

DROWSY KENT.

WITH PICTURES BY JOHN A. FRASER.



THE VILLAGE STREET, CHIDDINGSTONE.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.



CHIDDINGSTONE and Truggers—names that sound to some Americans sweeter than Tunbridge Wells, redolent of gay society in a bygone age. The Weald of Kent—name that has

I know not what of grandeur; perhaps because it stirs obscure memories of British tribes, of Cæsar and his patient legionaries, of Saxon swarms, of many a war between provincial kings with British and Saxon names, of reckless hordes of Danes, and of prudent Normans, hard as the iron of their helmets, steadfast in getting and keeping as ever the Romans were. Chiddingstone and Truggers—their are no memories of the heroic past, but of the lovely rural life of England, bathed in an atmosphere like cream and unsalted butter, smelling of hay and hops, leisurely and smooth as the foam on beakers of brown ale.

In a hamlet of southern England like Chiddingstone the people are a constant pleasure to Americans who move too fast and have nerves. Their voices are as smooth as the landscape, and their manners are restful—like the rounded outlines of the huge trees they have guarded for centuries with jealous care. Not the least pleasing is their historical perspective. What a delightful jumble is the view of the past, as it presents itself to Kentish men, wherein the primitive inhabitants who spoke we know not exactly what, and lived in cyclopean structures like Kits Coty (which means in the tongues of their Russian cousins just simply “stone house”), or in burrows under the chalk, are confused with the early British of Keltic speech, the latter again with Saxons and Danes, and all the foregoing with Norman invader and Flemish immigrant.

Chiddingstone, for instance, is essentially

Saxon; but the Druids, whose Brahminical iniquities have left a deep stamp on the minds of the people of the British isles, are pressed into service, and a stone on the calm fields behind the village has been erected by popular fancy into an altar from which Druids "chode" those who violated their wicked laws. At the most, we can suppose that this stone was the rally-place of a Saxon family called the Chiddings, but in Chiddingstone itself that explanation were far too prosaic to be accepted without scorn.

VIII; Sir Philip Sidney's Penshurst, with its baronial hall and exquisite rose-gardens; Knole, with its Elizabethan gables; and Igham Mote, with its girdle of water, and gray walls mirrored far beneath the swans floating at their foot, are too near to permit of travelers bestowing much attention on such humble spots as these. Yet here one absorbs the best that England has to give. Here are inns not yet ruined beyond recall, where overhanging upper stories and queer, bare tap-rooms still exist, and a cleanliness and a decorum, probably not very



IGTHAM MOTE.

ENGRAVED BY E. H. DEL'ORME.

Truggers, too. The name is a contraction of Trug-hurst, the haunt or home or nest of trugs, deceivers, ladies of light behavior. But generations of most decent and moral folk have happily forgotten the meaning of that word, and are glad to believe that Truggers signifies the bottom or foot of the wood.

Chiddingstone and Truggers are off the track of the tourist, known only to hop-pickers who at harvest-time pour in squalid thousands from London, and to half a dozen artists who have discovered their many charms. The castle at Hever where Anne Boleyn captivated Henry

ancient, supply the modern touch without detriment to the general air of antiquity. Here at dawn the tall trees and the coppices ring and trill with the fairy babble of small birds; the low-hanging clouds tinkle with the voices of larks; if you are in great luck, the cuckoo sounds from some place you cannot indicate, or the nightingale — but then you must be a veritable child of fortune — witches the night with its rare song.

Kent in its relation to Britain to the north is like Munster in its relation to the rest of Ireland, a rich agricultural land of rolling hills,

fine woods, and quiet streams. With less striking natural beauties than some parts of Munster, such as Killarney, the Suir valley, and the Kerry hills, it has far more historical places and a much higher grade of cultivation. The inland farms have a picturesque feature in their red-tilted roofs and their singular conical towers, one of which may be seen in the illustration on this page. These quaint towers are locally known as "oasts," and are as important to the economies of Kent as to the landscape. The word may have to do with *oogst*, Dutch for "harvest," but more likely with *ostu*, *osto*, Finnish and Esthonian for "barter" and "sale." They are part of the great Kent harvest, and are intricately bound up with the prosperity, not of Kent alone, nor of the hordes who journey down to Kent to win wages in the harvest, but of the annual budget of England. These hop-kilns with picturesque smoke-stacks, where the hop-harvest is sold, are mighty factors in the payment of those sums which keep the British empire powerful all the globe over—that empire which the Cinque Ports of Kent and Sussex did so much to found.

