly for "Máer-léah," words meaning "boundary" and "cattle" respectively.

That the Normans, in any case, would have failed to seize such a site as this for a fortress, even had the place been hitherto neglected, would be an oversight most unlike them. But Marlborough would seem to have been concerned with that Norman influx which occurred a few years before the Conquest, for "Alured of Marlborough," who was the great landowner of the district towards the end of Edward the Confessor's reign, was a nephew of Osborn Pentecost, the Norman owner of Ewyas, in Herefordshire, and when his uncle had to run for his life with most of the other Norman interlopers before the wrath of Earl Godwin, Alured for some reason was granted his Ewyas lands. His tenure of these, as well no doubt as of his many manors round Marlborough, was confirmed by William the Conqueror, and he lived to a ripe old age, fighting the Welshmen who disputed his patrimony on the Hereford march, and retiring betimes, no doubt from his lofty embattled mound in the beautiful vale of Ewyas to this other high perch of his in the more peaceful seclusion of Marlborough. Alured's Ewyas property still belongs to the family of one of his followers, who went there with him from Wiltshire. There are coins to show that William the Conqueror thought Marlborough castle a sufficiently important place for the institution of a mint, and secure enough to act as a prison for the Bishop of Sussex, who fell into disgrace, but it begins to assume a more consistently regal importance with Henry the First, who kept Easter here with his court in 1110.

Wiltshire was at this time extremely rich in prosperous towns and religious houses, so in the wars of Stephen both parties paid it assiduous attention. Stephen was endeavouring to capture Marlborough, when the Empress Matilda landed

with her brother the Earl of Gloucester, while Devizes had just been seized by escalade on a stormy night nominally for the empress. But its captor, Fitz-Hubert, a Flemish adventurer, destitute of even twelfth-century respectability, found what was almost the strongest castle in England so snug and tight, he refused to hand it over to his principals, and determined to go into business as a marauder on his own account, at the head of a force of those countrymen of his with which England then swarmed. A partner seeming desirable, he suggested that situation to Fitz-Gilbert at Marlborough. The latter pretended to fall in with the idea, but when the unsuspecting Fleming and his friends came over to arrange terms, his potential partner laid them by the heels, and notified Gloucester that they were at his service. The latter, burning for revenge, hurried to Marlborough, carried his faithless lieutenant to Devizes, the scene of his treachery, and hung him as high as Haman outside the walls, in full view of his despondent followers. As the orgie of fire, slaughter, and spoliation raged throughout England, Fitz-Gilbert of Marlborough burnt, slew, and ravaged with such industry that his name became execrated above that of all the noble marauders of his day by those who had aught to be burnt or plundered—"The root of all evil, a very firebrand of hell, who appeared to rule in that castle for no other purpose than to scourge the realm with his ceaseless injuries." Repeated excommunications to this ogre were but a huge joke, and as an answer to the thunders of the Church, he dragged the pious heads of monasteries to his castle and set them to work on his farm or his fortifications. Such were the wild and impious scenes being enacted around the college mound of Marlborough in Stephen's wars.

Henry the Second quite early in his reign granted Marlborough to his son John, who, as the villain of our Mrs. Markham period, seems, unlike some other old friends, to wax in villainhood under a closer and maturer acquaintance. It may be placed to John's credit, however, that he was fond of Marlborough. Indeed, the hunting in Savernake Forest, and in the other chases of Wiltshire, was in great repute with



mediæval magnates, a fact readily intelligible to any one familiar with the peculiar nature of the county, and John was a considerable sportsman. He celebrated his first marriage, too, in the castle at Marlborough, and throughout this domestic transaction gave a fine illustration of his unfortunate temperament. His bride was Isobel, the representative of the potent earldom of Gloucester and Glamorgan, and the greatest heiress of her day. I have told the story elsewhere, and must curtail it here. It is enough to say that he overrode the archbishop's objections on the score of consanguinity, and when this wife proved childless divorced her on those very objections of the archbishop's that he had flouted. This might pass, but custom and policy required that Isobel should forthwith endow some other noble youth with the earldom of Gloucester and its princely inheritance. Custom, however, also constituted John her guardian, and as this implied the spending of her revenues he kept her unmarried for thirteen years, outraging thereby both precedent and public opinion, for which he had already ceased to care one jot.

As king, both John and his queen—his second wife—spent a great deal of time at Marlborough, and several of his children were, by repute, baptized in the curious old font now standing in Preshute church. He kept moreover a great store of his jewels here; while in the Rolls there are numbers of entries relating to the stocking and furnishing of Marlborough castle. In one of these he commands the honest men, as they love their lives, to bring forty hogsheads of wine there. But with the later tribulations which John brought on himself we have no concern, though Marlborough had a good deal.

Henry the Third kept up the royal traditions of the place, and was frequently here, celebrating the Christmas of 1219 in the castle with great festivities. At another time, on the occasion of his mother's obsequies, he invited over all the poor clerks of Oxford, and treated them to a sumptuous banquet. He bred fine stock on the Barton pastures, a name now preserved by the large farm which adjoins the college. He sent presents of bream from the moat to his friends, which would

strike the modern as shabby, when pink-fleshed trout were sailing about in the Kennet within a bowshot. He orders his grain to be threshed, and the proceeds invested in two-tooth ewes. These, to be sure, are but trifles, but trifles of a kind that seem in some ways a closer link with the past than the doings of gorgeous wights, with whom it is not always so easy to be on intimate terms. In 1267, Henry held a parliament here, at which the "Statutes of Marlborough" were enacted. For a brief period the castle went to a Despencer. Walter Mapes tells us that there was a certain spring at Marlborough which was responsible for a particularly corrupt form of Anglo-French for which the place was notable. One might well imagine that the rugged purity with which the Wiltshireman still enunciates his Saxon would have imparted a racy flavour to the court French spoken at the castle. Perhaps, however, the spring was allegorical, and it was the potent ale of Kennet, even still of some note, that thickened the Gallic accent of these mediæval Marlburians.

Marlborough castle had, in the mean time, expanded prodigiously from the original keep upon the top of the mound. We know there were buildings at the bottom, and spreading far round it, of all kinds, suitable to the needs of a royal court and garrison, and for attack and defence, while it is generally thought to have occupied more or less the whole considerable area now covered by the buildings and pleasure-grounds of the college. But, like so many of its fellows, the great castle was abandoned after the Wars of the Roses to the bats and owls. In Leland's time it was a hopeless ruin. When Camden saw it seventy years later some few remains were still standing. But building-stone was especially valuable in a chalk country, the adjacent town was growing steadily, and a Tudor mansion, still retaining the name and influence of the castle, helped further to use up its ruinous walls. In Henry the Eighth's time it passed to the Seymours of Wolfhall through the royal connection of their famous daughter Jane, and was merged in the great Savernake and Marlborough property, which the present Ailesbury family have inherited from them direct in the female

line. What like was the first house erected by the Seymours or adapted from the castle ruins, we know not, but every one may see to-day its successor in the stately Queen Anne mansion which forms the principal block of the present school buildings.

And what all this time of the borough, that had grown to considerable importance under the protection of the castle, and in feudal times, and now under the new order of things, fell under the influence of the Seymours? One could say much, of course, of its charters, of its burgesses, of its wool trade, but not probably to the delectation of the general reader, but in the Civil War its story becomes much more stimulating. In the matter of ship-money, which the men of Marlborough resented as deeply as any, the town was rated as second only to Salisbury, which was far larger than any other in the county. Of the Seymours, at the period of the Long Parliament, there was the elder Lord Hertford and his brother Sir Francis, the builder of the present "Old House" of the college. Lord Hertford was lord lieutenant of Wilts, and became a Royalist general of repute, while his brother was senior member for the borough. Both led a useful country life, outside the sunshine of the court but of no little splendour, for the elder had deeply offended by his early marriage with Arabella Stuart. They were, moreover, regarded as holding liberal opinions, but when war actually broke out they both went to the king. Perhaps the "obstinacy and malice" of their tenants and constituents had disgusted both the marquis and the member, for of all the towns in a somewhat disaffected county, Marlborough was "most notoriously so," according to Clarendon. Sir Francis, however, had been just raised to the peerage as Lord Trowbridge. What was the strength of the Royalist minority in Marlborough we do not know, but the town went through the war on the side of the Parliament, and suffered much without any measure of compensating glory.

No sooner had the Royalist headquarters been established at Oxford than the town of Marlborough became an important object. In November, 1642, Lord Digby repaired there with

four hundred horse, and appeared on the common—that eighty acres of pleasant turf now devoted to the school footballer, the civic golfer and the civic cow, just above the town. Sir Neville Poole, the member for Malmesbury, commanded for the Parliament in Marlborough. He had behind him for the moment only one hundred and fifty militia, but it was market day, and Sir Neville went out to the parley that was proposed, leaving orders that all rustics available were to be impressed. Mr. Vincent Goddard, of a family then and still conspicuous between Swindon and Marlborough, was deputed to ride out from the Royalist ranks and hold parley with Sir Neville, but the latter was uncompromising and uncomplimentary. He declared that the king, if he should come in peaceful guise would be as welcome as ever was prince to people; but as for delivering up Marlborough to such a traitor as Lord Digby, or admitting any of his rabble within their lines they would sooner die, notwithstanding his lordship's threats to batter the place with artillery. He then ordered ten of his musketeers to advance and open fire, which they did. Lord Digby did not reply to the challenge but, remaining all day on the common, marched at evening to Aldbourne, some miles off. The Marlborough men, however, having tasted blood, and with ranks recruited by the yokels, displayed quite remarkable dash, repairing to Aldbourne and attacking his lordship with such vigour that they drove him off and succeeded in securing Mr. Goddard and conveying him back as a prisoner.

Fully alive to their danger they now sent to Lord Essex, then encamped at Windsor, for assistance, upon which the commander-in-chief promptly despatched a Scottish officer, Colonel Ramsey, who had distinguished himself at Edgehill, with others to assist in fortifying the town; the Kennet was a sufficient protection on the south, while on the north, at the edge of the common, earthworks were thrown up, the traces of which are still visible. The Seymour house was devoid of warlike attributes, and whether the mound above it was to be reconverted from the pleasaunce it had already become, to its ancient uses in case of desperate need, we know not. Franklyn,

the junior member of Parliament for Marlborough, had gallantly hastened down to serve his constituents with his sword, as he had served them with his tongue. He was just in time, for on the very next market day, December 3, provisions being an object with the Royalists, the latter appeared with no less than four thousand men under Generals Wilmot and Digby, besides two regiments of cavalry from Basingstoke, under Lord Grandison and Colonel Grey. The market people were again impressed, and after some outside skirmishing, the grand attack was made on the 5th. First small and then heavy artillery opened on the town from the common, but the steep fashion in which the former dips to the Kennet rendered the fire almost ineffective, the shot flying over the roofs, St. Mary's solid grey church tower which could afford to laugh at Jacobean cannon, getting much of the punishment. Clarendon tells us a spy was captured by the Royalists, shown the king's army, and then sent into the town to proclaim the folly of resistance.

But the Marlborough men were not to be intimidated; they held their earthworks on the common valiantly for three hours against the combined attack of Lord Rivers with Colonel Blake's foot and Grey's dragoons, while a small handful to the westward, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the present St. Peter's schools, defied with equal success the persistent efforts of Pennyman's foot, supported by Usher's dragoons and a battery. At last, however, the buildings on which this group of defenders relied were set on fire, and they were forced to retreat. The Royalists broke into the High Street through a narrow passage, cleared the barricades, and let in the cavalry at both ends with loud shouts of "A town! a town! for King Charles." The rustics, impressed as defenders, were now seized with a most venial panic and fled the town, throwing their firelocks into the Kennet as they ran. Not so the troops and citizens, who still kept up a hot fire from the windows and remaining barricades. The odds, however, were too great; Ramsey, with some musketeers, made a fortress of St. Peter's church for a time, but were at last captured. Sir Neville Poole retired to the mound, carrying with him Lady Seymour and her daughter



from the manor house below it. A story, let us hope a libel, runs that Poole erected two lay figures in black hoods and white aprons on the top of the mound to represent the ladies, and then informed the enemy that if they attacked him they would first witness the destruction of the fair prisoners. After considerable loss on both sides, the resistance in the town was overcome, some two hundred of the victims alone being buried in Marlborough. The invariable desire of soldiers to burn the houses from which they have been shot at, was indulged in here, and some fifty were thus destroyed, while the pillage was wanton and reckless. What the victors could not carry away they in great part destroyed. One bonfire of books alone burned for three hours; hogsheads of oil, vinegar, spirits, treacle, and spices blazed furiously. Furniture and such-like was hacked and broken, while the ragged rabble of invaders exchanged their clothes for those that the Marlborough men stood in, relieving them at the same time of their spare suits. The chests in the Town Hall containing the papers and charters of the borough were broken open and rifled, while waggon loads of goods and produce, and one hundred and twenty prisoners were carried off to Oxford. The loss to the town, besides the dwellings and seven barns of corn destroyed, was reckoned at fifty thousand pounds.

A force of Royalists remained at Marlborough till the next Thursday, with a view of making it a garrisoned town; but on that night a blare of trumpets sounding the retreat echoed down the High Street, and there was a sudden stampede of the king's men, to the great joy, no doubt, of the pillaged and harried citizens. A relief force, despatched too late by Essex from Newbury, had fallen upon them unexpectedly, killed a few, driven off the rest, and recovered some of the booty. But they had arrived too late, though Essex had been importuned in vain to permit of an earlier effort. As it was, they marched eighteen miles in deep, miry roads, cleared the Royalists out of Marlborough in the dark, and marched back again; a performance, says one of them, "men of twenty years' service abroad had never seen the like of." They had also

a poet among them, who thus laments, in course of a metrical narration, the sack of Marlborough—

“That trusty town they plundered in a rage  
 ’Cause they opposed them that, ’tis thought an age  
 Of years can hardly ever it repair  
 To make it half so flourishing and fair.”

But the relieving force departed the same night, and the hapless men of Marlborough were left amid their roofless houses, broken furniture, and rifled cupboards, to shift as best they might. A hundred and twenty of their chief inhabitants were carried off to Oxford, shut up in the jail there, and treated with every indignity. Many died, among them Franklyn, the energetic member for the town. Thus ended the bloodiest and most important incident which occurred at Marlborough during the war. It is impossible here to follow its fortunes throughout the contest. For a long time it was in the unfortunate situation of being a Parliament town within the sphere of Royalist influence. Several small affairs took place within or without it, while most of the best known leaders were here at one time or another. The king came several times, always stopping at Lord Seymour's house, which was fortified, to the great destruction of the adjacent timber; Charles himself superintending affairs on one occasion. Markets went on as usual, but there is no doubt that the sturdy but suffering Roundheads of the town must have been profoundly relieved when Fairfax at length, on his great westward march, in 1645, occupied it. Still, even after that, they were constantly exposed to the raids of a daring renegade Roundhead, one Major Dowett, who had gone over to the Royalists at Devizes, and, with the ardour of a pervert, gave the neighbourhood no rest, Marlborough, with its well-attended fairs, being a favourite object of attack. The hearts of the Marlborough Roundheads must have glowed when, three years after the peace, Cromwell himself, at the head of his army, marched through the town, on that mission of vengeance for the massacre of Protestants in Ireland, which resulted in the frightful chastisement dealt out at Drogheda and Limerick—mostly to the wrong men.



But, alas for Marlborough! scarcely had she recovered from the miseries of Civil War when, in April, 1653, even these were thrown into the shade by an appalling conflagration, which swept the town almost from end to end. It began in a tanner's yard, upon the extreme west, and, carried by a wind, leaped the wide street, and in less than three hours had reduced the greater part of both sides of it, including the Town Hall, "to dust," as all contemporary letters express it. About two hundred and fifty houses, mostly timber, and many thatched, were destroyed. Three hundred families were in the street, and seventy thousand pounds worth of property swept away. "We have scarce anything left but our lives," writes one erst prosperous trader; "the children crying to go home, and we have none to go to. The loss is unspeakable."

"The most furious fire that ever mortal creature saw," says Mr. Bayley, writing to Mr. Lawrence of London, "and if speedy relief be not sent from the nation, it will be a ruinous place and destitute of trade, and a monument to posterity that once there was a flourishing town that now mourns in silence." Another sufferer, poor Mr. Keynes, laments to Mr. Scattergood that, if he had leisure and strength, he could tell him the saddest story that ever he had heard; after detailing his own losses, amounting to two thousand pounds, he declares his chief trouble is that "numbers of honest tradesmen have not the wherewithall to buy bread." He himself is not brought quite to that, and stoutly declares that no man shall lose fourpence by him so long as he has threepence left. He has already secured two rooms for a shop in one of the remaining houses, "though it be thatched," a word which may well have been indited with a shudder at that moment. "Three men," he writes, "have been sent to the general, and unless every good man who has heard of the once flourishing conditions of Marlborough comes forward, that it may be rebuilt, we are utterly undone for ever, both for trade and lodging, there is not one inn left standing." Mr. Keynton, whose own house was spared, after acquainting his friend, Mrs. Manning, of the disaster in very similar language, says, "the like fire was

never in England, and probably never had been in a country town."

In the appeal to Government and the public, Marlborough is described as "this antient market town being so remarkable a place for trade and commerce, both with the cities of London and Bristol, and also serving as a magazine and storehouse for all the inland counties near adjacent, and so of great consequence generally to all persons having relation to those parts." A contemporary pamphlet, "Take Heed in Time," compares Marlborough High Street to Cheapside, and declares "that no braver wares were to be had in London than in this famous town." The scoffers, of course, had their innings, as the fire was concurrent with the elevation of Cromwell to the supreme power, and they thought it quite fitting that such an incorrigibly Roundhead town should celebrate the event in a manner so emblematical of the Protector's fiery nose. The self-righteous, too, had also gathered some crumbs of comfort in that Francis Freeman, the tanner, in whose premises the fire started, was reported to have proclaimed himself the Messiah in the humble circles he doubtless moved in.

In those days private charity, stimulated by official proclamation, was the poor substitute for the unspeakable blessings of insurance. The usual course was here followed, and the council at Whitehall gave orders for a collection to be taken up in all the churches of London and Westminster, and instructed the sheriffs of every county in England and Wales to take similar steps. The writer has stumbled on documentary evidence in the remote townlets of Wales that the "miseries of Merlebergh" did not pass unheeded even there. Marlborough was rebuilt, even to its "noble council-house," only just superseded, and to the restoration of St. Mary's church, which had been gutted. But it lost its second place in the county to Devizes, and if it has dropped a few places more, since then, it no longer concerns itself with heated commercial rivalries, but takes, with becoming and complacent gratitude, such trade as a wholesome market town, set in the centre of a wide if thinly peopled rural district attracts of necessity. Secure

in that further source of financial support which neither wars nor weather nor politics affect, it regards its strenuous past with the detached affection and appreciation only proper to a little town so long permeated with the academic flavour, and enjoys its present with the serenity of cheerful old age, secure from want, relieved from sordid competition, not uncared for of its appearance, and envious of none, so far as I am aware.

The story of the town between the Civil War and the close of the coaching period which synchronized with the opening of the college and created, so to speak, another epoch, does not call for any elaboration here. The plot against Cromwell's government formed by Penruddock, Grove, and other Wiltshire gentlemen only concerns Marlborough in that they intended to strike the first blow there at its small cavalry garrison, and we shall come across somewhat more of this in South Wilts no doubt. Nor will the various charters granted to the town interest the general reader; nor again need I dwell in detail on the religious houses swept away at the Reformation, since they were small, and there is very little left of them. So we may leave such existing evidences as remain of their place in the community to the local antiquarian, merely stating that a house of white friars on the High Street, though gutted no doubt by the great fire, was pulled down about a century ago, and the present priory, now one of the school boarding-houses built on its site, and partly with its material. Just opposite another old fifteenth-century building, known as "The Chauntry," escaped the fire. Semi-ecclesiastical and dedicated to St. Katherine, it appears to have been connected with a guild. Though put to modern uses and divided up, most of the old work, including a chapel, remains. A couple of hospitals were swept away at the Reformation, and there was another priory on the other side of the river. A sombre-looking sixteenth-century stone building on the road to the station marks the site, and was built from the material. But the house, which in my youth had a ghostly reputation, is perhaps more interesting than the site, for here died, on his way from Bath to Hatfield, the great Robert Cecil, Earl of

Salisbury. His chaplain has left an account of his death scene. How, though sinking rapidly, he insisted on standing erect with the aid of his crutches while prayers were offered. How he repeated the principal parts with affection, and then lying with his head on two pillows and his body in a swing, called for Dr. Poe's hand, which he gripped hard, when his eyes began to settle and he sank down without a groan, sigh, or struggle. After his death his body was embalmed and carried to Hatfield.

Of two churches, occupying either end of the town, St. Peter's is of early fifteenth-century date, of perpendicular style, and only noteworthy perhaps for its plain bold tower, one hundred and twenty feet high, whence the curfew still rings every evening under the now pleasing fiction of guiding benighted travellers over the downs. When the bell has clanged with cheerful warning for some five minutes, it proceeds to strike the day of the month. Whether this too was for the benefit of these potential wanderers on the bare chance that they might have wandered till they had lost count even of time, I know not. St. Mary's, which was gutted by the great fire, was restored in perpendicular style; but its sturdy tower, battered as we have seen by Royalist cannon, is of quite ancient date, and boasts a Norman door ornate with many courses of varied mouldings, billet, zigzag, and dogtooth.

In the rectory of St. Peter's was born in 1674, the notorious Dr. Sacheverell. The third son of the rector, and left early fatherless, he was adopted by his godfather, a doctor of the town, named Hearst, sent to the grammar school, and afterwards to Magdalen College, Oxford. Here he did well enough to win a fellowship and the friendship of Addison, and was afterwards appointed to the living of St. Saviour's, Southwark. The two famous sermons which turned the Whig Government out and the country upside down were delivered at St. Paul's and at Derby respectively. The doctor had great advantages both of person, voice, and manner, while his passionate zeal for the uttermost privileges of the Church was only equalled by the fervour with which he advocated the



divine right of kings ; and all this, too, from a son of the once republican Marlborough and a man who was well into his teens when James the Second, one might well imagine, had made the very phrase unthinkable. However, the rancour with which in these sermons he attacked the Revolutionary settlement, asserted the doctrine of non-resistance, and abused the Act of Toleration, as everybody knows, procured him the honour of a trial by the House of Lords, a three-year suspension and a brief popularity above any man in England. How faction raged about his name ; how the fury of the ignorant was worked up against all logic, common sense, and even their own best interests, as it can be yet by luck and skilful management, and how a Government fell for prosecuting a weak, vain, shallow fool who thoroughly deserved it, is all a matter of history. If his silly head was not entirely turned by the adulation he received, the process no doubt was completed when he got further preferment, and was asked to preach the anniversary sermon of the Restoration before the Houses of Parliament. His progress through England to a Shropshire living that was among the rewards of his sycophantic ranting, was practically that of a crowned head. His native town was intoxicated with his glory, though they got nothing else out of him, for the doctor soon sank into that obscurity, which was his natural sphere, and was in no position to confer benefits. Indeed the corporation of Marlborough in this year presented a humble address to Queen Anne, which, as an abject repudiation of the self-denial and doughty deeds of their ancestors, might well have made the turf above the graveyards of St. Mary's and St. Peter's heave all over with suppressed indignation. Perhaps the easy affability of Charles the Second when he stayed with his queen and his brother James at the castle—by that time the Seymour mansion at Marlborough, of which anon—did something to undermine the traditional independence of the natives, or perhaps the great fire had unstrung their nerves. It is certain that through the eighteenth century they became extremely docile to the powers that were, and fulfilled the obligations of a pocket borough, returning the two

members of their lord's choosing for the most part with due propriety. It seems, too, that the dukes of Marlborough for many years endeavoured to justify their title by buying sufficient land to cut into the Bruce political interest, but without success; and moreover the new doctrine of Divine right foisted on England by the Stuarts, and much more recently on Marlborough, with the help of Dr. Sacheverell, had taken such hold by the accession of George the First, that they actually rang the bells in honour of the Pretender and drank his health. Perhaps, however, the partiality for James the Second evinced by the Ailesbury family had helped a little to stimulate their emotions.

I have said that there is nothing of sufficient interest in the eighteenth-century history of the town to make demands upon my somewhat limited space. This is not to say that the human interests, the to us strange privileges, the factions, the humours, the passions of an historic town, all the more pronounced from its secluded situation, have not profound attractions to the student of social England; but that is another matter. The prevalent note of Marlborough as of many places, was the exclusive spirit of the burghers' qualifications: those little oligarchies who elected members of Parliament, under the direction, it is true, of their territorial lord, but not for nothing; who kept all the good things, the borough lands and other privileges for their own use; who exercised justice in a partial fashion that was only human, and whose energies were directed to keeping their body as limited and select as possible. That the majority sat down tamely under these conditions is not to be supposed; but if they attempted resistance it was mostly futile, while if they appealed to Parliament, things were so comfortably constituted that they got little satisfaction. Marlborough's burgesses in old days took care of themselves beyond the common. Nowadays we have too often the other extreme, the ill-instructed and the practically unrated aspiring to municipal office, and getting there. In ordinary affairs this would be accounted lunacy, and why the public business should not be judged by the same test it



is hard for the plain man to understand. Few small towns, if any, can have harboured more individuals for a longer or shorter period in the last half-century, who have concerned themselves with its antiquities, or, above all, dealt so intimately with the *flora* and *fauna* of its neighbourhood. The continuous presence of a numerous cultivated element face to face with a region so rich in all these things, so peculiarly inviting and accessible, and withal so far removed from the counter attractions of cities more than accounts for this. Two or three men of the very first rank as naturalists have spent a considerable slice of their lives working in this country; while the number of both men and boys who have followed more or less in their steps is beyond reckoning. Such pursuits organized themselves without effort within the school precincts over forty years ago. They were not introduced as a beneficent novelty in its outdoor curriculum, as in many such cases, since in various forms they had already been a spontaneous feature of its life. The society's collections are now, of course, extremely rich. It has been always a recognized and valuable contribution to the lore of the county in these directions, and throughout this corner of Wiltshire the recognized court of appeal for rare specimens of all kinds gathered, caught, or shot. Local history and archæology, though by no means neglected, have not been quite so prominent in matters outside the school's actual inheritance. But the present rector of St. Peter's, Canon Wordsworth, is indefatigable in everything that concerns the former; while Mr. Brooke, a well-known citizen of the town, has devoted the leisure of a lifetime to matters pre-historic, and has a private collection generously housed that I should imagine has no equal in private hands in the county.

This neighbourhood, indeed, is peculiar in its way. Its treasures are not buried in game coverts, or secreted in overgrown leafy lanes, or hidden away in lush-fields that suggest an act of trespass to the decently sensitive person. They are mostly open to the day, and they, or their situation, can usually be seen from miles away. There is practically no trespass for

the respectable and well-intentioned within miles of Marlborough. The occupants of the great pastoral holdings are enlightened persons and not of the kind to scent damage where none is meant and none is possible. In former days you could ride anywhere all over the district. Nor do I suppose for a moment that even a mounted stranger of discretion to-day would meet with the slightest opposition, even in the more enclosed portions. It is, in short, a country that cries aloud to the person fond of rambling, whether on horse or foot, whether naturalist, archæologist, or merely possessed of a healthy taste for nature, from its very freedom and untrammelled character, to say nothing of its stimulating air. And this applies, speaking broadly, not merely to the region in question, but to more than half Wiltshire.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STORY OF THE COLLEGE

THE fortunes of Marlborough and its "great house," whether as a Norman castle or a public school, have been of necessity and for all time linked together. But the close of the feudal period marks a point at which they seem to demand some separate treatment at the hand of the chronicler, even in such brief survey of their respective stories as is admissible here. As the borough and castle therefore formed more or less the text of our last chapter, so I propose to make the college and its more immediate predecessors the subject of this one. For it may be doubted if any place of residence in England has seen more curious changes in occupancy, more various methods of retaining a local pre-eminence than this one enjoys and has never lost. If the stranger, however, would have the best idea of its situation towards the town, and get at a single glance the most delightful view of both with their immediately surrounding landscape, I would take him up the long slope by which the school playing fields ascend to the edge of the wild down country which practically cuts off Marlborough from any civilization to the northward. From hence on the broad terraced plateau, where many famous cricketers have achieved their earliest triumphs, you may see the long narrow red-roofed town lying in the valley beneath, between its two old church towers that rise like sentinels at either end. Above and beyond the oak and beech foliage of Savernake forest mantles with the wealth of ages upon its steep upstanding ridge. Away to the eastward you can mark the course of the valley, down which the Kennet flows by old

water-mills and thatch-roofed hamlets, to the woody chase of Ramsbury just visible, and to the haunted halls of remoter Littlecote. Turning westward, one can see for miles up the course of the Kennet's shrinking waters, till its winding vale is lost in a waste of billowy solitudes that were the terror of winter travellers on the old Bath road, and whose further ramparts look down over the fat low country of North-West Wilts. Lastly, and immediately beneath, expanding outward from the western edge of the town you have the large group of school buildings, with the stately pile of the Seymour mansion dominating its younger neighbours: the rows and clusters of lofty limes, the ancient mound now bosky with verdure, backed by the abounding foliage of the tall rookery; the tapering spire of Bodley's beautiful chapel, the green water-meadows with the river glistening through them, and the smooth down beyond, with one of the five White Horses of Wiltshire pacing on its steep slope.

We left Marlborough castle in the last chapter just as it had come into possession of the Seymours, or St. Maurs, a family that in Henry the Fourth's time had acquired importance by a marriage with the heiress of the Esturmys who had been rangers of the royal forest of Savernake since the Conquest, and were considerable landowners. When Jane Seymour, as Anne Boleyn's waiting-woman, captured the fickle fancy of Henry the Eighth, still greater fortune and honours awaited her family, among others in due course the dukedom of Somerset. Incidentally the castle of Marlborough fell to them, but the Protector Somerset, being a person of consequence so great as to eventually cost him his life, was probably not much at Marlborough, nor even at Wolfhall. Though his estates were confiscated together with his head, Elizabeth restored all the Marlborough and Savernake properties to his son together with the title of Hertford. This young man was rash enough to repay the queen's favour by contracting a secret match with Lady Catherine Grey, who by Henry the Eighth's will was next heir to the throne. Considering what was meted out to some other high-born offenders, these young

people might well seem to have got off cheaply with a sentence of solitary and separate imprisonment. But the lady, though she left a son, died, as it is said, from the effects of it, and notwithstanding the fact that his son would be a strong claimant for the throne, the father was forgiven and retired to Wiltshire.

Here he lived chiefly at Tottenham House in Savernake Forest, which had superseded the old Wolfhall as the family residence, in addition to Marlborough castle, though what kind of house had been erected in succession to the old castle is uncertain. This potential monarch, Lord Beauchamp, died in his father's lifetime, but his son William was created Marquis of Hertford in 1640, and at the Restoration in gratitude for his services during the Civil Wars was given back the dukedom with which his great grandfather the Protector Somerset had invested himself. But during the Civil War, as Lord Hertford, he was an active commander on the Royalist side, and, as my reader may remember, had given his brother Sir Francis, afterwards Lord Seymour and Baron Trowbridge, the castle house at Marlborough. So the latter was now severed from the adjoining Savernake estates, and remained so for a century, when a Bruce, who had married the heiress of the other branch, brought it back again. While the old Lord Seymour was living at Marlborough, the castle house, though not the one we now see, must have been a residence of considerable pretension, for Charles the Second paid it a visit in 1663. Aubrey, that invaluable Wiltshire chronicler, antiquary, and gossip, was invited to meet the king, and to accompany the royal party on their excursions in the character of guide. The merry monarch had evinced much interest in what he had been told concerning Avebury, and was particularly impressed by Aubrey's own opinion that it was "as much superior to Stonehenge as a cathedral to a parish church."

So Aubrey rode along with the king and the Duke of York as they journeyed from Marlborough to Lacock; making the slight diversion necessary for an inspection of Avebury, then far more perfect than it is now. After this Charles



commanded the delighted antiquary to write an account of the ancient British temple, while the Duke of York, not to be behind-hand, evinced a particular interest in the barrows of the surrounding downs, and ordered a further essay from Aubrey on the subject, which, let us hope, he duly perused. And when the king caught sight of Silbury, the mightiest mound in Europe raised by men's hands, he must needs go up it; so they all three scrambled to the top, and the memory thereof remained in that sequestered hamlet for generations, though by Stukeley's time it had been embellished by a fable that the royal pair had ridden up the hill on horseback. Now, to ride up and down Silbury is one of those heroic performances that a native will sometimes tell you his great-grandfather is popularly credited with after dining, not wisely, but too well:

Evelyn, too, had, been to Marlborough "lately fired and now new built," a few years before this royal visit, travelling in a coach and six, not probably to impress his Wiltshire relations whom he was going to visit, but on account of the bad condition of the Bath road. He noticed without comment Lord Seymour's house, and went up the mound by the same spiral walk "for near half a mile" that we ascend it now. Pepys was also here, some five years after King Charles, but he "lay at the Hart," and confined his attentions to the town, noticing as most singular "its penthouses supported with pillars which make it a walk." If he woke up to-day he would see the same singularity.

It was during the latter years of the seventeenth century that the Hertfords rebuilt, enlarged, and completed the beautiful house that is the pride of modern Marlborough. It is said to be after designs of Inigo Jones, and was built by his son-in-law, Webb. That adventurous lady, Celia Fiennes, who rode on horseback about England, and recorded her impressions in the reign of William the Third, saw the "greate rambling" building, the direct off-shoot of the castle almost demolished, and the new house in an advanced stage of erection. She was greatly impressed with its magnificence, and wandered about



the grounds noting the bowling-green, the clipped hedges, the fish-ponds and the river, and of course ascending the mound. She had the good taste to think the view of the town very fine from the adjoining hill, "with its two church towers, and its very large streete, and the Kennet turning many mills."

But it was in the next generation that the Seymour house achieved its social and artistic notoriety, according to the prevailing fashion of that day. It was not the Lord Hertford, a future Duke of Somerset, then in possession, but his lady, who created this particular epoch in its history, which will be associated with the place for all time. Lady Hertford did not, to be sure, plant the trees, which have now, these many generations, been towering groves, noisy with the clamour of rooks, nor do we owe to her the large quaintly fashioned bee-hive yew trees, which have certainly not changed to the eye in this last half-century. The soft turf and the encircling banks of the bowling-green may or may not be of her fashioning. The broad, far-extended terrace, with its velvety bank dipping to the archery-ground below, is also a creation, which, so far as I know, has baffled the local historian, though the ivied brick wall which sheers it up to a considerable height on one side, above the lower garden on the river level, is pronounced of Tudor date. The long canal, like the fishponds and the moat, has been filled up since Lady Hertford's time, for you pass from turf of that particular texture which only age can give to the less delicate grasses of a later date.

This Lady Hertford of Marlborough and arcadian notoriety was a Thynne of Longleat, and has kept her memory green in the local annals by the letters she wrote in praise of her Wiltshire home. These are to be found in three volumes of general correspondence addressed to her friend, Lady Pomfret, who had been like herself, a lady-in-waiting to George the Second's Queen Caroline. At the latter's death the two friends retired to private life; Lady Hertford devoting herself to the embellishments, as she considered them, of her Marlborough gardens, and to the entertainment of various lions, big and little, of the

literary and religious kind. She was also an ardent patroness of what Bishop Cotton, in dealing with her Marlborough achievements, calls "the spurious picturesque and bombastic pastoral, which characterized the taste of the early part of the eighteenth century, in which English ploughboys are turned into Damons and Corydons, milkmaids into Chloes, both of whom are in constant and familiar intercourse with Venus, Cupid, Apollo, and Diana, to whom they are in the habit of praying night and morning with due punctuality." She stimulated the borrowed waters of the gentle Kennet, and more sluggish moat, which then surrounded the mound, and of the fishponds, into miniature cataracts of a most exotic nature. Not satisfied with the still remaining fragments of the Norman castle, she dispersed its stones about the grounds in mimic ruins that had neither story nor artistic harmony. On reading letters from Italy, she fancied the sheep bells tinkling from Granham hill were chapel bells pealing on the Apennines, and, by a still greater effort of imagination, transformed the worthy denizen of the mill among the willows on the Kennet, just beyond her pleasaunce, into one of the hermits dwelling in solitude among the Alpine rocks described by her correspondent. But these, after all, were mere modish affectations. Her ladyship writes at other times with genuine enthusiasm for her Wiltshire retreat, and of its more natural delights. Her garden is full of sweets, while borders of pinks and sweetbriar hedges line the terrace. The flowers, she tells us, seem to be painted with brighter colours, and the hayfields and elder bushes to breathe more fragrance than elsewhere. She contrived the still familiar grotto under the mound, which she hopes is like Mr. Pope's at Twickenham, and was, in any case, copied from a famous one created by her late royal mistress in Richmond Park.

But of the lions who were summoned to roar at Marlborough and admire these wonders, and to sniff the matchless fragrance of her pinks, and the sweetbriar hedges, the poet Thomson and Dr. Watts loom largest in our annals. Nor were the lionesses forgotten in her hospitalities, for Mrs. Rowe is said to have



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conferred lustre on the Marlborough grotto by composing some of her poems amid its dank and forbidding gloom. I can claim no sort of acquaintance with Mrs. Rowe, but admit at once a still lingering affection for Thomson, whom, at a tender age, I regarded as among the greatest of poets, and could quote by the page. Perhaps the *genius loci* was unconsciously operating on a temperament somewhat precociously susceptible to rural impressions. For neither then nor ever have I met with one spark of sympathy in this misplaced affection, which I refuse wholly to abandon, if only for association's sake. Moreover, I fortify myself betimes by reference to some of the weighty modern critics on English poetry, who say nice things about Thomson that might surprise the members of a Browning club, particularly the youngest and most infallible among them. Though cherished as a historical figure, as a poet, I fear, Thomson has never, within memory, been the vogue, even in this place of his inspiration. For he wrote most, if not all, of his "Spring" here. Tradition still hugs the spot, on the high ridge south of the Kennet, where the poet pursued his meditations. The big Sarsen stone that served him for a seat was brought down at some remote period, and set up outside the wall of St. Peter's churchyard, just where the High Street splits into the Bath and Salisbury roads; a peril, I should think, to over merry marketers turning the corner on their homeward way with too much confidence, and a perennial object of reverence, let us hope, to those going in and out of the college gates just opposite. But Thomson, after a while, fell out with his patroness, on account of the deplorable preference he evinced for his lordship's convivial board over the intellectual feasts provided in her ladyship's boudoir and salon. I do not know where he wrote "Summer, Autumn, and Winter," but certainly not at Marlborough, for he was invited there no more by his "dear Hertford."

"Fitted or to shine in courts  
 With unaffected grace, or walk the plain  
 With innocence and meditation joined  
 In soft assemblage . . ."



Nor could he any longer, as her ladyship's chief lion—

“Wander o'er the dewy fields  
Where freshness breathes ; and dash the trembling drops  
From the bent bush as through the verdant maze  
Of sweetbriar hedges I pursue my walk,  
Or taste the smell of dairy—or ascend  
Some eminence, Augusta, in thy plains  
And see the country far diffused around  
One boundless blush, one white empurpled shower  
Of mingled blossoms.”

Spring, however, was dedicated to “Augusta,” whose real name, I should have remarked, was Frances. The Gilbertian nature of the eighteenth-century colonial appointments is humorously illustrated in that of the convivial poet and play writer, “more fat than bard beseems,” as Dr. Johnson tells us, to the surveyor generalship of the Leeward Isles ! The balance between his deputy's salary and his own was three hundred pounds, on which, with the help of his friends, who were devoted to him, he lived, no doubt, very well.

But the poet Duck, “the thresher Duck,” must not be overlooked among Augusta's *protégés* ; for, unlike Thomson, who was a Scotsman, Duck was very much of a native, though very little of a poet. The indigenous nature of the name may be judged from the fact that the meadow on whose brow Thomson was wont to gather inspiration is to-day called Duck's field, and the bridge over the Kennet beneath it, Duck's bridge—not after the thresher, but after much more recent, much worthier, but wholly unpoetical and quite modern Ducks. I have not the slightest doubt, however, that in course of time these last will lose the fair promise of earthly immortality, now apparently secured to them, and that the old bridge will be identified by later generations with the poetic, and not the horsekeeping, Duck. The thresher poet seems to have had such a turn for rhyme, that Queen Catherine, Lady Hertford's mistress, first gave him a pension, then made him a yeoman of the guard, and then, by a transfer, which must have been trying, if it was at all like the gloomy dungeon



under the Marlborough mound, he was ensconced in her famous grotto at Richmond, possibly as a show wizard or hermit. From these cavernous shades he emerged to become a full-blown parson and rector of Byfleet. The vicissitudes of a great person's *protégé* were of a truth remarkable in those times, and one is not surprised that the poor man at last became deranged and died mad. Lady Hertford shows in her letters that she took him quite seriously, so evidently did the queen. The wags at court, however, seem to have laughed at him, and he figures as a target for much better verse than he ever made. Even Swift did him epigrammatic honour—

“The Thresher Duck could o'er the Queen prevail,  
The proverb says, ‘No fence against a flail;’  
From threshing corn he turns to thresh his brains,  
For which her Majesty allows him gains;  
Tho' 'tis confessed that those who ever saw  
His poems think them all not worth a straw.  
Thrice happy Duck! employed in threshing stubble  
Thy toil is lessened, and thy profits double.”

The Lord Palmerston of that day was so pleased with the whole business that he presented a field in Rushall, the next parish to Charlton, where Duck was born, the rent of which was to be devoted to an annual dinner to the threshers of Charlton. The field, or one that was exchanged for it, is called “Duck's Acre,” and to this day the feast is duly observed at the Charlton Cat, a solitary little inn at the foot of the downs, on each seventh of June. As there are now no threshers, a certain number of the poorer labourers of Charlton parish celebrate the occasion.

Poor Lady Hertford, however, was to lose her contentment of mind in the death of her only son, and to suffer a still further evil in living to see her beloved Marlborough home turned into an inn. For she survived her husband, who died in 1750, soon after succeeding to the dukedom, some years. The castle house passed with their daughter to the Northumberland family, and in October, 1757, to the horror of the old connection, became the Castle Inn. Mr. Champneys has

printed a letter from Lady de Vere, one of the earliest guests, in which she moans over this desecration of the ancient seat of the Seymours. She is indignant with the new owners for selling several fine family pictures with the house, particularly one of Henry the Sixth, which she proposed to buy herself. She found it "a prodigious large house, furnished in like." She wonders what the Grandfather Duke of Somerset would have said if he could have foreseen that his grand-daughter would have put his house to such a use as this. "Lady Betty does not dare to write to the Duke of Dorset an account of this house, for fear it should put him in mind that some time Knowle may make as convenient an inn for Tunbridge as this one does for Bath."

But the Percies could not be expected to feel for Marlborough as did the Wiltshire Seymours, and in truth so far as the house and grounds are concerned, they suffered little of either desecration or change. One may sympathize, however, with the feelings of the family, and can imagine the widowed duchess calling for her smelling salts when she was suddenly confronted with the following announcement in the columns of the *Salisbury Journal*:—"I beg leave to Inform the Public that I have fitted up the Castle at Marlborough in the most genteel and commodious manner, and opened it as an Inn, where the Nobility, Gentry, etc., may depend on the best accommodation and treatment, the favour of whose company will be gratefully acknowledged by their most obedient servant, George Smith, late of the Artillery-ground, London.—Neat Post Chaises." This modest invitation might well make the modern advertiser blush, for the castle quickly became, and remained for nearly a hundred years, the most famous hostelry in England, as those who know the place to-day may readily conceive. For that was not the age of palatial summer hotels, and in comparison with the average posting inn, this one at Marlborough must have seemed a palace indeed, while its thirty acres or so of garden and grounds, embellished by several generations of a wealthy and enlightened race, and kept up by successive landlords, must have been a prodigious

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attraction. To mention the distinguished guests who tarried there betimes on the way to Bath and the West of England would be to give a list of the most illustrious folk of every generation for a century.

But it was more than a passing house of entertainment, since persons of leisure and means were accustomed to lay there for a day or two and rest their bones during the protracted struggle with miry roads that a lengthened pilgrimage involved before the days of Macadam. A band discoursed music on the mound on Sunday afternoons, when the grounds were open to the townspeople, and the wealthier burghers of Marlborough, in all the glory of lace waistcoats and silk stockings and powder, ruffles, and gold buckles, rubbed shoulders with smart folks from London *en route* for Bath, glad enough no doubt to spend a "week-end" in a place which offered temptations for dallying that must have been rare enough at that period. Chatham was detained here for a fortnight by gout at the critical period when the troubles with America were brewing, and he was sorely needed at Westminster. "His domestics," says Horace Walpole, "filled the whole house, which wore the appearance of a little court, while their master was inaccessible and invisible." But the secret of this appears to have been that the great man, with that curious love of pomp which distinguished him, had caused all the retainers of the establishment to be clad in his livery while he lay there, himself swathed in bandages. The next stage westward, that over the downs to Devizes, or Calne, was the most dreaded on the whole Bath road in snowy weather, and visitors were frequently intimidated to dalliance at Marlborough by the report of drifts ten or fifteen feet deep. The Duke of Wellington, in his old age, was one of the last victims to such delays. He was on his way to a wedding at the Duke of Beaufort's, but, true to his indomitable character, he persisted so much that eventually his carriage had to be dug out of the snow in the wilds of Beckhampton.

During the earlier part of the nineteenth century both the famous inn and the old town prospered. Forty-odd coaches a

day changed horses here, while waggons loaded with goods, and flocks and herds on foot, moved slowly along the Bath road in cheerful abundance. Agriculture flourished amid exhausting wars, and the local markets still handled the whole produce of their tributary districts.

But now an evil time was coming. The vile thing was creeping westward from London. Coachmen, running within two minutes of time in two hundred miles, at eleven miles an hour, it is true, professed as yet no sort of anxiety at the hideous snorting monster with its elaborate appurtenances that was to run them off the road, and they had plenty of backers, as we know. Most people, however, held other views, and supported them with their purse. What a flood of talk, what heated arguments on the topic of the hour must then have raged in the bar parlour, not only of the Castle Inn, but of the Ailesbury and the Castle and Ball, which triumphant monopolists of later and present times did even then an ample but less aristocratic business in the High Street. Throughout the whole 'thirties there must have been abundant food for conversation and anxiety all up and down the Bath road. By 1840, however, the Great Western had reached Swindon, and left Marlborough thirteen miles to the southward. The coaches fell away in numbers, the Castle Inn closed its doors in despair, and the death knell of prosperity may well seem to have rung in the old town on the Kennet. Perhaps the full significance of what this would mean later, or would have meant but for a remarkable intervention of Providence was not yet quite apparent. For it took some little time to sweep every coach from the road. There were even pathetic efforts, as we know, to run against the trains, nor did the travelling chaises vanish all at once, for there were still plenty of cautious people who would not have entered a train for a king's ransom, and many stalwarts who had pledged themselves so violently against the innovation, in the character of patriots, fine old Englishmen, and other not unworthy poses, that decency compelled them to succumb gradually; nor yet did the carriers' wains, nor the herds of pigs, bullocks, and horses, which all left



their contributions in country towns, cease immediately. But just in the nick of time, as we see more clearly now than ever those despondent folk of old could have done, the founders of Marlborough College were casting about for a site, and the Castle Inn, with its considerable demesne, being vacant, was, after much discussion, appropriated.

Now, I would not bore my reader with any fragment of scholastic history of a conventional kind. But, in the first place the school in question has struck its roots so deeply into this corner of Wiltshire and become so identified with it that even if its story had been commonplace, it could hardly have been wholly overlooked.

But its early story is anything but commonplace. No such experiment on such a scale had ever been tried as the one which a group of enthusiastic and, in a sense, philanthropic gentlemen, headed by the Rev. Charles Plater, devised in the year 1842, and actually launched, in the August of the following year. The public school world of that day, into which Marlborough was so strangely born, differed vastly from the large collection of prosperous and populous institutions old and new, over which the modern parent casts an eye somewhat bewildered by an embarrassment of riches. Eton and Rugby were almost the only large and flourishing members of the few who had both a social as well as a national standing. Harrow for the moment was in such straits that it had dropped, or soon after dropped, to under seventy boys: Westminster did even worse, and was already breaking with its social past, though not, happily, with its capacity for good, as it proved. Winchester was, in strength and achievement, below its reputation, and was the particular terror of fond mammas, for its Spartan ways and strenuous methods of schoolboy discipline. Shrewsbury, which had swept the board in scholarships under some illustrious teachers, was small and even thus congested in its limited accommodation to a degree that would horrify the modern parent. Charterhouse had, I think, commenced that decline, due to its situation, which thirty years later reduced it to the alternative of migration or virtual extinction. When

it is said that schools like Uppingham, Repton, Tonbridge, and Sherborne were also small and little more than conspicuous grammar schools, one is merged in the long list of such places that had no sort of national pretensions, but did a vast amount of more or less useful local work for the class that now thinks it vital to their future to obtain the hall-mark with its various subtle shades, of a public-school education as well as for humbler folk. It will be obvious then that in the year 1843 the well-to-do youth of England who sought this now coveted distinction were but a trifling handful. It is still less certain to what precise extent it was coveted or valued outside the financial advantages of the great foundations to poorer people. Twenty or thirty years later, the present vogue had fully developed, but at the earlier date both the peer, the squire, and the parson had such mixed feelings upon the subject that prestige, I think, counted for comparatively little, and the practical side was mainly considered. The higher aristocracy was often inclined to think public schools too rough for precious elder sons, if not too democratic. The less wealthy, having no particular standard in this respect to strive after, had regard to the difficulties and expense of travel; an immense number were troubled with scruples concerning doctrines and religious opinion, so in 1843 the majority of well-endowed youths who were not public-school men was so great, and one finds the feeling so different from the modern one, that I do not think the freshman at Oxford or Cambridge, or the subaltern in the Army, suffered anything in prestige, whatever he may or may not have in character, from being the product of private tutors or obscure academies. Arnold and Rugby, however, had already created some revulsion of feeling, and a revival of that qualified faith in the public-school system which in a previous generation had at least kept the very few ancient and famous foundations up to their full numbers. The founders of Marlborough were undoubtedly under this influence, but they were to strike out on new lines. The boarding-house system, as then practised, seemed a fortuitous excrescence; in origin, of course, a mere collection of



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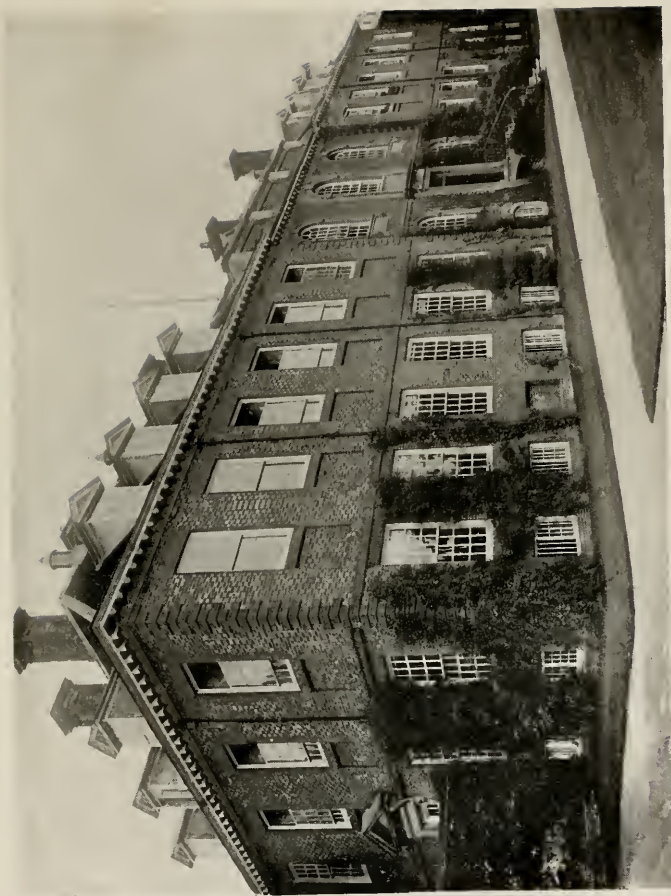
day scholars, without homes in the locality, and presided over by outsiders to their own great profit. These undesirable conditions had, of course, become greatly modified in schools by 1843, still things then were not as they are now, and our enthusiasts saw both rationality and a great saving of expense by collecting their future *protégés* under one roof, and boarding as well as instructing them. Moreover they had the clergy much in their mind, who could not usually afford to send their sons across England to Eton, Harrow, or Rugby, and keep them there. So they decided to found a school which, freed from the boarding-house incubus, would be enabled to give the advantages of a public-school education at immeasurably less expense. They were not a company, and they wanted no profits, which was fortunate, for they got none. They were philanthropists in a sense, but it was not, of course, a matter of charity. Interest-bearing bonds and saleable nominations were the financial basis. It was a thoroughly practical scheme, which for lack of technical knowledge bought somewhat dearly the experience and showed the way to the later founding of half a dozen Victorian schools that have also acquired size and distinction.

So a lease was taken of the Castle Inn, by this time once more the property of the Tottenham and Savernake branch of the Seymours as represented by the Marquis of Ailesbury—for the Bruces had acquired these great estates, and the political disposition of Marlborough by marriage in 1674. The old Seymour house and its grounds had remained practically intact throughout the coaching period, as they remain to-day intact, but for trifling interior alterations of slight consequence. Some of these were effected, and a few buildings added in the great court, and all was ready for the expected influx. Two hundred boys arrived on the opening day—a little Wiltshire lad of eight, whose propinquity to the place no doubt secured him the advantage, was the first to enter the gates. He is still hale and hearty, and is always accorded this unique distinction at all functions connected with the school when he is present. The creation of a head boy, too, must have been a curious

problem, but the choice fell upon the recently deceased and well-known rector of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, and father of the still better known novelist, Anthony Hope Hawkins. Among the first instalment deposited at the great porch of the old Seymour house, were various distinguished men in embryo, the late Lord Pauncefote and Admiral Sir John Hopkins among them, while a little later, Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon and Sir Evelyn Wood in round jackets turned up at the same portals.

Our early fathers combined between them all the virtues, and most of the talents, but they did not know anything about schools or academic finance. The terms were placed much too low, the clergy paying less than the laity, and these payments formed almost the sole income of the establishment, which was encumbered a little later by heavy building debts. The first headmaster, Dr. Wilkinson, was a man of parts, of character, of quiet habit, but not adapted to facing fearful odds. Marlborough, as then organized, would have required an academic Napoleon, to grapple successfully with the difficulties of every kind that gradually arose, hydra-headed on all sides. The staff was small and inexperienced, but then the salaries were low, and there was nothing much to tempt highly efficient lieutenants.

The original two hundred boys were drawn from all parts, but the sons of west country parsons and squires were the largest element. They behaved themselves quite nicely during the first year or two, the period of shaking down. They were all of course very young, and had not, so to speak, felt their strength. It has been described to me by those present, as a period of blessed calm before the storm. New buildings had been going up in the mean time, erected on borrowed money, and with much waste of that, while the income from boys' payments and nomination sales did not pay current expenses. In two or three years, four hundred boys were housed, and as each one cost more than he paid, things were getting worse; and so were the boys, on the principle, no doubt, of the more the merrier. There had been no time for after achievements, and



OLD SEYMOUR HOUSE—MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE



none were looked for, so the run continued, and in another year (1848), with five hundred boys, Marlborough was the largest school in England except Eton. But behind this, rapidly accumulated mass of youthful humanity, there was nothing stable—no traditions, no working machinery, a weak staff with scarcely any of what is now called public-school spirit among them all; sufficient scholarship perhaps, and any amount of cane, while lowering above the financial cloud grew darker and darker. It was in truth a queer place. There had never been anything at all like it before. The theory was excellent, the devotion of the founders and their loyalty were beyond all praise. Many of them lived to see their bantling succeed beyond their wildest dreams, but in the late forties and earlier fifties, it was a turbulent and anxious charge. It fell to me many years ago, to collect a great deal of evidence, from numbers of individuals, who were boys here at this period, men well known in the world, mostly of repute, and a few of them public schoolmasters, and therefore exceptionally well qualified as witnesses. All agree that it was a place quite unique in school history, as any one at all familiar with this subject will recognize was inevitable. Its glaring blemishes were characteristic, so indeed were some conspicuous merits, for it was fresh, racy and original to a degree, abounding in humours, but rife also with much individual misery. Outside school hours, there was no organization, no deputed authority worth mentioning; might was right. The mighty had a good time, the weaker vessels sometimes an extremely bad one. There was a good deal of bullying. So there was, to be sure, at some of the old foundations. There was also a great deal of fighting, and at one notable corner called Fleuss' arch, now swept away, hulking fellows of seventeen fought pitched battles, under the approved rules of the ring, amid the breathless excitement of their fellows, and academic seniority does not seem then to have carried any exception from the field of honour.

The necessity for playing-fields had escaped the attention of the benevolent founders, and it was some years before the group of small fields above the school were thrown into one,



and the beginnings laid of the elaborate provision of later days. Knots of boys clubbed together and played desultory cricket, on the town common in summer. In winter, coats were taken off and piled for goal posts, and casual football was engaged in, by those who had a mind, under an elastic code. Prisoners' base was popular, and hockey was played with brass-bound sticks, while even pegtops and marbles were not despised by the smaller fry. But in these primitive and Spartan times, the superfluous ardour of these five hundred, for the most part, country-bred boys, found a congenial outlet in the free and inviting country, in which Marlborough is blessed above most places. It was not the air nor the scenery, that consciously at any rate, was the chief attraction to that generation of inveterate rambles, though the schoolboy is not altogether without his little romance. But birds, and beasts, and fish, not precisely as natural objects but for mixed reasons, have or had a powerful fascination for healthy-minded youth. The schoolboy of fifty years ago, too, was much nearer these things than the schoolboy of to-day. He was much less often the denizen of a city or a suburb. His mind was not so full even at Eton or Harrow, of getting his colours for his house eleven. At the Marlborough of that time, he didn't care twopence about colours, there were none. It is written in authentic chronicles, that when a school eleven was formed, and matches arranged with neighbouring clubs, and eligible persons were informed that so many hours' practice a week was a condition of their place in the team, many refused the conditions, and preferred their liberty to the honour that a boy will now almost sacrifice his future for. It was not that they loved cricket less, but their liberty more, and they probably had distant engagements with keepers in the matter of birds' eggs, or some less innocent undertaking, in which keepers would have been anything but sympathetic. I confess to a sneaking admiration for these boys, and none the less that I pursued the other, very ardently, without any persuasion myself at a much later day. Mr. A. C. Benson, says the modern schoolboy, strives for excellence in athletics for social reasons, that is, for school social reasons, and



this is surely not a lofty standard for which to sacrifice a good deal of individuality. As I was saying, the old-time schoolboy was nearer nature. At home his sporting instincts were acquired more laboriously and independently. He was a connoisseur in hedge-birds, as he pelted them industriously with a catapult or a saloon pistol, and when the single-barrelled muzzle-loader was entrusted to his hands, he learnt everything there was to be known about wood-pigeons, plovers, and fieldfares. When the period of the double-barrel and the game licence arrived he was often quite an accomplished sportsman, and was perfectly safe when he took his place in the line with his seniors. Nowadays, the more or less gilded youth distracts his mind for the moment from the agonizing suspense of his house colours, to be pitch-forked into the turnips, without this wholesome apprenticeship, and fires innumerable cartridges from an expensive gun at birds whose cunning he has had no hand in circumventing.

But the old-time schoolboy worked his wild will around Marlborough, and small blame to him under the circumstances. It was such a fine field for his natural instincts, and there was no other outlet there for his energies. There were fat trout in the Kennet to be surreptitiously cajoled from weedy haunts. There were rabbits and hares for the bolder spirit, and the delights of a long run with a keeper at his heels was intoxicating. He did not always hold his hand at big game, and there are episodes connected with the deer in Savernake forest of a somewhat dramatic character. There is no doubt, that for many years these four or five hundred boys were something of a scourge to the surrounding country. The farmers held them in pious horror, the keepers regarded them mostly as natural enemies. There are no squires near Marlborough, or there might have been greater friction, for the entire district is practically one great domain, and its owners had a benevolent interest in the school beyond that of being its landlord. So many sporting episodes, inconceivable to the good boy of modern times striving for pre-eminence or normal excellence in athletics, were good-naturedly condoned so far as the persons

injured were concerned, under the time-honoured dictum, that "boys will be boys." They were very much so in those days, at any rate, and I for one have a good deal of retrospective sympathy with these spirited individuals, to some of whom distance seems to have been no object, and who would face a caning for a rare egg, swinging in a tree-top on the Beck-hampton downs, or in some secluded hedge-row of the Pewsey vale, or cut the only solid meal of the day for a sight of the famous Mr. Assheton Smith, hunting from Martinsell, or even do a bit of surreptitious ferreting in the west woods.

Tradition even tells of unblushing individuals, who sallied forth with the pieces of a gun secreted under their garments, after the manner of Sir Robert Peel, at Harrow, and even a dog at their heels. One of the first acts of the reformed prefects, in a burst of new-born zeal, was to hang one such dog—a despotic act which shook the place to its foundations, and which stirred the school poets to eloquent verse that remains to this day embalmed in its chronicles.

A French minister of education is said to have congratulated himself that he could take out his watch at any moment of the day, and say with precision what every schoolboy in France was doing. Any fine afternoon nowadays, you might say with almost equal precision what every public schoolboy in England was doing, to the great comfort no doubt of all responsible for him, but possibly not in all cases to the boy's unqualified profit. It does seem, somehow, rather dull. Cricket is surely the poorest and least active of games to the indifferent player, and a majority are indifferent players, and most certainly in their holidays prefer tennis with their sisters, or even golf with their grandfathers, to the nobler but more perfunctory form of entertainment imposed upon all alike at their various seats of education.

At any rate, it would have puzzled poor Mr. Wilkinson, sixty years ago, to have taken out his watch and attempted such a calculation as that of the French minister on a half-holiday afternoon even as regards the limited circle of his own pupils. He would probably have felt that he did not desire any such

knowledge, but that some unwelcome details of the day's doings would doubtless be brought to his attention all too soon.

All this is very picturesque in the retrospect, and there are still a few old gentlemen alive, who delight in its memories and speak of it as the Homeric age of Marlborough. There are others doubtless, for I take it the question of constitutional vitality had something to do with the boys' point of view, who will tell you that for years afterwards, the memories of their school days were to them only a black nightmare. There was no privacy in those days. In freezing weather, the lusty monopolized the great fireplaces in the schoolrooms; the weakly shivered afar off. It is not surprising that some boys ran away: so many in one winter, that a certain well-known founder and governor was wont to declare in grim jest that he quite dreaded to traverse the streets of London, lest he should encounter an infuriated parent, demanding from him his lost son. All this may sound very dreadful to the reader of this pampered generation. But here were five hundred young English lads, packed together under a hampered understaffed government, still further handicapped by increasing financial anxieties, and for the most part endeavouring to govern on the principle of a country grammar school, or a private academy, except for the almost boundless liberty that was accorded without doors.

Prefects, it is true, had been nominated. There were even captains of cricket and football; not the august functionaries of modern times, but persons who organized the limited groups that followed those pursuits in somewhat desultory fashion in preference to a more adventurous life in field and forest. The hero who was pointed out to the trembling new boy, was not the captain of the eleven, but the "cock of the school," the victor in many sanguinary encounters. Just think of it, ye grandsons, who have never probably so much as seen a fight, even among small boys! The boys fell into numerous groups known as *tribes*, to which new-comers attached themselves. There were no age limits and superannuations in those days;

eight or nine years was no very uncommon term for school life, and as old soldiers notoriously get troublesome, even in a regiment, the high-spirited schoolboy of that period, with such experiences must sometimes have been a real terror to a weak administration ; and indeed he was.

Things could not go on thus, and the boys themselves precipitated the crisis. Desultory insubordination became more frequent, till in 1851 the school broke out in open defiance. Guy Fawkes' day of that year is the one thus ever notable in local annals ; a firework display in the large school courtyard, contemplated but absolutely forbidden, being the immediate matter of dispute between the boys and the authorities. "Punctually at five," says an eye witness, "a rocket shot up into the sky," proclaiming in somewhat dramatic fashion, as it has done on many a more important scene of strife, the commencement of hostilities. I am not going to describe the period of more or less commotion of which that was the beginning, lasting for some days, and in which squibs and crackers played a prominent part. Several boys were expelled, but their schoolfellows followed their departing chariot with tumult through the town, and even some citizens abandoned their counters, and took an animated part. Within doors, great disorder reigned. At school hours, masters were met by the banging of desks and a further popping of crackers, and all order was at a discount. The successor of Lady Hertford's miller on the Kennet, an unpopular character, was maltreated. The lodge porter, who performed certain odious duties, was publicly chastised, and masters' desks were contumeliously treated. The headmaster was at last reduced to meeting a deputation of his boisterous pupils, with an invitation to state their grievances. These do not matter here, and a truce of some sort was patched up, but the disturbances continued till the Christmas holidays, many birches in the mean time being used up, for a victim told the writer he was one of a group of twenty-eight castigated *en bloc*. The situation had now become insupportable. For some time, ill reports of the school had been circulating abroad, the numbers were dropping rapidly,



and at last poor Dr. Wilkinson resigned in despair, and retired to a Wiltshire living and much-needed repose.

With the year 1852, Marlborough College seemed likely to expire, leaving behind it only the weird memories of a stimulating decade to the little town, by no means, however, all unpleasant ones, and ample food for conversation among the rustics of its sequestered neighbourhood. That the school saved Marlborough is now a truism; local opinion at that period, however, was no doubt less unanimous. Some there were in the neighbourhood, beyond a doubt, who might have said that the cure, if cure it were, was in the mean time worse than the disease. One of its founders had given it up as hopeless, and gone off to found Rossall on somewhat similar lines. But the rest stuck to it nobly, and by a merciful providence at this crisis, they secured the services of probably the best schoolmaster, in the best school at that time in England. The late Bishop Cotton, "the grave young master" of earlier days in "Tom Brown," left his house at Rugby, and undertook the formidable task, well knowing the risks, of which the financial ones always threatening were perhaps the greatest. But he was also possessed of the sagacity to see the immense possibilities that lay beyond, and the courage to attempt their achievement. The simplicity in matters academic, which still distinguished the governors, is humorously illustrated by their urgent instructions to the new chief, only to allow the boys outside the precincts in pairs with a master. "Under such conditions," said Cotton, with curt decision, "I shall not accept the appointment," which needless to say ended the incident.

The new headmaster soon made his presence felt, and Marlborough began to be a public school. He could not at first arrest the decline in numbers, which indeed he helped to accelerate by many judicious removals, for ill news travels fast, and subsides slowly; but he laid foundations strong and broad enough to carry the weight of the greater number, should they happily return, and indeed the school never sank to three hundred at its worst. He put the sixth form system of which he found a feeble caricature into active practice, and there were



no more "cocks of the school." There was of course considerable opposition to all this, as the boys were Britons. He addressed them collectively, however, on several occasions with trenchant force, and that touch of grim humour for which he was notable. He was determined his sixth form should rule, as in a short time they did. For himself, he told them plainly that he intended to govern them as a public school. If they would not submit to his prefects, they must accept the alternative of being reduced to the level of a private academy, and when that moment came he should resign. They did submit, for this somewhat saturnine, but humorous, masterful, straightforward man won their respect, and in a short time their hearts. But a sixth could not undertake new powers of government without a chief who knew how to inspire them, and inculcate the right tradition, and no one could do this better than Cotton. But he did not rely on himself alone, for he called by degrees to his assistance as single-minded, capable, and devoted a band of young masters as perhaps ever served a chief, and the latter in this case was a man of magnetic force. At Rugby he had been a considerable power, and it was from his old pupils, as they took their university degrees, that he in great part selected his assistants. In four years, nearly the whole of the old staff had left,\* willingly enough no doubt, what seemed like a sinking ship, and were replaced by Cotton's men. He and they, fired by his enthusiasm, and seeing eye to eye with him, the immense potentialities of the place, faced the financial crisis that now reached a head with singular devotion. The particulars would be out of place here, and I have recorded them elsewhere.

It will be enough to say that ruin now stared the new school in the face. It was a question of sacrifices all round, or of extinction. The bond-holders, naturally enough, though with a good grace, submitted to a curtailment of interest. The Marquis of Ailesbury waived his rent, and the whole of

\* No reflection whatever is implied on these gentlemen, who mostly accepted what may well have seemed, at that moment, more secure posts.

the staff who were able gave up a part of their salaries till such times as the public should learn that Marlborough was no longer the school of the "forties" and of dubious repute, and restore it to favour. Those days were not these, when the whole country discusses public-school affairs, their changes, and their appointments. And it took some time before good things began to be said of Marlborough; but when they were, it thoroughly deserved them. The numbers went up to four hundred, and the financial agony, at any rate, was over. A public school spirit was breathed into every department of life by Cotton and his strenuous staff. A school hierarchy, with its responsibilities and all that pertains to them, took firm root. Athletics were fully organized, and ample grounds were laid out. Cricket matches were played with Cheltenham, which had been founded about the same time under different conditions and on different lines. In 1855 a Marlborough eleven appeared for the first time at Lord's in its now quite time-honoured match with Rugby, and soon afterwards began to be represented with tolerable regularity in inter-University contests. Football, too, was now in full swing under Rugby rules, and elaborately organized. Fives and racquet courts had sprung up or were soon to do so, while scholarship began to flourish and make itself felt at the universities. When Cotton was created bishop of Calcutta, another Rugby master and personal friend of his own, the late Dean of Westminster, succeeded him. The admirable material that Marlborough had tapped so freely with few competitors in the field, now began to show its mettle under able handling and management, and exceptional teaching. The terms had been raised and were to be shortly raised again, and serious financial difficulties were gradually left behind. A succession of Balliol scholarships and a lengthy list of other prizes and distinctions at Oxford made a considerable sensation in the academic world of the "'sixties," and recalled the Shrewsbury exploits under Kennedy and Butler, at Cambridge. The staff had nearly doubled in numbers, and was the selection of two headmasters steeped in the best public-school traditions, and both of

exceptional skill in their judgment of men, and, moreover, fettered by no controlling powers. The contrast between the Marlborough of Dean Bradley's brilliant administration and that of the early fifties was prodigious. There never, perhaps, was a period in any big school more marked than the former by a combination of mental and bodily vigour, sanity of discipline, and healthy manliness of tone. Indeed, the place was perhaps more conspicuous at that time than at any in her short history; the other Victorian schools, being only then in their making, except Cheltenham, which had more military than classical tendencies, and was half a day school, while of the old foundations, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester were really the only ones at that time of first-rate strength. The others were small, weak, or suffering from various ailments to be cured later; neither formidable in scholarship, nor prominent in athletics at the universities, nor of any particular social consideration, nor able to form rifle corps, nor build racket courts, nor create modern sides, nor do much more than exist with dignity.

All these things were achieved in that period at Marlborough, and five hundred members without any day boys was a large school in those days. The new schools then in the making had this one as an example; her mistakes to avoid and her merits to emulate. None of them started in such haphazard fashion; but then the times had advanced. They proceeded with caution and ample funds, illustrious and even royal patronage. None of them, however, had an historic site, or a Seymour House, or a Savernake forest, or an ancient and picturesque town to graft themselves upon, and thereby enjoy a certain distinctness of atmosphere and character. Rugby had an immense influence in the reconstruction of Marlborough, but the latter, like some of the others, never adopted Rugby forms, phrases, and customs. It developed its own, both in and out of school, in its bush-ranging days, and sticks to them yet. The freshness and simplicity and Spartan habits of its youth, born of peculiar circumstances and local environment, went to form a certain

individuality which still, in a sense, remains. Its great success, following so closely on untoward disasters, helped to create an *esprit de corps* that has always been peculiarly fervent, and I feel sure, too, that some of this remarkable affection is inspired by its arcadian situation and the singular charm both of its surroundings and its own precincts, which, it may be mentioned, were purchased in freehold nearly forty years ago. Some persons are keenly sensitive to these influences in youth itself, more perhaps are unconsciously so, and realize them afterwards. The spell of the place, too, if I may venture to use the word, takes hold in like fashion of those who come here, not as pupils, but as teachers. The long slope that trends up from the town towards the downs is getting sprinkled with residences of those who, having finished their work, are unable to tear themselves away from the scene of it, and with the world to choose from, still hold that it contains no other place in their eyes so delectable. I need not continue my story through the prosperous administrations of the late Dean Farrar and Canon Bell to the present day. It will be enough to say that even before these commenced, and to a further extent afterwards, the hostel system was modified by the erection of boarding-houses set pleasantly about in the surrounding country, and by the acquirement of houses in the town. Some of the pathetically ugly buildings, erected by the pious, hard-pressed founders, whose memory is held in all the more honour for the trials and tribulations they won through so loyally, have been replaced by more artistic and convenient fabrics. In place of an older chapel, one of the most beautiful buildings of this class in England now lifts its lofty tapering spire high above the Bath road at the point where the coaches in old days used to swing into the large three-acre court, at whose further end stood, and still stands, the Castle Inn. "Under the wide eaves," says Mr. Stanley Weyman, "that sheltered the love passages of Sir George and Julia, in the panelled halls that echoed the steps of Dutch William and Duke Chandos, through the noble rooms that a Seymour built, that Seymours might be born and die under their



frescoed ceilings, the voices of boys and tutors now sound. Those who, in this quiet lap of the Wiltshire downs, are busy moulding the life of the future, are reverent of the past. The old house stands, stately high-roofed, almost unaltered, its great pillared portico before it. Hard by are the Druids mound and Preshute church in the lap of trees. The bridge that was of wood is now of brick, but there it is, and the Kennet still flows under it, watering the lawns and flowering shrubs that Lady Hertford loved. Still can we trace in fancy the sweetbriar hedge and the border of pinks which she planted by the trim canal, and a bowshot from the great school can lose all knowledge of the present in the crowding memories which the duelling-green and the bowling-alley, trodden by the men and women of a past generation, awakened in the mind."

Such is the curious story of a school in brief outline, or rather of the strange tribulations through which it passed to a prosperity that has never yet been darkened by a single serious cloud.

But in all this school talk, I have sorely outraged the ancient dictum of *Seniores priores*. For though the outer world knows it not, there existed till recent years in Marlborough, nay still exists in humbler and reconstructed form, an ancient grammar school founded in the time of Edward VI. Near the banks of the Kennet at the further end of the town from the lusty interloper that gradually squeezed the life out of it, the old red-brick, ivy-clad building, within easy memory of the present writer, still presented a brave front as a home of classical learning, and indeed the Marlborough Grammar School has no ignoble past. For generations it educated not merely the sons of the well-to-do townsfolk and large farmers round, but many scions of the great Wiltshire families—Bruces, Goddards, Penruddocks, and of others now vanished. It owns lands and houses, and possessed close scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge, now lapsed from want of candidates. Indeed it was a place of some dignity, and the town was proud of it. Dr. Sacheverell was there of course, and Sir



Michael Foster and General Picton, of Waterloo fame, and numbers of other persons who did somewhat in the world or were born to a place in it.

Now, when the college fell plump into Marlborough, the situation was not without its humour. The old foundation was still fairly prosperous. It was part of the place, a limb of the town, and its head master was a local institution of dignity who took high place at civic functions, and shared the ecclesiastical honours of the borough with the rector of St. Peter's, and the vicar of St. Mary's, and as I have said, had been for all time accustomed to harbour among his boarders the sons of persons of more or less local consequence. The old foundation at the east end of the town would not indeed have been human had it welcomed with enthusiasm this huge swarm of educational bees, this overwhelming rival if we may thus put it, who descended upon the west end, and settled itself there in the seats of the mighty of old times. For their part it behoved them to use the only weapon left them in the face of such fearful odds, and to sit in the seat of the scornful. It was not, under the circumstances, an attitude very easy to wear bravely, but traditions lingered in my youth of several occasions on which gallant efforts were made to assert the claims of antiquity over arrogant and overgrown youth, and as we know there were moments when it appeared as if the sixteenth-century foundation would inadvertently reap a fearful revenge, and be restored once more to its solitary pre-eminence. It must have been an immense privilege when once a year or so at a civic function the chief of the one was able to propose the toast of the other as "our younger rival recently settled in our midst," and no one could have enjoyed suffering this with a face of more inscrutable gravity than Bishop Cotton. If a little earlier than this the cane and the birch had whistled merrily at one end of the town, so far as one-man power counted, it was even outdone by the tremendous vigour with which a certain learned doctor at the other whacked the classics into his smaller flock, and fairly out-flogged his rivals, if nothing else, and this alone was no mean achievement.

The poet, Tom Moore, whose life was mainly spent, not in the vale of Avoca as many people no doubt think, but within a drive of Marlborough, sent his two sons to its old grammar school. On reading his journals not long ago I found the story of some venerable friends of my youth in Marlborough curiously verified. For, on his boys coming home for Christmas the poet complains [no, he does not complain, but merely observes], that one of them on being stripped was found to be black and blue from head to foot. Mrs. Moore appears to have said something, but the bard was doubtless dressing for a dinner-party at Bowood, and preoccupied with the good things he was expected to say there. But these little inter-scholastic bitternesses were of course one-sided, and entirely human. For there was certainly one cricket match in these primitive times when numbers counted for nothing, played in the forest which concluded harmoniously, and the readers for whom this chapter is more particularly written may be amused to hear, resulted in favour of the aborigines. Probably the bushrangers of the other establishment were never conscious of such a struggle having taken place. Another slight if dubious advantage accrued from the presence of two educational institutions, though overwhelmingly in favour of the smaller one. For in the matter of sporting adventure in which the grammar school sometimes aspired to emulate "its younger rival," it was extremely convenient for the culprits of the one to attribute their crime to those of the other, though the game was obviously a little one-sided.

One word more and I have done with a subject of which some readers, perhaps, will have had enough. Now, in connection with this ancient grammar school and its younger rival, there is a fragment of more serious local history forgotten by almost every one, but well worthy of remembrance. In the days of the latter's earlier struggles a proposal was brought forward to amalgamate the two foundations, strongly supported by the Marquis of Ailesbury, a good friend, and governor of both. On the one side was an ancient but moderate endowment, and some close scholarships at the universities. On

the other were numbers, large interests, and a potential, though extremely uncertain, fame. The college though not eager, was willing. The feudal powers were eager and right. The grammar school governors were divided. I have recently read the contemporary account of the meeting which was to settle the matter. It is interesting, and in a sense pathetic, and was certainly heated. The pride of the town in its old school was considerable, and its pride was now put to a severe test. Moreover it was not quite certain of the stability of its saviour, nor would every one at that time admit, even in the face of overwhelming facts, that the town needed a saviour. Prejudice and *esprit de corps* were powerful factors in those days in country towns. There was a party who could not see the hand-writing on the wall, pointing at once to the decay of the town from natural causes, and the virtual extinction of the grammar school by the college. The bill was thrown out, and in due course the grammar school was extinguished, or rather forced into an intermediate day-school for boys and girls, though it made a not ungallant struggle. The college would have profited to a trifling extent in landed endowments, and in close scholarships of slight value to a big flourishing public school. But the interesting point is that it would have come before the world, not as a modern creation, but as an Edward the Sixth foundation, and shed in fact its only reproach if it be one, of undeniable modernity. It would have acquired not only the ancient seat it now occupies, but also an ancient origin.

Within easy memory too, there were occasionally heated passages of a town and gown order, and the city fathers were reminded of the debt they owed to the college. Grey-haired patriots were not always willing to be told that, but for this wind-fall they would have become not quite perhaps as the cities of the plain, but possibly even as Bedwyn or Pewsey, and if this does not convey much to the outside reader it is plain enough speaking to a Wiltshireman. Possibly so extreme an illustration was a trifle hyperbolic. But nowadays there are no two opinions about it. The old borough not only recognizes its

debt, but regards the college almost as part of itself, rejoices in its triumphs, sorrows with it in its defeats. Life without it would be inconceivable, flat, dull, unprofitable; nay, the last is a weak word. It still has its mop fairs, sheep sales, and markets, but its great days, above all in these times of general movement, are the school functions. Its civic year one might almost say is divided into term time and holiday, though there are signs that the stranger within its gates, and the motorist rushing through them are becoming an element of disturbance to the bygone tranquillity of the summer vacation. A dog can no longer slumber peacefully in the middle of the High Street as of yore on an August afternoon. Its life would not be worth two minutes' purchase.







THE GRAND AVENUE, SAVERNAKE

### CHAPTER III

#### SAVERNAKE, LITTLECOTE, AND RAMSBURY

SAVERNAKE forest, as already noted, overhangs Marlborough, but a mile distant, covering a portion of that broad undulating plateau which divides the vale of the Kennet from the vale of Pewsey. Two main roads traverse its western and its northern fringes respectively. The former runs due south to Savernake junction five miles away, clinging to the shade of the forest for almost the entire distance. The latter is indeed no other than our old friend the Bath road, or, in Marlborough parlance, the London road, which escapes from the town on the bridge by the old grammar school, and, heading eastward, climbs by a long and gradually stiffening ascent to the second milestone. Here it, too, enters the forest for a shorter and a less darksome, and only less beautiful, stage than the other. We cannot do better for the moment than follow this one, and at the top of the hill, where a clump of old Scotch firs has moaned over the grass-grown remains of Roman Marlborough for many generations, we shall have the visible and modern one, with all its records of kings and lords and coaches and schoolboys, of which the reader perhaps may have had enough, far below and beneath us.

Some, indeed, hold this to be the most alluring prospect of the scene of the last two chapters. Endless seeming wastes of downland to the north and west touch the fancy no little by the contrast they offer to the warm-looking red-roofed town with its encircling foliage, dropped, as it were, in their very heart. But such contrasts are, after all, the prevailing note in Wiltshire scenery, though present here on a somewhat extensive

scale. The Kennet, too, comes glistening brightly out of the town into the meadows beneath, coiling in sinuous reaches by Poulton mill to the village of Mildenhall, with its little church by the river bank, so hoary of aspect and so curious within. Here, too, the river Og joins the other, swelling it at once to the dimensions of quite a generous stream worthy of its high place among the trouting rivers of England. No traditions, so far as I know, has this little Og with the King of Bashan, being merely a corruption of Oke; a somewhat ignoble rivulet it is too, oozing in sluggish fashion from villages in the downs that bear its name, and harbouring trout of fabulous size that share its lethargy, and have never been known to take any interest whatever in the most seductive fly.