When the lovely hop-vines have been torn from their poles, and the hop-fields, far more beautiful than the Rhenish vineyards, are despoiled and hideous, the hops are cured in the buildings crowned by these towers. Then from

the drying fires and sulphury fumigations in the oasts rises that pungent smell of hops, which is so pleasant in the open and so hateful in cabin or store. The hop, which comes down from antiquity, was mightily encouraged in this fair land of Kent when monasteries were strewn thickly over the country. Here in Kent it was that St. Augustine landed and baptized. As in Irish Munster, so in English Kent the monks chose well the sites of their buildings, and proved good stewards for the farms they laid out or gathered in by gift or craft. The Saxon love of ale found them no laggards, and if the special monastery brews have disappeared, yet the hop-farms remain, just as the farmer stays long after Druids, pagan conquerors, Norman sea-lawyers, and haughty prelates have vanished and left few traces of their pomps behind. Not alone in delightful old Canterbury, but in many other parts of Kent, ruins and portions of buildings still in use testify to the wealth and taste of the old monks, whose pride and haughtiness seem to have made almost as deep an impression on the rustic mind as the cruelties of the Druids.

At first blush Kent might seem to mean the promontory or headland, like the "pen" in Penzance, the "ness" in Dungeness, the "corn" in Cornwall. In many names about the British and Irish coasts Ken and Cann mean that.

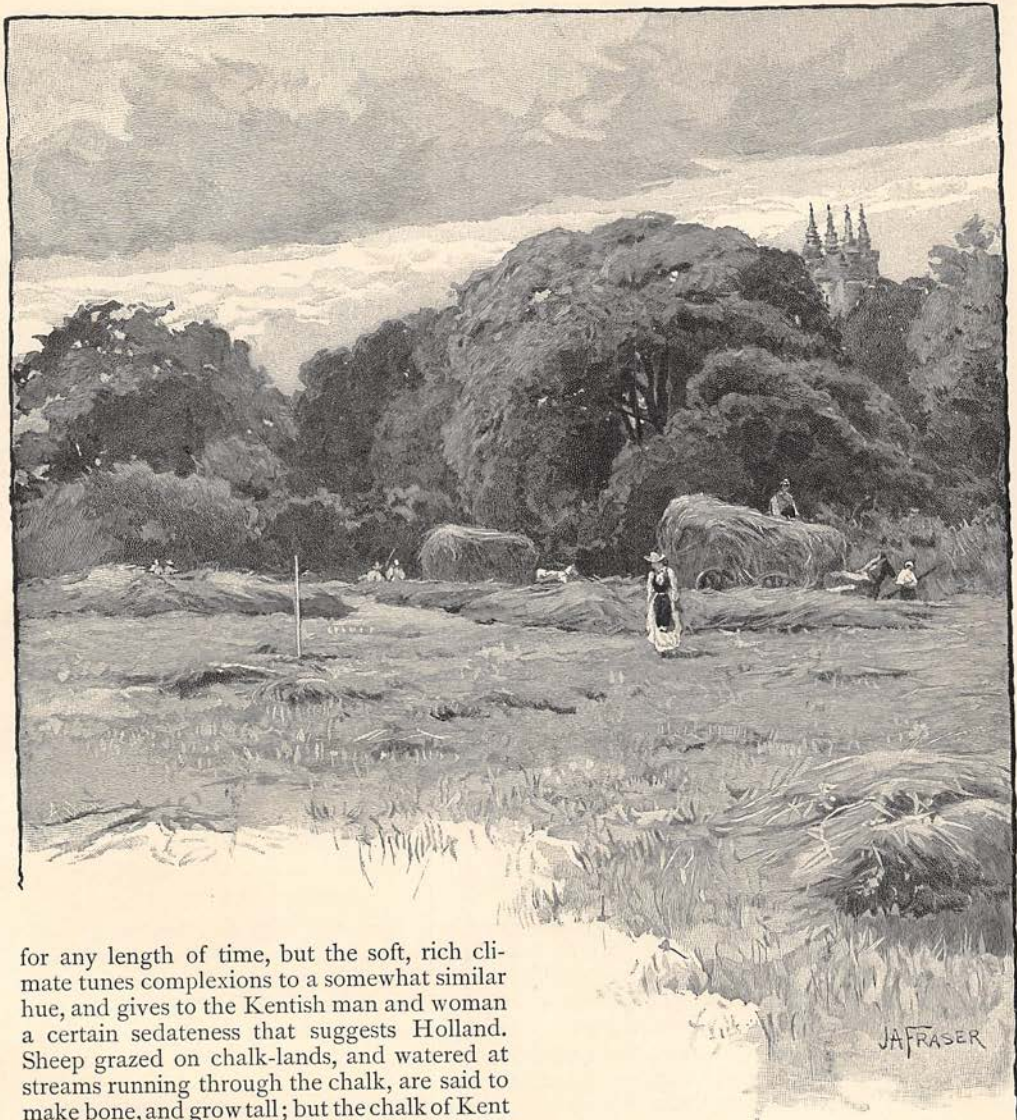
But the fact that the Romans found the name Cant and not Can points away from that meaning. Philologists solve it offhand by noting the Germanic word *kante*, corner, and observing how nicely Kent balances Cornwall on the west corner of Britain. But such a name smacks of the person who knows all about the shape of Great Britain, has maps before him, and is, in fine, a modern bookman. Places rarely get their names in that way. Kent retains a name given it before the Kelts entered Great Britain, when the populace were not Aryan in speech at all. In the tongues like Finnish that survive from this period in the north and center of Europe Kent would mean an untitled plateau, and Kant would mean the people, folk, race—simplest of meanings, one which underlies a majority of the terms for old peoples and old lands.