But this high point, whence the Bath travellers of old caught their first and no doubt welcome glimpse of Marlborough, was one of some anxiety to such as knew the established habits of the road, while the attention of those who did not was very apt to be prematurely diverted from any raptures aroused by the prospect. For this was a favourite spot for the Jehus of the fast-service period to let their teams go. I can well understand the temptation, for there was a mile here of tolerably straight and moderately steep descent and half a mile of flat to easy down on before they swung round into the town. I have myself succumbed to it many a time on a cycle, and have often watched, not without anxiety, the dust clouds enveloping ecstatic motorists hurtling down at breakneck speed, for there is nothing like it, I think, between London and Marlborough. The coachmen, we know, enjoyed an occasional gallop downhill, particularly with a timorous old gentleman beside them on the box-seat. Moreover, they were sometimes a few minutes late, and here beyond question was the opportunity to recover them. But all this time the entrance to the forest is close at hand, and while the Bath road hugs its outskirts, the Grand Avenue starting hence pierces its centre for nearly five miles. I approach it as a literary cicerone with some apprehension, for it is admitted on all sides to be the most impressive forest aisle in England

It derives some further distinction, too, from the fact of running up hill and down dale through the heart of woodland that professes no symmetry, but, on the contrary, retains all the character of an ancient forest that has flourished in all its natural and pristine wildness, untouched and untrimmed by the hand of man. The Grand Avenue itself is a work of art, or of man's design, at any rate; but then it is the design of two centuries ago, which makes all the difference. The great beech trees, of which it is mainly fashioned, have achieved the stature, which, in a soil they love, has in two hundred years reached the limit of possibility. Wide apart though the opposing rows stand, and each tree at measured intervals, their tops interlace with such precision that the sunshine which lights the wild and scattered woodland around seldom pierces this Gothic roof, and scarcely touches the smooth, lofty columns from which it springs. Not often, indeed, is the connection between Gothic architecture and the noblest forms of forest scenery brought so forcibly to the mind, and the effect is not lessened by the sharp slopes over which this stately woodland arcade rises and falls in its unswerving course.

An interval of parkland about midway marks the meeting of eight separate forest roads, and the site of a long vanished gibbet erected for the benefit of a Cumbrian malefactor, who must have been unpleasantly surprised at being caught so far from the scene of his misdemeanours. But there are other great beech avenues in plenty, fashioned by the same hand, running this way and that through Savernake forest, though none of them on so vast and imposing a scale as this one. It was a period when men delighted to bend the wild and rugged scenes of nature into the trim, the stately, and the straight. One can well understand the impulse to tame the wilderness when it was the normal condition of so much of the country. Men could hardly be expected to cherish an æsthetic affection for untamed nature when they had scarcely finished fighting it, when highways were a foot deep in mud, and the undrained fields were pale in colour from poor cultivation, and the English hedge-row was not. It was, perhaps, only natural



that the park, the smooth lawn, the trim avenue, should be the chief solace of the tasteful and the inspiration of the poet, that Richmond should be the apotheosis of natural beauty and North Wales "a horrid spot of hills." But we may be thankful to the men of those times who created for us these noble monuments of a taste that loved measured stateliness and terraced lawns, even though we appreciate more than they did the wilder areas of untamed nature, which are yet left to us. The very contrast, too, of the majestic symmetry and solemn gloom of these beech avenues to the primitive and sunlit forest which spreads so lavishly around them over long slopes, waist deep in bracken, and winding dells green with immemorial turf, is in itself delightful. Time may well seem to have stood still in Savernake, the always-wooded heart of a forest once covering far wider limits, though not of necessity everywhere timbered. Hereabouts, however, it was always a forest in the woodland sense, and is in effect much the same as when Anglo-Norman kings hunted through it from their castle of Marlborough, and in later days the first James pursued the stag, and perhaps the wild boar, in company with the Earl of Pembroke, and the Lords of Savernake. Some wild boars, Aubrey tells us, were reintroduced into the new forest by Charles I. and became "terrible to travellers." They spread into other forests and tainted all the pigs of the surrounding country with their colour, but were exterminated, however, during the Civil Wars.

There are no spiky fir plantations in the forest proper to mar the harmony of its primitive aspect, of its rugged oaks of unthinkable age, its scattered birch and ash and thorn trees springing naturally from fern and thicket. Game preserving, with its inevitable pruning and trimming and planting, has hitherto, and happily so, from an æsthetic point of view, been confined to its further edges. The forest, moreover, has always been open to the public, and till recent years that rather formidable sounding term meant little more than a few rambles on horse or foot from Marlborough, who in the course of a day would be unlikely to come across each other, or



indeed any living wight but an odd wood-cutter or verderer. Improved railway communication, and still more the increase of holiday makers and holiday travel have altered this somewhat. Still even yet you might wander for hours, nay almost for days, away from one or two popular trysting places, and meet no one, and even lose yourself without much difficulty, seeing, in the mean time, no more company than the deer and the rabbits, the squirrels and the woodland birds, for whom it is a rare refuge and breeding ground.

That among all this assemblage of gnarled and ancient oaks, Savernake should have its historic trees is a matter of course. The *King oak*, which within easy memory held its court on a wide, open lawn in the centre of the forest, has been now reduced by the weight of centuries to a withered trunk. But the *Duke's Vaunt*, an even more interesting veteran near the eastern edge of the forest, still carries some stout limbs bravely, and clothes them each returning summer with a goodly crop of leaves. It was thus named as being the particular pride of the Protector Somerset, nearly four hundred years ago, and the old tree must have been then in its prime. A century back a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes how, as a boy, forty years previously, while helping to beat the bounds of the forest he was shut up with twenty others in its hollow trunk, then fitted with a lock and a door; nor could the oldest men, he tells us, remember the tree being in any way different from what it then was. In short, it has not materially altered in the past two hundred years.

A couple of Roman roads can be more or less traced through the forest to Cunetio, the Roman Marlborough, or to be more strictly accurate, perhaps, the Roman Mildenhall. The Wansdyke enters it at one end to emerge some way to the westward of the other, and continues that conspicuous course over the open downland which will, no doubt, attract our attention later. Roman relics, coins, and so forth, have been dug up in the forest, as well as the remains of a villa, near Lord Ailesbury's house of Tottenham. Quite recently, treasures much more valuable to the scientific mind were

unearthed by Mr. Stephen Dixon of Pewsey, in the shape of a great store of flint implements, bearing those indications which seriously raise the question of human life in the eolithic or pre-glacial age.

But a word must be said of the tenure of this sylvan paradise, though some mention of it was made while treating of Marlborough. The Esturmys of Wolfhall appear after the conquest as the chief wardens of the whole original forest, and owners of certain manors both within and without it. Its precise bounds and various tenures have been hunted out and recorded by the faithful, but they would not be in place here. Now the Esturmys must have been persons of virility, determination, and tact, for they managed to retain the rangership of the forest in the family as well as to have a son always ready to succeed to it till the beginning of the fifteenth century, and to hold office under ten successive mediæval kings must have been no light strain on their discretion. They fell out, we read, both with Richard the Second and Edward the Fourth, but recovered their honours on each occasion. Even at the last it was their supply of males, not their discretion, which gave out, and Wolfhall, with the honours of Savernake and other good things, went to a Seymour from away in the west, a family that in four generations, as we have seen, turned their rangership into a freehold by marrying their daughter to the most married of kings. Wolfhall, by a process we need not follow, was gradually abandoned for the site of the present great mansion of Tottenham, which had hitherto been a hunting lodge, and it was the Lord Hertford, immured so long for marrying Lady Katherine Grey, who improved it into a permanent residence when he came out of prison, carrying the stones of Wolfhall there for the purpose. It was his grandson, Lord Hertford, it may be remembered, who served King Charles so conspicuously in the Civil War, and was made a marquis at the Restoration, and afterwards a duke, though he had lost his house at Tottenham at the hands of the Roundheads, who dismantled it. After a time, however, he began the work of rebuilding. The process by which it gradually developed

under successive owners into the noble proportions of the present pile need not be elaborated. It was the original builder, however, who was the husband of the unfortunate Lady Arabella Stuart. The craving of Seymours for wives perilously involved in the succession was further illustrated by that other Seymour, Thomas, who married his royal brother-in-law's widow, Katherine Parr. It is only fair to remember, however, that the amorous monarch had almost snatched her from his kinsman's arms to her most unwelcome promotion, and that when she had done with acting as a footstool for the king's gouty leg, and a target for his ill-humours, and had seen him safely put into his coffin just as her own head was beginning to ripen for the block, she and the faithful Seymour came together again and lived happily ever after. Not, however, in Wiltshire, or I should have been tempted to repeat the gruesome story of how the ex-queen's body was dug up at Sudely two hundred years afterwards in perfect preservation to every detail, even to the smart clothes she was buried in, and tossed about the village graveyard for every comer to gape at, and much more of a shocking nature.

As already related the present family, the Bruces, married the Seymour heiress and inherited their lands and honours in the end of the seventeenth century, thereby maintaining the continuity of blood succession from the time of the Conquest to the present day. There is a remarkable instrument still treasured in Tottenham House known as the Esturmy Horn. Fashioned of ivory, and two feet long, it is mounted in silver and decorated with over forty carved illustrations of animals of the chase, and the figures of huntsmen and other officials. It is known to be of anterior date to 1350, and was, in fact, the ancient symbol of wardenship, and is supposed to be the title-deed of the charter granting the forest to the Protector Somerset. When George the Third, whose virtues are commemorated by a lofty column in the forest, visited Savernake, a story runs that he commanded his noble host to blow the Esturmy horn, a performance which at a former period seems to have been incumbent on its owners, as tenants, in capite of

the once royal domain. The situation was apparently saved by the fact that, though Lord Ailesbury himself signally failed in this proof of his right to Savernake, no one else could do any better. Perhaps it was like the famous horn of Egremont and only Esturmys could wind it.

A chapter or two could readily be written on Savernake Forest. But with a good portion of Wiltshire to traverse it is obvious that here, as throughout our pilgrimage, I must steel my heart against many things I should like to gossip about, and trample on the feelings of the parish chronicler right and left by sins of omission, and only ask him to credit me with many a pleasant and unforgotten hour among his local gods, that I cannot recall in these pages for the obvious exigencies of space. Of the literary critic, in that particular common-sense and experience has emboldened me to have less fear, for he knows too well the limitations of the printed page, and understands the reader's attitude towards books and encyclopædias respectively. I am not attempting the latter, nor even professing to trench on the useful field covered by Mr. Murray. This measure of propitiation, I think, is due to those local friends and acquaintances whose hands I shake again in fancy by the winter fireside, as pen and spirit travel with them once more through the summer fields and highways of their respective preserves.

We may depart, then, from these sylvan shades by the gate of the home farm at the south-east corner of the forest, and wend our way by tortuous lanes for a mile or so to the greater of the two Bedwyns. Now, there stood formerly in the centre of its wide street a decrepit market-hall and council-house, which bore the appropriate word "Fuimus" inscribed upon its time-worn front, though as a matter of fact this is the motto of the Bruce family. Since its removal Bedwyn looks as if a load had been taken off its mind. It was a standing reminder of former glories; that might have been forgotten but for this one melancholy note, though Leland, to be sure, did not think much of the place even in his time, calling it "but a poore thing to sight." At any rate Bedwyn has no



longer anything visible to live up to, and wears the appearance of a cheerful and contented village; with its wide, quiet street, bordered with mellow brick and flint houses, still often carrying picturesque roofs of thatch after the common Wiltshire habit, and its pulse beating with the slow measured beats of a sequestered tillage country. But till the first Reform Bill Bedwyn returned two members to Parliament with due regard no doubt to the behests of its feudal lords. It has, moreover, a very fine cruciform church set in a wide graveyard outside the village, and girt about with lofty trees; while if no pellucid Kennet washes its edges the Kennet and Avon canal catches the sunshine betimes in the bordering meadows, and is not without artistic value to this reposeful spot.

The church is indeed a very fine one, fashioned of flint, and carrying a low massive central tower. The arches of the nave are transition Norman profusely moulded. The capitals are singularly ornate and vary in design with each column; while the transepts are of late thirteenth century. In the chancel, which is extremely fine, Sir John Seymour, father of King Henry's queen and the Protector Somerset, lies in full armour on an altar tomb, his head with flowing hair resting on a helmet. There is also a monument to Frances, widow of the second Duke of Somerset; and in a niche of the south transept a nameless Crusader in chain armour lies with legs crossed beneath an ample shield. Crowning a hill above the narrow valley in which Bedwyn has nestled since the first Saxon invasion, is the justly celebrated oval camp of Chisbury. It rests on the Wansdyke, and is surrounded by a double and sometimes triple rampart nearly fifty feet in height, though greatly overgrown in these days with encroaching woodland. A farmhouse stands in the interior, which is a dozen or more acres in extent, and among its buildings is an ancient chapel to St. Martin, now fallen to agricultural usages.

Chisbury is said to derive its name from Cissa, the original Saxon, who, after landing in England, made his way thus far and founded Bedwyn. From the camp there is wide outlook over a broken wooded foreground, with the heights of Inkpen,



the loftiest chalk down in England, some thousand or more feet in altitude rising beyond at the point where Wiltshire, Berks, and Hants all meet. But Bedwyn has a store of memories, and if we could only have been standing on Chisbury camp in the year 675 we should have seen the men of Wessex—not the little Wessex of Mr. Hardy, but of ancient history—gathered together from all that wide region, contending with the men of still greater Mercia, their late oppressors for the space of an entire day. The slaughter, says the chronicle, was tremendous; success declared for neither party, and that is almost all we know about it.

Bedwyn was a natural point of conflict, for it appears to have been one of the chief seats of Wessex power, while if any further proof of the battle site were required, the bones of the slain have been unearthed in a chalk pit in heaps during the present generation. Mr. Adams, in a little brochure on Bedwyn, relates that the first skeleton brought to light at Crofton was held to be the long-lost remains of a son of the tenant of Wolfhall, thought to have been murdered, and local opinion congratulated itself that an ancient mystery had been cleared up. But when in time other skeletons were unearthed, and yet later whole cart-loads of human bones, it became quite evident that no modern assassin's hand had been here at work, but that the burial-pits of the battle of Bedwyn were being opened to the day.

We are here within a mile or so of the county line, and though these West Berkshire uplands blend themselves insensibly both in a human and physical way with North-east Wilts, I am glad enough of the excuse afforded by my title to turn due northwards, and take the reader by a pleasant, sequestered, but uneventful route to Littlecote and Ramsbury. Passing Little Bedwyn, which has a church worth seeing but nothing else, one is soon out of the once afforested and still woody, broken, and enclosed country, interlaced by hilly, tortuous lanes of gritty, flinty surface, and landed at Froxfield between Marlborough and Hungerford on the Bath road. One might well be tempted to pursue it for three miles to the

last-named town, which is so nearly in Wiltshire that the county line runs right through the centre of its famous old coaching inn The Bear, for its memories of William of Orange and his parleys here with the commissioners of the hapless James, and indeed for its own sake, as a pleasant, sleepy old borough, with a wide street climbing laboriously up from the Kennet. Hungerford does not seem to have changed anything within my memory, which goes back to the time when it was the nearest station for Marlborough people eastward-bound, and the belated and depressed survivors of the coaching period, machines, and men, rumbled leisurely along this ten miles of road, cheerless in the possession of only a single public-house.

And this was at Froxfield, where I have left the reader standing, as it were idly. And I well remember as a child, homeward bound, perhaps, on a winter night, the avidity with which this single opportunity was always seized by the driver: with what alacrity he tumbled down from the box, threw his reins to a hanger-on, and with what deliberation he disappeared into the warm glow, and how long he stopped there comforting himself, within and without, while we kicked our cold heels in the dark interior of the stage. Froxfield, being only a pleasant little village, is quite overshadowed by the fine old building known as the Somerset Hospital, erected in James the Second's reign by Sarah, Duchess of Somerset, as a refuge for the widows of twenty clergymen and thirty laymen. With its ancient gateway, clocktower, and long, low, well-proportioned wings, its mellow walls, and windows bright with flowers, and its reposeful quadrangle, with a chapel in the centre, all lifted high on a green terrace above the roadway, this stately alms-house presents a most engaging and collegiate appearance, and makes one almost long to be the widow of a Wiltshire clergyman.

A mile or so of winding byway through upland fields, green with the promise of future harvests, or brown and ribbed with the fresh sown turnip-drills, brings us to the top of the park at Littlecote. A short descent down a green drive, between two rows of stately elms, and the Tudor gables of this famous

mansion rise before us. The writers of a century or so ago, while they glow with enthusiasm over the palatial temples that had risen so thickly in parts of Wiltshire, just before their own time, dismiss Littlecote as a "respectable ancient house." Nowadays we look on its subdued and time-worn walls and grey gables, its immense mullioned windows, with other eyes, not merely for its weird story of much more than local fame, but as one of the best of the larger Tudor houses that remain in England. It does not fill the eye from every point of the compass, nor invite you to admire its stature and its cubic measurement, its classic porticoes, or the number of its windows, from the far end of half a dozen converging avenues. It looks warm and homely, nay, by comparison unpretentious, in exterior; yet withal so eloquent of a dignity that requires none of these imposing accessories and a quiet assurance in its native English beauty, its associations, and its antiquity. It faces up rather than down to an undulating, finely timbered, deer park, and you look for peacocks and fan-tail pigeons on the smooth-shaven enclosure of sward before its door. The latter were actually in evidence when, after a long lapse of years, I paid my last visit here. It was a warm and breathless summer noon; the house for the moment was unoccupied, and a great peace reigned as I wandered at leisure through the panelled chambers, the noble hall, and the long gallery with the domestic in charge, who knew his way about, but was no jaded cicerone to ruffle the atmosphere with perfunctory and stilted utterances. To catalogue here the treasures of Littlecote would be unprofitable. One may recall, however, the spacious, lofty, and well-lighted hall, profusely hung with the martial relics of other days, particularly those of the great struggle between king and Parliament, the most interesting of which, perhaps, are the buff jerkins and steel caps of the Parliamentary regiment, which the Popham of that period raised and led. There is a great store, too, of antique furniture, and much fine stained glass of armorial device filling the great windows which extend from the eaves of the roof to the ground. Among other curious relics there is an instrument

of punishment for domestic use, a sort of finger press, the unpleasantness of which a personal experiment will readily demonstrate, and also a chair in which the original Popham, the judge, used to take his ease. An interesting little room, too, is intimately associated with William the Third, being panelled all round with scenes from Dutch domestic life, which were painted in commemoration of his visit. There are two pictures of Judge Popham who became the first owner of Littlecote in such sinister fashion, if that part of the tradition is to be believed. In the gallery, some one hundred and ten feet long, there are many Lelys and Gainsboroughs which do not concern us here, much as they may charm us in the inspection. There is the room where Dutch William slept containing his portrait, and another chamber which was elaborately decorated for the use of Queen Elizabeth, with a beautiful mantel carving testifying to the warmth of her reception. And by the same token, I wonder why the modern writer is so given to making merry at the redundancy of royal bedrooms in this small island, and usually too with such an air of superior wisdom. I suppose it is the altered habit of Royalty in this respect during the last two or three reigns, and partly, no doubt, the greater ease of travel, which obscures the conditions of the past in the unreflective mind. The roads of England, prior to Macadam, were no respecters of persons. You could not get a king or a queen along in winter with much greater despatch than a commoner, or, in other words, about four miles an hour with good luck. This did not prevent them from making acquaintance with their subjects; on the contrary it distinctly encouraged it, for they had to lay where they could between their more formal and ceremonious visits. "A respectable ancient house." Good heavens! when Lord Macaulay wrote his "History of England" matters had mended somewhat in this particular. "A house renowned," says he, "not more for its venerable architecture and furniture, than on account of a horrible and mysterious crime committed here in the days of the Tudors."

I confess at once to a great renewal of interest in visiting once more the haunted room at Littlecote, or rather the



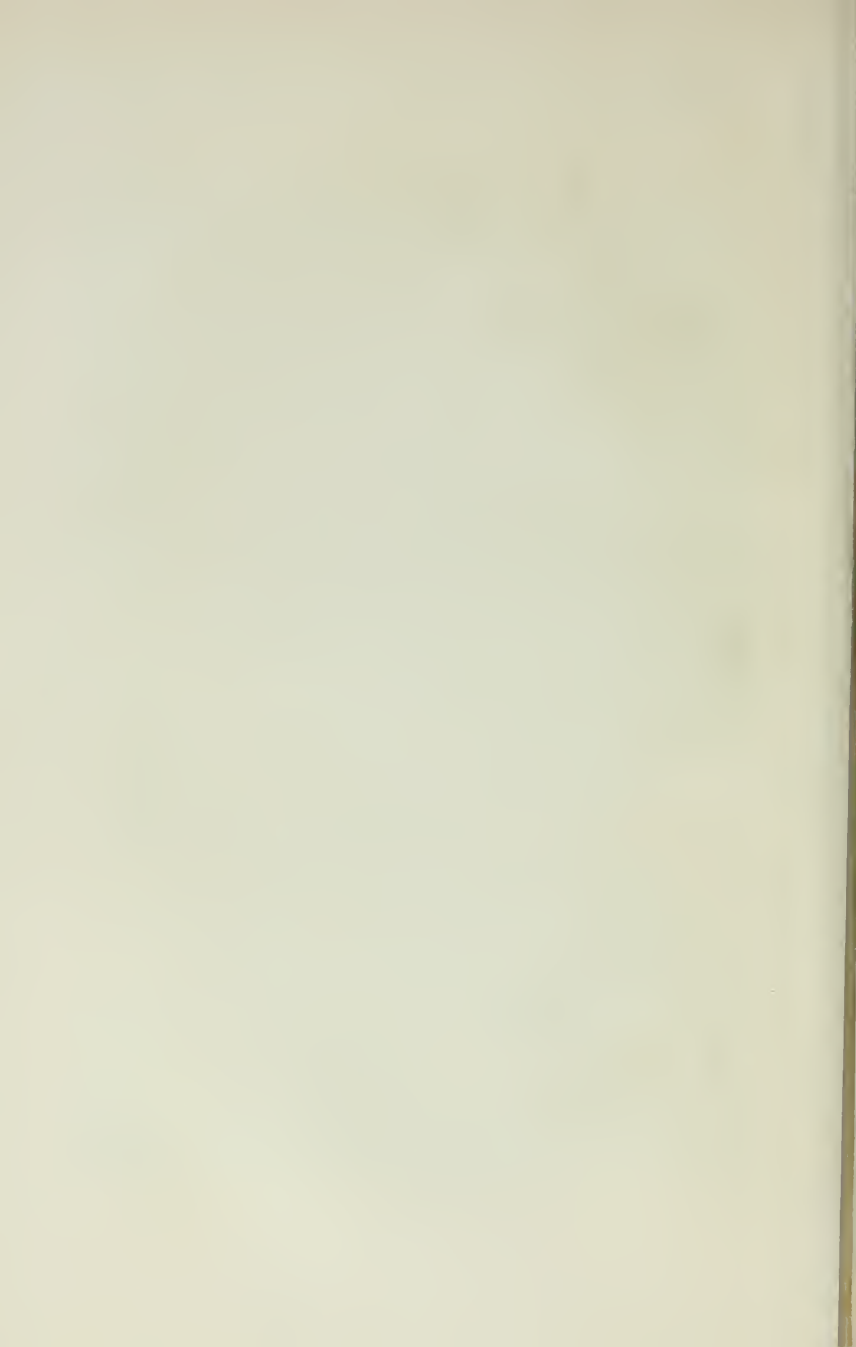
chamber wherein was committed that deed, which has given the place so much notoriety. When Sir Walter Scott first told the story in his notes to "Rokeby" it was regarded with only qualified belief, an attitude no doubt shared by Sir Walter himself. But since then documents have been unearthed in Wiltshire families that seem to leave little doubt of its authenticity.

Now the Darells of Littlecote were an ancient race, having come over with the Conqueror, and acquired Littlecote in Richard the Second's time, by marriage. We find one of them getting into trouble for trespassing in pursuit of game on his neighbour, the Bishop's chase at Ramsbury, in the reign of Henry the Eighth. But William, or "Wild Darell," is the hero of the tale and the villain of the crime, which was perpetrated in the year 1577. The story runs that a midwife, in a village some miles from Littlecote, in the neighbouring county of Berkshire, was awakened in the night by a man on horseback, who stated that her services was required immediately at a distance, and would be highly paid for. She was then mounted behind him, blindfolded—one condition of the bargain—and carried on a long, rough journey, at the end of which she was deposited at a large house, and after traversing many rooms was finally introduced into the chamber where she was in request; her bandage being only then removed. Upon the birth of the child, which occurred almost immediately, a haughty and ferocious-looking man entered the chamber, snatched it from the midwife, and threw it on the large fire which was burning in the chimney. The infant, in its struggles, rolled out of the fire on to the hearth, when the monster, in spite of the horrified protests of the two women, thrust it back, and heaped the burning coals upon its body. The man was, of course, Wild Darell, and the woman one of his wife's attendants, though both were strange to the midwife, who was paid handsomely and carried home as she had come. She had taken the precaution, however, so runs the tale, to snip off a bit of the bed curtain, and to count the steps of the private staircase. "This horrid action," says Aubrey, who lived fairly





AT RAMSBURY



near the time, "did much run in her mind, and she had a desire to discover it, and knew not where 'twas. She considered with herself the time that she was riding, and that it must be some great person's house, for the room was twelve feet high, and she should know the chamber if she saw it. She went to a justice of the peace, and search was made, and the very chamber found. The knight was brought to his tryall, and, to be short, this judge (Sir John Popham) had this noble house, parke, and manor, and I think more, for a bribe to save his life."

"I have seen his picture," continues Aubrey, "he was a huge, ugly man. He left a vast estate to his son Frances (I think, ten thousand pounds per annum); he lived like a hog, but his son John was a great waster, and dyed in his father's time. He was the greatest housekeeper in England; would have at Littlecote four to five or more lords at a time. His wife was worth to him six thousand pounds, and she was as vain as he, and sayd that she brought such an estate, and she scorned but she would live as high as he did, and in her husband's absence would have all the woemen of the country thither, and feaste them, and make them drunke as she would be herself. They both dyed by excesse and by luxury; and by cosenage of their servants there was, I think, a hundred thousand pounds in debt. Mr. John would say that his wife's estate was ill got, and she would retaliate as to the well-known manner in which he had gotten his." This epitaph, says Aubrey, was composed at his death—

"Here lies he who not long since  
Kept a table like a prince,  
Till Death came and took away,  
Then asked the old man, 'What's to pay?'"

His father, Sir Francis, all this time, lived also like a hog, according to Aubrey, at Hownstreet, in Somerset, but on a moderate pittance. He says that in the matter of the Darell affair, Judge Popham gave judgment against the prisoner, according to law; but being a great person, and a favourite, he procured a *noli prosequi*. The Pophams were an old Somersetshire

family, and the judge, as a young barrister, according to Aubrey, was idle and dissipated; but his wife besought her husband to dismiss his lively friends and set to work. He did the first with a great farewell entertainment, and the second no less thoroughly, soon winning fame and fortune, "for this strong, stout man could endure to sit at it day and night." The deposition of the midwife, Mrs. Barns, taken on her deathbed by Mr. Bridges, of Great Shefford, Berks, was actually found within the present century. This corroborates the story of the crime in all essential particulars, and further states that the lady whom she attended was herself masked. The deposition also states that the messenger had persuaded her to accompany him by stating that he had been sent by Lady Knyvett, of Charlton House, with whom she was acquainted.

About the same time the late Canon Jackson, the well-known Wiltshire antiquary, discovered a letter at Longleat, which practically completes the evidence. It was addressed to Sir John Thynne by Sir H. Knyvett, of Charlton, under date January 2, 1578, and concerns a Mr. Bonham, then employed at Longleat, whose sister was Darell's mistress at Littlecote. The writer "desires that Mr. Bonham will inquire of his sister concerning her usage at Will Darell's, the birth of her children, how many there were, and what became of them; for that the report of the murder of one of them was increasing foully, and would touch Will Darell to the quick."

It was the reversion of Littlecote that went to Sir John Popham, who took possession ten years after the trial at Salisbury, when "Wild Darell," who was a great rake and spendthrift, met his death by a fall from his horse, apparently in jumping a stile, for the spot was, and may yet be known as Darell's stile. There is, I fear, no justification for Scott's quatrain—

" Wild Darell is an altered man  
 The village crones can tell.  
 He looks pale as day, and strives to pray  
 If he hears the convent bell."

For, a few years after his escape from the halter, there is some evidence that he tried the same experiment which had been so successful then on the Lord Chancellor, in some other matter, and offered him five hundred pounds "to be his friend." Pity though it be to tamper with a fine old story, it must be admitted, despite Aubrey, that the date of Popham's promotion to the bench does not quite fit the tale. Still, it offers the very plausible alternative that, as a famous advocate, he used his influence with the authorities to remit the sentence passed on the prisoner at Salisbury—for the consideration mentioned, if we must have it so.

But greater events than these, about which there is no shadow of mystery, happened at Littlecote a century later. On December 8, 1688, Dutch William had received King James's commissioners, headed by Halifax, in his bedroom at the still noted Bear Inn, in Hungerford, and had there opened the first letter that he had received from his father-in-law since their strained relations commenced. The proposition, made both by letter and by Halifax, was that William and his troops should in effect remain where they were till Parliament, then about to assemble, should make known its wishes. Requesting his own councillors to confer with the king's commissioners, quite unhampered by his presence, but reserving the final decision to himself, William retired to Littlecote that afternoon, as the guest of Alexander Popham. His advisers, with the Earl of Oxford in the chair, met in the great room at the "Bear," still used for local gatherings, and through which the line between Berks and Wilts actually passes. Here the decision to reject the king's terms was arrived at, and duly reported to William at Littlecote. The sagacious William, feeling how vital it was that the outward appearance of coercion should be avoided, and shrewdly guessing, perhaps, that James would so blunder as to bring about the desired results without it, overruled the decision of his too eager friends, with what success we all know. It will be enough to record here that, upon the following Sunday, his terms were delivered in writing to Halifax. The king's commissioners



came over from Ramsbury Manor, where they were staying, and dined at Littlecote before their departure for London. "A splendid assemblage," says Macaulay, "had been invited to meet them." The old hall, with its coats of mail, and with portraits of gallants who had adorned the court of Philip and Mary, was now crowded with peers and generals. In such a throng a short question and answer might be exchanged without attracting notice. Halifax seized the opportunity of extracting all that Burnet knew or thought. "What is that you want?" said the dexterous diplomatist. "Do you wish to get the king into your power?" "Not at all," said Burnet. "We would not do the least harm to his person." "And if he were to go away?" said Halifax. "There is nothing," said Burnet, "so much to be wished." It was a strange thought as I took my leave of Littlecote, so infinitely peaceful and far removed from the scenes of modern strife and controversy on that hot summer's day, that the fate of England had been decided, with no little pomp and ceremony, within its walls.

As I turned my face along the foot of the park towards Ramsbury, a rustic cricket-match was proceeding without spectators, and with that obvious detachment from the rest of the rural life so common nowadays. The deer scampered headlong at my approach over the burnt sward, and the Kennet urged its peaceful course through lush meadows and straggling osier beds, so close at hand that you could hear the moorhens, splashing and uttering their harsh cries in the tall reeds. A two-mile progress, on a rough byway up the riverside, and at the edge of fields, lands one, by a short cut, in the outskirts of Ramsbury, famous in Saxon times as the episcopal seat of a great diocese, but only famous now as the spot which those who know the Kennet valley regard, perhaps, as its most alluring portion. Linked as it is with the adjoining beauties of Littlecote, all other dwellers on the Kennet, above or below, must, I think, concede so much. As to the village, its long, single street holds you for such a distance between its low-pitched dwellings, packed together, with every variety of mostly



IN THE KENNET VALLEY

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bygone fashion in thatch, tile, and slate, in timber, flint, or brick, that by the time you have emerged at the western end you might well think that Ramsbury, too, should have returned a couple of members to Parliament in the halcyon age when these matters were so pleasantly arranged.

This is not so, however. Ramsbury relies for fame on its remote episcopal glories; its ancient church, which represents them; its manor-house and its chase; its big trout, and the sylvan scenes and bright, gravelly streams and deep pools, where they wax and flourish. In a more serious and sordid sense, however, Ramsbury, like most Wiltshire villages, thinks mainly of the noblest and most unprofitable of industries—that of agriculture—as would be obvious at a glance. It pays the penalty for the reposeful old-time greeting it gives to the discriminating pilgrim from more restless scenes, in beginning and ending exactly where it began and ended when I was a boy, which, unhappily, was not quite yesterday; and, indeed, why should it be otherwise? If an ancient village of a thousand and odd souls can still wear a tidy and uncomplaining face in an agricultural county, what more could be expected of it, or, indeed, wished for? The church and its surroundings make a fitting break in the long street, though standing slightly removed from it. The tower is massive, squat, and heavily buttressed. The nave, aisles, and chancel are of large proportions, but of no commanding interest, unless in their finely wrought oaken roof. There are effigies of the Joneses, ancestors of the Burdetts, the present owners of Ramsbury Manor, who also are duly commemorated here; the original purchaser being attorney-general in Charles the Second's time. To the north of the long chancel is Darell's aisle, containing a few tombs of that family. There is much ancient timber, too, around the precincts, and amid a pleasant rustle of fresh June foliage and the clamour of rooks, a few ample and mellow-looking abodes of what a recent Wiltshire writer to the *Reviews* on matters rural, has styled "the village gentry," lie snugly ensconced.

For over a century at the close of the Saxon period

Ramsbury was the seat of the diocese of Wiltshire after its separation from that of Winchester. In 1058, it was united to that of Sherborne, whither the Episcopal seat was transferred. Ten years after the Conquest, however, both Ramsbury and Sherborne were shorn of their importance, and became merged in the diocese of Salisbury. Ramsbury is six miles from Marlborough, and at the very beginning of the journey thither one is confronted by a parting of the ways at the gate of the park, and a choice of either following the high-road or swinging down to the left across the Kennet and through the chase. I have never myself any hesitation as to a choice, and certainly should have none under the responsibility I have assumed in these pages. Nor can I often resist the temptation to linger upon the lofty bridge that here lifts the road over the river, before entering the chase, where, as everywhere in the less rugged parts of England at any rate, nature is at her best in June. Above the bridge the river has been dammed into a considerable lake over whose margin, for perhaps half a mile, fine forest trees spread their ample draperies, while back from the shore, set full in view, is the fine Queen Anne manor-house of the Burdetts built by the same hand, that of Webb the son-in-law of Inigo Jones, which fashioned the Seymour House at Marlborough and in the same style. The Burdetts, who have been in possession since the eighteenth century, inherited through marriage with a Jones heiress, the lawyer Jones already mentioned having purchased it from the Earl of Pembroke. "A fair, square stone house," Symonds the diarist who followed the fortunes of Charles the First in these parts calls it "a brave seat and fine parks." In this former house too Lord Pembroke entertained Cromwell while his army for the subduction of Ireland lay at Ramsbury and Marlborough. Here too, as we have seen, tarried the commissioners of James the Second, while William was at Littlecote just below, and here the well-known Sir Francis Burdett of later days lived and died.

One may well fancy the dimensions attained by the Kennet



trout, so ample as they sometimes are, even in the more contracted and moving currents of his native stream, when he drops down to a life of leisure and high living in a capacious pool like this. It is worth noting that the three largest river trout ever taken in England, came out of the Kennet namely, one of nineteen, and two of seventeen pounds respectively. This, at any rate, has been the answer repeatedly given in the *Field* to the curious on the subject. What monsters may roam the depths of the lake at Ramsbury, Heaven knows, for ten- and twelve-pound fish are not infrequently reported in the papers as captured by the rod in the river itself between this and Newbury, or as being on view, and the objects of capture. These monsters, I need hardly say, scarcely ever fall to the fly fisherman, whose victims will mostly scale from one to three pounds, the latter weight, or over, being frequent only in the mayfly season. This beautiful and succulent insect will be pursuing its fitful course through much of the month, whose long hours of sunshine are at the call of memory lighting my way over these earlier pages; and if the prospect from Ramsbury bridge is an alluring one upon any summer day, it is no less so in those fitful hours of June when scattered clouds of these graceful insects, like thin showers of laburnam blossoms floating in a light breeze, are stirring the big fish in stream and lake into an electrical condition. Just under the bridge where the lake falling into a broad palpitating pool becomes again a river and glides away into the meadows beyond, a fat fellow of six pounds or so was nearly always in evidence last summer at the same spot after the habit of big trout, with a few pounders lying humbly spread out behind him for such scraps of good things as should be unworthy of his attention.

Now, there is, or was, a fish stew at Littlecote, where a few trout in what might be called honourable confinement were encouraged to good living, and according to a well-known local sportsman not long dead, actually acquired a spirit of rivalry among themselves from being so frequently

lifted out and placed upon the scales. There was one old Triton whose reputed weight I dare not venture on, that I once heard the above authority declare, grew so pleased with himself that he used to come up regularly to the edge of the stew to be weighed and lie like a lamb on the tray, and when the scale went down in evidence of his increasing stature, as it always did, would flap his tail twice in quiet exultation. Much, however, must be forgiven to men who live on the banks of streams, whose authentic records are apt to be received with incredulity by the men of far counties, and are, in consequence, put so often upon their mettle. To apply a familiar saw, one half of the fishing world has but a scant notion of what the other half is doing, or thinking. The wet-fly men of the north and west, and their methods and standards, are now so widely sundered from the dry-fly men of the chalk streams, that, unless they are cosmopolitan anglers, they have scarcely any understanding of one another, and are even apt to quarrel, with no prospect of coming to one.

Ramsbury chase is a long, steep, richly timbered ridge, with a pleasant green strip beneath it, bordering the water-meadows, where the Kennet, and one or two straggling feeders, bubble with unwonted energy over gravelly reaches, and here and there disappear in the embrace of over-arching trees. The sight of a quite artistic pavilion set on the old familiar stretch of sloping sward, beneath the hanging wood, stirs up memories of country cricket as it was in Wiltshire, and doubtless many other places, thirty to forty years ago. Times have greatly changed—it was the one summer pastime of all classes then; there was no tennis, nor yet any cycling, nor other similar distractions, nor any village football heroes, yearning to distinguish themselves before the leaves had even yellowed, for football was unknown outside the public schools. There was much heartiness too in country matches, and a good store of patriotic feeling. The non-combatants gathered in force on the arena, criticized freely, and dealt out hearty applause. The young men home from school or college engaged, to the

best or worst of their ability, with the locals. They were not collected in groups, and carried about to play other collections of the same degree, on immaculate pitches, before admiring parental audiences. The boy was proud to be numbered in the village eleven, and the stripling glowed when he first represented his town.

I sometimes pause, nowadays, in my wanderings about England, to watch a village match, and it often appears to me a somewhat melancholy function, and even a depressing one. The pitch, or "table," as they used to call it hereabouts, is vastly improved, and the accessories generally more elaborate, but there are no spectators, nor any apparent enthusiasm, and the batsmen treat the bowlers like a caricature of an Australian eleven, trying to play out time. In ancient days the wicket was usually indifferent; the bowling, whether under or round arm, was generally fast, and the ground did the "working." But the country cricketer, nothing daunted, laid about him with a will, or tried to. There were no boundaries then, and some grounds lent themselves to great achievements. A well-known Marlborough and Oxford cricketer of the 'sixties, made forty-four runs in a single over, in Devonshire, the physical formation of that county lending itself greatly, of course, to so sensational a performance. Even the school ground at Marlborough, in dry weather, though affording from earliest time the best of wickets, offered immense possibilities to the slogger. R. A. H. Mitchell, the once-famous Eton bat, held the record here for many years; but this was exceeded in a match at which I was myself assisting, when a broad-shouldered cricketing farmer, from a gigantic on-drive downhill, ran his partner out attempting the eleventh run. I can see the latter now, always slow between wickets, though one of the best amateurs, with the gloves, behind them of that day, as he fell prostrate and exhausted in mid career, and lay there, and nimble boys, be it remembered, were after the ball.

The humours of old-time country cricket are no new theme, and in what might be called the transition period, we had still our share of them. One of my earliest recollections

as a combatant, is of a dramatic occurrence that happened on, or about the spot where the pavilion now stands in Ramsbury chase. This was before the local club aspired even to the luxury of a marquee. However, on that occasion, a gigantic rick-cloth, stretched on an aerial crosspole, much more than served to shelter the simple, but ample feast, which in those days, when country matches generally began at eleven, was a serious affair, though I might add, there was then no tea interval to follow. On this occasion the heavens had descended on our noontide feastings with such fury and deliberation that there was nothing for it but to prolong them with such faint attempts at mirth and song, as the depressing circumstances might admit of. Nearly every country cricketer of that day, gentle and simple, was a potential songster, and audiences, perhaps, not so critical. The professed vocalists had, of course, their familiar repertoire; the others hugged their single ditty, which became, as it were, their peculiar property, available for instant service at all those gatherings where it was regularly due, and if anticipated by any inconsiderate stranger, relieved them of all further obligations. It was certainly no prospect of æsthetic enjoyment that created the unvarying call for these soloists. The humour which gathered by degrees about the men of one song, whose delivery of it lost nothing by time and confidence, was a worthy factor, I think, in the situation. To myself, I am quite sure they were a source of much enjoyment. It was not in those days, "Mr. Biggins will now favour us with a song," but "Mr. Wiggins will now sing, 'The vloy is on the turmuts,'" and Wiggins always sang that celebrated Wiltshire melody, or at least, emitted it without hesitation, or false modesty, and with a good deal of feeling, particularly if it was the month of June. Perhaps the reader would like to hear a sample of the ditty which to the true moonraker is what the "March of the Cameron Men," or "Weel may the keel row," or "The men of Harlech," or "Shall Trelawny die," are to their respective communities, and much more than any gives a proud swing to the step of the Wiltshire volunteer or militia Tommy as he passes the



saluting point at Aldershot or marches to laborious days on Salisbury Plain—

“ Oh, zum be vond o’ haymakin’  
 An’ zum be vond a-zowin’  
 But o’ ahl the work as I likes best  
 Gie I ma turmut hoein’.  
*Chorus.* The vlo-oy, the vlo-oy,  
 The vloy be on the turmut,  
 O bother me eye, ’tain’t no use to try  
 To ka-ap ’em arf the turmut.”

On this fateful occasion an old friend, with no soul for music but an amazing talent for Wiltshire humours, was busy with his particular song, one familiar enough in this part of the country at that time, and peculiarly adapted to the local vernacular, of which the singer was a past master. It appears to have been a metrical tribute to William the Fourth on a subject near the hearts of rural folk, for the only two lines I can remember, ran—

“ And merrily sing, live Billy, our king,  
 For ’batin’ the tax on beer.”

Then there was the chorus—

“ For I owns I like good beer,  
 For I owns I like good beer,  
 And dall their eyes, if ever they trie  
 To rob a poor man of his beer.”

It was during this very song, I remember, that a sudden loud roaring began far above our heads, as if all the temperance orators then at large were uniting their thunders of disapproval. We were not long in suspense, for the sailcloth had begun to rip from rottenness, and its own sodden weight, under this unwonted strain, and continued to rend along the cross-pole with considerable despatch and great sound, till the whole mass of heavy soaking canvas fell plump on top of our somewhat enforced convivialities and buried the two elevens, together with the rounds of beef, the jugs of ale, the tables, plates, glasses, cricket bags, and scattered garments. There was



a fine scene of helpless and saturated confusion, exposed to the mercy of as pitiless a downpour as I have ever witnessed.

Another entertaining feature of country cricket in those days, and one which has long vanished, was the occasional tours of All-England elevens at the close of the cricket season. Strong combinations of the best professional players were pitted against eighteen or twenty-two of the second-class counties, to use a modern term, whose populace at least never had other opportunities of seeing the famous players. These were, in truth, great functions, and were celebrated betimes in this part of the world with much fervour. Special trains were run, the gate-money was quite respectable, and they were thoroughly enjoyed. Local players had the felicity of engaging at close quarters for two days with the most famous experts of the period, and the period alluded to was that of Southerton and Willsher, of Jupp, Lillywhite, Humphry, Pooley, and Hill among the stars. The non-combatants, moreover, could reasonably look forward to the chance of passing the time of day with one or the other of these great men, or even drinking a glass with them—a memory to hand down with embellishments to their children's children—and as the season's hard work for these giants was over, small blame to them if they mellowed somewhat under the miscellaneous hospitalities of the refreshment tent or the bar parlours at night, or if they accepted the worship of the more roving sportsmen of the town with infinite urbanity and dropped winged words concerning other giants and great contests on notable arenas. What a thing it was, too, to see the whole All-England eleven standing, like ordinary mortals, in the High Street smoking their after-breakfast pipe. For a parallel, in Marlborough it would almost have been necessary to have recurred to the visits of Charles the First or George the Third. There is no doubt that this departed form of entertainment brought great joy to a country neighbourhood thirty or forty years ago. As for those of us who were combatants, the intimacy we cultivated with these immortals, though of a more practical kind, was yet more stimulating.

The procession of the twenty-two back and forth from the wickets was fairly brisk, it is true, and not often interrupted for very long together. Some local heroes of an impressionable kind were practically out before they left the pavilion, which every one did with the applause befitting so solemn an occasion. Others remembered that after all these world-renowned trundlers were but mortals, and anon surprised themselves and the spectators by hitting them out of the ground. Our local wicket-keeper I remember stumped Jupp in great style in both innings one year at Ashdown Park, and three seasons afterwards it was still remembered to him on a similar occasion near by, and he received quite an ovation by way of reminder. Half the county was, of course, picked over on these great occasions, and each player was cheered by his local friends, who were sure to be mustered on the field. Nor was it only batsmen who were sometimes intimidated by the prospect before them; for on the first venture of this kind in Savernake forest I remember our own old trusty umpire quite lost his bearings at the opening moment from stage-fright. Hill, I think, was waiting to deliver the first ball, but the official in question—an elderly amateur and ex-farmer who always umpired *con amore*, and whose decisions were never questioned—was noticed to be rambling distractedly about behind the bowler. Our captain, who was in first at that end, perceived the veteran's inconsequent behaviour, and called his attention to the urgency of the moment. To his amazement and dismay he was replied to in an agitated whisper, "Where be I to stand, Master Willie, dost know?" However, Elisha pulled himself together, gripped the five pennies tight in his right hand, recovered his wits and his judicial demeanour, and no one, but "Master Willie" and his nearest friends, ever knew anything of his little attack. Yet even in these far-away days W. G. Grace was already the first batsman in England, a fact which tempts me to two more Wiltshire cricket stories, and I have done. One of them is well known, and constantly quoted in newspapers, but not always attributed to the right locality; the other is also occasionally brought up in

the cricket columns of the press. Both of these, however, are concerned with the college.

In 1869 Grace came down with an eleven against the boys, and, as it so happened, was clean bowled for next to nothing, a triumph which may perhaps be partly attributed to the surprising speed at which the balls travelled from a youth of exceeding small stature. The hymn in chapel that night, by a pure accident, as it had been appointed, according to custom, a long time previously, contained the singularly topical lines beginning—

“The scanty triumphs Grace hath won.”

Many years later, during their annual match with Cheltenham, played on this occasion at Marlborough, the Cheltonians had been somewhat overpowered on the first day by two Marlborough bowlers named, respectively, Wood and Stone. In the hymn that night, quite as fortuitously as in the other case, occurred the lines—

“The heathen in their blindness  
Bow down to wood and stone.”

And in all this time we have crossed the Kennet valley again, where it begins to lift its sloping walls to somewhat bolder elevations. It is in truth as typical and satisfying a stretch of chalk stream scenery as one could desire. Thatched and gabled cottages of wattle and timber, or of red-brick worn almost as grey as the flints mixed with it, stand anon by the roadside amid their bright garden patches. In the narrow sloping pastures, between road and water meadows, lordly elms, which flourish here in the valleys as do the beeches on the upland, gather under their ample shade the collar-rubbed and trace-worn work-horse, rejoicing in his partial holiday between turnip-sowing and harvest, the colts and calves and all the supernumeraries of farm life. Clear and clean of surface weeds, as beseems a well-cared-for trout stream, the Kennet slips past us through meadows lush already with the promise of the coming hay crop or bitten close with growing lambs now gone to the butcher or the downs; now hiding for a moment behind

an osier bed, now spreading out beside some old red-brick water-mill, now plunging through a hatch-hole into a pool, surging for the moment with all the life and sparkle of a mountain stream. The smooth green steeps above the valley are deeply seamed with the prints and trackways of prehistoric man, and above them are the heights of Folly Farm, the old Cunetio and the conspicuous clump of fir-trees cresting the London Hill that we mounted at the opening of this chapter. We soon leave behind us the hamlet of Axford and the village of Mildenhall. The church towers and red roofs of Marlborough, with the graceful slender spire of the college chapel in the distance, backed by the green fir-crowned ridge of Granham hill are once more in view ; and after crossing the confluence of the Og and Kennet, just below the old red manor-house of Poulton and its sheltering timber, are soon upon Marlborough green, with St. Mary's church tower rising finely above the ancient gabled houses that cluster thickly about its precincts.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARLBOROUGH TO SWINDON AND HIGHWORTH

WHEN one has climbed out of Marlborough by the laborious ascent of Kingsbury Street, and stepped on to that great expanse of almost level turf sacred to the burghers' cow from immemorial times, it is easy to understand why the Royalist guns expended most of their energy on the church towers, so little else is to be seen of the town for the steepness of the declivity on which it partly lies. Here, too, are the remains of the earthworks thrown up by its stalwart Puritan defenders. But what is more to the immediate purpose there may be here taken in almost at a glance the whole of this upstanding fragment of Wiltshire that geographers—more generally, perhaps, than ordinary wights—describe as the Marlborough downs. This elevated block, together with the greater one of Salisbury Plain and its outlying ranges, form between them that downland country which occupies nearly two-thirds of Wiltshire, and practically stands for the county in the popular mind. The Pewsey vale divides the two, a fertile corn country three or four miles in width running through the centre of the shire from near Bedwyn almost to Devizes. Up here on Marlborough common you can mark at almost every point the outer boundaries of this northern upland, and command a considerable sweep of its mostly wild interior. On one far horizon are the fir-tufted camps looking out over the fat grass lowlands which divide the downs from the Cotswold country to the north. On the other to the



southward, but only four miles away, is the woody shoulder of Martinsell, which drops abruptly five hundred feet into the vale of Pewsey, with as sheer a declivity of slippery turf and as bold a headland as can be found in the chalk counties. But nowhere can you see over the steep edges of this waving and furrowed plateau, some twenty miles long from east to west, and half as many, perhaps, from north to south, though you can discern its upstanding ramparts at almost all points.

It is the unenclosed portions of these uplands, one need hardly say, that most appeal to the lover of the downland, and these in the breezy distances here so generously unfolded are mainly conspicuous. Yet even in the enclosed portions of these great chalk plateaus, neither the hedges, the ditches, nor the planting of a century or so ago, seem able wholly to destroy their nature, or make them as other enclosed countries. They refuse, in short, to be ever quite tamed. The fences round the large fields retain, for the most part, a meagre and wind-swept look. The oak and hazel copses remain copses, and would seem to have no further aspirations. The farms being very large, the homesteads are widely scattered, and mostly in the valleys, while the labourers, too, dwell generally in the valley villages, so cottages are scarce upon the face of the upland. The impress of the wild still lies unmistakably upon it. Wide belts of down turf that have never felt the plough run fortuitously between the tillage lands, bordered betimes by great beech trees that flourish here with such small encouragement. Sarsen stones that have survived the greed of the barn builder and the road maker lie about on the headland as they lie on the open down, and here and there strew a whole valley so thickly as to have earned for them in ancient days the name of "grey wethers." Here, too, the pasture will be still seamed with British trackways, or there a cromlech will be standing up to its middle in waving wheat.

And after all the open pasture is always in sight and generally close at hand. Fenced or unfenced, plough or natural pasture, the whole of this two hundred and odd square

miles is true downland, rich, nay more than rich in all those features that are dear to the lovers of such scenery which I am well aware is not every one, though the exceptions will rarely, I think, be found among those with whom birth or residence have bred familiarity. Scarcely any spot in Wiltshire, not even Salisbury Plain, commands a wider range of the primitive country, still in almost sole possession of the sheep and the barrows of the unknown dead, where the bees, humming over the wild thyme and the gentle sough of the bent grasses in the breeze, are often the only notes to break the silence. One road, nay two, if an almost disused one may count, strike north across the wild, dropping into the low country above Broad Hinton and Swindon respectively. But for us, the narrow valley of the Og, cleaving the down country to the north-westward, and followed by the present road to the latter town, claims more immediate attention.

Now, any one who might contemplate a prolonged cycling tour in Wiltshire, must not rely on that comparative immunity from punctures, which is nowadays enjoyed in most counties, for the chalk roads, admirable as they are in dry weather, and much better than most of those in the low country, are in places somewhat liberally sprinkled with minute but sharp fragments of flint pecked up by the feet of travelling sheep. Moreover, the cyclist will do well to take his appliances with him, for assistance of that kind is very partially distributed in Wiltshire. Years of good fortune or good tyres had reduced me to such bad habits in this respect, that I paid for them by a ten-mile walk on one occasion, which did not matter, as the day was fine and young, and time no object. Much the worst part of it was the terrific explosion of the tyre within arm's length of a hilarious group of harvesters celebrating the close of an abundant and rainless in-gathering with generous libations of ale. The Wiltshire labourer, in normal conditions, is a well-mannered and respectful person. There were two or three good excuses for the hilarity of these votaries of Ceres and Bacchus, though for the moment it was not easy to make them, since the tenth milestone from Marlborough

actually stared us in the face, and the white road went waving miles away through solitudes, which struck even their torpid imaginations as a further factor in the disaster. For there was not even a public-house on the whole of it, which no doubt occurred to these yokels with instant force, and doubled their satisfaction. This, too, was serious, for it was near lunch-time, and almost the hottest day of the year. I admit to feeling some humiliation as I left their unsympathetic neighbourhood in such ignominious fashion; but I reaped some satisfaction almost immediately in encountering a fellow-sufferer, who asked me in despairing tones the distance to Devizes. I told him it was six miles, whereat he looked yet more downhearted, and said he had an important appointment. All this was near Alton Barnes, and no one who has important appointments should think of resorting to them in the Wiltshire down country on a cycle, admirable as are the roads. As for me, I had no appointment, and thoroughly enjoyed my leisurely pilgrimage over the solitary upland road. My other mishap was in the most desolate part of Salisbury Plain from another sharp flint on a sheep-pecked bit of road. This, however, was in the grey of an autumn evening, with a rainy night setting in, and twelve miles from Salisbury, my goal. The prospect here was really formidable, and I deserved it thoroughly, being again unprepared. But providence intervened in the shape of a shrewd wayside blacksmith, who made an occasional well-earned shilling out of other fools like myself. I quote these two trifling incidents as more likely to point a moral to the potential cyclist in Wiltshire, than any benevolent generalities, for there are not many such enterprising blacksmiths, I can assure him.

In the narrow and elevated valley of the Og, there is comfortable room for two villages a couple of miles apart, before we mount the gentle watershed beyond—if, indeed, you can thus designate a slope that for half the year supplies no spring water. For many of these chalk streams, it may be noted, run absolutely dry in their higher reaches during the summer season, a fact well illustrated by the number of “Winter

bourne" sprinkled about the map of Wiltshire. I spoke disrespectful of the Og, where we crossed it at its junction with the Kennet, in the last chapter, and had some thoughts of this in the back of my mind, for above Ogbourne St. Andrew, after harbouring trout reputed of fabulous size a mile or two below, and hiding itself for some distance under a thick mat of weeds yellow with water buttercups, the little river disappears altogether, while at Ogbourne St. George the school children sport and the calves graze in its wide, grassy bed. Ogbourne St. Andrew is a pleasant Wiltshire hamlet of thatched cottages, set about in wayward fashion, and an ancient little church of the Norman and transition period, with nave, side aisles, chancel, and tower. Ogbourne St. George, two miles up the valley, is obviously the more important. Its village street, running at right angles to the road, and terminating in a bridge over the grassy bed of the Og, and leading nowhere, would seize an artist's fancy at once for its wealth of varied thatched roofing and general air of antiquity in front and gable end, and its entire rusticity. Tall elms cluster about it, too, and the rectory lurks somewhere near amid abounding foliage just off the street, while an attractive cottage residence, draped in creepers, marks a snugger, whence emanate from time to time essays and skits on social Arcady of an uncomplimentary and pessimistic nature with the farmer, the parson, and the labourer as the *dramatis personæ*.

As I turned down the village street one sunny morning last summer, the only sign of humanity in the whole length of it was a stout middle-aged gentleman pursuing the same course, whose air and dress suggested the representative of some prosperous London business-house. This glossy and exotic-looking person strengthened the presumption by answering my passing civility in a very fine Scotch accent, at which I marvelled greatly, wondering what possible scope for commercial enterprise on such an apparently ample scale Ogbourne St. George could offer. He asked me in good Glasgow-Scotch if I were a native of those parts, I said I had been once upon



a time, and liked to think I was still when on the soil. He then told me he was too; nay, even of this very Ogbourne itself, but had left it as a young man! I thought to myself he must have been young indeed! and I admit to a very considerable shock. For an adult native of Ogbourne, a very fount of purest Wiltshire, to divest himself of every trace of its most tenacious vernacular, and then to acquire the Doric in easy perfection is no mean lingual performance between five-and-twenty and fifty! But my friend was not commercial. He proved to be a successful musician, which accounts for his flexible treatment of intonations. We chatted for a few minutes on the bridge, over what ought to have been the Og, but was in fact a juvenile cricket pitch, and under the tall ash-trees that threw their shadows effectively on the stream, no doubt when there was one, but for the moment gave us welcome shade as the sun was waxing powerful. The ways of Ogbourne St. George are of a truth, not those of Caledonia, though one need hardly add that in the whole of that canny country you would not find a village comparable to it from a picturesque standpoint, and Ogbourne is but one of scores of such Wiltshire villages quite as engaging, and some much more so. It was given to me in early life to spend two years in very intimate association with Scottish agriculture, and the folks engaged therein, and then to come back with a jump to Wiltshire to similar operations on a well-known estate. I remember the shock of the seeming untidiness, the desultory look of everything that now pleases an eye long unused to regarding a landscape from such a material point of view. The prodigious contrast from the rectangular, weedless Lothian fields bursting with the maximum of produce; the close trimmed thorn hedges, the factory-like steadings with tall red chimneys of uniform-type covering the treeless landscape, the bustle and discipline of the labourers who at the same time never touched their hat, nor addressed their master in accents of respect, though he were chairman of all the Scottish agricultural societies; men who would have regarded you with contumely had you offered them a tip, who knew nothing of the joys of



the village ale-house, but at long intervals got drunk quietly on whisky, and remained drunk and invisible for two or three days ; serviceable, indomitable, mannerless, thrifty souls. How strange the Wiltshire yokel seemed again ! How almost courtier-like his manners as he offered to drink your health on every possible occasion at your expense, poor fellow, though he had by then, for I am speaking of the early seventies, achieved his eleven shillings a week, and under the inspirations of Arch, the once noted agitator, was striking all over the country for more. On our domain he struck, I remember, in the middle of harvest, and there was a great to-do. I can see the leader now, a great tall red-bearded fellow, haranging the rest in the field, and waving his fagging hook over his head. It was in the next year that Richard Jefferies made his first literary hit in an eloquent paper in the *Times* defending the Wiltshire farmer's attitude toward the labourer, writing from almost the next parish to Ogbourne and himself a farmer's son. Indeed I can myself just dimly remember the Wiltshire Hodge on his seven to eight shilling scale, and the less we say of the price of grain at that time perhaps the better.

The old vernacular resists modern progress, and the cockney schoolmaster as well, perhaps, in the Wiltshire villages as anywhere, though many of the archaic words have, of course, virtually died out. I do not suppose you would anywhere hear a great sequence of them nowadays. I doubt if any enraged Wiltshireman, for instance, would now exclaim, "I'll slat thy mazzard for'ee, thee caddlin 'usburd," though the several words will even yet be in casual use. The omission of the aspirate by the way, I am assured by the best authorities is degenerate Wiltshire of the last two or three generations, which is, of course, not the case either to the west or to the east. In support of this I may cite the evidence of a friend who is an expert on the subject, and distinctly remembers his mother, who was also one, complaining bitterly of her younger maid-servants thus sinning against their native speech. After all, it is by no means the actual words that make the spirit

of a dialect, important part of it though they be, but the intonation and pronunciation counts in a sense for almost more, and Wiltshire in this is absolutely unmistakable to those who know it.

A great many peculiarities of Wiltshire speech can of course be written, not only archaic words, but the misplacement of pronouns as, "her hit I; but us ain't goin' to touch she," for which the county has some outside notoriety. But it is the mouthing of the words that strike the familiar ear coming in sound of it again from any other, whether neighbouring or remote vernacular, though I need hardly remark that these things are not controlled by actual county boundaries. Precisely, how far the peculiar lilt reaches into West Berks, or even over the Hampshire line, I am not prepared to say, nor does it matter. On the other side it begins to change a little even before it touches Dorset, and I am pretty sure changes essentially before or about the edge of Gloucester. This elaboration, however, is unnecessary, nor is this quite the place to discuss the alterations that to the acuter ear become evident on the outer edge of West or South Wilts. The Rev. Edward Goddard, of Clyffe Pypard, the editor of the *Wilts Archæological Society's Journal*, and himself one of the closest students, as also, I may perhaps add, one of the most effective reproducers of Wiltshire dialect, is inclined to the theory that the eastern part of the county has eastern rather than south-western affiliations as regards its Saxon plantation. However that may be, a Wiltshireman says, "*I zced'n*"—in cold print a phrase by no means peculiar to the county—with an inflection I could myself detect in a moment from any other west or south countryman, while an old Wiltshire keeper's rendering of, "I m'r'r'kd 'un, zur; I m'rrk'd 'un," is entirely his own. No other south or west countryman gives the long, soft-drawling burr to the "r" with anything like the gusto of a Wiltshireman. The vowel which precedes it he treats in a fashion much his own, but he positively revels and exults in his "r's" while his rendering of the first person singular, if he is a true ancient, is quite unique.

I only know of one work of fiction in which the Wiltshire dialect has been treated by a sympathetic and skilful hand, namely, that of Mrs. Stephen Batson in her powerful novel of "Dark," which some ten or fifteen years ago made a considerable impression as a story. But the local colouring could of course appeal only to the few. The authoress was altogether of local connection, and as a clergyman's wife had the exceptional opportunities of her position. That the scene of it was laid just over the Berkshire border in the same down country is a mere detail for reasons already given. The title of the book was extremely happy, suggesting as it does a Wiltshire idiosyncrasy, namely, the sounding of "o" in certain words as "a." For Mrs. Batson's "Dark" has not, as the intending reader might imagine, any atmospheric significance, physical or social, but is merely the local abbreviation of the name of Dorcas, in this case the winsome and unfortunate daughter of a downland peasant.

I came across a fine figure of a Wiltshire shepherd one morning recently, standing out against the sky on the rampart of a British camp near Ogbourne, overlooking half the county. He was a quite ideal picture, his crook in his hand, his cloak beside him on the ground, and lying upon it a shaggy grey sheepdog, which eyed me suspiciously, while the steady crunching all around of what Thomson would have called his "fleecy care," was the only audible sound upon the waste. He most assuredly was not posing, for his condition I found was one of despair. "I've had a t'rr'ble misfart'n, zur, this marnin'" (he might have said "this marnin's marnin'," for that is good old Wiltshire), "I larst my bacca pouch." An unworthy distrust of human nature prompted the thought that he was as other degenerate mortals, and the picture for the moment lost some value. But I had a pleasant surprise, "No, zur, thank'ee kindly. 'Tain't the bacca, but the pouch; ma zon guv it I on my larst birthday. It's a turr'ble misfart'n I should ha larst'n." He would neither accept of, nor be comforted from my supplies, and after he had dwelt on the changes that had come over the country, in critical and pessimistic fashion, and with no

apparent thankfulness for the rise of sixty per cent. in wages, I left him still unconsoled.

The church here is a fine old building, half encircled by stately elms and other foliage, that just permit a glimpse of the grey roof of an adjacent manor-house. Above it is a hill-side crowned with wood, and above the wood the smooth high steep of the down. Founded as a priory by Maud of Wallingford, and attached to the Norman abbey of Bec, it was built about 1300, and boasts a massive lofty tower, entered from the interior by one of those high pointed arches so common in Wiltshire towers, a nave, chancel and north aisle, exhibiting both the perpendicular and decorated period and a clerestory with double-light trefoil windows. Here are Goddards of date 1517, a husband and wife with a troop of children, in brass on the pavement of a small chapel in the north aisle. The Goddards are an ancient family hereabouts; they have owned in their day many manors, and though long lost to this one, are still seated at Cliffe Pypard, beyond the downs. Their old Tudor manor-house, still standing here at Ogbourne, divided from the churchyard by towering trees and shut off from the village by almost monastic walls, has, like many other such houses, been in later generations the seat of mighty sheep farmers. Five seventeenth-century bells hang in the church tower, and fling their melody far over the surrounding wilds, one of them being thus engraven, "To be the leading bell to prayse and sing well, 1625."

This little village, too, was innocently a source of much vexation, for some centuries to the borough of Calne. For till quite recent times its burgesses had actually to travel hither thirteen miles, to be sworn in as members of their own corporation. This was a trifle humiliating, to say nothing of inconvenient, for a borough returning two members to Parliament. But through some exchange of land in Henry the Eighth's time, Calne came to be held of the manor of Wallingford, of which Ogbourne was the nearest court. So the tiresome practice had to be observed, till the House of Commons in modern times disposed of the monstrous anomaly. I was almost forgetting



the fact too, that a railroad from Marlborough to Swindon, has now this twenty years somewhat modified the Arcadian simplicity of the Og valley, though not quite so much, perhaps, as one might suppose. Indeed, the disturbance created by a secondary line, when once the navvies have gone, is a good deal exaggerated. There is plenty of room for this one here, at any rate, and much occasion. Four or five trains a day make their presence felt, for perhaps fifteen minutes in the twelve hours, and the rest is all ancient peace, except for the persistent motor, which from time to time sounds a louder and more frequent note, and is actually with us on the dusty highway.

Swindon in my youth, and to some extent even till this railway was built, was Marlborough's station for the West of England. In the former period a somewhat historic 'bus, indifferently horsed and freely utilized to its great delay by the intervening villages, made a laborious daily pilgrimage back and forth. The student of rural types might have spent much time in it to great profit, if not to great comfort, in those pristine days. It was the enterprise of a notable old Marlborough innkeeper of a commanding personality, which was deeply impregnated with the aroma of the coaching period, though all sense of the dash and punctuality of those stirring days had quite evaporated. The name of Jeremiah Hammond yet rings down the ages, and the service thus organized and maintained for a generation was colloquially known, and will be remembered by hundreds of greyheaded persons other than natives scattered about the world, as Jerry 'Ammond's' bus. The outward journey of thirteen miles, as a train had to be caught, was accomplished in spasmodic fashion within the two hours. But for the return trip, particularly on stormy winter nights, over this most exposed country, there were no such obligations, and public houses were, and still are, plentiful.

Now, throughout that whole period, and for long afterwards, certain vital branches of the organization of Marlborough College were managed, in an efficient and despotic manner, by one of those forcible and original persons whose like are no



more seen ; one of those characters whose passing seems at the time to tear up things by the roots and leave a gap that in practice may be adequately filled, but otherwise never. The immortal personage alluded to—immortal, that is to say in local annals—had come out of Devonshire, and retained the speech of that famous county with a laudable purity, on which neither an academic atmosphere on the one hand, nor a Wiltshire environment on the other, nor the prolonged cultivation of no mean mathematical and financial operations ever made the slightest impress. He was possessed too of that extreme rotundity of person, which in strong characters is a positive assistance to authority, and a round, rosy, spectacled face redolent of the autocrat, and the humourist. That he imparted mathematics to junior boys in a racy fashion, though he could doubtless have coached wranglers, is a mere detail. He was chiefly a man of affairs, commercial and financial, subordinate it is true, though my pen frames the word with difficulty and hesitation, but within his own province, which was an important one, a very autocrat of autocrats. His sallies became classic utterances, and many are embalmed on the printed pages of local history, though in cold print they lose the rich unspirited, Devonian, which was part of their merit, and of which it was said, the humourist himself was profoundly unconscious. Great in conscious rectitude and faithful, indispensable service, the most awe-inspiring head master had no terrors for him ; indeed, I have heard it said, that it was sometimes the other way. I believe he would have cracked his joke at the marquis, or even the bishop, had the opportunity offered. One of his duties, was to despatch the school for the holidays, arrange the transport to various stations, assess and distribute the journey money, and give Bradshaw instructions to such weaklings as needed it. That at such moments, he was often provoked to irritation by the stupidity, real, or I fear often feigned, of importunate and eager youths, putting what, to him, appeared the insensate question of how they were to get to Swindon, was natural. Quite early in his day, he adopted a crushing formula, which pointed out that there were two

alternative routes, one by way of Savernake station and Timbuctoo, the other by Jerry 'Ammond's 'bus, and the latter, though not speedy, he recommended as the best. This was ultimately embalmed in verse, which may still be found printed in Marlburian archives for those who have not cause to remember it.

“Two ways there are to Swindon,  
One is by Timbuctue,  
And one by Jerry 'Ammond's 'bus ;  
Which one will you pursue ?”

He was responsible at any rate for the disrespectful abbreviation of Mr. Jeremiah Hammond's omnibus service to Swindon, which clung to it throughout the brave days of old.

Away to the right and east of this Swindon road and railroad, between these and the long beautiful trough of Aldbourne Chase which runs parallel to them, is a strange unfrequented region of steep hill and dale, threaded by tortuous flinty lanes ; a tillage country once, but now of somewhat derelict, uncared-for appearance. Decrepit unlovely cottages look across at one another from windy hilltops, and suggest in their appearance the near approach of their dissolution. Their inhabitants, for whose services there would seem no longer to be much local demand, appear quite resigned to this probability. Indeed a poorish tract, bought up in great part as a commercial speculation at commensurate prices and laid down to grass, does not make, perhaps, for a smiling peasantry.

For an exploration of this back country it is necessary to climb the down above Ogbourne, and then traverse much common land bristling with gorse, blackberry, and thorn trees. Nobody by any chance, however, ever does such a thing except the doctor, and I have heard him describe the joys of a winter night's pilgrimage into the heart of it. I should not be involved in its mazes now ; but for the fact of a solitary manor-house, set deep in their heart—a house which boasts a prodigious weight of years and of having been actually a hunting-seat of John of Gaunt. The guide-books know it not ; few people even in Marlborough, five or six miles away,

have any knowledge of its existence, nor indeed, for that matter, had I myself till quite recently. A rustic in Ogbourne told me he had been there when he was a boy, but with the help of the despondent occupants of one of the decadent cottages within its neighbourhood, I eventually found myself in a deep combe, where a fine old red-brick farmhouse with generous outbuildings, lay picturesquely slumbering. My lane, indeed, came to an end here, as I had been warned it would; but at the same time given to understand that John of Gaunt's hunting-box, otherwise Upper Upham, could be reached by a further ten minutes' walk across the fields.

There were no stock in these yards, however, nor in the surrounding pastures, nor any sign of human or animal life. On approaching the house, instead of a Wiltshire farmer I found the graduate of an American agricultural college in his shirt sleeves as the sole occupant, and then I began to realize that the whole immediate neighbourhood was covered with cocks and hens. There were four thousand birds there, the tenant told me, and till the demand of London hotels had thinned them there had been six thousand. There were, moreover, a dozen or so incubators in the great empty barn, so often, no doubt, in former days crammed to bursting with grain. The industry was conducted on American labour-saving principles, that is to say, the boss, with a young son and another boy did all the work, instead of four or five men and two or three women. There are still parts of Wiltshire, and yet larger parts of Sussex and Kent where it is thought necessary to employ four horses, a man, and a boy to plough three-quarters of an acre six inches deep in a day. Yet a hundred and forty years ago, Arthur Young, fresh from the stiff clays, too, of his own estate of Bradfield in Suffolk, which I know well, having frequently shot over it, stood up in his stirrups and called Heaven to witness such a deplorable and to him unprecedented spectacle.

A short mile up a long grassy ridge brought me to a lane, and thence on to a small green, where was a pond, a cottage or two, and the ancient little manor-house of Upper Upham

standing forlorn and only removed from the road by a square of turf. The fabric of the house is, I believe, of undoubted fourteenth-century date, and John of Gaunt did actually spend a good deal of time here, as Aldbourne Chase immediately below was a famous sporting ground of kings. Built of sarsen stone and flint, it has projecting, gabled, and mullioned windows, upper and lower, on both sides of its lofty two-storied porch, besides two or three equally ancient windows of irregular size flush with the wall, and is altogether a most striking-looking old house to be confronted with in so strange and remote a situation. This manor also fell into the hands of the Goddards. Now, however, it is quite uncared for, and though till recently the home of large farmers, a labourer's family at present inhabits the lower rooms. There is scarcely anything in the way of interior decoration but a curious fireplace. Yet, in spite of relentless lath and plaster, concealing we know not what, a gloomy mediæval spirit exudes even through the whitewash. I have never been in an old house so forbidding and so ghost-like in its plain interior, and the projecting Tudor windows failed for once to let in light or to relieve the eeriness of the cavernous rooms. I noticed incidentally two names scratched on a window and dated 1791, which appealed to me somehow, even though the walls were raised four centuries before that.

From Ogbourne the Swindon road breaks out on to the open upland between the bordering ranges of down, and with the precision of a Roman highway, which in fact at this stage it actually is, follows in switchback fashion a direct course to the northern brink of the Wiltshire downland. And all around, swelling upward to either foot of the flanking hills, is a treeless, fenceless country, rich in June with the chequered colours of growing crops. The wheat is ablaze with the golden bloom of the charlock, while the brilliant purple of the sanfoin, even more frequent nowadays than of old, illumines these Wiltshire landscapes in early summer with wonderful effects, till the folded sheep eat their slow way through it. The rooks are here on freshly stirred turnip land, or flapping



round the sheepfolds in great flocks, and the ubiquitous starlings, in numbers which would seem to increase with every year, are about in huge packs, while the young blackbirds and thrushes are still floundering around the spot where they were hatched. Indeed, one never shakes off the starling short of a grouse moor, and not always even there. He seems equally at home and equally in evidence on a British camp eight hundred feet above the sea, or in a walled garden, or an ox pasture in the fens. Climate, soil, and altitude seem to his happy, sociable disposition a matter of absolute indifference, and with his short wings and partridge-like flight he is scarcely ever out of sight. Here, too, plovers wheel around the bleak birthplace of the Og, and wood-pigeons break constantly from the still verdant grain fields.

The ancient and important village of Chiseldon clings to the steep where the wilder upland at last drops into the plain. But the descent is broken into combs and hollows, around which the village straggles in irregular and picturesque fashion, and, as beseems so ancient an abiding-place, is well garnished with foliage and with residences of some pretension not built nor planted yesterday. The church stands well lifted up, and is of ample proportions, with tower, nave, side-aisle, and chancel. The walls of the latter are quite covered with tablets to the Calley family, who, like the Goddards, have been leading people hereabouts for several centuries, and are still seated at Burderop park, a mile or so distant. The body of the church is profusely adorned with the records of past Chiseldonians, but otherwise containing nothing of especial interest to the stranger.

But before turning down the short road to Chiseldon, and certainly before descending from the high country, it would be well to traverse the brink of the ridge eastward for a mile or so, and climb the steep face of the high down to the summit of Liddington castle. One of those ancient redoubts that crown the summit of almost every salient point on the Wiltshire downs, Liddington is among the more notable; not merely because it is encircled by a rampart forty feet high, enclosing



eight acres, but for its superb position, both from a scenic and strategic standpoint. From its summit you look out to the north and north-west over miles of a well-wooded grass country, over modern Swindon straggling red and garish behind its ancient and once obscure market town, over High-worth, slumbering on its lofty perch above the wood-muffled plain eight miles away, over Wootton Bassett equidistant to the westward, similarly uplifted and only less picturesque in its Arcadian tranquillity. These, however, are but landmarks of the middle distance. In the dimmer levels beyond, the infant Thames is running its course just within the bounds of Wiltshire through Cricklade and Castle Eaton and Kempsford and out again by way of Gloucestershire, the county of its birth, to the more familiar and broader streams of Lechlade. The whole vale of the White Horse lies spread beneath us to the eastward, while the down rampart on which we stand goes sweeping along and above it far into Berkshire; the White Horse itself, greatest and most eccentric and most ancient of all white horses, careering on their northern slope some half-dozen miles away, but from here invisible. To the south, the whole solitary expanse of the Marlborough downs waves away to distant Martinsell, and to the yet remoter heights of Tanhill and Roundaway above Devizes, and of Oldborough camp above Calne, with the Lansdowne column faintly traced like a needle against the sky; while only five miles away the sister fortress to this one, that of Barbary, with its dark clump of beeches, stands finely up above the plain.

Residential values have shifted about since this mighty trench was dug round Liddington. Nowadays these chalk uplands are comparative solitudes. When the Romans landed they were the centre of population, and no wonder. Some acquaintance with primæval forests, beyond a doubt, helps one to realize primitive England, for nothing like the real thing has, of course, been possible for centuries in the whole island. One may speak of Savernake, which stands, moreover, on dry and elevated ground, as a primitive forest, a mediæval chase,

with more or less truth ; but that is quite different from a primæval forest where trees grew up and tumbled down over each other, and fresh trees grew up amid the chaos of rotting trunks, choking everything and damming up the rivers. Population was too thick and too skilful, and wanted fire-wood and building timber too much in the middle ages for the survival of the dense tangle of really primitive times. A modified forest, too, was almost necessary for the enjoyment of the chase in mediæval times. King John could pursue the stag with horse and hound through the Savernake forest of his day ; but, probably, could not have travelled fifty yards in the vale of the White Horse or through the present midlands at the time of the Christian era. When most of low country England was a true forest primæval abounding in wild animals, one can well understand the ill-equipped Briton preferring to take up his residence and do his farming on the downs, whose dry and boundless sward must have been a luxury far out-weighing a low temperature, a superfluity of east wind in March, and a lack of shade in summer. For though the downland may have carried more timber than now, it must have been light and easily removed, if indeed it did ever actually flourish. But the trackless forest below must have been terrible to men who had only stone or even bronze weapons, save where tidal rivers and sea-going commerce invited here and there a close settlement.

Whether too much company and too continuous friction on the chalk uplands drove some poor devils into the shaggy, beast haunted woods we may not know. Whether like certain North Welsh squires in comparatively recent times, who migrated because they would either have to kill or be killed by their relations, any of these early Britons sought a doubtful peace in the wilderness for like motives is uncertain. But it is evident enough that the downs and other treeless paradises were in great demand, and were the main seat of the joys, the sorrows, the industries, the struggles, and the religion of these, to us, mysterious folk. One has to suppose that the greater part of the Marlborough downs at the coming of the Romans

was occupied by people of a different stock from those who held their southern fringe and Salisbury Plain with much more besides, for the Wansdyke ploughs its gigantic furrow westward from Savernake forest to the heights above Calne, and the Wansdyke is generally held to be the northern boundary of the immigrant Belgæ, though this, of course, opens a thorny question and lies in the tilting ground of antiquaries.

There is no reason, however, to suppose that the tribes who fed their sheep and cattle, and ploughed their patches of grainland on these wastes, had not their share of domestic felicity. It is more than likely that they observed the courtesies of life to one another, and in times of peace were individually perhaps safer than a Texas or Montana sheep man a few years ago would have been from his neighbour who ran cattle. The tribal system in all countries deprecated domestic lawlessness. It could not afford that fighting men should fall on one another, and took effective and stringent means for creating a brotherly spirit.

But, turning again to present times, many readers, I am sure, will find it pleasant hearing that this solitary height of Liddington, with its adjacent group of wind-swept firs, was a favourite haunt of that strange and hapless genius, Richard Jefferies, whose home at Coate lies within easy sight in the plain below. I have noticed of late some impatience among the critics of literary ramblers, who find their chief inspiration in the haunts of second-rate and comparatively obscure writers. But Jefferies was a son of the soil, and his work, that is the best of his work, was inspired by and actually concerned this native soil of his, and whatever he may have been he was not a second-rater. Those who have read that singular revelation, that final effort to explain himself, not long before he died, "The Story of my Heart," will remember, or rather, not being locals may need be told, that it was on these grass-grown ramparts of Liddington that he used to lie, as he tells us, face downwards on the turf, or face upwards to the sky, or gazing, as we more normal folk do, with rapture





COTTAGE AT ALDBOURNE



on the glorious prospect around. But somewhat more will be said of Jefferies later.

A few minutes walk from here, over the shoulder of the down, will open to view the whole of that long, smooth, and elevated trough, known as Aldbourne Chase. From its dip into the low country beneath Liddington camp, it runs backward through the hills in a southerly course, parallel with the Og valley as far as the village of Aldbourne, four miles away. No streams water it, and the unfenced road, like a white tape, waves along the centre of the green vale in gentle undulations, passing but two or three isolated homesteads, that between them, no doubt, control the long sweeps of pasture and occasional tillage, that on either side rise gently to the foot of the flanking downs. A famous warren was this too in ancient times. "There were not such conies in all England," says Aubrey, as well as a notable haunt for taller game much cherished by Royal sportsmen.

Two days before the first battle of Newbury, the royalist cavalry, on their way thither encountered here in several skirmishes of an undecisive nature, the new London levies, under Essex, who lay at Hungerford. In one of them a parliamentary officer captured the Marquis de Vienville, son of the Lord High Marechall of France, who was on a brief mission to the king, and took part in the fight for his own entertainment. The Frenchman had been granted quarter and was being led away by his captor, when he suddenly drew a pistol and shot him. The wounded Englishman, however, had sufficient strength to swing his pole-axe, which he did, with such effect as to cleave the skull of the treacherous marquis in twain. In 1815, during the construction of this very road, sixty skeletons, the victims of these encounters, were exhumed just south of the village, bearing traces of promiscuous and hasty burial in a common grave, being only covered by some two feet of earth.