Thrust out eastward toward France and the Netherlands, Kent has been the natural objective of conquerors and streams of immigration, so that its population has always been more disturbed and mixed with various strains than that of any other part of the British isles. There is no Kentish type now, if indeed one ever existed



ENGRAVED BY C. W. CHADWICK.

THE DUCK-POND AND OLD OAST-HOUSE AT TRUGGERS.



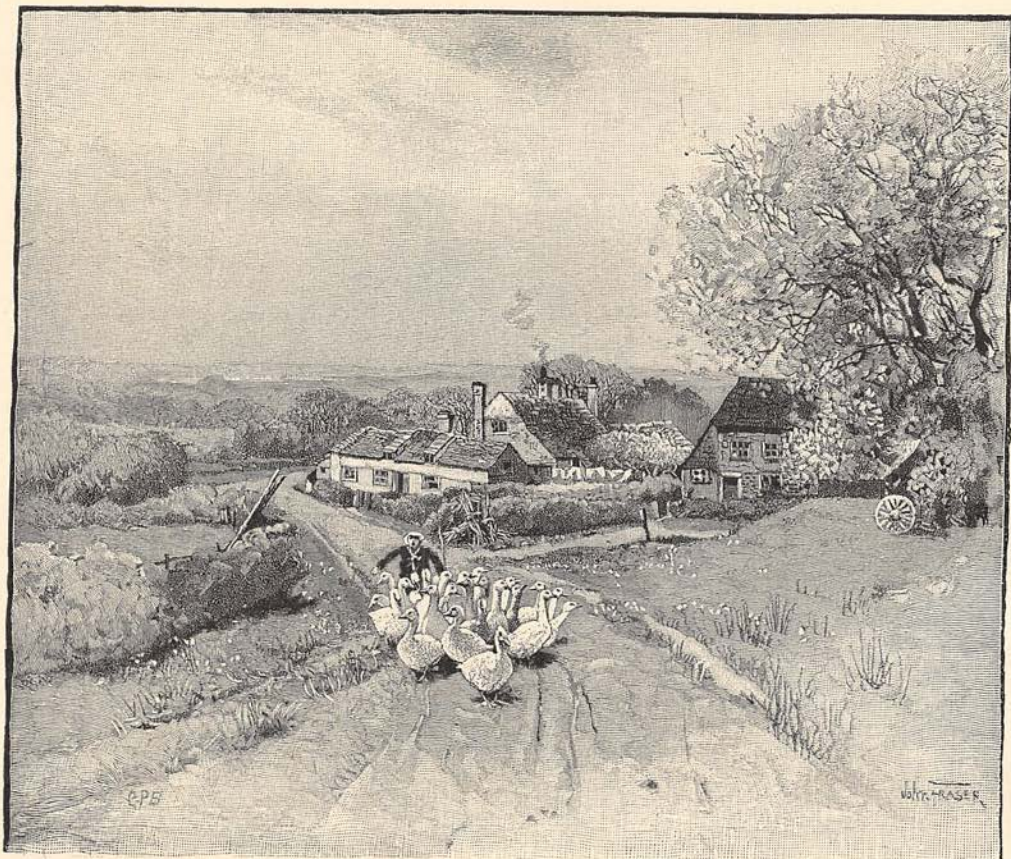
ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