The village of Aldbourne is well worth a visit for itself alone. Lying snugly, embosomed in foliage among the hills, and remote from main roads or railways, it yet is, and looks, a

village of distinction, not merely a picturesque roadway of labourers' cottages, a vicarage, and a church. A fine old brick homestead or two, flanked by huge barns and shadowed with elms, front the curving street, which, in its gabled and often roomy houses suggests past ambitions beyond those of ten shillings a week. Its inns, too, are such as a large farmer's dog-cart might be seen standing by while the owner clinked glasses with the district auctioneer in a snug parlour. There is also a wide village green, around which are set some modest but bowery habitations, such as a retiring townsman dreams of, as well as an ambitious pond, and an old village cross. Above all, standing high in the centre, amid a large, well-kept graveyard, bristling with tombs and monuments, there is a stately perpendicular church, with a massive and beautiful tower, profusely buttressed to a great elevation at each corner, and decorated with some wonderful gargoyle water-spouts. The exterior of the body of the church is almost aggressively crenelated; indeed, this symbol of the perpendicular period is so insistent in Wiltshire one gets somewhat wearied of it. Almost all the churches in North Wilts are of this style in origin or in early restoration. The great prosperity and increase in the wool export trade at that time, by which this county, of course, benefited above the common, is, I believe, the cause of this not altogether pleasing uniformity. The interior of Aldbourne church, however, is varied as well as imposing. Its double row of transition Norman arches, show both plain and decorated mouldings, both square pillars and round, and there is a handsome oak roof with carved human heads on the corbels from which it springs. The lofty pointed arch which enters the tower is lavish of mouldings, and a large perpendicular window lights the west end. There is also a finely carved oak pulpit; but what interested me, as much, perhaps, as any of these things, were some extraordinary Tudor monuments on the south aisle, next the chancel; a row of effigies male and female, kneeling on cushions, the former gorgeous in coat armour, and with moustachios pointed upwards in a truculent fashion that would delight the German Emperor.

These are more representatives of the prolific family of Goddard. In a chapel on the north side the once famous Wiltshire family of Walrond are represented in stone by two bearded brothers, of the respective ages of ninety-six and eighty-four, who died in 1617, and kneel at their devotions in plate armour. One of them was probably the grandfather of a youthful sportsman, who at that time was killed by a stag in Savernake forest while hunting with James the First. This young man's sister, who was in the suite of Lord Hertford at Savernake, had also an adventure during the king's visit there, in which his Majesty took a not over-courteous part. She had feigned, for some time, to be bewitched, and would endure in her seizures that pins should be thrust into her flesh, or even under her nails. King James, who had just written a book on "Demonology," and regarded himself as an authority on the subject, was taken to see her when in this condition, and to witness the torturing performances. The room was full of company, and he proved too many for her; "for his Majesty," says Aubrey, "gave a sudden pluck to her coats, and tossed them over her head, which surprise made her immediately start, and detected the cheat."

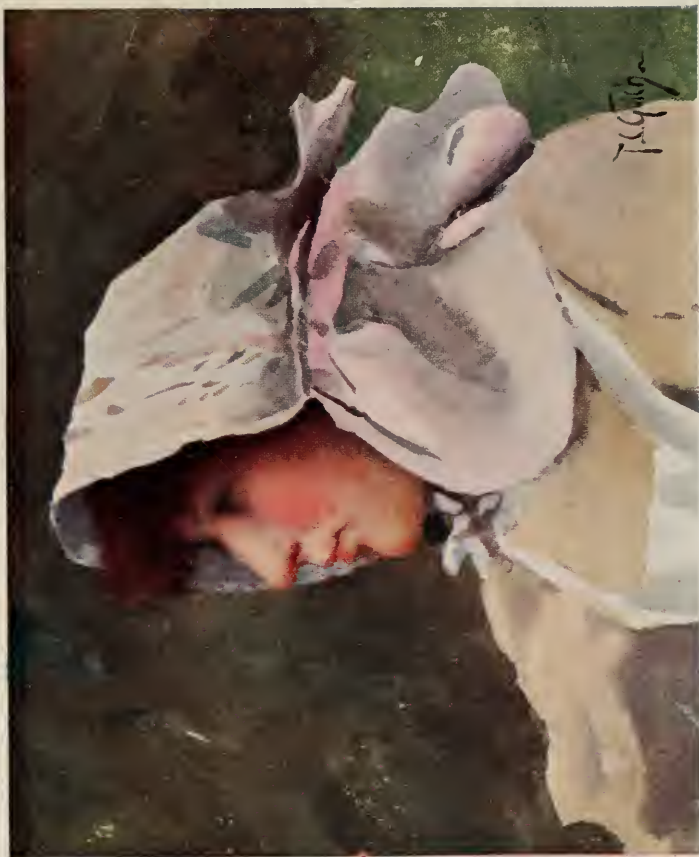
I have called Aldbourne a village, but it is one of those dignified villages that in other days might well have posed as a town, and doubtless did. Within my memory, it boasted two curious industries, both now defunct, or nearly so. One was willow-plaiting, for the decoration of fireplaces in summer-time; the other, straw-plaiting in squares for exportation to the hat manufacturers. Aldbourne, too, was noted in my youth for its feast—its "veast;" the afternoons of which were devoted to athletic contests among the natives, and still, I am told, it celebrates that function, though with, perhaps, diminished ardour.

The most conspicuous object in the foreground of the vale of Swindon, from the top of Liddington, is Wanborough church, two miles away. It stands on the brink of a second ledge, which, lying between the actual down foot and the true low ground, widens considerably as it travels westward, and

about Bicknoll Castle and Cliffe Pypard drops to the plain, almost as precipitously as the walls of the downs themselves. This is known to geologists as the "lower chalk." But Wanborough, or Woden's burgh, was, in Saxon times, a chief protection of Wessex, and Roman roads, from all directions, from Silchester and Salisbury, from Winchester and Oxford, converged to this point. Two great and bloody battles were fought here; one in 591, in which Ceawlin, King of Wessex, was defeated by his nephew, Ceolric, and another in 714, between Wessex and Mercia, with no result to either side but great slaughter. One may remember, too, that Ashdown, where Alfred inflicted his historic defeat on the Danes upon these downs, is not a dozen miles away. Indeed, a course of Freeman and the Saxon Chronicle might well be recommended to the intending Rambler in this down-country.

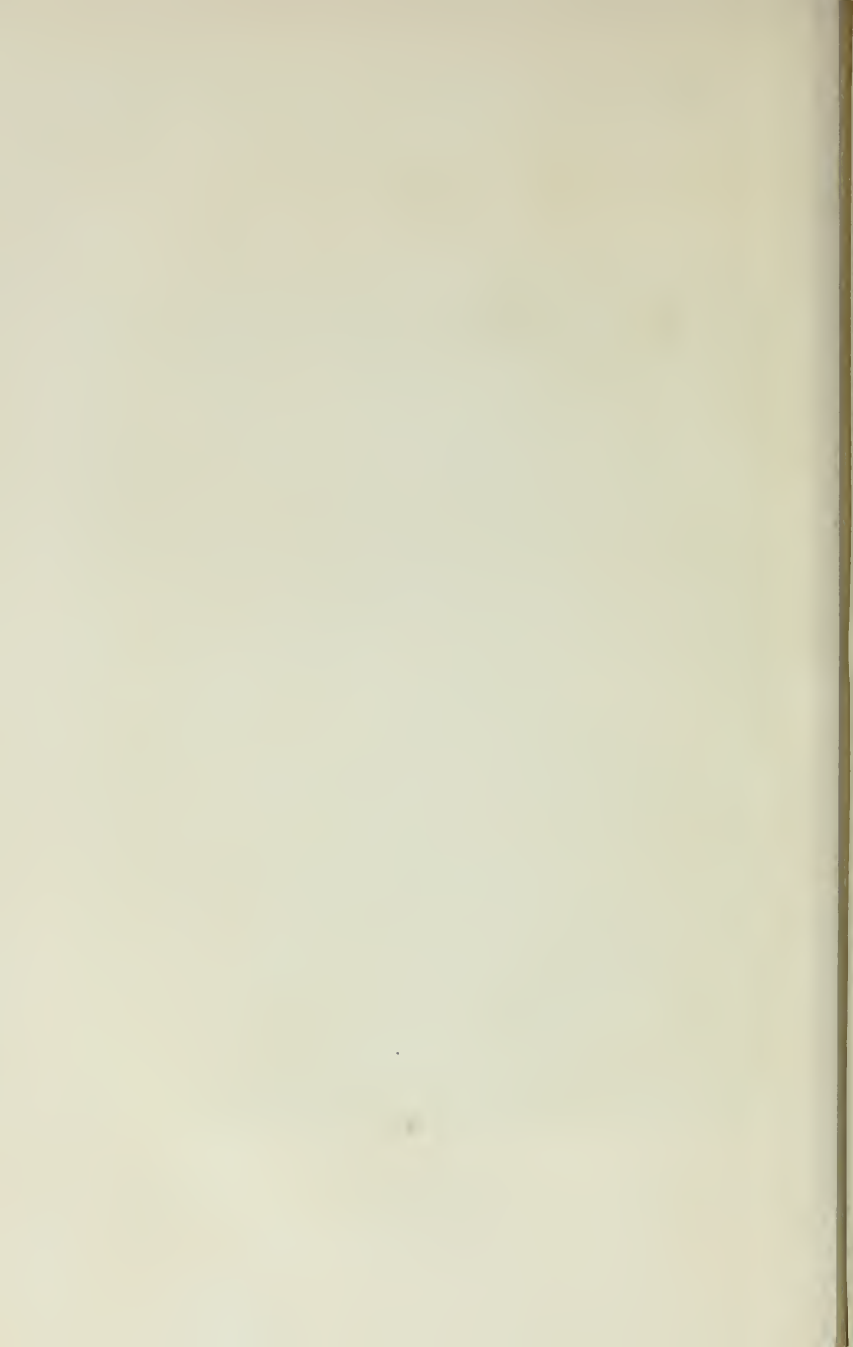
Wanborough church is in itself imposing and interesting, but is greatly glorified by its commanding site. Its lofty square tower, of fifteenth-century date, was apparently causing anxiety to the authorities, and was being under-pinned when I was last there, and as it was only built of rubble, with a thin layer of stone laid over it, such settlement seems less surprising. Though there is nothing particular in the interior of the church to give us pause, I must not omit one curious external feature, namely, a slender stone spire with dormers, erected earlier than the tower, on the east gable of the nave. Its appearance is much more eccentric than engaging, and there is an impossible local legend of two lady builders, one of whom determined to have a tower, while the other insisted on a spire; the quarrel being ultimately settled by having both. There are, however, one or two other examples of this in Wiltshire. In the church porch I observed a notice, to the effect that "all females are requested to take off their pattens on entering the door," a relic, no doubt, of a less fashionable rural age.

The small village of Wanborough has one or two remarkable old houses, and the most remarkable modern one I think I have ever seen fronting a quiet English by-way. It



A SUNBONNET





belongs to the ambitious villa class, and is a medley of tiles, parti-coloured timber, coloured glass, models of wooden knights, lance in rest, and other curious contrivances, and a wooden tower. It suggests the notion that a local carpenter had got Scott's novels and the "Arabian Nights" very badly on the brain, and had set to work to illustrate them both in a single masterpiece, with such materials as the parish provided. This surprising edifice on the village street is guarded by two stone lions, who cannot, however, intimidate the fierce storms from the downs, that have used its exotic splendour somewhat hardly, and made it look a little seedy. The villagers have long outgrown the wonderment it must have originally caused, and told me its story, which I have forgotten, without any emotion. A notice-board intimated the fact that for the moment it was without either a crusader or an Eastern caliph in possession, but was advertising for one. Wanborough, says a seventeenth-century writer, was frequented by the neighbouring gentry for revelling and horse-racing. I am quite sure no such reproach could be thrown at it nowadays.

Returning by a lower road to the main Swindon highway, one passes through Liddington and Badbury villages; the latter a delightful umbrageous spot, replete with brightly tinted cottages, all heavily laden with massive hoods of neatly braided thatch, while a small stone manor-house fronts the deep lane, and little patches of garden blaze brightly behind old-fashioned hedges of clipped box. Emerging out on to the highway again, below Chiseldon, and heading for Swindon, two or three miles of level and somewhat solitary tree-bordered road brings you at length before a plain, unobtrusive oblong brick farm-house of six or eight rooms, standing a few yards back, behind a hedge enclosure. On the entrance gate a tablet is affixed, proclaiming that this was the home of Richard Jefferies; a fact, in the most complete and literal sense, for it was the freehold property, with the farm attached, of his father and his ancestors, and wherein he lived himself, till long after he had reached man's estate. The fields around and the downs rising two or three miles away from which we have just descended, and the

reservoir nearly a mile long, which lies behind the house, were the actual materials which fed his imagination, and provided the nature portraits by which he will doubtless live. Though he was drawn, after marriage, by the possibilities of money and fame, to the neighbourhood of London, in whose inner or outer suburbs, and occasionally in places further afield, he made the most of such nature as was left about him. The modest roadside farmhouse at Coate, which then, I think, had a thatched roof, was a familiar landmark to me from childhood, as it was, no doubt, to every one who travelled the Marlborough and Swindon road, for the simple reason that landmarks were few, and a road you travel frequently, to catch trains, and not for the good of your health, or the enjoyment of scenery, though these advantages may often be incidentals, arranges itself in such stages with peculiar clarity.

Whether as a child in a coach, to whom two hours seemed all eternity, or, in after years, driving one's own horse with an interest in its movements, these punctuations of the highway remain unforgettable, and the solitary house at Coate was one of them to me. How little I thought, six or eight years afterwards, while reading at the other end of the world those articles in the *Pall Mall*, entitled "The Gamekeeper at Home" and "Wild Life in a Southern County," that the writer was the son of the farmer at that familiar but somewhat insignificant farmhouse, set alone on the Swindon road. These papers told of a down country, but with no direct hint of locality, while the classification of the author puzzled me, as it no doubt did everybody else, not a little. How far were any of us from guessing, in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, of the strange genius, boy and man, who was ranging somewhere about our path as we whisked along, or writing hopeless romances in that homely roadside house, with its orchard, garden, and background of trees, so often passed and repassed in the way of travel, as you pass a milestone.

Richard Jefferies is a very big subject ; neither is he a man who was or is popular with the crowd. Probably a great many people, without any pretensions to literary discrimination, read

him, and still read him with real pleasure. Among the more discerning, there are, I presume, no two opinions regarding his powers, the remarkable nature of his inspirations, the originality of his mind, the tragedy of his life. Outside these admissions, which alone entitle him to a more conspicuous place, in a vulgar sense, than he enjoys, there are, I fancy, considerable differences. No mean following regard him as immortal; at any rate, as a native prophet and interpreter, matchless in his generation. They find no jar in the elaboration of detail which to others is somewhat of a blemish, though it may not seriously impair their sympathy and admiration for the divine spark that burned so brightly in his gifted mind, and was extinguished all too soon and in such unutterable gloom. Whatever be the precise place of Jefferies, there is no doubt whatever but that he was unique. Though he has been compared to Thoreau, the analogy is very far indeed from being complete. The points that jar upon even the sympathetic countryman in Jefferies will often not be obvious to the townsman, who is apt to accept the ordinary commonplaces of country life, sprinkled about among Jefferies' more occult observations, as all of a piece, and of like inspiration. These everyday truisms embodied among the rest, and imparted with the same slightly didactic air which pervaded some of his nature essays, proved a little disconcerting to the most appreciative readers of rural habit. But this, after all, is nothing, and his personality was, in truth, an extraordinary one.

The son of a respectably educated intelligent yeoman; the descendant on both sides of undistinguished yeoman stock, a soul found its way into Jefferies' body from sources which may well have baffled the family genealogist and upset the calculations of heredity. From childhood he was an incorrigible dreamer in those woods and fields with which his class are so materially intimate, but for this very reason so generally deaf to the sort of voices in which they speak to less habitual acquaintances. But they held Jefferies under as powerful a spell as they held Wordsworth, though the former's knowledge was of course much more technical of the earth and all that

pertained to it. He was naturally familiar with farming, and wrote eloquently upon the subject ; but seems to have had but little instinct for its practice. In short, he came into the world with a message, though it had hard enough struggles to reach the light. He played no games, though he was a sportsman in a solitary, desultory sort of way, and he had no friends, but roamed the fields alone, absorbed in everything on the earth beneath and the heavens above him, noticing the most minute things, and thinking marvellous thoughts. A heaven-born naturalist as well as a philosopher, he was in a strict sense neither botanist nor ornithologist. Though he dreamed on Liddington Castle of the men who had cast it up and of primitive England, even to the extent of writing a book about it ("After London"), I do not think he had any of that technical knowledge of ancient monuments and races with which so many of his fellow-countrymen concern themselves. The literary bent forced itself out in his teens, and he became quite early a reporter on a Swindon paper. He also wrote little tales, very bad ones, a history of the Goddard family, and a quite practical little book on newspaper reporting.

The *Cacoëthes scribendi* was now fully upon him, though he continued to roam the country in every spare hour, a tall, rather good-looking, brown-bearded man of loose limbs ; unathletic but enduring, absolutely unsociable, utterly misunderstood, and known as "mad Dick Jefferies" by the rustic youth of his acquaintance. From short stories he proceeded to novel writing, for which he had not the faintest gift nor any equipment, though he persisted in his delusion to the contrary till he had wasted years in writing strange productions that no publishers would accept. His literary qualities, however, seem to have made themselves apparent to some, as we may well believe, in spite of the fantastic dukes and marquises whom, by some strange fatuity, he fancied in his ignorance of the world that he could paint.

In 1873, as already mentioned, he made a hit in the *Times* with one or two articles on labourers and farmers, that inspired a leading article under the impression that a sagacious



middle-aged Wiltshire farmer had dropped words of exceptional wisdom, unusually well arranged into Printing House Square. Wiseacres say that he missed his chance in life by not following it up; but, be this as it may, he certainly erred woefully in his continued devotion to hopeless fiction, that went its weary circuit of publishers year after year, some of whose readers must however have been no little astonished at the eloquent English and fine abstract thoughts embodied among plots and people of a conception almost childish. At last he published a book or two at his own expense, and lost all his savings, as the volumes fell almost still-born from the press. On the strength of a small income, derived from his reporting work and from fugitive papers that began to find their way into the London Reviews, he married the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, and after a few months at the parental homestead, which, by the way, did not prosper, settled in Swindon.

His papers now began to attract so much notice that he moved in 1877 to the neighbourhood of London, and then with "The Gamekeeper at Home," published soon after in book form, followed by the other well-known works of the same type, he appeared to have laid the foundations of real success. He at any rate made enough to support the simple and almost isolated life that he and his wife lived, and even managed to save a little. He courted no society, and when not writing or reading was ranging the country round. He had now, however, found his mission, and wrote only on these subjects, in which he had no rival. His essays collected from time to time in book form brought him very little, and in his ignorance of the world this caused him much bitterness of soul. He could not understand that the praise of the critics did not mean of necessity the patronage of the multitude, and that in some ways he was writing too much above the heads of the public for financial success, unless the public could be persuaded that it was the correct thing to read him. He was a prose poet, thinker, and philosopher, and some of his books will doubtless live, or should do so, but they did not sell to

much advantage. The articles of which they were composed, however, provided him with a sufficiency, till an illness of a painful, indefinable, internal kind struck him, and after four years of poverty, though happily not of actual want and of labour under almost continuous torture, killed him in 1887, and cut off in his prime the most original genius of his generation.

He was not buried in his native county, but at Broadwater. His bust has been placed in Salisbury cathedral, and the tablet, already mentioned, on Coate Farm. But I am afraid the natives do not as yet know that delectable country between Swindon and Marlborough as "Jefferies land," though literary gentlemen in London have solemnly rechristened it thus many times and foretold in effect that there would be no further use for old definitions and local nomenclature; that Coate and Wanborough, Badbury and Chiseldon, Liddington and the Ogbournes would lose their identity and become merged in the name of Jefferies to the greater glory of the squire and the parson, the shepherd, and the sheep farmer of those parts. Oh! innocent aliens of the world of cities, who thus love to partition England into a sort of heptarchy sacred to the personality of their favourite modern authors. What a painful surprise these visits to the land of the prophet must sometimes be when it is discovered how little of a prophet he is in the kingdom that has been made over to him, and that the minds of the unenlightened are obstinately stored with memories of the old squire's father, or the late marquis, or entirely occupied with politics, or the price of sheep. The enlightened with imaginations have the stirring memories of a thousand years around them, sometimes at their finger ends, and the monuments, let us say to be safe, of four thousand confronting them, and resent being handed over to new gods by strangers, none the less, perhaps, if the god be a product of their own time and soil. The subtle quality of Jefferies' work makes it inevitable that he should be even less of a prophet among his own countrymen than even a popular novelist. It is possible that their grandchildren and great grandchildren will hold him

in greater honour, but who can say? Wiltshire may even then be still in the joint possession of John Aubrey and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and the band of later antiquarians already canonized, and with that reasonable hope of local immortality to which the more distinguished labourers in such fields may look above all other men. It is enough for the present that the disciples of Jefferies have his best books, and those who would become so can now acquire them in cheap editions. For those more curious about his upbringing an almost literal account of it will be found in the so-called novel, but most engaging book, "Amaryllis at the Fair." The story, such as it is, leaves off suddenly, and the characters melt away into obscurity; but the picture of the life at Coate is worth reading for that alone, and as a study is in parts not unworthy of his best work.

## CHAPTER V

### SWINDON TO AVEBURY

**B**EFORE the days of railroads, Swindon, now known as Old Swindon, was a modest market town of some two thousand souls. It stands on the edge of the broad terrace below the downs, and with the tall spire of its rebuilt parish church looking far over the surrounding country, retains some measure of individuality, in spite of the populous new town of some forty thousand employees of the Great Western Railway and their belongings, which has gradually crept up from the station below and drawn it within its busy toils. The middle-aged among us have witnessed this transformation, and seen the green pastures that used to slope down for a mile or so to the railroad, as well as much more besides, covered with streets and houses. Yet even while all this was in active progress, Swindon, to most of the world, meant nothing more than a refreshment-room and a scramble for soup and sandwiches, chops, and tea. It is no longer a refreshment-room in the national sense, and has to be content with the narrower but more enduring fame of being much the largest town in Wiltshire. We might linger over the story of the old town, or even yet rummage up some old buildings, or might relate how the ancient manor belonged to the Talbots of Goderich castle in the Welsh marches and their predecessors for centuries, how in 1560 it was purchased by Mr. Goddard of Upham, with a charter for the holding of weekly markets and two annual fairs, and, indeed, that same family are still lords of the manor, and have a handsome residence in the town. I might also tell how part of New Swindon now stands on what

seventy or eighty years ago were quagmires, which the natives, avoiding as highly dangerous, called quaving-gogs, showing thereby that a Wiltshire man could displace his consonants with as much facility as his vowels. On a summer's afternoon, within the peaceful seclusion of the Goddard Arms, we might even imagine ourselves back again in the past ; or again on a market-day, when beeves and sheep gather from the vale or down, and farmers and dealers jostle one another in greater force, no doubt, than ever, in the somewhat modernized trysting place, forget for a moment the busy red-brick city of brain, muscle, and sinew that has pushed itself into the very vitals of the once sleepy little town.

But it will not do ! An exotic and modern atmosphere now pervades the whole place. It is not even the Swindon which witnessed Jerry Hammond's 'bus from Marlborough lurching through it so assiduously, and plunging down through a mile of leafy lane to the station. It is still in Wiltshire, but no longer of it from our present point of view ; a cosmopolitan place, well built, clean, industrious, and no doubt contented. There we will leave it, and take a short leap eastward before turning our faces to the setting sun.

Now Highworth lies about six miles away, and can be seen clustering on its high ridge from almost any point. It is to-day the antithesis of Swindon ; it was once a more than successful rival, till the plague of 1666 upset the equilibrium, and gave the town of the Goddards a permanent advantage over the borough of the St. Johns. You may go there by a small branch railway, which takes forty-five minutes to achieve the outward six miles, and constitutes Bradshaw's record for leisurely travel, or, if in a hurry, you may mount a cycle and pursue a broad highway between hedges and elm trees, and pastures yellow with buttercups, to the foot of the long steep on which the town is perched. Highworth boasts two thousand souls and a picturesque appearance. Its single short street retains a few ancient houses that still catch the eye, and many whose age has been obscured by later alterations, while in the outskirts there are several peaceful



residences, that whether old or Georgian matters little, for the pleasant leafy seclusion in which they have enfolded themselves. We are now too well out into the stone country. At Swindon a deposit of Purbeck limestone has been steadily quarried and shipped for two hundred and fifty years, while the freestone quarries of North-West Wilts are popular with builders in every part of Southern England. The ruddy brown and tawny grey stone houses with their flagged roofs, so familiar in the Cotswold and Cirencester country, begin here to displace the flint and sarsen, the brick and timber, or timber and wattle common in those of the rest of Wiltshire.

Highworth, in Doomsday, was in the royal demesne, and in the halcyon days of small boroughs, returned one or more members to Parliament. Its lords were for a long time the St. Johns of Lydiard Tregoz, of whom more anon. Its church was turned into a fortress by the king's friends during the Civil War, but was captured by Fairfax on his march to the West from Naseby. Soon afterwards there was something of a fight here, and Highworth, like so many other scenes of that bitter strife, has in recent times unearthed its store of skeletons. Its perpendicular church has a lofty tower with quaint figures of animals grimacing at each angle, a nave, side aisles with pointed arches, and a chancel. Its monumental interest centres in a chapel at the south side, belonging to the Warneford family, of Sevenhampton, a mile or two distant, where on upright slabs its various members are commemorated from the year 1649 to 1904, the armour some of them wore being still suspended above them.

Where the street terminates at the eastern edge of the ridge, there is a fine outlook over the Berkshire side of the valley of the Upper Thames, with the wooded parklands of Coleshill, Lord Radnor's seat, a couple of miles away, lying on the border line of the two counties.

When standing here the other day, memory flew back to a somewhat humorous entertainment which took place at a spot easily visible, and at which I was privileged, some thirty and odd years ago, to see the Wiltshire rustics introduced to a

real live North American Indian chief, as well as make my own first acquaintance with an unsophisticated savage. I have seen something of them since on their native prairie, but most certainly never at quite such close quarters. But when your aboriginal from any continent comes to this country with a purpose, your honest and benevolent Englishman, above all your real home-staying Englishman, takes him to his bosom with a naïve wholeheartedness that must often surprise the dusky one from whatever clime. In the days referred to, moreover, conservative old gentlemen immersed in rural affairs knew even less of the noble savage and far-away lands than an average member of Parliament nowadays, which is saying much indeed. My old friend took this noble red man, whose actions were restrained by an attendant missionary, to his bosom for several days, or to be lucid, entertained him as an honoured guest at an auspicious moment that discovered me also under the same roof. I must add that our host, when not concerned with affairs of the soil, was prodigiously active in those of the souls—of other people of course—and I might say that his conception of the immortal soul was not such glimpses of it as came to Richard Jefferies on the top of Liddington, but with him the harp and crown and wings on the one hand, and the flaming pit on the other were very real, positive, and material implements of future joy or suffering. If his neighbours in general—for Salisbury was always rather a high-church diocese—were bound for the pit, it was not for want of a word in season and out of season from this patron of Red Indians. He had really a judicial mind on the subject of Oxford down rams, but in theological matters very much the same equipment as those troopers of Fairfax's who captured Highworth church, and of whom he would certainly have made one had he lived at the time, nay almost two, for he was a very Titan in physique, and his zeal in the cause knew no bounds. In his own day, I am quite sure he would have carried fire, if not sword through the interior of Highworth church with pleasure had it been possible, so terrible were its mild decorations in his sight.

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Our Indian guest had no English, and was enveloped by day—in what by night I know not—in a white Hudson Bay blanket. It fell to my lot to be his table neighbour for some time, and as the fire-water came round, or rather the sherry, the missionary kept his eye on him, lest peradventure he should tip it into a claret glass, for he was a brand snatched from the burning, somewhere on the north shore of Lake Superior. The village people peered amazed at him through the gate of the drive as he roamed about the lawn with stately step in the daytime, and when on one occasion he ventured into the road, the old cowman, a typical moonraker, rushed panic-stricken to the house crying, with loud voice, “He’s bruk louse! He’s bruk louse!!” But he was at length formally introduced to the rustics and a portion of the aristocracy of the neighbourhood in a large marquee erected in the park. It was a great function, and Richard Jefferies was very likely there reporting for his Swindon paper, but nobody knew him then, for his article in the *Times* had not been written. The red man, mounted on an impromptu stage, and still encased in his white blanket, then proceeded to address the populace through his interpreter. I forget the gist of his wingèd words, but they were probably not original, and doubtless concerned the erection of log churches in the territory of Hiawatha. It was certainly not oratory of the eloquent and inspiring kind, such as that addressed by the chief of the five nations for instance to Montcalm or Sir William Johnson in the great Anglo-French struggle. He then retired behind the wings, flung his blanket from him, with what relief who shall say, and in ten minutes appeared in full war-paint, casque, feathers, tomahawk, breech-clout, and with face smeared horrible with vermilion and yellow ochre, let himself go with all the terrors of the war-dance and the war-whoop. The rustics watched him stupefied. Women and girls screamed anon, and one or two old ladies fainted. The missionary remained calm, after the manner of a lion tamer, but our host relaxed somewhat his benevolent smile, and began to look as if he doubted whether the brand was in truth yet out of the fire. He was

probably the first and the last painted Indian to dance the war-dance and yell the war-whoop in North-East Wilts, and I am always glad to have been there. No Red Indian on his native soil ever gave me such entertainment.

The perplexity which attended my savage table neighbour's handling of the cruet, and other like implements returned to my mind when I heard not long ago at Ottawa an anecdote of the plight in which two Western Indians found themselves under somewhat similar circumstances, and what a measure of sardonic wit they displayed in the trial. The occasion was a banquet, given in honour of a deputation to the Canadian capital of these children of nature, and of the Government. One of the guests observing a white neighbour pepper his soup profusely, proceeded to do the same with an adjacent castor, which unfortunately contained cayenne. The first spoonful tried even his Indian fortitude severely, but he valiantly took another, and then set down his spoon in despair, with teeth set and eyes blinded with tears. A fellow tribesman seated next him noticing his condition, and looking steadily at his friend, remarked, "Brother, there are tears in your eyes, for what are you weeping?" the other, though in great and silent agony, preserved his presence of mind. "Brother," said he, "I am weeping at the thought of my dead grandmother," and passed the pepper pot, which the other immediately utilized with an equally liberal hand. The first victim, now somewhat recovered, awaited the result with sardonic joy. A single spoonful was enough on this occasion, as the suspicion that he had been had smote this second chieftain, and added poignancy to the smart of the pain. He, too, endeavoured to dissemble, but with no more success, and the tears forced their way out, and rolled down his cheeks. "Brother," said his treacherous friend, "you too are weeping, and for what?" "I am weeping," was the reply, "because you did not die before your grandmother."

It is a delightful view northward, from the heights of Highworth across the vale of the White Horse, the downs rolling their smooth green waves from east to west, above the rich and wooded plain. But that is Berkshire mostly, and we



must back to Swindon without delay. And all this lower country, on the hither or northern side of it, I must leave the reader to explore for himself, if he ever cares to, and to wander through these fat and grassy, these closely fenced and well timbered undulations; to seek out Staunton Fitzwarrenne, with its interesting church, or Hannington, whose beautiful old stone manor-house Freykes and Hussey-Freykes have inhabited for centuries, or Lushall with its quaint old mansion and detached stone archway abandoned now for a more modern seat upon the hill. And thence perhaps to Cricklade, with its two churches, its infant Thames and prodigious antiquity of origin. Drayton, by the way, had some singular aberrations on this subject, cherishing the fancy that Cricklade had been a colony of Greek scholars before the Roman invasion.

“Greeklade whose great name yet vaunts that learned tongue  
Where to great Britain first the sacred muses sung.”

This lower lying northern strip of Wiltshire, resting on the green sand, the Oxford clay, and the öolite in stratas somewhat confusing to the untechnical mind, has little of the larger and southern moiety of the county about it. For myself I feel still as I felt of old, somewhat of a stranger and a pilgrim when descending upon it. Doubtless the inhabitants of Cricklade and Purton have mild attacks of nostalgia, when they in turn find themselves among the Marlborough downs or in the Pewsey vale, or at the further end of Salisbury Plain. This low-lying enclosed country seems in truth to have nothing in common with the rest of the shire, and to belong, as it were, to another scheme of creation, till you hear the rustic begin to talk and proclaim himself own brother to the man of the Pewsey vale. It is a country for the dairy farmer, the fox hunter, and of course also for the lover of old buildings in which it is rich. Its natural features, however, are of a homely order, and a wanderer from the midland counties, save for the distant rampart of the downs would experience few fresh sensations. We have left by now the great flockmaster, and his square miles of territory behind us. Farms down here are of normal size or



small. The Oxford down treads heavily over the ridge and furrow, elm-bordered pastures, in place of the smaller and nimbler sheep of the chalk uplands. The milking herd is everywhere in evidence, and within my time the once celebrated North Wilts cheeses were made here with pride and energy. I can see them now lying in long rows, in their damp cloths, upon the racks in the cool dairies. A firm orange-coloured article fashioned somewhat like a half Stilton, it was held sufficiently toothsome to make a welcome present to discriminating persons in distant parts of England. They are not, however, I think, made any longer. If a waiter at a London club or restaurant, were now asked for North Wilts cheese, he would, I am told, conceive himself to be the victim of a plesantry. The importation of the foreign article, but more particularly the facilities for direct shipping of milk to London, a more profitable business, have brought this about. Such cheeses as are made in North Wilts nowadays are of the double Gloucester variety.

One speaks of all this low country, somewhat vaguely as the vale. But it is not the vale of anything particular, unless it may be that of the Great Western Railway, which traverses it with a sustained directness, unapproached by any of its wandering and undistinguished brooks, that find their several ways eventually into the upper reaches of the Bristol Avon or the Thames.

Wootton Bassett is five miles west of Swindon, and there is nothing worth special notice on the road thither, but Lydiard Tregoz lying a mile off it to the north, that need detain us. But this is well worth the detour, and has been the property of the Bolingbrokes, from the time of Henry the Seventh. The house, a somewhat plain one, stands in a park well furnished with ancient oaks. The church near by is famed for its stained glass, and its devices and gorgeous monuments of the St. John family. On one of the windows is painted an olive tree, in memory of Oliver St. John, carrying in its branches the arms of the several heiresses who brought the estate into that virile family. One of the many elaborate monuments is

enclosed within folding doors, on which are painted figures of life size, Nicholas and Eliza St. John, of date 1589, kneel under a Corinthian canopy. Edward St. John is here in gilt armour, and Sir John, with his wife, who was a Hungerford, a family of long and great renown in these parts. Under this picture are some verses concluding—

“This course of time by God’s almighty power,  
 Hath kept this land of Lydiard in one race,  
 Five hundred, forty nine years, and now no more,  
 Where at this day, is St. John’s dwelling place.  
 Noe ! noe ! He dwells in heaven whose anchored faith  
 Fixed on God accounted life but death.”

Lydiard Tregoz is one of those old names and places, that illustrate the quite remarkable connection between Wiltshire and the Welsh marches. In John’s reign, a Tregoz married Sibilla, heiress of Robert Lord of Ewias, under the Black mountains in West Hereford. His son also became Baron Tregoz of Lydiard, whose son in turn becoming owner of both, was celebrated even above other Marchers for his prowess against the Welsh. Then two heiresses parted the property—a De la Ware getting Ewias, and Lydiard going to a De Grandison, whose sonorous name is still preserved by a well-known parish in Hereford Lydiard—through one or two more heiresses then came, as we have seen, to Oliver St. John, in 1497, ancestor of the present Lord Bolingbroke.

Any one familiar with the Welsh borderland and its story must inevitably be struck with the family connections existing between that turbulent land and the more peaceful soil of Wiltshire. Even here at Lydiard it is not only the Norman house of Tregoz, but the St. Johns who followed them that were among the original band of conquerors, between whom Fitzhamon divided the fat of lands of Glamorgan. As an Oliver St. John was the first sub-marcher whose descendants held the castle of Fon-mon in the twelfth century, so it is an Oliver St. John of that stock we find in the sixteenth century founding the House of Bolingbroke at Lydiard. Alured of Marlborough, the Scudamores, the Baskervilles, the Talbots, the

Herberts, are but the first names that occur to one in this connection. While here again, at the village of Dauntsey, the very next station to Wootton Bassett, the tradition of a frightful crime still lingers among the people, and recalls yet another famous Glamorgan stock. The Stradlings or D'Esterlings were also among FitzHamon's "twelve knights." Their great castle of St. Donats, occupied ever since their day, and in recent times skilfully restored, still overlooks the Severn sea, but a few miles from the St. John's castle of Fon-mon, also standing and still occupied by the family who succeeded them.

One of the Stradlings, however, Sir Edward, held this Dauntsey in Wiltshire, in the year 1500. As Aubrey heard the tale in 1679, he and his family and servants, all save a scared ploughboy, who hid himself in time, were brutally murdered upon a Saturday night, the first outside suspicion of anything wrong being aroused by the fact of none of them attending church on Sunday. When a party of investigation proceeded to the house, "the parson," says Aubrey, "walked gravely with them," but was identified by the terrified survivor as actually one of the malefactors, and hung for it. Sir John Danvers, "a handsome gentleman," met the messenger conveying the news to London, the next heir being Stradling's sister, "who lived on an ordinary portion in Paternoster Row," Danvers must have been an Adonis indeed, or the lady, in her eagerness for a husband, must have been somewhat lacking in modesty, for the bold gallant spurred in hot haste to her modest quarters, and "clapt up a match with her," before she heard the news. The Danvers, in any case, hung up their hats at Dauntsey, and gave it distinction for some generations. The current version of the story varies a little, holding that Sir Edward Stradling himself was absent attending Parliament, but the parson remains a leading character with the addition of his clerk. The retribution was terrible, according to the villagers, who have it that the wicked clergyman was starved to death in a cage, while the clerk was buried up to his neck only, and left to die. The Dauntseys had owned the property before the Stradlings, and here again we come in contact with the Welsh border, for the

Dauntseys or Danseys are to-day one of the oldest surviving families in Herefordshire.

Wootton Bassett is another Highworth ; it contains about the same number of souls ; stands also on a height, or rather at the western point of the ledge, one is imperceptibly travelling on from Swindon, but which here drops suddenly in pleasant sweeps, and folds of green, to the vale beneath. Like Highworth, too, it was stripped of its parliamentary honours, and to continue the analogy, consists of a single, but much longer, street, also possessed, on normal occasions, by an equally profound repose. It was a normal occasion when I last passed through it on a warm afternoon, but the conditions for the moment were quite abnormal, as an enraged cow, lately deprived of her calf, was running amock in the town, and galloping wildly round and round the old market hall, which I had forgotten to remark stands in the centre of the street. As even the butcher, who was an interested party, had temporarily retired within his fortress, I thought it high time myself to seek cover. The grocer and the draper held tight to their door handles, while shouting encouragement to two perspiring and exhausted drovers armed with sticks, for a horned animal in a frenzy has a traditional fancy for the interior of shops. In due course, however, the infuriated beast disappeared down a precipitous byway, and after a reasonable interval, the citizens ventured out of their doors, and the town resumed its calm. For myself, I took the road to Cliffe Pypard, which, I was not altogether sorry, lay in the other direction from the one pursued in such a hurry by the cow, and will traverse it yet again in these pages, with the reader's permission.

Wootton Bassett church is of the prevailing perpendicular type, but till it was restored, some thirty years ago, it had, I believe, some singularities. The old part is now included in a more extended building ; the tower, set at the west of the south aisle of the old church is not distinguished, I noticed a panelled roof, the painting on which is, I believe, original, but no monuments of particular interest. If there was space





THE TOWN HALL, WOOTTON BASSETT



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to take the road to Brinkworth, and so to Malmesbury, I should have greatly modified any impression I may have given, that this vale of the Great Western, if I may call it so, is lacking in features such as the descriptive pen might fasten on. For the pose of Wootton Bassett on the high point of its promontory, with the distant downs behind, is really striking from this same highway, which pursues the apex of another rich, well-timbered and grassy ridge, overlooking, in the mean time, much of West and North-West Wilts to Brinkworth, a spot that every one remembers who has passed it. Brinkworth consists of a succession of umbrageous, but scattered, cottages terminating in a Tudor rectory and a church, which crown a bold escarpment, and look down over the two valleys, where separate branches of the Bradford Avon wind toward their junction. But after this you drop into the plain, and the road to Malmesbury, though pleasant enough in the pursuit, will leave few definite memories behind it, save perhaps some slight one of the bridge over the Avon, a mile short of the town, where that stream expands for the moment into a sparkling ripple upon a gravelly bed not quite in keeping with its general character. In the year 1759, one, John Ayliffe, was hung for forging a presentation to the living of Brinkworth. A curious crime!

It is about five miles from Wootton Bassett to Cliffe Pypard, travelling southward, towards the lower and outer escarpment of the Marlborough downs, beneath which it nestles. Away to the east of it, crowning the same ridge, is Bicknoll (Binoll) castle, neither a modern mansion, nor yet a mediæval ruin, but only another prehistoric earthwork, with the steeps below riven into picturesque woody coombes, notable among naturalists for their profusion of insect life, and among geologists for their fossils.

On the foot of the steep ridge, just lifted above the plain, embowered and overhung with foliage, stands the little village of Cliffe Pypard, its rectory, church, and Tudor manor-house, lying practically within the same enclosure; a delightful and compact spot of lawn and blossom and shining pool, of

foliage, tower and gable, while a few thatched cottages stand about the already climbing road without. Cliffe is perhaps the most picturesquely seated village in North Wilts. The Pypards, whence its name, seem to have dropped out in these parts during the thirteenth century. The Goddards have held it now since 1530, and it seems highly appropriate, not only that the editorial chair of that venerable and serviceable society, The Wiltshire Archæological, should be fortuitously planted here, just where upland and lowland Wiltshire meet, but that it should also be filled by a member of a family so long and intimately associated with the county, in the person of the present vicar. Besides his great services to the archæological lore of the county, Mr. Goddard, in collaboration with his cousin, Mr. George Dartnell, of Salisbury, has also published, within recent years, a Wiltshire Glossary. This, too, is well, for the generation to which they belong will be the last one able to gather, at first hand, from the more archaic and vanishing features of the vernacular. The late squire, who died at a ripe age, a few years back, had an extraordinary knowledge of, and memory for, old facts and oral traditions concerning the immediate neighbourhood. The original meeting-place of the "Hundred" of Kingsbridge, his nephew tells me, was preserved by him in this way, and thus recovered by the antiquaries, who had given it up for lost. He had somewhat to do with Richard Jefferies in the latter's youth, as it may be remembered, that the records of the Goddard family had attracted him to his first literary endeavour.

When John Goddard bought the manor in 1540, the house was, even then, an old one. It has been restored more than once, but on the last occasion, sixty years ago, the original "house pillars" were found, entire oak trees running from foundation to roof-tree, about eight in all. One of them, at least, was sound enough to retain and it is still *in situ*. It was to this house that Tom Moore, the poet, during the thirty odd years he lived at Bromham, used to send his half-yearly rent, accompanied often by a characteristic letter or poem,

as we shall hear something of later. Some years ago an article was written in a leading magazine on Cliffe Pypard. I have not read it, but its title, at any rate, "Where time stands still," is felicitous. For Cliffe, though not actually very far removed from the rest of the world, wears the appearance of being so in a very high and picturesque degree.

There is a tradition, mentioned by Aubrey, that the church was built by a Lord Cobham, whose cross-legged effigy, in pure chalk, lies in a corner of the north aisle. There is also a brass on the south aisle floor, representing a knight, supposed to be a Quinton, whose family were landowners hereabouts even before the Cobhams, while there are Goddard monuments, of course. The church recently restored is mainly of the perpendicular style, with traces of earlier work within; indeed, the vicar thinks that not only the body of most North Wilts churches were practically rebuilt in the fifteenth century, but the towers as well. The chief event in the modern annals of Cliffe Pypard is a whirlwind, that, half a century ago, swept from the down above and tore up hundreds of trees immediately around the village, expending its fury on this protected and favoured nook. One might almost fancy that Æolus, enraged at the defiance which Cliffe Pypard by its situation appeared to offer to elemental attack, determined to give it a lesson and something more stirring to think about for some time than was likely, in the ordinary course of events, to penetrate its seclusion. The road, which climbs from the clays and greensand of Cliffe, to the top of the chalk ledge, is one of the steepest in Wiltshire, mounting, as it does, some three or four hundred feet through woods, with but slight superfluous circumlocution. Travellers on the Great Western, no doubt, conceive this long ridge to be the main escarpment of the Wiltshire downs, but an unknowing cyclist from Cliffe to Marlborough, would discover, as he drew breath on the top of the hill, that it was only the first step, and would see before him a two-mile stretch of farming country, and then the real thing rising bare and green, and still steeper beyond it.

Away to the east, on the summit of this main escarpment

is Barbary camp, one of the largest in the county, and right in front, Hackpen swells above us, with its clump of beeches, and its white road toiling sideways up the green wall, to wander beyond it for many a long mile across the unbroken wild to Marlborough. Barbary is about the size of Liddington; but is nearly round in shape, and has a double circle of ditch and rampart, even still of great depth, and about half a mile in circumference. Here is thought to have been fought, in 556, the bloody fight which wrested modern Wiltshire from native occupation, and included it in the Saxon Kingdom of Wessex. Like Liddington, it is a place to visit alone, and to make one think. Like the other, it looks northward, from the crown of the steep, over three counties, and southward over the silent solitary downs. Scattered, stunted, thorn trees in its neighbourhood still brave the blast, which, when I last was there, was scattering, though with rough warm breath, their lingering blooms, and smiting the June leaves of a small clump of much tortured beech trees that have made no growth within my memory, but may be seen even from the ridges above Oxford. Weapons and coins in considerable numbers have been discovered here, and are now in the museum at Marlborough College. Immediately beneath, on the broad chalk ledge, lies Broad Hinton, a little spot of foliage in a waste of varied tillage. Here once lived a well-known speaker of a notable House of Commons, that of 1640, Sir John Glanville, but only in his gate house, says Evelyn, the mansion having been burned. Among the monuments, in an interesting, but restored church, is that of his son, killed at the battle of Bridgewater. All these things would lie in our path by taking the direct road to Marlborough across the downs. But at the summit of Cliffe hill, with a view to following the lower and better, but more circuitous route through Avebury, we leave them behind us to the east, though within easy sight, and strike across for Winterbourne Bassett two miles away.

Here amid great sweeps of waving grainfields, and rippling breadths of rye grass and clover, and long intrenchments of wattled hurdles, set amongst the purple sanfoil all noisy with







THE UNDER-SHEPHERD

the bleat of sheep, and the tinkling of their bells, a treeless, unfenced expanse merging insensibly into the open downs, we have a typical Wiltshire village; not, perhaps, of the most attractive type, though the thatched cottages are neat enough, while a kindly patch of woodland shelters the rectory and the church, from the unbroken violence of the winds. Yet a place not altogether without modest fame; for if that of the mediæval Bassetts has long evaporated, the redoubtable name of Captain Budd, still lives in the memory of middle-aged people whose fathers actually witnessed his doughty deeds—some of them that is to say—for his doughtiest were performed in lands and seas remote.

Young Budd entered the navy as a midshipman in 1796, and served with singular dash and credit, under Sydney Smith and Nelson in the long war with the French, being wounded more than once. Having retired after the peace, and married the daughter of a thousand-acre farmer at Winterbourne, he took on the tenancy at his father-in-law's death, and became the most energetic and progressive agriculturist in all this region. What were at first regarded by his neighbours as the vain theories of a seaman and amateur, soon became successful practice and matter for imitation. It is as a strenuous character of a by-gone type, however, that one lingers for a moment to recall his name, amid these windy uplands, where he was the first to grow the swedish turnip, and to use machinery. There was no squire in any of the villages of this upper plateau, nor is there now, and Captain Budd became an autocrat as well as an example; a terror to evil-doers, or those at least who did that which he held to be evil. Now, there is a pond in Winterbourne, and a friend of mine, who remembers the captain, says it was the inevitable goal sooner or later of those who would not recognize his dictatorship, which, however, was admittedly a wise and beneficent one, and no doubt included his own twelve children.

But though in early life he had been personally recommended by Sir Sydney Smith to the prime minister for fourteen years of continuous gallantry, the performance by

which he is best remembered in North Wilts is his active part in the suppression of the anti-machine riots in 1830. The labourers were in that year ranging the country in large bodies, destroying the recently introduced threshing machines, and an assemblage of several hundred, leaving wreckage in their track, arrived in due course at Winterbourne, with a view to treating the captain as they had treated others. That indomitable person, however, did not at first even deign to take a party of his own men with him, but went out by himself with his gun, and sat upon a gate at the edge of his farm facing the crowd, and solemnly affirmed he would shoot the first man who set foot inside his place. No one, however, was bold enough to be that first man. Whether it was the captain's gun, or his eye, or his reputation that won the victory, I am not prepared to say, but it was complete, at any rate, and the invading army swerved away to less formidable pastures. But this old war-dog of an heroic period was no mere egotist looking after his own interests, for he led out his own labourers, and a troop of yeomanry in defence of other people's property. I have before me a letter addressed to Lord Melbourne, signed by the magistrates of the Marlborough and Swindon division of Wilts, Goddards, Baskervilles, Warnefords and others recommending Captain Budd to his favourable notice, "for his unwearied and extraordinary gallantry, and spirited exertions which contributed in no slight degree to the pacific state which the country has relapsed into" [December 21, 1830]. The captain it should be added was a warm friend to the labourer. Though a staunch Tory renting under a Whig landlord, he was ready at all times in his public speeches, as the files of the local papers show, to read a lecture to landlords as to their duties without fear or favour. In short he was a fine old English gentleman, whose cold water cure for the intractable no doubt was quite satisfactory, and is somewhat refreshing hearing in these anæmic and mawkish times. The captain indeed only died within easy memory, in the year 1869, and at the age of ninety. His elder brother was a

somewhat notable cricketer of more than local fame, who lived at Purton near Swindon, and in old age still captained a local eleven that his underhand bowling helped to make formidable. His last ball, tradition has it, was bowled against the Marlborough boys in their somewhat primitive cricket period of the early fifties. It seems that a swiping youth, afterwards one of the defenders of Lucknow, with neither style nor reverence, hit him thrice out of the ground in one over. The veteran unaccustomed to such treatment at the hands of a stripling vowed it was not cricket, and that he would never bowl another ball as long as he lived, and he did not. So runs the tale from the lips of those who were actors in the scene. A curious feature in this last match of the old cricketers was that the bowler to whom he succumbed in both innings, afterwards famous in Oxford and Notts cricket, and till quite recently prominent on the Marylebone Committee, was exactly fifty years younger than himself. He appears to have been as great an autocrat in the cricket-field as was his brother among his "foreign turnips," and his Winterbourne subjects. A rather humorous, but not very good-natured book has been recently published of which that village is the quite obvious scene. Anonymity was attempted both as to place and author so far as the general public is concerned, but to the local public such precautions were quite fruitless. It is rather an entertaining little book, and describes the trials of a young clerical couple who seem to have taken the living for the obvious advantages it offered to the gentleman in the way of literary work. A modern *Bœotia* purports to be the experiences of the vicar's wife who in the long hours of her husband's literary labours endeavoured to take her mission seriously, going out and about among the people. The attitude with which she approached this unaccustomed and uncongenial toil suggests that of a cheerful young person from Girton, with rather a pretty turn of the pen, and quite prepared to regard the rural districts as a kind of prolonged pantomime. Mrs. Batson's book, before mentioned, is somewhat pessimistic to be sure, but it is the



qualified pessimism of life-long knowledge, and sympathy, and considerable literary power. This other one is the lighter pessimism of an exotic missionary, well meaning, but scarcely well equipped for the task, yet gifted with no little skill in putting her ill-understood failure in an amusing light for city and suburban readers. I can well imagine that a young couple from town who settled at Winterbourne with the apparent intention of leading the lives of hermits, ran considerable risk of disillusion. I was told that the work had been in great demand in the parish from its fortunate possessors at "twopence a read," and the Winterbournians did not like it at all, since many of them figured in its pages with slight disguise, and not wholly in a flattering light. Ladies are not often topographers, and our authoress seems quite unconscious that the "miserable ditch, miscalled a river," is the source of the classic Kennet. I am afraid in summer time it almost merits the opprobrious title. Like many chalk streams its infant springs dry up betimes, if its lower ones never fail, or Winterbourne would not be Winterbourne. For myself in spite of its obvious blemishes, I enjoyed the book, and the vernacular was quite creditable. Still three or four years in Winterbourne should enable any one with a reasonable gift of tongues, and a good ear to almost qualify as a contributor to Dr. Wright's dialect dictionary.

In Winterbourne church, too, lies the first immigrant Baskerville from Herefordshire, son of Sir Walter of Eardisley, the first seat of the Norman de Boschervilles, who in 1540, or thereabouts, married a widow possessed of this and much territory among and around the Marlborough downs. In both counties this enduring race still hold up their heads. A long level white road between low bank fences and a wide open country, more down than lowland, and broken only by the small villages of Berwick Bassett, and Winterbourne Monkton brings one into the presence and in due course within the mystic circle of world-famous Avebury. Lying in an open though cultivated plain, with the bare downs heaving gently upward into solitude, and no foliage to speak of but that

within its precincts, Avebury lends itself most admirably to the frame of mind in which a visitor might be expected to approach it. It has sufficient seclusion from the outer world to satisfy the fancy, and if one's attitude towards it were of the normal kind, one would pause to admire so snug and leafy an oasis amid a landscape whose merits or demerits lay mainly in the absence of such things. To be candid, I am rather intimidated by Avebury in its more serious aspect. It does not, like Stonehenge, appeal at once as a spectacle to the dullest soul. There is, in truth, not much but what is quite usual in this country to be still seen, yet thousands of printed pages by experts, living and dead, have been lavished on it. It is much older and was infinitely more important than Stonehenge; so much seems certain. "What a cathedral is to a village church," says Aubrey, "such is Avebury to Stonehenge."

What the visitor sees now is approximately a circle, traced by a huge grass-grown rampart and ditch, with a circumference of about three-quarters of a mile, which within is an almost level plateau, containing the village and its adjoining grass paddocks. The rampart here is on the further side of the ditch, which alone is thirty or forty feet deep, proving the place to have had no military significance. The only startling objects within the circle are four or five huge stones twelve to thirteen feet high, and of great bulk standing erect in a paddock, though as many more survive hidden behind buildings. This does not mean a great deal to the uninstructed till he digests the fact that these, together with a few more prostrate stones, are the sole survivors of six hundred and fifty that were most likely intact as late as the Tudor period. Whatever mystery there may be about the kind of gods to whom this once mighty temple was dedicated, or the kind of men that worshipped them, there is none whatever as to the essentials of the fabric itself. The sacrilegious destruction of the stones for building purposes, that had been going on for perhaps three hundred years, only ceased half a century ago.

The village within the mystic circle, even apart from its interesting church and beautiful Tudor manor-house, would

demand a word or two of appreciation but for the guilt that lies upon almost every house and wall and barn within it. In short it has been largely created out of the unhewn columns of this ravished temple, flung down and broken up with rude but devilish ingenuity. Fire, cold water, maul and wedge were the chief instruments of destruction, and when Dr. Stukeley was here early in the eighteenth century, he saw these unconscious vandals actually at their work ; one wretch, Tom Robinson, making it his particular glory and trade. It should be mentioned that round the whole circle of Avebury on the inner parapet of the fosse, was a continuous row of these upright stones placed about nine yards apart. Of these hundred or more only two or three are left upright, and a few prostrate. Within the large circle were two concentric ones. Of that to the south, two stones are still erect and three prostrate ; of the northern inner circle, two are erect and three prostrate. In the centre of the northern circle, moreover, were three very large stones close together, forming, as is thought, a sort of cave. Two of them are still upright in a barnyard, one being some seventeen feet in height. These two inner circles seem to have contained forty-two stones apiece. The despoiler's hand being of such comparatively modern date, the cavities where the huge stones rested are often traceable. But this is of little consequence, as Stukeley has left a plan of those standing in his day, numbering in all twenty-nine ; and more important still there is a plan of Aubrey's showing sixty-nine stones *in situ*. The long avenues, reaching certainly to Kennet and possibly to Beckhampton respectively, were bordered by several hundred more stones, of which only a trifling few remain.

As late as 1660, when Aubrey, the virtual discoverer of Avebury, wrote his notes and made his plans, almost half the entire temple was still intact, and it must be remembered that some of these stones weigh fifty or sixty tons. They are sarsens, of course, natives of the neighbourhood, though of no kin to the chalk soil on which they were so strangely deposited in remote ages. It is not surprising that antiquaries



STONES AT AVEBURY





gnash their teeth, and that even ordinary mortals acquainted with the district rage, when they reflect that by comparison to the long ages during which this matchless work defied time and escaped the hand of man, it should have been destroyed but yesterday; nay, almost by their own great grandfathers, and at the very moment, too, when the value of such things was just beginning to dawn in the land. For the first half of the eighteenth century seems to have been the darkest period of vandalism at Avebury, from the fact of its being a prosperous one no doubt, with a growing demand for substantial buildings. Stukeley gives the actual names of other local monolith smashers besides Tom Robinson. Farmer Green, for instance, had destroyed many stones of the inner circle for his house at Beckhampton. Another farmer, John Fowler, confessed to having found them the greatest comfort to him in his building operations, one large stone providing material enough for a whole cottage. A common method still of getting rid of undisturbed sarsens when in the way of the plough is to dig a huge hole and bury them. Hundreds have been removed from the surface in this fashion. There was an old belief among the rustics that these stones grew when planted upright, and cases in which the soil has been washed away were cited in proof of it.

It is singular that no one should have paid any intelligent attention to Avebury till Aubrey, with his keen eye for ancient things, brought it into notice. He was only twenty-two when he accidentally ran across it in the year 1648. He had known Stonehenge, he tells us, "since eight years old," but had never seen the country about Marlborough till invited to spend the Christmas of the above year with Lord Francis Seymour at the castle. During this visit he went hunting with a party, among whom were his "good friend Colonel John Penruddock, of Compton Chamberlayne, and that good old gentleman Mr. Stephen Bowman, steward to the Marquis of Hertford." It was the morning after twelfth-night that his friend, Mr. Charles Seymour and Sir William Button of Tokenham met with their packs of hounds at the Grey Wethers (Clatford), and

he continues, "These downes look as if they were sown with stones very thick, and in a duskey evening they looke like a flock of Sheepe from whence it takes its name. One might fancy it to have been the scene where giants fought with huge stones against the gods. 'Twas here that our game began, and the chase led us at length through the village of Avebury into the closes there, where I was wonderfully surpris'd at the sight of those vast stones of which I had never heard before, as also at the mighty bank and graff about it. I left my company a while, entertaining myself with a more delightful indagation, and then steered by the cry of the hounds overtooke the company and went with them to Kynett, where was a good hunting dinner provided." After the repast, which he tells us was cheerful, they had the greyhounds out and beat the downs. He then saw the Wansdyke and other curiosities, and at evening returned again to Marlborough castle, "where we were nobly entertained, *juvat hæc meminisse!*"

Seven years later John Aubrey had read with great delight a book called "Stonehenge Restored" by Inigo Jones; but, having compared the scheme with the monument itself, he found that the author, like many much later ones, had framed Stonehenge to his own hypothesis, which differed greatly from the thing itself. The perusal of the book, however, gave Aubrey "an edge to make more researches; and a farther opportunity was that, my honoured and faithful friend, Colonel James Long of Draycot (ancestor of Mr. Walter Long), since baronet, was wont to spend a week or two every autumn at Avebury in hawking, where several times I have had the happiness to accompany him. Our sport was good, and in a romantic country. The prospects noble and vast, the downs stocked with numerous flocks of sheep, the turfe rich and fragrant with thyme and burnet.

"Fessus ut incubuit baculo, saxoque resedit  
Pastor, arundineo carmine mulcet oves."

nor are the nut-brown shepperdesses without their graces. But the flight of the falcons was but a parenthesis to the

Colonel's facetious discourses, who was "*tam marti quam mercurio*, and the muses did accompany him with his hawks and spaniels."

Here is a pretty picture surely by a Wiltshire man who loved the downs, both for the pleasure they imparted to his senses and the mysteries they suggested to his imagination! One has no authority to say he was ahead of his generation; but in this particular he certainly writes ahead of it. An altogether fresher and more original soul than so many of his successors, who loved a grotto by an artificial lake, with the classic porticoes of their patron peering through a well-planted park, in wholesome reminder of the good cheer which was to crown their sedentary toil. If Aubrey was an enthusiastic antiquary, he was no dry-as-dust. We can see how he loved the wide solitudes and the fresh breezes of his native county as he loved its human interests, his neighbours, and all those things which give flavour to local story and brush off the dust. He was at least the discoverer of Avebury, and the first writer upon it; and if he discovered it, following the hounds of Francis Seymour, or the hawks of Colonel Long of Draycott, one likes to have it so. It is so certain, too, that he had a healthy appetite for his hunting dinner at Kennet, even though "Kennet ale" of later fame, had not yet been brewed, and was able to follow the greyhounds as far as the Wansdyke afterwards with a clear brain; while one is not quite sure of Thomson when he descended from his seat on Granham hill to Marlborough castle, though his conviviality as we know gave offence to his hostess.

What is one to say of the various theories advanced concerning this great mystery since Aubrey's day, who certainly made it the fashion among inquiring souls? For Pepys, on his way from Bath to Marlborough in June, 1668, had his coach brought to a halt at the sight of "great stones like those of Stonehenge," and he was "carried" by a countryman to see other great stones surrounding the trench "some bigger than those of Stonehenge." He was "carried," be it noted, *i.e.* conducted, and when he got there he "admired"

otherwise "wondered," a long obsolete use of both words in England, but still maintained and in regular use among the countrymen of Virginia and the Carolinas. "Carry that horse to the stable," says the one, "Well, I do admire!" says the other; when other Anglo-Saxon moderns would say, "Well, I am surprised." But Pepys had no theory to offer. He was told that—thanks to Aubrey—most people of learning had stopped to view them, and that the king had done so, as we know. He gave the man a shilling, and proceeded on his way "admiring" the prodigious number of great stones scattered about the downs and valleys.

Dr. Stukeley went elaborately into the whole matter with a view to proving a serpentine shape in the Kennet avenue, and building up a theory of serpent worship, long discredited. This enabled some unscientific enthusiasts, of robust theological convictions, to attribute the work to Adam as a dedication to Eve after their eviction from Paradise, a performance as spiteful surely as laborious. They professed to see the action of the flood on Avebury and the country round, that is, the flood on which Noah's Ark floated. A pamphlet was printed to prove all this, not a hundred years ago, by a Mr. Brown, who was noted as a manufacturer of well-known models of Stonehenge and Avebury.

But learned and scientific people have been building better theories than this about Avebury ever since Stukeley's time. Beyond, however, a general concensus of opinion that it was a place of religious rather than political celebration, a temple in fact, probably connected with Sun-worship; that it is earlier than Stonehenge, and belongs to the stone period, nothing more definite can or ever will be said about it. At any rate, there is nothing comparable to it in the United Kingdom, its only rival being at Carnac in Brittany.

Silbury, which we shall pass anon, is the largest tumulus in Europe. But a mile away, on the slopes and summits of the downs above, are scattered in unusual numbers the mounds of the dead, and, as we believe, the more distinguished dead. There they lie, on the shelving broad-backed ridges, these





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shadowy warriors under their round barrows, fortunate, no doubt, in the estimation of those who had laid them there, in resting near this mighty temple, raised by what people and to what gods who shall say? The mile long stone avenue to West Kennet, which slants across the course of the present highway from Avebury to that village, and to the Bath road, has still seven or eight fragments remaining, and the public motor from Marlborough to Calne, which takes this little circuit, throws its dust almost over their mainly prostrate forms. On the top of Kennet down, there stood in Aubrey's time another perfect double circle of stones, some thirty odd in number, to which the avenue is thought to have extended. A second avenue to Beckhampton, where there are still two or three stones of about the same length, is included in some schemes of ancient Avebury, though this is an open question. About the rest of it, however, there is no need to theorize; it could almost be built up again from the poor fragments that are left. But as our immediate forbears saw it in comparative perfection, and have left us their descriptions and their plans, there is no need even for so much exercise of imagination. The pity is that a few vandals among them, so near our own time, should have deprived us of a monument almost unique in Europe.

I have left small space for the church of Avebury which, in any other situation, would have no doubt detained us longer. But it is curious in story as well as interesting in fabric. For a Saxon church built of chalk and sarsen stone stood here, and is partly embodied, with some original windows in a later fabric, and admirably restored within my memory by its then vicar, Mr. Bryan King, a name which was familiar to all churchmen in the sixties. There was no manor here, and the Saxon church is noted in Domesday as *in terra regis*. It ante-dated the village, and is supposed to have been built for the use of the shepherds by some Saxon king, but in Norman times was made a cell to a French monastery. The font is remarkable, being Saxon in character, with later Norman ornamentation. The figure of a bishop is depicted on it, clasping a book to his breast and piercing the head of a dragon

with his crozier. There is a fine screen, partly fifteenth century, and an ambulatory of the same date. The tower is of the perpendicular period, while adjoining the churchyard, which is protected from the bleak expanse on the north by a wood of fine trees, is the beautiful Tudor manor-house, already alluded to, well preserved as a gentleman's residence. It stands on the site of a religious house, but I do not know its social history, except that it originally belonged to the family of Dunche, nor is it, perhaps, luminous enough to make a fitting tailpiece to even the most imperfect account of the great temple of Avebury.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BATH ROAD TO CALNE

WE had wandered back in the last chapter to within five miles of Marlborough, and out once more into the Bath road at West Kennet. But, with a fresh chapter, I shall seize the opportunity of making a fresh start, and take the road from Marlborough to Calne. So, passing out at the wide west end of the High Street, between the lofty fifteenth-century tower of St. Peter's church and the lime groves and mossy lawns and clipped yew trees of the school's more ancient precincts, we follow the Bath road on its circuit round the old boundary of castle, mansion, and hostelry in turn, now an effective barrier of buildings, standing with their backs to the road.

Away past the gates of the great three-acre quadrangle, with the heavy portico of the old Seymour House filling the far end of the long lime avenue that now bisects it, and past the beautiful uplifted modern chapel with its tapering spire and the green, woody background of the castle mound and adjoining rookeries. One might well fancy that any historic or ancestral spectres would have been long ago exorcised from so exuberant an atmosphere as this now is, but the phantom coach which belongs to it has been seen in quite modern times pursuing its ghostly circuit round the court. There is a legend that a venturesome youth was once on the point of getting into it, when he was overcome by a sudden and fearful reflection of where he might be driven to. Here, too, is the picturesque homestead of Barton, the home farm of kings and constables in the days of castle rule, while across the way, above the meadows through

which the Kennet steals in bright coils, at the back of the school precincts, towards the town, rises the green down of Granham, popularly known as "White Horse Hill," with the familiar figure of that local celebrity facing us across the narrow vale. This horse is not Saxon, nor anything like it, but was cut just a century ago by some schoolboys of the town. Among the meadows, too, stands, in leafy and pleasant isolation, the Norman church of Preshute (*pres-chateau*), with its old horse-chesnuts throwing their shadows on the clear surface of the stream. It was the parish church of the castle, and also of its successors even to this day, and in its green graveyard by the Kennet the headstones of more ancient parochial worthies are now quite thickly mingled with others commemorating the lads that in sixty years have been cut off in the heyday of their youth at the great school whose sheltering woods rise just across the meadows, and of others, too, who had grown grey in its service.

Restoration has been busy here, but some of the Norman work is left, and the font still remains that in mediæval times was brought hither from the castle chapel. In that building, as already related, King John was married to his first wife, while the children of his second were baptized in the above-mentioned font, which is an extremely curious one. Camden says that even the people of Marlborough "bragged of nothing more than they did of this."

It is of black marble, circular in shape, plainly fashioned, and of most unusual size, being some three-and-a-half feet in diameter. Which of John's children were baptised in it, one may not know; not his heir and successor, for Henry was born at Winchester. John, by the way, granted the first charter to Marlborough, though it seems to have enjoyed the privileges of a corporate town some time before that. Henry the Third granted another one. New buildings were added to the castle for John's queen, with fireplaces capable of roasting oxen whole, while her successor, Eleanor of Provence, according to the entries was amply provided with the requisite oxen. It is recorded that John pensioned the anchorite residing in Preshute with a penny a day for life to



pray for his soul. When weighed in the balance with his enormities, the price seems miserably inadequate.

Preshute House, adjoining the churchyard, with gardens running down to the river, was secured by the college some fifty years ago, and utilized as a boarding-house. For half a mile, too, along the north side of the Bath road, with a charming outlook over the Kennet valley and the down of the white horse beyond, are several more of such tutors' houses, perched high above the road in grounds now leafy and ornate with the growth and care of thirty to forty years. There are some two hundred and fifty boys in various houses, and about three hundred and fifty in college, so that the votaries of either the house or the hostel system can take their choice. In half a mile, however, you are clear of the stream of straw-hatted youths that seems always flowing up or down this rural but much trodden bit of highway. The Bath road, as befits so historic an artery, has a broad smooth surface, and as it ascends the valley beside the gradually shrinking streams of the Kennet, there are nowhere any formidable hills such as you encounter when you cross the grain of Wiltshire. Down the valley towards Hungerford the Kennet leads you by degrees into richer and statelier scenes, as the reader will, I trust, remember. But as you ascend it from Marlborough you feel the atmosphere of downs about and around you all the time, and the sense of gradually drawing up towards some wild upland is always strong within you. In the mill pool, at the old thatched hamlet of Manton, above Preshute, you may yet kill a good trout with fly, but here the river makes its last respectable appearance, henceforth expanding itself in plaintive murmuring, but ankle-deep amid gravelly beds of water-weed and cresses.

At Manton, in a wooden barn by the roadside, there were preserved till quite recently two quaint old carriages, built for a Baskerville on his being appointed sheriff of Wilts, in the year 1730. Lofty of wheel, and clumsy, hung on leather springs, and decorated with the Baskerville arms, they had been mouldering here ever since I can remember and were regarded

with almost the same veneration as the great cromlech, locally known as the "Devil's den," up Clatford Bottom, a mile further along the road. This is the largest cist-vaen in Wiltshire, the cross stone being of enormous size and lifted by its supports some six feet from the ground. There is no longer any doubt about the significance of these cromlechs. The old superstition that they were sacrificial altars, on which wild-haired Druids offered human sacrifices, is of course long obsolete. Indeed, the Druid himself holds no very prominent or definite place among the modern sages of the down country. But the rustic is not so critical, and uncanny spectacles may be witnessed in the neighbourhood of this huge and solitary cromlech, the worst of all, perhaps, being when the devil himself arrives with eight white oxen at midnight and makes futile efforts to pull it down, while a white rabbit, with lurid coals for eyes, sits on the top stone as the presiding genius of the scene. Again it used to be an article of faith that if water was poured at night into any of the hollows of the roof-stone, it would always be found drained to the last drop in the morning by some demon.

All about here, in secluded valleys, in spite of steady and even quite recent onslaughts, the "grey wethers" still lie thick. For in addition to local demands, the bridge over the Thames at Windsor, was built of stones from Clatford Bottom. And here is Fyfield, whose short street of old-fashioned sarsen, flint and thatched cottages, and ancient church with elm-shaded graveyard, and lych-gate opening to the road, would have entirely failed to secure even a fraction of the notoriety that Alec Taylor's training-stables have bestowed on it. I can just remember a famous horse, called Savernake, that was expected to put untold wealth into the pockets of every farmer and tradesman in Marlborough, but did the other thing. I have no doubt this catastrophe has been retrieved and possibly repeated many times since those distant days. Fyfield was a surreptitious haunt of the sporting schoolboy in the days of individual enterprise. Wonderful tips and mysterious interviews were darkly hinted at by young gentlemen who affected

tight trousers, which sometimes produced other mysterious and less promising interviews with those in authority over them. It was on the down about Fyfield, too, that King Charles's army was encamped when he himself lay at Marlborough.

Lockeridge lies yonder across the narrow vale, and Overton follows with its high-perched church. There are no country houses carrying family or land-owning interests in all this wide region. Indeed, before leaving for good this two hundred and fifty square miles, speaking in round figures, of which Marlborough is the centre, it might be worth noting, for the benefit of readers who care for rural economics, that I, for my part, know no part of England or Wales, and no town of tolerable importance, that presents such a curious spectacle; for within that radius there is not a single squire. The illustrious family seated in Savernake and their connections by no means own the whole of this spacious territory, but what they do not is owned either in small tracts or by absentees without a residence or any local significance. I believe the situation to be almost, if not quite, unique in this particular upon the map of England. Here and there is a residential or sporting tenant, but there are no squires. There is the marquis, the town, and the college, the latter's being interests for this reason and for others more identified with the district than is usual in such cases. Then there are the parsons and the big farmers, occasionally freeholders; but the strong landed interest of a number of resident or even represented squires, which is the leading note in every division of all counties, even the wildest, known to me is absolutely non-existent between the vales of Pewsey and Swindon, or between Ramsbury and Devizes, which last places are twenty miles apart.

Where the Bath road surmounts the long, high ridge, known as Seven Barrows hill, and looks down upon West Kennet, Avebury, and Silbury, we are well among the tumuli and on the open down. The seven barrows in question lie near at hand. Numbers more, too, can be seen upon the

skyline, and among them one of those other "long barrows," which are thought to be the work of an earlier race, or, at least of much earlier day than the far more numerous smaller mounds, whether of the plain or the bell-shaped variety. In the long barrows, which are, roughly speaking, the shape of potato pits, though of varying width, and, in a few instances, over a hundred yards in length, the skulls found are of the dolichocephalic type, while those from the round barrows are as usually brachycephalic. I admit these words are sufficient to make the layman in such matters turn over this page at once, if not skip the chapter, which I must therefore hasten to say will drop into a lighter vein anon. They gave me some trouble myself at one time, in spite of a long apprenticeship in Welsh topography, which is calculated to promote a familiarity with words of ten or fifteen syllables, and demoralize one's elementary spelling. But the former of these terms is applied to the long-skulled men of Iberian stock, who are the first known inhabitants of this island; comparatively short men, too, as their skeletons prove. The other is used to distinguish the round-headed men of larger frame, and of Gallic or Belgic affinities—Celts, in short—who are thought to have crossed the Channel and driven the others into the West, or enslaved them, and treated them generally in much the same fashion as they themselves, some centuries later, were treated by the Saxons. The long-headed men belonged wholly to the stone or neolithic age. No bronze implements, nor any articles of delicate workmanship, are ever found in the place of their sepulture. Moreover, the measurement of fifty male skeletons, taken at various times from the long barrows, averaged five feet six inches. In the round and bell-shaped barrows, on the other hand, with the bones of the round-headed men are found implements and weapons of bronze, also gold ornaments of delicate work, mixed with tools of flint and stone, for it is held that the Stone Age overlapped the Bronze for long years, during which both materials were used. The measurements of other fifty skeletons, taken from the round barrows, averaged five feet nine inches, showing a much larger and, indeed,



altogether a finer race. Nor, again, in the long barrows, where numbers of persons were apparently laid together, is there any sign of cremation, whereas most of the burials in the others were single ones, and the bodies had generally, but not always, been burned. Chambers of whatever hard material was available, were usually constructed before heaping the earth over the dead, and in the sarsen country cists of these large stones were built immediately over the corpses. In the long barrows, remains are always found near the higher and broader end which generally points towards the east. The skeletons of the round barrows, when perfect, have usually been found in a cramped position on the side, with knees updrawn. The bones of animals, too—oxen, dogs, sheep, and the antlers of deer—are frequently found in these ancient graves.

Besides what are termed the primary burials, much later deposits of bones are found in the barrows, showing that they were constantly utilized as late as Roman and Saxon times, not perhaps by persons of distinction, but by private individuals, who doubtless held that their remains would be safer there from the desecrating plough, and would presumably lie in valiant company, and in more or less hallowed soil.

There is a delightful backward outlook from hence over the line of little villages we have passed through, nestling in their green trough between the bare enfolding hills, and at the end of the vista, four or five miles away, the slender spire of the chapel, shooting above the wooded horizon, marks the site of Marlborough. Ahead of us, the wilder downs are opening into ample distances, while the road dips to West Kennet, where we left it in the last chapter, and runs quickly thence to the foot of Silbury, which no man ever passes for the first time, I should hope, without rendering up some sort of tribute to its mysterious majesty.

There are no poet's grottoes, nor any spiral walks, nor clinging woodland, no feudal nor early Georgian traditions attached to Silbury, as to its fellow mound at Marlborough; it is as grim and naked as in that remote age when the turf first clothed it. Together with its encircling ditch, it covers



an area of five acres, and is a hundred and seventy feet high. Though Charles the Second and his brother James, it will be remembered, did accomplish the feat, it is quite a stiff scramble to its summit, from whence you may look down upon Avebury, but a mile away. As already noted, this colossal effort of prehistoric ages has no equal in Europe; its purpose still defies the wit of man, and controversy has raged around it for generations. The wiser men of to-day admit defeat, or rather venture their theories with the modesty that distinguishes the modern antiquarian, in the complete absence of proof, from the fearless dogmatism of many of his predecessors, and the interior of Silbury, though searched diligently by skill and science, has yielded up no such proofs. Whether it is the tomb of some matchless chieftain, a monument to some potent god, or merely a part of the great design and scheme of Avebury, will never be revealed. The peasant decided long ago that it was the tomb of a certain King Sel, a monarch with whom I can claim no sort of acquaintance. When I was last there a shepherd had just accomplished the feat of getting his flock of down sheep through the gate, and as they raced along in a big bunch after the manner of their kind, with bells tinkling, and tearing eagerly at this fresh sample of pasture that grew in the moat, he was taking a well-earned leisure on the bank, his coat and crook and dog beside him, and in sociable mood.

“Yes, zur, it’s a turr’ble big mound, vor zart’n. A nashun sight of volks come yer to look at’n; I doan’t take much notice of her myself, but I’ve heerd my feyther tell as they druv a hole into her innards onc’t, an’ vound zummat or awther.”

And so they did more than once. In 1723 some workmen, planting trees, of which there is now no trace, on the summit, found a skeleton near the surface, which Doctor Stukeley, whose imagination was stronger than his balance in these matters, hailed at once as the great King Sel, and the faith of the shepherd in his Majesty waxed more robust than ever. Primary burials, however, lay at the bottom, not at the top of tumuli, and the learned doctor’s theories fell to the ground before the cold light of reason. Silbury was opened again,

however, in 1766, by the Duke of Northumberland and Colonel Drax, with the help of some miners from the Mendips. They began at the top on this occasion, and drove a shaft downwards. There appears to have been considerable excitement in the antiquarian world about this second effort, but it resulted in nothing more than a slip of oak wood. In 1849, Dean Merewether, of Hereford, took up the matter again, and drove a tunnel in from the side, but only met with some ox and red deer bones and some sarsen stones. This was the last operation Silbury had to submit to, and the scars are yet upon its sides.

Welsh sages have had their say on it, but resorted to literature rather than the pickaxe for evidence, and discovered in the fourteenth triad that Avebury is one of the "primary circles of Britain," which seems fairly obvious, so far as it is not enigmatical, and that Silbury is the "Cludair Cyvrangon," or "Heap of Assemblies," which also is beyond question, unless it was raised in one night by the devil—another local theory. The Rev. W. L. Bowles, the poet and antiquary of Bremhill, had stout theories regarding the god Mercury, connecting everything possible in this neighbourhood with that deity, Silbury being a hill temple in his honour. One writer of repute thinks it was part of the sun worship, with which Avebury may have been connected, and that a fire was kept always burning on its summit. Another holds it to have been the base of a castle or fort; while the late Mr. Duke, of Lake House, Amesbury, a well-known antiquary, held that all these works on the Wiltshire downs are a vast planetarium, and that Silbury represents the earth. It was obviously raised before the Roman occupation, as the Roman road from Bath, or *Aquæ Solis*, to Marlborough makes a detour in getting round it. The reader will understand, therefore, that I cannot give him any satisfaction concerning Silbury hill, and he must be content, like the late Canon Jackson, who was as well qualified as any one to pronounce on the matter, to dismiss it with the pertinent quotation, "Factum absit, monumenta manent."

Beckhampton lies immediately beyond, a pretty, almost

model hamlet, where the road forks to Devizes and Calne, respectively, in both cases shedding all sign of enclosure, and facing for many miles the bleak and lonely down. This is the stage that old-time travellers between London and Bath held in such pious horror, both for snowdrifts and highwaymen. But when pursued to-day, upon a summer morning, or an hour before sunset, is to me, at any rate, always a great delight. A rugged old coaching inn still looks the part it must have played in so important an oasis. Otherwise Beckhampton harbours few people, but those devoted to the training of the thoroughbred and the cult of the greyhound. A cheerful red-brick Georgian house, with well-kept grass-plots and flower-beds, and large stables behind, parts the Calne and Devizes roads, and a fine row of spreading beech-trees gives a touch of warmth and luxuriance unexpected in this windy and remote spot. With the exception of a cottage or two and some buildings about in the meadow below, devoted doubtless to the service of the racehorse, this is about all there is of Beckhampton, a name so familiar to generations of English sportsmen. Coursing is not so generally popular as it was in the days when Master MacGrath won the Waterloo cup. However great the interest that may still centre at Altcar, the greyhound has lost popularity in the country generally within my memory. Even in these Wiltshire downs, the best coursing country in England, and still the most prolific in hares, the meetings are not what they were; while of private coursing for pure sport, in the fashion once followed by farmers and squires, there has been I fancy for some time next to none. It is curious, too, when slow hunting on foot with every kind of scenting dog down to the minutest possible, and, that often too in dull heavily enclosed tillage countries is so fashionable, that so stimulating a pastime as coursing the hare in an open country should have dropped out.

The Devizes road, as I have indicated, shoots away from Beckhampton at once into the open, and pursues a direct and gently undulating course till it disappears over the edge of the downland above Bishops Cannings, some five miles distant.

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As we rise the short hill to the watershed on the other and the Calne road we can look right up this wide trough between the downs towards Devizes, bare and bleak enough in its winter garments of brown and grey, with patches of snow generally lingering in the northern hollows. But now it is brilliant with the saffron blaze of the charlock in the growing grain fields, and dappled here and there with great squares of purple sanfoin ; a fine patchwork of colour at this season, and not the less effective for the almost complete absence of hedgerow or woodland.

And away beyond the grassy downs roll in long ridges towards the brink of the Pewsey vale, while that lonely ridge yonder, the highest land of all, a thousand feet, save thirty, above sea-level, and overlooking half Wiltshire, is Tan hill, or St. Anne's hill, the scene of an annual sheep fair and merry-making on every 6th of August, from time immemorial. Beyond Tan hill a chain of prehistoric fortresses look down on the Pewsey vale and across to others on Salisbury Plain, till, after the most eastern and perhaps the most imposing one of Martinsell, the great plateau gradually subsides into the bosky shades of distant Savernake. Hence issues the Wansdyke, striding towards us over hill and dale, and easily visible from hereabouts, as it descends the lower ridges of Tan hill, crosses the Devizes road at Shepherd's Shore, and climbs the eastern steep of Roundaway and Morgan's hill like some colossal furrow drawn by oxen of the megalithian period with a Titan holding the plough handles.

The run from Beckhampton down to Calne is a continuous but gentle descent of five miles, a stretch beloved by coach drivers of old, when the elements were kind and under similar conditions, one of the most inspiring bits of road in all Wiltshire. For much of the distance one is on the wide open down, traversing the north-western slope of the chalk country. To the left are the round barrows breaking the now contracted sky line, the wandering bunches of sheep, the wheeling plovers, the friendly white-tailed wheatears, and skylarks innumerable filling the air with song. Away below, far in the rear, is the



wide platform of the lower chalk, lit up for miles with its gay characteristic colouring of June, where you can mark the villages of past acquaintance—Avebury, Broad Hinton, the Winterbournes, and others—set in their dark circle of trees upon its breezy, sunny, fenceless surface. Above it, again, the northern rampart of the Marlborough downs curves away into those dim tufted heights where we stood so lately discoursing upon Richard Jefferies.

This long and gentle slope may nowadays be enjoyed at leisure, but it was quite a recognized preserve of the eighteenth-century highwayman. When one celebrity or gang were run to earth and hung in a gibbet from a gallows, which stood here long after their terror had vanished, another took their place to make a little fortune or a sinister reputation upon so profitable a beat. For between Beckhampton and Cherhill there is not a house within possible hail, and in those days, at any rate, there was galloping ground in every direction for the knights of the road. The records of the men who haunted this most eligible section of the old Bath road are in part preserved. I wish there were space to touch on the story of some of them. Tom Dobell rode this country at one time, while down in the far south-west of Wales, tourists still visit the cave of Twm Shon Catti in the wilds of the Towy valley, and among the local legends of this madcap, who was not a highwayman, but concerned himself rather with their discomfiture, is an exploit of his performed near this very spot.

Now Twm, or Tom, was the illegitimate son of a Welsh magnate and a Cardiganshire peasant woman. His courage, quick wit, and eccentricity, made him a favourite with the gentry there, and, indeed, has gained him local immortality. On this occasion he was riding to London with a sum of gold for one of his patrons, disguised as a rustic Welsh clown, and mounted on a sorry pony. He had reached what sounds like Beckhampton, and in the inn there discovered, in suspicious converse with the landlady, an obvious highwayman, who regarded him with unmistakable interest. Tom, greatly put to it, proceeded to pull some gold out of his saddle-pocket



before their eyes, and then pressed it back again as if for greater security. He then rode away, and as quickly as possible transferred the cash to his pocket. In due course he perceived the highwayman following him, and as he approached, jumped off his horse, ungirthed his saddle, and flung it conspicuously into a pond of water in a field by the roadside and rode slowly on. The highwayman, secure, so he fancied, of his prize, hitched up his horse, and adventured the pond in pursuit of the well-stored saddle. Tom, who had in the mean time remained within sight, now rode back, as if to beg consideration, to where the highwayman's horse was tied, when, leaping suddenly on to its back, he galloped away to Marlborough, not only with his cash in hand, but a thoroughbred horse into the bargain.

The Welsh chronicle says that the horse was identified as Tom Dobell's, and that the people of Marlborough made a hero of Twm and fêted him royally. He sold the horse for a good sum, and reassuming his disguise, reached London in safety. I have only the Welsh version of this story, for the Marlborough people have quite forgotten Twm Shon Catti's meteoric performance in their midst.

Mr. Wayland has left us several biographical sketches of Wiltshire highwaymen, and Mr. Marsh, latest historian of Calne, has naturally something to say of the perils of this bit of road, relating, among other things, that one member of what was known as the Cherhill gang, had a fancy for carrying on his operations in a state of nature. This original bandit held that the shock delivered to a potential victim by a naked man riding down on him in the moonlight was so great that the chance of any resistance was greatly minimized. When one thinks of it, and of how thickly the tombs of prehistoric man are strewn along this road, the sudden apparition of a resuscitated British warrior at your carriage window might well have lowered the vitality of the bravest soul. Another story relates to Serjeant Merewether, who, while driving home after securing the acquittal of one of the same gang by a great forensic effort, was robbed by the very man whose life he had saved. One,

Charles Taylor, the same authority tells us, was convicted at the Wiltshire Assize of 1743 for relieving an Ogbourne farmer and another person of seventy pounds, and, as he refused to plead, was ordered to suffer the punishment of *Peine forte et dure*. This originally entailed pressing to death with heavy weights, but by the highwayman period it had been reduced to screwing up the thumbs with whipcord. Taylor held out till the whipcord broke, but ultimately succumbed. The object of this apparently superfluous exhibition of fortitude was to save his property for his family—a concession made to those who endured tortures before execution. Otherwise it was forfeited to the crown.

The Bath road drops down into the low country again at Cherhill, and under the very shadow of Cherhill down, on whose crest is Oldbury camp. This is of a nearly square formation, and on its inner sides has still a deep double ditch and high earthwork remaining. There is some idea of its having been raised by the Danes. On the other hand, it commands many miles of the Wansdyke and the presumably Belgic fortresses which lay behind it, so it may have been a stronghold of the little long-headed Iberians, whence they could hold in check any further aggressiveness on the part of the big, round-headed Celts squatted on Ryborough and Martinsell, and everywhere on Salisbury Plain. In short, unless its shape forbid the notion, it would seem one of the same chain as Barbury and Liddington, so easily visible from it. Nowadays, it celebrates the House of Fitzmaurice rather than Edward VII., whom they meant to honour by a lofty obelisk, erected at his birth by the last Marquis of Lansdowne within the ramparts. This is a conspicuous landmark all over Wiltshire, and is known as the Lansdowne Column. On the face of the steep down hard by us is the most artistic white horse in Wiltshire, a fine high-stepping farmer's cob. It was carved in 1780 by an enterprising physician of Calne upon generous lines, being forty yards long and fifty feet high, thrice the size of the Marlborough Horse, but not half the dimensions of the wonderful sea-serpent-looking monster which the

Saxons really cut at Uffington. The architect of the Cherhill horse laid out the work through a speaking-trumpet from a point a mile away, his workmen sticking in flags according to his directions. If he was not a Saxon he was at least a good draughtsman and surveyor, and his proud-looking white cob, kept well scoured, does him credit. These really striking heights of Oldbury are sometimes mixed up with the great battle against the Danes, fought by Alfred at Edington, near Westbury; for the village of Heddington lies just below to the westward, and some writers, not content with the distinction it already possesses as the Roman Veluccio, have unduly credited it with being the scene of the glorious victory of Alfred the Great.

Cherhill itself is a most charming village, and affords one of those sudden and delightful contrasts which are such a leading note in Wiltshire scenery; the passing in a moment, that is to say, from the grassy wastes of down, whether lit by the purples and saffrons of June or the green and gold of blowing turnip fields and harvest time, to the luxuriance of oak and elm, and rich paddocks, and shady lanes. Cherhill is in a hollow rich with such verdure and the bloom of orchards, and a great profusion of old-fashioned cottages with thatched roofs and timbered walls scattered promiscuously about among the foliage. Its little church, set on the foot of a wooded hill, is of thirteenth and fourteenth century date, and an old manor-house stands hard by, also an immense tithe barn, only a century younger than the church, and one hundred and ten feet long, with a quite remarkable pointed oak roof.

Hence it is a two-mile run downhill to Calne, and the cyclist, though he may get punctured on the smooth flint roads of the downs, will find a lamentable falling off in comfort when he drops down on to the hard but lumpy surface of Bristol rock, which distinguishes many of the lowland and leafier highways of North Wilts. Indeed I could not give a stranger, bent on voyages of pleasure and discovery in the Wiltshire mainly treated of in this book, better advice than to take a saddle horse and stick to it, a suggestion I

should hesitate to make in any other county in England known to me, for road riding, even with intermittent relief, is poor work. But the horse is not available to the majority for various reasons, not the least being that so many people nowadays cannot ride. The walking, too, is everywhere delightful, but with many it has its obvious limitations, so I should like to add that all over the downs are green tracks, some of which a cyclist may use freely, and often traverse with almost the comfort of a macadamized road.

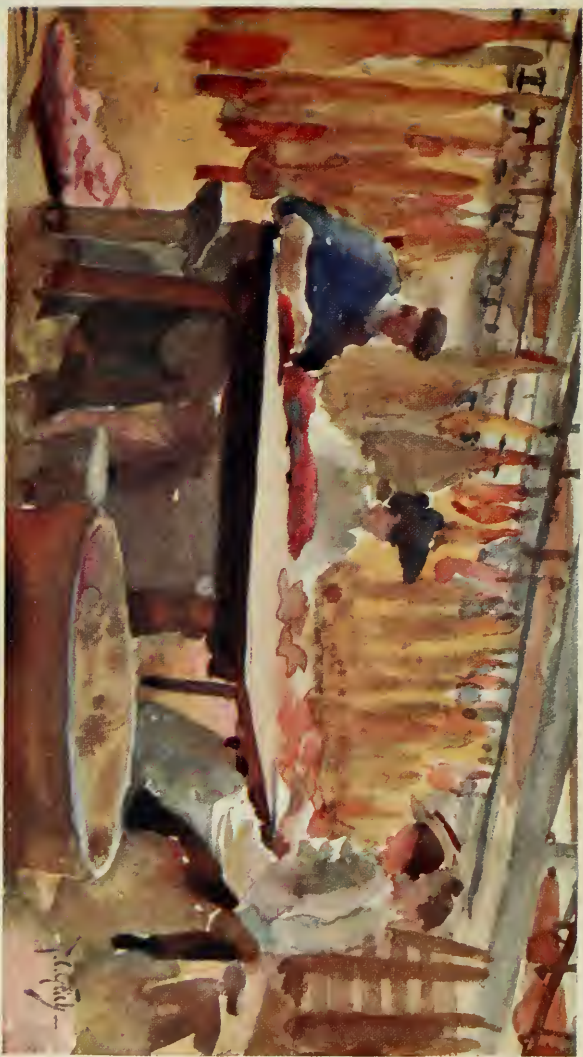
To the left of the road approaching Calne is a broken, wooded strip of country hugging the foot of the down, over which, and crossing the Wansdyke, a track leads to Devizes. Here are some pretty and secluded nooks, and the little fifteenth-century church of Calstone set among them is a fitting spot for a curious, mural tribute to one of the old Bath road coachmen.

“ While passengers of every age  
 With care I drove from stage to stage,  
 Death's sable hearse pass'd by unseen,  
 And stop'd the course with my machine.”

In a hollow below the church the little trout stream of the Marden, fresh from its birth in the chalk steeps above, turns the wheel of a rustic mill. Near by is Blackland Manor, an ancient seat of the once potent Hungerfords, as Calstone was of the Ducketts, though now on another site. In the grounds is a diminutive church, with lych-gate and bell-cot. The principal feature of its interior till quite recently was of social rather than antiquarian curiosity. For about one hundred and twenty years ago, the squire of Blackland, with a more than common fancy for saying his prayers in private, had a large room built out, entered by a private outside door, and on the inside shut off from the rest of the church by a lofty screen. Here, with table and chairs and a good fire, this devotee made himself comfortable. But when the estate passed into other hands fifty years ago, the rector persuaded the new owner to dispense with this somewhat unecclesiastical establishment, giving him in exchange two pews in the chancel. The old







A BACON FACTORY

Adam, however, proved too strong, and the passion for being able to sleep comfortably beyond the scrutiny of parson and dependents grew so strong upon the new squire, that he, too, proceeded to intrench himself within a loose box of noble proportions. For the sake of that uniformity which was strong within the early Victorians, at any cost, another horse-box to match the squire's was fashioned opposite it. Between these bulky monuments of self-conscious pomposity which obscured the east end, the modern worshippers of Blackland squeezed their way to the altar.

Calne, commonly called "Cann" by the ancients on the highway, has now only about two thousand four hundred souls. It sprang into importance in the middle ages through that cloth industry which was till recent years the main support of so many Wiltshire towns. Its rapid decline before the great organized industries of the North was happily arrested by the Harris family of pork notoriety, and Calne is now the chief seat of that admirable product, Wiltshire bacon. It enjoys a pleasant situation, with the downs upon the south-east, Bowood Park with its three miles of sward and timber touching its gates on another side, and high wooded ridges sheltering it from the north. It has no particular architectural merit, unless a quite remarkable irregularity of plan and variety of style counts for such. It enjoys, however, the distinction of some pre-Norman importance, and of having been the scene of a most dramatic episode in history, one indeed which could only have been surpassed, had Guy Fawkes had his way.

For in the year 978 the friction between the party both in the Church and out of it who favoured clerical celibacy and those who resisted it ran very high. The secular, and indeed many of the monastic clergy had fallen back into the liberties of the old British Church, and taken unto themselves wives.

Archbishop Dunstan was a fierce opponent of such lapses, and got the consent of the king to hold a Witan at Winchester, for the purpose of enforcing the views of himself and his party. But the Winchester meeting, dissolving itself in an uproar, was adjourned to Calne, as is supposed, because the

king was then residing there. So the Witan met here, in a large upper room, and fell to with the same wealth of invective as had broken up the assembly at Winchester. Bishop Bearnhelme, who led the seculars or anti-celibates, had just overwhelmed Dunstan with his convincing rhetoric, and the old man seemed inclined to call a truce when the floor of the building suddenly gave way, and the entire assembly were precipitated amid the falling timbers on to the floor below; all except the archbishop, whom we may fairly imagine to have been left astride of a beam. However, the damage to life and limb was considerable, scarcely one of these early English legislators escaping with a whole skin except his Grace, and of course the celibates swore it was a judgment of Heaven on the loose doctrines expounded by their opponents, the suspending of their own chief on a friendly beam giving really good point to their argument. The people generally took this view, and supported the Reformers effectually. The other party, however, declared the whole thing was ingeniously contrived by the clever archbishop. But it was of no use, Heaven had clearly intervened, and the vexatious regulations regarding wives and families were proceeded with.

Flemings were introduced into Wiltshire by Edward III. for weaving purpose, and again by Henry VII., many of both batches settling at Calne, which, being handy to such great sheep-walks became, as already mentioned, a notable centre of the clothing trade. In Elizabeth's time, Evelyn tells us, that humorous old knight, Sir Edward Duckett, being anxious to shift his deer from Bowood to Spye Park, drove them over the three-quarters of a mile of intervening country between two walls of Calne cloth.

Calne was represented in Parliament till the last Redistribution Act, the present Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice very appropriately winding up a list of members, which had included many distinguished names. Among these are Pym, Colonel Barrè, Townshend, Jeykell, Lord Henry Petty, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three, Abercromby,

Speaker of the House of Commons, Fenwick Williams, the hero of Kars, Robert Lowe, and last to be mentioned, but not least, Lord Macaulay. This is very creditable for a pocket-borough. Still, one must remember that Lord Shelburne, who became the Marquis of Lansdowne, and his immediate successors were men of discrimination, taste, and broad minds. Nor was Calne, perhaps, quite so much of a pocket-borough after all, as powerful civic families arose among the clothiers, who, by intermarriage and connected interests, had everything their own way in Calne itself, and no doubt exacted and received due consideration in the selection of a representative.

The history of Calne is neither so dramatic nor so feudal as that of Marlborough. It is quite different, and for that very reason nothing could illustrate the intense individuality of our country towns, and in a more complete fashion, than do these two old parliamentary boroughs, but a dozen miles apart. Bowood, of course, has exercised considerable influence over Calne since Lord Shelburne bought the property, and made it one of the great places of England. The Ducketts of more provincial type had swayed the borough, from Calstone and Blackland, for two centuries, and no doubt in good hearty and provincial fashion. I do not fancy their hospitalities, like those of their successors, were at all of a catholic or cosmopolitan type, nor did they apparently seek out celebrities, or potential celebrities, for their political favours, but in this respect seem to have been quite sufficient unto themselves, representing the borough in their own persons in no less than seventeen parliaments, if the Calne statisticians are accurate. That the humour of the old knight who drove his deer between streets of Calne cloth was not wholly extinct in his descendants may be inferred from the title alone of a family record, classified as "Ducketiana," which if it were easily available, and life was long enough, I should like to read. Another Duckett seems to have been a resourceful joker, for when the Parliamentarians besieged him in Calstone, and burned his house, he escaped through their ranks in the disguise of a corpse in a hearse.



Indeed, I am not sure if it is correct to speak of Calne as a pocket-borough, under the Lansdowne *régime*, as Robert Lowe (Lord Sherbrooke) seems to have gained the seat at the peril literally of his life, so rough were the elections at that time. Moreover, the word seems to jar a little in conjunction with the wide-minded traditions of the ruling house.

Calne was not greatly concerned with the Civil War, though it felt the effects of the fighting round Devizes, Marlborough, and elsewhere, and was frequently requisitioned for men and supplies, to its great annoyance. The collapse of the cloth trade needs no elaboration of detail here, the causes to any one interested in such things will be obvious enough, but the rise of the bacon industry is not without its little romance, if so much may be conceded to a pig.

It was just a hundred years ago, that the first Harris began the bacon-curing business in Calne. Before the day of railroads, great droves of Irish swine used to be driven this way from Bristol to London, and from these the Harris's got their meat. When the Irish potato famine stopped the supplies from that country, the prospects of this enterprising family looked dismal. One of them, however, went to America, and took to slaughtering hogs there, and shipping them to England. The first year was successful, but the second so very much the reverse, that he abandoned the enterprise and returned to Calne. He had learned in America, however, the use of ice, and the feasibility by this means of killing and curing pork throughout the summer, a practice hitherto never followed in England. The Harrises now introduced the system into Wiltshire; they also took out a patent for their process, and built up the business which is now not only the chief factor in Calne's existence, but has ramifications throughout the world. A hundred and twenty thousand pigs are killed here annually, and an army of workmen employed, who to a great extent wear wooden clogs and blue smocks, giving on occasions no little character to the streets of Calne.

The park of Bowood, which is about three miles across, touches Calne, though the chief entrance is two miles away on



Derry hill. It is part of the old Pewsham Forest, which covered a large area in the early Stewart period, and is finely timbered, and has a picturesque broken surface. This tract was purchased by the Earl of Shelburne, Lord Lansdowne's ancestor, from Sir Orlando Bridgeman, who had bought it from the Crown. This distinguished statesman built the magnificent Italian mansion, which his successors have still further embellished within and without, and upon which I shall not attempt here to enlarge. An admirable book might no doubt be written concerning the comparatively modern architectural splendours, and the innumerable treasures collected therein of the many great historic mansions of the North-West Wilts lowland. An abbreviated catalogue of the exterior and interior glories of these stately fabrics, of their paintings and statuary, of their bric-a-brac and marbles, of importations or replicas from Italy, Holland, France, and Spain is inevitable to a guide book, but this is not a guide book. Such cataloguing on these pages would be vexatious, both to reader and author. To attempt more would be hopeless within our space as well as out of harmony with the mood of the writer, who professes no skill whatever as a cicerone, around picture-galleries or museums, even though they happen to be in Wiltshire. Furthermore, the majority of such collections are not accessible, or only rarely accessible, to the stranger, which perhaps makes any such cataloguing the more futile. When they are thus accessible, an elaborate account of their treasures, compiled by a local expert, can usually be purchased for sixpence.

The beautiful park of Bowood, however, is open to the public both on foot and wheels, the cycle, owing I believe to some outrageous performance on the part of a badgewearing pacemaker many years ago, is tabooed. A trifling incident always comes back to my memory in the presence of Bowood, for it recalls the hearty spirit of rivalry which characterized country cricket long ago. On this occasion Calne and Marlborough towns were pitted against each other in Bowood Park, and the former under the captaincy of its parliamentary representative, with certain defeat staring it immediately in the face,

refused to send its last two or three victims to be laid low by our irresistible attack on account of a shower of rain, to the great disgust and strenuous protests of those in the field. The M.P., who exercised feudal as well as parliamentary authority, drew the stumps with his own hand, in summary and impetuous fashion, and it was just as well, perhaps, that the voters of Marlborough were not concerned with his next election.

The first Lord Shelburne, as already noted, was the original purchaser of the property of which Bowood became the famous centre. He was a Fitzmaurice of the illustrious stock of the House of Kerry. His son and successor was, at twenty-six, chief of the Board of Trade, the equivalent of colonial secretary, and at twenty-nine secretary of state. His period of activity was that important one from the close of the seven years' war, and the beginning of George the Third's reign, to the end of the American war. He was created Marquis of Lansdowne in 1784, and Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice has written an interesting biography of his celebrated ancestor. Bowood became in his time a notable resort of men distinguished in every branch of life. Dr. Priestly there prosecuted his discoveries throughout many years. Benjamin Franklin, Jeremy Bentham, Dr. Johnson, and Mirabeau were among the many guests. As a debater the first marquis was regarded as second only to Chatham, of whom he was a devoted follower and admirer. The impartial Stanhope attributes to him a great gift for affairs, and profound knowledge of foreign policy, and notes also his particular skill in managing his own estates and private concerns. He achieved, however, a reputation for insincerity, which is attributed to his extraordinary elaboration of manner and address, and overstrained courtesy, which Englishmen never understood, and which in Shelburne's case seems to have been too much even for the French. I felt myself some added interest in revisiting Bowood, as, in pursuit of information in no way connected with Wiltshire, I was fresh from the perusal of Lord Shelburne's despatches to America, embalmed in the colonial correspondence at the Record Office. It was a time of peril, and we had then the only great

pro-consul who ever served us beyond the Atlantic, when pro-consuls had real responsibility, to wit, Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester. Shelburne was a big enough man to see this, and to gauge the limitations of his own situation. Small men, with high-sounding names but with limitations of character as well as of environment, followed, and so did disaster, very quickly personified by Burgoyne.

Bowood was built by the first Lord Shelburne, and added to later in the shape of an immense wing, said to be after Diocletian's palace at Spalatro. The gardens were laid out by Capability Brown, and it would be superfluous to add, perhaps, that the present owner is the late foreign secretary. S. T. Coleridge resided for some time at Calne, in a house of a hospitable Bristol merchant who lived there. One does not hear of him in connection with the hospitalities of Bowood. The opium habit, which was particularly strong upon him during this unhappy period, may perhaps, have been the cause. Calne church is a fine and capacious building, with double aisles to both chancel and nave. The columns and arches of the latter are transition-Norman, quite rich in moulding, both billet and dog-tooth. In 1645, an original tower fell on the chancel as so many did in Wiltshire, and elsewhere, and both were rebuilt. At the base of the corbels supporting the fine oak roof are the effigies of kings and abbots alternating. I noticed with interest a modern east window to a recent Hungerford, once perhaps the most powerful family in Wiltshire, now locally extinct, even in name, while the chief monument in the church bears the name of another once famous race in these parts, that of the Ernles, or Ernleys.

## CHAPTER VII

### BREMHILL, MALMESBURY, AND LACOCK

I FOUND myself more than once last summer, during these Wiltshire wanderings, in Malmesbury. A single visit stimulated the desire for another; an impulse mainly due to the attractions of the place itself, for the roads approaching it leave, as I have already had the temerity to remark, no great impression on the memory, pleasant enough though it be on a summer day to travel through a well-timbered pastoral country and through quiet villages full of years and almost untouched by the stir of modern life. Going there by way of Calne, on one occasion, I had a fancy to see Bremhill, lying as it does a little off the direct road, on a luxuriant hilltop, the extremity, in fact, of a protracted ridge, which runs westward from Wootton Bassett. I had another reason, however, or rather two, over and above the picturesque situation of the village for this digression. One of these was an attenuated little book of sonnets, published in 1794 as his first effort, by the Rev. W. Lisle Bowles, "late of Trinity College, Oxford," that had come fortuitously into my possession years ago; the other, and more stimulating one, a history of the parish of Bremhill, written thirty years later, by the same author, who had, in the mean time, been installed as its vicar. The sonnets, I admit, had remained unread till the parish history of Bremhill and its neighbourhood had promoted some interest in the poet.

Now, Mr. Bowles, "Billy Bowles," had many admirers as a minor poet in his day, and none, perhaps, more fervent than himself. I confess I found his prose more entertaining than his

verse, if only for its suggestive glimpses of rural life in Wiltshire, eighty years ago. The route I followed to Bremhill, not quite the shortest one, passes at a point two miles from Calne, the site and scant remains of Stanley abbey, which was founded by Henry the Second and his mother, the Empress Matilda, for a group of Cistercian monks out of the Isle of Wight. It grew to be quite a powerful establishment, and at the dissolution was purchased by the Bayntons of Spye Park, who held their heads high in Wiltshire till the last century, and lie on an altar tomb, in warlike panoply and with "feet upon the hound" in many country churches.

There is nothing now remaining of the abbey but a few old stones in the walls of a farm-house, a stone coffin used as a pig-trough, some remains of fish-ponds, and some ill-defined grass-grown foundations. These lie in a quiet, almost lonely, valley, if so much may be said of one penetrated by an unassuming branch railroad. I did not go to see this forlorn site altogether for the sake of the Empress Matilda, or the vanished Cistercians; but in another place I have concerned myself somewhat with a remarkable gang of gentlemen outlaws from the Welsh border, whose doings are so delightfully set forth in a quaint mediæval chronicle, "The romance of Fulke Fitzwarrenne." It is the story of a Marcher baron, who, falling out with King John, took, so to speak, to the road with a band of companions, partly as the victims of confiscation, and partly from sheer devilment and high spirits. They raided up and down England and Wales for a year or more, even playing practical jokes betimes, and in various disguises on the king's sacred person. This so-called romance, written in Norman French, purports to be fact, and is of almost contemporary origin. It is much the best thing of its kind, within my knowledge, that we have from those times, while a most valuable testimony to its general veracity is an entry in the cartulary of Stanley abbey, to the effect that Fitzwarrenne was at length run to earth here by a great company of Wiltshiremen, on July 2, 1201, and forced to surrender "into the king's peace." Fulke was



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pardoned, and became a pillar of law and order on the Welsh Marches and a vigorous fighter against Welshmen, dying ultimately in his bed, and in the odour of sanctity, at his baronial castle in Shropshire.

Bremhill lies on the hill just above. It is a rural village of the usual old Wiltshire type, but its chief interest lies in the church for the sake of its antiquity, and in the adjoining vicarage for its association with the somewhat eccentric celebrity who lived there for so long, and the many famous people who then passed under its portals. I was a trifle unfortunate in my visit here, as, on entering the picturesque churchyard, I was taken bodily possession of by a rustic, who rose upon me unawares out of the depths of an almost finished grave. I thought for a moment I had encountered one of those treasures in the way of a sexton that combine entertainment with instruction. I discovered too late, however, that I had given myself away to a bucolic amateur, whose thirst, a venial one considering his occupation, and the exceptional heat of the day, had been liberally ministered to, but was obviously not quenched. Hence his air of authority, though the keys, I discovered too late, were actually in the door of the church, and my captor knew less than nothing about its interior.

The building was much injured by restoration fifty years ago, a carved rood screen being destroyed among other vandalisms. In a corner of the tower there is some "long and short" work, presumably Saxon, and there is also a curious bell-cot on the roof of the nave and a perpendicular south porch with groined roof and a chamber above it. The arcade of the nave, which was rebuilt from the old material, is in the pointed style. My cicerone, who in the temporary absence of the sexton had thus thrust himself for the moment into his place, was not informing. The bell-cot had "bin yer a main long time," so had the pillars of the nave, so had the font (a cylindrical one of the twelfth century), so had the graves of the Hungerfords, so even had the present vicar, since dead. Chronology was not one of my friend's strong

points, stupidity was obviously his forte, and beer his solace. At last, I thought that he, too, had been here long enough, and when I presented him with an ill-earned sixpence, it was quite evident that on this point at least we were at one, from the celerity with which he made, not for his unfinished grave, but for more sociable quarters. I like the Wiltshire rustic, partly for his dialect, which cannot be properly reproduced, for the hearty relish with which he burrs it round and round his tongue, and thrusts his lower jaw out as he hangs lovingly on his vowels, both broad and flat. I like him, too, for his supposed simplicity, and the assumed stupidity, which has given him a certain distinction among English rustics. And the old people, the people who can remember the seven shillings a week, and were brought up without meat, or tea, or wheaten bread to speak of, are often delightful, while the patient, uncomplaining way they talk of those times might be a lesson to some of us. But I did not like this thirsty gravedigger at all.

Every one knows that Wiltshiremen are called "Moon-rakers," and that they acquired this uncomplimentary designation from the fact of a party of them having been once discovered raking a pond on which the reflection of the full moon was shining brightly, under the impression that it was a cheese. But the Wiltshireman turns the story the other way, to the confusion of the stranger. It seems that in the smuggling days an alien official was hunting for some kegs of brandy that had been run through, and hidden away, and coming upon a party of smocked frocked yokels raking the above-mentioned moon-lit pond, his suspicions were aroused. On asking them the object of their proceedings, he was told they were raking for what they took to be a cheese. "Zo the excizeman 'as ax'd 'n the question," concludes the tale, "'ad his grin at 'n, but they 'd a good laugh at 'ee when 'em got whoame the stuff."

The Hungerfords, once the most potent family in Wilts, owners in their time of Heytesbury, Farleigh castle, Down Ampney, and other places of renown, were at length reduced

to a single small estate, namely, that of Studely-Hungerford, in Bremhill parish, and of this there is nothing now left but a farm house. A young man, on a tomb here, was the last male, and the remnant of their great possessions went to the Crewe family through an heiress, their name, in any significant sense, vanishing with it. On many a panelled wall; on many a stained glass window and altar tomb throughout Wiltshire, their coat, a wheatsheaf between three interlocked sickles, still serves to remind the few, who care for looking backward of this once illustrious house. A slab in front of the altar commemorates one Dr. Townson, a vicar of this parish, somewhat notable for his philanthropy and the persecutions he suffered during the Cromwellian period; eviction from his living being, of course, one of them, but he was reinstated in 1660, to spend twenty-seven more years among his people. Bowles, who, in spite of the somewhat wearisome and self-satisfied facility with which he drops into rhyme, in and out of season, was zealous and industrious at research, gives us, in connection with this divine, a curious glimpse of bygone methods of ecclesiastical preferment. For Townson, it seems, was one of fifteen children, begotten by a dean of Westminster, who died just as he was appointed to the bishopric of Salisbury. The dean had incurred the initial expenses of his institution, without reaping the great profits that, in those days, accrued to the holders of such a see, and had left his family in indigent circumstances.

As a way out of the difficulty, John Davenant, the bishop's widow's brother, was promoted to the see by the king, on the distinct understanding that he should remain unmarried and devote his interest and his purse to the well-being of his sister and her fifteen children, a charge he faithfully performed. Whether the widow considered herself to be in truth the bishop and something more than a Mrs. Proudie, history does not tell us. Admirers of Trollope—and what undemoralized native of the diocese of Barchester is not an admirer of Trollope?—may remember how, in "The Bertrams," a crusty old nobleman up in the North gave a Bassetshire living to the

ambitious son of its deceased vicar, on the express condition that he should not only hold it for the support of his mother and sisters, but that the widow should actually receive the income and pay him a curate's stipend out of it. How filial duty compelled the young man to accept terms, which necessitated celibacy and obscurity, though both his affections and intellectual aspirations were already engaged, and how a doting mother gradually developed into a full-blown and somewhat arbitrary rectoress, to the utter discomfiture of the clever young man's matrimonial and professional prospects. How the worm at length turned, and this parochial Mrs. Proudie was ultimately rounded on and routed, not by the dutiful and long-suffering son, but by the wicked old lord in the north, to her amazement, humiliation, and repentance, is almost worthy of the best scenes in the palace at Barchester, which is saying much. One is led to wonder, however, if the Townson arrangement suggested the situation to the chronicler of Barsest, which he worked up with so much humour and pathos.

In this verdant and secluded graveyard of Bremhill the local muse is active on the tombstones, the poet vicar, whose period here was the first half of the last century, being responsible for no little of it. He not only buried his parishioners, but provided them freely with epitaphs. "A young woman who died of consumption," "An old parishioner and constant churchman," "The father of a large family," "An old soldier aged 92," "An aged couple as addressed by an exemplary son," and many more bear witness to the ready pen of the poet parson. Billy Bowles, as he was called hereabouts, had a good share of the vanity that is supposed to be a not infrequent attribute of minor poets; and moreover, he was really much admired in his day, and had some excuse for self-esteem. Great men came to see him, a pilgrimage to Bremhill having been a regular item in the entertainment provided for the more intellectual guests at Bowood, which is in full view from the high perched and bowery parsonage. But Bowles was more than poet, he was a keen antiquary, though with



somewhat wayward theories and a sufficiently good scholar. His absence of mind, too, provided his neighbours with many good stories, one of them relating that he once presented a parishioner with a bible, on the fly-leaf of which he had written, "With the author's compliments." The slip reminds me of an old clerk in my youth who sometimes read out the next Sunday's programme for his master and announced on one occasion to an astonished congregation that the sermon on the following Sabbath morn would be preached by the author of the 119th Psalm, having omitted the words "commentaries on" as superfluous.

Bowles had a fancy, too, for repairing to Stonehenge on the 4th of June, attired in the glories of Druidical attire, or his conception of it. He had fashioned his garden in somewhat fanciful style, and one might imagine that the mantle of Lady Hertford of Marlborough had, in some measure, descended upon him. Tom Moore used to walk over from Bowood or from his own cottage at Bromham, and an entry in his diary thus refers to Bowles:—"His parsonage house at Bremhill is beautifully situated, but he has frittered away its beauty with grottoes, hermitages, and Shenstonian inscriptions. When company is coming, he cries, 'Here, John, run with the crucifix and missal to the hermitage, and set the fountain going.' His sheep-bells are tuned in thirds and fifths, but he is an excellent fellow notwithstanding." In his history of Bremhill, Bowles gives proof of his controversial tendencies, which even attracted the satire of Byron. The vicarage adjoining the churchyard and its picturesque grounds, are still much as he left them, even to various stones and columns from Stanley abbey, which he distributed about. Bowles, however, has left us a few instructive pictures of a Wiltshire parish in the decade following Waterloo. It was a time when the poor-rates provided a certain amount of bread to every peasant, male and female, whether in or out of work, and of work in those days of large families and little movement there was not enough to go round. The land was groaning under the administration of the Poor Laws and the low prices



following the Napolean wars. The farmers, who in this lowland Wiltshire were then, as they are still, on an altogether different scale from the big men up on the chalk, paid in Bowles's time fifteen shillings an acre in poor rates alone. The regular weekly dole of bread that was paid to every labouring person out of this, to the demoralization, as our author says, of the whole country, kept the actual rate of wages below the normal by just so much; but the burden on agriculture was prodigious. The parish of Bremhill alone at that time paid no less than four thousand pounds per annum in poor rates.

Set picturesquely on the high ground in Bremhill parish is a roadside inn with the remarkable sign of The Dumb Post, but for all that it is a decidedly superior house, and one to which the pilgrim in this country, with a fancy for rustic quarters, might fearlessly commit himself. I had ordered some lunch there one day and had called through the door to the ministering angel who superintended that department that I would have a pint of bitter with it. "Oh no, you won't, sir," remarked a genial-looking gentleman emerging from a dark corner and tapping me on the shoulder; "you'll have a pint of home-brewed." This was the landlord, and I of course took the advice, as both his manner and person inspired confidence. Really good home-brewed ale in these degenerate days, no sound wayfarer not a total abstainer would, I imagine, knowingly reject, and this was of the very best.

At the north end of the parish, at the very highest point of this broad ridge of Bremhill is Wick hill, and Wick hill is distinguished on two accounts: the one for its beautiful westward outlook over the rich country towards Bath and Somersetshire, the other for a lofty obelisk with the plainly cut figure of a peasant woman seated on its summit. The woman is Maud Heath, and the services by which she thus acquired a just immortality are unique both in their performance and their recognition by a grateful posterity. She lived hereabouts from 1399 to 1474, and was but a plain market woman accustomed to carry her wares on foot from Bremhill into Chippenham, which ancient town can be seen lying in the valley

below some three miles away. When one reflects what the country roads were even in George the Second's time, it may be imagined that in the Wars of the Roses they were not like billiard tables. At any rate, this poor peasant woman was so impressed by the toil evolved on herself and neighbours by the weekly journey from Bremhill throughout her long life, that she left her very considerable savings to be invested in constructing and maintaining a causeway from Wick hill through a circuit of villages to Chippenham. It still in part survives, though no longer requisite, and at Kellaways, the wettest part of the valley route by the Avon, may be seen raised up on a number of archways.

At Kellaways bridge there is a stone shaft and sundial erected in the seventeenth century

*“ To the memory of the worthy Maud Heath, of  
Langley Burrell, widow,”*

with the particulars of her bequest below, and concluding—

“ This pillar was set up by the feoffees in 1698.  
“ Injure me not.”

Parson Bowles, however, could not keep his hands off it, and has paraphrased some Latin inscriptions on the dial.

At the end of the causeway at Chippenham is another stone inscribed—

“ Hither extendeth Maud Heath's gift,  
For where I stand is Chippenham clift.”

The big obelisk on Wick hill was the creation of Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bowles, so the latter had acquired the right to perpetuate himself and his own poetic gifts there, together with the virtues of its subject. So the lines upon it point a somewhat irrelevant moral after the author's tiresome habit, and say nothing in praise of Maud Heath. On a third stone, which indicates the actual beginning of the causeway, is inscribed on an iron plate—

“ From this Wick hill begins the praise  
Of Maud Heath's gift to these highways.”

Under it the Reverend William tells the world that this is his translation of a Latin inscription which originally stood here, and which, I believe, he erased himself. This, after all, was only a somewhat glorified form of the passion for name-cutting, which possesses the British tourist to such a deplorable degree, and it was all in Tom Moore's country, too, who might have left such graceful fragments on stocks and stones if his egotism had taken that form.

I am not going down into Chippenham. It is a place of ancient fame, and a great deal might be said about it if there were space in which to say it. While to note that it contains nearly six thousand inhabitants, and is still much concerned with cheese and cloth, will not interest the reader in the very least. I have traversed the road from here to Malmesbury more than once by Hilmarton, by picturesque Lynham, by Clack, and its memories of Bradenstoke abbey close at hand, and so on, through Dauntsey of which I have already spoken. But I have also confessed that the green lanes or the broad undulating highways of North-West Wilts find me somewhat unresponsive. In the days when Pewsham and other contiguous forests wrapped these clay and greensand lowlands as with a mantle; when in the Tudor and early Jacobean period, their woodland solitudes echoed the note of horn and hound; when gay companies of kings and great nobles came galloping out of the shade of primeval oaks on to the sunny turf of the open glades, to dive again into the forest, it was another thing. There were no cheeses made here then, but what a pleasant ride it would have been by green glades or tortuous hunting-paths, from near Devizes all the way to Chippenham and Malmesbury, provided you could have done so without the loss of an ear or a thumb. It was "the fourth Earl Pembroke," says Aubrey, "who had Bowood for his life, from James the Second, that was the great hunter, and in his lordship's time that hunting was at its greatest height that ever was in this nation. The glory of English hunting breathed its last with this Earle who deceased about 1644, and shortly after the forests and parks were sold, and converted into

arable." Well, we will not cross the arable or its more frequent alternative the grass. Few readers in these days of urban or merely sporting country life will put up with any farming talk. It is interesting to note, however, that Arthur Young riding through here from Bath finds the rentals average from twenty to thirty shillings, high enough for the period succeeding the Seven Years' War, and the wages of men, except in harvest time, ten shillings a week. But those were not the pinching times with meat at fourpence, butter at fivepence, and bread not more than twopence as quoted on the same page. It was later when wages had scarcely moved, and provisions had doubled, that things were so grievous with the poor. In Bowlés's day for instance, the rentals in Bremhill parish were thirty-four shillings, plus a fifteen-shilling poor rate. So the days even of the farmer must have been anxious ones. The landowner alone must have been tolerably free from worries save those of his own making.

Malmesbury is about the size of Marlborough and Calne. Like these two towns and unlike Chippenham, Trowbridge, and Melksham, it is picturesquely seated, in this case on a projecting ridge, beneath either slope of which run the Avon and Newton brook respectively to their junction just below. The little town is eminently quaint and old fashioned, with no outward suggestion of commercial activity, even bacon, though at one time, like its neighbours, it did a flourishing cloth trade. Leland, in his queer abbreviated phrases and economy of printers' ink, admired its situation, but, as was natural to his period, from the point of view of defence. "It stondesth on the very toppe of a great slaty rock, and ys wonderfully defended by nature."

Branching from the High Street, which scrambles up from the stream at a somewhat alarming angle are tortuous by-ways, bordered by old stone-houses roofed with the flags of the country. But all these things will be forgotten in the surprise provided at the end of the main street where the great half-ruinous, half-perfect abbey church fills the eye and the end of the town at the same time. And I use the word "surprise"



advisedly, for I do not think that many people not immediately concerned with such things, with whom of course it is in great repute, realize what a magnificent ecclesiastical monument, and so proudly placed withal, dominates this sleepy Wiltshire town tucked away at the end of a branch line. Our illustration will most effectively convey the measure of its stateliness, and the nature of such portion of the original fabric that is left, and which now does duty as a parish church. It is the south front which faces the end of the street and market-place, while on the further side the ground drops almost sheer from the base of the building into a deep valley through which meanders the Newnton brook.

The town dates as a fortified post from early Saxon times, when it was known as Ingelburne with still earlier traditions, and derives its present name from an Irish missionary, named Maldulph, who came over to convert the natives, and apparently with such success that the grateful town adopted his name and became Maldulphsbury—hence Malmesbury.

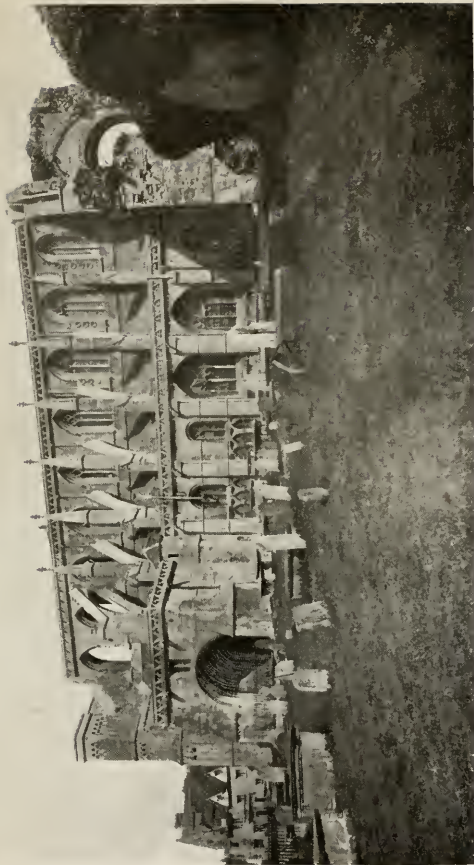
Having made Christians of these rude Saxons, Maldulph then proceeded to educate their youth, and his school, at which the pious Ealdhelme of the royal Wessex stock happened to be one of his pupils, formed the nucleus of a monastery. King Alfred himself wrote a life of St. Ealdhelme we are told by William of Malmesbury, that famous twelfth-century chronicler, and monk of the abbey. William had the privilege of perusing Alfred's work before it was destroyed, and has culled many strange things concerning the life of St. Ealdhelme, from the Wessex monarch's pages. Among others, that when the saint took off his coat to pray, and there was no peg convenient, he hung it on a sunbeam. The land was granted in 680 by Leutherus, bishop of Winchester, who owned property in and around the place. As time went on, the kings, both of Wessex and Mercia, whose boundary stood near by, contributed to its enrichment. But Althelstan was the greatest of these royal benefactors both to town and monastery, actually rebuilding the latter. When he died at Gloucester in 941, his body was brought here to be buried;



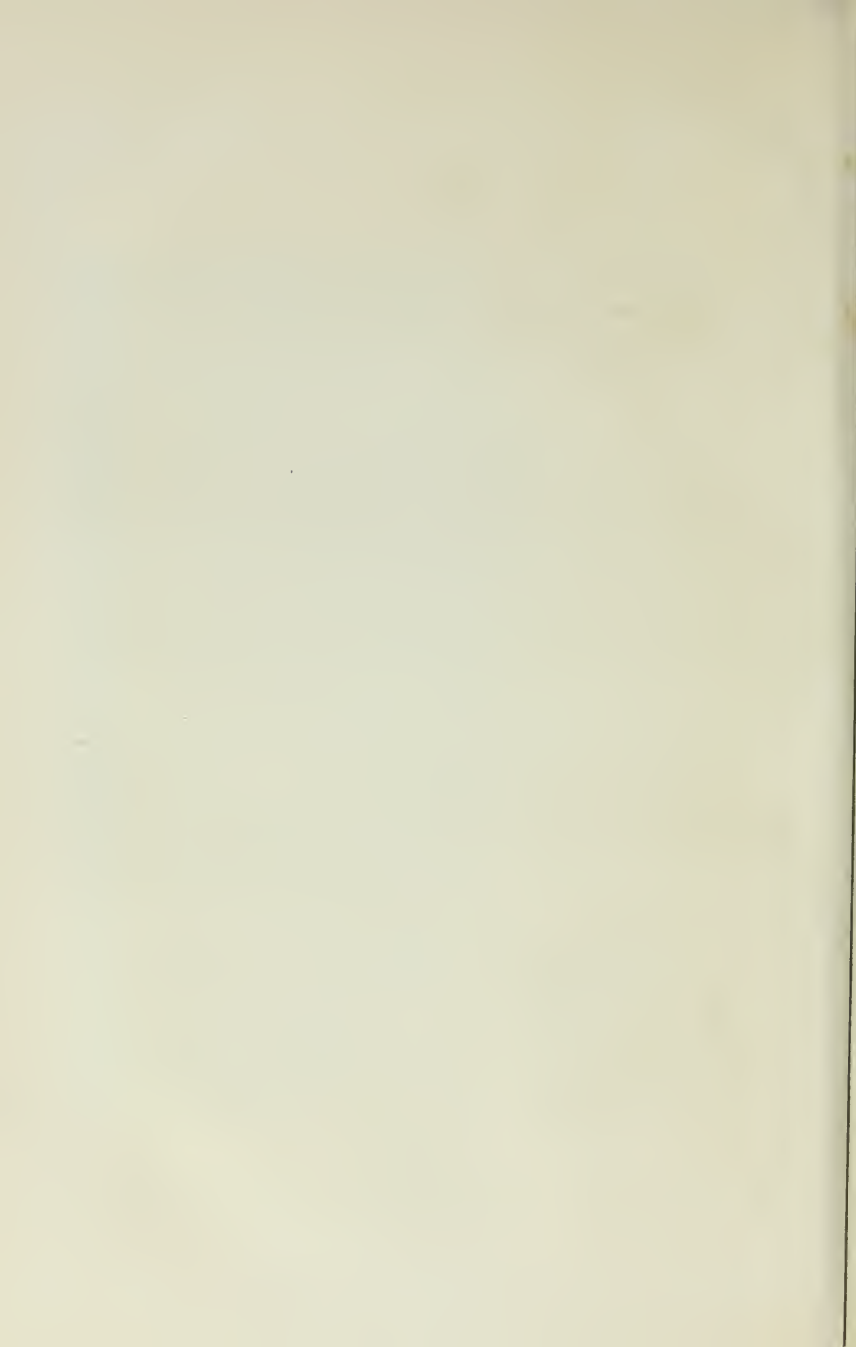
a recumbent effigy on a tomb being still treasured as his, though fashioned doubtless in his honour at a later date. But he is, in any case, the presiding genius of the place.

Though the monastery had its ups and downs, it continued to receive favours from Saxon kings, and even William the Conqueror robbed Rouen of many relics for its benefit, and ordained a yearly feast of five days in honour of St. Ealdhelme. This was still duly celebrated in Leland's time, attracting such crowds to the town that a troop of men had to be employed to keep order. King John, whose interest in Wiltshire seems to have been continuous, was a great benefactor, and so was Edward the Third, who raised the superior of the abbey to the dignity of a mitred abbot. The monks were of the Benedictine order, and the convent buildings are said to have covered forty-five acres of ground. Malmesbury ranked next in importance to Glastonbury among the ecclesiastical establishments of the West of England, and at the dissolution its income was returned at eight hundred and three pounds, a large rent-roll in those days. I was almost forgetting too, that in the reign of Henry the First, that indefatigable castle-builder, Bishop Roger of Salisbury erected one in the very yard of the abbey, and built walls round the town with four gates, which must have proved useful in Stephen's wars.

One of Athelstane's grants to Malmesbury exists to this day in a most practical shape. For it seems that in some battle against the Danes, the men of Malmesbury supported him with such surpassing valour that he made a grant of nearly a thousand acres of land to the burgesses in the neighbourhood of the town. This land is still enjoyed by them in the shape of allotments apportioned free of rent and rates to *bonâ fide* natives. Over five hundred acres is in two-acre allotments, the rest in rather larger plots. No stranger can acquire this privilege by any length of residence, only sons of former holders, or those who marry their daughters are eligible for a plot, nor can any bachelor or spinster hold one. The names of those thus eligible are carefully registered, and they come on in rotation, if qualified by marriage. It will be readily



MALMESBURY ABBEY



understood that the young women of Malmesbury have for all time had no lack of alien suitors, and that even the local marriage market has been stimulated by King Athelstane's wise conditions. On entering into possession the happy owner is conducted to his property by the steward, who then hands him a sod cut from it, and gives him three strokes across the back with a twig, cut on the plot declaiming the time-honoured couplet—

“Turf and twig I give to thee,  
Same as King Athelstane gave to me.”

The holders of the smaller plots are promoted in due course to the larger ones. Of course they may not build on them, nor does their tenure convey any political or municipal rights.

So far as the world of literature is concerned, one may fairly say that its illustrious Monk William is the presiding genius of Malmesbury, though it had another and an earlier chronicler in one Faricius. William was born about 1075, was educated at Malmesbury, and after assisting its abbot, Godefrey, to collect a library, became himself its first librarian. In 1140 he declined the offer of election as abbot, feeling no doubt that his true vocation lay among his books, to the great gain of English history; or, perhaps, his health was failing, for he soon afterwards died. The two chief works he left behind him are, “*De Gestis Regium Anglorum*,” embracing the history of England, from 449 to 1128, and “*De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum*,” being the history of the Church till his death. He had a staunch friend and patron in that gallant Robert, Earl of Gloucester and Glamorgan, Matilda's half-brother and faithful champion; and one of William's last acts was to attend a meeting of her supporters at Winchester. Anti-quarians have some cause of complaint against the Malmesbury historian in his failure to make clear the date of the destruction of the original church of Ealdhelme, and the commencement of the present one. Freeman places the latter in 1135, several years before the monk's death; but others cannot hold with this, and having regard to the war-stricken

state of the country, and influenced furthermore by some architectural technicalities, think that the historian had probably just passed away before the great work was commenced. Unfortunately, at the time of the dissolution, the voluminous manuscripts of the abbey were dissipated with a deliberation that seems to us a proceeding of quite incredible vandalism.

One William Stumpe, a Gloucestershire clothier, purchased the site of the abbey from the king at the dissolution for fifteen hundred pounds. Some of the buildings he used as workshops, others as quarters for his workmen, while he filled the chapel at the end of the transept with his looms. The nave he presented to the parish, to be used as its church in place of their former one of St. Paul, which was in a dilapidated condition. The tower and spire of this still remain, and carry a peal of bells for the benefit of the abbey, whose central tower and peal of ten bells, one of which was dedicated to St. Ealdhelme and rung as a protection from lightning, fell somewhere about the year 1500, scattering ruin beneath it. Aubrey tells us that on one occasion Henry the Eighth and his whole retinue, with appetites sharpened by a morning's hunting in Bradon forest, dropped in unexpectedly to dinner with Mr. Stumpe at Malmesbury. The worthy clothier, hard put to it for sufficient provender, gave the royal party the dinner provided for his workmen, which seems to have been devoured with true sportsmen's appetites. The same chronicler also tells us that the rare and numerous books of the library were scattered to the winds, many being sold as waste-paper. Aubrey himself, who was at school here, and his companions used them as covers for their lesson books. Mr. William Stumpe, a descendant of the great Stumpe, had a mass of them. "He was a proper man and a good fellow, and when he brewed a barrel of special ale, his use was to stop the bung-hole under the clay with a sheet of manuscript; he said nothing did it so well." But the divine spark flickered early in Aubrey, and such doings "did grieve me much to see, even as a schoolboy." Afterwards he went to another school, kept by the rector of Leigh Delamere, where also the like



precious covering was used for their books, while in his grandfather's time, "the manuscripts flew about like butterflies, all music-books, accounts, copy-books, etc., were covered with old manuscripts, as we cover them now with blue or marble paper, and the glovers of Malmesbury made great havoc of them, and gloves were wrapped up in many good pieces of antiquity."

In after years Aubrey revisited his first school at Yatton Keynell, in the hopes of recovering some of these relics; but the sons of his old teacher, also a Stumpe, and perhaps the hero of the beer-barrel, were "gunners and soldiers, and had scoured their guns with them." The late Canon Jackson, of antiquarian repute, and rector of this Leigh Delamere, discovered a few, which are preserved. Thus did some men of Wiltshire plug their ale casks, and clean their guns with the precious records of mediæval history, while their neighbours blew up prehistoric temples to build pigstyes. Mr. Stumpe's son was knighted, and married into the purple of Wiltshire. His wife, a Baynton of Bromham, brought him only a daughter and heiress, who took his property at Malmesbury and Charlton to the Knyvetts. Thus, as in hundreds of cases, did the Tudor tradesmen blend with the Norman stock, and one is inclined to think that the latter talked much less of their condescension than many a modern of the third and fourth generation from nothing, in like circumstances. But the fact and the theory of English genealogy are often in truth far removed. Well may the foreign observer of social England despair at the paradoxes by which he is confronted; a complex but materially wholesome social system, made much more vulgar than it need be, by make-believe and an abounding inaptitude for genealogical perspective. It is William Stumpe, at any rate, that we have to thank for preserving the abbey to the parish, and thus securing its preservation.

This abbey church of Malmesbury, which even now rises so imposingly before us, is but a fragment of the original building. It was originally cruciform and of larger dimensions than many cathedrals. The great central tower, which fell just before Leland's time was further crowned by a lofty

spire, "A marke to al the countrie about, higher than Salisbury; the highest in England according to tradition." Soon after Leland's visit, "a greate square toure," erected in the late perpendicular period at the west end, fell, destroying several bays of the nave. The builders of Malmesbury, if able designers, were surely less capable in their structural work, or else singularly unfortunate. Aubrey tells us, too, that the citizens consumed so much gun-powder in their delight at the return of Charles the Second, in 1660, that they shook down one of the remaining arches of the great central tower. The present church consists of six only of the original nine bays of the nave, and even thus presents an interior of quite imposing proportions. The west end was walled up, and is lighted by a large modern window of the Decorated type. Outside the wall stand the ruins of the tower. The east end also is closed, but not lighted. The exact date as well as the builder of the present abbey, are controversial questions, and Bishop Roger of Sarum figures in the controversy. It will be sufficient here to state that it ranges over the first forty years of the twelfth century. The most thoughtless visitor will feel that he is in the presence of something quite out of the common as he passes within the beautiful Norman porch into the interior; while any one of ordinary knowledge will recognize at once a building practically Norman, though distinguished by pointed arches rising from the short massive cylindrical columns of the nave. Above is a most striking and perfect Norman triforium, and above that again a clerestory, the original lights of which were displaced in the fourteenth century by large pointed windows. The capitals of the nave are scalloped, and the semi-circular triforium arches are decorated with chevron mouldings. The vaulting of the nave roof, too, is exceedingly fine, and is looked upon, I believe, as a shining example of fourteenth-century work, and full of suggestions regarding the transition period to the more technically-minded visitor.

The aisles mostly retain their original Norman vaulting, and some of their Norman windows. Against the wall of the east end, which has been built up under the original western

arch of the central tower that collapsed, is a rood screen, supposed to have been removed when the former became dangerous. Along the top of this are various devices, including the arms of Henry the Seventh. Over this cornice hangs a painting of the raising of Lazarus, supposed to be the copy of a Michael Angelo, given to the church by the Duke of Suffolk. There is a chapel at the end of the north aisle; but the only effigy or monument of much interest in the church is the one previously mentioned, and supposed to represent King Athelstane resting on an altar tomb. The walling in of the two ends is, in a strictly architectural and modern sense, of course, a blemish to the building; but, on the other hand, one does not think of this fragment as a complete work. One sees so plainly what has happened, and carrying one's fancy east through the great barrier, through the arches of the huge tower under the shadow of a spire "rivalling Salisbury," and on to the vanished choir, and then, again, turning westward, and reopening the lofty arches of the tower that stood there, the last thing one would think of would be to regard the present church as a complete whole, or, to worry about present proportions, though a Malmesbury patriot with ambitious views of restoration might think other thoughts. I was almost forgetting, too, a curious stone chamber or watching-loft, protruding from the triforium. All these, however, are but the main features of this noble building roughly outlined. And for that matter, we passed through the south porch almost without notice. Yet this most ornate, deeply and profusely ornamented piece of twelfth-century Norman work is one of the great glories of the church.

One of the lofty arches of the ruined central tower, with part of a wall of the south transept, stands out in the weather, together with the remains of the western tower, which rises at the other end to a level with the clerestory; imposing, detached, pathetic wrecks. Let us try and imagine one's self a Malmesbury citizen on the day or night when this mountain of stone fell crashing down five centuries ago, and let us also pray that Malmesbury abbey may never be "restored."

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If the bathos involved in so abrupt a departure is admissible, I may mention in conclusion a most curious epitaph on a tombstone, near the main walk through the churchyard, which tells of a hapless damsel bearing the astounding name of Twynnoy, who was destroyed in 1703 by a tiger on exhibition at the White Lion Inn.

“In bloom of youth, she’s snatched from hence,  
She had not room to make defence,  
For tiger fierce snatched life away,  
And now she lies in bed of clay  
Until the resurrection day.”

It is quite evident that they had no Billy Bowles in Malmesbury.

Near the entrance to the churchyard gate from the marketplace is a very fine octagonal fifteenth-century market cross with a groined roof, not unlike the poultry-cross at Salisbury. There are several houses in Malmesbury, too, worth notice, while for the active part it took in the Civil Wars, I have left myself no space; I have been for once tempted away from the historical by the influence of the architectural, which here seems to dominate aught else. Particularly is this the case if one descends the steep green northern face of the rock on which the abbey stands, and from the combe below, where the Newton brook, which turned the monks’ mill, meanders, looks upwards at the great pile, half living and half dead, outlined far above and so imposingly against the sky.

One other great monastic foundation lies right in the path of our return to the hill country, namely, Lacock, and running thither due south from Malmesbury along the main highway we pass right through Chippenham. So once again I have to express contrition at this cavalier treatment of a town that was an important market in Anglo-Saxon times, and was the seat of the kings of Wessex as well as of the Danish army when it ravaged Wiltshire, till Alfred’s great victory at Ethandun put an end for the time to their merciless domination. Four miles beyond Chippenham, on the Melksham road, stands the large village of Lacock, on the banks of the Bristol Avon, and in



the adjoining park the nunnery of Ela, the seat of the Wiltshire Talbots since the sixteenth century.

If there were no abbey, the village of Lacock would be unique in Wiltshire, and not easily matched in England, for its wealth of old stone and timbered houses and reposeful air of antiquity. If there were no village, the abbey, as perhaps the most interesting thing of its kind in the county, would give the place distinction. Though the residence of its owner, it is open, or at least a considerable part of it, every day to the public, though no doubt such a public as seeks out a monastic building in the heart of Wiltshire may fairly be trusted to behave itself. Moreover the proprietor is himself a zealous antiquarian, possessed of a keen interest in all that pertains to his inheritance, and this temperament is apt to endow its possessors with more sympathy for that small fraction of the outside world which is more or less similarly constituted, and to take chances with the barbarian. I do not imagine, however, that barbarians resort greatly to Lacock, and they would in any case be placed resolutely in charge of an informing lodge-keeper, and have to hear the story of the abbey whether they liked it or not; nor would they have an opportunity to cut their names or distribute orange-peel.

The fabric is mainly and naturally of two periods—that of the conventual times and of the purchasers at the Dissolution respectively, in this case the Sharingtons, or Sherringtons, through whose heiress it came, by marriage, in the sixteenth century to the ancestor of the present owners. Sir William Sharrington seems to have been hardly a suitable person to settle down in this holy spot. He destroyed the fine abbey church, though we may be thankful he left so much of the rest of the building intact. He was guilty, however, of an even greater delinquency than this, for, as master of the mint at Bristol, he was convicted of coining false money and clipping current coin to the extent of two thousand pounds. His estate was confiscated; but, for some inexplicable reason, restored to him soon after.

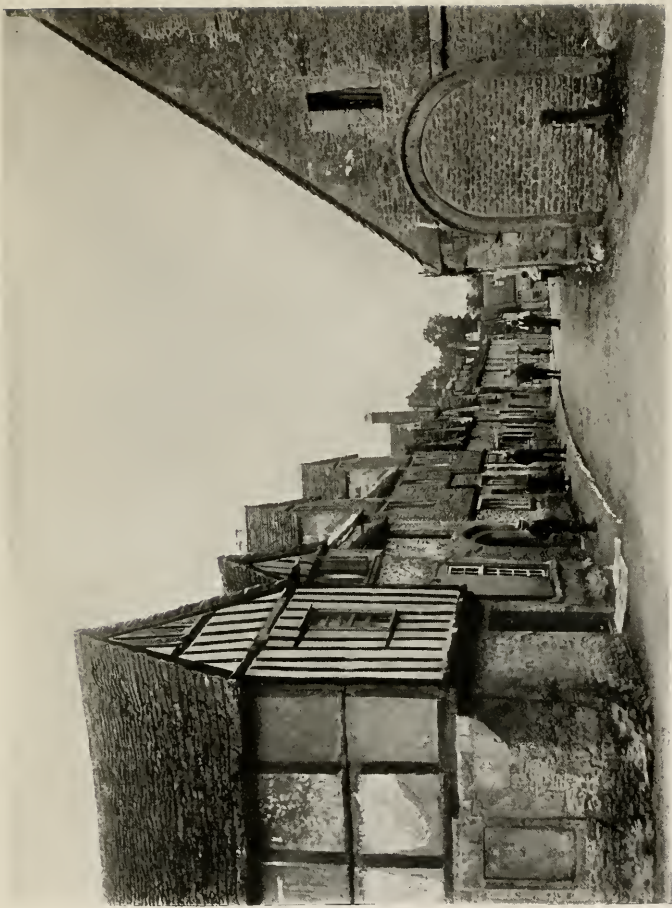
The story of the foundation of the nunnery in 1232 is



interesting, if only for the famous lady who was responsible for it, and who became one of its first superiors, namely, Ela, Countess of Salisbury. She was the daughter of an Earl of Salisbury, and, being his sole heiress, carried his honours as well as his wealth to William Longespee, son of Henry the Second and fair Rosamund, whose well preserved effigy we shall, I hope, stand beside in Salisbury cathedral later on. Ela was born at Amesbury, and brought up in Wiltshire, doubtless among the splendour of those tournaments which her father organized for that over-rated monarch, Richard the First, his half-brother. At this nobleman's death the child seems to have been carried away by her mother, a Frenchwoman, and apparently lost to her father's friends and even to her legal guardians.

The legend runs that a knight named Talbot, not connected, so far as I know, with the Talbots of Lacock, undertook to find her, and was two years wandering through Normandy, in the guise of a pilgrim, before success at last crowned his efforts. He assumed the *rôle* of troubadour, and, entering the castle where Ela was domiciled, made himself so entertaining that he found means to carry off the girl, who was still only ten years old, to England and to King Richard, who married her at once to William Longespee. She lived in great accord with her husband, and in his frequent absences represented him at Salisbury with much ability and distinction. They both assisted in the founding of the present cathedral, the earl laying the second stone and Ela the fifth.

After this, Longespee had occasion to go to Gascony, but on the way home was no less than three months at sea, and was so completely given over that the pseudo widow became an object of quest to avaricious courtiers. Hubert de Burgh, having extracted a promise from young King Henry in favour of his nephew Reimund, despatched that youth with an imposing retinue to seek the lady's favour. The countess, who was thirty-seven, snubbed the poor lad and, indirectly, his powerful father, unmercifully telling him, in the first place, that she believed her husband to be alive, and, in the second, that



A STREET IN LACOCK



if he were not, she would refuse to consider a man so beneath her in station, and she might have added of so tender an age. When soon after this the earl turned up safe and sound, there was likely to be a pretty row between himself and de Burgh. But the latter assuaged his wrath by a present of horses, and then, by way of crowning the reconciliation, asked him to dinner, and poisoned him—so, at least, ill-natured people said; but the more judicial historian thinks he over-ate himself, a proceeding for which three months' confinement in a thirteenth-century ship may perhaps offer some excuse. This repast, so fatal to the famous earl, took place at Marlborough castle, then held by de Burgh, justiciar of England for the king. As Longespee, however, managed to ride across Salisbury Plain afterwards, and die in his own bed, he may after all have been smitten by the east wind on that inhospitable waste, as the period was early March, and fallen a victim to a chill on the liver.

But even after her lord's death Ela braved the custom of the time and all the pressure then brought to bear on her as an illustrious and still blooming widow, and persistently rejected the notion of a second husband. The honours which would have been bestowed on the latter, however, were refused by the king to her son, and she remained Countess of Salisbury and chief of the earldom for life, seeing both son and grandson laid in their graves. She was both Sheriff of Wiltshire and Castelan of Old Sarum, filling these offices in no nominal sense. Six years after her husband's death in 1232, she founded the nunnery of Lacock, and eight years later retired there herself, becoming its second abbess. She obtained all sorts of valuable privileges and charters for her abbey, and was ultimately laid to rest here in the seventy-fourth year of her age, in the choir of its church. Though the latter has disappeared, Ela's monumental slab, among many others, has been removed to the cloisters, and bears a Latin quatrain—

“*Infra sunt defossa Elae venerabilis ossa,  
Quæ dedit has sedes sacras momalibus ædes,  
Abbatissa quidem quæ sancte vixit ibidem,  
Et comitissa Sarum virtutum plena bonarum.*”

But the conventual buildings, partly lying around a quadrangle to the north and partly included in the present dwelling-house and adapted to later needs, are wonderfully well preserved. A cloister of perpendicular character and with a vaulted roof runs round three sides of the court. The refectory, sacristy, and chapter house are still perfect, with Early English vaulting supported on slender pillars; while the nuns' dormitory, which is one hundred and forty feet long, has merely been altered by the insertion of a floor at the spring of the roof, its original timbers being all perfect. An octagonal tower, part of the buildings erected by Sharington, is a muniment room, and among its treasures, and innumerable others contained in the house, is an original copy of the Great Charter of Henry the Third, sent to the Countess Ela in 1225, in her capacity as hereditary sheriff of Wiltshire. In the grounds I was shown a curious relic of the old abbey, namely a gigantic bronze cauldron with a capacity of sixty-seven gallons, and inscribed to the effect that it was cast at Mechlin by one Peter Wagheuens in 1500.

Queen Elizabeth was entertained here by the Sharingtons, and during the civil war the house was garrisoned for the king, but capitulated to Fairfax's men at the fall of the great western posts. Aubrey here comes to the front again, and tells us a story of how the grandfather of the Talbot he knew, succeeded in the marriage with the Sharington heiress. The lady's father was not agreeable, but one night the heiress "discoursing with him from the battlements of the abbey church," which stood on the site of the present terrace, said, "I will leap down to you. But he did not believe she would have done it. She leapt down, and the wind, which was then high, came under her coates and did something break the fall. Mr. Talbot caught her in his arms, but she struck him dead; she cried for help, and he was with great difficulty brought to life. Her father thereon told her since she had made such a leap she should e'en marrie him." About 1750 a second son of the Talbots of Lacock inherited the ancient Mansel possessions in Glamorganshire, still owned by them, and now of enormous



value. His eldest brother died unmarried, and left Lacock to a sister, whose husband took her name. So, fortuitously as it were, the male line was continued at Margam, where also the remains, now alas but scanty, of a noble abbey adorn the grounds, while the old Wiltshire place was continued on the distaff side.

I have alluded to the village of Lacock in terms of enthusiasm. Guide-book writers, even local ones, appear to have been so overwhelmed with the abbey as to have quite overlooked the village, which is in truth a gem. It is not one of your attractive villages with a sunny green and bowery thatched cottages and flower-gardens. It is on the lines rather of a diminutive town, two main, and as many cross, streets of houses squeezed together, if a too brief survey did not mislead me. It seemed full of old timbered houses with projecting upper stories and sharp gable ends, some flagged and some thatched, besides many obviously ancient stone houses, and altogether wears a general appearance of Tudor England. The effect is, I think, enhanced by a rather shabby and unfurnished look and an absence of flowers, garden-plots, and of colour generally, for the Wiltshire cottagers as a rule do not keep the timbers blackened nor their plaster as white as do those of the Welsh border, where this type of architecture is at its best. But even in Herefordshire I have never seen a village more interesting at the first glance, and none more hoary in appearance, or so wholly devoid of self-consciousness, for Lacock is sombre and almost melancholy of aspect. There must be quite a number of fifteenth and sixteenth-century houses in its streets, I was told at the inn of one or two earlier even than that. Many bits of Lacock seem to suggest the background of one of Shakespeare's domestic plays, while the situation of the village at the gate of the abbey grounds is all that it should be, making a wonderfully complete picture.

Looking east and south from here the wooded heights of Bowden, of Spye Park, and Bowood make a pleasing background to the view, and the road to Devizes, which it is high time we took, carries us right among them. The old house of

Spye Park, perched on a wooded hill, and now owned and rebuilt by the Spicer family, was once the residence of the Bayntons. Evelyn deplored the eccentricity of the humorous old knight, who might have made a noble place of it, but had erected instead "a long single house, of two low stories, on the precipice of an incomparable outlook, with no windows on the prospect side." But the old knight was not in a humour at that time to erect any noble fabric, for he had just been burnt out of his seat at Bromham by the king's forces, and the blessings of fire insurance were not yet.

Pursuing the high road to Bromham we pass Heddington, the Roman Verlucio, where Aubrey tells us that while ploughing an extra deep furrow they discovered the foundations of houses and coals for at least a quarter of a mile, and a great quantity of Roman money, silver and copper, of the time of three emperors. Bowles, at a later day, collected several hundred coins from this spot, and the remains of a Roman villa were unearthed here within my time. Turning down a secluded by-road for a few hundred yards you might almost pass without notice, so high is the fence before it, a long cottage residence, standing on a small lawn and completely covered with ivy and creepers. This would interest many people, perhaps most people, more than the site of Verlucio, for it is where Tom Moore the poet spent the last and most important half of his life, and where also he died. It is curious how few people seem to realize that the genial little Irishman was a moonraker by adoption and residence. When the city of Bath had a celebration last year in honour of the three poets of its neighbourhood—George Crabbe, who was rector of Trowbridge; Bowles, of Bremhill; and Tom Moore, a well-known literary paper jeered somewhat at the Bathites for claiming the latter on the strength of "a few visits to Bowood." So the public, who still warble his delightful melodies if they no longer read "Lalla Rookh," may be excused their darkness concerning the little man's domestic life; little in stature, but great in mind and in heart, and in the making of melodious verse and sparkling converse. Moore was thirty-eight when he brought

his "darling Bessie" to Sloperton Cottage in 1817, and seventy-two when he died here in 1852. The attraction was the neighbourhood of his friend and patron, Lord Lansdowne, and it was no summer or week-end cottage this, but his permanent abode. Both he and his wife were entirely identified with the neighbourhood. The poet was the most popular diner out in the countryside; the lady not a diner out, but one of the most beloved and charitable of Dorcases within her means. Many of the Irish melodies must have been written here, in the little study which Moore used laughingly to say had the merit of being so small that he could reach all his books without getting up from his chair. It would be an unfeeling person who could stand to-day before this leafy cottage, so snugly tucked away by a shady Wiltshire lane, without some stirring of the pulse, if only for the sake of the melodies. If they are not great they are the most felicitous and feeling English verse, taken as a whole, ever set to music, and are certainly world famous and probably immortal. No one would wish to submit "Dear Harp of my Country," or "Oft in the Stilly Night," to the cold light of poetic criticism. But when the conscientious expert has finished with "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels," and consigned them to oblivion, he goes into another chamber, so to speak, and relaxes into unrestrained praise of the melodies. What old friends they are to every living Briton, whether sung by Patti or Albani as an encore to a London audience or by some rough backwoodsman at a Canadian camp fire. What a spell they have. Politicians may remember that Mr. Parnell lived in the vale of Avoca; but the mass of British humanity have enshrined Tom Moore—not that sinister individual—as its deity for all time. What thousands upon thousands of human hearts have been touched and stirred by the charm with which Moore has invested airs, that under other handling would have fallen on deaf ears or have invoked but a fugitive response. If only some of them were written here, all of them no doubt have been rendered again and again with the sweetness and expression the author is said to have imparted to

them, with his "dearest Bessie," or his "darling Anastasia," at the piano in the little drawing-room.

A small, curly-haired man, so full of vivacity as to seem almost on wires; a tender heart and a boyish temperament, but with conversational powers valued by the great men of the age, made Moore a *persona grata* everywhere. Many volumes of his letters are written either from or to Sloperton Cottage. At Bowood a knife and fork was always at his service. All but one of his children were born here, and all predeceased him; his widow alone out-living him by some fourteen years. The cottage was, and still is, on the Spye Park property. Moore added to and made it practically as one sees it now, at his own expense, and in consideration held it at a very low rent from Mr. Goddard of Cliffe. A lady of my acquaintance who has just passed away at a great age, and retained a clear and unimpaired memory to the last, used to receive the poet's rent half-yearly, and send him his receipt for it. As a girl she acted as amanuensis, for her father, who held Sloperton Cottage by virtue of the marriage settlement of his wife, who was a Baynton. Moore said my informant always wrote charming little notes when he sent his cheque to Cliffe Pypard, which was then her home. The rustics do not seem to have rated the poet's capacity very highly, and a saying of theirs is remembered in my friend's household. "Mrs. Moore she wur a angel, but as for Mr. Moore, thur he wur no good, vor he was allus in a brown stud."

All this time he was supposed to be a Government official in the West Indies, but no doubt his deputy proved much more efficient. The house stands near the end of a ridge, from whence—as described in the poet's letters—there is a beautiful outlook towards Bath and Lansdowne. Bromham, where the Moores worshipped and are buried, is about a mile distant. It possesses a fine perpendicular church, with a central tower and spire; but one naturally makes at once for the railed-in slab, outside the north wall, under which the poet lies with his favourite daughter, Anastasia, in such aloofness from the environments with which his name is generally associated. A stained glass



window in the west end of the chancel, was erected to his memory, and a better one to his wife at the east end. The interesting feature of the building is the Baynton aisle, or chapel, a very fine and richly decorated example of fifteenth-century work, with battlemented parapets, ornate with tracery and carving. Within it there is a carved and painted oak roof, and a great wealth of heraldic devices, together with effigies of redoubtable Bayntons and their relatives, while on the walls are helmets and gauntlets, which speak of the past perhaps still more eloquently. The spire was mostly rebuilt about two hundred years ago ; a fact only worth mentioning, as the former one was pulled down by some exuberant steeple flyers, which pastime seems to have found much favour among the early Georgians. It appears that it was their practice to fasten one end of a long rope to the church spire, while to the other was attached the stoutest rustics of the neighbourhood. The steeple-flyer then launched himself from the top, hanging to a bar running through a grooved wheel, which descended the rope with, one might imagine, most uncomfortable celerity. But during one of these exhibitions at Bromham, the enthusiastic assistants below pulled so lustily that they brought down the steeple ; whether the acrobat came with it history does not say.

NOTE.—Since this chapter went to press a Celtic cross has been erected over Moore's grave at Bromham. The event was worthily marked by a gathering of distinguished Irishmen from all parts of the country. In the course of an address Mr. Justin McCarthy observed that great numbers of Englishmen had been turned for the first time to the reading of Irish history by the charm and pathos of Moore's verse. I can testify to the absolute truth of that statement so far as one Englishman is concerned at any rate. The Gaelic league and what seems to be known as the "twilight" school of modern Celtic poetry and their minor poets appear to have left the Moore celebration in Wiltshire severely alone with some ostentation. From fugitive utterances of this school one gathers that its followers wholly resent the imputation of humour as an Irish asset. Their own lack of it at any rate was luminously illustrated by their petty boycott of Tom Moore at the Bromham ceremony.



## CHAPTER VIII

### DEVIZES AND THE PEWSEY VALE

**D**EVIZES sits upon a ledge at the western base of the Marlborough downs, but sufficiently raised above the lower country to give it no small distinction of pose. Controversy has long raged, not around the meaning of its name, for that is obvious enough, but anent the races or territories whose boundaries it marked. William of Malmesbury alludes to it as "Castrum" or "Villa Divisarum." Later on it became simply "Devisœ," then "The Devizes," a term which was used in documents and ordinary speech until quite recently. The country people called it "the 'Vize," and frequently do so at this day. Devizes lies in the very heart of Wilts, with its back to the chalk uplands, and its face to the green plain below, muffled in foliage. The great farmers of the downs and the Pewsey vale here meet the smaller men from the low country at one of the largest corn markets of the West. As at Marlborough, too, there is no suggestion of any other county in Devizes; it is Wiltshire in complexion and in spirit all over and right through, and though not structurally so engaging as Marlborough, since it is busier and twice the size, it is nevertheless a pleasant, old-fashioned, sunny-looking town, not to say a windy one, being five hundred feet above sea-level, and exposed to all the breezes that blow. It possesses, on two sides of it, at any rate, what Marlborough is so uniquely deficient in, a "neighbourhood." A carriage and pair arouses no sort of curiosity in the streets of Devizes, though, in this day of the motor, such evidence of provincial dignity are, perhaps, no longer to the point. Devizes, too, is the depôt of the

Wiltshire Regiment, whither the youthful moonraker, imbued with martial fires, or wearied with "turmat hoin'," repairs to don the red coat. These Wiltshire boys, being still mainly of agricultural habit, make most excellent and trustworthy private soldiers, but their intellectual capacity, I have been told by those who ought to know, is so often unequal to the responsibilities of non-commissioned rank, as to be a cause at times of no small perplexity. The mental slowness of the Wiltshire rustic is indeed proverbial, and an old story is often produced to illustrate the leisurely working of his mind. It dates back to a former period, when carriers' vans travelled very long distances, freighted with the parcels and commissions of a neighbourhood. This particular carrier and his son hailed from some village west of Devizes, and were bound, I think, for Reading, or a yet more distant point. On arriving there, after a two or three days' journey, and proceeding to unload, the parent, to his great concern, missed a package of some importance, and thus anxiously addressed his offspring: "Ethard (Edward), where be thic passel the passon gave we to bring vor 'n? I'm nashun 'vear'd we larst 'n." "Lor! veyther," draws Ethard, after a decent interval, "I zeed 'n drap out at the 'Vize!"

In the wide main portion of the street, or rather of the spacious market-place, into which it here expands, is a cross, erected about a century ago, and designed by Benjamin Wyatt, which is chiefly notable on account of an event recorded on it, that has gained some celebrity. For it proclaims how, in the year 1753, one Ruth Pierce, of Potterne, and three other women, purchased a sack of wheat between them in the market, and when the others had paid their quota towards it, one contribution was still lacking, obviously that of the faithless Ruth. She protested, however, that she had paid her share, calling the Almighty to strike her dead if such were not the case. The words were hardly uttered when her challenge was apparently accepted, and she fell a corpse at the feet of her companions, with the missing money actually in her clenched hand. This is a quite veracious tale, and made

such an impression on the people of the 'Vize, that half a century later, when the cross was put up by Lord Sidmouth (Mr. Addington), for the affection he bore the town that he had represented for twenty years, it was thought well to rub in the moral of the tragedy upon it, as a warning to future liars.

Just opposite, too, is the Bear Hotel, one of the historic inns of Wiltshire, celebrated in former days for the warm welcome and efficient service it rendered to travellers to and from the West. It seems to have been fortunate in a succession of enlightened landlords, one of whom erected white posts, twelve feet high, for the benefit of wayfarers upon Salisbury Plain. But the most notable tenants of the Bear were the parents of Sir Thomas Lawrence. The young artist here first exercised his pencil on his father's guests, and recited poetry to them, in lieu, no doubt of the modern photographer's exhortation to his sitters to "look natural," or "to think of their sweethearts." It might be suspected that a canto or two of Milton would have made a Wiltshire farmer of that day assume a cast of countenance painfully unnatural, and quite unfamiliar to his companions at the market ordinary. Lawrence painted his first picture when he was five, and his father used to introduce him to his guests with due formality: "Gentlemen, here is my son. Will you have him recite from the poets or take your portrait?" an alternative that must, for the moment, have sounded formidable to inartistic and unpoetic souls, weary from buffeting winds on the Marlborough downs or on the Plain. But as the Bear was on the Bath road, and all sorts of distinguished people halted there, the Lawrences saw the best of good company, and Thomas had a choice of superior models. The great artist was a genuine youthful prodigy, for, at ten years old, he was drawing professionally. Miss Burney, on her way to Bath with Mrs. Thrale, was enraptured with the whole family. After dwelling on the beauty and the musical skill of the girls, she continues, "But the wonder of the family was still to be produced; this was their brother, a most lovely boy of ten years old, who seems to be not merely the wonder of the family, but of the times, for his astonishing skill in drawing.

They protest he has never had any instruction, yet showed us some of his productions that were really beautiful. I was equally struck with the boy and his works. We found that he had been taken to town, and that all the painters had been very kind to him, and Sir Joshua Reynolds had pronounced him the most promising genius he had ever met with." At eighteen, Lawrence went permanently to London, and became a student at the Royal Academy, and rapidly rose to fame.