BACK OF THE VILLAGE—CHIDDINGSTONE.

for any length of time, but the soft, rich climate tunes complexions to a somewhat similar hue, and gives to the Kentish man and woman a certain sedateness that suggests Holland. Sheep grazed on chalk-lands, and watered at streams running through the chalk, are said to make bone, and grow tall; but the chalk of Kent seems to have had no special influence on the stature of the people, perhaps because until recent years nobody dreamed of drinking water when there was such a flood of good ale in the land. In later centuries Kent has been a favorite ground for the rich from London belonging to every race and nation under heaven; hence its many cathedrals, castles, Norman keeps, monasteries, and granges; hence also a further complication of the race. As a rule the stranger is well treated at the show-places, although the proximity of London, and occasional acts of lawlessness on the part of cyclers, Sunday tourists, and hop-pickers, render the rustic less urbane than he is by nature. I say urbane advisedly, for the city to the north is so gigantic that one often feels that Kent is nothing more than a suburb of London.

Especially is this so at the berry-picking and at the hop-harvest, for then the lower, though not the lowest, ranks of London march on Kent as the hordes of Jack Cade once marched from Kent on London—"some in jags and some in rags, and some in 'fairly decent gowns.'" It is a mistake to suppose that the annual exodus from London is rowdy or beggarly. In such a concourse there are black sheep, but a stranger who does not seek them is not likely to know of their existence.

On such occasions Americans cannot fail to note the difference between the people of England—that is, the commons—and the educated, well-to-do classes. The term "merry



A KENTISH BY-WAY.

ENGRAVED BY GEORGE P. BARTLE.

England" is a puzzle to foreigners until they mix with the common folk. There they find what the American masses lack, and the British upper classes are at great pains to suppress—jollity and good cheer, a happy spirit making light of hardships, a fraternal warmth that seems like a breath from Utopia. The upper classes in the British Isles are a prey to the disease of self-consciousness. They seem to be forever taking the measure of one another's right to live, and this unfortunate habit of mind readily leads them unconsciously to a feeling that other people, native or foreign, who are not in the ranks they approve, really have no adequate excuse to exist at all. To see Englishmen unaffectedly merry without recourse to spirits or beer one needs but to visit the hop-fields of Kent in the harvest, and observe the families in their camps or their cheap lodgings enjoying a picnic, yet laying by a small wage for the winter's coal. It is a delightful sight, and I need not say that Royal Academicians, not to speak of Associates, or of thousands of artists beyond their narrow pale, have drawn, engraved, carved, washed, and painted the scene more times than there are words on this page. But note that

they have done this with a certain air of genteel condescension, a turning of the jolly, chaffing Britisher into a Greekish figure, and his "gal" into a conventional type of English rural beauty. This has been done to make the lower classes palatable to the self-conscious upper.