I made my own first and, I may add, only acquaintance, as a guest, with the Bear under circumstances a little out of the common, and a very long time ago. For, as a boy of fifteen, I had set out one morning somewhat rashly from a relative's house, four miles the other side of Bristol, to ride a pony, that proved rather too soft for the job, all the way to Marlborough. It was a hot summer day, the roads were hard and dusty, and my steed, who was quite equal to running away on the downs, dull as a donkey. I don't know whether he or I were the most completely bored as darkness fell on us at Devizes, fourteen miles short of our goal. There was nothing for it but to assume as adolescent an air as possible, to hand over my horse to the hostler, and order a room and dinner at the Bear. I remember being a little nettled at the quizzical expression of both the landlord and the chambermaid, and was, in consequence, somewhat short to the rather pardonable curiosity manifested by the staff. I think it probable, on looking back at this mild adventure, that the former took me for a runaway schoolboy, who had annexed his master's horse to facilitate matters. However, I was fortunately able to pay my bill; though, had I stopped for breakfast, it might have been a very near shave, so there was no excuse for their further cross-questioning, and I went on my way rejoicing over the Beckhampton downs, in the fresh of the morning, and on my now reinvigorated cob.

Architecturally, Devizes is chiefly famous for two noble churches. Its story, however, begins with its Norman castle, now vanished, but in its day, one of the largest, strongest, and most important in Southern England. For Devizes, so think



the best authorities, sprang from its castle, and had no former existence. A modern one erected some fifty odd years ago now lifts its embattled tower upon the same foundations, and serves as an eloquent suggestion at least, though but a private residence, of the ancient fortress, which from this commanding site looked out over West Wiltshire to Somerset.

Devizes, then, is a Norman town, and Bishop Roger as founder of its castle, was also its founder too. This strenuous and potent man was fetched out of obscurity in Normandy, by Henry the First, who, while still uncrowned, and fighting in that country, happened to halt for mass at the little church, where Roger was then officiating as a humble parish priest. The despatch with which he galloped through the prayers, recommended him at once to these impetuous men of war, and Henry attached him forthwith to his person. He soon became invaluable, not for his piety, nor even for his professional despatch, but for his mundane business qualities, and when Henry came to the throne he promoted him from the management of his own finances to those of the nation, making him Chancellor of England. After all, there surely never were such democrats as these Anglo-Norman kings! Roger seems to have had a free hand, and when the king was away, practically governed England, and became immensely rich by fair means and by foul. But his management also enriched the king, and in 1192, he received further reward in the bishopric of Salisbury. Even hostile chroniclers admit, that he was not only the richest man, but the greatest intellect of his day. All speak of the vast cost, the prodigious size and strength of his castle of Devizes, which, with three others, at Sherborne, Malmesbury, and Salisbury respectively, the all-powerful Roger proceeded to erect. When Leland saw it, it had fallen greatly to ruin, but many of the towers still remained, while "the donjon set upon a hill is a piece of work of incredible cost; such a piece of castle building was never before or since set up by any bishop in England."

Like Cardiff, where Duke Robert's tower is still pointed out as the scene of the final years of that unfortunate prince's



captivity and life, Devizes had the distinction of being the fortress selected by his royal brother for the earliest and longest period of his confinement. After his defeat and capture in the struggle between the two brothers for the possession of Normandy, Robert was consigned to Bishop Roger's castle in 1194, under the guardianship of twelve knights. The first three years at Devizes seem to have been little more than an honourable detention, and at their termination he was released under a promise never to enter England or Normandy again. But engaging immediately in further plots he was again seized, sent back to Devizes, and this time into lifelong captivity of a most harsh and rigorous kind, which was only ended by his death at Cardiff twenty years later.

As for Bishop Roger, he flourished in the king's favour for thirty years, but was foolish and unfaithful enough at his master's death to forsake his daughter Matilda's cause, and espouse that of Stephen. The old man, however, met with a just retribution, for Stephen after a time, having cause for suspicion, seized his person, and all his castles but Devizes, which his nephew, the Bishop of Ely, had just time to garrison in Roger's behalf. Upon this, Stephen himself hastened there, taking Roger and his son, whom he had made his chancellor, and a nephew, Bishop of Lincoln. Roger's wife, Matilda of Ramsbury—though I don't know what business he had with one—was within the walls; so Stephen erected a gallows in sight of them, and swore he would hang her son, the chancellor, before her eyes, unless the place with everything in it was immediately surrendered. To make things more uncomfortable for the family in general, he shut up Bishop Roger in a cowshed, and the Bishop of Lincoln in a still more vile outhouse. The grim humour of the situations these mediæval people create for our edification in the retrospect, and the astoundingly rapid alterations in their respective fortunes, make Tudor methods seem almost genial. The castle was of course surrendered. Roger retired to his cathedral at Old Sarum, and piled up the remnant of his cash and jewels on the high altar. But even this sanctuary was not respected; they were wrested from him, and

the greatest man of his time, and the founder of Devizes and many other places, died of a broken heart, accelerated no doubt by old age.

Throughout the wars of Stephen, Devizes castle continued to be the scene of stimulating dramas. FitzHerbert, the Flemish adventurer, next captured it, by scaling ladders of leather thongs, in the name of Matilda, and then, as related earlier in this work, went into business on his own account, till FitzGilbert of Marlborough, a scarcely more reputable person as will be remembered, seized him by treachery, and handed him over to Matilda's brother, Robert of Gloucester, who hanged him outside the walls. Matilda continued to hold the castle, and also held two conferences within it, and then, when hard put to it, escaped to the West, carried in a coffin as a corpse, though not, however, before she had granted the town its first charter. Thus in breathless fashion, these royal, and noble, and blood-thirsty personages pursued their astonishing adventures in Devizes castle as elsewhere, till one tries in vain to imagine how they could have supported the few months of humdrum existence, they were occasionally called upon to bear.

Devizes become henceforth, like Marlborough, a royal castle. John, who for personal and state reasons, led for the most part such an Arcadian life, and must have known every inch of Wilts, Gloucester, and Hereford, was of course often at Devizes ; but it was in the reign of his son Henry, who kept a large sporting establishment, hawks, hounds, grooms and horses at the castle, for use in the great forests below, and on the downs above, that it was the scene of another incident. Matthew of Paris, who tells us so much of both John and Henry's adventures in Wales, relates the story of Hubert de Burgh as he heard it from his own lips. This great man was Henry's chief minister, but making a resolute stand against the king's foreign favourites, he at length fell with a crash, and found himself after various troubles in a dungeon in Devizes castle, guarded by four earls with their representatives. The latter were too sympathetic with their illustrious charge for Henry's liking, and he changed them for other custodians,

who proved, however, equally partial, for Hubert was regarded as in some sort the champion of Englishmen against foreigners. One of the latter Des Roches, was now chief minister, and bishop of Winchester, and on a rumour reaching Devizes, that Hubert was to be handed over to his tender mercies, his keepers decided to deposit him in sanctuary at St. John's church. The problem was how to get him there unknown to the governor, as he was loaded with chains and fetters. At length on Michaelmas eve, 1233, one of these kind-hearted friends took him on his back, and leaped from the castle wall into a thicket of brambles as being the softest falling. Thence not greatly damaged they found their way to the church, woke up the priest and deposited Hubert on the steps of the high altar. But the king's friends disregarded the sanctuary, and dragged poor Hubert back, though he clasped the cross and kissed the wounds of the crucifix, to a yet more painful durance. The Bishop of Salisbury was properly enraged. He hurried to Devizes, and demanded of the governor, the restoration of Hubert to his sanctuary. The request being refused, he excommunicated all concerned, and then the bishops generally took the matter up, and forced the king to restore de Burgh from his dungeon to St. John's church. But the situation could have been no great improvement, for the sheriff, and a posse were ordered to guard the building closely. Unlooked-for relief now came in the shape of Gilbert Bassett of Compton, and a band of Lord Pembroke's men, who routed the sheriff's party, knocked the fetters off Hubert's limbs, and carried him off to Wales on horseback, where Pembroke was himself in arms. Ultimately, de Burgh recovered most of his estates by royal favour, and died in his bed at Blackfriars. Fortunately for my space, and perhaps for my reader, Devizes castle scarcely figured in the Wars of the Roses, and soon afterwards fell into decay. Leland says that some of the material had been carried away to build the Baynton's magnificent house at Bromham, where the owner on one occasion entertained Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn.

In the Civil Wars, like so many other crumbling fortresses,

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it was awakened from its long slumber, and its shattered limbs patched up, and hastily braced together to feel once more the shock of arms. What were the various and secret convictions of the hapless natives of Devizes, we may not know, but the castle was held for the king, by a Welshman, Sir Charles Lloyd, throughout the war, till in September, 1645, when Cromwell himself captured both, and the former was soon after demolished. But Devizes, like Marlborough, being on the road from Oxford to the south-west, was of much importance to the king, and had little repose. The battle of Roundaway, however, was the only fight of the first class in which it took an active part.

This was one of that series of defeats, which brought the cause of Parliament so low in 1643, and at the same time made necessary, that remodelling of their army under Cromwell, which ultimately secured their triumph. In July of the above year, Lord Hertford's western forces, under Sir Ralph Hopton and Prince Maurice, had fought the battle of Lansdowne against Waller, with sufficient success to check him, but at considerable loss to their own side. They now headed for Oxford, with a view to joining forces with the king, and took the less direct route through Chippenham, Rowde, and Devizes, so as to avoid another action with Waller, who succeeded in meeting them, however, near the former place. Here he was repulsed a second time, but attacked the Royalists again almost immediately from the Baynton's house at Bromham, whence a running fight continued all the way to Devizes through an enclosed country, the king's troops getting there first. Upon this Waller drew off his troops, and began to throw up batteries for bombarding the town. Lord Hertford seems only to have had about two thousand five hundred men, four-fifths of whom were infantry. So he gave up the attempt to reach Oxford in the face of Waller's numerous cavalry, and his people set to work to improvise defences for the almost unprotected town. Their situation being critical, Hertford and Prince Maurice decided to make a dash for Oxford with a small body of horse, and secure assistance. In this difficult task, favoured at the outset



by the darkness, they succeeded, with the loss only of a few prisoners. In the mean time, Waller had erected his batteries on the rising ground leading towards the present barracks and Roundaway down, and from thence battered the town.

The approaches to Devizes had been barricaded with chains and timber; otherwise its sole defence lay in some hedges and ditches. Waller now sent a trumpeter to demand a surrender. Hopton parleyed somewhat skilfully in order to give time for the approach of a Royalist force. His officers ransacked the houses for bedcord and matting which were boiled and beaten up to make match for the musketeers, while lead was torn from the church roofs for bullets. But Waller missed his opportunity, for on the next day the situation was entirely changed. The nimble Hertford was on the downs with fifteen hundred dragoons, and Waller duly apprised of his approach, had drawn off his forces to Roundaway to intercept him. Hopton's infantry in the town, suspecting the guns fired on the downs by their friends as a signal to be a ruse of the enemy, were slow in realizing the situation. The ascent to Roundaway is long and steep; the day was hot, and the cavalry action was virtually over before the Royalist foot were on the scene. Though Waller had two thousand five hundred horse they were broken and routed in half an hour by the impetuous onset of their enemies under Lords Wilmot and Crawford. His three thousand foot, however, were still intact, and they were now assailed by Hopton's, a part of whom were Cornishmen, in concert with a cloud of still available cavalry under Wilmot. With the further help of some captured guns, these, too, after a short resistance, were driven flying from the field and the victory was complete. Curiously enough, at the very hour this decisive fight was raging the king was meeting the queen near Oxford, on her return from the Continent. Waller galloped off to Bristol, which was soon after delivered up to the king in somewhat cowardly fashion by Fiennes, the Roundhead governor.

Nearly two years afterwards Waller was again at Devizes, this time with Cromwell, and in its immediate neighbourhood



cut off and captured what was considered the finest cavalry regiment in the king's service, that of Sir James Long, raised mainly in Wiltshire by this distinguished Wiltshireman.

Another local notability distinguished, though on the other side, in these wars as well as for his memoirs of them, was Edmund Ludlow, of Hill-Deverill, who was first sheriff of and then member for Wilts, and also one of the signers of the king's death-warrant. He lived afterwards in exile at Vevay, in Switzerland, and carved the inscription over his door, *Omne solum forti Patria quia Patris*, 1686. This was brought to England, and is now at Heywood House, near Westbury.

The towers of the Devizes churches still show the marks of Waller's guns, as do those at Marlborough of the king's, and, as I have before remarked, two of these churches are amongst the finest in the county, both being regarded as the work of Bishop Roger. St. John's set on high near the centre of the half moon which the town roughly describes upon its ridge facing the west, is the most striking to the eye. With its massive and most imposing rectangular tower, rich in arcading and other external ornamentation, it looks over the deep cutting through which the railway now runs, to the tower of the castle rising beyond, which, though not original, is a reminder at least of the great man who founded both, and was second only to the king in the realm of England for thirty years.

The chancel where Hubert de Burgh clung so desperately to the crucifix is still there with its Norman vaulting and interesting Norman arches. The present nave is fifteenth century, and there are two chapels of slightly later date, one of them, that of the Hertfords, having a fine oak ceiling and panelled arches. The great tower is supported within by two circular and two pointed arches, while there is still a Norman window in the chancel and traces of Norman work in the transepts. There are no monuments, however, of especial interest; but in the churchyard the mortuary stone of a long departed physician is inscribed with the not very felicitous text, "And there shall be no more pain."

St. Mary's, on the other side of the town, is of the same

period, and like the other, possessed of a fine tower and the original Norman chancel, of very similar design, but disfigured by perpendicular windows. The nave is in this case too perpendicular. But while touching, however lightly on the past of Devizes, I must not overlook two notable men who have found themselves here on military duty, though of a much less stimulating description than that which caused the presence of Waller and Cromwell. One of them was Edward Gibbon, the historian, who came here as a captain of Hants militia. Probably he was not exercising his later and more practised historical judgment when he condemns the 'Vize as a disorderly and populous town. The presence of some militia regiments, at any rate, would upset the balance of the best regulated borough. Five years before, in 1756, James Wolfe, a young lieutenant-colonel of twenty-eight, was here recruiting among the moonrakers. I have read three of his autograph letters, dated and headed simply "Devizes." But local tradition assigns his quarters to the Lamb inn, a small house still standing near the church. He was here about five weeks, and for most of the month of July. He makes no reference to the place except in relation to his usual state of ill-health, and that he had only been once on horseback for a month. One of his letters from Devizes illustrates the high reputation which he had even then gained. A member of the Townshend family had written to him for his advice as to a course of military reading for a young relative, and the list Wolfe sends him of works in all languages would stagger, I imagine, most staff officers of to-day. He commends the intentions of the youth, and wishes all officers of birth and fortune would do the same, and try to fit themselves for the command that must come to them. "Without it we must sink under the superior abilities and indefatigable industry of our restless neighbours."

In another letter from Devizes to his mother he says, "I'm tired of proposing anything to the officers that command our regiments. They are, in general, so lazy and so bigoted to old habits." In the same letter he fulminates against "that

Byng," and fears he is "a dog. If he has lost one day at Gibraltar he is the most damnable of traitors." And again, "To-morrow we march and pitch our tents upon the downs within a mile and a half of Blanford. If there is an ounce of resolution left we shall not long lie idle; but I am afraid we have not spirit enough for any undertaking of any great moment." After the review on the downs he writes to his father, General Wolfe, "We had a general review of our forces yesterday to the great entertainment of the ignorant spectators, though, according to my judgment, we do not deserve even their approbation. There are officers who had the presumption and vanity to applaud our operations, bad as they were; but I hope the general saw our defects and will apply a speedy remedy, for I think we are in imminent danger of being cut to pieces in our first encounter." The next year Wolfe got his first chance and was the only officer who came out of the ill-devised Rochelle expedition with credit. The following year he was the hero of Louisburg, and the next the "hero of Quebec," enshrined as one of the Immortals, and laid in his grave at the age of thirty-one.

"The town of Vies," jots down Leland, "stands on ground somewhat clyving and mostly occupied by clothiers." Like most other Wiltshire towns, Devizes concerned itself greatly with manufacturing the abundant wool which grew in the district from the time of Edward the Third. Declining steadily throughout the eighteenth century, the trade practically collapsed early in the nineteenth. Before this, however, the town was manufacturing tobacco and snuff, and still does so, though where the snuff buyer still lurks I know not. I do not think the other and usual industries of an important country town need be catalogued. Wiltshire has been turning out lunatics, however, of late with alarming activity, and divides the distinction with Herefordshire and one or two north Welsh counties of the highest rate. They are housed at Devizes, and it is curious that the most rural and open-air populations should exceed the urban in disease of the brain, though it may be remembered that many of the weak minded

were formerly kept at home. The "village idiot," who was sometimes an institution, an object almost of affection, and betimes of entertainment, no longer mows and gurgles at you in the village street. He is shut up in Devizes and helps to swell the lunacy statistics as well as the county rates. The town boasts, too, an admirable museum which is, in fact, the headquarters of the Wilts Archæological Society.

Devizes is poised upon the northern slope of the gateway, where the vale of Pewsey expands and dips somewhat into the western low country. From nearly any uplifted spot you can see the vale spreading eastward, with its waving undulations of woodland, pasture, and corn land, and its sharp green walls of down; those of Marlborough on the north, and of Salisbury Plain on the south, drawing gradually nearer to each other in the dim and distant regions of Savernake and Burbage; while away to the south-west, the ramparts of the Plain, dipping from their bare, fir-tufted summits to many a leafy village and grey church tower, roll away, in fine curving outline, to the bold promontory at Bratton camp, above Westbury, which marks their western limit. And as we enter this heart of Wiltshire, keeping pace in a measure with my own recent wanderings through the county, the colouring of an approaching harvest has stolen over the land; a harvest, too, the most abundant in promise that had gladdened the farmers' eye for many a long year, and nowhere in England, perhaps, do the ripening grain fields make a braver and a broader show than in this Wiltshire down country. You may see the breezes here rippling over a continuous breadth of nodding wheat as large as an average farm in many parts of England, and rustling onwards without fence or break over another and as broad an area of oats or barley. The steeps of the down too, after so long a spell of summer suns, are a thought less verdant than they were in June. The white roads which, at intervals, cleave their face to vanish on the sky line in lonely pursuit of various distant haunts of civilization, glare, or seem to glare, whiter than ever. Their flinty surface is now pecked up, and loosened, by the hard small



feet of flocks of travelling sheep, and the summer breezes, playing over the steep hill face, whirl it about capriciously in dusty clouds which, at a distance, often create a passing delusion of some hurrying farmer, or feverish motorist, racing down the declivity.

Nor do the long foot-hill sweeps below the down any more blaze with the bright hues of June, with the saffron of the charlock, the purple of the sanfoin, the deeper reds of blossoming clover. The rich gold that precedes the harvest moon, has succeeded the former. The sheep have nibbled the latter to bare stubbles; the hurdles have gone, ewes and lambs too have gone, some to the butcher, others to roam the upland pastures with the shepherd and his dogs, while the ploughs are beginning to break the hard trodden folds for the autumn seeding. The "turmat" hoer may still be seen here and there singling some late sown roots. But for the most part the long unfenced breadths of swedes and mangold are already displaying a green carpet to the sun and flickering healthily in the summer wind. While the "vloy" has done its worst, leaving a few bare patches, here and there, of brown soil to mark his ravages.

Bishops Cannings, some three miles from Devizes, is invitingly situated in a hollow, near the foot of one of the highest and steepest escarpments of the Marlborough downs. Tan hill, and its adjacent heights, named, as William Bowles believed, after the God of Thunder, but still, as I have related, the site of a famous sheep fair rises high above us. This old episcopal village, for the bishops of Salisbury had once a palace here, is another fine example of what always appeals to me as one of the most characteristic and attractive features in Wiltshire scenery. For here again, one sees to perfection that striking contrast of spacious, bare, and breezy down abruptly terminating in luxuriant stately timber, and in this case a yet more stately ecclesiastical fabric. Indeed, the church at Cannings is one of the best in the county, a large cruciform, early thirteenth-century building, with a fine tower, and a stone spire, of exceeding grace and height. The



natives are very proud of it, and it was a robust belief with their Devizes neighbours that they once manured the top of the tower in the hope of stimulating a small pointed turret at the angle to emulation of the other.

The building contains a great deal of fine work of various periods and the view from the west end, looking up between the lofty pointed arches under the central tower, to the vaulted roof of the chancel is singularly striking. On the corbels supporting the roof, as befits the traditions of the church, are the effigies of kings and abbots. The Ernles, before noted as an ancient family of Wiltshire, are commemorated in a chauntry with a large sixteenth-century monument to one of their members. There is a curious mediæval chair too, on the panel of which is painted an outstretched hand with inscription on the fingers and palm; a rare bit of church furniture, supposed to be of confessional significance. In the south porch is a list of the rectors from earliest times and the chronology struck me as quite extraordinary, inasmuch that since the year, 1720, there have only been five incumbents. Archdeacon Macdonald, whom I can myself just remember, was installed in the year of the battle of Waterloo, and as his successor only reigned about ten years it makes the tenure of the other four the more remarkable. To go back further there have only been nine occupants of the living since 1623, and only eleven since 1543, thus giving an average of about thirty years apiece over that long period! As a curious link with the past moreover I might venture the fact that the venerable lady whose husband was inducted in the Waterloo year has only passed away quite recently. Aubrey tells us of one George Ferraby who was rector here in James the First's reign, a gentleman of musical and theatrical proclivities. For when the queen was on the road from Bath in 1613, this spirited person greeted her at the Wansdyke, which crosses the downs above the village, attired as a bard, with his scholars tricked out in "shepherds' weeds" and sang a four-part song of his own composition "to the great liking and content of the queen and her company."

Legends reflecting on the intelligence of the Cannings' folk have been always more or less in the air. Another tells of a party of schoolboys from Marlborough who, finding an ownerless donkey and cart outside a public house, unharnessed the first, put the shafts of the cart through a gate, and then put the donkey back into them, and harnessed it up again. The libel has it that no one in Cannings ever fathomed the mystery of how the animal succeeded in performing this feat of legerdemain, and that it is still a matter of speculation.

I must say at once, however, that this road, which edges along the foot of the downs by Bishops Cannings, and Staunton Fitzwarren, and the two Altons, Alton Barnes and Alton Priors, to Pewsey, through a wide, open, and unfenced country is not that which a person, bent on getting up the vale by the best and most direct means, would select. It is, in fact, the alternative route to Marlborough, branching to Pewsey at Alton Barnes, though with the splendid road to Marlborough, across the wild plateau by Beckhampton, I do not suppose any one, nowadays, but some curious and wayward wanderer selects it. But it is well worth pursuing, for you are lifted above the vale on the one side, with a fine prospect all over it, and in close company with the overhanging steeps crowned with their British camps upon the other. At Alton Barnes too is a diminutive and most primitive old church which gathers some additional interest from the fact of its pulpit having been occupied for some years by Augustus Hare, author of "Sermons to a country congregation," and a more rural audience of the Saxon type, it would, I should imagine, be difficult to find in all England. The manor once belonged to William of Wykeham, who gave it to New College. Above Alton Barnes too, is another white horse, a shapely animal, measuring some fifty yards from head to tail, and visible over a vast extent of country, even to Old Sarum, some twenty miles away. This was the contrivance of one, Mr. Robert Pile, tenant of the manor farm, early in the last century, an open-handed, broad-acred Wiltshire farmer of the traditional type, though I have heard travellers on the Great Western Railway

point it out to their families as a legacy from the Saxon period, I myself in my youth used thus to regard it from afar with proper reverence. Mr. Pile, however, was sadly taken in over the job, for he contracted with a journeyman painter to effect it, and paid him twenty pounds down in good money; but the nefarious mechanic, having pegged out the proportions and set his men to work, decamped with the cash, and left the public-spirited agriculturist to complete it at his own further cost, which he nobly did. He has been well rewarded in the touch of historical romance that has been pleasantly awakened in the breast of so many generations of travellers who know nothing of Mr. Pile, but credit this conspicuous emblem of the Saxon warrior, to King Alfred, or one of his contemporary admirers.

A well-defined, interesting camp, which is certainly much older than King Alfred, crowns the hill above, which is well worth the climb, if only for the prospect it affords of the whole vale of Pewsey and Salisbury Plain with the spire of the cathedral shooting up like a needle on clear days at the further end of it. Those who believe that the hare, as in some parts of England they have cause for believing, is an almost extinct animal would find in this county much consolation. For as I walked up to the camp the whole breast of the down seemed alive with them, either sprung at my feet or alarmed by the hasty flight of those who were; and with such a company set a-going by my quiet and solitary progress, how many a row of guns and beaters would have started I know not. Indeed from one to two hundred hares is still a usual bag when hares are made the sole object of a day's shooting on these downs, and are driven to guns.

On the secluded and uplifted road that twists through the downs from here to the Kennet valley and Marlborough, with not half a dozen dwellings between this and Lockeridge, there is set a humble cottage that I have turned into in passing more than once, a tired-looking bottle of lemonade displayed in the window providing an excuse, if such were wanting. Its tenants are an aged couple, who receive five shillings a week

between them from the parish, and are typical survivals of the old *régime*. If you want to find a keen memory and a tenacious grip of those small facts that time has invested with importance, you will generally discover it in brains that were not burdened with reading and writing, and are not addled in consequence with the perusal of trashy prints, though illiteracy is not defensible. Townsfolk, too, may talk with fatuous ignorance of the rustic as an "unskilled labourer," but it is they who are the people that notice, that remember, and who in their day possessed a skill which was invaluable and many-sided, and which only experience can teach. It has always seemed to me that a man who can thatch and mow, handle horses in plough and waggon, and in the stable, whose eye can penetrate the inscrutable exterior of the sheep and detect his slightest discomfort, who can generally read the heavens above and the earth beneath with rude but rare intuition, is not less skilled than he who sits all day with hand on the knob of a piece of machinery which of itself finishes the point of a nail or completes the heel of a boot. Both, to be sure, are equally credulous and narrow in matters outside their own environment, but I do not see that the perusal of football statistics and a variety of snippets conduces to intellectual superiority. The librarians of provincial libraries seem for the most part of an opinion that it is the rubbish which is mainly in demand among the working-class, and that the natural theory of a public library as a beneficent agency diffusing light broadcast among the populace is mostly a delusion.

This old couple, of seventy-seven and seventy-eight years respectively, date from the period when men began with six shillings a week and rose to seven, and the whole family went into the field. The man had become, in course of time, shepherd to a large farmer on the Plain, who accumulated forty thousand pounds and then lost everything by some extraneous folly, the shepherd in late middle life being consequently thrown adrift. But it was the earlier times before this promotion and comparative comfort that these old people



had so much to say about ; not, however, with a particle of rancour or the slightest sense, apparently, that any injustice was being done, or that with wheat at fifty shillings and wool at eighteen pence there was anything out of proportion in the labourer's family touching no meat, no wheaten bread, no tea, no sugar—or scarcely any. My ancient friends lived quite alone, and I do not suppose ever saw any one to speak to but perhaps the parson on his rounds. A gossip about bygone times was obviously a great treat to them. They were a wholesome-looking pair, with clear memories for the dry facts of their hard, early lives, without any note of complaint, and a scarcely perceptible consciousness that there had been any cause for complaint. On the other hand, there was a curious pride in the thrift of those times—if such inhuman economies may thus be described—and, of course, a vast contempt for the “sassy” and unskilled and lazy generation they professed to see around them. The husband was a carter for some years at seven shillings before he became a shepherd and had a family, which ultimately numbered ten. A little bacon was managed every week ; but that was reserved for the men of the family, as engaged in the more strenuous labours ; the women and children never touched it. Speaking of her father's household and her girlhood, the old woman told me that they only had wheaten bread for a treat, barley bread and a sort of thin tea made from barley meal was the staple diet. This, of course, was after the old Poor Law distribution of loaves had been abolished. Tea was too dear, sugar was much dearer than it is now, and a scarce luxury with them ; milk was occasionally obtained, and buttermilk frequently. This, with such small supply of vegetables as they could grow, constituted the diet of the Wiltshire labouring class in the forties, and with slight improvement for long afterwards. Harvest time then, as to-day, was a time of comparative fatness. No wonder even their better-fed descendants are slow in thought and speech, and not over nimble in movement. It was not easy in those days, the old man said, to change masters, as it involved a house-moving, and the



farmers had "an understanding" with one another. Cottage rent is now very low in Wiltshire. To-day, in Winterbourne Bassett, houses are let at a shilling, and free of that to those whose duties involve some Sunday work. Labour is generally, but not quite everywhere, scarce; but then again, less is required. Wilts and Dorset still foot the list of the counties, as Durham and Glamorgan head it in the matter of farm wages, though, including harvest money and allowances, the Wiltshire labourer now averages from fourteen to sixteen shillings a week, or even more. This reminiscent veteran had, of course, the meanest opinion of his kind as represented by the present generation. Most of them, he declared, could only do one job; the man of his own day, who could turn his hand to anything, was extinct. As for the young unmarried man, many of them were content to work three or four days a week and loaf the rest, and were continually changing their employers. As for "eddcation," his scorn for its results were, I need not say, unbounded. "They can read the newspaper, and do nought else," was his scathing verdict. On the subject of the women, the old lady was equally trenchant concerning their wasteful ways, and thriftless habits, and tawdry finery. I suppose it is really a fact that the English working man's helpmate, urban and rural, is in some respects the least efficient of her class in civilized Europe. If the pessimism of this venerable couple is in part the inevitable accompaniment of old age, it is not reassuring to note how the English workman has fallen in reputation in the colonies. I can myself remember the time when for an immigrant to be an Englishman was a recommendation of itself to an employer. It is now a melancholy fact beyond dispute that *qua* Englishman, he is looked on somewhat askance, and has established a reputation for grumbling, instability, and a dislike of sustained labour. As a factory hand, he has created the formula in Canada that "the country has no use for men who don't turn up on Mondays." As explorers, administrators, exploiters, we doubtless hold our own, but in less dashing enterprises and steady work are thought to be getting soft. It is a pity that

more of us are not enabled to see ourselves as others see us in these days of unavoidable national rivalries, unless indeed we purpose to live by taking in each other's washing.

I am afraid the Wiltshire labourer is not a humorist, nor can this fairly be attributed to his short commons in times past, for the Irishman sparkled on sixpence a day, and certainly grows no brighter on a shilling. This particular veteran, like all of them, was more inspiring in his sober history and his vernacular than when he fell into more frivolous anecdote. This, I remember, was one of his jocose reminiscences. "Bill" was a fellow comrade of his youth, and was loading wheat with him one day in some far distant harvest time. "Bill," says I, "why dost thee zweet zo? The perspiration was jest arollin' arf'n." "Zweet?" says he, "I allus zweats like that when I eats a onion."

But here is an old rustic Wiltshire ballad, a satire on the lawyer's craft, which may be cited, not only as a specimen of the vernacular, but in proof that the saving grace of humour was not so wholly wanting to the genius of the moonraker as might be inferred—

" A harnet zet in a hollow tree,  
A proper spiteful twoad was he,  
And a merrily zang while a did zet ;  
His sting as zsharp as a baganet.  
' Oh, who's zo bowld and vierce as I,  
I vears not bee, nor wapse nor vly.'

" A bittle up thic tree did clim,  
And scarnvully did luk at him ;  
Zays he, ' Zur harnet, who giv thee  
A right to zit in thic' there tree ?  
Although you zengs zo nashun vine  
I tell 'ee it's a house o' mine.'

" The harnet's conscience velt a twinge,  
But growin' bowld in his long sting,  
Zays he, ' Possession's the best law ;  
Zo here thee shasnt put a claw,  
Be off an' leave the tree to me,  
The mixens good enough vor thee.'

“ Just then a yucle (woodpecker) passin' by,  
 Was axed by them their cause to try.  
 ‘ Ha ! ha ! it's very plain,’ says he,  
 ‘ They'll make a vamous nunch (lunch) vor me.’  
 His bill was zsharp, his stomach lear (empty),  
 Zo up a' zapped the caddlin' pair.

“ All you as be to law inclined,  
 This leetle story bear in mind,  
 Vor if to law you ever gwo,  
 You'll vind they'll allus zarve 'ee zo ;  
 You'll meet the vate o' these ere two ;  
 They'll take your cwoat and carkis too.”

But on the vale of Pewsey a great etymological distinction has recently fallen, though unbeknown to the world. For it so happened that the Swedish Government not long ago despatched a professor, erudite in the root of tongues, to England for a prolonged study of the purest and oldest Anglo-Saxon that this island affords. This gentleman, on his arrival, took consultation with the best authorities on the subject in London, and I believe in Oxford, with the result that he selected Wiltshire as the scene of his operations, and when he turned for more precise directions in the county itself, he was recommended by the local experts to the Pewsey vale. This accomplished Swede spent three seasons there, and became intimately known to various friends of mine resident therein. I am assured that not only did he achieve the Wiltshire dialect and accent to greater perfection than any educated Wiltshireman with a turn for, and skill in the vernacular had ever been known to, but that he actually distinguished and tabulated the speech of different villages. He made himself a *persona grata* among the natives, and if the Pewsey vale has escaped the notice of the popular novelist who employs local colouring and dialect as his stock in trade, the savants of Sweden at any rate have been brought into intimate touch with it.

The upper half of the vale of Pewsey is, in fact, the upper valley of the Avon, not of course the Bristol Avon which we saw about Malmesbury and Chippenham, but that other, and

to me much more inspiring stream, which cleaves the heart of Salisbury Plain, and runs on by Ringwood and Christchurch to the sea. A river in whose clear chalk waters the lustiest trout, and the noblest of English salmon rejoice, and whose whole course of sixty miles from Pewsey to the tide is an almost continuous progress through alluring and Arcadian scenes.

Pewsey, anciently known as Pewsedge, is a little town, or rather a large agricultural village, with a fine church containing much early English work, a perpendicular tower, and a great deal of modern decoration, both in carving and painting, executed by Canon Bouverie the present rector. The Avon, which rises but a short space above, and is here a small stream, prattles through the village. Though the little capital of the vale, as it were, there is nothing in its story of much ultra-parochial interest. No feudal nor ecclesiastical distinction worth recording here belong to it, though distinguished persons, both lay and ecclesiastical, including of course the Seymours, have owned its manor and market at various times. Pewsey enjoys some local fame for the fervent manner in which it has always celebrated, and still continues to celebrate, its annual feast. "Pewsey veast" was a great local event in my youth, and still I believe defies the growing blasèness of the rural element towards these simple jubilations with much success.

All round Pewsey, connected by a network of deep leafy lanes, are sequestered villages, good to look upon with their quaint thatched gables, their bright patches of flowers, and ancient hedges of box or yew, and usually, at least one home-stead generous in barns and yards, with ample dwelling-house of creeper-covered brick, gay in flower bed, and trim of lawn. Above them all, as above Pewsey hangs the steep lofty wall of the Marlborough downs, their almost precipitous sides ribbed with innumerable sheep-walks, their more outstanding summits carved into those uncanny looking notches and angles which proclaim for miles over the surrounding country, some scenes of prehistoric strife. Thus Huish hill dominates the secluded village of that name. Behind Oare the hanging

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beech woods and verdant parklands of Rainscombe fill the floor and lower slopes of a deep sheltered bay in the hills, and from the high road that climbs laboriously up the range towards Marlborough, presents to the downward view one of the most engaging prospects in all Wiltshire. Overlooking this sheltered and reposeful spot at a great height, the eastern headland, in fact, of the deep bay which gives it such charm, is an outstanding camp with its sharply fortified crown, and a natural escarpment tumbling abruptly many hundred feet into the vale below. Just beyond again, above the village of Wootton Rivers, the tufted crest of Martinsell, girdled with one of the longest fosses in the county, and indented with the remains of a British village, shows the boldest and most precipitous front of all to the dwellers up and down the vale, and to the shepherds of Salisbury Plain, which three or four miles away displays its entire northern frontier.

Martinsell, Oare, and Huish camps, crossing at different points the great horse-shoe curve of Rainscombe, are often taken as apt and accessible illustrations of neolithic life. Here are the huge furrows trending down the steep face of the down, and trodden to the depth of ten to twenty feet by the cattle of unnumbered years, as they were driven back and forth from the upland camps and grazings to the valleys below, certainly for water, perhaps for pasture. Here, too, are the traces of dew ponds, which were utilized beyond doubt by these hill dwellers, with the clearly defined pit villages on Martinsell and Huish. Every detail of the ancient life that once stirred here, so plainly marked on the kindly turf, can be studied by those who will, and interpreted according to the theories that each one favours. The terraces, lynchets, or, as the rustics call them, shepherd's steps, are mysterious objects over which speculation ranges with some freedom. They are here numerous and particularly well defined. The thought suggested to most of us by the hill camp is naturally that of human foes. A recent writer, who has discussed these Huish and Martinsell camps as types, lays immense stress on the wolf, and pushes that ferocious animal conspicuously to the front; holding it



to be the great enemy, indeed the main enemy, in normal times, of these neolithic hill dwellers. He sees in the terraces of the downs, "Wolf platforms," or vantage points usually near the foot of the hill, where numbers of men gathered together, with noise and sound more effective than weapons, pushed back the howling packs that would break from the forest, and scale the hill to where the sheep and cattle are huddled at night, or in winter within their entrenched folds. Packs of wolves do not attack large bodies of men, and would hardly discriminate between those armed, as now with a rifle, or as in primitive times with only slings or clubs. Demonstrations would no doubt be enough to scare them away, and the picture drawn of bodies of primitive long-haired skin-clad Britons crowding on the "Wolf platforms," face to face with howling mobs of wolves, and their stock coralled on the heights above is sufficiently dramatic, though an extremely fanciful one. After all much of this must inevitably be surmise, though pure speculation will always be fascinating as we stand among the traces of this ancient life, which the untouched turf of the Wiltshire downs has preserved for us so conspicuously. With some intimate knowledge of the forest primeval even in temperate countries there are difficulties not easy to overlook. I cannot bring myself to believe that neolithic man, so ill equipped as he was, made much inroad in the valleys, or greatly utilized them for grazing or tillage, even supposing that he was sufficiently crowded on the uplands to make it an object. One would like to know, too, the birth-rate of these people, or rather the proportion of them that survived childhood; and yet more the average perils of manhood when this was achieved. But then, one would like to know many things that can never be revealed.

The refuse and litter, again, of the neolithic implements has left everywhere abundant traces. The run on flints, seeing that probably only selected stones were used for such fashioning, must have been immense. Were particular men in a tribe conspicuous for this work in some sort of commercial fashion—which seems a favourite theory—perhaps, stimulated

unconsciously by our modern habit of division of labour—or did each one pride himself on his individual cunning, and occupy no small part of his time in the chipping of scrapers, mauls, hammers, arrow-heads, and the like? Among civilized Anglo-Saxons in the backwoods of America even yet, and much more so within easy memory, every man prides himself on the fashioning of his own axe-handles, his plough-shafts, his mauls, and would consider it almost derogatory to be beholden to neighbour or storekeeper. Would his primitive ancestors on Salisbury Plain have been without this elemental and natural pride of the soil-worker or hunter?

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, great sports were held up here on Martinsell. The custom still, I believe, survives in picnics for children. But at the original function a part of the programme consisted in sliding down the almost perpendicular face of the hill seated on the jawbones of horses, a practice which an antiquarian friend in the neighbourhood believes to show some trace of pagan origin. I can myself remember as a child the well-worn mark of a slide traced down this three or four hundred feet of precipitous turf, and the legend that a certain grave episcopal and academic dignitary, then living, had been persuaded to launch himself down it, without the assistance even of the horse's jawbone, and that having once started had to continue his career unchecked till he landed safe but sore in the vale of Pewsey. All trace, however, of the historic slide has long vanished. But within the memory of men only elderly, the pugilists of the neighbouring villages used to take advantage of what was left of the ancient festival, and fight out their battles on the top of Martinsell. These encounters were sometimes so ferocious that unsuccessful efforts were made to stamp out the festival, which, however, died a natural death.

Tradition had it that Assheton Smith, in whose Tedworth country it lay, once rode behind his hounds down the steepest face of Martinsell, with that impetuous ardour for which he was conspicuous. If that is so, his old huntsman Carter, who lies in the churchyard of Milton, just beneath the hill, would

have told his vicar, who shared his tastes and was, in a sense, his biographer as well as his spiritual adviser. Carter was almost as well known a man in his day as his master, and gave up the horn of the Tedworth in 1865, a few years after the latter's death, to spend a long and honourable old age in the seclusion of a cottage at Milton. "An odd man, a very odd man, was Mr. Smith!" The old huntsman, one of Nature's gentlemen, never permitted himself any more emphatic expression regarding the great but eccentric sportsman, who must have led him many a dance.

Everybody in this part of Wiltshire knew Parson Gale, of Milton, just as most people of out-of-door tastes in England knew by reputation Fred Gale, his brother, the poet of cricket. The vicar of Milton, who is not long dead, was one of the olden time, an enthusiastic foxhunter, with a gift of bluff and racy eloquence that made him indispensable at every country gathering. I can see him now, as if it were yesterday, though it is over thirty years ago, addressing the audience at Pewsey feast with a hearty and patriotic fervour that must have convinced them "that Pewsey veast" was the glory of Pewsey, almost of Wiltshire, and that on its proper upkeep and celebration their reputation depended; and Mr. Gale could talk Wiltshire when he liked, and in those days, at any rate, the rustic appreciated the talent. But Parson Gale, as I have said, was an ardent sportsman, and took an abiding interest in the doings of the Tedworth, getting to them himself, perhaps, with his single horse once a week. But the ordinary phraseology of the genial cleric flavoured strongly of the chase, and anecdote is busy with the metaphors he sometimes brought into use for rating the moral delinquencies of a parishioner, or for cheering up the flagging spirits of a starchy and depressed brother parson as they donned their surplices in the vestry.

However, it was George Carter, not the late vicar of Milton, that had for the moment arrested my pen. Yet it was the latter who has preserved such reminiscences of his friend and parishioner, the famous huntsman, as are extant. For the old man, in his years of retirement, had but little to occupy

him, and was glad enough to kill his foxes or lose them over again with his sympathetic vicar sitting on the opposite side of his hearth ; while there was obviously nothing the other liked better than to sit there and listen. Many of the old huntsman's reminiscences of the eccentric master he served so long, and whose hounds he practically hunted at his own discretion for the two or three last years, were taken down by Mr. Gale and embodied in a little book. They are given in the words of the narrator, and as Carter was regarded as one of the finest huntsmen who ever lived, as well as a respectable and superior man, such simple tales have certain modest merits that the smartly written biography of a mighty Nimrod sometimes lack. I had never read, save in occasional fugitive articles, any account of Assheton Smith, but George Carter's anecdotal chats are usually prefaced with "Mr. Smith, he were an odd man ; a very odd man." I fancy most people know this much, but one or two of his oddities may be briefly culled from his old servant's lips. He lived, of course, at Tedworth House, now the headquarters of the general commanding on Salisbury Plain. The seclusion of the house and grounds are not destroyed, but where George Carter used to jog home with his hounds are now rows of unsightly brick barracks, and the whole environment is given up to military requirements.

"The squire" kept a hundred couples of hounds one way or another, hunting two packs regularly. On one occasion a distinguished stranger expressed himself as anxious to have a day with Mr. Smith and see *all* his hounds, not knowing the nature of the establishment. The squire, who was away at the time, wrote to Carter to take all the hounds possible to the fixture at which his admirer was to be. Carter was expected to know his master's moods, even if his directions were a little ambiguous and obviously absurd. So he turned up with fifty-seven couples at the meet, where the master also appeared, in company with the bewildered stranger. No operations were attempted in such a congested state of matters, and I forget the outcome of it, "but then the squire had enjoyed his little joke, for Mr. Smith were an odd man—a very odd man."

When he left off hunting at points where his trap could not hit him off, it seems that he used to ride home at full gallop along the road, having generally several horses out. "He would come along, waving his hand, and I'd say to Cowley, the whip, 'We must get out of the way, or Mr. Smith will be right over us,' and he'd come past as hard as ever he could gallop, never taking any notice of us or the hounds." "In frosty weather he used to have two or three horses out, and gallop them up and down as hard as ever they could lay legs to the ground, and I don't believe he would have pulled up whoever had got in his way." Again, "He was a wonderful horseman, was Mr. Smith, but his ways and mine didn't always agree. I liked to find a fox, and have an hour and a half with him, and kill him, if I could—and, somehow, I generally could; but the squire used to say, 'What's the good of caddlin' about after a fox all day?' If he hunted one for forty minutes and didn't kill him, he'd give him up, and try for another; but as soon as he'd tired one horse out, he had another, so it didn't signify." Both the old huntsman and his sporting vicar and biographer now lie in the little churchyard of Milton. *Requiescat in pace!*



## CHAPTER IX

### PEWSEY TO AMESBURY

AT Easton, hard by Milton, there once stood the Priory of the Holy Trinity, greatly favoured by the Esturmys and earlier Seymours of Savernake, but nothing remains of it. It is a little curious that in both the plots against Cromwell, royalist, and republican, Wiltshiremen were mainly concerned, and that both had much to do with Marlborough. Major John Wildman, who represented the cause of pure republicanism, and had been suspected many years earlier of planning the Protector's assassination with Lilburne, was the originator in 1655 of this latter intrigue. He was arrested here at Easton by a troop from Marlborough, in the very act of writing a manifesto, which began, "The declaration of the free and well-affected people of England now in arms against the tyrant Oliver Cromwell." For some reason his life was spared, and twenty-five years later he stood for Marlborough, though without success. The other in the same year was the better known Penruddock and Grove rising on behalf of the "king over the water." Close to Easton is the old manor-house of Fifield, a second residence, till quite recently, of the Penruddocks of Compton, Chamberlayne, in South Wiltshire, while beyond Pewsey we shall pass Enford, a former property of the Groves. The ulterior design of this plot was to seize Marlborough, which harboured great numbers of potential partisans, including Lord Hertford himself, who was suspected of being one. But the attempt was easily quelled, and the leaders suffered capital punishment. In a

third plot, too, of Cheshire origin, some Wiltshire squires round Malmesbury showed much activity.

Near Savernake station, at this southern edge of the forest, is the only country hotel, though a small one, which caters for tourists in all this part of Wiltshire, providing a good centre for the exploration of the forest, the Pewsey vale, or Salisbury Plain, while hence, though we may not follow it here, a road runs along the eastern fringe of the Plain through the Collingbournes, typical Wiltshire villages of thatch and flint, and big elms clustering round a perpendicular church tower beneath the down, to Ludgershall. This last is the site of a royal castle, and possesses an extremely interesting church. Within my memory it, too, was a quiet village, but is now the busy railway entrepot for the military section of Salisbury Plain. From Pewsey itself you may climb almost at once on to the Plain, hereabouts enjoying to the full its ancient solitude, and travel over a broad firm turf track by many barrows and for many miles to Everleigh, a church and hamlet dominated by the fine old mansion of the Astleys.

A century or more ago a Pewsey man, named Dyke, was robbed and murdered, in the dark, near the village by a fellow-townsmen named Amor, an incident quite unworthy of notice here, but for the strange manner in which the criminal was brought to account by the parson of the parish, a capable and somewhat celebrated person, who reigned in Pewsey at that time, by name Townsend. The murderer's footmarks had on this occasion been traced back to the village; but nothing could be made of the case. So on Sunday this resourceful cleric commanded his congregation to remain in church after service, had the corpse of the victim carried in, and made every individual present lay his hand upon its face, and swear solemnly that he was not implicated in the horrid deed. When it came to Mr. Amor's turn, who, as the rector anticipated, came to church to avert suspicion, he could not face the ordeal satisfactorily, was searched, and the murdered man's watch actually found upon him. Some persons yet alive remember the gibbet still hanging on which

his corpse mouldered. The present rector has something of a joke against his ancestor, the Lord Radnor, who originally acquired the advowson of Pewsey, and this, too, is connected with the sagacious and long-lived Mr. Townsend. The latter was inducted about the middle of the eighteenth century at a tender age, and was supposed at the time to be hurrying to an early grave. So his lordship, in that ordinary and legitimate course of ecclesiastic commerce, which still continues to astonish, not to say unduly scandalize, foreigners and colonists, purchased the living for a young relative at the long figure proportionate to the situation. Mr. Townsend, however, disappointed them all cruelly, for he saw both patron and aspirant laid in their graves, and lived strenuously for fifty years, unfortunately, as we have seen, for Mr. Amor. These kind of speculations do turn out awry at times. I can almost cap this misadventure, as no doubt it seemed at the time to those concerned, by another, in quite recent times, in which a relative of my own played the part of Mr. Townsend in a still more surprising fashion. For at the age of eighty he held an exceeding fat living in the eastern counties, and a hapless young cleric, acquainted only with the age and not with the person of the sitting rector, paid the noble patron a very round sum indeed for the next presentation, borrowing the money to do so, and afterwards went down to survey the scene of his financial operations. The occupant, who was altogether a phenomenal person for his years, has often described the meeting to me and the face of his visitor, as with a well-dissembled effort, he vaulted over the low garden railings on his way to greet him. He lived for nineteen years afterwards, relatively hale and hearty almost to the last, always expressing, not without a twinkle in his eye, a due measure of sympathy for his long-suffering successor, who did, however, live to enter into his inheritance, and let us hope still enjoys it.

As we leave Pewsey and face westward again down the flat and fertile vale, one's thoughts seem to turn instinctively to the vast changes that in recent times have come over

agriculture, and all concerned with it. For, within three short decades, the levels around us were among the most noted wheat-growing regions in all Southern England ; while on the wild uplands that hem them in to the right and left, rich harvests of high-priced wool added their profits to the great returns on grain. Many fortunes were made here, and some of them were lost in the reaction that set in with the fatal year of 1879 ; for this particular season, from its appalling nature, is the one which best serves both the rural memory and the agricultural annalist to mark the beginning of the great decline, though in no way, of course, connected with its cause. Skilful farmers had, till then, made money easily, and less skilful ones a generous living almost free from care. There was a certain pride attached to large and successful farming in those days, now entirely scotched by the long period of adversity, which surrounded the big farmer, and stamped him as favoured among men. No one lectured the British tenant, on agriculture at any rate, in those days. He was regarded, and regarded himself, as the salt of the earth in his own line. Foreigners came from the east and the north and from the south to admire and to take hints from him ; and so he added farm to farm, and wiped out fences, and gloried in broad acreages, and did himself nobly. Small farmers then, like small squires, were regarded as belated institutions, to be decently got rid of in one way or another. No one seemed to dream, let us say, in 1873 of the cataclysm that was coming, though even then settlers were pouring over the virgin prairie lands of the Western States, and one might have thought that an intelligent schoolboy, on a trip across the continent, could have foreseen some change impending.

If the Lothians were the favourite object-lesson to the foreigner, and the farmers of North Lincolnshire, who hunted with the Brocklesby in pink, offered the most exhilarating social spectacle, the Wiltshire farmers, with their fine open country and broad acreages had grown into a distinct caste, who lived freely, intermarried among themselves, and could afford to set much store by what would be now called superfluities.



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Before railway times, particularly, they took immense pride in the appearance of the four-horse teams that hauled their wheat to Salisbury or Devizes market, keeping them sleek and fat for the purpose, and decking them lavishly with ribbons; while the bells on the harness, often sweetly tuned, were treasured from one generation to another. One well-known occupant of a farm within sight of us here, as we draw towards Manningford Bruce, so his grandson relates, never permitted his market-team to haul the waggon down the half mile of heavy farm road that led from the homestead to the highway, lest it should make them sweat and marr the glossiness of their appearance in Devizes. So the ordinary drudges of plough and harrow used to draw the load of three to four tons down to the turnpike, where the pampered and shining elephantine pets were waiting to roll it with dignified gait and jangling bells along the broad way to the 'Vize.

I have lately seen a memoir relating to the private history of a family, not only distinguished in agriculture throughout the Pewsey vale and Wiltshire, but well known for their short-horn strain throughout Great Britain and beyond. It is extremely interesting as illustrating the ups and downs of agriculture, and the individual careers of three or four generations of a clever and intelligent race, holding farms all over North Wilts, but centering mainly in the Pewsey vale. It may interest and, perhaps, surprise the reader to hear that one of them is paying rent at this moment on over ten thousand acres, a fair amount of which is dairy and tillage land. The founder of the family was a native of the Pewsey vale of humble position; a harness-maker, in fact, though doing a good country business. About the year 1780, happening to lay his landlord under an obligation, by some sensible advice, on an important matter, the latter put him into a good farm, and lent him part of the money to stock it. His confidence was well placed, and his tenant had, moreover, four sons, who, by heredity or training, developed their father's capacity for affairs. The story of these sons, which is continued into the third and fourth generation, of the different farms they took,



how they prospered, or otherwise, and how they collected the herd associated with their name, together with the rents and wages paid and the prices received throughout the nineteenth century, make an interesting if unpretentious bit of contemporary history. The stiff rents of the Napoleon wars, and the high prices of grain, come in for interesting record. How a neighbour or relative sold ten quarters of wheat at Andover market to a Devizes corn dealer, in October, 1812, for two hundred and one shillings a quarter, constituting, perhaps, the most sensational item in it.

We read, also, how wheat, from the battle of Waterloo to 1830, averaged sixty-seven shillings, and how, under the old Poor Law, the surplus population of parishes were utilized to drag stones on to the roads, rather than keep them in idleness, and that the rent of farms in such parishes was greatly affected by the crushing rates inevitable. There is full mention, too, of the riots provoked by the introduction of threshing machines, in which, it will be remembered, the redoubtable Captain Budd, of Winterbourne Bassett, played such a strenuous part. One of the family, as a yeoman, took a hand in the only "engagement" of this little civil war, where the mob, armed with pitchforks, were surrounded at the Charlton Cat, and shed the only blood of the campaign by severing a bucolic ear. Several of the insurgents were hanged, and some transported; three hundred and thirty in all being arraigned at the assizes of 1830-31. One learns, among other details, that New Forest ponies were used largely by one noted farmer to subsidize horses; four of these little animals, the breaking of which was an exhilarating performance, being hitched to each plough or harrow. And again, as early as 1854, we find seven cows and bulls going to America from one of the family farms for one thousand pounds, a high price for those times. Another member clears four thousand pounds in one year of the Crimean War on a single farm. Wheat, which had previously dropped as low as thirty-five shillings, had shot up to seventy-two shillings. Wages, which appear to have risen at the end of, and after, the Napoleon wars to ten, had dropped again,

long before the Crimean War, as the inflated rents remained, unresponsive to the subsequent low price of grain, and squeezed farmers terribly for a time.

There were fox-hunters, of course, in the family, as well as antiquarians and book lovers. One of the most successful of them all never went out of doors till the afternoon, but had such a grip of business that his bailiff and men never ventured to relax their ardour, knowing well that his vigilant eye would detect in a moment any oversight or lack of diligence. The notion that a capacity for physical exertion is the chief asset to success in farming, so lightly do they hold the requisite brains, is quite a common shibboleth among laymen even yet; while, as regards the intending colonist, I know it to be quite an article of faith that a footballer will make a farmer. Another member of the clan, which was rather of the serious sort, made a practice of never going near a market, a restraint which would certainly have been torture to the ordinary Wiltshire farmer. He sold grain and stock to the same firm always; and so accurate was his judgment that, though the transactions often ran into thousands, precise equity, as well as harmony, was always maintained between seller and buyer.

Such are a few notes culled at haphazard from the memoirs of a rather notable family. The origin of the settlement of one branch of it in the holding now occupied by them in the Pewsey vale is not without humour. It appears that seventy odd years ago their ancestor, who was farming near by, had an encounter with a horsedealer out of which he emerged heroically. For one day, as he was riding his cob peaceably to Devizes market this impudent horse coper, cantering by, gave it a smart cut over the hindquarters, which nearly caused the upsetting of its indignant owner. The latter, however, having pursued and captured the offender, gave him such a lathering with a ground ash that he took out a summons. The case was heard before a local magistrate, and though the doctor testified to the prosecutor's back being like a gridiron, the justice of the peace was so drawn towards the defendant that he eventually let him his best farm, and their respective descendants

still occupy the position of landlord and tenant to one another at this day.

What indeed can one say of the Pewsey vale, to-day, except that it has passed through parlous times, and that now, under rents upon a wholly different scale from former days, and much of it under grass, it is in smooth water again. Though the great days of old, when a farmer—as in one instance known to me—could lay down five hundred dozen of port, have gone for ever, and wheat is only grown for straw, still the rent is paid, and the big tenants enjoy life in a more restrained fashion, if no longer, perhaps, the envy of their neighbours. Some even make money, I am assured by those who ought to know. More I do not feel qualified or called upon to say, even if it would interest the reader.<sup>1</sup> The great waggons still roll along the roads, though the pride of tuned bells and sleek horses has departed, and if the restricted area of wheat still looks fine for these degenerate days, and, indeed, presents a noble sight at harvest from the top of Ryborough camp, or Martinsell, and yields its five quarters in a bumper year, a quotation of thirty shillings will stir no one's blood in the prospect and certainly not the growers.

The little Avon accompanies us to Manningford Bruce, keeping pace in its gentle current with our somewhat discursive progress. It has by now expanded into a trout stream of some consideration, and I never cross the railed bridge under the Lombardy poplars, just below the mill at Manningford, without recalling the shock I received here, over twenty years ago, on being fortuitously introduced to the mysteries of the then new cult of the dry fly. It so happened that I had been in foreign parts for a decade or so, but, in the 'eighties, found myself once again in the familiar atmosphere of the Wiltshire downs, and armed with rod and line, treading the banks of the infant Avon at this particular spot, a veritable Rip van Winkle of a fisherman as was soon to be made plain. In my early days, the angler on these chalk streams having noted to his contentment that a breeze was blowing was wont to issue forth with two flies mounted, and search the eddies of the infrequent runs

or the ruffled surface of the more frequent deeps in unceremonious and haphazard fashion. He treated the Kennet or the Avon short as he treated the Usk or the Exe, and sometimes with fair success. But the fly is the natural food of the latter rivers, while the fat trout of the chalk streams look to the bottom for their main supply, and regarding the fly as an occasional delicacy, are much harder to tempt, and harder to please. The new method of combating this fastidiousness by the single dry fly had in the mean time arisen. Allusions to it I had doubtless noticed afar off in the columns of the *Field*, but with slight interest, at they applied in no way to the trans-Atlantic trout in his forest haunts with which I was then concerned.

However, the occasion in question was a sunny day, I remember, in early summer, just before the hatching of the mayfly, which toothsome insect does indeed stimulate even the chalk-stream trout to abnormal activity. Unconscious of my belated methods, I had put my wet flies unsuccessfully over the little rapid water there was hereabouts, and was whistling vainly for a wind, the necessary accompaniment of Wiltshire trouting, from my primitive and reminiscent standpoint. But the still reach by which I was somewhat disconsolately seated grew glassier as the sun mounted higher, and the scarcely perceptible zephyrs died wholly away. So I possessed my soul in patience, and gathered what consolation I might from being surrounded once again by the familiar landmarks of youth, the green fir-tufted billows of Salisbury Plain, so close in front, the bolder ramparts of Oare and Martinsell hanging dimmer and fainter to the north. I was wondering whether our old friend, Archdeacon Grantley, was still alive, and whether the distant hammer of a horse on the road might perchance be the vicar of Bullhampton, on his way to some perilous encounter with Mrs. Proudie at Salisbury. The keeper passed by, looking very hot in his thick velveteen and whistling corduroys. "It's turr'ble akk'rd vor the trout, zur," meaning it was awkward for me; but he was neither a fisherman nor a grammarian, and intent only on his young pheasants. Presently, however, my



dreams were rudely broken by the sudden apparition of a strange angler upon the scene, who, after the usual courtesies, proceeded to remarks of so sanguine a nature that I should have taken them for a sorry jest if he had not looked such a thorough sportsman, as, indeed, he soon proved to be. He surveyed the pellucid reach before us, and as no ring of rising fish broke its surface, proceeded on a cautious visit of inspection, and shortly announced that he could see a good fish lying at a point which appeared some thirty yards away. He asked me if I couldn't see it. I most assuredly could not, and even had I succeeded, the spectacle would not have suggested to me any alleviation of our apparently gloomy prospects. The notion of hunting for one's fish before catching him seemed to be subversive of every canon of the angler's creed, as I had known it.

However, this professor proceeded to convince me that the world had turned upside down since I had last thrown a fly amid these pastoral scenes, not merely by his long accurate casting and manipulation of a floating sedge, but by actually capturing this fish and two more pounders that he had marked at long range from out of this sunlit and pellucid stretch. But all this is nearly a quarter of a century ago, and the dry fly is now such an accepted religion that to use a wet one on a chalk stream is regarded as only one degree less heinous than shooting a sitting pheasant.

At Manningford Bruce there is a beautiful little Norman or Romanesque church with an apsidal chancel, supposed to have been erected in the late Saxon period. It is quite severe, without ornament inside or out, but otherwise reminds me somewhat of the more famous little church of Kilpeck near Hereford. There is an interesting tablet within, however, erected to the memory of Mary Lane, who became the wife of Edward Nicholas of this place and died in 1686, and the inscription will serve to identify her—

“Underneath this lieth the body of MARY NICHOLAS, daughter of THOMAS LANE, of Bentley, in the county of Stafford, a family as venerable for its antiquity as renowned for its loyalty, of which ye



wonderful preservation of King Charles the Second, after the defeat of Worcester, is an instance never to be forgotten, in which glorious action

bore herself a very considerable part, and that the memory of this extraordinary service might be continued to posterity, the family was dignified with the addition of the signal badge of honour—the Armes of England in a Canton.”

This lady greatly assisted her better-known sister Jane in effecting the escape of Charles, and is the original of Sir Walter Scott’s “Alice Lee.”

We are now actually on the skirts of the Plain. The smooth gritty roads of disintegrated flint may twist betimes under avenues of ash and elm, but through the trunks of the trees the long fenceless fields, golden with ripe grain or green with the freshened up aftermath of seeds and clover, trend gradually upward to the steep wall of the down, where the barrows lie thick against the sky. Here the Avon takes a turn to the southward and, receiving the waters of the Marden brook from the direction of Devizes and the west at Rushall, enters, a mile further on, at Upavon the long narrow cleft through the heart of Salisbury Plain, down which it so pleasantly urges its bright streams.

Upavon stands at the mouth of the valley, and once belonged to that ill-fated Despencer whom Edward the Second’s unfortunate affection, like that of the gods, made mad first with vainglory before it destroyed him.

It is a delightful and clean old-world village of the Wiltshire type, with the Norman tower of its Early-English church rising above the clustering thatched roofs and abounding foliage, through which the river glides for a brief period in unaccustomed shade. Here, too, comes in the white dusty road from Devizes after its ten-mile pilgrimage, the last few over the toes of the open down and by its side. Visible from here is the Charlton Cat, where the threshers still dine once a year in memory of Stephen Duck the poet.

At Weddington, just beyond the village upon the down, was born, in 1773, Henry Hunt, otherwise “Orator Hunt,” a man who made some stir in his day, and had altogether a

strange career. A typical Wiltshire farmer of the broad-acred and Tory type, he was one of the foremost in the neighbourhood to come forward and place everything he had at the service of the Crown during the alarm of invasion in 1801. He was then farming at Chisenbury, just down the river, and in the appraisalment of property made for military purposes his effects were valued at twenty thousand pounds. Hunt offered to serve himself with three mounted men. He was noted for his sporting qualities and his fine horses. But through some misunderstanding, the nobleman commanding the local forces, declined or dispensed with his services. He answered the slight in person, and challenged his lordship to mortal combat, for which he was mulcted of one hundred pounds and his liberty for six weeks. In prison he brooded over his wrongs in the sympathetic company he found there, and came out transformed into a red-hot demagogue. He became a friend of Cobbett, contested Bristol once and Somerset twice without success, and devoted himself generally to the career of an agitator. He was chairman and chief speaker in an assembly of eighty thousand people in Manchester on the occasion of the Peterloo massacre. For this he was arrested and again imprisoned, and on his release was greeted by the largest concourse of people that London, it was said, had ever seen. He eventually entered Parliament for Preston in 1830, lost his seat in two years, and died shortly afterwards. Hunt was regarded as the handsomest man in the House of Commons—tall, bronzed, and muscular. He had been accustomed to drive to Devizes market four-in-hand, and was at the same time capable of doing a day's work with the stoutest of his labourers. His lack of success in political life seems to have been due to an imperfect education. Hunt was not the first man who has changed his politics in a week from pique, but I should imagine he is the only wealthy sporting farmer that jumped from a Tory to a demagogue in six and remained one permanently. A rector, whom I knew well in life, once did the same thing, smarting under a verdict which he regarded as a cruel injustice. When he returned to

his pulpit his Tory squire, who sat immediately under it, heard to his amazed indignation Liberal sentiments of the most pronounced and aggressive kind being poured out over his sacred head. He rose at once, and reached for his hat, but his lady, who was not only of a masterful but well-balanced mind, seized him firmly by the tail of his coat. There was a brief struggle, witnessed by a trustworthy person well known to me, but the lady proved the stronger, or the more persistent, and an open scandal was thereby averted.

Crowning the high down above one side of the entrance to the valley is Casterly camp, comprising sixty acres enclosed within a rampart thirty feet high, and much valued by antiquaries as a probable British town. On the east of the valley, guarding the other side of its entrance upon an opposing height, is Chisenbury Ring, a smaller enclosure with a lower rampart. Down in the hollow between, the little river runs out from beneath the thatched gables and embowering foliage and dominant church tower of Upavon, and sparkles bank high in quick current down the centre of a long strip of verdant meadow, to tumble over a hatch into a churning pool. Thence swishing under the pendant boughs of a hanging woodland, and with many twists and turns by pollards, withy beds and alders, it hurries onward; sometimes mute, and sometimes with thin piping voice, to the lush paddocks, the stately elms, the ancient mill, and the old Manor House of Chisenbury. It is a pleasant spot down here on a warm sunny day in the mayfly season, and the more abundantly those most beautiful and graceful of all water-born insects are executing their gambols over the surface of the stream, the brighter smile no doubt, the cynic will interpolate, does the face of nature wear? Perhaps so; but even when waiting with hope deferred for the thin vanguard of those succulent ephemera, when a nipping and unseasonable north-easter is sougning over the high plains above, it is always summer when the June sun is high in this leafy hollow, and the trout think so too sometimes and, tired like us of waiting for the expectant feast, turn their attention in languid fashion to smaller fry, to

alders, duns, or spinners, to their occasional sorrow and our petty but only human triumphs.

But sometimes both we and the fish are idle. The buntings chatter mockingly in the withy bed; the moorhens plunge about with raucous notes, or a water-rat flops into the stream in imitation of a big fish rising, and by way of a practical joke no doubt, just as a boy from behind a hedge will sometimes pitch a stealthy stone for the angler's beguiling and his own malevolent joy.

The venerable little manor-house set above the stream at Chisenbury is interesting as the home of that ill-fated Grove who took a leading part in the Penruddock rising against Cromwell, and suffered death for it. It remained in their family till the Crown stepped in a few years ago, and purchased all this portion of the Plain. Breaking away from the leafy bowers, and the ancient mill dam of Chisenbury, the Avon goes on its way rejoicing through open meads, and the road rises high above it, giving the wayfarer pleasant views of the rich valley below, and the surrounding wilds on either hand. At Enford (Avon-ford), the stream is once more checked, and one of the more notable churches of the diocese rises near its banks. Its massive tower once carried a lofty spire which was struck by lightning in 1817, and fell on the church to its partial destruction. Its restored roof, however, is still supported by the original Norman arches springing from square columns.

As one follows the uplifted chalk road from Enford, it soon becomes manifest that we are within the area of the recently acquired territory of the Crown. For here and there upon the grassy bank which ridges it, a stone or post bears the broad arrow upon the face that denotes the nation's property. The big farmers all about here and beyond, are tenants of the Crown, and in regard to their sheep runs to the east of the Avon, are under agreement to shift their stock on those occasions, when military operations, such as artillery practice, are in progress. One is not yet quite within touch of these official despoilers of the Plain, though the booming of



the guns can sometimes be heard half over the county. But even on this quiet river highway you may often meet a military waggon dragged by steam or petrol churning up the dust, and escorted by a group of sunburnt lads in khaki, bound for one or other of the little railway stations on the Great Western, which cleaves the heart of the Pewsey vale. You may be startled too betimes by the statuesque figure of a warrior with lance aloft, broadside across the road on some ridge ahead of you, discovering in due course a stalwart trooper with eye fixed on the valley below, lest some imaginary Teuton scouts should venture the passage of the Avon. In the mean time a gentle angler, an officer of his own corps possibly, is casting an assiduous fly on the threatened fords, undisturbed by any thoughts of death or glory, and a ploughman has halted his lathering team on the headland by the roadside, and is stolidly chewing his "nuncheon" of bread and cheese under the very nose of this alert-looking warrior; a suggestive and realistic study for a picture under the title of "Peace and War." The archaic Wiltshire word of "nuncheon" by the way, not I fancy, much used now, seems more than justified by its derivation from "noon cheyne," or noon-slice.

The woods and park lands of Netheravon now fill the narrow valley, and no disturbing hand has been laid upon the old village or apparently upon the adjoining manor which Sir Michael Hicks-Beach sold to the Crown. The house is now the headquarters of officers, and red-faced Tommies are clustering round the village inn. The church stands out in the park, and a very fine Norman door in the tower will repay the short walk thither, while within it are Norman arches, both to the belfry and the chancel. The rest of the building is perpendicular, though the clerestory is lighted by lancet windows with remarkably wide splays. This church and parish was served for two years by Sidney Smith, who according to Lady Holland, had a very bad time of it. He had no books, and could only get meat once a week from Salisbury; his only companion the squire, his only recreation, long walks over the lonely downs, where he once came near losing his





ENFORD



life in a snow drift. For most of the five-mile journey from here to Amesbury, the road rises and falls along the slope of the down, and the Avon follows it in the vale beneath, slipping in bright coils from mill to mill, and from village to village, amid a succession of scenes which do much more than beguile the way.

Though the whole region has been acquired by the Crown, no change has touched it here ; nor has any worth mentioning, one may feel tolerably confident, affected the landscape, its meadows, its villages, its highways for a hundred years. Fighledean, Milston, and Durrington, one after another, a mile or two apart, have little in common with what the Londoner sometimes calls a country village within the twenty mile radius. Thick among orchards, and towering elms, the grey roofs of thatch, still bid defiance in serried rows, or thick clusters to the improver's hand, and garish brick has made as yet but small inroad on the walls of timber, flint, or white-washed chalk-stone, beloved of the ancients. Away in the background vast breadths of golden grain fade into sheep walks that here begin to open out, only, alas, to carry the eye away to unsightly blots, and scars upon the horizon that speak of the havoc that has been wrought on this south-eastern quarter of the Plain. But the Avon still glides peacefully past between screens of willows whitening in the summer wind, and the water meadows, where the plovers gather in winter from the bleak downs, still yield of their abundance. But as we pass above Milston with its little church, where Joseph Addison was born, the corrugated iron town of Bulford on the Plain beyond, comes painfully within range, and Sidbury hill, and the other more distant heights about Tedworth, where Assheton Smith and George Carter bustled their foxes with such vigour, seem to look even at this distance, as if worn by the tramp of horse and men, and seared by the smoke of mimic warfare.

But this is treason, for I can imagine no spot in all this island anything like so favourable for summering and exercising our hardly raised, and none too numerous defenders.

There are plenty of far larger moorlands in the north and west, and in Wales, but they are not galloping grounds, to put it mildly. Here we have a country dry and firm like the South African velt, or the Manitoba prairies. Indeed, there is a very strong physical affinity between the Wiltshire downs and the rolling prairie of the Canadian North-West, strange though it may seem to thus link together the very oldest and the very youngest scenes of British settlement. The surface contour, and the elevation of the latter in many places is practically identical; the short prairie grass, though less verdant, approximates very closely to the other in a general landscape, while the big unfenced breadths of wheat and oats in immense patches on the heaped-up wastes add greatly to the resemblance; and I have seen them both on two occasions within the same year. As you drop down into Amesbury the groves and meads of the abbey make a pleasant scene of verdure and water through which to enter the capital of the Plain, and as one crosses the Avon where it hurries towards the bridge between a wall of foliage and a grassy slope, it shows no slight increase in volume since we gossiped on its banks at Chisenbury, and has become a river of much more consequence.

This very journey down the Avon valley from Pewsey to Salisbury was one of Cobbett's "Rural Rides." "It brought before me," says that racy and vituperative person, "the greatest number of, to me, interesting objects, and it gave rise to more interesting reflections than I ever remember to have had brought before my eyes or into my mind in any one day of my life. This ride was the most pleasant I ever had in my life, so far as my recollection serves me. For this is certainly the most delightful farming country in the world. Though the downs are naked, the valleys are snugness itself. They are to the downs what a ha-ha is in a park. When you are going over the former, you look over the valleys, and if you be not acquainted with the country, your surprise when you come to the edge of the hill is very great. The shelter in these valleys, where the downs are steep and lofty, is complete." He praises their tall elms, their numerous rookeries, their snug cattle-yards

sheltered by trees. Cobbett combined a practical knowledge of agriculture with some of the imagination of a poet. English landscape had for him that double significance which makes for its greater enjoyment. The poetry of agriculture was blended in his mind with the poetry of form and colouring, though he did not clothe his sentiments in poetic guise, but only in lucid and forcible English. A landscape is none the less beautiful; to the eye that sees something more than an arrangement of form and colour in the fields, and is on terms, so to speak, with its secrets. However, we well know that the poetry of agriculture, though he may call it by another name, or no name, has lured many an ardent soul to wish that he had never been born. The disillusionment, however, does not lie in the fields or the sheep-folds, but in the bank account. I don't think the former often pall or disappoint, on intimate acquaintance, the instinct drawn to them, if it be a reasonably genuine one. Unlike other commercial pursuits, its victim cannot shake off its attachments. Whether financial failure or other calls have parted him from it, he feels for a long time like a man who has lost a limb, in large part, perhaps, from the strange sensation of the weather and the seasons having no longer for him any significance. He forgets the anxieties of late frosts, and prolonged droughts, and floods, and remembers only when warm rains are falling in May that he has now no meadows for them to fall on. When March is mild and dry, that March dust has for him no longer any virtues; that a fine harvest concerns him nothing. Cabbages and roses are never the same thing; they are amusements, and involve no stake.

Apart from technical reasons, that make it more difficult for farmers than other business men to retire, no farmer ever does completely retire till he is more or less compelled to. He is not generally rich in other tastes, but, even should he be so, they do not make up for the great wrench. He is not severing connection with a shop or a factory, but with the elements—the sun, and the rain and the wind, the dews and frosts, which cannot be put out of sight, but continue to remind him of his dissolution of partnership with them, and seem now to show



him their smiles oftener than their frowns. That loss of daily intimacy with the weather, and interest in it, and concern with things growing under it, produces a prodigious blank. For the ordinary layman's concern with the elements, unless he be a fisherman out for a holiday, is a poor and vapid thing compared to a farmer's.

Farmers are accused of always grumbling at the weather. When one remembers that a majority of Britons, to whom the weather, by comparison, doesn't matter two straws, are ceaselessly discussing and finding fault with it, farmers, to whom it is a matter of life and death, and of hourly interest, may surely be spared criticism. It may be remembered that there is a larger proportion of people in modern England to whom the weather is of no vital moment than in any other country in the world, just as there is a larger proportion of people, gentle and simple, who practically do not know one crop from another, in spite of a kind of superstition that a general genius for country life exists in England. Isn't it rather a taste for the amusements of the country made as easy and conventional as they can be made?

Cobbett's bosom throbbed at the sight of four thousand ewes and lambs penned for the moment on an acre of ground near Enford—not as the bosom of a butcher or a dealer, but of a poet, though, unlike other poets, he knew their value to a shilling. It was the significance of the spectacle and the surrounding landscape which made it possible that impressed him. And then he enlarged upon the snugness of the warm, tree-protected cattle-yards in these hollows of the downs. He pictured them in winter, with winds and storms and desolation around, and the cattle, up to their bellies in bright, clean straw, pulling at the hay-racks under the shelter of well-roofed sheds. "In all the world," he declares enthusiastically, "there is not a more beautiful sight than this."

"Pomona loves the orchard,  
And Liber loves the wine ;  
But Pales loves the straw-built shed,  
Warm with the breath of kine."

He might have sung, had he lived a little later, and been like George Borrow—with whom he had a point or two in common—given to quotation. I, for one, absolutely agree in substance with Cobbett and Pales, if the former's method of eulogy is perhaps more expansive than felicitous. However, did not the Latin poets feel it, while these downs were yet covered with barbarians?

Near Chisenbury he counts twenty-seven stacks in a single yard, and launches out in admiration and fury. "It would not be possible," he declares, "to imagine any life more easy and happy than men might lead here if they were untormented by a cursed system that takes the food from those who raise it, and gives it to those who do nothing that is useful to man." "Where are the people who are to eat this food?" he cries, and then he sees them around him, half-fed and wretched, on eight or nine shillings a week—a twentieth or a thirtieth part of what they each produce. Then he rides on down the valley, swearing and cursing, and hitting out at everything; at the disappearance of the small gentry, whose decaying manors lie about him; at the big landlords and the *nouveaux riches*, calling them all by name and expatiating on the particular sins with which truth or scandal credits each one. "The country gentlemen," he declares, "are something superlatively base—the most cruel, the most unfeeling, the most brutally insolent. I know, I can prove, I can safely take my oath, that they are the most base of all creatures that God ever suffered to disgrace the human shape." The clergy were only one degree better. Cobbett was as fierce a celibate as Archbishop Dunstan himself. What business had they to marry and expend the tithes on their wives and families. As to the big rectories and all attached to them, they were mere "premiums on breeding." But London and the big cities, and their rapid increase—"the thrice-cursed *wen*"—which sucked the country of its men and produce, and made us a nation of shopkeepers and parasites, was the chief object of Cobbett's objurgations. His knowledge of agriculture was a good deal ahead of his historical sense. The population of England, he swore, was

larger in the Middle Ages than in his day. What were all these huge churches for? No one would persuade *him*, at any rate, that monks spent all that money and labour in raising large buildings solely for the glory of God. The lynchetts, or terraces on the slope of the downs, he thought were evidences of a once congested population. Then he falls to cursing the Normans, the cause of every ill to England; then certain adversaries of his own, "beastly Scotch pheelosophers," come in for unmeasured abuse, and, having blown off steam, he again admires the willows by the Avon, the beauty of the Vale, the fertility of the country. There was in truth a good deal to criticize in the England of 1825, and Cobbett's method of criticism contains plenty of home truths, in spite of the exaggeration and strong language, which make his "Rural Rides" so racy and entertaining, as well as instructive, if read with judgment.

Amesbury, anciently Ambresbury, is one of those places that Georgian travellers, without reserve, describe as a town, but a modern estimate boggles somewhat over the term. At any rate, it is a place of considerable distinction, though in appearance but a pleasant, old-fashioned Wiltshire village, and little altered, in spite of its martial vicinage, within my memory, which goes back a longish time. For my first acquaintance with Amesbury was brought about quite fortuitously, and at an extremely tender age, by a coach accident, which had, however, its humorous as well as its inconvenient side. For a family party on this occasion, domestics and luggage included, were proceeding from Salisbury to Marlborough on a drizzling August afternoon in an omnibus with pair of horses hired for the occasion at the former place. The horses were steady and sober—I can remember so much from my perch on the box seat—but the driver was not, and on descending a hill near Stonehenge, he drove us into the ditch with singular deliberation and without any provocation whatever from his team. The ditch was shallow, and the coach remained upright, but everything else, so far as I can remember, parted from the shock, even the box seat yawned

away from the body of the vehicle, which had no doubt seen great service in the good old days, then some time past, and craned over at a perilous angle. I remember a piercing shriek from within the coach, which was afterwards traced to the cook, whose elbow being slightly skinned made her thereby the heroine of the occasion as the only injured person in the adventure; I can also recall being suspended by my belt over the dash-board for a brief and comfortless moment or two, and then dropped, not to destruction, as the fond relative to whose frantic endeavours I owed that untoward situation anticipated, but on to the comfortable broad back of a grey horse, who was squatting down in the ditch. It was then raining hard, and after a stormy altercation between the head of the party and the driver as to the precise measure of the latter's inebriety, we left him to sober off on the wreck, and set out along the road, a melancholy train of dripping refugees, for Amesbury and its White Hart, which, no doubt, does a much more roaring trade in these days than in those.

But Amesbury, in a small way, had always an importance as well as some romance of situation, surrounded as it is on every side by the still lonely billows of the plain, and linked with Salisbury by its long narrow chain of riverside hamlets. A little downland metropolis, with its belts of trees, its hoary church, its once famous abbey, it has gathered here all sorts of people from the earliest times. A hundred years ago, an old writer tells us, though of a decayed appearance, it made a fair living on the sights of its neighbourhood. Lovers of coursing in the palmy days of that sport collected from all parts of England. With antiquarians it was always famous, if only for its propinquity to Stonehenge, and now of late years the military camps have ensured a further importance, and let us hope will not spoil what is a charming and even yet romantic spot. The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, in the early eighteenth century, lived in the abbey in noble and lavish style, and a hundred years later Britton reports the inhabitants as still crooning over the lost glories of that long departed period. Before this, however, the place had acquired



a great reputation for the making of clay pipes, and no smoker of fashion at one period would be without his "Amesbury." The church is imposing and quite devoid of the perpendicular character that distinguishes the majority of Wiltshire churches. It is cruciform, and has a massive squat tower. The interior is a combination of Norman and Early English, but is extremely gloomy and severe, lighted in the main and somewhat sparingly by lancet windows. It was probably the church of the abbey, as well as of the parish. It was undergoing repairs when I was last there, and the supporting timbers necessary to the operation considerably interfered with the prospect. I was shown various odds and ends of ancient stone mouldings by the workmen who had unearthed them. It is not a church I should like to attend every Sunday, for its severity and prodigious gloom; but it is extremely interesting and striking to visit, and has almost the dignity on a small scale of a minster or a cathedral. Its churchyard and yew trees are well ordered and in peaceful harmony with the spot, which is at the extreme western edge of the village, where the lofty trees of the abbey grounds make a green and restful background to the hoary and distinguished-looking little fabric; while just beneath them, the gravelly streams of the Avon shoot under the highway leading to Stonehenge, and cleave a bright path through the verdant meads below.

The abbey, the property of Sir Edmund Antrobus, stands retired in its own grounds in the background. The house, though a handsome one, is not a century old, but is supposed to stand on the site of the former fabric, and many traces of cells were discovered on digging its foundations. Though the old stones have gone, the story remains, some gleanings from which will be in order here. The semi-mythical but famous story of the treacherous murder of Vortigern and four hundred and sixty British nobles by Hengist, who had bidden them to a feast, is connected with Amesbury, in that it took place at Stonehenge, one and a half miles away, and the corpses of the flower of the British aristocracy were interred at the abbey. So, if this were true, we tread on hallowed



ground indeed. My Welsh proclivities, however, have instilled me with the conviction that Vortigern escaped ; for I well know the sombre gorge on the north coast of Lleyn, where he nursed his sorrows by the billows of the Irish Sea. Leaving these cherished legends, however, and passing over the fairy tales of our old friend Geoffrey of Monmouth, history here begins with the Saxon Queen Elfrida, who founded, at Amesbury, in 980, one of the many religious houses by which she invoked the tolerance of the Almighty for the murder of her stepson Edward, at Corfe castle. This lady was so terrified by the memory of her crimes, that she is said to have covered herself with little crosses to keep off the devil, from whom she hourly expected a visit.

It was a nunnery that she instituted here, and it seems to have flourished till the reign of Henry the Second, when the nuns got out of hand and were expelled by that king, who characteristically, foreigner that he was, bestowed this house upon the abbey of Fontevrault, in Normandy. Under these new auspices, and by the liberality of John, who certainly was not ungenerous to Wiltshire, the nunnery became celebrated. In 1283, a daughter of Edward the First, and thirteen young women of noble birth took the veil here, and a few years later Eleanor, widow of Henry the Third, entered the order, died, and was buried in the abbey. Later on this became one of the richest foundations in the country, and Katherine of Aragon was quartered in it on her first arrival in England. At the Reformation the prioress of Amesbury positively refused to surrender the house, unless the king in person ordered her out, and she scorned the offer of a pension. Death, however, averted either eviction or martyrdom, and one of the Darells of Littlecote was the lady who actually handed the abbey over to the king. If one can imagine the dissolution of monasteries occurring in our own time, what a display of safe and cheap heroism there would have been, and what eviction scenes ! But these little dramas were dangerous in the time of Henry the Eighth, nor was there any press to resound their glories.

## 250 ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

Tennyson, as we all know, follows Geoffrey of Monmouth, and sends Arthur's queen here to seclusion and repentance.

“Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat  
There in the holy house at Amesbury.”

Amesbury is said to have been given by Henry the Eighth to his acquisitive and powerful relation, who is so inevitably prominent in all this Wiltshire talk, being a Wiltshire man, namely, the Protector Somerset. One cannot get away from the Seymours in North Wilts any more than from Hungerfords and Bayntons and one or two other hardy genealogical plants, which if they fail in one bed spring up in another. This property, after the confiscation following the Protector's death, was restored with the rest. His son, Lord Hertford, had for his third wife a young woman of great beauty, who had thrown over Sir George Rodney for this more illustrious match, to the utter indignation of the poor knight, who loved her madly, and proceeded to provide Amesbury with a dramatic scene that many larger and more important places would give much to boast of. For travelling down here the day before the marriage and putting up at the inn, Sir George spent the night in composing his own death song, an extremely bad one, not worthy of quotation, even though it was actually written with a pen dipped in his own blood. At the home-coming of the young bride and elderly bridegroom the next day, the love-sick gentleman went out among the crowd to greet them, and falling upon his sword in the lady's presence, expired with well-timed calculation at her very feet.

The Bruces who inherited Amesbury with the Marlborough and Savernake property from the Seymours, sold it to Lord Carlton, who left it to his nephew, that same lavish Duke of Queensberry whose great doings were remembered for so long a period as being a glory and profit to the town. For in the early part of the eighteenth century, when Lady Hertford was entertaining poets and landscape gardening at Marlborough, Lady Anne Hyde, lately converted into a

Duchess of Queensberry, was doing somewhat the same at Amesbury. Gay was her particular *protégé*, and he seems to have made his home here for some time. A cave still, I believe, exists where he wrote some of his poetry, though why the poets of that day should have been so fond of subterranean haunts I cannot imagine. Prior also indited a ballad to the duchess. Indeed, her grace was a person of spirit, talent, and renown. She offended the king and queen by defending her friend Gay, whose *Beggar's Opera* was tabooed at court, and was banished from the sunshine of their ponderous Teutonic amenities. Personal loyalty, as understood before and since in England, did not of course exist at that particular time, and the duchess's pert letter to the king on the subject is instructive. The property was purchased by the Antrobus family about eighty years ago, and the present house, as already mentioned, erected soon afterwards.

## CHAPTER X

### SALISBURY PLAIN AND STONEHENGE

“And when you die I will erect a monument  
Upon the verdant plains of Salisbury.  
No king shall have so high a sepulchre  
With pendulous stones that I will hang by art,  
Where neither lime nor mortar shall be used  
A dark enigma to the memory.  
For none shall have the power to number them  
A place that I will hallow for your rest ;  
Where no night hag shall walk nor were-wolf tread  
Where Merlin’s mother shall be sepulchred.”

**I**N the last chapter we pierced the heart of Salisbury Plain, but only in the shelter of the luxuriant furrow that the Avon has ploughed through its heart. By the banks of Avon we were in the Plain but not upon it. In this chapter we shall be for the most part on higher ground, and there is no more interesting road in all Wiltshire than the longer of the two which lead from Devizes to Stonehenge, even omitting this wonder of all the ages in which it culminates. For it is something like five miles from Devizes to the foot of the Plain at West Lavington, and the other twelve lie almost wholly on the open. Dropping down from the Devizes plateau through deep cuttings of green sand, whose woody cliffs tower high upon either side, into the lower country so different from that just left behind, the village of Potterne, with its imposing and uplifted church, receives us and demands a word. Potterne has a good many qualities. It is one of those villages which, though quite venerable and rural in appearance, has always harboured a few families of condition. It

has, moreover, several good half-timbered houses, and one on the village street, of much note, which Mr. Richmond, the well-known artist, purchased and restored some years ago. The average Wiltshire village, in most parts of the county at any rate, has no fortuitous aristocracy. A big farmhouse, possibly even two, may dominate it; but that is strictly business. There are several villages, however, below Devizes, and others for that matter sprinkled about the country, that are thus blessed, for there is certainly much gain to rural life, in what a Wiltshire writer on rural sociology in the *Reviews* has styled "a village gentry." A retired colonel, the maiden aunts of a local squire, a country solicitor, with reliable sons at the office, a returned colonist, a stranded admiral, and the relict of an archdeacon. This, I think, together with the squire, the parson, and the doctor, is a prescription that would insure the vitality and well-being of the most remotely situated village, and is sufficiently typical of many. There are villages and villages. A collection of clubbable persons from all over the kingdom seated within twenty miles of London, and more or less engaged there, added to a lower class with an exuberant cockney accent and figuring but little on the parish registers of the past, do not constitute a village but a suburb. Let the elms above them mantle ever so luxuriantly, and the new-mown hay be ever so sweet, theirs is not village life, nor are they villages in any genuine sense of the word, though some of them may have been a century ago. It is in such places that maypoles are re-erected, and old arcadian *fêtes* revived—cheerful and harmless make-believes that are only possible because they are not country villages, nor anything resembling them. But the villages of Wiltshire are the real thing beyond any sort of doubt; and the "village gentry," when there are any, will generally be of the soil, either by birth, marriage, or connection, wherever they may have respectively wandered at other periods of their lives, and this is all as it should be. In these days of decadent rural life, and of flitting to towns, such an element is surely to be desired. Whether the development of motor traffic will



popularize country life on a moderate scale by making towns and neighbours more accessible, or on the contrary will conduce still more to town life by qualifying it with such rapid access to country pursuits remains to be seen. Some members of the *Punch* staff, by the way, settled themselves in this part of Wiltshire within recent years, whether with an eye to untapped veins of rustic humours I know not; but the results seem to have been satisfactory. One of the first was a stout lady, who could not get through the door of a carrier's van, and who replied indignantly to the driver's impatient suggestion of "Try sideways, ma'am," "I aint got no sideways, young man." This incident is associated, I believe, with Potterne.

Potterne, oddly enough, has come under the scrutiny of Mrs. Gaskell; but above all it is proud of its church, which is about the same age as Salisbury cathedral, and is regarded as possibly the work of the same builder, Bishop Poore. It stands finely upon a high knoll above the village, and is a most striking building of severe, massive, and cruciform style. One gets away altogether here from the perpendicular character, that whatever else it may include, somewhat wearies one, as I have before hinted, in the Wiltshire churches, with their crenelated battlements and profusion of crockets, the last a detail of fifteenth-century ornamentation that to my inexperienced eye is always a sore trial. If forestry has lent the splendour of its arcades to gothic architecture, an imitation of the knots and sprouts of boughs which took the fancy of later builders, seems to my perverted senses wholly uninspiring. But Potterne church, whose exterior I had formerly known only as a passer-by, gave me much delectation on a more intimate acquaintance, though when first introduced to it by the vicar, it was a gloomy evening after a long day we had spent together on Salisbury Plain.

It is a beautifully proportioned cruciform building without aisles, and almost wholly Early English in design. There is comparatively little ornamentation, but good triple lancet windows both at the east and the west end, and a general air

of distinction that appeals at once to expert or amateur. While its exterior centres finely on a massive square tower with some highly ornamented belfry windows. Two miles beyond Potterne, nestling under the high ramparts of the Plain with the ever-pleasing contrasts of bold down and hanging woodland is West Lavington, with a good church containing some altar tombs to the Danvers family, and an inscription commemorating the murder of Captain Henry Penruddock by some of the Parliamentary soldiers as he sat in his chair. Probably this was in the old manor-house, shut out from the village street by lofty walls. A great many years ago I spent some nights in a reputed ghost-room of this venerable house. It was well adapted, I remember, to the accepted taste of a supernatural visitor; but whether Captain Penruddock was its genius I forget. But partridge shooting on Salisbury Plain is a good narcotic, and no experience was vouchsafed me. A little trout stream runs through the grounds and crosses the foot of the village street, which contains several quaint old houses and no particular trace of modern enterprise. After this, deep sunk and shaded by huge trees, the road climbs the down, and breaking out into the open lands us fairly on the Plain.

“O Salisbury Plain is bleak and bare,  
At least so I've heard many people declare,  
For I fairly confess I never was there;  
Not a shrub nor a tree,  
Nor a bush can we see,  
No hedges, no ditches, no gates, no stiles.  
Much less a house or a cottage for miles.  
It's a very sad thing to be caught in the rain  
When night comes on Salisbury Plain.”

Mr. Thomas Ingoldsby was not quite accurate in his detail, which is excusable after the frank admission with which he prefaces it. For the Plain is dimpled nowadays with small clumps of beech or fir, which crown the summits of those rounded ridges that give the wide expanded landscape the look of a sea, swelling with the subsiding impetus of a recent

storm. Everywhere on the Plain too, nowadays, and indeed less noticeable, perhaps, than thirty years ago, the golden grain fields lie patched upon nature's carpet of green. In the hollows by the roadside, at long intervals, are the homesteads of broad-acred sheep-farmers and their flocks can be seen here and there, biting their slow way in close bunches over the distant down, for the sheep here are not usually scattered over the waste at their own will, as on the mountains of the north and Wales. They range for the most part in close companies, under the eye of the old-fashioned shepherd, with his cloak and crook, and bob-tailed, long-coated sheep-dog, whose yellow eyes shine with intelligence from beneath a tangle of blue-grey hair.

Just here, by the lonely highway, is an inscribed stone, calculated even now to provoke a passing tremor in the heart of the timid stranger, adventuring the Plain on a dreary winter's day. It was not set up, however, to scare such innocent wights, but rather to point a moral after the fashion of its period, as the reader will discover when he has perused its thrilling story to the end. He may start for the moment on learning that Mr. Dean of Imber was attacked, and robbed by highwaymen at this very spot, but will take heart when he finds it was so long ago as 1839, and that after a spirited pursuit one of the miscreants, by name Colclough, fell dead on Chitterne down, exhausted by his flight, and that the other three were caught, convicted and transported. But it was not to tell so ordinary a tale, that this stone was erected, but as a warning to those presumptuous persons who might think to escape the punishment God had threatened against thieves and others. This was about the time wages had dropped again to seven shillings, and an invocation of the Divine wrath against rabbit-catchers and such-like, was no doubt felt to be timely.

The Wiltshire downs, as was remarked during our progress over one of their favourite beats at Beckhampton were popular with highwaymen. And I cannot leave West Lavington without saying something of the most famous of all the Wiltshire bred knights of the road, namely Thomas Boulter. He was the son of



ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAIN





a miller at Poulshot, near Devizes, but his kinsmen were thick throughout this country, and the name is still common in the land. The miller himself seems to have been a pretty rogue, for he was publicly whipped at Devizes market cross for robbing an old woman, and afterwards transported for horse stealing. His wife's brother, too, a native of Lavington, was shot on the highway near the village, in an attempt to rob a gentleman, and crippled for life. The son and nephew of these misguided persons respectively, carried on the traditions of the family with more than temporary success, and much more distinction. He was born in 1748, and bred a miller like his father; but, wearying of so humdrum a career, migrated to the Isle of Wight, where he opened a grocer's shop in Newport. This proving neither profitable nor congenial, he next, with much deliberation and misdirected enterprise, embarked on the career of a highwayman. Coming to the wise conclusion that the island was too small to be safe in so risky a business, he crossed to Southampton, where he purchased pistols, hired a horse, and started out in search of adventure, heading at once for Salisbury and Devizes. He first tried his hand on the Salisbury coach, and with such success, that he repeated the experiment upon some half a dozen other likely looking objects of prey between that place and Devizes; arriving at his mother's mill at Poulshot, with forty pounds and seven watches. On his way back to the Isle of Wight, he was equally daring and fortunate, so much so that he paid off his debts at Newport, and even indulged in dreams of honest commerce and respectability. But his native instincts were too strong for him, and crossing the Solent again, he hired a common horse, and set out along the borders of the New Forest, to select one from those at grass, more suitable for his hazardous requirements. It was some time before he found one worth stealing, from his point of view. But at last he suited himself at Ringwood, and started for the west, with the intention of working the Exeter road.

While traversing Dorset, a confiding grazier, jogging beside him, dwelt on his success at Salisbury market, with such

misplaced elation that he suddenly found a pistol at his head, and his pocket lightened to the extent of sixty pounds. By the exercise of much daring and industry, Boulter picked up five hundred pounds in money and valuables on the highways, about Exeter and Honiton, and with this plunder he retired to his mother's mill near Devizes, and enjoyed himself after such fashion as a man who had elected to spend a short and merry life might be expected to do. In the spring of 1776, he went on the road again, and requiring a change of horseflesh, showed his judgment in this matter by stealing a mare from the paddocks at Erle Stoke, which, under the name of "Sunshine," performed achievements, which became intimately associated with his dare-devil master's reputation. At Erle Stoke, the beautiful seat of the Watson Taylors, at the foot of the downs between Lavington and Westbury, Boulter's sister was in service, a fact which no doubt facilitated the transfer to his stable of the coveted animal. Thus finely mounted he now headed for the roads running westward out of London. Perhaps these regions were held as specially dangerous, for he relates in his memoirs, which Wayland collated and utilized, that the western coaches were so well armed, that an attack was hopeless. The first postchaise too that he stopped, fired at, but missed him, and the inmate paid for his bad aim with a purse of forty pounds. Soon afterwards, Boulter had the temerity to stop three postchaises near Windsor, all in sight of each other, to their respective undoing, and showed a still greater hardihood in riding on just in front of his victims, and baiting his horse at Maidenhead, whither they were all bound. Here while refreshing himself, the "hue and cry" was raised, and he had just time to jump on the back of Sunshine, and ride for his life towards Wiltshire, at the head of a flying squadron of pursuers. Thanks, however, to the mettle of his thoroughbred, and by taking devious ways, he showed them a clean pair of heels, making his first stop at Hartley Row, his second at Whitchurch, in Hampshire, and his third at Everley on Salisbury Plain, baiting his mare with toast steeped in wine at each place. That night he was at Poulshot, having ridden



MARKET LAVINGTON



eighty miles in about ten hours, and this in spite of the fact that he was a heavy man. It seems to have been Boulter's practice, after his performances had raised a stir, to retire to Poulshot, and at a later time to Bristol, and lie low for two or three months, till the storm had blown over, before striking out for pastures new. He seems to have been daring to foolhardiness, and this very quality perhaps upset calculations, and enabled him to maintain his reckless career for nearly three years before finding the inevitable halter. For when not occupied elsewhere he amused himself profitably in his own country, both on Salisbury Plain, and on the Devizes and Bristol road. The local papers of the time bear ample evidence to his misdeeds, and the terror of his name.

While operating in Yorkshire, however, he was actually captured, having challenged a single man, who, though armed, gave up his purse, he rode carelessly off at a slow pace, when some mounted officers appeared in pursuit, and after a two-mile chase, he was ridden down and overborne. Sentenced to death at York assizes, he was pardoned on the very morning appointed for his execution, on the condition that he would enter the army, which he joyfully did, joining the regiment then stationed there. A week of drill, however, was enough for Boulter, and, deserting the colours, he found his way to Bristol, where he arrived penniless and exhausted, at the house of a disreputable innkeeper named Caldwell. Undismayed by his misfortunes, and doubtless more reckless than ever from his situation, he talked Caldwell into joining him in a fresh start on the road, and the publican proved almost as bold and resourceful as his mentor. Two good horses were now stolen, and the pair operated, sometimes singly and sometimes together, all over the West of England, and even as far as North Wales, secreting their plunder below the floor of Caldwell's house in Bristol. There is no space to touch on the detail of their widely sundered robberies, though some of them even now were perpetrated, as the local papers show, on the "Devizes Plain," otherwise the north part of Salisbury Plain which we are now traversing. One old gentleman, with Boulter's pistol



at his head, took the bold highwayman somewhat aback by telling him to fire away, for he should not have his money; and he didn't, for Boulter let him go.

The next time Boulter was taken, and with him Caldwell, was under curious circumstances. They had accumulated so much treasure at Bristol, that they made an expedition to Birmingham with a view of selling some of the jewellery. A wily Jew with whom they opened negotiations, made an appointment at his shop. But when the unsuspecting highwaymen appeared, the officers of the law were waiting for them, and they were promptly ironed, and sent up to London, Boulter to Clerkenwell, and the other to Tothill Fields prison. The Wiltshire magistrates were then informed by Sir John Fielding, that "Boulter the noted highwayman, who hath so long been a terror to your neighbourhood," had been at length trapped. But Boulter's resourcefulness was not yet exhausted. Having money to pay for them, he had privileges in the shape of a private room, with six others. Here he quickly detected a beam in the wall, by removing which an opening was possible. He enlisted the aid of his fellow-prisoners, and of a woman from outside, who brought him the one or two tools necessary.

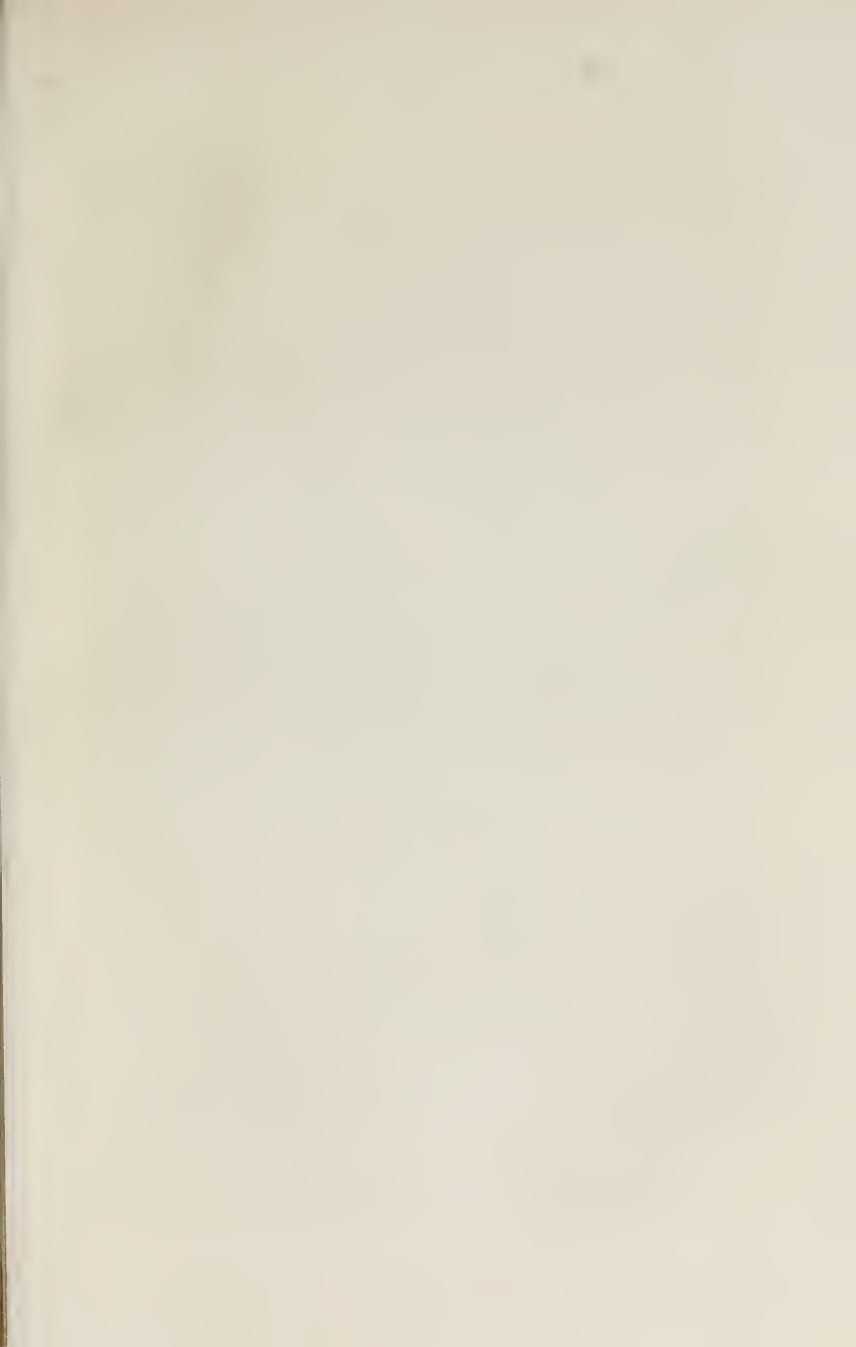
To shorten the story, Boulter, with one of the other prisoners, got away to Leicester, where he was not known, bought pistols, stole a horse, and made for Dover, intending to leave England. But the ports had just been closed for the French war. He next tried Portsmouth and Bristol without avail. He then made for the isle of Portland, hoping to lie for a time in security, but while dining at an inn in Bridport he was recognized and seized by stratagem. For in one of his encounters, a victim had blazed a pistol right in his face, skinned his forehead with the bullet, and blackened his eye permanently with the explosion. He was now lodged in Winchester jail together with Caldwell, who had been transferred there. Sentence of death was passed on July 31, 1778 on both, but execution was deferred for three weeks from the desire of several people to get a memoir of so notable and

experienced a criminal. Boulter, who behaved throughout with decency and calmness, acceded to the general wish, and dictated with considerable fulness the events of the past three years, a few of which I have ventured to find space for here. The contents of their hiding cellar at Bristol were distributed to the proper owners so far as possible. Neither of these men, strange to say, had blood on their hands, effective in scores of cases as had been their loaded pistols. Boulter may fairly be called the last ideal highwayman. "Ask any of the aged people," says a Wiltshireman, writing sixty years ago, "in the neighbourhood of Romsey or Devizes, who was the booted and spurred hobgoblin which the servant maids of a past generation threatened to summon out of the dark wood in order to silence the turbulence of the nursery, or what was the name ever coupled with the tales of terror which went round the Christmas hearth, or whose the phantom steed, incapable of fatigue, that swept across the village green, transporting its rider in an instant of time to distant hills? It was Boulter." The leading hero of the road of the preceding century in Wiltshire was oddly enough a North Welshman, named Davis, who, single-handed, held up the whole *cortège* of the violent Duchess of Albemarle, General Monk's wife, on Salisbury Plain, including outriders, and robbed her of her diamonds.

The village of Tilshead in due course with its straggling street of thatched and whitewashed cottages and its Norman church, makes one of those oases amid the Plain that are a part of its character. An inscription on some cottages tells the wayfarer of a devastating flood, that, in the year 1841, wrought much havoc in the village, though it stands on a slope, the water rushing down from the hills on a level with the first-floor windows, so the marks proclaim. I met a veteran of ninety one day, and in a good hour, on the village street, who told me the whole moving tale, and how he had only saved his sow by carrying her in his arms upstairs into his bedroom; I recall the ancient and his tale, not so much for what he had to say, but the way in which he said it, for his

dialect was that of an absolutely bygone day. Pretty good Wiltshire is still spoken by shepherds and labourers while its distinctive flavour runs higher up the social scale, but this old gentleman talked the tongue of Boulter's day in all its obscure purity, among other things using the termination "n" instead of "s" in his plurals, not occasionally but consistently. A lady who was with me, of some years' ordinary acquaintance with the rustic speech of Wiltshire, candidly admitted that she did not understand one single word of this remarkable peroration. It took me all my time to follow the harrowing story of the great "washout" which is the epoch-making event of Tilshead history. It would not be worth noticing here except for the fact that the intelligent stranger, on being confronted with the memorial tablets of Tilshead's great flood would naturally look around for the physical cause of the mischief, and seeing no trace of brook or rivulet on the slope of the hill and only a dry ditch in the valley, would be moved to some curiosity. As a matter of fact, the storm that wrecked this and one or two other villages in the Plain seems to have been a special onslaught of nature. For a heavy snow fall on the hills was melted so suddenly by a rapid rise of temperature that the still hard frozen ground could not absorb the waters and they rushed down every road and dry channel with abnormal force and volume, and in a flood ten to fifteen feet deep.

Another four miles of chalk road rising and falling over the open down; more far reaching vistas of this strange land to the east, and to the west, and to the south; nothing else to be seen but the long billows of green patched here and there upon their sides, or in their troughs, with golden harvest fields and tufted with the clumps of fir or beech which, in the far distance show merely black specks upon the waste. There are no roadside fences here to break the view, and the low grassy banks which fringe the highway are rank by now with the tall stiff stems and matted undergrowth of cocksfoot, rye-grass, or fescues, and decked in patches here and there with the modest hues of scabious and wild parsley, but mostly powdered





GREEN FODDER



white in this August weather by the dust of travelling sheep, or the occasional motor. No grouse crow, nor do curlews call, amid these chalk solitudes, nor yet is there anywhere the faintest note of tumbling water. Indeed the characteristic quality of the Wiltshire downland is, as often as not, its overpowering silence, unless the faint murmur of wild bees may be accounted as a disturbing factor. The sound of a big pine forest stirred by the breeze is always inspiring. But to pass from the utter silence that often reigns among the grave mounds on the high down into the hoarse music of some group of veteran Scotch firs that have braved both years and storms is better still. Yet there is music enough, too, on the downs at times. The young peewits in August have found both voice and winds, and sweep about with lusty cries. The skylark is always here, and often in tuneful mood. But the gregarious sheep of the down is much quieter than the sheep of the Welsh, and Northern moorland, who seems always to be proclaiming that he has lost either himself, or a lamb, or his companions.

A great deal of precious immemorial turf was ploughed up on Salisbury Plain when wheat was high, to grow sometimes but second-rate crops of three quarters to the acre, and many a bitter regret has doubtless been since felt for the destruction of sheep pasture that takes nearly half a century to regain its original quality. The military quarter of the Plain beyond the Avon, from which the sheep have been banished and the down grass, for centuries cropped close by them, been let run to seed, or casually picked at by cows and horses, presents a deplorable sight, though of comparatively slight moment, in view of the much worse disfigurement of the military buildings, where such conditions prevail. But here, on the north and west portion of the Plain we are far away from all such desecration and the sheep still keeps the succulent turf, mixed with nutritious plants and flowers of great variety, sweet and short, as he has kept it, no doubt, since his breed was first introduced into England.

It is thought that the great Wiltshire sheep fairs are the

oldest fixtures of the kind in England, and they have a double interest, from being, in some cases, held by immemorial custom on lonely points like Tan hill, marked by a prehistoric camp. Thousands of sheep collect on these occasions travelling long journeys on foot, cropping their slow way along the broad green trails, on the high down, followed for centuries by Wiltshire shepherds whose rugged figures and simple equipments have not perhaps changed much more in appearance than the bare hills around them.

But returning for a moment to the birds, it would be ill-forgetting the noble bustard, though it practically vanished a century ago, or more, from this, its favourite old-time English haunt. Bustards were sometimes run with greyhounds, the dogs being occasionally able to catch them as they rose from the ground. But all sorts of wiles were practised to circumvent these largest and shyest of British birds. Britton was surprised to put up a couple near Tilshead in the year 1800, and fulminates against the law that protected partridges, and left the bustard to its certain fate. Occasional visitants have been seen since then, the last, I think, during the Franco-Prussian war, driven over, no doubt, by the firing. The dotterell too was common once on these Wiltshire uplands, and I have read contemporary accounts of sport with them by seventeenth-century writers. In some printed notes made by that eminent naturalist, the present governor of British Guiana, when a schoolboy at Marlborough, I see that, in his time, which was mine, there was still one brood generally to be found every spring on the downs near Ogbourne. All this, however, is bygone talk. The wheatear is still with us on the Plain, as in all upland solitudes, though his cousin, the stonechat, which used to be designated by the rustics, for some inscrutable reason, the "horse matcher," prefers the gullies in the Marlborough downs, where the sarsen stones lie thick. The meadow pipit, or titlark, that cheery innocent, who flits around you almost to the top of Snowdon, will very often be your sole companion on the loneliest outposts of the downs. The kestrel and the sparrow hawk seem to have avoided the keeper's gun

here with some success, and the Wiltshire rustic used to cherish a strange delusion that the cuckoo changed himself into one or the other with the approach of winter. The dark form of a kite may now and then be seen, but though the buzzard survives I have not been fortunate in getting a sight of him.

Shrewton lies snugly in a hollow of the Plain, a place altogether more homelike and picturesque than Tilshead. When I had been there in June, a broad, clear stream rippled over the gravel beside the village street. In August the grass was growing and the children sporting in its bed. But several roads meet at Shrewton, under the walls of two or three snug-looking residences, and much overhanging foliage, and a rambling old-fashioned inn, where hilarity and broad Wiltshire go forward in the taproom, and a more select form of entertainment progresses in duller fashion in a low-roofed, picturesque, and more elegant chamber hard by. On my last visit, I was assigned by the honest unconventional landlady to a share in the teapot and accompanying condiments of two young lady cyclists of the robust kind. Having recovered from the temporary paralysis with which a British maiden receives the intrusion of the un-introduced male, and found their breath and their tongues, they protested they did not like Wiltshire. It was too bare; there were not enough trees; they preferred their native Surrey, whither they were bound. It was not worth while quarrelling about this, and they went on their way rejoicing, or, at any rate, well fortified, towards their native Surbiton. Shrewton is a popular centre for those who still follow the ancient cult of hawking. There is also a pack of bloodhounds kept here in training. In view of their sinister purpose in life, one would not perhaps elect to meet them in full cry in the middle of Salisbury Plain. I was informed, too, by the landlord, that there was a flourishing pig club in the village. An institution without which, he declared, no community could be upon a sound basis, or enjoy true happiness. This has nothing to do with the chase, but is merely a form of mutual insurance against the many insidious diseases to which this useful animal is liable. Whether the pig club has a social side, dines together, and

parades on high days with the other clubs, under a banner displaying a white sow rampant, I know not.

To the west from Shrewton a road, which the lover of waste places will find all that his heart could desire, runs, by way of the lonely hamlet of Chitterne to Heytesbury. Another to the south, of rather less solitary character, will carry him to the Wylve valley, and thence to Salisbury. Our way, however, lies to the eastward, to the Temple of the Sun, and after three miles of somewhat steep wanderings in the wilderness, we are brought face to face with Stonehenge.

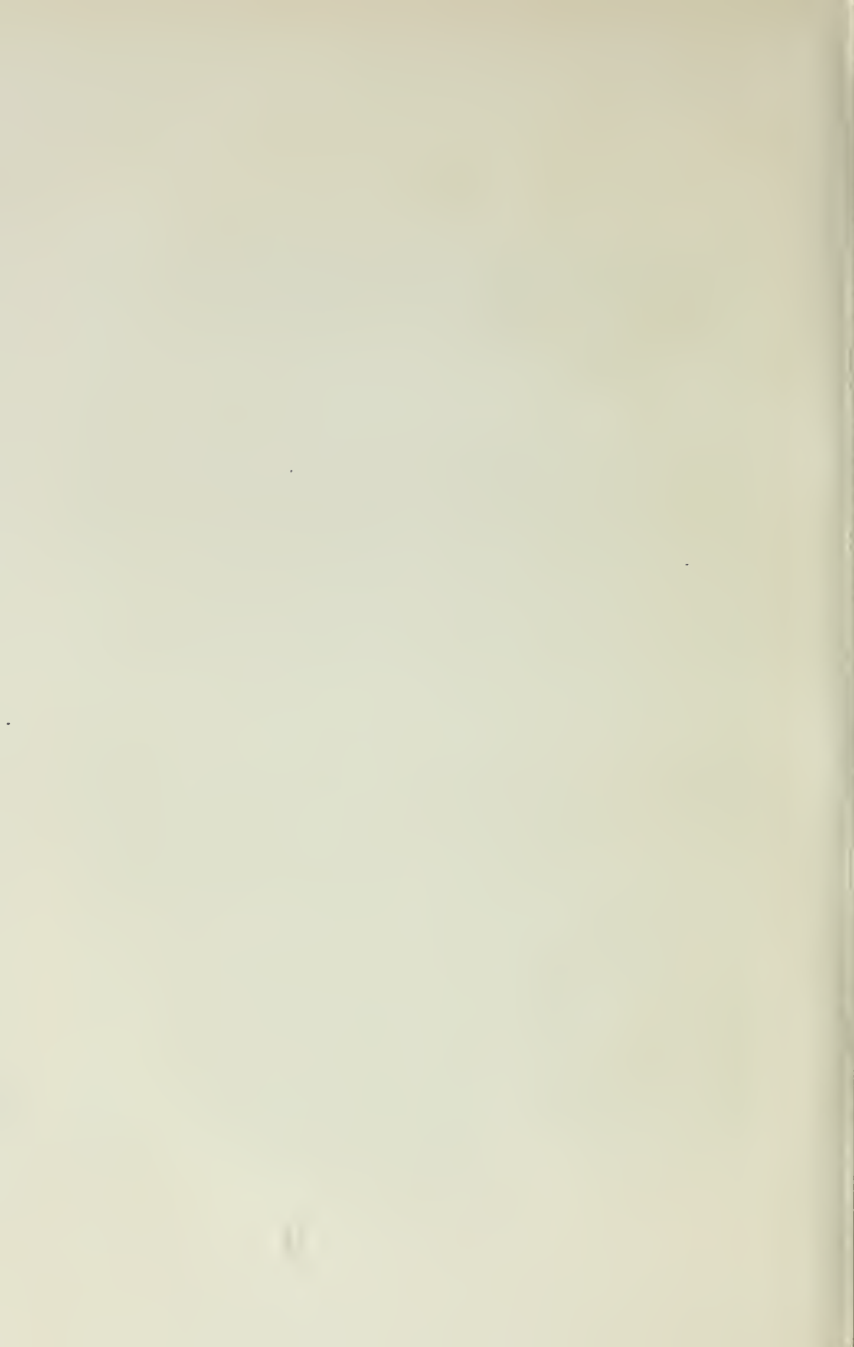
It is written of some mediæval Englishmen, who had gone to Rome to study antiquities, that the wise men of that city gathered round him, hungering for a description of the great prehistoric relic of Britain, whose fame had often reached their ears. But when the visitor declared, not only that he had never seen it, but that he had never heard of it, the Roman sages chased him in indignation from their city, and kicked him outside its limits. If the modern Roman applied this test in a general way to their English visitors, it is to be feared a good many thousand Britons would be despatched home again with contumely every season. I approach Stonehenge, in these pages, with trepidation. How does it strike the visitor who first beholds it? Ah! there is the mystery of the human brain—the unsearchable depths, the possible shallows of our nearest neighbour's imagination. I have said it is admitted that Avebury is, or was, within recent times, more wonderful, but Stonehenge appeals to the eye and to the fancy with infinitely greater force. I have often wondered what some wanderer, who, by a miracle, had never heard of it, would think, if he stumbled across it in a hunting party, as Aubrey stumbled on Avebury on a grey winter's evening. For, I am quite sure that a dreary day—nay, a stormy one—best suits the mood of Stonehenge, since not many of us can manage a moonlight *séance* there on the snow, which must be better still.

All the old travellers and antiquarians visited Stonehenge. It would be wearisome even to touch upon their various



EVENING ON SALISBURY PLAIN





theories, particularly since many of them have been dissipated by quite recent discoveries. It is interesting, however, to note that Evelyn, that distinguished son of ancient Surrey, did not agree with our young lady friends of modern Surrey, but regarded Salisbury Plain, "for evenness, extent, verdure, and innumerable flocks, as one of the most delightful prospects in nature." Pepys, on the other hand, was quite scared by the hills, having hired saddle-horses in Salisbury, and paid a shepherd woman fourpence to lead them about, while he surveyed the great stones. "Find them as prodigious as any tales I ever heard of them, and worth going to see; God knows what their use was." Dr. Johnson expressed the affinity and the propinquity of Salisbury cathedral and Stonehenge, as spectacles visited on the same day by such numbers of persons, with epigrammatic felicity: "Two eminent monuments of art and rudeness, exhibiting the first essay and the last perfection in architecture."

It is quite curious how Dr. Gilpin's stilted artificiality still holds the modern handbook writer in thrall, by the mere force, we may presume, of repetition. It is the same in South Wales, of which his treatment in the late eighteenth century was equally pedantic and absurd. Britton, a Wiltshireman, a practical person and painstaking author, rages with just indignation at the romancing of this peripatetic divine, who would mislead his public into the notion that Salisbury Plain was a kind of Sahara, and presumably passed over it in complacent oblivion of its half-million sheep, its, even then, considerable area of grain, and its dozen or so of snug villages.

In 1901 what was known as the "leaning-stone," within the circle of Stonehenge, was restored to the perpendicular with great care by a competent architect and engineer. In the excavations incidental to this process were found a number of implements that, beyond all question, had been used by the builders. These were all of stone and flint—axeheads, hammers, and mauls—thereby determining, it would seem, that the work was of the stone or neolithic age; or, in other words, that it preceded the Christian era by at least twelve hundred years.

All those sages, therefore, who, from conviction or perversity, had attributed Stonehenge to Roman, Saxon, or Dane, were knocked out of court ; that is to say, if any of them were left alive to suffer this measure of confusion. There is a pretty general agreement now that 1700 B.C. is a reasonably approximate date. The nature of the implements discovered suggests the minimum, while planetary science contributes to more exact definition. For it seems a general assumption that Stonehenge was connected with sun worship, and, in short, was a temple to that deity. There is still clearly defined the track of a stone avenue, now called "the cursus," which ran directly towards the rising sun, whose first ray fell upon what is known as the altar-stone upon the 21st of June. To put the matter briefly, the difference between the position of the sun to the earth in those days and in these, as here defined by the situation of certain stones, gives the astronomers a further clue to the number of centuries which have passed over these hoary monuments.

Midsummer morning has of late become quite a function at Stonehenge. Large gatherings of the enthusiastic and the curious meet here in the grey dawn, and go out, some of them, to greet the rising sun in garments of daring design, and of a pattern which would, in all likelihood strike terror into the shades of the original Druidic worthies they are supposed to personate. But Stonehenge, always from earliest times, a point of intelligent pilgrimage, widens its sphere of interest as the years go by: a process inevitable to the advance in population, in enlightenment, and, above all, in facilities for travel. And, indeed, there is nothing like it in Great Britain—probably not in Europe ; for Avebury, as we have seen, has, by comparison, no dramatic spectacular qualities, and requires much mental reconstruction, and a good deal of thinking out to fully grasp its significance. Stonehenge, on the other hand, would startle and subdue for a moment the exuberance of a beanfeaster. The human significance of the ruin is as eloquent as the battered keep of a Norman castle. Yet the fashioning of it, the thoughts and motives that conceived it, are so remotely, so infinitely removed from any humanity with which we

in England are brought in touch, by literature or the thousand links that bring us on some sort of terms with Norman, Saxon, or Roman. If we know next to nothing of that wonderful four centuries of the Roman occupation, of all blank spaces in history the most regrettable, we, at least, know the Romans themselves, and with the help of their architectural relics and inscriptions, can fill in much social detail with tolerable certainty. But here we have an uncanny, conspicuous monster, of an age as remote from the Romans as theirs is from ours, mocking at us from the midst of the bleak downs, with its story irrevocably locked up in its wrinkled, mossy stones. No science can ever unlock its secrets, and most certainly can never give us the faintest glimpse of the manner of men who raised it. Conjecture can do no more than it has done; but as a temple, presumably of the sun, hewn and raised by human hands in Britain before Israel went out of Egypt, it is absolutely unique.

The plain about Stonehenge is still reasonably wild. Amesbury, two miles to the south-east, is hidden out of sight in the Avon valley, behind the wooded height known as Vespasian's camp. All across the horizon, from east to west, a carpet of turf spreads away to a distant skyline, and here, as at Avebury, the grave mounds of the dead lie thick, happy, no doubt, as they then were to rest within the hallowed atmosphere of the great temple. The sacred road, lined by low banks, and styled "the Cursus," from the likelihood of its having been used as a race-course, cuts into this semicircular array of clustering barrows, some three hundred of which still survive within the range of sight, and one may not know how many have been ploughed under. A long barrow is visible among them, of an age as great, and, perhaps, much greater, than Stonehenge itself, with the bowl and bell-shaped mounds of the round-headed men all about; moderns by comparison, who, in the centuries preceding the Roman conquest, looked on these grey columns and massive imposts as dating even then from dim and distant times. It has been noted, too, by archaeological surveyors that, practically, every tumulus over the wide,

uneven surface of this vast prehistoric cemetery is so situated as to command a full view of Stonehenge. The temple consisted of a complete outer circle of huge native sarsen stones, rising some sixteen feet above ground, hewn square, and connected by imposts secured by mortises and tenons. Next came a circle of alien syenite and igneous stones from the West or Brittany, standing about the height of a man's head. There were five (or seven) "trilithons" of sarsen, still higher than those of the outer circle, standing in pairs, and connected with an impost and rising in stature from east to west, the last being twenty-five feet in height. These were grouped in the form of an ellipse, and within them was another group of small syenite posts like those of the inner circle. In the centre of all still lies "the altar-stone," or the "stone of astronomical observation." Away to the east, outside the circle, is a solitary stone, in the direct line of the altar-stone and the point of the rising sun on the 21st of June, known as the "Hele stone." Seventeen of the great piers of the outer circle are still standing; eight are prostrate and five missing. Of the inner circle and horseshoe of igneous rock, locally called "bluestone," twelve, in whole or part, are upright, ten prostrate, and four missing. Two of the great inner trilithons survive intact, and two of its single columns. Finally, the temple, which is some thirty yards in diameter, is surrounded, at a little distance, by a circular mound and ditch.

In 1624 the Duke of Buckingham caused the fall of one of the inner trilithons by digging for supposititious treasure. Another fell in 1797, and in the last day of the nineteenth century two monoliths from the outer circle gave way, foretelling to superstitious minds the death of our late queen.

Most of us, I think, were brought up to wonder at the magic which could have conveyed from afar and reared these mighty blocks. Great as is the mystery which surrounds the origin and purport of Stonehenge, the physical side of it presents none whatever, and it is hard to account for the persistent attitude of former days in this particular. All the large stones, those of the outer circle and the trilithons of the larger



ellipse, are sarsens, and are the products of the neighbourhood, or at very furthest of the Marlborough downs. For though the plain is almost bare of sarsens, they were, perhaps, sufficiently plentiful upon it three or four thousand years ago. The question of dragging them a few miles and raising them was merely one of levers and rollers, wedges, thongs, and a sufficient force of men ; while time could certainly have been but a trifling object. Mr. Dowland, who recently restored the leaning stone to the perpendicular, and incidentally made the important discovery of the stone implements beneath it, has published some illustrations, showing the Japanese in quite modern times achieving precisely similar results, without any aid whatever but human hands, ropes, and levers. But in regard to the alien stones, they only stand five or six feet high, and could have been conveyed any distance. They are said by experts to conform exactly to the old silurian rock of Carmarthen and Pembroke, and are arranged as in the ordinary so-called druidical circles one is familiar with in Wales and the North. It may be suggested, too, in passing, how much more eloquent and startling all these rugged prehistoric relics appear on a smooth chalk country carpeted with turf than on a wild moorland and stony country. In the latter, crags and rocks as nature placed them are always within sight, and those reared by man beside them, the cromlechs and the maeni-heirion, have seldom, for this very reason, so detached and uncanny a look as these grim, grey derelicts on the smooth carpet of the Wiltshire downs. Stonehenge, to be sure, would be a sufficiently overpowering spectacle in the craggiest country, but I cannot help thinking it is most felicitously placed on a landscape that is at once smooth and solitary, and so adapted to exposing every mark and grave mound, every track and dyke, every camp and terrace of the unknown ages, that in some prospects the prehistoric seems to hold the field and quite overmaster any trifling reminders of to-day.

I have said nothing of the notorious legends evolved by the ancients that have gathered around Stonehenge. But the more intense and sober interest its mysterious presence awakens,

seems for once to make fairy tales appear thin and poor. Of any indifference to legends I am quite sure my readers will acquit me. But after an hour of Stonehenge, I do not, somehow, feel much interest in Geoffrey of Monmouth's romance about Merlin having transferred the "Giant's Dance" from Kildare. There is nothing mystical, at any rate, about the murder of the British chiefs by Hengist, alluded to in the last chapter on Amesbury, whether fact or fiction; but the name has nothing to do with Hengist, as is sometimes suggested, but is a slight corruption of "Stanhenge," *i.e.* stone-hanging places. A writer, named Hecatæus, of date 500 B.C., is quoted by a later Latin author, Diodorus Siculus, as recording the existence in an island, twice as large as Sicily beyond the north wind, of a magnificent round temple, sacred to Apollo, adorned with splendid offerings, and a city also, inhabited principally by harpers, who tuned their lyres perpetually in honour of the Sun-god, and more to the same effect, which is interesting. The Phœnicians have been credited with Stonehenge by one or two sages of distinction, and the periods of their activity would not be incompatible with the end of the neolithic period. Stout theories, too, are held that it contains the work of two distinct ages, that the last immigrants before the Romans, the Belgæ, according to a popular belief, found Stonehenge, adopted it wholesale, and added to it, presumably the big sarsens, with their squaring and mortising, for the small alien stones are quite crude. Henry of Huntingdon, of twelfth century date, is the first chronicler actually to mention Stonehenge by name.

But enough of this, let us jump for a moment to modern times, and consider a question which agitated Wiltshire and the lawyers, and to some extent the public generally, quite recently; whether or no in fact it was just and politic of the present owner, Sir Edmund Antrobus, to fence Stonehenge with barbed wire, and charge a shilling ahead for entry, and to assume the responsibility of preserving it. This seems to me the only alternative to its purchase by the Crown, and assumption of an owner's responsibilities. If any negotiations were on

foot for such a transfer, they were matter purely for private bargaining. If they had been effected, the tax-payer would have to do, in some shape or form, what the owner does now ; and I do not see why the trifling contribution towards the keeping up and safeguarding of Britain's greatest prehistoric monument should not fall on those who have the privilege of visiting and enjoying it. It seems to me absurd to cavil about rights of way, as if a grouse moor, or a spinney in Richmond Park, were the point at issue. Stonehenge is not a place for beanfeasters to sprawl on, or for Tommy Atkins to occupy in force while the enemy are approaching from Salisbury or Bulford. The strands of wire make no appreciable difference to the prospect, the general public can approach within fifty yards of the stones, and I don't think that many people, who are qualified to absorb any measure of profit from a nearer inspection of the ruined temple, or really cared for it, would feel or grudge the trifling payment. Stonehenge is neither a waterfall, nor a stalactite cave. The enjoyment to be gathered from a near examination is in no way physical, but purely intellectual, and the South British proletariat are a great deal more likely to carve their distinguished names upon the stones than to mentally reconstruct the temple and ruminate on its significance.

However, even this is not the question at issue ; for the preservation of the stones inviolate is a matter of incomparably greater importance than trumpety squabbles over local rights, which, after all, is a matter for the law to settle. It was high time, in these days of locomotion, that the crown or the owner kept the tripper and the Tommy, and all irreverent vandal crowds, merry-makers or otherwise, off the stones, which should be watched most jealously, not only against human chippers and name cutters, but against the action of time and weather, so that steps may be taken in time to avert impending disaster. This has all to be paid for by the presence of custodians night and day. If the owner were a millionaire, no doubt he might do this at his own expense for the benefit of the nation ; but I believe the reverse is the

case, and anyway, it would be neither equity nor business. Some one must incur this outlay, and whether the visitor who benefits by it or the general tax-payer contributes to it, does not seem to me to matter a fig. No one grudges their sixpence at the gateway of a ruined castle, though it belong to a duke, as it often does. Ruined castles, though personally I delight in them, are plentiful, and things by comparison of yesterday. Stonehenge is unique and precious beyond any money estimate, and miles removed in value from any trifling right of way disputes. It is mercifully outside the actual military orbit, being on the west side of the Avon, though nearer than one might wish to Bulford and its corrugated iron horrors. The first time I was there, last summer, a blaze of tents did temporarily disturb the solitude of the northern outlook beyond the barrows, and on another occasion a whole battery of horse artillery, rumbling down the road, broke rudely on our reveries.

Besides the toll-taker at the entrance gate a member of the county police mounts perpetual guard among the stones. By the time all the Wiltshire constables have taken their turn here, they will not only be a body of archæologists, but highly cosmopolitan individuals, as they are obviously expected by the average visitor to be a fount of knowledge, regarding every detail connected with the great mystery which they have in charge. A patient, sunburnt giant, not long snatched from his quiet beat in the village street of some remote Bulhampton, seemed to me to be enjoying himself hugely, and had not only mastered the guide book, but discoursed eloquently on the various national characteristics as exhibited by visitors from the diverse nations of Europe and America in their passing relations to himself. A handbook to Stonehenge is essential, and a small one, sufficient for all passing purposes by Lady Antrobus, can be procured at the gate. A visit will doubtless often lead to a literary excursion into one of the many fuller works upon the subject. An amusing effort of a misguided American in this direction suggests the reminder that the late Francis Lawley's affectionate tribute to Henry Hall Dixon is



not effective for the purpose. How delighted that genial prince of sporting writers would have been, could he have known that his biography, "The Life and Times of the Druid," would be carried in the pocket of a conscientious pilgrim to Stonehenge, and how loudly he and his old schoolfellow and biographer would have laughed over the joke.

Dixon was often in Wiltshire, where training-stables so much abound. Hence, perhaps, his well-known pseudonym, "The Druid." One of the strangest of careers and remarkable of temperaments was surely his. One of Arnold's favourite pupils at Rugby, though debarred from practical success in scholarship, both there and at Trinity, by ophthalmia, the divine spark was in him, but, strangely, accompanied by a genius and passion for horseflesh. This was quite detached from any personal ardour for horsemanship, for which, indeed, he had little opportunity, and he never went near the betting ring. It is a unique picture, this Rugby boy, respected at that somewhat hypercritical epoch for his principles (and I speak from contemporary testimony other than Mr. Lawley's), and, at the same time, even then a regular correspondent of *Bell's Life* on matters equine. How he became in after life a noted authority on things of the turf and stockyard, and about the best judge of a racehorse in England; never riding himself, in the sporting sense (for he was a poor man, and never putting a shilling on a horse)—"a white-souled Galahad among the snares and temptations by which racing is surrounded"—is all well known by many of a generation rapidly passing away.

I well remember, as a child, his arrival one day at a certain house in Marlborough, with a big valise on his back that he had carried across the downs from Swindon. He had every reason to be a welcome, though quite unexpected, guest, during the few days he was inspecting the horses training at Fyfield, Beckhampton, and elsewhere, though some aspects of the situation were not without humour. His host for the time, and old school friend, used to say that he was the "horsiest Christian he had ever known," for he was a man of deep religious convictions. His eccentricities of manner, mainly in the



direction of mental abstraction, were so considerable that they caused tortures of repression among the juveniles of that particular household, and remained for years ineffaceable. He was equally at home, however, with a trainer, a bailiff, or the head of a college. He walked enormous distances, and though never in robust health, worked like a horse, and finally broke his constitution by riding a scrub pony from the John o Groats to London in the depth of a hard winter. He died in middle life, the father of a large family. Such was "The Druid," author of *Silk and Scarlet*, *Saddle and Sirloin*, *The Law of the Farm*, and many other works that were classics in their day, besides an immense amount of journalistic work. It is maintained by some of the many notable persons who knew him well, that Henry Hall Dixon had neither before, nor has he had since, nor is he ever likely to have, any exact equivalent in the world of rural or sporting literature; either as regards his work or his personality.

"Near Wilton sweet huge stones are found,  
But so confused that neither any eye  
Can count them just, nor reason try  
What force them brought to so unlikely ground."

Many minor poets have sung of Stonehenge, since Sir Philip Sidney, if in this one single accomplishment we have to assign him an inferior rôle, to modern times. Of more illustrious bards, Wordsworth alone, so far as I know, invoked it, and that only in a single couplet, like many of that great man's, not worth transcribing.

Stonehenge is about eight miles from Salisbury. You may travel there "through the villages," as the locals have it, or, in other words, by the ever delectable valley of the Avon, or you may go to Amesbury, and thence over the high down, the southern extremity in fact, of the Plain, a somewhat longer pilgrimage. Taking the former route, a couple of miles over the Plain, much cultivated here, and studded with clumps of beech trees, brings us down again to our old friend, the Avon, at Wilsford, now grown to quite a lusty stream among its

pleasant meadows. A fine profusion of elm and oak, of ash and chestnut foliage decks the narrow valley, and mantles yet thicker around the not infrequent country houses or homesteads. Flint and stone cottages, in the quaint chessboard pattern of the country, and hooded with deep roofs of thatch, blink at the many strangers who pursue this rural highway from behind their bright patches of garden, and exact, no doubt, their meed of admiration from the curious alien from overseas. The rounded ramparts of the down still rise high above, on either side, golden here with the fast falling corn, or there still retaining their ancient character and their immemorial turf.

And the silver Avon proves again a welcome if fitful companion. Coursing along with swift but silent current over its chalk and gravelly bed, it steals up betimes so close to the road that we can see the green water-weeds trailing and quivering above the bottom with the motion of the current; can mark a trout rise, or the occasional splash of swallows as they go hawking over the surface of the fly-haunted stream. The trout of the Avon, by the way, are favourably noticed by Evelyn, who once dined at Durnford House, "a ferme of my uncle Hungerford's," still standing across the valley. Immediately overhanging it is Ogbury, an enclosure of sixty-two acres, a camp of refuge rather than of defence, according to Colt Hoare. Great Durnford church, too, is worth a visit, as retaining many Norman features.

Lake House, further on, is familiar to every traveller by this road, as it almost fronts upon it, and exposes the whole face of one of the most perfect Tudor houses in South Wilts, at very close quarters to the admiring wayfarer. It belonged to the Duke family from the sixteenth century till quite recently, when it passed into the hands of the present owner, Mr. Lovibond, who achieved the necessary restoration, with extraordinary success, and with a restraint that is even more remarkable. I imagine that to restore thoroughly, at considerable outlay, a beautiful but crumbling old house, without showing any external traces of having done so, is one of the highest achievements of domestic architecture. Those who

knew Lake House a decade ago, which I did not, tell me that the success of the owner and architect in thus preserving its old appearance and character is complete. It is of modest dimensions, as one would expect of the period of Edward the Sixth. Within is a fine staircase, ascending from a panelled entrance-hall, with rooms and upper chambers, retaining in a marked degree the irregularity and character of the period. The kitchens and offices below are all in keeping with that generous and homely period, and retain many of its fixtures, while the great attics under the open oak rafters, without any compartments, complete the charm of a house deservedly famous. It is not open to the public, but the stranger can enjoy the exterior, at any rate, from the road, not forty yards away, without reserve. The gardens are in perfect harmony with the buildings, intersected with fine old yew hedges, and slope down to the river, which flows below. In the park across the road are several sepulchral tumuli, from which the late owner, who was also a noted antiquary, secured many treasures in the nature of amber and gold ornaments, now in the British Museum. There is a spring, too, in the park, from which the house probably takes its name; for, oddly enough, the term "lake," in the Wiltshire vernacular, is applied not merely to a small pond, but to a brook. There are still surviving rustics who will direct the bewildered stranger to follow a path till he comes to the "lake," meaning thereby some trifling brook with a plank across. In a neighbouring building by the roadside spinning-wheels may be seen revolving merrily, turned by the hands of Wiltshire maidens, and the passing traveller, if of sympathetic attitude towards the revival of village industries, may here array himself, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, from his skin to his winter overcoat, in the fleecy product of Salisbury Plain. Nor need he have any fears, even with such a wholesale order, of being taken for a Druid, when thus tricked out; for there are patterns designed for all tastes, from an archbishop to a stud-groom. Many interesting things, as may be surmised, have occurred in Lake House. I have just glanced over a tome of manuscripts within it; but, alas,

if one yielded to all such temptations, we should unquestionably be still on the banks of the Kennet.

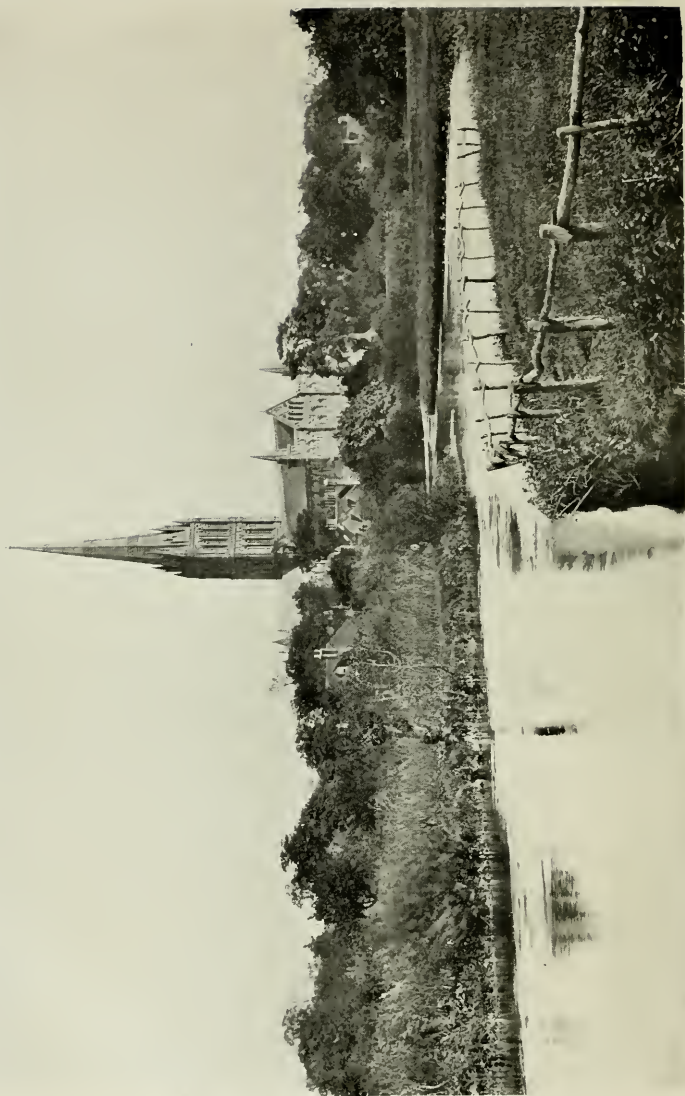
Lower down the river, across the valley is Heale House, memorable as one of Charles the Second's hiding-places after the battle of Worcester. "I went directly," says Charles himself, "to a widow gentleman's house, one Mrs. Hyde, some four or five miles from Salisbury, where I came into the house just as it was almost dark with Robin Philips only, not intending, at first, to make myself known." The good lady recognized the prince however, as she had seen him before, and though, for precaution's sake, he was set at the lower end of the table, was so overcome she could scarcely refrain from helping him first. She did actually give him two larks when the others had but one, and took the risk also of drinking a glass of wine to him. After supper, the fugitive king declared himself openly to his hostess, and it was arranged he should leave the house next morning, as if for good, but return at night to the hiding hole. "So Robin Philips and I took our horses and went as far as Stonehenge, and there we stayed, looking at the stones, for some time, and returned back again to Heale, the place where Mrs. Hyde lives, about the hour she appointed, when I went up into the hiding hole, that was very convenient and safe, and staid there all alone some four or five days." After this, his friends had arranged his escape from the Sussex coast, and he left Heale by the back way.

The house is approached through wrought-iron gates and a stately avenue of elms. It is on the moderate scale of its Tudor neighbour, but square in shape, and fashioned of small red bricks, now mellowed by some three centuries or more of weather. In style of the Caroline period, there are, however, some innovations of the later Dutch mode on its exterior, and dormer windows in the sloping roof. I believe the interior is no longer of any interest. The place belonged formerly to the Errington and Hyde families, and the Avon waters its pleasant precincts. In later years it became, by inheritance, the property of our poetical cleric from Bremhill, Canon Bowles. There are roads on both sides of the valley, but following the westward

one for choice, through the three Woodfords, and crossing the river, one quickly comes under the imposing height of Old Sarum, rising grim, desolate, and suggestive above the village of Stratford. When Cobbett arrived here, he shook his fist at Old Sarum, and swore roundly at it as "the accursed hill." He could not resist, however riding to the top, and meeting a labourer on the way, asked him how times were with him. On receiving the only answer a family man, earning seven or eight shillings a week, could very well give, he asked him if he knew the reason. The mystified bucolic only shook his head despondently. "Then I will tell you," said the agitator, and pointing up to Old Sarum, said, "It is all that accursed hill." The rustic, no doubt, thought he was mad. I am not sure myself of his precise meaning, but imagine he must have had in his mind the gathering held there by William the Conqueror for confirming the title deeds of his followers. The manor-house at Stratford was the property of William Pitt's father, and the great statesman resided in it sometimes in early life, and it will be remembered he was first returned for Parliament as representative of the earthworks that, several hundred feet above, are so sharply and impressively outlined against the sky. But the Avon valley now expands into the spacious hollow whither so many others converge, and we see, close at hand, the most prodigious spire in Britain, shooting high to heaven from behind the low-lying roofs of Wiltshire's ancient capital.







SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

## CHAPTER XI

### SALISBURY

PRIOR to the construction of one or two new railroads, and to the more recent inventions in road travel, no county in England was more divided within itself than Wiltshire, and Salisbury Plain was, of course, the main factor in this cleavage. The folks of the north, whether of upland or lowland, speaking generally, knew scarcely more of their fellow-countymen, who lived within reasonable sight of Salisbury Spire, than they knew of Kent or Devon.

The tradition, in a sense, still survives, though greatly modified by improved connections and more restless habits. For myself, as of North Wiltshire rearing, at any rate, I frankly confess to settling down in Salisbury for a month last autumn as almost a stranger to the attractions of that delectable cathedral town.

Now, in the matter of these peculiarly English institutions, I have always regarded Hereford as the most complete and perfect specimen of the type; I am consoled, however, by the recollection that when I ventured that statement recently in print, something moved me to a reservation in favour of Salisbury, from what I knew of it, which I blush to say, was not a great deal. A cathedral town of the really snug and complete type must not, of course, be too large. It certainly must not be smoky, nor yet too near some dominant industrial city, while a picturesque neighbourhood should count as a further asset. It should be the county town for one thing, and the centre of an agricultural, not a mining or manufacturing, district for another. The perfect peace, the clarified, but

decently drowsy, atmosphere desirable could not possibly retain the full measure of its unruffled calm in the rude and vigorous breath of a northern environment. I have elsewhere recommended Americans, who cherish high ideals, gathered from fiction, of our cathedral towns, and are eminently qualified to appreciate them, to make for Hereford. It would be superfluous to urge them to Salisbury, for they already flock there by hundreds, and sometimes remain for weeks, which is quite right. In a true cathedral town, moreover, the close should be the dominating influence. It should have no rivals, and in Salisbury it has none. Above all, did not the most entertaining and accurate delineator of such and kindred circles who ever lived draw his inspiration from modern Sarum? Trollope's art may, or may not, have been of the most exalted order, but he wrote contemporary history, and in a hundred years our descendants, if they have the sense or good fortune to recognize the fact, will have a picture of mid-Victorian life in Southern England of a most invaluable quality, by an author who knew the world and never makes a mistake. Let us hope, too, they will still be able to appreciate the English in which it is written, and they will, no doubt, be able to discount the touch of caricature which has given immortality to his outstanding characters. But Trollope, at least, never blunders. The subtle shades of the rural hierarchy, lay and clerical, are deftly indicated with quiet confidence. He knew exactly who should have the hounds, and why, and when he rides after them is quite as good in description as Whyte Melville himself. Even in this anti-Trollopien period it is sometimes said that "Phineas Finn" is the best political novel ever written. How much more then is Trollope at home, when a coming election is agitating East Basset with its abounding humours. His young ladies are nowadays thrown at his head, because they are the gentle young women of Basset in the 'fifties and 'sixties who stayed at home and led uneventful, unathletic, and extremely proper lives; young ladies who cantered over the downs on summer days in flowing habits and top hats, who put their angelic feet down firmly on the

tight ball and croqueted the curate pitilessly into the geraniums before proceeding through a hoop like a Norman archway, and not much smaller. I admit that Trollope would not live by his young ladies, faithful portraits though they be, and some of them, I think, very charming ones. There are plenty of writers, however, to paint the emotions and stirring actions of more modern young women. But his squires and his land agents, his dukes and his lords, his country solicitors, his rectors and his curates, his canons, his archdeacons, and, above all, his bishop, ay, and many of his married ladies, they all seem to me to be very much alive indeed, and always just where they ought to be, and would be, in real life, which is a great deal more than can be said for some of the creations of genius, before or since.

Trollope's people, it is sometimes said, are commonplace. I am sorry for any one who can read the moving tale of poor parson Crawley, the perpetual curate of Hogglestock, without emotion, or can sit quite still in his chair at that thrilling moment when the falsely accused, the ragged half-fed scholar cleric stands with such infinite pride, blended with an almost fierce humility before his weakly quaking bishop to the absolute ignoring of the bristling, bullying, insolent, intrusive, but by no means bad, woman at his side. How the worm turned for one brief contemptuous moment, and pointing at her with lean finger, shouted, "Peace, woman," in that sacred episcopal study. How the bishop leaped in panic from his chair, and how Mrs. Proudie dropped dead from syncope not many weeks afterwards. Are not all these things written in the "Chronicles of Barset," which I would advise any one going to Salisbury or to Wiltshire to look into again. It is curious that Trollope, who had lived mainly in Ireland and Essex, and had no Wiltshire affinities but those of frequent visits to Salisbury and its neighbourhood, should have fastened so tenaciously upon the county as the scene of nearly all his best books. Without any pretension of posing as its interpreter through the medium of fiction, Trollope quietly proceeded to take possession of Wiltshire in so unostentatious a fashion that a majority of his



outside readers have never, I imagine, identified Barchester with Salisbury, even though he threw off all disguise in "The Vicar of Bulhampton."

He had a good enough ear for the talk and humours of a keeper, a groom, or a labourer, and conveyed it in sufficiently approximate vernacular for the purpose, though never labouring at dialect. But in the main he was, of course, the prophet of the well-to-do, from the duke to the local solicitor. He knew them all, and how each one of them would look out at the world and at his neighbours, if he were in truth flesh and blood, but with just that touch of caricature which gives them vitality for the reader. Trollope is rather sparing of scenic description. Yet when he brushes in the village with the rectory, the doctor's house, the water-meadows, mill, and overhanging down, and even the finger-post at the cross-roads pointing the way to Westbury, Marlborough, or Devizes, the homely scenes seem to respond at once to his easy matter-of-fact touch, and rise before one with a reality not always achieved by much word painting.

Salisbury has to-day little more than double the population it possessed in the time of James the Second, when seven thousand souls indicated a place of great importance. I do not think it is generally realized how picturesque a town it is, apart from its quite matchless close and in some respects matchless cathedral, which together cover so large an area on its southern fringe. Yet strangely enough it is a town of parallelograms as deliberately laid out as in any American city half a century old. But it is seven centuries since Salisbury was thus planned, at the time when town and cathedral were bodily transferred here from the windy pinnacle of Old Sarum, a couple of miles away. So the rectangles and straight streets of its older portion have a peculiar antiquarian interest, while the many old-timbered houses on them show none the less effectively for the regularity of the highways. All these, with the expansive and beautifully timbered precincts of the cathedral, rest upon a broad flat, beyond which the Avon and the Wylye, just united with the Nadder, mingle their clear

chalk streams upon a verdant carpet of bubbling water-meadow. Indeed, the first of these rivers goes whirling and rippling over a clear gravelly bed through the very centre of the ancient city. Pouring through a huge old water-mill into a churning pool and diving under the busiest street, it glitters away between a long vista of mellow red-brick walls and branching foliage, where you may see the trout rising at flies or lying on the gravelly shallows almost any moment of a summer's day. I doubt if there is any other town of sixteen thousand souls in England where you can lounge on a bridge amid its traffic and see half a dozen trout from three pounds downwards behaving precisely as they would behave in the Arcadian wilds of Chisenbury or Enford. The gambols of the Avon through the heart of the town and the skirts of the cathedral close add something beyond doubt to the seductions of Barchester.

But there is so much to be said about this famous place I feel I have already indulged too freely in the discursive habit. One really ought to begin any chronicle of Salisbury on the top of the lonely and inspiring hill fortress, Cobbett's "accursed hill," which a mile and a half away looks down on its successor, and far out over the surrounding country. The wholesale migration of small towns, usually before an encroaching sea, as in the case of Winchelsea for instance, is not uncommon; but the transfer of Old to New Sarum, together with the quite remarkable situation and appearance of the earlier and abandoned site, is a combination altogether unparalleled. Rising some three hundred feet above the valley and forming the projecting southern spur of what may still be called Salisbury Plain, conspicuously encircled with a deep ditch and bank of immense proportions, the massive isolated hill presents a spectacle of strange and stern significance. It is not unlike the mouth of a crater, with a huge flat-bottomed bowl turned upside down inside it. And when one remembers that it once carried on its summit and slopes, not merely a castle, the stronghold of an earldom—for that is in no way remarkable—but a large cathedral and a quite populous town, one's imagination goes out to it, and it is a sight that would

assuredly bring to a standstill the most callous and unobservant of wayfarers. It differs conspicuously from those camp-crowned hilltops so familiar to every Wiltshire man, but resembles rather a gigantic intrenched fort of later days. It is actually of three tiers, for in the centre of the almost circular top, which is about one thousand yards in diameter, is another raised platform, also circular and intrenched with a rampart and ditch, the site of the castle, of which only a fragment of masonry is left. On the broad level plateau just below this citadel stood the cathedral, of which all trace was lost till the line of the walls was laid bare by an exceptional drought in the year 1835, and the foundations by that means discovered. It proved to be a cruciform building two hundred and seventy feet long, and must have looked out with imposing grandeur over the wide tract of country below. Keys, fragments of stained glass, window leads, and skeletons were found beneath the site, and a grave in the choir, that for sound reasons was held to be that of the builder himself, Bishop Osmound. Built in 1076, when the see was removed from Sherborne to Sarum, it stood here for about a century and a half.

But long ages before this, Old Sarum was a powerful Roman station, known as Sorbiodunum, and the junction of six great roads; while later on it was often the object of bloody fights between Saxon and Briton. Under the Saxon occupation there seems to have been a religious house here as well as a fortress, while King Alfred is credited with the great outer trench and rampart, which together are over one hundred feet deep, the citadel ditch above being almost as formidable. Among other functions, a Witenagemote was held here by King Eadgar to concert plans for protecting Northumberland against the Danes. The Normans, as already noted, recognized its importance, and William the Conqueror, in 1086, summoned hither all the estates of the kingdom to do homage, and to receive their lands afresh under the condition of military tenure. The powerful Bishop Roger, whose works and doings at Devizes and elsewhere will, I trust, be remembered by the reader, embellished the cathedral, and still further

strengthened the castle. William Rufus held a council, while Henry the First on two occasions kept court here for months together. But the bare record of the events that happened on the heights of Old Sarum would be wearisome and to small purpose.

The dramatic part of its story is the friction that arose between the dual powers, lay and clerical, who respectively held sway upon the upper and lower plateaus. The former was occupied by the castle and its supplementary buildings; the latter by the cathedral, one or two churches and the town, though the suburbs spread down to the foot of the hill. There was not space enough up here for the lion and the lamb to lie down together. In Bishop Roger's time the church had been something of a lion, and in his person, at least, had combined the military and ecclesiastical power. But later on the warriors, who held the fortress for the crown and their dependents, began to bully the cathedral people and their tenants so persistently that life upon this land-locked Gibraltar became, for the latter at any rate, no longer worth living. "After brawls they often fell at last to blows." Once in the reign of Richard the First when the clergy were going in solemn procession to the cathedral, the "Castellanes" chose the moment for a boundary dispute at which "The entertainment waxed hot." The cathedral, though on the second plateau, seems to have been within the castle lines, which was a chronic embarrassment, and on this occasion, no doubt merely a typical instance of these frequent disputes, the soldiers got between the church and the town during service and rolled up the long *cortège* of homeward-bound divines in a deplorably sacrilegious fashion. On another occasion the military played a cruel practical joke on the clergy, barring them out after some processional function from their precincts and compelling them to spend a winter's night in the open. Sometimes they even went so far as to refuse them access to their own cathedral, "what has the House of the Lord," one canon wailed piteously, "to do with castles, let us in God's name descend into the level. There, are rich champagnes



and fertile valleys abounding in the fruits of the earth and watered by living streams."

So in this same reign Bishop Herbert Poore, the elder brother of his more famous successor, turned his attention seriously to moving the cathedral to the more fertile, more peaceful and better watered, meads below. He procured a licence from the king, and fixed upon the site; but was daunted by the huge prospective cost. The ensuing and troubled reign of John was no season for such formidable enterprises, but with the advent of Henry the Third, Bishop Richard Poore actually took it in hand. Local historians think that many of the citizens of the old town had anticipated the bishop and already moved their habitations down on to the site of the present city which was Church property, though a scarcity of water had probably as much to do with this migration as an excess of militarism. Some say the site of the new cathedral was fixed by an arrow shot from the ramparts of Old Sarum, but as the range would have been nearly two miles the other tradition that Bishop Poore was guided thither by a dream is the more credible.

But the men who projected and built our great cathedrals brought no doubt the same skill and forethought to the site as they did to the fabric of their vast and splendid creations, and were guided neither by arrow-shots nor dreams. However that may be, the foundation stone of the present cathedral was laid with due solemnity by Bishop Poore on April 20, 1220, and another story begins. The town soon followed suit, though it was some centuries before the distant height was abandoned to the profound solitude which now reigns there, and that is rendered so mutely eloquent by its gigantic and conspicuous earthworks, and its altogether impressive and weird situation.

The wide yawning trench, the depth of a church tower, is now densely choked in places with a tangled frieze of hazel, thorn, and blackberry. The smaller circle above which enclosed the castle is the burrow and sporting ground of innumerable rabbits, who have nibbled short the sweet and



verdant sward within. The rampart round it, about three hundred yards in circumference is thickly clad with berry-laden thorns and briars, while a small adjacent clump of impenetrable woodland even thus high defies the south-west gales, and howled a solemn dirge beneath their buffeting on the wild autumn day that found us sole occupants of the spot. It hardly needs saying that the outlook from the ramparts of Old Sarum is no ordinary one. Far away to the north, from the very foot of the steep below, the Plain stretches its billowy surface. Its bright colouring fades gradually into pale grey, and the tufts of fir or beech that tip the crests of each succeeding wave, become mere dark specks along the horizon, behind which, some twenty miles away, lies hidden the vale of Pewsey. All about us too, on this September day, on the hither side of the Plain corn shocks were dimpling, in places, the generous breadths of still golden stubble. The turnip fields, which here and there breasted the down, were now thickly covered with a twinkling carpet of green. In all directions the chalk roads caught the eye, waving like coils of white tape over down, stubble, and fallow, hiding for a moment in some woody hamlet, only to emerge again and pursue their way till, a mere thread, they vanished over the low crest of some distant ridge.

Extended immediately below and to the southward was the fair city of New Sarum; the top of the cathedral spire rising a hundred feet higher than the ramparts on which we stood. One can well appreciate up here the longing expressed by the persecuted clerics of this aerial perch to descend into the pleasant and fertile hollow so effectively sheltered by converging downs. Bleak of aspect, but surely a poetic bleakness are these hills to the south of Salisbury like those to the northward, about their summits, but breaking everywhere into abounding foliage as they dip to the fringe of those "living waters" which our poor twelfth-century canon eyed so wistfully. For he could see the Wylye and the Nadder coming to meet the Avon from the west, and all together, as we may see them now, in ample current winding down a

wider and yet more luxuriant valley towards Fordingbridge and Ringwood and the sea.

Perhaps Old Sarum is more familiar to the general public for the humorous figure it cuts, even in the abounding humours of pocket-borough records than for its own moving tale and still more moving aspect. By Leland's day the few remaining residents had disappeared, though there were considerable ruins even then of the castle, and of private dwellings, and one chapel still actually in use. Pepys, however, a century later found it quite deserted, "So all over the plain by the sight of the steeple, and to Salisbury by night. But before I came to the town I saw a great fortification, and there lit, and to it, and find it prodigious, so as to fright me to be in it alone at that time of night, it being dark. I understand since it to be that, which is called Old Sarum." In short, Old Sarum and Stonehenge seem to have got very acutely on the famous diarist's nerves.

The old city could not, I presume, have been quite deserted when it was allotted those two seats in Parliament by the first Edward, which it retained till the time of the Reform Bill. Nine scattered plots of land covering twenty-three acres in all, each conferred a vote. An elm tree still stands on the middle one, known as "election acre," and under this it was the custom when the great moment came for the nine electors to do their duty, to erect a tent for the purpose. In later days, however, these plots of land seem to have merged in the manor, so its owner, in order to fulfil the necessary conditions, used to grant leases to two persons who, having cast their votes for his man, then resigned their rights till their services were again required at the next election. It is said that this autocratic creator of legislators once threatened the prime minister of the day, in a moment of petulance, to send his negro servant to Parliament.

For some weeks in the past summer it was my privilege to be domiciled under the very shadow of Salisbury cathedral. Now, however, that I find myself before it, pen in hand, I feel in no slight dilemma. For in a modest chronicle of this

kind, what is one to say when confronted with one of the greatest and noblest ecclesiastical monuments in England, possessed moreover of a history more luminous and complete, I believe, than almost any other of the kind? There are certain features, however, about Bishop Poore's masterpiece that will at once strike the visitor, the most prominent, perhaps, being the remarkably wide expanse of level greensward on which it is placed. The fine elm trees which contribute here, as in most cathedral closes, to the charm of the precincts stand for the most part round its fringes, while behind these again upon three sides the historic and beautiful old houses of the chapter look none the less alluring for being in part screened by the foliage and trunks of mighty trees. On the fourth and south side is a belt of wood, behind which lies the palace, enclosed on three sides by nearly half a mile of lofty battlemented wall, which was erected in the reign of Edward the Third, from the stones of Old Sarum. Just beyond this to the southward the Avon and the now united Wylde and Nadder come together by the ancient hamlets of Harnham and Fisherton; a venerable bridge built by Bishop Bingham in the thirteenth century, surrounded by many old houses, civil and collegiate, conducting you at once into country roads and Arcady.

In regard to the cathedral itself, which occupied some thirty years in building, the symmetry and consistency of its noble proportions must immediately strike the most untechnical of visitors. For myself, I can never quite shake off a sensation, felt nowhere else, that it is some gigantic model, fashioned elsewhere, and carefully dropped on to the centre of a green velvet cloth. No doubt this inconsequent but persistent fancy is in some sense an unconscious tribute to the extraordinary symmetry of the magnificent Gothic pile, stimulated perhaps by the unusual expansiveness of its lawns.

Henry the Third was away on one of his frequent Welsh campaigns when the first stone was laid. This was for the Pope, Honorius, who had permitted the transfer, while the second was in honour of Archbishop Langton, who was away with Henry in Wales. The third was laid by Bishop Poore himself,

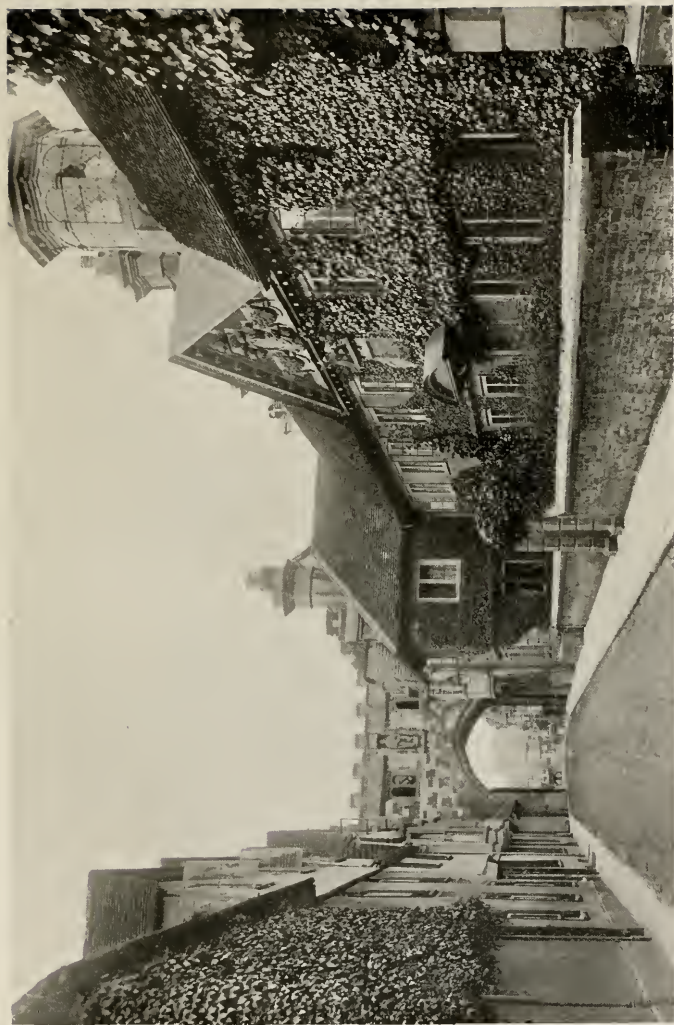
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and the next two by our old friends William Longespee, Earl of Salisbury, and his wife Ela, the foundress of Lacock. Other great persons each laid their stone and put their name down for subscriptions, and when the army returned from Wales many nobles and knights came down to Salisbury and contributed their quota. A leading authority on church architecture tells us that Salisbury has not only the surpassing beauty which is obvious to all, but is perfectly original in design without any trace of the foreign influence, and is the first instance upon such a scale of pure English Gothic.