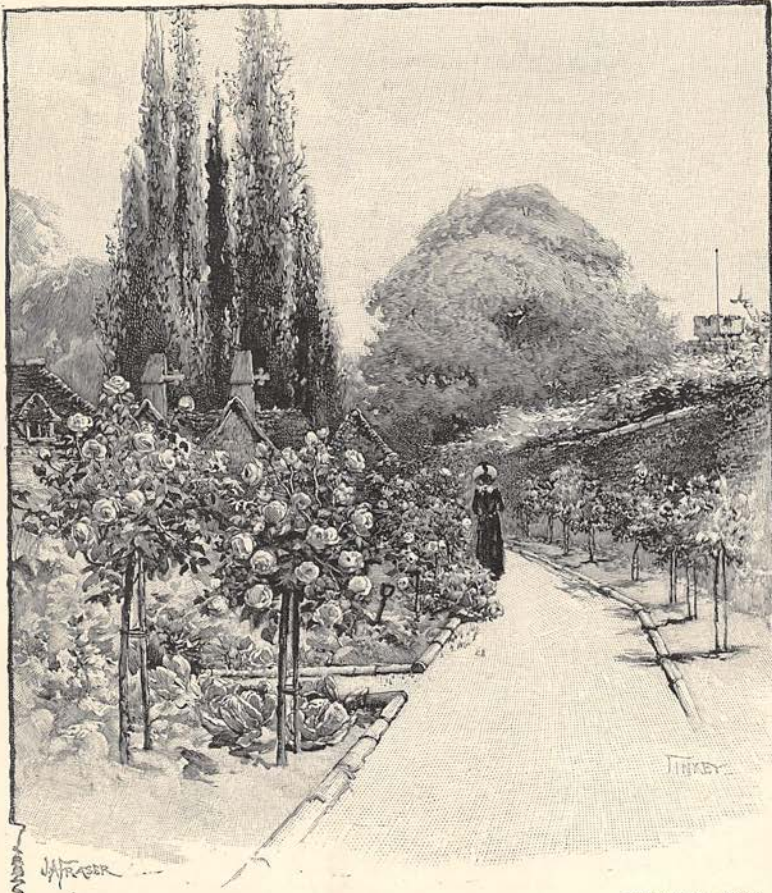
Frankly, one great attraction of places like Chiddingstone and Truggers is the absence of the perverted Briton who is thinking about himself and trying to gage your position in life. Until he mends his wits the world will be too small for him and sensible folk. An edict might be tacitly enforced to segregate him and his kind at certain watering-places in special hotels, whither the not unknown American, too like him, may be recommended to resort. Pray Heaven that he continue to stay superior to Chiddingstone and Truggers! Let him be told that only common people go there, artists and stray Americans, and some poor clergy and verse-makers of even less account. His own station in life will be distinctly lowered if he be known to resort to Chiddingstone and Truggers. He may drive rapidly through Chiddingstone's only street, and gaze upon the Weald

from the high road near the Rock Tavern; but it should be firmly represented to him that yonder towers are those of Penshurst, where lives the Lord de Lisle, and that there is a railway station and a good modern hotel at the village, while at Seven Oaks there is a show hostelry and the famous seat of the dukes of Dorset. *Procul, O procul!*

The Weald, or wild, of Kent has traces of its pristine savagery only when seen from afar. Then, when seen through the thick air, there is something in its crumbly cliffs, and a moorland aspect to its dales and plains, which justify its name. Spenser had the scenery of Munster in mind when he wrote the "Faery Queen," but if he had not been in Ireland when he

mere fashion, that such residences as Igham Mote were carefully encircled with water, and defended by a drawbridge now no more to be seen.

The Mote is a classic example of the dwelling of a country gentleman or rich farmer in the north of Europe before gunpowder became the arbiter of local feuds. If a raiding party could hope to take Igham Mote save by surprise, there was need of special men-at-arms and no small science of war. But as soon as cannon came in, its position in a hollow made it quite untenable, and the stone arch took the place of the drawbridge. At a very early period it may well have been the site of a British family, whose round houses and huts, each



IN THE KITCHEN GARDEN, CHIDDINGSTONE CASTLE.