The entrance to the close, and to a complete view of the cathedral from the end of the High Street, under the massive embattled fourteenth-century gateway which adjoins a picturesque almshouse of the Stuart period for widow ladies and other quaint old buildings, is worthy of the rest. With regard to the exterior of the cathedral it would be superfluous with the illustration of it before the reader's eyes to add anything in the way of description, unless to note that the material is grey stone from the quarries of Chilmarke to the west of Salisbury which are still worked. The enormous expanse of narrow Gothic windows in doubles and triplets will be noticed as remarkable, and the double transept is unusual, and is a masterpiece of artistic design. The spire was added, together with the upper story of the beautiful central tower, some seventy years after the first foundation, and the oftener one sees it the more I think it holds one from its almost overpowering elevation. As it is, though rising from the river level it can be seen from high points over half the county. If it were uplifted on a hill like Lincoln, or Durham, where there is, I believe, a good deal of similar work to that of Salisbury by the same hand, it would be a landmark indeed.

The spire is octagonal, and has leaned some two feet out of the perpendicular since the time at least of Christopher Wren, who was commissioned to look into the matter. No one, however, appears anxious upon that account, nor is the congregation, so far as I know, diminished by a single head in consequence. A well-known tradesman in Salisbury once





MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE CLOSE, SALISBURY





climbed to the top of it and stood by the ball, the only individual unless, perhaps, a steeple-jack, who has ever accomplished the perilous feat. The very thought of the enterprise makes the brain reel when regarding the scene of it from below. The hero described his performance to me with becoming modesty and, moreover, confided the fact that, as a boy, he was fired by a consuming ambition towards three accomplishments, any one of which would a great deal more than satisfy most of us. The first was to climb to the ball on Salisbury spire, the second to be wheeled by Blondin over some perilous void, the third to smoke a pipe in a lion's den. Blondin refused to convey him. No lion-tamer would have anything to do with him, though his brother was more fortunate, and smoked his pipe duly to the end in a lion's cage. But Salisbury spire was always available to the so far disappointed member of this adventurous family. The main ascent is made by ladders fixed inside, which is so far thinkable. But at a point some thirty or forty feet from the top it becomes imperative to squeeze through an aperture and take to the open, scrambling up by some stone knobs just large enough to grasp with the hand and rest the feet upon. Arrived at the top my informant went on to relate that there was a projecting ridge or platform to surmount, which was the most trying moment of the whole ascent. Having accomplished this, however, successfully, he was very nearly knocked off by the sudden swinging round of the vane, an emergency he had not taken into account. However, this final peril was surmounted, and my informant was able to wave his handkerchief triumphantly to his friends assembled below. When he reached the ground again in safety, an American present came up and privately offered him two pounds for his somewhat ill-used trousers, as a memento; an offer which was not accepted. The only other person who has accomplished this feat so far as I know is, strange to say, a lady, and, moreover, an American lady, though that is not perhaps strange. She asked permission of the authorities, who at first refused it, but afterwards relented in so far as to stipulate that she went up

at her own risk, whatever that may have implied. But she got up there, as far, that is to say, as the platform under the ball, which she either could not or did not wish to circumvent.

The inside of the cathedral gives the same impression as its exterior, that of vastness, symmetry, and grace, an exhibition of the most perfect Early English on an uncommon scale. These imposing proportions and the length of the vistas they disclose much more than atone for a certain sense of coldness, which is caused in part by the lack of stained glass windows, as well as by the peculiar severity of the early Gothic architecture. The nave arcade consists of ten bays, with pointed arches supported on clustered columns of Purbeck marble. The triforium arches carry more ornamentation than most parts of the building, while the clerestory is lighted to great advantage by triple lancet windows. The style of the choir is practically the same as that of the nave, and a plain vaulted roof covers the whole, which from the extreme west end presents a most striking and uninterrupted prospect, a glorious avenue in stone and marble, four hundred and seventy feet long. A curious stone bench or platform runs down both sides of the nave, beneath the base of the columns, and on this are placed at intervals in a line the effigies and slabs of many famous persons. They have all been removed here from other parts of the building, and if architectural conventionalities are somewhat outraged, from a personal and historic point of view, it seems to me at any rate, not wholly unsatisfactory. Among them there is a stone coffin, supposed to have covered the remains of Herman (1078), first bishop of Old Sarum, and two slabs with carved figures, supposed to represent the great Bishop Roger and a later successor Joscelyn. There are altar tombs to Bishop Beauchamp and Robert Lord Hungerford, both of the fifteenth century, each of whom, or their families, erected chapels in the cathedral which were swept away by Wyatt, whose ravaging hand seems scarcely to have paused as long as life lasted. A trained architect, commissioned on all sides by a well-intentioned but inert generation to improve and beautify, he

appears to have achieved about as much destruction as any of the professed iconoclasts of the Puritan period. He desecrated ancient and famous graves. He carried effigies and slabs about, and planted them wherever a piece of furniture seemed to be wanted. If there was no vacant spot handy he flung inscribed coffin lids and armoured crusaders out on to the road-side, and most of the old stained glass in the cathedral he hurled on to the scrap heap; while he annihilated a fourteenth-century campanile which stood in the close. Indeed, I don't know what he did not do. Yet his public were apparently quite satisfied, and described his work, I believe, as "neat and effective." I dare say there is a biography of Wyatt. If life were long enough I should like to read it, and see how he justifies himself. Perhaps he restored the houses of country squires more effectively than he did the Houses of the Lord. If the curses of posterity have any equivalent effect to masses for the dead, poor Wyatt should be now enduring unheard-of torments. Archæologists exhaust their whole vocabulary of anathema before they have quite done with him. The newly enrolled verger learns to vituperate him with his earliest professional breath, and freshens up his perfunctory eloquence and cocks the ear of his conscientious audience from time to time with a lusty kick at the much execrated architect. I don't know what Wyatt was about. His desolating progress through cathedrals and churches almost suggests a prolonged and hideous practical joke. He put a west front on to Hereford, now replaced by a masterpiece, which looks, in illustrations, like the back premises of a block of London flats. He laid about him in Salisbury with the fervour of an Anabaptist saint, and seems to have summoned the bishops, earls, knights, and burghers, who had slept peacefully in their appointed places for five centuries to a kind of "general post" with a wave of his measuring stick. Still, he obviously imposed upon his generation, and very possibly on himself, and, I dare say, made a fortune out of the havoc. But, after all, he was not given a chance to touch the main fabric of Salisbury which is its pride and glory. It is in the

minor details, the works and treasures and chauntries, that had accumulated beneath these lofty pointed arches, this vaulted roof, and great array of Gothic windows, that he earned his imperishable reputation. Among the altar tombs placed in the nave by Wyatt's redistribution, for which I can forgive him, is one of William Longespee, the first Earl of Salisbury, so often mentioned here, and the son of Fair Rosamund. Another interesting effigy is that of Sir John de Montacute, a hero of Cressy, arrayed in chain mail, and most life-like in design. Sir John Cheyney, too, standard bearer to Henry the Seventh, has been brought out into the nave, a person of surpassing stature, and of some special interest as having been unhorsed by Richard the Third in that final hurly-burly at the battle of Bosworth, which cost the so-called Hunchback his life. When Wyatt routed up his remains from their original resting-place, his gigantic thigh bone corroborated the traditions of his great stature.

The second Earl of Salisbury is also here, son of our old friend, Earl William. His legs are crossed, for he served in two crusades, and was killed in the Holy Land, and buried at Acre, this monument being raised to his memory by his mother. I feel myself almost kindly disposed towards poor Wyatt for fetching these distinguished persons out of dark haunts and arched niches or chauntries, for they look extremely imposing in the open, lying face upwards beneath the solemn and stupendous arcade of the nave. Many of them are beautifully carved and extremely well preserved, and there is no doubt they gather dignity and touch the fancy more in such a conspicuous situation. Still, I believe that some of the altar tombs and slabs had no original connection with the effigies they carry, and that Wyatt not merely shifted their quarters, but in many cases changed their very beds. The armour on many of these effigies is very beautiful, and bears interesting evidence to the changes and improvements in this respect of the various periods. But I was almost forgetting that of Lord Stourton of Stourton, a Wiltshire magnate, who was hung in the market-place of Salisbury, in the year 1556, for a double murder.



It is a curious story that Aubrey tells of him. There was a great feud between this same Lord Stourton, a man of ancient local family, and the first Lord Pembroke, "who was altogether a stranger in the West, and from a private gentleman of no estate, but only a soldier of fortune, becoming a favourite of King Henry the Eighth, at the dissolution of the Abbeyes, who in a few years, from nothing at all, stepped into a prodigious estate of the Churche's land, which brought great envy on him from this Baron of ancient family and great paternal estate, besides the difference in religion." Lord Stourton remained a Catholic, and was a person of great spirit and courage, keeping in his retinue the stoutest fellows he could hear of. One Hartgill was recommended to his lordship as answering in a high degree to this description, and, above all, as having recently killed a man, a curious item of merit in a bailiff's character to our modern notions! However, his lordship valued him all the more for it, and paid the parish priest ten groats to say a mass for him on the first Sunday, in expiation of his crime. "A surly, dogged, cross fellow," however, he proved to be. Nevertheless, Lord Stourton made him his steward, in return for which he cheated him out of his manors. His lordship "then perceiving the fellow had so ensnared him in law tricks that he could not be relieved," simplified the matter by killing him. So much for Aubrey. It seems, however, that the manor was Church property, which both master and man desired, the latter being successful in the acquisition of it. A great dispute followed, which began in the reign of Edward the Sixth and was renewed under Queen Mary. The council, however, then interfered, and the disputants agreed to live amicably. But Lord Stourton could not forget his disappointment, and caused Hartgill's son to be waylaid and nearly murdered. For this he was imprisoned, and sentenced to pay a fine to his enemy. Stourton then decoyed the Hartgills, father and son, to meet him, under pretence of paying the money, but they were seized, bound, and carried to a field near Stourton, in the night, and their throats cut, Lord Stourton holding the candle, it is said, during the operation.

The bodies were then buried in a dungeon. Stourton was tried in Westminster Hall, but refusing to plead, the chief justice threatened him, under the prevailing code, with pressure to death, upon which he confessed, and was hung at Salisbury with a silken cord, while his assistants were hung in chains at Mere. Bishop Burnet heard afterwards, in Wiltshire, that Queen Mary, the prisoner being of her faith, was not only anxious to pardon him, but actually sent down a reprieve at the last moment. Furthermore, Lord Pembroke, to whom it was sent, having previous notice of it, caused his gates to be locked, and hastened off himself to Salisbury to have the sentence carried out, while the messenger was waiting at Wilton. So he was hung, as related, in a silken cord, a model of which in wire, together with the noose, lay on his tomb till the end of the eighteenth century, when Wyatt shifted his quarters, and mislaid or threw away the offensive decoration.

For the locked portions of the cathedral, containing the rest of its older monuments, its chapter house, cloisters, chambers, and treasures, its Lady Chapel—the first portion of the fabric built over the bones of Bishops Herman and Roger, and also over those of Osmond, its tutelary saint and the Conqueror's nephew—I shall leave my reader in the better hands of his guide-book, and to the able expounder who, at certain hours, unlocks these inner sanctuaries and takes successive groups of pilgrims round them. The old-time verger seems to have been eliminated for this purpose from Salisbury. Personally, I think it a great bore, this scrambling round with a crowd, and being lectured to at each point, even by the most eloquent and accomplished cicerone. For myself, I like to take a handbook, for choice, if available, one written by an appreciative and scholarly canon or dean, and loiter round at will. A preliminary canter with a verger, however, is sometimes not wholly unprofitable, as some particle of originality may yet remain with him, but a book is the best companion. This pleasant method is apparently debarred at Salisbury, and possibly for a good reason. But where one

feels quite innocent of any impulse to cut one's name on the leg of a crusader, or to chip off an abbot's nose, the limitations imposed on the intelligent stranger seem a kind of reflection on his sanity, not to say on his respectability. I am speaking now quite impersonally, and from the point of view of the above-mentioned intelligent alien. For any one dallying in Salisbury long enough to make local acquaintances or already possessed of them, the matter is easy enough; but the bulk of even enlightened visitors are not thus situated.

In the Lady Chapel a number of the Herbert family are buried, eleven earls and countesses among them, but without inscription. There is a fine monument to Edward Lord Hertford, whose unhappy marriage with Lady Catherine Grey was alluded to in a former chapter. There are a great many modern stained-glass windows in the eastern portion of the cathedral, and some old glass from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries escaped the ravages of Wyatt. The grave of Bishop Beauchamp, however, who founded the chapel and also designed St. George's at Windsor, did not, for the inscribed stone that covered it was torn up and lost. Some visitors will look with interest on the bust of Richard Jefferies, but I note that the local handbooks who catalogue all the Browns, Jones, and Robinsons of modern date, who are commemorated here do not think him worthy of notice, which is quite characteristic. In the muniment room is a contemporary copy of the Magna Charta, said to have been the property of William Longespee, Earl of Salisbury, who was one of the witnesses. The cloisters of thirteenth century date are among the best examples of their kind in England, while the chapter-house is both large and imposing, and among its other decorations illustrates the history of man from the creation till the delivery of the Commandments to Moses. As a last word on the cathedral, the west front is striking and curious. It is not the actual wall of the building, but practically a vast screen in five stories of arcades carrying under their canopies a great number of statues, originally over a hundred, assuming that the niches were all filled. This dates from the decorative

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period of English architecture, but has undergone much restoration.

The palace, standing as before mentioned in large, well-timbered grounds between the cathedral and the river, is an interesting old battlemented building with a massive crenelated tower at the north corner. In addition to the many celebrated divines who have resided in it, James the First, who was extremely fond of Salisbury, was here a great deal, and Sir Walter Raleigh also for a brief time just before his death. Charles the First, curiously enough, at the beginning of his reign found a bishop here, Davenant, who absolutely refused to turn out for him, so that he had to go on to Wilton. Bishops were bishops indeed, in those days! Salisbury, of course, played a conspicuous part in the Revolution of 1688. For James the Second was in the palace while William of Orange was at Exeter, and a few days later the prince was installed in his father-in-law's quarters, while the latter was tearing his hair in London and impotently watching the desertion of his friends.

Even Clarendon, whose estates adjoined Salisbury, and who a few days before had professed an agony of shame at his own son's defection, now rounded on the wretched king in language that even the most extreme Whigs disapproved of, and set off for William and Wiltshire. A curiously mixed assemblage this must have been that filled the inns of Salisbury and passed back and forth under the ancient gateways of the close. Avowed Whigs, who had objected to the king's succession, and had been out in the cold shade of neglect and persecution ever since, now drank confusion to him over their wine. Strong Tories were here, steeped in the traditions of royal prerogative, much misliking the company of their new friends, and with no notion of dethroning James, but only professing anxiety to rescue him from his advisers. Clarendon, still posing as one of the latter, tells us with disgust how Burnet, during the cathedral service, rose from his knees ostentatiously at the collect for the king, and sitting back in his stall, made contemptuous noises with a fervour



sufficient to disturb the whole congregation. The strangest epoch, perhaps, in the history of the palace, is its sale by the Puritans to a Dutch tailor, Van Ling, who converted part of it into a public house, and let the rest out in tenements. A remarkable range of fourteenth-century cellars still extant under the house, no doubt suggested to this shrewd and irreverent Dutchman its capacities in the public-house line.

Charles the Second, too, sought refuge here when the Plague of London was at its height, though Salisbury itself for that matter, suffered severely from the same visitation. All around the wide, green outskirts of the close are houses standing for the most part detached and often in leafy gardens. Most of them have either architectural and historic distinction, or that indefinable attractiveness and home-like look so characteristic of the more mellow residences in our English country towns. The deanery is in part very old, "the King's House," a gabled building dating from the fourteenth century, and occasionally occupied by royalty, and once by Richard the Third, is now a training college for schoolmistresses. The "King's Wardrobe," another beautiful gabled house of the fifteenth century, and three or four more associated with the fortunes of famous families or famous divines look out between the tall elms over the wide, green carpet towards the cathedral. One stately mansion near the north-west corner was once the property of the great Wiltshire Norman family of Mompesson, and retains many features of their occupation. One of the Mompessons was the original of Sir Giles Overreach, Philip Massinger being a native of Wilton. All along the northern fringe of the close are other snug and comely abodes with or without a story, till the fine mediæval gateway of St. Anne, with its overhanging chamber, leads you out again into the busy street. A further interest attaches to this ancient gateway, as indeed to the whole enclosing wall of the close, from the fact that much of the stone was brought down from the deserted buildings of Old Sarum.



These precocious thirteenth-century designers of a rectangular town did not include the wide streets of their modern successors in their scheme. Still, their method insured a great deal of space inside the squares, which is often filled with old-fashioned gardens and foliage, mostly unsuspected, till some curious alley from the street gives a glimpse of it to the passer-by. There are even yet a great number of old gabled and timbered fronts, and a considerable wealth of mellow roofing abutting on the streets, and still more of old interior work disguised outside by concessions to a later and less picturesque taste, or to the exigencies of repair. I shall not attempt to tabulate these surviving bits of mediæval or Tudor days. The older part of Salisbury is small and compact, and they will reveal themselves to the most casual wanderer in a quarter of an hour's stroll. The striking poultry cross, a fine open hexagonal piece of work, used as early as 1365 at least, for the marketing purposes its name implies, stands perhaps in the most suggestively ancient part of the town. Close by, approached by a narrow winding passage leading from Silver Street to the market place, is St. Thomas's church, originally built in the centre of the city by Bishop Bingham. Under the shadow of a great cathedral, it will not do to dally in parish churches. This one of St. Thomas, dedicated to Thomas à Becket, was rebuilt in the perpendicular period. But it is somewhat unconventional, as well as rich and quaint, with its carved oak roof and wide aisles, and large amount of wall space devoted to glass, while the chancel is nearly as long as the nave, which has a clerestory and side aisles. There are also curious monuments to the Eyre family. An old, but rather insignificant tower off the south aisle, gathers some particular interest by containing the peal of bells which formerly swung in the campanile that Wyatt swept from the cathedral close. The most interesting of all the old houses in Salisbury can be seen without effort, as it is the showroom of a large dealer in glass and china, namely, "The Halle of John Halle." Now John Halle was mayor of the city at a time when mayors were, or could be very potent persons indeed, and when Salisbury was

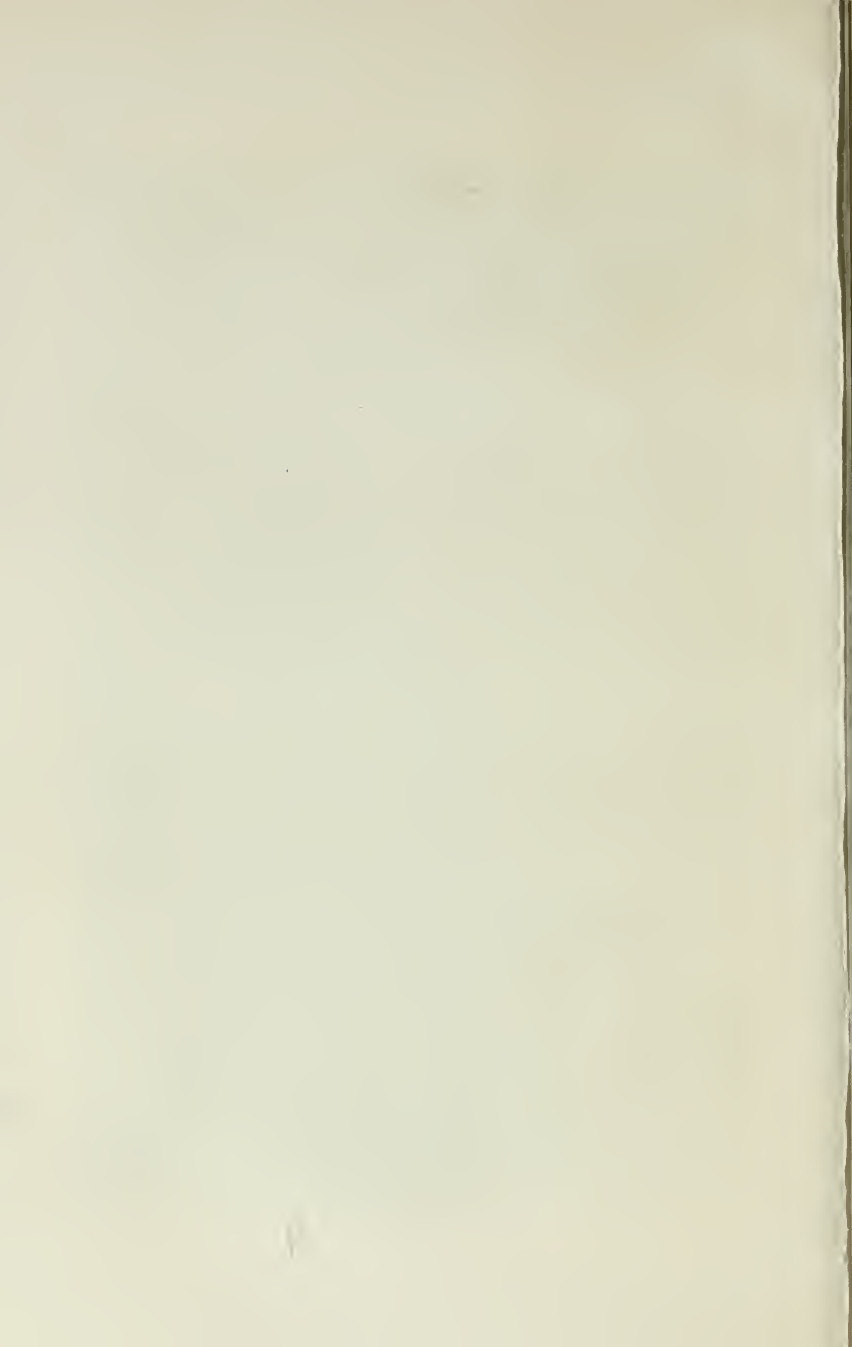


STONEHENGE





POULTRY CROSS, SALISBURY





at the zenith of its influence, that is to say, in the fifteenth century. This one was a wool stapler, and for years "did buy all the wool on Salisbury Plain." He was four times in office and thrice represented the city in Parliament. In his day the city was at odds, both with the bishop and the crown, and John Halle was a strenuous defender of its rights against both. He was so plain spoken with the king upon the subject, that he was committed to the tower for "showing himself of a right sedicious, hasty, wilful, and unwitty disposicion." While he was in prison, however, the people of Salisbury unanimously elected him mayor a fourth time, a proceeding suggestive rather of Cork or Tipperary in modern days. He erected this beautiful house in 1470, as a banqueting hall for the holding of civic feasts. The roof is open and supported by dark time-stained oak timbers picturesquely intersected with white fans of plaster. There is also a large oak screen elaborately carved, a capacious fireplace with ornate stone mantel, and lofty mullioned windows filled with stained-glass, bearing the armorial coats of the great Wiltshire houses and the city guilds. One window is devoted to the personation of the builder himself, in contemporary costume, holding the banner of England with one hand and a dagger with the other, while in the act of swearing allegiance to Edward the Fourth. This window is supposed to be commemorative of John Halle's release from the tower. The late Mr. Duke, of Lake House, has found interest enough in this richly ornate Tudor building to fill a whole volume. It is at least a good object-lesson in the position achieved even in the provinces at that early date by successful traders, a matter in which many otherwise intelligent moderns hold most misguided notions quite alien to those of their ancestors, real or imaginary, whose shades they invoke.

The seeming, though it is believed, let us hope with good reason, not actually critical condition of the cathedral spire, suggests the fact that the spire of St. Edmund's church at the edge of the town did positively fall in 1653, destroying both chancel and nave. In St. John's Street the house, now known

as the King's Arms is still standing, where the friends of Charles the Second were accustomed to foregather while he was hiding at Heale House, with a view to getting him out of the country. Part of the building that was once the famous old George Inn is still extant on the High Street. This was the chief haunt of early pilgrims to the cathedral. Here too, Pepys stayed, after his fright at the declivities of Salisbury Plain, and the grim solitude of Old Sarum, and found "a silken bed and a very good diet," though he adds that he was charged heavily for these luxuries, and exorbitantly for horse hire, and furthermore, admits that he lost his temper with the landlady. Mill Street is or was the scene of a curious custom. For the last house in it, is supposed to be the spot where the building of New Sarum was actually commenced, and where Bishop Poore himself resided, so each newly consecrated bishop of Salisbury is here invested with his official robes, and hence conducted to the cathedral.

Nor, while taking note of a few of the old houses of Salisbury, must we overlook what is now the Diocesan Church House. Of fifteenth century date, it was once the mansion of Lord Dudley, who was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1631, for many deplorable crimes. There is a portal and also a courtyard within, while close beneath it the Avon runs buoyantly over its pebbly bed under Crane bridge, displaying a pleasant vista of garden foliage through which it sweeps out into the meadows beyond, and to its junction with the Wylye. In a house still standing near St. Anne's Gate into the close, Fielding abode for a time though more permanently domiciled in another part of the city where he wrote a great portion of Tom Jones. The original of Thwackum in that immortal work was one Hele, then master of the Close Grammar School, where Joseph Addison received his education, after starting life as such a frail infant that he had to be baptized on the day he was born.

But for myself I admit unblushingly, that when I stand in Salisbury close I do not think of Tom Jones nor of Addison. For even to the partial exclusion of Bishop Poore and William

of Orange, and all the Stuart kings, and the long array of notables who in seven centuries have passed beneath these hoary portways, the fictitious friends of my youth and occasional comfort of my later years will thrust themselves upon the scene. I see old Mr. Harding, the venerable silver haired ex-warden tottering across the close to his last service in the cathedral, or the tall dignified figure and scholarly face of Dr. Arabin turning in at the deanery gate, or poor Mr. Crawley again, weak and weary with his twenty-mile walk from Hogglestock vicarage, half-starved, but erect in bearing, threadbare, but proud, striding toward the palace gates, and to that immortal interview with the bishop and Mrs. Proudie. I like to fancy, too, the rival equipages of the bishop and Archdeacon Grantley, creating a question of precedence in the narrow gateway of the close. The eloquent expressions of the rival coachmen, the painful uplifting of the archdeacon's hat, from the well-bred ecclesiastical head; the automatic bow of the imperturbable Griselda Grantley with her back to the horses, her viscount already captured, and her trousseau, absorbing her whole soul; the defiant shaking of Mrs. Proudie's plumes in a hopeless attempt at the necessary courtesies of life, and the feeble hen-pecked little bishop beside her. All these shadowy souls, and many more of their shadowy friends, and mine will thrust themselves on to the peaceful lawns and elm avenues, or confront me in the quaint narrow thoroughfares leading to the precincts, to the exclusion of those mightier and more strenuous men of old, that I ought to be thinking about, who were far from being shadows.

Salisbury owed no little of its earlier importance to Bishop Bingham, who in the thirteenth century diverted the western road from Old Sarum, built the bridge at Harnham across the river, and thereby destroyed Wilton, which had been in a sense the chief centre of the county, and had certainly given its name to it. Almost every English king was in Salisbury at one time or another. In the Civil War both parties occupied it in turn, and there was a skirmish in the close, between Ludlow and the royalists, but no really hard fighting dyed its streets

with blood as at Marlborough and elsewhere. The rising of Penruddock and his friends in 1655, was initiated at Salisbury during assize week ; the judges and sheriff being taken bodily possession of, while Charles the Second was proclaimed to an ominously unresponsive public.

The subsequent execution of the leaders at Exeter, reminds me that Salisbury market place is a fine roomy parallelogram, planted with trees, for several victims by rope and axe, and stake have here provided entertainment, or intimidation for the natives ; most notable of all, perhaps, being the Duke of Buckingham, under the superintendence of Richard the Third. That Salisbury was held either in high regard, or in some fear seems obvious from the fact that it was honoured with the consignment, for exhibition purposes of one of Jack Cade's quarters. In these harmonious times, however, the spacious market place is a cheery scene on its busy days. The market produce and the denizens of a great agricultural district fill it from end to end, under the shadow of the banks where the cheques are honoured, and the old hostleries where the farmers still cement their bargains over the cheerful glass, and long rows of horses crunch their oats in roomy stables as if the shadow of the automobile threatening incalculable uprooting of old horsey and homely ways were not upon the land. There is something quite inspiring about Salisbury market. The breath of the broad downs from the north and south, from east to west seems to blow upon it. For save in the narrow valley of the Avon, running down to Fordingbridge and Hampshire, there is scarcely any cramped country within calculable distance. The large farmer is at any rate in the ascendant, with a big balance or a big overdraft at the bustling banks, men who still do their farming on horseback, and have a smart dog-cart tilted up in the inn yard ; not the kind of persons, in short, to jump eagerly at a hundred and sixty acre free grant in Manitoba, or to be at all happy when they found themselves upon it.

The stranger in Salisbury, when a little overcome by the ecclesiastical and archæological demands of the place, may spend an entertaining half hour following the auctioneers



around on market days, and admire their unfailing vitality and the impartial eulogies expanded on the pens of down sheep, of shorthorn calves, of prolific sows, and even on the baskets of clamorous poultry. There is not the inspiration of a great Wiltshire sheep fair, to be sure, nor is the smock frock, that many of us can remember as once so common, any longer to be seen; but much good Wiltshire may yet be heard around the pens, from bailiffs, labourers, or even small farmers and their wives; both the Wiltshire of the Plain and the north, and that of the south towards Fordingbridge or the down country towards Dorset, where the prodigious amplitude of the Wiltshire burr begins to flatten out a little under the tongue of men of a different Saxon stock as the local ethnologists hold. I do not know Dorset, to speak of, but natives of that county, who live in Wiltshire and are good judges of men, and speech, and manners, tell me the difference is much greater than one might be inclined to think. The infusion of Celtic blood for one thing must be greater in the Western county. On quiet days the stranger in the market-place may take his hat off to the statue of the late Mr. Fawcett, the blind postmaster general, who was a native of Salisbury, and lost his sight as a young man out shooting in this neighbourhood. His blind face comes back to me rather as stroking the "Ancient Mariners," a crew of dons that used in my day to plough the turgid waters of the Cam. In front of the Council House not far away, the late Sidney Herbert, afterwards Lord Herbert of Lea, erect on a pedestal, keeps company with the blind statesman.

At the north-west of the market-place on fine days, at certain periods, you may see a goodly collection of persons from all the ends of the earth, who have gathered to inspect the lions of Salisbury and its neighbourhood. From hence a motor 'bus runs back and forth daily to Stonehenge, and as it only has accommodation for about a dozen persons, and there are often fifty candidates, the battle is to the strong or at least to the nimble. But relief brakes and lurking hack drivers soon absorb the disconsolate remainder of Americans, colonials, foreigners, and such stray Britons as have an eccentric fancy



for seeing something of their native land. On one occasion in which exceptional circumstances impelled me to enter for this competition I failed, through lack of brass, perhaps, rather than of agility. But our failure provided us with the opportunity of rescuing a couple of American ladies, thus stranded in the market place, on their very first day in England, and of carrying them off to the Plain in a four-seated conveyance. The trifling obligation thereby involved of sitting with one's back to the horses was immeasurably outweighed by the contemplation of two educated and enthusiastic individuals snatched from the crude and remote West, plumped suddenly down as it were in the heart of rural England. Some familiarity with the Western hemisphere, however, is quite necessary to a full appreciation of the strange and captivating spectacle that England presents on such a first acquaintance to an intelligent American. Even a continental tour awakens the returning Briton to some sense of the physical contrast between his own country and any other. But the marks of an ancient civilization are, of course, everywhere upon Europe. It is merely a difference of detail saving always the subdued atmospheric lights, the brilliant carpet of turf, the hedgerows and hedgerow timber which makes Britain alone among the countries of the earth. But to an American, familiar only with natural beauty on an untamed and lavish scale, regarding civilization, speaking generally as a destroyer of nature as it appeals to him, England must always be a revelation for which he cannot possibly prepare himself. A landscape mellowed by centuries of civilization is utterly inconceivable to a person accustomed only to the fields and farms and villages of North America. Productive, neat, substantial, nay, even luxurious, these may sometimes be, nor yet vastly differing in actual detail if committed to paper, nor showing any violent contrast perhaps even in photography; but absolutely in another world, when looked at with the eye. Steeped as is the educated American in the lore, familiar in books with every phase of English life from his earliest years, what a moment it is when this dreamland is actually revealed to him, and in a minor and different sense,

when he hears English voices, strange voices and a strange accent and intonation all around him. In the first particular I do not imagine disappointment is ever conceivable. Our own first acquaintance with Rome or Athens, or Paris or Jerusalem, cannot be comparable in exaltation to a cultivated American's first day in England. And all this parenthesis has been provoked by the fact of driving two American ladies to Stonehenge, though, as a matter of fact, my thoughts had travelled back so far that I had ungallantly forgotten all about them. It will be sufficient to remark that I felt it to be a merciful dispensation of Providence that I was not quite a stranger to Wiltshire, and was thus able to pass a tolerable examination; for our fair companions proved to be college professors, and apt examiners.

Americans show their good taste by their very marked one for Salisbury. There are a great many fairly comfortable apartments in the city which they freely patronize, and several comfortable hotels, including a very large modern one, The County which I believe has wrested the supremacy from the old White Hart, that, in my youth, was a famous hostelry. The white hart herself still stands proudly over the portals, and I see no outward change since the Western circuit, briefed and unbriefed, enjoyed there the post prandial hour, and sipped the port they were popularly supposed to have laid down in its cellars with some care and forethought. Trollopian memories will arise, too, in the White Hart, for was it not the "Dragon of Wantley" where all our Barsetshire friends foregathered on those frequent occasions, clerical, legal, and political, which brought them to the cathedral town?

It would be inexcusable to take leave of Salisbury without mention of its two museums, the Blackmore and the Salisbury and South Wilts, which adjoin one another and stand on the site of an old friary. A soil so prolific as that of Wiltshire in ancient relics naturally finds expression, both in the taste for collecting and a necessity for harbouring them. Not that the contents of any of these local museums are confined to the remains of neolithic and paleolithic man, or

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even to those of Roman and Saxon, for natural history holds in them all a prominent place. In the Blackmore museum, moreover, are two curiosities which belong to neither, namely the giant and the hob-nob (hobby horse), time-honoured accompaniment of civic *fêtes* and processions in Sarum. The giant invariably heads them, and is a bearded individual some eight or ten feet high, with a truculent expression, and a three-cornered hat. The last time he officiated was at the king's coronation. The hob-nob is diminutive in size with an evil expression, and a mouth contrived to open and shut, so that it can be made to seize on the garments of young women or other spectators who may be regarded as fair game by the privileged directors of its movements. These comic lay figures have acquired with time some historic interest.

The well-to-do of Salisbury, save always those few favoured laymen who can secure one or other of the delightful old habitations within the precincts of the close, live up on the ridges that mostly encircle and always look down upon the town. The atmosphere of the latter, I should say, was neither particularly dry nor particularly stimulating. In former days the Wylde and the Avon have more than once covered the nave of the cathedral two or three feet deep with snow water from the Plain. But in summer days the presence of these two streams and their feeders is a great addition to Salisbury.

Now, there are rivers and rivers. I do not myself care for a turgid weedy stream, beloved only of eels and roach, and just clear enough to reveal the dead cats and discarded shoes that have found lodgment on the bottom. But the Wiltshire streams are not turgid. The Avon runs clear and swift over a pebbly bed beneath Crane bridge, and I was beguiled to many wasted moments every day in marking each trout in its accustomed haunt, or noting its mood towards such surface feed as might be coming down. But, after all, it is outside the limits of the town that these gurgling chalk waters prove such pleasant company for an hour's stroll. Tumbling over mill-wheels into cool frothy pools, or spreading into wide, sunny,

gravelly shadows, or hurrying in deep narrow runlets between the rich grasses, one is always crossing them by plank bridges, or bearing them company as they urge along their clear waters beside the path. After half an hour's progress over this pleasant expanse of verdure and twinkling water one abandons all attempt to identify the Avon or the Wylde or the Nadder, and the various channels into which their surplus waters have been turned. And, after all, one of the inducements to wander out over this network of bright waters is to enjoy the superb view of the cathedral shooting up above them from its girdle of woods. Indeed one may fairly say it is a somewhat famous prospect, and deserves to be. Painters great and small, etchers and engravers innumerable, have been busy putting it on paper for a century or more. And from the top of the high down to the southward, where solitude soon begins again to assert itself, it is good to look down upon these great expanses of green, ribbed with the meeting of so many waters—a fitting carpet to lie at the feet of the mightiest mediæval fane in provincial England. Here above Harnham, or towards the racecourse, you may follow the mood, not infelicitously expressed by an eighteenth-century laureate reared among the chalk streams—

“ And stretched among the daisies pied  
Of some green dingle's sloping side,  
While far beneath where Nature spreads  
Her boundless length of level meads,  
In loose luxuriance taught to stray,  
A thousand tumbling rills inlay  
With silver veins the vale, or pass  
Redundant through the sparkling grass.”

## CHAPTER XII

### WILTON AND THE WYLYE VALLEY

THE two miles of broad highway which connect Wilton with the outskirts of Salisbury are eminently suggestive of the tie which has for all time bound together the ancient and the later capital of Wiltshire. For a fine array of stately trees borders its almost direct course along the edge of the Wylve valley, and shades its ample and level surface; a road which looks as if it were made for pageants and worthy to be the link between the palace of a great bishop and the stronghold of a great earl. Close to it upon the right is the site of one of the chief tournament grounds of the Middle Ages, selected by Richard the First during one of his infrequent sojourns in his realm. Down to the left, crouching among trees near the river, is the ancient little Gothic church of Bemerton, and its roomy Tudor rectory, built and occupied by George Herbert during his last years, and an object of pious pilgrimage to all visitors in Salisbury. As a fabric there is not much beyond antiquity to give it attraction, and it has, moreover, been restored. Herbert himself lies near the altar, while the bells hanging in the little belfry are the same with which that gentle soul rang himself in at his institution, and are of fourteenth-century date. "A pitiful little chapel of ease," Aubrey calls it. The latter's uncle was at Herbert's funeral service, which was chaunted at the special request of the saintly poet and divine by the "Singing men of Sarum." George Herbert was a brother of the famous Lord Herbert of Chirbury, and was born at Montgomery. He had been a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, and public orator, and is, of



course, well known for his religious poems and his blameless life, as set forth by Izaak Walton. He married at thirty-six into the Wiltshire family of Danvers, of Baynton, about the time he came to Bemerton, where he died in his fortieth year of an ague. He was passionately fond of the choral services at the cathedral, and was accustomed to walk almost daily into Salisbury and take part in them. He was also chaplain to his distant kinsman the Earl of Pembroke. Bemerton has had two other notable incumbents—Norris, the poet and divine, and Coxe, who wrote a good deal, and whose history of Monmouthshire every one concerned with such matters is familiar with.

As you turn off the main road by the picturesque church and graveyard of Fugglestone, the amplitude and distinction of the tree-bordered highway turns with you into the loop leading down to the great seat of the Pembrokes and the ancient capital of Wiltshire and of Wessex. Wide plots of turf and venerable trees edge the road that after crossing the bridge over the broad shallow streams of the Wylye, runs straight up to the gates, behind which rise close at hand and in full view, the towers of Wilton House. A turn to the right along the banks of a mill stream rippling to the river beneath the overhanging foliage of some adjoining grounds, and in a couple of minutes one is in the wide open heart of this shrivelling but still cheerful-looking place of ancient fame. Its commercial pre-eminence, as already remarked, was shattered by the rise of Salisbury in the thirteenth century, and above all by that single stone bridge of Bishop Bingham's, which so fatally turned the tide of traffic. It now possesses a population of about two thousand souls, and a still surviving carpet factory, which no doubt those responsible for the honour and glory of Wilton will preserve to the town, whether at a loss or profit. For Wilton was the first place in England to embark in the business, and about this elementary venture hangs a tale to the effect that in 1740 a Mr. Moody was granted a patent for the exclusive right of making carpets of a certain kind in Great Britain, and founded his factory at Wilton. But certain

cunningly disposed persons at Kidderminster having acquired an insight into the process, succeeded in imitating it without technically infringing the patent and the letter of the law. Hence the origin of Kidderminster carpets at the expense of Wilton, though the latter had the honour of making the first ever woven in England, and gained a reputation in that particular, which this single factory bravely, and let us hope successfully breasting the modern octopus of industrial centralization, still preserves. I am constrained to admit that Wilton does not look like a manufacturing town. Who, indeed, would wish a place of such Arcadian disposition and such an historic past to do anything of the kind? Under the shadow of one of the greatest of England's historic houses, the abode also of some few persons of taste and means, a Mecca to a moderate degree of strangers and pilgrims from Salisbury, Wilton, let us hope, though the possessor of only a single carpet factory, will find no difficulty in pursuing the quiet life that modern conditions seem to have marked out for places such as this. If the great centres have sucked the rural districts and sapped the industries of the average small town, the wealth they have accumulated will overflow and give back something at least to the most sequestered districts, and quite a little to places that have something to show and are not deplorably remote.

To be thankful for these small mercies, however, it is necessary to have outlived industrial ambition. Happy, perhaps, are such as have yielded to necessity, and achieved this blessed peace. Wilton must have long ago forgiven and forgotten Bishop Bingham, and the cruel blow he dealt it. Even the piratical men of Kidderminster are now but the villains of ancient history. Salisbury itself has increased nothing to speak of within measurable time. Perhaps that is why I found such difficulty in getting an approximate estimate of the inhabitants from any one within it, or even from the handbooks which give the stranger no sort of clue, whether the city he is invited to inspect is the size of Marlborough, or of Bristol. The height of the cathedral spire, the length of its

nave, or the diameter of Stonehenge are matters of common knowledge to the man in the street, and confront one in print at every turn. But I had to resort to an atlas of England and Wales for the number of its inhabitants, and I admit a weakness for what young ladies sometimes refer to, I believe, in their schoolroom days as "pops." Like altitudes they do simplify things so, if you begin young, and get the proportions right in your mind, so that a hill or a town thus tabulated presents some approximate mental picture. This no doubt is a sufficiently common source of comfort, but there are so many intelligent and quite superior folks about to whom such figures mean absolutely nothing, and I cannot think how they get along.

Within a hundred years, and perhaps less, Wilton still held some of the honours of a county town, the county members being chosen there, while the judges sat occasionally in its court. I need hardly say it returned two members to Parliament till the Reform Bill. A progress through Wiltshire unfortified by any general notion of the distribution of seats in the time of the Georges might well leave the stranger, let us say from Porkopolis, in some perplexity concerning the seating accommodation of the ancient House of Commons. Wilton, Salisbury, and Old Sarum, so close to one another that they might conceivably be within the bounds of a single large rural parish, returned between them six representatives to Westminster. Wilton, however, had twenty-four electors, the suppression of whose personal views and predilections must have been a more costly and troublesome business than those of the two dummy voters who were trotted out at election time beneath the elm-tree on the heights of Old Sarum. Wilton made its first reputation in a historical sense by the great battle of Ellandun, when Egbert, King of the West Saxons, in 823, overthrew the Mercians in their long struggle for supremacy in England. Fifty years later Alfred did some heavy but not very successful fighting here against the Danes. Two centuries afterwards, however, the Norsemen under Sweyn treated Wilton grievously, burning it to the ground. In

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early Norman times it was a large and, still more, a most important place, being held as one of the very first of the royal towns. In Stephen's wars the Empress Maud held her court here during the Easter of 1141, and the rhyming chronicler Harding, who, if I remember rightly, was a page to Harry Hotspur two hundred and fifty years later, thus jingles—

“The King Stephen a castle then began  
At Wilton, where Kyng David (of Scotland) with power,  
And Erle Robert of Gloucester that was there,  
Him drove away out of that place full clere,  
And bet it downe to the ground full nere.”

But the beating down to the ground of a town in those days was a comparatively trifling matter. Timber was plentiful, life was spartan, and Wilton continued to flourish till Bishop Bingham built his hapless bridge at Salisbury, which was much worse than fire and sword, for it shut the royal and ancient borough off the western highway as it then ran. Leland asserts that Wilton had twelve churches, a statement which stirred the antiquaries up to strenuous efforts of discovery. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, a hundred years ago, claimed to have succeeded, in which case any further testimony to Wilton's ancient glory would be superfluous. It stands at the confluence of the Nadder and the Wylde. As the latter is never spelt alike by any two writers, or in any two maps or books, I hope the above rendering will be accepted in the spirit in which it is written, namely, that of despair. As it is generally agreed to be a Saxon corruption of the British or Welsh word *Gwili*, and has a delightful twin sister well known to me tumbling through wooded gorges in far away Carmarthen, I do not think it much matters what particular form of rude orthography we adopt. The spelling of place names is always a dreadful worry to me. The fortuitous determining of the latest corruption of a much corrupted name does not inspire me with proper reverence for its accepted form, and I am constantly in trouble. In connection with a former work which treated a good deal of Powysland, a lady dating from Powis

Square, Bayswater, West, brought me to task, and called my attention with all the authority of—the “woman on the spot”—to my persistent lapse in the rendering of this historic name.

Wilton suffered heavily in the Black death, but so did all England. Later on the still unquenched energies of its citizens expended themselves so vigorously in brewing, that the authorities had to limit the output of beer by assigning a particular day in the week on which each brewery was to operate. In 1627, Salisbury was sorely smitten by pestilence, and Wilton had a temporary revenge in taking over its market. A stone halfway between the towns is still shown where the Salisbury people deposited their money in a basin of vinegar. Beyond some remains of the Hospital of St. John at the further end of the town, and those of the old parish church in its centre, there is nothing of special interest to catch the eye of a stranger in this sleepy old-fashioned looking townlet, till he is confronted with the modern church, when he may well rub his eyes.

This is an absolutely exotic building, and has architecturally nothing in common with things Wiltshire or British. It is, in short, a superb specimen of the Lombardic or Byzantine style, and a wholly Italian building, erected sixty years ago by Lord Herbert of Lea. Standing high above the road it displays a practically detached and slender bell-tower, fashioned as an Italian campanile, whose capped summit looks strangely down from the height of over one hundred feet on the old-world Wiltshire gables clustering below. It is considered, I believe, a masterpiece of its kind, and was designed by T. H. Wyatt the younger, who has also left his mark on Wiltshire, but must not for a moment be confused with his destructive relative. Indeed I should gather the impression that the terrible example of the elder braced this one and other younger members of the clan who have achieved distinction to great endeavours at atonement for the sins of their forefather. The interior of this church is truly gorgeous, and unrivalled I believe in rural England. Everybody goes to see it, and be transported for the moment into far away Southern climes. But it



is a little upsetting in such an eminently Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage as this. The hastier sort of tourist will wedge it in between Salisbury cathedral and George Herbert's tiny church at Bemerton, and will have no cause to complain of variety, if perhaps of some mental confusion in the harvesting of his memoirs.

Wilton House stands on the site of an ancient religious foundation, the roots of which go far back into Saxon times. King Alfred, on a yet older stem, founded a nunnery here, which was more amply endowed by Edward the Elder, and among its abbesses was at least one scion of royalty, namely Editha, daughter of King Edgar. The abbey continued to gather wealth throughout the centuries till the Dissolution, when its lands were given by Henry the Eighth to his favourite, Sir William Herbert, the first of that illustrious and wide-branching stock to make a figure in England. Hitherto they had been Welsh gentry of moderate estate in Montgomery and Monmouth.

To-day if one were asked to assign the position of *Primus inter pares* to one or other of the historic family groups of England, that of the Herberts would be more likely perhaps to suggest itself than any other. Three first-rate peerages backed in each case by the large possessions and conspicuous position enjoyed by this single family would hardly perhaps be enough for this if there were not something more. But I think there is; I rather fancy no single English stock has contributed quite so many members who have earned deserved fame in various paths as the Herberts during the last three centuries. *Vide* the "Dictionary of National Biography."

Among other incidents in the long history of the abbey was the abduction of two nuns in the time of Henry the Third. Juliana Gifford was then abbess, and an audacious relative of hers, having no doubt special opportunities, Sir Osborn Gifford, of Fonthill, was the culprit. Archbishop Peckham, renowned for his resolution as well as for his wisdom, fell with extremely heavy hand on this scandalous Wiltshire knight. He was excommunicated, as a matter of course, but



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his expiation, as decreed by the irate bishop, is terrible even to read of. First he was to be publicly whipped in the parish church of Wilton three successive Sundays, and thrice more in the market place and church of Salisbury; secondly, he was to fast for several months; thirdly, not to wear a shirt for three years; and, fourthly, to abjure his knighthood, and wear russet-coloured garments until he had spent three years in the Holy Land; finally, what remained of this criminal after so severe an ordeal was to abjure all truck with nuns and nunneries, a caution one might fairly suppose by that time hardly needed. Goodwin tells the story in his "Lives of the Bishops," and relates that Sir Osborn bound himself to all these horrors. Whether he went through them, and if so came out of them alive, is left to conjecture. When Cicely Bodenham, the last abbess, resigned the old foundation to the king's officers the income was large, and there were thirty-one nuns. One of these has left some record of the rudeness of the officials who came to take the inventory of effects; how they laid irreverent hands upon the relics and uttered "profane and scurvy jests to the contemning of the saints and the scandal of our holy religion."

The old buildings are known to have been extensive, but were mostly pulled down, while the adaptable parts were embodied in the new house which Sir William Herbert at once began to erect. This fortunate person married a sister of Catherine Parr, and was one of the executors of the king's will. He was created Earl of Pembroke by Edward the Sixth, who paid him a visit, accompanied, it is said, by four thousand horsemen. He commanded the king's forces at home, and the English division at the battle of St. Quentin, trophies of armour from which notable fight hang to-day in the great entrance hall. He was also lord president of Wales, and was master of the household to Queen Elizabeth.

His son, the second earl, married for his third wife the daughter of Sir Henry Sidney, whose great and single-minded services are so pathetically hinted at by himself on the stones of Ludlow, and can only be fully appreciated perhaps by

students of the history of the Marches. This lady, who was, of course, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney, was of high distinction among the cultivated Elizabethans, and must have had much of that extraordinary charm which has made her brother's memory a thing almost to itself in English annals, and one of the most fascinating speculations to the cultivated and the curious of later days. Philip Sydney wrote much of his "Arcadia," which one cannot, however, suspect of contributing to the glamour which surrounded his name, at Wilton. The great house grew by degrees. In 1573 Queen Elizabeth was here for three days. The earl met her five miles away on the Plain with a vast retinue in livery and great pomp. As the queen passed through the porch, recently executed by Holbein, and still standing, "the Countess, with diverse ladies and gentlemen, meekly received Her Highnesse; and the outer court was beset on both sides with the earl's men as thick as they could be, through which lane Her Grace passed in her chariot and lighted at the inner gate." Throughout her visit, we are told, the queen was both "Merrie and pleasant."

A few years ago, between the leaves of a copy of the "Arcadia," in the library at Wilton, was found a lock of Elizabeth's hair, together with a memorandum and verses to this effect—

"This locke of Queen Elizabeth's owne Hair was presented to Sir Philip Sidney by her Magesty's own fair hands on which he made these verses and gave them to the Queen on his bended knee.

"ANNO DOMINI 1573

"Her inward worth all outward show transcend  
 Envy her merit with regret commends  
 Like sparkling gems her virtues draw the light  
 And in her conduct she is alwaies bright  
 When she imparts her thoughts her words have force  
 And sense and wisdom flow in sweet discourse."

The son of Sidney's sister succeeded as third earl, and Aubrey tells us he was of a most noble person and the glory of the court in the reigns of the first James and Charles.



The former was a frequent guest, and Shakespeare, of whom the third earl was a staunch patron, is said to have acted in some of his own plays at Wilton before the king, a strong tradition existing that *As you Like It* was first produced there. The fourth earl was a friend and frequent host of Charles the First, and put up a new south front to the house. The king, says Aubrey, was anxious for Inigo Jones to build it, but he was busy on Greenwich, so Webb, his nephew by marriage, took it in hand under his uncle's general supervision. "King Charles did love Wilton above all places, and did come here every summer." One of his inducements appears to have been the excellent trout fetched from a stream at Broad Chalk, which to any one who knows the little brook at that remote place to-day, and the superb trout of the Wilton fishing itself, sounds a quite remarkable instance of the importation of coals to Newcastle. This earl was a great lover and patron of Vandyke, a number of whose masterpieces still adorn the walls; notable among these is an immense portrait of the earl himself and his family celebrated throughout the world. Some owners followed who "espoused not learning, but were addicted to hospitality and field sports." Then in 1683 came Earl Thomas, who revived the reputation of the house for the encouragement of the fine arts, and gathered together that remarkable collection of treasures for which Wilton is to-day celebrated far and wide.

The long quadrangular cloisters are lined with statues and busts, some of the best collections in Europe having been purchased wholesale. Within are masterpieces of Holbein, Rubens, Kneller, Lely, Durer, and other famous painters; while the Vandykes are, I believe, among the best in existence. To enumerate the treasures of all kinds collected in these noble rooms, or even a few of them, would be a futile departure from the purely local spirit which pervades these pages. Nor am I qualified to act as showman to a storehouse of European art, though it does happen to be in Wiltshire, and through the liberality of its owners thrown open under certain conditions and restrictions to all comers.

It is certainly a dazzling progress through the many splendid rooms and corridors.

The first and last objects one's eyes rest upon appealed to me, I think, as much as any, save perhaps the portraits of the Herberts and Charles the First. These are the numerous suits of armour hung round the entrance hall, interesting not only from their richness, but still more as trophies of the Spanish victory over the French at St. Quentin, and the distinction of many of their original wearers. For the first Earl of Pembroke led the English troops despatched by Queen Mary to help her Spanish friends in this famous fight. His armour hangs here together with that of de Montmorency, Constable of France, who was his prisoner on that day, together with many other illustrious Frenchmen. Wilton House is in the form of a quadrangle, and is approached from the road through a triumphal arch carrying an equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. The Nadder flows through the grounds which are famous for their fine cedars to its junction with the Wylye, and loses for a brief space its indigenous characteristics in the presence of Italian gardens. Its wayward fancies have been here trammelled by the art of bygone landscape gardeners, and its fat trout seize the mayfly under the shadow of Palladian bridges. With these brief but sufficiently adequate remarks we will here take leave of this sumptuous domain, and seek such humble joys as are to be found up the valley of the Wylye. Spenser wrote a punning stanza on this river, and a commentator alludes to it as almost too great an honour to be borne by so insignificant a stream. But the Wylye is by no means insignificant. It gave its name to Wilton and to Wiltshire. In the angling world it is almost as well known by name as the Kennet or the Itchen. Its scenery for the whole twenty miles, from above Heytesbury down to its confluence with the Nadder, is singularly engaging, and is possessed of every quality and all the accessories which form the ideal chalk stream landscape. In this particular it is own sister to the Avon, for though the wild downland and lofty camps that touch its eastern bank are, technically speaking,

the western limit of Salisbury Plain, the same downland, equally rich in prehistoric remains, still moves onward regardless of geographical distinctions. In short the Wylve, like the Avon, cuts a deep green furrow through the high wild, sprinkled like the other by thatched villages, and grey church towers screened from the down blasts, and in part hidden from the world by mantling foliage. It opens out to you its long vistas of folding hills and coiling streams with greater frankness than the narrow cleft of the Avon. The waters, both of the latter and of the Kennet are clear; but those of the Wylve are clearer still. You can see the big trout and grayling lying near the bottom of the deeper pools as plainly as if the Usk or Dee were flowing over them, and from the bridge at Wishford you can mark the movements of the smaller fish in the broad gravelly shallows as far away as if you were perched above the Dart at Holne or the Tweed in Peebleshire, which is saying a great deal. Yet a railway, too, runs up the Wylve, which theoretically should interfere with such perfection of rural repose as seems to me to pervade the vale from end to end. But it does not somehow. It clings respectfully and unobtrusively to the further foot of the down, and nowhere mars the graceful curves of the stream nor the abiding peace of the thatched villages.

Wishford, the first of these that one arrives at beyond Wilton, lies picturesquely set above the stream, grouped around its embattled church tower, with the river shimmering in extended shallows under the bridge, and a row of Lombardy poplars swaying their tall tops above it. In the church I found nothing much of particular interest but some ancient worthies, lying there in considerable state. A gentleman and lady on a canopied tomb, regarded by a galaxy of sympathetic angels, were laid out with sufficient pomp for an Earl and Countess of Pembroke. But they proved to be only a Sir Richard Grobham and his lady, steward to the Gorges family who owned Longford, the present seat of Lord Radnor. Seventeenth-century sociology is very puzzling. Democracy or rather plutocracy was, of course, abroad for the greater

glory of the Tudors as we all know. Sir Richard, however, killed the last wild boar in Groveley forest, which helps to justify, perhaps, such mortuary splendour. The Gorges were an illustrious house, and I seem to remember that Sir Fernando Gorges was one of the staunchest patrons of colonial enterprise. But if the steward was knighted, and thus immortalized, what sort of tomb was worthy of the family he served? There was also another recumbent effigy, in this case a much earlier magnate, one Thomas Bonham, who, though attired in the peaceful garb of a pilgrim, must have lived through the Wars of the Roses. He appears to have been lord of the manor of Wishford, and I was told, either by a village matron who was sweeping the church, or by a loquacious gentleman who was watching the trout from the bridge, that on his return from a seven years' pilgrimage in the Holy Land, his wife presented him with seven children at a birth, which in those easy-going and unpopulous times may, for aught I know, have been regarded as a windfall as well as a surprise. They were all brought to the font in a sieve, which was hung up in the church in memory of the event; I gather, however, that the returned wanderer could not have been gratified at such an addition to his family, as the original cause of his flight from England and domestic joys was his terror at the appearance of twins, as the first pledge of his wife's affection. The second instalment corresponding in number to the years he was absent, suggests a judgment.

One would like to know the origin of such a fable, which at any rate says something for the robust imagination of the people of Wishford, or to be just, let us say of their progenitors. Wishford is a corruption of Welsh ford, which sounds interesting, and no doubt relates to some incursion of Welsh troops, as the name is too old to be concerned with drovers. There is also a local tradition that the church was built out of the thank-offerings of people who crossed the then marshy valley in safety.

All along the top of the high down to the west of the Wylye, runs for many miles an ancient forest known as



Groveley Wood. Those who claimed custom in the wood used to repair in a body once a year to Salisbury cathedral, and make claim there in the words, "Groveley, Groveley, and all Groveley." I gather that almost till within living memory something of this sort was done. "Groveley rights" are famous, and papers are read and written upon them by antiquaries. They are now connected with oak-apple day.

A bridge over a prolific trout stream has always a fascination for no inconsiderable portion of mankind. It is instructive to note, however, the difference in degree between the bridge lounge of Wiltshire and his fellow in Wales, in Devonshire, or in the North. The Wiltshire rustic's interest is entirely an abstract one. He is no fisherman, nor has he a chance to be one. The chalk-stream trout is sacred to his betters, nor could he catch it if he were made ever so free of the liberty to do so in orthodox fashion. The other sort, however, have a personal interest in the matter, if not under the particular bridge at least in similar places near by. They know all about it; what fly is coming down or should be, and regard the water and its denizens with the eyes of connoisseurs. There is, in fact, no room on the chalk streams for the humble native or the promiscuous angler. There are no unprotected hill brooks productive of free-rising quarter pounders, where he practised as a boy an almost inherited art. The village cobbler or stonemason, who ties his own flies, and knows everything about fishing there is to be known, does not exist in Wiltshire. The riverside rustics are on the same terms of respectful acquaintance with the trout as they are with the partridges and the pheasants. The men who twice a year get into the water and cut the weeds that, if left to themselves make chalk-stream fishing impossible, and those who attend to the hatches and ditches in the meadows can sometimes gossip with a little inspiration about the *salmo trutta*. They have a quick eye, too, for the first mayflies; but they know no more of fishing than a stray beater knows of killing rocketing pheasants. Nor are they fish poachers, unless the occasional pocketing of a big fish, who has worked himself up a



narrow runlet into difficulties may be dignified with the name. No frayed casts adorn the hats of the station loafers along the Wylde or the Kennet; nor does the cap of the village publican bristle with the barbed and local imitations of the march brown, the alder, or the dun. There is, indeed, nothing democratic whatever about fishing in the chalk-stream countries; there is no expectant populace to hear the first witching call of the still leafless spring, or to watch a summer flood fining down with eager hope. As a matter of fact, though these wild and natural conditions, these early and odorous spring days, those April showers, those floods and droughts that make up the sum total of the western or north-country anglers varied year have little place in the programme of the chalk-stream fisherman, and less than ever since the dry-fly acquired its absolute supremacy. Indeed spring-time has now scarcely any significance, for serious operations do not much begin before the first week in June, when the mayfly appears. Freshets are only a nuisance for just so long as they discolour the river with white sediment from the chalk roads and lanes, while the supply of water is always sufficient in these smooth flowing, bridled rivers, for the dry-fly man, who only prays for a still and sunny summer day, and has no reason whatever for welcoming all those little aids of wind and water, cloud and shower, that are interwoven with the other's creed. Indeed one must confess that a good deal of the poetry of fishing vanishes before the exact science of the floating fly, though not all, of course; nor had the chalk streams, even before its introduction, the full measure of the other's varied scenes, emotions, and delights; so in their case the gain is indisputable. But one must admit that its literature, compared to that of the wet-fly, is undeniably dull.

For many miles above Wishford the Wylde is the sacred preserve of a somewhat noted club, whose members hail from various parts of the kingdom. Indeed, I rather fancy that residents are not acceptable as brethren for obvious reasons, which to the layman may seem deplorably selfish, but as a matter of fact are logical enough. As a corporation, the club

migrated here some years ago from their then famous stretch on the Kennet at Hungerford. There, indeed, as an apt exception to prove the rule I have just been descanting upon, the population have some ancient vested rights in trout fishing, which were doubtless not wholly favourable to contiguous societies. I was made free for a September day of this delightful stretch of the Wylye, and though the trout then had slackened off, I basketed a few brace of the finest grayling I have ever killed. The modern supervision and restocking of chalk streams would be a revelation indeed to the ancients of fifty years ago or less, who haunted their banks; the squire and the parson, the relative from London, or some keen and favoured disciple from the adjoining town. It is wonderful now to see the big stock of trout and grayling, of from one to two pounds, lying cheek by jowl in some of the clear deeps of the Wylye. What their pedigree is, such a science has fish hatching become, it would be ill saying. It is not merely fish, however, that are introduced to streams nowadays, but even flies. For local conditions sometimes contribute to an undue destruction of the caddis or larvæ, and in some streams, where the rise is naturally rather limited, it is hoped, by introducing more surface feed, to stimulate the rising qualities of these well-fed, fastidious, chalk-stream fish. And, indeed, it is more than suspected that the high cultivation of trout, the pampering of the fisherman by too close weed-cutting and tree-thinning, is already injuring the mayfly, by destroying the natural conditions in which it is bred.

What a wide gap yawns between the untravelled rough-water fisherman of remote counties and the men of Wilts and Hants, or more properly speaking, those who repair thither, was somewhat humorously brought home to me in this very valley of the Wylye. It was a bright morning in this same September, and I was seated in a railway carriage, travelling up the vale from Salisbury with thoughts running on trout, and bound for a higher portion of the river where there are no grayling. The only occupant was a stalwart, rosy-faced, commercial gentleman, in black broadcloth and a tall hat, with

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a flamboyant manner and a loquacious disposition. About Wylye station, where the river to be sure narrows a good deal, he cast his eye for the first time upon it with unmistakable contempt, and then almost truculently upon myself, and thus delivered himself, "We shouldn't call that much of a river where I come from."

Where that was, approximately, his melodious accent left small room for doubt; but he put an end to any there might have been by proclaiming himself a Weardale man. "There are some fine fishermen where I come from, I can tell you," he continued; "and the rivers there are something like." It so happened, however, that I had in early life acquired no little intimacy with the three and four ounce trout of the upper Wear, and indeed cherish the memories of that acquaintance and everything connected with it with much affection. Yet this gentleman was so aggressive and contemptuous that I could not help asking him if he would be surprised to hear that an average trout in the little river below would swallow the average fish of his native waters without any sort of after discomfort, which was quite true, and furthermore, that an angler here would return to the water as unsizable a fish that the native of the Tees or Wear would talk about for a month. I also ventured to point out that, if he were to import one of his most doughty performers from the banks of the above-mentioned streams and turn him loose that morning on the Wylye, though it was full of fish, he would almost certainly have as empty a basket at sunset as he started with, which was also the approximate truth. He quieted down a little on this. In fact, he gathered up these crumbs of information in stony silence, which is not surprising. On recovering, he admitted that he was no fisherman himself, but had many friends who were. As, like the rest of the world, he probably rated them all as descendants of Ananias, he doubtless put me down as a south country variety of the stock. But as the train just then drew up at Codford station, I had to leave him to think it out. I was sorry I had not time to tell him the Littlecote trout story already related here.

Exactly at the seventh milestone from Salisbury, which stands high and looks up the Wylve, there is, I think, the most charming and comprehensive view of a river valley in all Wiltshire, and withal so admirably characteristic of Wiltshire scenery. You can look hence for miles up the level floor of the vale a half mile, perhaps, in width, and all aglow at this season with varied colouring. In fine contrast, too, are the bare slopes of Salisbury Plain sweeping down on either side from their tufted summits, in great breadths of stubble and turnip-field. Clusters of sheep can be seen here and there, packed together and feeding their slow way along the grassy heights which are traced at intervals with the white line of some steep farm track. A broader ribbon of gleaming chalk leaps forward along the vale, clear of the meadows and skirting the fenceless tillage fields, showing here and there by little puffs of white dust the track of a farmer's gig, a baker's cart, or a parson's pony-trap heading for a garden-party. And, below, in the meadows, the Wylve shines in sinuous loops, half screened at times by whitening willows, but open for the most part; a fine coil of light as it twists away towards the distant woods of Steeple Langford and Fisherton Delamere. Beyond, again, among winding woody levels, the Codfords and Upton Lovell point the way to the distant hills over Heytesbury and Warminster, while close at hand, the Winterbourne brook comes rippling down from the heart of Salisbury Plain to the Wylve and joins it amid the orchards and foliage of the hamlet of Stapleford, with its ancient cruciform church almost at our feet.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CODFORD TO WESTBURY AND EDINGTON

**I** CLOSED the last chapter in some admiration of the prospect up the Wylve valley, disclosed at the seventh milestone, where the road is lifted to quite an imposing height above the confluence of the Winterbourne with the larger stream. The whole ten-mile course of the vale to Heytesbury, seems here spread before and beneath one presenting at a single glance, and in harmonious grouping, every essential of typical Wiltshire scenery. Wider than that of the upper Avon, there is here space for a double row of villages and churches, each hugging the foot of their respective downs, with the river coiling brightly through the intersecting meadows, while along the top of the breezy hills on either side, sometimes visible, and sometimes thrust back, is a continuous chain of significant and grass-grown earthworks. Of these the most notable is Yarnbury, lying back upon the right above Steeple Langford; an immense circular camp overlooking one of the loneliest parts of Salisbury Plain, and surrounded by a ditch and rampart, fifty feet in depth. It is still the scene of an October sheep fair, and all about it are ancient trackways, and the remains of prehistoric dwellings. Oldbury camp, on the same ridge above Codford, is thought to be a religious circle, while across the valley, Bilbury Ring, Hanging Langford, and Dinton Beeches, all ancient fortifications, follow each other in quick succession.

Down in the valley, and all the way up it, there is a delightful air of homeliness. The frequent villages, half-muffled in foliage, look across the wide water-meadows at one



another in neighbourly fashion, and convey a sense of snugness by their very contrast to the great solitudes that stretch away on either hand behind them. One feels that a native of the Wylve valley should have the *amor patriæ* in its local sense strong upon him ; a consciousness that he is a denizen of no ordinary, vaguely defined region. One might fancy the exile seeing it more often than common in his dreams, and being more liable to nostalgia than the average South Saxon of the average countryside. An open pleasant valley, indeed, is this, where wood and water, village and meadow, group themselves in singularly captivating fashion amid the quite imposing sweep of bordering solitudes, so full of mystery and significance, so full of charm to those whose eyes and minds are but reasonably open to such impressions. There is a fine abundance, too, of natural life by the Wylve. It is not only that noble trout and grayling swim in its waters, but a great store of wild fowl flock here in winter, above all of course in hard winters. I think that even those who do not care for the chalk countries would make some reservation in favour of the Wylve valley, and fall captive in some measure to the seductive fashion in which it winds its way between the long shoulders of the Plain from Wishford to Heytesbury. For myself, as I have said, I forswear any natural and venial predilections for the Kennet and the Avon, and hold the Wylve, as a whole, to be the cream of Wiltshire valleys.

Cobbett, in his youth, spent a summer on a farm at Steeple Langford. All his life, he writes, and throughout his wanderings on both sides of the Atlantic, he remembered the beautiful villages, meadows, and farms up and down this valley, and talked of them to his children a thousand times. Indeed, it was the recollection of them that prompted him to include so much of Wiltshire in his "Rural Rides." In those days of his youth, too, the women of Steeple Langford and Wylve parishes used to card and spin dyed wool ; but in 1825, he found all that changed, and parties of clothworkers from Bradford out of employment, gathering nuts among the roadside coppices to eke out their declining stores. He makes up his mind, not

that the industry is at an end, but that it will never be again what it has been, in which he was quite right. He went on this last occasion without his supper and his breakfast, which he calculated at three shillings, and adding five more, bestowed them in the shape of viands on the hungry weavers. The landlord was so affected by his self-denial, though he was himself an involuntary partner in the loss, that he was anxious to throw the price of his lodging into the purse as well, but Cobbett would not hear of this.

Steeple Langford church has been lately much restored. There is an altar tomb, however, to the Mompesson family, and a harrowing fragment of local history relates how the Puritan party flung the vicar, one Collier, whose image is in the church and his eleven children, during the Civil War upheavals, out into the snow, and how two of the sons joined the Penruddock rising, were captured and sold for slaves in Jamaica! Wylve church was rebuilt in the last century, but Stockton close by contains a fine old manor-house, half-hidden among woods and a good church, mostly transition Norman and Early English. The manor-house dates from the time of Elizabeth, and is still a country house, with an interior, I am told, full of fine old work. It is interesting, too, as marking the rise even thus early of the wealthy clothiers of Wiltshire as the founders of landed families. A Mr. John Topp was in this case the new man upon the old acres, and he lies in the adjacent church in effigy beside his wife on a fine canopied tomb. That John Topp thought of his poorer neighbours as well as the advancement of his family is amply proved by an old almshouse still standing to his credit in the village. Nor was he the only person in the parish who had weaved his way to such distinction; for while he and his lie in the north aisle of Stockton church, there is in the opposite one, another tomb and monuments to a second clothier family, the Poticarys, who at the same date oddly enough achieved as great prosperity, and also acquired lands and built a manor-house, which still does duty close at hand as a homestead.

The two Codfords, St. Mary and St. Peter, follow each

other not a mile apart on the east side of the vale. In the church of the former are more effigies of Mompessons, and a communion-table contrived out of the old pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford, when that church was restored. It is a curious thought that the platform from which so many illustrious Englishmen have addressed so many distinguished congregations, should lie tucked away here among the Wiltshire downs. The church of the further Codford is Norman, containing among other features a finely moulded chancel arch, and stands perched above the road looking up and down the vale. Codford is a complete and satisfying type of a Wiltshire village, and is, perhaps, the most pleasantly situated of the many that lie so snugly set in this pleasant vale. The Codfordians hold that it is the scene of the "Vicar of Bullhampton," Trollope knew it well, and it very likely was, so far as a novelist might feel called upon to use such quite superfluous precision. His mile-stones, of which he was fond, and used with some literary effect, certainly favour Codford, though he always makes them overlap a bit, and no doubt with design. If Harry Gilmore, the fifteen hundred a year squire of those times, were here now in the flesh, he would have let his manor-house long ago, and possibly be living in a cottage in the village on a third of that comfortable income, and if Mary Lowther had not jilted him they would have found themselves in sorely straitened circumstances in these degenerate days, blessed no doubt as they would have been with the ample olive branches, common to the Trollopien period.

The potent and stiffnecked Marquis of Trowbridge, who owned the rest of Bullhampton, and who always alluded to the squire as "a person owning some land in the parish," would even amid his own declining rent-roll have chuckled wickedly at the overthrow of such small fry so pestilently wedged in among the great domains of the House of Trowbridge. The great Bullhampton murder will be remembered as a leading note throughout the book, when old farmer Trumball, a tenant of the marquis, is killed and robbed in his own house by hands unknown, and Sam Brattle, a ne'er-do-well son of a decent

miller on the river, a tenant of Harry Gilmore's, though innocent is arrested on suspicion. The horror and rage of the old marquis at the sanguinary deed is very fine, not a bit because of its brutality, but because a villain should have had the audacity to select a tenant of his as a victim. That the suspected murderer, moreover, should be a tenant of the irreproachable Gilmore, was enough to make all further evidence superfluous, and the marquis raged on till the actual criminal, an alien ruffian, was discovered. Thus confounded, and his pride cut to the quick, the obstinate old peer sought a mean revenge, and gave a bit of waste land at the very vicarage gate to the dissenters for their new chapel; for the young vicar and the squire were old college friends, and daily intimates. How the hideous Bethesda arose above the vicarage shrubberies, under the superintendence of the unctuous and spiteful minister, full of pious gratitude to the noble marquis is very excellent. But the climax of this is when the parson's relative, a clever chancery barrister, spending a week at the humiliated vicarage, conceives doubts about the ownership of the waste corner, hunts up old records in London, proves beyond question that the chapel has actually been built on glebe land, and how finally the poor old marquis has to take down the offensive building, and remove it at his own expense.

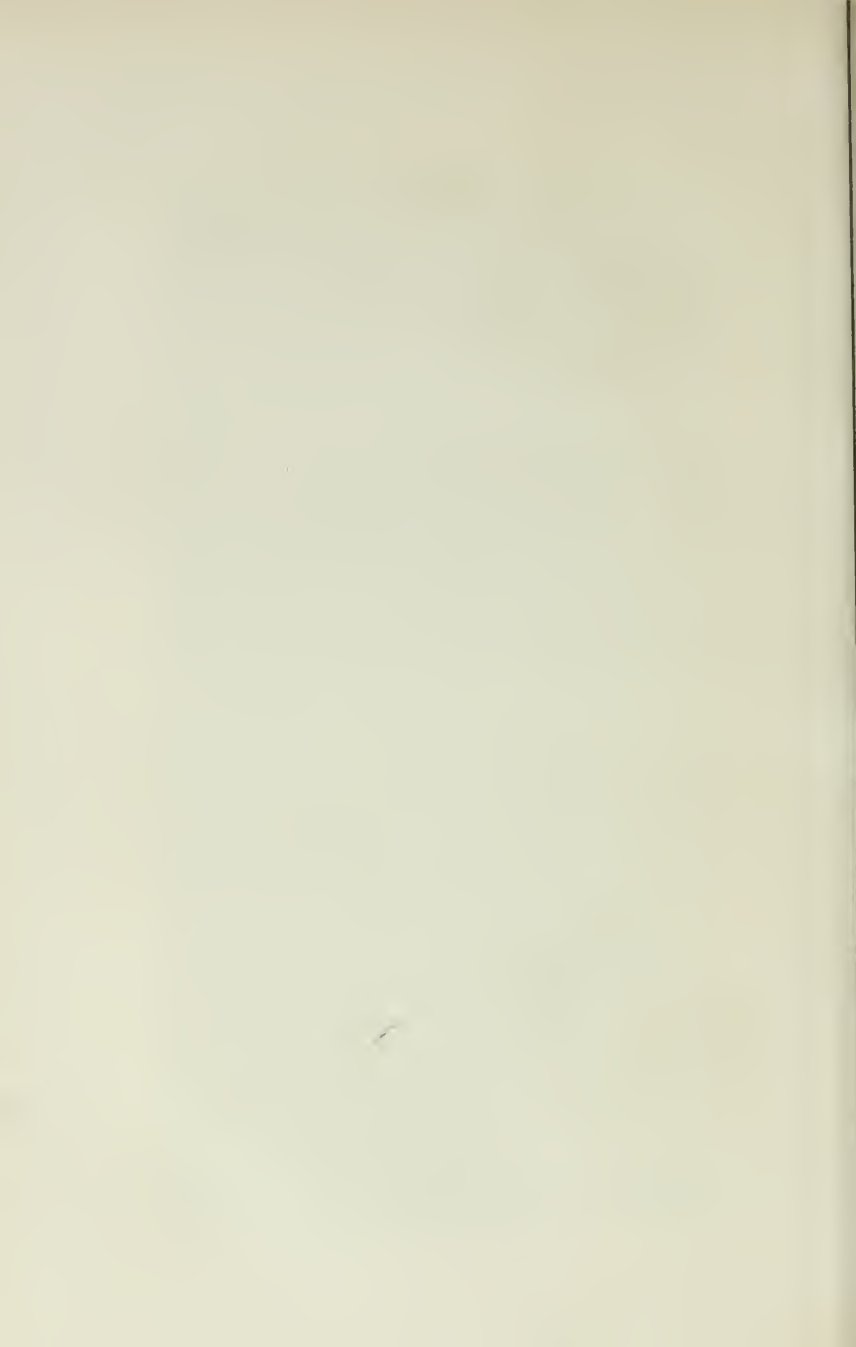
The Wylde, where it flows from Upton Lovell through the Codfords, has become little more than a cheerful prattling brook, amply large enough, however, for the turning of mills and the harbouring of many trout. Here the exactions of the dry-fly associate are no longer regarded. No trace of axe and pruning-knife is on the banks of the stream, over which alder, ash, and hawthorne fling their boughs at will when they are so minded, and here and there almost hide the little river in a double screen of foliage. A pleasant September day on its grassy banks in the Codford meadows comes back to me. A season of small things to the fisherman and small expectations, and when a very few brace make glad his foolish heart. We eat our lunch with much leisure out on the grass in the tempered sunshine of mid September, and my companion, the





A SHEEP FOLD





present vicar of Bullhampton, gossiped much more informally on Wylde antiquities than his predecessor, poor Frank Fenwick could have done. And all day long, away up behind the green and brown ridges to the eastward, amid the fenceless spaces of the Plain I could catch, at intervals, the faint thud of guns where my host was pursuing the elusive partridge. No partridges anywhere, its friends are very positive, get more quickly wild, above all in a forward season than those of the Wiltshire downs. None take more outrageous flights or so often defy the most lynx-eyed marker, while the hazards of the hatching period are more than common in a country so exposed to storms, so sticky in a wet season, and so thirsty in an over-dry one. In short I should imagine that the owner of down country shooting faces September with less idea of what it may have in store for him than any of his contemporaries.

Across the valley, under the further down is Sherrington, and hard by its church, a large moated mound of disputed origin, though no doubt exists that the powerful Norman family of Gifford had a castle on its summit. Boyton Manor close by belonged to the same family, and for several years it was the home of the late Duke of Albany. I have never been in Boyton church, but it has a good interior, I am told, and contains, among other monuments, the cross-legged effigy of Sir Alexander Gifford, a crusader who was fighting by the side of William, that second Earl of Salisbury, Longespee's son, when he fell, and recovering his body from the Turks, secured for it Christian burial. There is also a pit here with a small spring in it, which local legend holds to be the place where a church was once engulfed.

Upton Lovell has at least a fine name, and the Lovells who were its lords, had once a fine house here. The family seemed to have run out in Henry the Seventh's time, but not without leaving something for the people in the neighbourhood to think about. For Francis Lord Lovell having escaped from Bosworth Field joined later in the insurrection of Lambert Simnel. At its failure he escaped to his house on

the Wylye, and was starved to death in a vault beneath it, where he had taken refuge. At any rate some two hundred years afterwards a skeleton was found there, seated at a table with the remains of a book, pen, and paper, which was judged to be that of the ill-fated Lovell. Further on the ruins of a great cloth factory strike a strange and inharmonious note in the valley, and in two or three miles the long straggling picturesque village of Heytesbury, once a Parliamentary borough, marks a widening of the vale. The seat of the A'Courts, with prettily wooded park lands rolling up the face of the downs, heralds the approach to the little town, which, like so many similar places, has cheerfully adapted itself to the status of a considerable village harbouring some thousand souls. The A'Courts got footing here through an Ashe heiress in 1750, and have been peers of the realm for some four generations; the first Lord Heytesbury somewhat distinguishing himself as a diplomatist. But here again we are confronted with the Hungerfords, for this was the cradle of their race, being their seat as early as the time of Richard the Second. Some remains of their ancient house are embodied in the present mansion. It is in the extremely fine church, however, that the Hungerfords chiefly hold their own. They are thought to have themselves built the nave in the reign of Henry the Fourth, and their arms are still engraved on the arch of the north transept, which was once indeed their family vault. For the church is cruciform, and, with the exception of the nave, which is in the main, Early English. It was made collegiate in the twelfth century by the bishop of Salisbury, with a dean and prebendaries, and in the chancel are still fourteen stalls of old oak. Mr. Cunnington, a famous Wiltshire antiquary, whose descendants still maintain the traditions connected with his name, is buried and commemorated in a tablet here. He gave invaluable assistance to Sir Richard Colt Hoare in his classic work on Wiltshire, and died a century ago. Elsewhere in the village, too, the Hungerfords have worthily marked their long dominion, and most conspicuously, in a picturesque old hospital of red brick,

forming three sides of a square, devoted to the maintenance of twelve old men, and still so prosperous that I am told it is to be soon enlarged for the admission of women. The founder was that Lord Hungerford, who was high treasurer of England, and died in 1449. The familiar sickles, interlocked, of this potent race are engraved over the portals. I have seen somewhere, too, a print of Sir Walter Hungerford, of date 1574, on horseback, with a black greyhound, a leveret, a falcon, and some ducks. He offered to match this particular horse and hound for a hundred pounds against any in England, but no one would apparently take up his sporting offer.

Either this Hungerford or his father was something of a Bluebeard, for he imprisoned the last of his three wives for some years in his castle at Farleigh. An existing letter from this unfortunate woman complains that she has been shut up there for three to four years under charge of the chaplain, who had once or twice poisoned her. He alone with the lord's "fool," was allowed to give her nourishment, and she declares in plaintive language that she would have died of starvation but for food conveyed by poor women of the neighbourhood to her window at night. Such, indeed, appears to have been this genial soul's normal conduct to all his wives. To the vast relief of this one, no doubt, he met his death on the scaffold before he had finished her. Like her contemporary, Katherine Parr, she had a narrow escape, and like her, too, she lived to forget her much greater troubles in a second and happier marriage.

Three miles along a road which turns westward here to Maiden Bradley and the extreme bounds of Wiltshire, is Hill Deverill, only known to me as the home of that Edmund Ludlow, who was so prominent a leader on the Parliamentary side in the Civil War, and whose memoirs of the struggle are so familiar to students of it. He was the squire there, and married a Welsh heiress, a Thomas of Wernvoe. When the lady was a widow of seventy-three, the Thomas of that later day, still in his thirties, married her for the purpose of recovering the Welsh estates for the family.

This north-western corner of the Plain, which here hangs above one's right shoulder and runs to the highway that we followed in a former chapter from Lavington to Shrewton, covers about sixty square miles. It is a complete and perfect solitude, save for the two hamlets of Chitterne and Imber, with their respective churches, the most interesting, perhaps, from the point of view of pure aloofness from the world, of any in Wiltshire, and I should imagine, more often snowed up in winter than almost any other villages in the south of England. Nor anywhere does Salisbury Plain terminate with more continuous boldness or more frequent evidence of ancient occupation and strife than in the lofty chain of grass-grown fortifications that overlook the white chalk road, which, rising and falling along their feet from Heytesbury to Warminster, shoots onwards thence to Westbury.

Cotley hill, though a small camp, has a tumulus on its very crown. Knock, which was a British village, and afterwards a Roman camp, lies back out of sight. But the great earth-work of Scratchbury looms right above one, with its encircling ditch and rampart nearly seventy feet in height, and an area of forty acres. Midhill follows, and then Battlesbury, with equal distinction of site, while the intervening valley is ribbed with a succession of those curious terraces or lynchetts that still bewilder and make cause of strife for antiquaries. The area of Battlesbury is about half that of its neighbour; but its ramparts are nearly as formidable, and the frontal approach to them almost secured by the abruptness of the slope.

Not far from the road is the largest long barrow in Wiltshire, in length two hundred feet and fifteen feet in height. It was opened at one end a century ago, but only produced two skeletons, with the bones of a horse, the tusks of a boar, the horns of a deer, and some pottery. As one traverses this three-mile stage, so crowded overhead with the silent monuments of mysterious times, the valley to the left and ahead opens widely out towards the wooded ridges of Longleat, with the curious isolated height of Cley hill, a straggler from



the chalk upland and nearly a thousand feet in height. The qualities which distinguish the Wylve valley practically cease with Heytesbury, and we have before us now a rich, diversified, and luxuriant country, but of quite another character, and with no particular limitations, as it rolls vaguely away towards Somerset. Longleat, the Marquis of Bath's seat, the ancient abiding place of the Thynne family, whose fortunes have been so much interwoven with Wiltshire history for so many generations, is of course one of the show places of England.

“O'er Longleats towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks the fiery herald flew,  
And roused the shepherds of Stonehenge, the rangers of Beaulieu.”

Macaulay was quite accurate in this, for there was a beacon on the summit of Cley hill, which was lighted on the sighting of the Spanish Armada, though he fell into the common error of assuming that these alarm beacons were also lighted on the high mountains of the island.

Longleat has the distinction of possessing a massive rectangular house of grey stone, which is to-day but little altered from the sixteenth century, when it must have represented one of the most splendid efforts of an Elizabethan subject. The Thynnes owe their rise to that other Wiltshireman, the Protector Somerset, and have never, so far as I know, suffered any relapse from the position then acquired. Their beautiful grounds, comprising large sheets of water fringed with forest trees and flowering shrubs, and many miles of avenue bordered with rhododendrons and azaleas, were in full bloom when I saw them, and they are practically open to the public. But I had no intention of describing Longleat, or telling its long story, nor yet saying much of Warminster, a clean-looking town of some five thousand and odd souls. Of the latter, its situation is the most striking feature, for that is beautiful, though there is nothing in the aspect of the town unworthy of such a sight. It manufactured cloth in former days, of course, and now, I believe, does a considerable malting business, in addition to possessing a notable corn market. This does not seem quite to account for five thousand people, but here they

are beyond a doubt, if the census-takers are correct, and not apparently overcrowded nor lacking employment. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, was educated at the Grammar School, before proceeding to Winchester, an elementary period not generally worth noting in a man's life; but, in this case, his biographer, Dean Stanley, credits the place with exercising a good deal of influence on the youthful mind of the great headmaster. The church stands below the town and just outside it. I never paid it a visit, chiefly from the fact that it is an early Georgian restoration, carried out, I believe, with the practical thoroughness that distinguished the æsthetic Briton who waxed fat in Walpole's long peace, and provided models for Hogarth. One legacy from that same restoration caused, some twenty years ago, no little stir in Warminster, and much prolonged entertainment throughout the neighbourhood. During the reign of an influential and popular rector, it was decided to sweep away the Georgian pews and reseat the church. The owner of the most imposing one of these, however, positively refused to sanction the abolition of his individual fortress; so there was nothing for it but to sue so reactionary a person at law, and the case was quite a notable one, involving the expenditure of a large amount of money. The verdict, however, went in favour of the family pew, the judge, I am told, being under the impression that its owner was a squire or lord of the manor, with an ancient prescriptive right. Such was not the case, but judgment was given on those lines at any rate, and the formidable erection continued to tower above the modest sittings that elsewhere were substituted for the ancient horse-boxes. Feeling, however, ran high, and one night some heady blades of Warminster secreted themselves in the church, and in the dark hours tore the Georgian structure from its foundations, carried it out into the churchyard, and proceeded to make a bonfire of it. This nefarious project, however, was not fully carried out, for a part, at any rate, of the cause of strife was rescued, carried back into the church, and set up again in the south chancel, where it may be seen to-day. I confess myself to some sneaking fondness for that old church furniture,

and no great predilection for church pews fashioned like the outside seats of an omnibus. I can even cherish the memory of the hearty and original church music when a hand-organ of many horse-power ground in the gallery, and a dozen rustics of both sexes, in mufti, stood before it, and strove with pathetic desperation to make their lusty voices heard above the storm behind. Another memory much more precious is that of an old clerk, of prodigious individuality, who with a trio of sons, formed not merely the whole choir, but the only singers in a quite reasonably numerous but extremely rustic congregation. Indeed, I think the old man would have frowned disapproval at any unprivileged person who ventured to lift up his voice in too hearty praise. When a musical stranger at long intervals appeared in the rectory pew, which confronted his little company at very close quarters across the aisle, he used to rise to the occasion, like a war-horse, fix his eye on the intruding warbler, and fairly sing him down, swinging his head from side to side, and beating time with his nailed shoe on the stone floor as a caution to the other that he was setting it. The stranger, unless he or she were an old hand, always gave in, thankful, indeed if they could retain an even countenance and avoid disgracing themselves. One son puffed upon the flute, while the rest of the family sang in glorious vernacular all through the canticles, and the Tate and Brady psalms, no one else joining but the rector, either because they could not or they dared not. For many consecutive weeks of Sundays, at various times, it was given to me as a boy to confront that great little bald-headed man—clerk, musician, schoolmaster, shoemaker, autocrat, and village Solon—across the narrow aisle. One occasional visitor in the rectory pew, with a powerful tenor voice and much self-control, entered so painfully into the humour of the situation that these vocal duels became a thing of dread to us non-combatants, who had to suffer in silence and with all decency of demeanour, exposed as we were to the full and stolid gaze of the congregation. The autocrat, who selected

his own programme, never failed to render the spirit of the words, and I can see him now letting himself go in his favourite metrical psalm at the verse which began—

“O let them shout and sing,  
With joy and pious mirth.”

There are some still living who had the closest intimacy with that unforgettable and, I believe, unparalleled orchestra and its leader, and who will also remember the pathos of its inevitable disruption and the unexpected nobility with which the veteran eventually accepted comparative effacement in the shape of a harmonium and a mixed choir and an “Ancient and Modern” hymn-book. Every one thus privileged holds the memory of these things as a truly precious one. The offending young tenor is now the elderly rector of a parish just over the borders of Wiltshire, with the humours of youth unscotched by time still upon him, and when at distant intervals I have run against him, no other topic is of moment till that matchless clerk and musician has been fetched out of the remote past with a realism and fervour, that on the last occasion—the scene being the school court at Marlborough—attracted quite a crowd of small boys.

The road from Warminster to Westbury continues of the same character as that already traversed, hugging the foot of the north-western ramparts of the Plain, which is still crowned betimes by camps, and occasionally parts for a moment to give a peep into the solitudes behind. Cobbett had wholly approved of Warminster. He knew of it as noted for fine meat, and so went out and inspected the market, and found by far the finest veal and lamb he had ever seen in his life. Westbury, however, was “a nasty, odious, rotten borough; a really rotten place.” In meat Cobbett was a trained expert, and of rural economy well qualified at least to form an opinion, and a little bit of a poet. In historical or antiquarian matters he was an infant, but quite as confident in his conclusions. It was easy to see, he says, that Westbury was once “ten or twenty

times its present size," a population, that is to say, of thirty to sixty thousand, and in this fashion he settled the past of all these small towns. The rustic of ancient times, in Cobbett's opinion, had been, by comparison with those of his own day, a well-fed and happy individual—a quite reasonable conclusion. But how twenty millions of them (his figures) could have been rendered thus in an ill-cultivated, half-opened country like mediæval or even Tudor England yielding five or six bushels of grain to an acre, he makes no attempt to explain. The size of the churches was sufficient proof for Cobbett, and he does not seem to have been in the least aware of his simplicity.

Westbury, which is about half the size of Warminster, would, as a matter of fact, be more likely to find favour in the eyes of a modern wayfarer than the other, for he would feel no sense of depression, I take it, because its cloth trade is reduced to two small factories, nor yet any exaltation at the spectacle of some modern ironworks near the station. It is an old-fashioned looking town, with a wide market-place, and elsewhere built round a green which gives it some attraction in the eye of an uncommercial traveller. The principal inn proclaims with sufficient accuracy that the Lopes family are a leading influence, and I learn that in 1810 they gave six thousand five hundred pounds for the political reversion of this "rottenest of rotten boroughs." The church is a fine cruciform building, with a central tower, of Norman origin, and prettily situated within a chestnut grove. It has a groined west porch, a fine nave with narrow side-aisles, and a chapel with vaulted roof adjoining the north transept. South of the chancel is a Tudor chapel of the Willoughby de Brookes, the origin of their name being a small stream flowing within half a mile of Westbury, which gave its own to an ancient seat of the Pavelys. The Willoughby who was made a baron by Henry the Seventh took his title from it as a descendant of the Pavelys. North of the chancel is a chapel of the Mauduits, an ancient Norman family, who were Lords of



Warminster and great hereabouts in their day. In the south transept is a large monument, with the effigies of Sir James Ley, of Ley, Earl of Marlborough, and his first wife. The former, created Baron Ley of Ley, in Devon, by James the First, was promoted to the Earldom of Marlborough by Charles, serving as chief justice, lord treasurer, and president of the council in turn. The title ran out in 1679. The earl lived at Haywood, close to Westbury. Aubrey says that he began life as vicar of Teffont, near Wilton; that the stipend of sixty pounds enabled him to pursue his studies at Lincoln's Inn, and that his butler, or some other equally qualified person, officiated in the mean time at Teffont.

Now the Wiltshire wanderer who found himself at Westbury would be almost sure to go on through Trowbridge to Bradford-on-Avon, if only for the fact that the latter place contains the most perfect Saxon church in England, and the most beautiful Jacobean house in the county. The former is very small and of eighth-century date, and little altered; the latter, the *King's House*, and a private residence, was selected for the last Paris exhibition as a model of the English country house of the seventeenth century. But Bradford with its streets terraced into the steep hillsides or winding up them; its store of ancient houses, of stone and timber with the Avon flowing in the valley between under old and handsome bridges, bears no resemblance whatever to the ordinary Wiltshire town. It belongs physically to the Bath district, and is in itself of the nature of its greater, less industrious, but more celebrated neighbour; a stone town throughout, with its older houses mainly roofed with stone flags. Bradford, however, is a big subject, with its ancient weaving history dating from the Middle Ages, its wealthy clothiers who founded landed families generations ago, and have remained in Wiltshire ever since. The best known, perhaps, of these are the Methuens (now Lord Methuen of Corsham) whose monuments are thick in the chancel of the fine parish church, that for some inscrutable reason—the chancel, I mean—is kept bolted and barred. Bradford is eminently picturesque, apart from its

many antiquities; but its picturesqueness, as I have hinted, does not seem to belong in the least to Wiltshire, being altogether of an East Somerset type.

Now, in travelling to Bradford from Westbury by road you will pass through Trowbridge. It is not a road that leaves lasting memories behind it, but is well adapted, I should say, to the motor. A great deal of course might be said about Trowbridge, too. It has been to me, however, throughout life a railway junction and nothing more; and a place that rises always to the mind as seen from its station platform, creates ineradicable prejudices. A visit to Trowbridge, with a view of seeing Crabbe's church, and, if possible, his rectory, has not banished this distorted image. The church and rectory abide with me a thing apart. Otherwise, though I wound about it for some time, Trowbridge still remains, I regret to say to my shame, a railway platform. I was fortunate, however, in finding the poet's rectory in the hands of the cleaners during an interregnum, and pleasantly surprised, moreover, at being able to go into every corner of a genuine fifteenth-century house; the original rafter timbers in the attics being extremely curious. What was more interesting still, however, was the poet's study on the ground floor, which has been kept exactly as it was during his occupation of it. This old part of the house has portentously thick stone walls, fifteenth-century mullioned windows, and a stone-flagged roof, and is densely muffled in creepers. The church which Crabbe served from 1814 till his death in 1832, is a fine specimen of the Perpendicular erected in 1475, mainly through the liberality of one or two rich clothiers of the town. It has been completely restored, though on the old lines since Crabbe's death, and is conspicuous for its lofty stone spire and the handsome roof of the nave. The poet lies in the chancel under a tablet, and a recumbent effigy, "Though nature's sternest painter, yet his best"—Crabbe's work is for the most part connected with East Anglia. He wrote comparatively little, I think, during this last period of his life, but seems to have enjoyed excellent health, and rambled about the country geologizing,

hammer in hand, and appears to have been much respected, both as man and parson. Some notes concerning him, printed many years ago in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, relate how, when Murray paid him up in bills for all his copyrights, and, suspecting him of unbusiness-like habits, besought him to deposit the notes in a London bank, he rejected this sound advice, stuffed them into his various pockets, and started for Trowbridge that he might exhibit them to his son John! But there is another much stranger story concerning the adventures of his skull. For when the church was being repaired in 1847, the floor of the chancel was taken up, and Crabbe's body, buried only fifteen years previously in a plain coffin, was found to be entirely decayed. One of the workmen tossed the skull, prior to replacing it, on to the surface of the ground, and a person, whose name is not given, standing by remarked half jocularly that he would like to have it for phrenological purposes. That evening a workman knocked at the said person's door, and being told to enter remarked in a sepulchral voice, "I have it." "Have what?" said the other. "Old Parson Crabbe's skull," was the answer. The young man refused to accept it; but the workman declared that the chancel floor had been put back, and it was quite impossible now to replace the skull, and that he must therefore destroy it. Rather than this should happen the other took it; but his father, on hearing the facts, absolutely refused to have the gruesome relic in the house. So the young man put it in a dry place outside, and reported the matter to the rector. But the latter refused to take up the chancel floor as by that time it had been tiled. The unwilling proprietor, on leaving England some years later, was at his wits' end to know what to do with his uncanny possession. Before sailing he had it photographed, and also acquainted the poet's son with the homeless condition, of his father's skull. The end of it all was, that in 1875 the churchwardens caused a handsome oak box to be made and lined with sarsenet, and having enclosed the skull therein, deposited it as near the poet's body as was practicable.

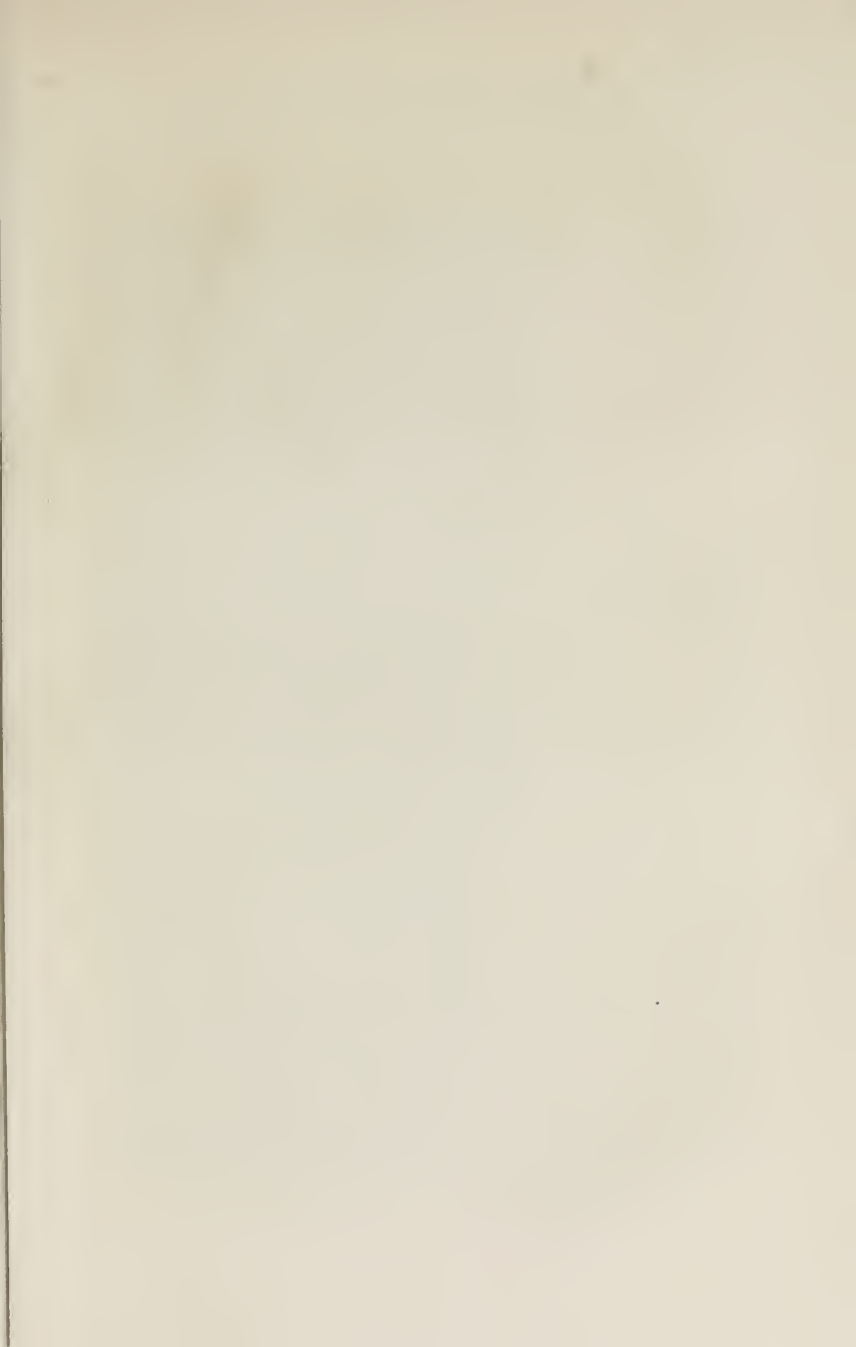
Trowbridge, too, is nowadays the headquarters of Wilts county cricket; at any rate the county ground is here, even though Swindon, which is well-equipped in this way, would seem to be the most prolific nursery of that local talent which is required to subsidize such amateurs of distinction from the university, who are the backbone of minor counties. Wiltshire began some twenty-five years ago as a very minor county indeed, and remained so for a long time. The rivalries and the exceptional distances that had separated clubs made cohesion no doubt difficult, and in the heartier days of old, a victory over the "stokers," as they were called, of Swindon was not unaccompanied with peril. The visiting umpire at least regarded an impending victory of his side with mixed feelings. Nor did North and South Wilts know very much about one another, when it took nearly all day to circumvent Salisbury Plain by railroad. But these conditions have passed away. Wiltshire for her opportunities acquits itself quite nobly in the fine old game.

But the road of most interest to the north of Westbury is the one that, turning westward, continues to hug the still steep and lofty ramparts of the Plain, and heads towards Devizes, though so far as we are here concerned ends at Edington, and the finest country church in Wiltshire. Delivered from the steep and tortuous ways of Westbury, thoroughly Wiltshire as they are in complexion and atmosphere, and not a bit like Bradford, the road recovers the character and more than the character of the one we travelled from Heytesbury. Rising and falling over the toes of the overhanging down, it parts like a white streak the great half cleared harvest fields and breadths of flickering swedes, and opens out the woody lowlands beneath into the vague distances, where Melksham and Chippenham, Lacock and Bowood, and other distinguished places lie in a landscape for the most part physically undistinguished, and that in an earlier chapter we saw something of. But right above us here on the steep face of Bratton down is the best, indeed the only white horse in Wiltshire of really ancient origin. The present animal was unfortunately



remodelled one hundred and thirty years ago, and, like the others, is of conventional shape, being some sixty yards long and thirty high at its withers. It is a vast pity the original was not left, if only for its humorous and most uncanny design. I have seen illustrations of it, showing a long narrow body resting upon short legs, much after the fashion and proportions of a dachshund; a long up-curved tail forked at the end, an upstanding, arched, and thick neck, a small head with a sharp-pointed snout, and enormous eye, altogether a grotesque quadruped that, as a Saxon relic, might have made the fortune of the Westbury hotels but for the foolish renovations of 1778. This nightmare-looking animal was thought to be of the Saxon period, and very probably to have been carved in celebration of the great victory achieved here over the Danes by Alfred the Great and his brother Æthelred. Most authorities agree that this foothill slope below the fortified summit of Bratton hill was the site of the battle of Ethandun or Edington in 878, which gave England peace for many years from Danish ravages, and the young Alfred much renown. Some authorities, though perhaps not the best, hold other views, for one local at any rate informed a stranger that the battle of Waterloo was fought here, and that the cart tracks leading up the down had, on that occasion, run red with blood. It was through the winter and spring of 877 that the Danes, then practically in possession of Wessex, were harrying the country with Chippenham and Westbury as headquarters and depositories of their vast spoils. Wessex, by this time it must be remembered, had risen to be undisputedly the premier kingdom of the English. The Danes were holding down East Anglia and a good deal more, and the reduction of Wessex and Mercia seemed almost accomplished. Alfred apparently had given up the struggle, and was lost to the eyes of most of his people. But he was, in fact, wintering among the marshes of Athelney in Somersetshire, gradually gathering together again the broken remnants of the men of Wessex. Feeling himself strong enough for aggressive action by May, he broke up his quarters, marched







THE WESTBURY HORSE

towards Wiltshire, and camping for the night on the lofty crown of Cley hill above Longleat, fell the next day upon Guthrum and his Danish army at Edington. The fight was long and fierce, till at length the Norsemen were driven to the refuge of their camp up here on Bratton hill, where the formidable earthworks, with the double ramparts we see to-day, had been doubtless freshly renewed by them. Here the remnant of the beaten Danes, cut off from water and from help, cornered in the territory they had harried and denuded for months, were forced to sue for terms. The terms Alfred granted would, I think, be a sore disappointment to most readers of the sanguinary chronicle; for, though Wessex, to be sure, was permanently secured by them, the pagans were allowed to retain all England north of the Thames and Watling Street, provided Guthrum and his chief men would accept the Christian religion. These easy terms, as they may seem when read without the context, or even yet more without allowance for the missionary ardour of the Christian Saxons, were of course accepted. The main army recrossed the Thames. Guthrum, together with his officers, remained to be baptized, and Alfred stood as godfather. Thus all ended happily, and the land had peace, and the kings of Wessex continued to rule their own territory and receive homage from the rest of England, Mercians and Danes included, while their fleets sailed round the coasts, and the original white horse stretched his weird proportions across the face of Bratton down on whose summit the black raven had so lately flown.

It was a wonderfully clear morning in early autumn when I mounted to the heights of Bratton camp. A crop of swedes filled the twenty acres enclosed by the ramparts, so the coarse unpastured grasses waved rankly over bank and ditch. Here at least was a battle-ground eloquent of men and deeds, of great men and decisive deeds too, within the range of recorded history. Over the high plateau of the Plain, behind the fortress, a rough chalk road led into space and disappeared over the low horizon, which was broken only by a few wheat stacks the product of the passing harvest. A flock of sheep, with

shepherd and dogs, travelling on the turf beside it was slowly drawing to the southern skyline, bound, no doubt, for one or other of the autumn sheep fairs. Immediately below, planted on a wooded knoll at the foot of the bare down, and in curious aloofness from any human association, stood Bratton church, with its battlemented tower. To the north one could mark the site, if not actually the buildings, of all the little cities of this plain of North-West Wilts; Trowbridge and Chippenham, Malmesbury, Melksham and Calne, while the houses at Devizes, clustering on their high ledge at the foot of the Marlborough downs a dozen miles away to the east, glowed quite brilliantly in the clear autumn sunshine. Indeed the whole of this northern block of downs, from the Lansdowne monument near Calne, throughout the entire length of the Pewsey vale to Martinsell, and the long procession of familiar heights and camps came out to greet us once again in these last days of our wanderings with wonderful lucidity. Down below over the toe of the down, the white road trails forward into the picturesque village of Edington. A cheery inn, an old farmhouse, and a Jacobean-looking mansion within high walls immediately face the rise of the downs. Behind them, amid a profusion of elm foliage, and perched about above deep shady lanes, a dozen thatched cottages, generous strawroofed barns, and freshly raised wheat stacks lie picturesquely on the slope, while at its foot, still raised somewhat above the plain below, stands the noble collegiate church, surrounded by fine elm and walnut trees. It would surely come upon the casual wanderer by this nook in the downs, if indeed casual wanderers came here, with a shock of glad surprise.

It is a cruciform building, with a massive central tower, and is rated very highly as an example of the transition from the Decorated to the Perpendicular style. It was built in the middle of the fourteenth century by William of Edington, who preceded William of Wykeham in the bishopric of Winchester. Just before the erection of the church the same person founded a college of twelve prebendaries and a dean. At the instigation of the Black Prince this was changed, and some

Augustine monks of the order known as Bonhommes, who had a brotherhood at Ashridge near Berkhamstead were introduced. The monastic building stood on the site of a farmhouse which now adjoins the churchyard and still contains some of their original masonry. In 1449, during the rising of Jack Cade, Ayscough, bishop of Salisbury, was brutally murdered by some Wiltshire yokels at Edington. He had retired here from his palace to escape the turmoil of the moment, but was pursued and dragged from the high altar whilst in the act of celebrating mass, to the top of an adjoining hill, where his brains were dashed out. His body was stripped, his shirt torn into rags, and his palace at Salisbury plundered of ten thousand marks. He was buried in the monastery at Edington, and Leland, writing a hundred years later, tells of a chapel and hermitage standing on the spot where he was slain. His ostensible offence was merely absenteeism, residence at court, that is to say, instead of at Salisbury. What a mortality there would have been among the Welsh bishops of the eighteenth century if such measures had been meted out to them also! At the Dissolution the monastery was granted to Lord Seymour of Sudely, the Protector's brother, and at his death to the Pawletts, then earls of Wiltshire, who built a mansion out of the materials of the monastic buildings. But in the eighteenth century, after passing through the hands of the Duke of Bolton into that of the Taylors of Erlestoke, the present owners, most of the stone was utilized in the construction of the building which stands there now.

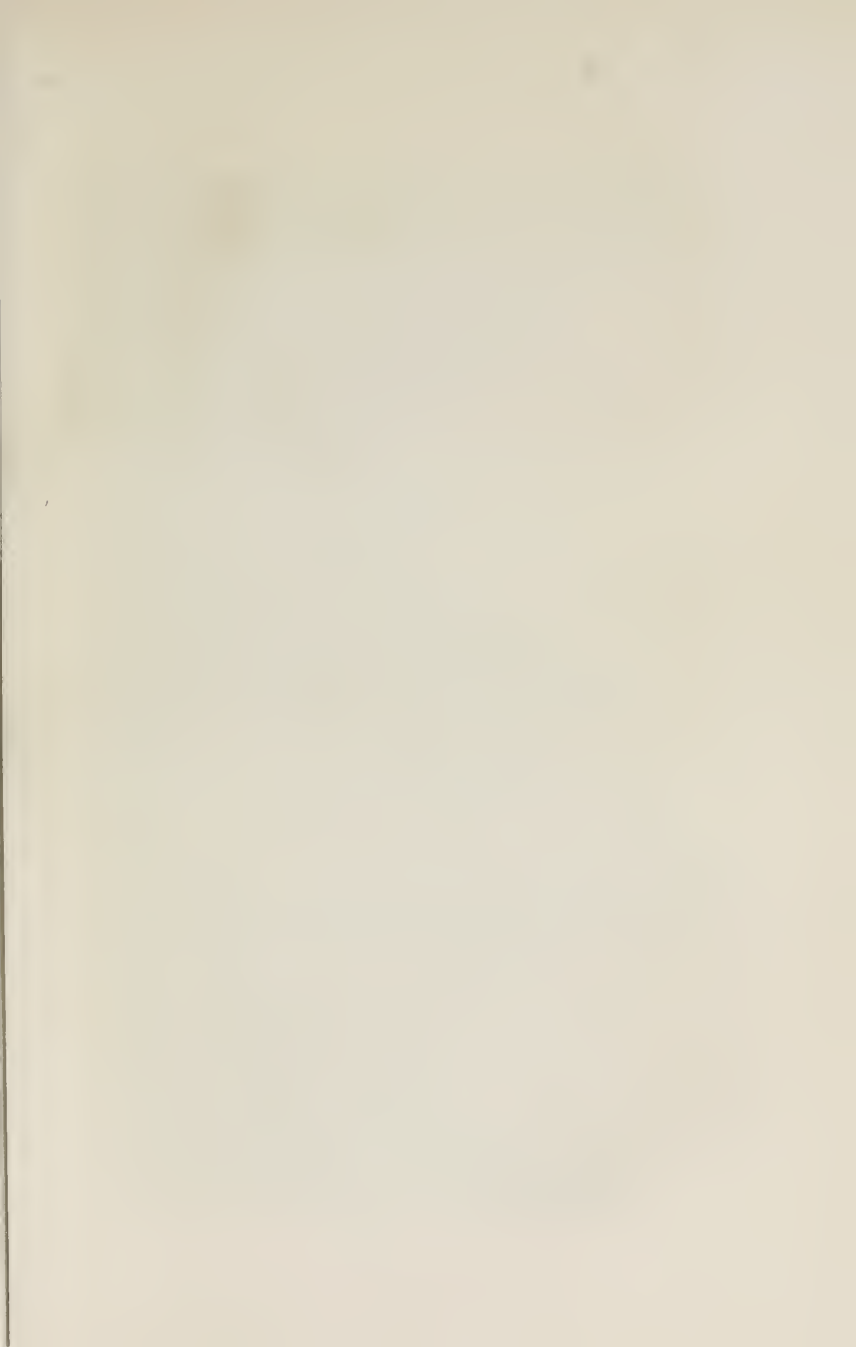
The church is full of interesting detail as well as beautiful in its proportions. The groined south porch has a priest's-room over it, while the arches which support the central tower are singularly fine. The tracery of the window is of a very high order, and the east window, as a blend of the Decorated and Perpendicular, is, I believe, almost unique. Some of the original oak benches, though much mutilated, remain, while the marks on the stone floor show how many monumental brasses have been wrenched away by all kinds of despoiling hands. To those for whom family monuments mean something more than the carving

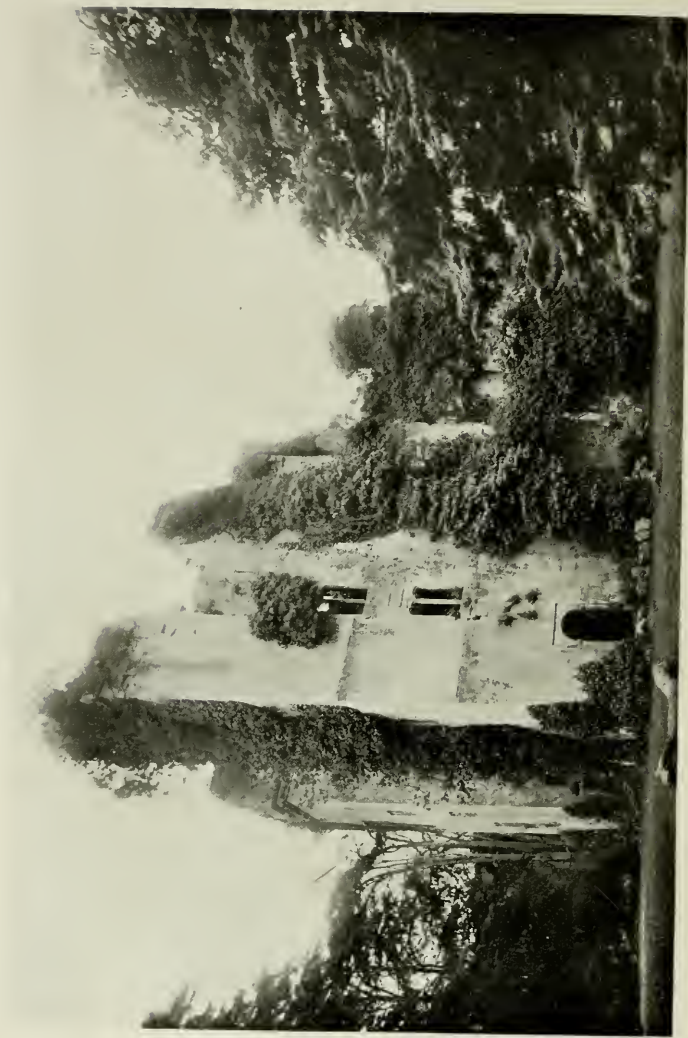


of figures and canopies, Edington offers a good deal. There is an altar tomb in the nave from which effigies have been taken, but which bears the arms of the Cheneys of Brooke House, already alluded to, near Westbury. Beneath the rich canopy that covers it there is a recess that is thought to have been for the use of the priest while reciting the prayers for the dead. In the south transept is a recumbent stone effigy of an Augustine canon with his head on a cushion and a barrel. This may or not seem quite appropriate; but the effigy itself is thought to be one of the earlier abbots of the monastery.

On one side of the chancel is a splendid tomb of alabaster and marble, which appealed to me as it bears the effigy of Sir Edward Lewys of the Van in Glamorganshire, and his wife, the widow of a Seymour. For the Lewises of the Van were in olden days a name to conjure with in Wales, and are now represented by Lord Windsor. There is a fine roodscreen still dividing the nave and chancel, while the wood carving of the altar is said to be of the time of James the First, and is supposed to have come from the old mansion of Edington. The stone walls of the abbey gardens are still standing, and traces of the ancient fish-pond yet remain, while in the churchyard, which bounds the road, is a grand old yew tree of some twenty feet in circumference.

Once more we have wandered again into North Wilts, but most assuredly for the last time in this little pilgrimage. I have landed the reader abruptly here at Edington, and must leave him to find his way back to Salisbury, either by the Wylye, as we came, though, like most valleys, it looks better in the ascent than in the descent, or by pushing on through Erlestoke, a beautiful bit of country under the downs, to West Lavington, and thence across the Plain again by Tilshead and Shrewton, a matter of twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles in either case. For us, here, we have but to turn the page and be once again under the shadow of Salisbury spire.





WARDOUR CASTLE

## CHAPTER XIV

### SALISBURY TO CRANBORNE CHASE

WHILE the valley of the Wylde pursues in its ascent a north-westward course from Salisbury to the bounds of Wiltshire, that of the Nadder runs a trifle south of west, and, like the other, shrinks to its source at or about the county line. Within the angle thus formed there lies uplifted, as I have already told, a great outlying tract of what is in fact Salisbury Plain, wherein the five Deverills, strung out along the same highway, are the only centres of collective humanity. In the southern half of this triangular region, however, is a richly wooded, diversified, and hilly country, ornate with many seats, famous either for their intrinsic beauty or for the historic names with which they are associated. Notable among these on the first account is Fonthill, with its lavish expanse of wood and water. Scarcely less beautiful, and of much greater ancient fame is Wardour, the seat of the earls of Arundel, with the beautiful remains of its fifteenth-century castle, renowned for its defence by Lady Arundel through nearly a week of bombardment during the Civil War. In the same district is Compton Chamberlayne, where the Penruddocks, so often mentioned in these pages, still abide; while, just across the Nadder is Dinton, the home of the Wydhams, another ancient Wiltshire clan, with its old manor-house in the village, where Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, and historian of the struggle between king and parliament, was born. There is no note of stiffness, however, in these, for the most part, ancient park lands, with their noble timber, to mar the harmony of a district that breathes throughout an

air of rural peace and seclusion from a restless world. Its southern limit, from near Wilton to the edge of Dorset, is overhung in an almost straight line by, perhaps, the sharpest ridge of chalk downs in Wiltshire, and the road from Salisbury, through Wilton to Shaftesbury, hugs their northern base for nearly the whole distance.

When first I traversed this thinly occupied and comparatively little travelled stretch of road between Wardour and Barford, and looked up for so many miles at the steep green wall rising above my head like the ramparts of another Salisbury Plain, I had a kind of instinct that something out of the common way must lurk behind it. The sun sank while I was yet in the near company of this upstanding range. The brilliant light which its departing rays shot streaming from the west along these ten miles of almost precipitous verdure gave way by degrees to sombre tones, and in time obliterated every detail, but those notches and pimples here and there on the sky-line which at all times, and particularly against a twilight sky, look so significantly weird. From a few passing words with the natives, I gathered that my fancies in regard to "the land beyond the mountain" were not wholly without inspiration. From the air of vague contempt with which they alluded to it, I was led to infer that they held themselves as by comparison quite near the heart of things, and the people beyond as outlanders indeed. This was promising, and before the month was a day older, I learned that hidden behind this uncompromising and unyielding barrier lay the long vale of Chalk; a designation which in Wiltshire might seem, perhaps, to lack something in originality, or, on the other hand, to express, with some bluntness, the very apotheosis of this land of chalk downs. I think now that this view is almost justified, and that the name is not worn amiss. For this is held as the most sequestered of all populated Wiltshire vales, running, as it does, for a dozen miles, into the heart of the downs, and ending there. For, unlike the valleys of the Wylye, Avon, or Nadder, it is traversed only by those who are compelled to get into or out of it. I have said it leads nowhither—which



is true enough, and not less so because you can escape from it at the upper end into Dorsetshire through a winding pass amid lofty bare hills, which upon the further side carry such woodlands as are left of the once famous Cranborne Chase.

The Romans, indeed, habitually travelled from Old Sarum to Dorchester *viâ* the vale of Chalk. But no modern traveller, save, perhaps, a stray commercial one, or some wight abandoned to archæology, ever follows, nowadays, the gentle currents of the Ebele to their infant springs. I had a mind, however, to traverse this most sequestered of Wiltshire vales, not merely because such places as lie away from the stream of life have a quality of their own, but also because it was much the nearest way to Cranborne Chase, which I was curious to see, if only for all that I had read and heard of its story in bygone times.

Removed from Salisbury, on the south-west, by two or three miles of bleak, cultivated but unpeopled upland, the village of Coombe Bissett, lying in a green hollow astride of a prattling trout stream, makes a promising start for this arcadian vale with the unmelodious name. The cottages are grouped about in irregular picturesque fashion, and a venerable cruciform church crowns the green knoll above them. I asked a recent graduate of a board school, who was hanging over the rail of the bridge, the name of the stream that flowed beneath it. He did not know, and evidently did not want to know. Perhaps he was ruminating on the rivers of Asia Minor! A toothless veteran, however, passing by, who, I am sure, never heard of Asia Minor, gave me the name of the stream at once, which, though unknown to fame, plays its part in the quiet life of the vale of Chalk, and still cherishes a fair stock of those trout which King Charles, it may be remembered, rated so highly.

It was the typical valley road of these parts that bore me over gentle undulations of pulverized flint to Bishopstone; a hedgerow on one side, and fenceless fields, merging gradually into downs, upon the other. Bishopstone is the first stage up the vale, and boasts a church of some local note; an ancient

cruciform building set above a deep lane, a bow-shot from the highway, and sheltered by some splendid beech trees. With well-tended graveyard and bowery vicarage adjacent, it is a spot that would give pause to any leisurely traveller of taste, though he might care little for ecclesiology. The parish is named from the bishops of Winchester, who were formerly its lords, and a brass in the church represents a John de Wykeham, presented to the living by the illustrious William of that name in the reign of Richard the Second. The building, though a good deal restored, is of much interest; the long chancel and south transept being vaulted, and the east window extremely rich and curiously long. There are some good sedilia too, and an external chamber, of contemporary date, at the south of the south transept, that baffles the expert. There is a good deal more of technical interest, and altogether the place is well worth a visit.

The village further on straggles picturesquely and in fragmentary fashion along the fringe of tortuous lanes with its whitewashed walls of chalk or mud, or of the chessboard flint and stone so dear to the heart of rural Wiltshire builders, with their gay trimmings of autumn flowers. On either side the little stream twists under willows on its gravelly bed, or feeds the watercress beds that are an obvious village industry. The willows were whitening along its course in the fresh autumn breeze when I was here, and a file of tall poplars were swaying above the clusters of thatched gables, while in the background somewhere, great straw-roofed barn yards loomed up against dark screens of elms, with golden ricks fresh gathered from broad-acred Wiltshire fields. A prospect not worthy perhaps of record; just another Wiltshire village; ancient, fortuitously fashioned by slow degrees, and maintained with no effort or even thought of grace or art—only, some love of cleanliness, and a simple taste for simple flowers, that no grinding struggles with poverty in the past or present seems able to diminish. Aided by Time's mellowing hand the result is one that neither wealth nor studied art can achieve. We all know the model village; it is generally close to a great

house, and often of quite captivating appearance. There is inevitably, however, a good deal of pose about it, a sort of "six for you and half a dozen for myself" suggestion in the proprietor's benevolence. It reminds one of what is called "road farming" in agricultural circles. It is admirable so far as it goes, but it sometimes does not go any further. The parson, moreover, of such a village, though the object perhaps of envy to a thoughtless world, has sometimes a skeleton in his cupboard worse than that which sits beside an impoverished parish, in the shape of a great lady who descends upon his villagers for four months in the year with a redundancy of energy and reforming zeal and of simplicity regarding the astuteness of the poor that may well be at times the despair of their professional and constant shepherd.

But Bishopstone is not a model village, nor are there any in the vale of Chalk, though the artist might well hold them all as such. Nor could much be said for the moment about the landscape that has not been said about many other Wiltshire landscapes. The narrow strip of lowland luxuriant with watermeads, and the dark foliage of elm; the tangled hedgerows of briar, thorn and hazel, all festooned with autumn berries, from behind which comes anon the crunching of milk cows, as they tear at the sloping strips of pasture land above the meadows, now freshened by September rains. Pleasant sight as it is, I need not dwell here on how the little river comes out betimes to meet us by the roadside for a brief space, only to dive again into its screen of willows and alders; or to part the grassy carpet of some small larch or beechen grove on its return to the meadows, and the further banks of the vale. Nor need I linger by the long fenceless fields that on the right of the road lie sloping gradually to the down; how the ploughs are drawing long brown furrows, with their attendant companies of rooks and starlings, and even gulls, in readiness for the coming wheat crop; tearing through the baked, trodden sheepfolds which in June were patches of purple sanfoin, or carving their smooth way through the matted crust that at midsummer had been a rank sea of clover bloom.

The wood-pigeons have no longer any great choice of cover outside the woods in which to pursue unseen their nefarious havoc, but waddle about in full view, though always at safe range, on the stubbles, reduced to the harmless *rôle* of gleaners. The young peewits have grown stout of wing and cautious, and flap about at long distances, though indeed, poor things, they have no more cause for mistrusting man in this country, once out of the egg, did they but know it, than rooks or starlings, the serious partridge-shooter being the only armed wight abroad.

Thus wandering through these scenes of quiet husbandry, I found myself in due course crossing the stream, and the narrow meadows, and mounting a green slope beyond, on which lay the village of Broad Chalk, the metropolis, if so arcadian and slumberous a spot may thus be called, of the vale. Its large cruciform church, with massive central tower, rises conspicuous and dignified out of its wide-spreading graveyard, closely packed with the headstones and monuments of departed Chalkites. Ample in dimensions, it is in part fifteenth century and elsewhere Early English, and is devoid of side aisles. What mainly interested me in the interior was a curious window to that eminent Welshman, scholar, and theologian Rowland Williams, who was once its incumbent and held in much affection. This memorial is realistic and almost whimsical; for the reverend gentleman is depicted on it as engaged in various characteristic avocations. In one pane he is in his red doctor's robe, instructing a child. In another he is meditating on his sermon. In a third he is in the act of writing it. And in a fourth delivering it from his pulpit clad in a black Geneva gown.

But after all I should be an ingrate indeed if I were to reckon even Rowland Williams as of more account here than our dear old friend Aubrey. Perhaps we might hold one as the presiding genius of the church, and the other of the village, for Aubrey spent some years in the occupation of a farm under Lord Pembroke. It seems scarcely respectful that our itinerary should knock at his door, though for that



matter both door and house have long gone, so near its close. On the other hand the few words to be said of him may after all be more to the purpose when the reader has already gathered some notion of his claims on the gratitude of posterity to say nothing of his claims on that of the author.

John Aubrey was born in 1625, at Easton Pierce, in North Wilts, son of a landowner with estates in Wiltshire, Hereford, and Brecon, in which latter county his immediate forbears are still held in high regard by antiquarians. He was sent to school, as already told, both at Malmesbury and in its neighbourhood. He then proceeded to Trinity College, Oxford, and left there at eighteen, partly owing to the outbreak of the Civil War, and partly to an attack of small-pox. After this he entered as a student at the Temple, but was never called to the bar, and eventually returned to Oxford, where he chiefly resided till his father died in 1652.

On inheriting the property, Aubrey seems to have entered upon a course of continuous adversity. He is accused of extravagance and impracticability. Possibly he was a muddler. At any rate he had much unfortunate litigation, and by his forty-fifth year had almost nothing left. From this time forward he resided in the houses of Wiltshire friends, particularly in that of Colonel Long of Draycott. He was a welcome guest no doubt in those easy-going hospitable days to such as cared for the past of their own county, a taste which seems to have been almost as common then as now—if that is saying but little.

He was anything but a dry-as-dust, however, for he was a prince of gossips, and knew everything about everybody. If a new man—and parvenus are not recent innovations—put on airs or assumed a consequence greater than beseemed him or a bogus origin, Aubrey trotted out the facts, and with the natural contempt of a genealogist for humbug, was at hand with the unpalatable truth that his father had been a butcher in Devonshire, or his grandfather a carrier in Kent. What a terror he would be now in a countryside! It was not the honest fact that Aubrey gloated over so much as the humbug



that endeavoured to evade it. He continued to collect materials for a history of Wiltshire to the end of his life, and received a patent from the crown for making surveys of the county. Like a humbler and later prototype, "Iolo Morganwg" of Glamorgan, Aubrey had an enormous appetite for facts, and a great capacity for collecting them, but no corresponding aptitude for putting them in order. He published, however, some volumes of brief biographies, not especially of Wiltshire worthies, which are most valuable, and some other works. But old age found him with his Wiltshire material still undigested, and he tells us with what reluctance he was at length compelled to hand it over to Bishop Tanner of St. Asaph—one of the Wiltshire Tanners—for completion. This was never wholly accomplished, but in recent years all that was done of his survey, comprising the greater part of the county, has found a competent editor in the late Canon Jackson of antiquarian renown.

Aubrey died at Oxford, and was buried at Draycott. He tells us how much, during the years he lived at Broad Chalk, he enjoyed the fine open country lying all about it. Like Owen of Henllys, the Pembrokeshire historian of nearly a century earlier, Aubrey, as a country gentleman, had an eye to seize things that count for much with posterity, and that mere students, for the lack of it, are apt to overlook; things concerning land and game, farming and natural history, manners and customs that he knew at first hand, to our great edification. He was ardent also in matters psychical, and recorded ghost stories, visions and dreams with much industry, and some credulity. In social matters he has already been introduced to the reader as a *laudator temporis acti* of the most pronounced type. He regretted the dissolution of the monasteries, the hospitality shown by them to all classes of travellers. Gentlemen then met, he declares, "not in tipping houses, but in the fields and forests with horses and hounds, with their bugle-horns in silken bawdricks, and thus were good spirits kept up, good horses and good riders made, whereas the gentry in later days are so effeminated by coaches,

and are so far from managing great horses that they know not how to ride hunting horses, besides the spoiling of several trades dependant. Every yeoman once kept a sparrow hawk, every priest a hoby. Gentlewomen, too, learnt surgery, and did cure their poor neighbours, but now they are too fine."

Aubrey was the pioneer of a long list of successors who, if sounder antiquarians, lacked his humours and his all-round grasp of human interests.

A mile or two above Broad Chalk the vale rapidly contracts. Humanity grows yet scantier. A lane like a twisting road skirts the edge of the narrow grassy trough through which the shrunken waters of the Ebele steal noiselessly through mats of weeds. The grassy shoulders of the hills folded us in more close embrace, while the high downs above, showing here and there a tufted crown, offered quite imposing proportions. A single farmhouse by the roadside, with the style and surroundings of a well-appointed country rectory, made a pleasant break in a somewhat lonely road. A weather-beaten shepherd who welcomed my assistance in getting some sheep through a gate, gave me in return his views on the decadence of things in general as seen from the head of the vale of Chalk, particularly of the farm hand. He spoke naturally of this district as "The Plain," an interesting archaism, I think, at variance with modern topographical notions. Small things make history in a pastoral seclusion where till lately villagers rarely shifted. A neighbouring shepherd, a few days previously, asked me if I had seen the place of the "great battle"—pointing in the direction of the valley below. My thoughts turned instinctively to King Alfred, and flew onward through the wars of Stephen, and the Roses to the doings of Waller, Ludlow, and Rupert without anything definite wherewithal to confront what was apparently a village antiquary, and I pleaded ignorance, with a full sense of deficiency.

"It wur a nashun vierce vight I've heer'd my veyther zay. Theer wur two kippers killed and dree or vore poachers, and a sight more wounded."

I felt both relief and disappointment. · This was obviously

the echo of one of those sanguinary encounters that distinguish the annals of Cranborne Chase, whose ancient purlieus I was now within, and of which more anon.

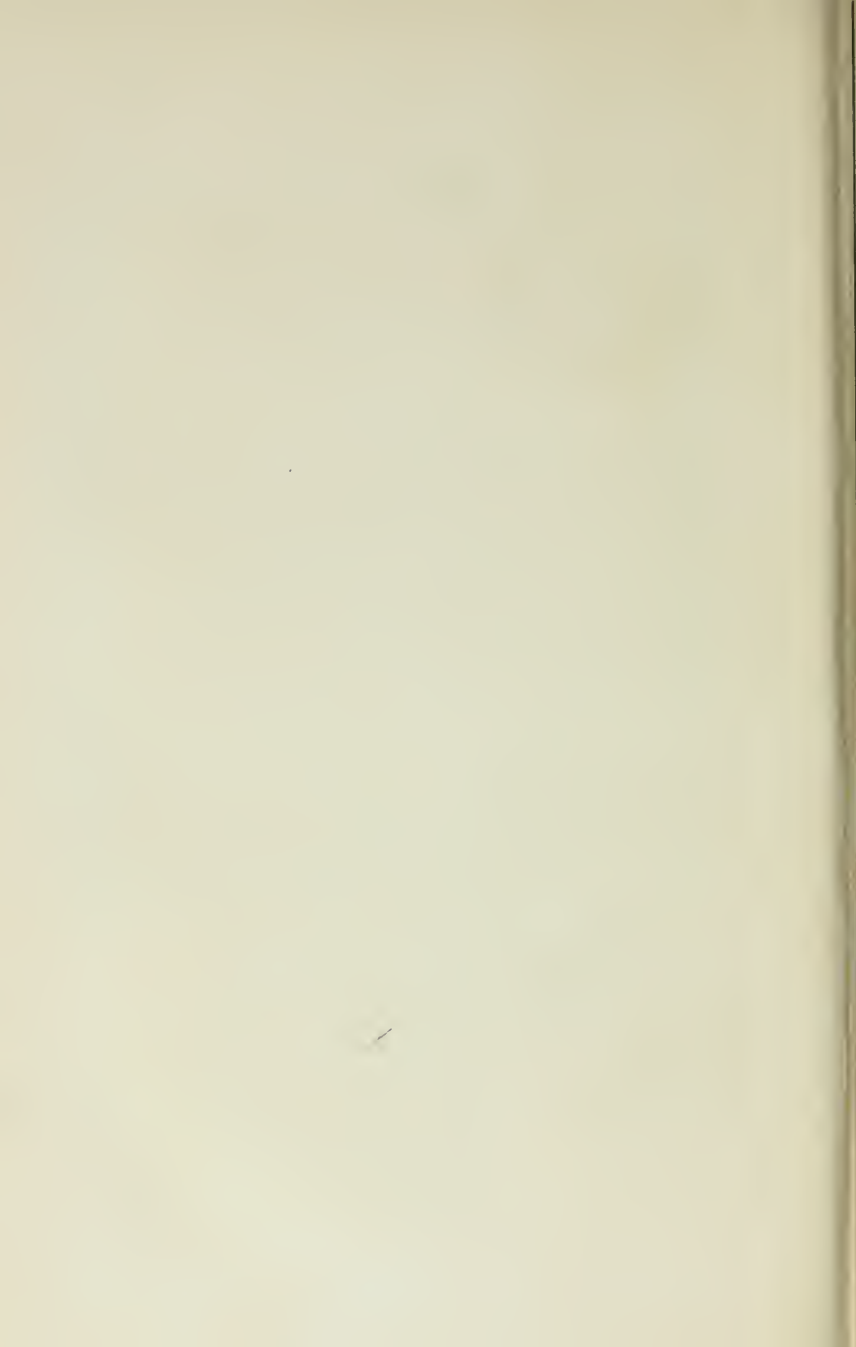
These narrow ways, now of such excellent surface, must have been poor mud tracks when Aubrey rode along them, and for generations afterwards. How many a squire and farmer met their fate, when "market peart," as they say in Herefordshire, and urging their steeds unduly over them, is written large in the history even of families that are accounted worthy of documentary record in all parts of England. Thrice in succession, a Welsh property known to me changed owners prematurely on this account in the eighteenth century.

There is a Wiltshire story of a farmer who was born with a kink in his neck, and carried his head throughout life over one shoulder. He was given, like many others, to tumbling about on his way home from Salisbury market, and one day was discovered lying prone by the roadside, by well-meaning Samaritans, who happened to be strangers. When they picked him up, and laid him out on the bank, still in a state of oblivion not mainly due to his fall, they opined that his neck was dislocated, and not possessed, perhaps, of much medical insight, set vigorously to work to force it back again. This so incommoded their victim that he was galvanized into sufficient consciousness to cry out, "Barnzo ! barnzo !" The Samaritans, being unskilled in the vernacular, took this to be the unfortunate man's name, which, with charitable intent, they had vainly endeavoured to extract from him. So they continued for a space to work away at his neck, in spite of his reiterated groans of "Barnzo ! barnzo !" Finally, they gave it up as a bad job, and bore him to a neighbouring cottage, and sent a boy to the nearest doctor, with an urgent message detailing the sad case of Mr. Barnzo. The victim carried the nickname among his neighbours so long as he carried his head on one side, which was, of course, for the rest of his life.

The village of Ebbesbourne seems quite to fill the deep and narrow hollow in the downs in which it lies, and to be the end of all things. For beyond it all foliage and enclosures



REMINISCENCE





cease, the bare hills rise to the highest limit common to chalk altitudes, and the road out to Dorsetshire goes winding round their spurs.

I have said that this vale of Chalk was the direct route from Salisbury to Cranborne Chase. So it is; for the great humpy hills, riven into deep combes, and towering above in almost menacing fashion to the traveller on wheels, are, in fact, the northern boundary of what is now called the Chase. Not, indeed, the original Chase—for that is quite another matter, and a much wider one, as in all such cases. For every purpose of recent history, however, the edge of the Chase lay along the southern skyline, some five hundred feet aloft, towards which a farm road dragged its long laborious length from Ebbesbourne. I had a cycle with me, and the natives with whom I took counsel seemed to regard the crossing of the range with one as an entirely desperate undertaking. In corners so remote as this the yokel is still sometimes inclined to regard this modest and handy instrument of locomotion with the eyes of ten years ago, and as a means only for pursuing a headlong career along a wide, smooth road; and this though half the farmers in England now make use of them in their daily affairs.

The ascent of this high back of Cranborne Chase was simple enough, and well worth the long climb for the beautiful retrospect it afforded. Ebbesbourne church, with its vicarage, and a fine old homestead, lay apart and together amid a cluster of foliage far below, while behind it rose ascending ridges of green down to the lofty summit of White Sheet hill, an outstanding landmark all over the borderland of Wilts and Dorset. On the southerly hill I was climbing, a deep combe drove right into its heart below my feet, whose narrow gorge, channelled only by the wash of storms, was bosky with the untrimmed growth of hazel, ash, and oak. In the north or west a living stream would have made hoarse music, and filled so deep a dingle with the glitter of cascades, but in the downs we look nowhere for the sparkle of falling water, or yet listen for its music, any more than one listens for the crow of the

grouse or the call of the curlew. For good or ill, their great silence is their quality; whether you like it or not, it is so insistent that you probably do one or the other with much decision. Even the sheep on the Plain, as I have said, have small cause for clamour. The ridge surmounted, and its broad grassy back traversed, I beheld below me to the south and west a broken, partly wooded country descending gradually to the plain below. This was Cranborne Chase, the heart, that is to say, of the broad domain it once included. I had always cherished not unnatural visions of this once famous hunting-ground as a place of sheeny glades, where you moved beneath the shade of immemorial oaks, as at Lyndhurst, Savernake, or Sherwood. Macaulay, at a remote date, may have been responsible for this, and, no doubt, when the fiery heralds of the Spanish Armada were blazing over England, and probably for long after, the oaks of Cranborne were noble and numerous enough. But the glory of Cranborne has departed, so far, at least, as its Wiltshire portion is concerned. The tract is still picturesque, secluded, umbrageous, and diversified in scenery, but the axe has been busy, and in times, too, not very recent, while its various portions have changed ownership no little during the last two centuries.

I descended slowly, and on a gentle slope, through occasional gates, with here and there a lonely wayside cottage. Enclosed woodlands, of no particular distinction, interspersed with thin pasture fields, lay all about, till, in no long time, I was practically once more upon level ground, and following leafy lanes, where here and there the descendants, no doubt, of Cranborne poachers led virtuous lives in snug abodes, where roses and dahlias still bloomed, and rows of sunflowers touched the low eaves of mossy thatch.

And the Chase—this portion of it, that is to say—all lay behind me; broken ridges of wood, and pasture climbing the down. A stranger might nowadays pass by or over it without any recognition of its ancient character. But to me Cranborne was interesting rather for its curious history than for any traces of primitive woodland there might be left to it.

Indeed, its story is racy enough, though most of what is now called the Chase is in Dorset. This was not the case in former days, and something must be said of it here. Parenthetically, too, it may be remarked that the term "chase" was applied to a forest that was granted to a subject. The proprietor's rights being the same as those of the Crown in a forest, a definition which implies of itself royal ownership. So Cranborne was originally a forest; but when granted by Rufus to Robert Fitzhamon, that potent Earl of Gloucester, who privately conquered and annexed Glamorgan, it became a chase.

It would seem at this time to have extended but little further than the limits it was ultimately reduced to. By degrees, however, its powerful owners pushed out their boundaries to the very gates of Salisbury on the one side, while they touched Shaftesbury on the other, making a length and breadth of some twenty-five and twenty miles respectively. The abbess of Wilton stoutly protested against the inclusion of the Nadder valley; but a lady's objections availed little where those of so many knights and squires were ignored. The Clares, who cared little for kings, cared nothing at all for the holders of manors. They even claimed and exacted a toll on Harnham bridge leading out of Salisbury during the fence months when the fawns were being dropped, and every waggon then entering the Chase had to pay fourpence chiminage, and every packhorse a penny, as compensation for possible disturbance of the does. A stag's head used to be set up on the bridge in notification of the tribute a fortnight before midsummer day. This continued till the beginning of the eighteenth century, though the Chase passed to the Crown in the person of Edward the Fourth, and remained with it till James the First, who was fond of hunting and particularly in Wiltshire, as we have seen, gave it to Cecil, Earl of Salisbury. The Crown had, no doubt, been comparatively unaggressive in exercising rights that had remained through centuries a grievance. But this reversion to a private owner was the signal for renewed and more successful resistance on the part

of the landowners on the Wiltshire side. For the remainder will not be resented, I dare say, by some readers, that forest rights merely applied to the game, chiefly deer, and in no other important detail affected or were concerned with the freehold ownership of lands within the forest.

Lord Salisbury soon became engaged in litigation with the Wiltshire owners. Lord Arundel of Wardour first sued him and won; Mr. Gawens of Norrington, near Ebbesbourne, next tried a fall with him, but failed. The Chase was then divided into eight "walks" or beats, with a lodge in each. At Tollard a court leet used to be held, and in the old times when the court was sitting—which it did under a large tree—the lord of the manor had the right of starting a deer, and the occasion was made a general holiday. Lord Salisbury had so much trouble with the Wiltshire squires and farmers that he sold off one or two of the walks, and that made confusion worse confounded. The keepers and verderers had the right of entry and hunting on the private property of gentlemen, and the bad blood thereby engendered was continuous. The deer roamed at will over grain and hay fields, doing great damage, both landlords and farmers being equally irritated.

About 1700 a set of men came into existence known by courtesy as "deer hunters." They were, in fact, gentlemen poachers, the sons of squires, and such-like, victims often of the deer's encroachments. Their methods of procedure savoured of woodcraft rather than the modern notions of sport. On the other hand they were quite unmercenary, and only sold so much of the venison as would pay the heavy fines that ensued on capture. The excitement of the business lay partly in flouting the obnoxious rights of the proprietors, the legality of which on several manors was doubtful, and partly in the fights with keepers, which so often terminated for the moment their enterprises. The cult of snares and nets, of calling up and tracking game, of training dogs to assist in all sorts of discarded kinds of venery, was an important branch of country life in those days. These hardy bloods fell naturally in groups or companies who hunted together, and



one or two contemporary pictures of them in costume are extant. Their headgear was made of wisps of straw tightly coiled together with split bramble stalks, thickly padded within and shaped after the manner of a beehive. They wore long tunics of canvas, heavily padded with wool to resist blows. For arms the "deer hunter" carried a short sword or hanger, and a long quarter-staff, thick at one end and pointed with iron at the other. The numerous keepers of the Chase wore a somewhat similar costume, and the frequent engagements which took place between them and the gentlemen poachers must have resembled a mediæval tourney of dismounted warriors. The fine on conviction, which short of actual capture was doubtless difficult under the circumstances, was thirty pounds, and this was so cheerfully paid out of a fund provided by a sufficient sale of the venison, that the hunters got their sport and excitement for little or nothing. We find one squire, however, paying so many fines for a younger brother, as to be driven to protect himself. In George the Second's time this method of punishment having for so long proved futile, the law was amended, and this pleasant and not very expensive form of entertainment made a criminal offence, the second conviction carrying transportation for seven years. This draconic measure, extinguished the gentleman poacher effectually. He would face a keeper with pleasure, and a fine with equanimity, but was not prepared to pay the price of a felon for his fun. Henceforward, another class of men, equivalent to the modern poacher, took up the business. They followed it for profit, and in view of the consequences of capture, resisted more desperately, being armed with a short gun, which, taken to pieces, could be concealed under the coat.

One, William Chaffin, a gentleman in holy orders, who died at an advanced age early in the last century, compiled a little work of the racy, lawless doings of his youth, and the people that took a hand in them. The reverend gentleman had himself hunted in the Chase all his life, and, to use the mild phraseology of one of his admirers, "the lay element



prevailed greatly over the clerical" in his habit of life. This sporting soul was the eleventh son of a local squire, who had lost so many of his elder children that he determined to try heroic measures with this latest arrival. So the moment the infant had received at the font the name of William, he was carried off to the cottage of his father's shepherd, where for five years he fared precisely as a shepherd's child, and, indeed, rather more so, for he was carried punctually every morning, through summer and winter, to the sheepfold for the day, a proceeding to which he attributes a constitution that at eighty-five found him still hearty and vigorous. At six he was sent to school, but the instincts of the sheepfold, or the deficiencies of his tutors, seem to have been uppermost, for at fifteen he was still a raw, ignorant country lad, devoid of any classical lore. As a singular remedy for these deficiencies, he spent a year at home devoting himself wholly to field sports. With this mental equipment, he was next sent to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where his tutor, discovering much latent capacity in the bucolic William, wrought so perseveringly and successfully upon him that he not only got his degree, but was actually presented by the college with a piece of plate as their best man of the year. This, perhaps, is not saying much for the intellectual status of Emmanuel at that period. But what homely, original sort of places these smaller colleges must have been at that time! There was, surely, something to be said for them? Imagine a college tutor thus devoting himself to a modern William Chaffin. The Georgian tutor, however, had, perhaps, one advantage; for the sportsman of small means must have been unutterably bored in those days at Cambridge, and may, like this Cranborne Nimrod, have thrown his abounding energy into Homer and Virgil for lack of more congenial occupation.

On being in due course ordained, our author was, after a sufficiently decent interval, presented to two livings, one near Taunton, and the other at Lidlinch, in the Cranborne neighbourhood. The former, we may presume, took care of itself; the latter was served from Squire Chaffin's house, a few

miles away, the new vicar's assistance being there required in the management of his father's estate. The latter and an elder brother presently dying, the sheepfold-bred divine found himself a squire in fact, after which the more congenial "lay element in his character" seems to have been wholly predominant. His home was within the Chase, and he seems to have hunted so continuously with its proprietors as to have imbibed the most reactionary views with regard to their rights, which in his seventy years of experience he had seen so strenuously resisted and so frequently curtailed. He maintained to his dying day that the landowners within the Chase had not merely no rights over the deer, but not even any over their small game. And in his old age, when the Rivers family were making a last struggle, and putting forward almost mediæval pretensions over their neighbours' sporting rights, the Reverend Chaffin supported them stoutly. The old deer-hunter, or gentleman poacher, had by then, as we have seen, long given way to the professional, and the whole district was demoralized by the presence of twelve thousand deer, private property at law, but ranging the country at large, injuring crops, and offering extraordinary temptations to the wilder and lawless spirits of a district where such spirits flourished as in a prolific soil. Our parson, however, retained enough of the "clerical element" to offer up, according to his own account at least, one daily prayer, and this was to the effect that—"All these evil things [the disfranchisement of the Chase] may remain in a flourishing state till the general dissolution of all things."

This primitive old parson, however, as well as other writers, has left many pictures of eighteenth-century life in the Chase he knew so well, which are valuable. One famous "deer-hunter"—not deer-stealer, be it noted—a Mr. Henry Good, by his fascinating converse and reminiscences, had exercised a profound influence on the tender mind of William Chaffin and, just as the Emmanuel tutor had wrought such wonders in the matter of scholarship, so did this other in the much easier task of making a hunter of him. This particular

Will Wimble, his pupil tells us, was well versed in history, and read Milton and Butler's "Hudibras" with avidity, being at the same time a skilled musician. He was a welcome guest at the houses of the nobility, not, as may be imagined for his historic and Miltonian tastes, but for his skill in the breaking of dogs and the management of nets. "He would call quails by a pipe to a spread net, imitating the hen with such skill as to bring the whole bevy to his very feet," an art which he imparted to Mr. Chaffin.

"His talent for music," remarks our anecdotist, with some quaintness, "gained him the respect of the neighbouring clergy." With his assistance they established a musical club, selecting for its headquarters, somewhat whimsically, or perhaps with design, a public-house called The Hut, perched high up on the down, and commanding a fine view of the Chase. Here, monthly in winter, and fortnightly in summer, this mixed orchestra discoursed sweet music to the surrounding waste, and no doubt drank the landlord's health in the intervals. Good, as leader of the company, used invariably to repair thither on Sunday after divine service, at which, we are told, he was punctual, to arrange the books and instruments for the next day—Monday being their day of meeting.

"His two leading accomplishments," remarks the Reverend Chaffin, ingenuously, "music and deer-catching he never suffered to be entirely disunited, and together with music of his own composition, he carried in his pockets nets also of his own manufacture." Among typical performances remembered by his extremely apt pupil, was one upon a certain hot Sunday in August. Mr. Good and the landlord, having, as usual, arranged the music, were admiring the expansive prospect which lay spread out before the door of The Hut. The former, however, soon espied a herd of deer, evidently annoyed by flies, seek refuge in a small patch of detached woodland. So, without further remark but to wish the landlord good day, he slipped down the hillside and made a wide circuit to the wood in question, and having previously noted the spot where the deer had entered it, he drew out his nooses from his pocket,

and set them with his accustomed skill on their trail. Then, having provided himself with some stones, he crept cautiously round to the further side, and proceeded to pitch them, one at a time, so as to move the deer gradually out of the wood without stampeding them. These often practised manœuvres succeeded, and three deer fast in the snares was the result. An old sawpit being handy, their captor first cut their throats, and then dragged the carcasses into it, covering them for the time being with leaves. He then mounted an oak tree, and, concealed in its branches, solaced himself with "Hudibras" till nightfall, when slipping home, he apprised his friends of his success, and a cart was brought for the spoils, which were duly cut up and dispersed among them.

In the later days of the "deer-stealers," the fights with keepers were more bloody. The poachers, besides guns, pistols, and hangers, carried a swindgell, a short threshing flail, the striker of which was made of iron. Among many fierce encounters was one in 1791 at Rushmore, the numbers being even—ten upon each side. The keepers on this occasion, armed with hangers, drew the poachers, who were using swindgells, into a copse where the latter were unhandy, and the whole gang was caught and transported. The last big fight seems to have been near Donhead in 1816, where firearms were used with deadly effect.

In 1828, after much litigation and overwhelming evidence, as to the injury done by the deer and the general demoralization caused in the district, the Chase was disfranchised by Act of Parliament, and money compensation awarded to the Rivers family.

Lord Rivers had indeed attempted to carry things with a high hand; had sent notices to farmers and landowners to throw down fences that the deer could not leap, had served processes against the ploughing up of downland, and had even started a buck in Wardour Park, which had been decided by law as without the forest. One of his keepers, too, had shot a greyhound, walking peaceably at the heels of his master, an opulent farmer named King, at Norrington,



on the Wiltshire side. Mr. King determined to make a test case as to his farm being within the forest, and drove the deer off his land on the first opportunity. An action was then brought against him, and after an important trial the verdict was given in his favour amid a scene of great enthusiasm.

This sobered the Rivers family, and would assuredly have much distressed poor Parson Chaffin, had he been alive. It practically secured the Act of disfranchisement which brought to an end a demoralizing and curiously belated situation.

The Wiltshire end of the Chase, says Aubrey, was the inspiration of Philip Sydney's "Arcadia." "He lived much in these parts, and the most masterly touches of his pastorals he wrote here upon the spot where they were conceived. 'Twas about these purlieus that the muses were wont to appear to him, and where he wrote down their dictates in his table-book, though on horseback. I remember some old relations of mine, and other old men hereabouts, that have seen Sir Philip doe this, for those nimble fugitives (the muses) except they be presently registered, fly away, and perhaps can never be caught again." Aubrey continues in quaint strain that they had never favoured him as the occupier, though to his landlords, the Pembrokes, "they had continued a constant kindness for generations." In Aubrey's day, Groveley forest above the Wylde, was noted for deer. They were the heaviest, but the Cranborne skins fetched sixpence more from the glovers at Tisbury. And as the southern edge of Old Cranborne almost touched the New Forest near Fording-bridge, there must have been a continuous deer-walk from the Solent to Heytesbury and Longleat.

Leaving the twisting lanes that lead southward from the now mutilated Chase, with Tollard Royal and Ruston, the seat of that accomplished antiquary the late General Pitt Rivers, away on the right, I ran out on to the delightful grassy track that traverses the low-lying downland of Hartley Common. Tumuli rose thickly upon the slopes and ridges, and among them a long barrow which, no doubt, is duly



treasured by the antiquaries of Dorset; for an outlying strip of that county here crossed my path. More stretches of common, lavish of gorse, and even betimes with heather, retaining still some lingering bloom, spread widely about as I re-entered Wiltshire. And across this breezy land, the skirt and offshoot of neighbouring downs, Bokerley dyke, like a smaller Wansdyke striding our path, furrowed its mysterious way.

A small tongue of Wiltshire here shoots southward between Dorset and Hants, with the little village of Martin in its neck; a secluded undistinguished fragment of a dozen square miles with perhaps as many homesteads set among elms and hedge-row timber, but opening to the down; and a few score of thatched cottages grouped here and there by the narrow roads. I should have crossed the neck of this little peninsula, and struck off northward by Coombe Bissett again to Salisbury had other things been equal, instead of making for the railway at Fordingbridge, and loitering about in the meanwhile in this Ultima Thule of Wiltshire till the autumn sun had set. But other things were not equal. Sentiment drew me strongly, if not perhaps felicitously, down this narrow tongue, which might almost indeed be a vale since a chalk stream without name or fame waters its very heart. I was inviting melancholy too, and going out of my way to stir up memories which must prove sad ones for reasons wholly irrelevant here. The impulse to sit again at a hearth peopled with the ghosts of departed friends, may be a morbid one, but it was strong upon me. And for such painful indulgences the twilight of an autumn evening is surely well or ill adapted.

Dimly remembered objects gradually disclosed themselves, a finger-post and cross-roads here, or a track there, leading up to the downs; and here too, at last, was the old roadside inn. But even a good memory in much more than half a lifetime can play queer tricks with objects of no very prolonged acquaintance. The stream had shifted to the other side of the house in mine, and a row of tall poplars puzzled me sorely till I remembered, with something of a shock, that they

could easily have achieved much of their stature since I last stood here.

But there, at any rate, right on the road, was the old hostelry, not changed one whit, though to my prejudiced eyes now forlorn-looking enough ; a mere roadside inn at the first glance, but at a second revealing evidences of better things behind. And the better things were still *in situ* as the antiquaries say, the sitting-rooms, the lawn, the flowerbeds, and the paddock at the back. Nothing seemed altered but the landlord, a new man, and a stranger, without knowledge of the old associations of the place, or of even the names, much less the faces, that now looked at me again from each side of the parlour hearth. The faces of men young and old as they returned to me here, but all departed ; one or two in the course of nature, one or two that mainly drew me here cut off in their prime not long ago.

Now it so happened that certain estates in this neighbourhood, were connected with others in Ireland, and as often occurred, and still occurs, though less frequently in the distressful country, the interests of the absentee were managed by a neighbouring squire of less abundant acreage. In this case, and in those days, the Irish management extended to both sides of the channel, and this snug roadside inn was its headquarters for some weeks every year, and was expected not only to be equal to so much official dignity, but to a certain measure of private hospitality. This last was inevitable, when an extremely fine specimen of an old Irish gentleman, and one or two chips of the old block, went into residence there. The establishment had justified this patronage for many a long year, when ties of friendship, and reasons irrelevant here, brought me more than once under this hospitable roof. It was the landlord of that epoch, perhaps, who helped to make all these things possible, an ex-retainer of well-known personages, with an easy grasp of the arts that make things go smoothly both for the inner and the outer man. His occasional confidences concerning Melton Mowbray, in the notorious days of Captain Holyoak, and the rest of that heady crew, one or two of whom

he had served, were of no small interest to us younger people. They were not, I am afraid, heroes to him, indeed they could not have been if the familiar proverb is of any account. But the seamy side of that *régime* was tolerably notorious, and our landlord, who was a profoundly respectable man, used to shake his head mysteriously over the recollection of scenes, behind which his situation had placed him. There were some fair daughters too, well adapted to the breaking of hearts. An old cottage piano still stood in the parlour, I wondered if it was the same on which these sirens used to strum the "Cruiskeen lawn," and the "Harp that once," in honour of their guests.

But all this was in the great times soon after the Franco-Prussian War. Every agricultural and landed soul was cheerful—not only in Wiltshire, but even in Ireland—outside bog-trotting Ireland, that is to say, which neither then nor now seems within the area of agricultural economics, but a stamping ground for politicians, theorists, and tourists. It was like the times before the French Revolution, men ate, drank, and were merry, without a thought of the storms of all kinds that were brewing. Mr. Parnell was an elderly undergraduate at Cambridge in the one connection. In the other, the Americans were just recovering from civil war, and only beginning to turn their serious attention to the Western Grain Fields. Rent and tithe dinners were quite cheerful festivals in those days. Nowhere more so, I am sure, than in the big chamber here at the back, into which I now found my way in the gloom, and found it unaltered. The audit dinner, held in the autumn, was a function of some importance, and the humours which distinguished those occasions in old days, lost nothing here by the auspices under which they were conducted. A generation had passed away since I had last sat among the tobacco smoke of one of them, and enjoyed the local melodies with a zest that even the formidable accessories could not then daunt. might have been but a week ago, as more ghosts rose up in their places where the long table was spread, and delivered their annual tribute to the occasion. An old grey-haired farmer, long mouldering no doubt in the graveyard on the hill

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above, got up again—an old gentleman of many winters, and but few teeth, and rested his hand upon his heart, and his eyes upon the ceiling, and with the thin remains of a tenor voice, and much emotion and quavering, sang—

“Believe me if all those endearing young charms,  
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day.”

But the song of songs, looked forward to at the top of the table at any rate on these occasions, was a rural domestic drama, partly in verse, and partly in dialogue, entitled, “John the Corrier.” The vested interest in this lay with a bailiff or diner of the humbler sort who delivered it in a rich archaic Wiltshire, and with prodigious solemnity though parts were intended by the composer for comedy. The composer, however, I am quite sure, never dreamed what an unforgettable treat he was providing for some appreciative souls. The tragedy of a domestic hearth, threatened if not outraged, was the burden of the ditty. One “Wigsby” was the gay Lothario who had been carrying on with “Mrs. John the Corrier,” while that honest, unsuspecting wight was conveying market-women and parcels to Salisbury. It was a three-part piece, and the utterances of each of the trio were delivered according to the singer’s conception of their respective vocal qualities. To this day I recollect a refrain, produced in the sepulchral bass voice with which the honest John was credited.

“Oh—h—Wigsby, oh—h—Wigsby  
Little did I think  
Thou had eat’st of my meät  
And drunk of my drink.”

Nay, I remember the very tune which resembled that of a familiar hymn. Then the lady under suspicion followed in a squeaking voice—

“Oh—Wigsby, Oh—h—Wigsby.”

What she had to say to Wigsby has, alas! escaped me in the mist of years.

Wigsby defended himself, and, of course, put the blame on

the lady in a high-pitched tenor adapted to the part of a youthful village beau. And when it was finished and the table duly rapped with knife-handles and appreciative palms, churchwarden pipes, *de rigueur* on these occasions, were waved through the mist towards the man of one great song and a pull was taken at the port by those who still stuck to port, and at the brandy and water by those who had got into the second stage, while some gave "Wigsby," as they lifted their glass, and others "John the Corrier," according, no doubt, to their sympathies, but always prefixed by the name of the singer.

Every echo of "Wigsby," however, had long died out of this empty chamber. The landlord knew nothing about such prolonged *séances*. I dare say he wished there might be as many strong heads and strong stomachs in the country as there were of old, and as much money. There must, of a truth, have been many rent dinners all over England in the lean years to come when light hearts were strangers at the board, and even good meat and drink were powerless to dispel the skeleton at the feast. Thousands upon thousands must have irrevocably sunk in the surrounding slopes, since those halcyon days; many a broad-acred field that then sent fine samples of wheat to Salisbury market now lies in permanent pasture. I do not know whether in these convalescent times reduced rents are paid by a new generation with such convivial and cheerful accessories. I have attended in other regions one or two latter-days festivals of this kind. They were but thin imitations of the hearty and strenuous feasts of old; and, in truth, I was glad they were.

The lights of Fordingbridge—the Silverbridge of Trollope—were twinkling on the Avon when I reached that ancient borough and awaited the train to Sarum. I should like to have said somewhat of the short course of the Avon below Salisbury which belongs to Wiltshire; of picturesque Downton, on the county limit, with its Saxon moot-hill in Mr. Squarey's grounds and its memories of Sir Walter Raleigh's brother, who owned an estate here and lived in the old rectory. Clarendon, too, and Trafalgar, whose names speak



for themselves, and Longford Castle, the Wiltshire seat of the Radnors, all lie in this southern corner of the county. I should like also to have had the reader's company when I went to The Hut at Winterslow where Hazlitt stayed and wrote so much, his wife having been a native. A solitary enough way-side inn, of erst coaching fame, is this, reached by a lonely six miles of mainly down road from Salisbury. But here, even if my conscience were in any way committed by the title and nature of this pilgrimage, it would prick me nothing, for The Hut is just over the border in Hampshire, and such measure of distinction as attaches to association with the solitude-loving stylist, whose upper chamber is still pointed out there, Wiltshire cannot claim.

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