ENGRAVED BY J. TINKEY.

wrote, he might well have restocked the Weald in imagination with its old forests (it was still the place for ship-timber in his day), and sent his knights and damsels traveling through its haunted shades. A debatable land it must have been as late as the Danish invasions; even under Elizabeth it was not for slight cause, or a

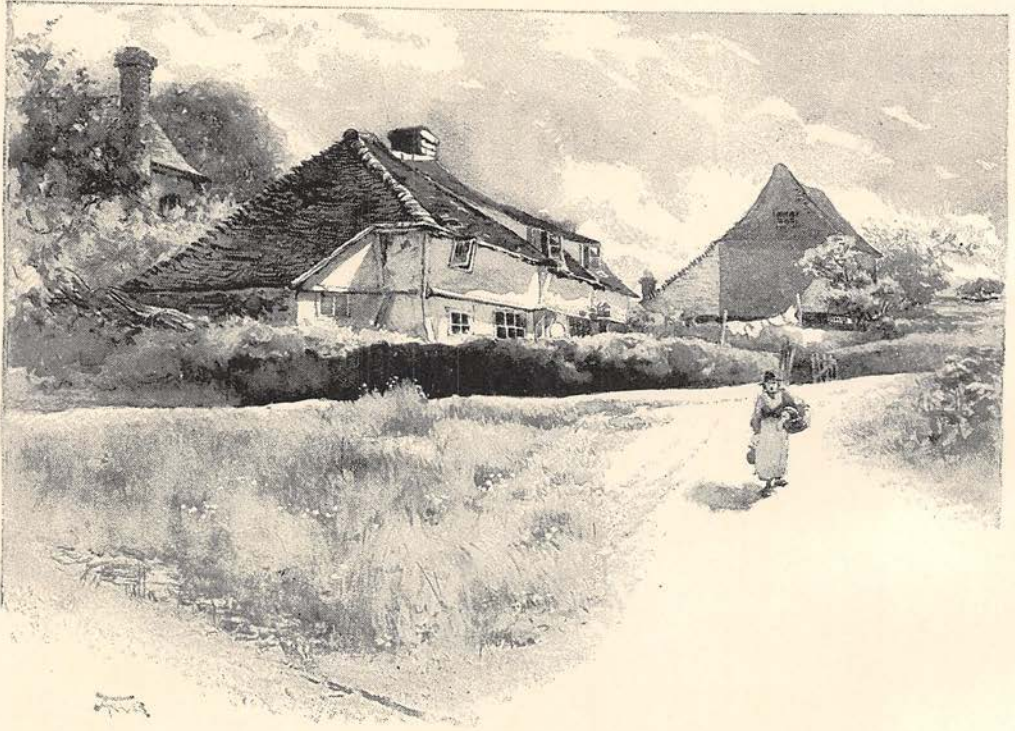
house or hut representing a separate room in the buildings of ages which succeeded them, stood huddled together within a fringe of trees, the whole settlement surrounded by water or marsh. To complete that early picture, let us imagine the good roads, far and wide, blotted out, and mere cattle-paths and horse-trails the

only indication that human beings lived on this edge of the Weald.

There is a fascination in a primeval landscape. No one wonders if a man brought up in the backwoods has homesickness for the rude life of his boyhood. But homesickness for landscapes like those of Kent must be just as violent. It is the half and half land, the country neither wild and abounding in wild beasts and wild men, nor cropped and savory with hay and apples, nor charming with the abundant flowers following agriculture on a small

find the right moment to make the doubtful attempt.

Rambling about these fields and poking along these neglected hedge-rows, at imminent danger of being suspected of designs on a rabbit, and haled before a pitiless country magistrate, it is hard to remember that the sea is not far off. Yet, as the crow flies, it is scarce twenty miles southerly to the Channel, and half as much again to the North Sea and the estuary of the Thames. No wonder the old philologists explained Kent by German *kante*, point



THE CORNER OF THE ROADS AT TRUGGERS.

scale, that strains the love of one's native place. Kent is one of the parts of England without grand natural features that seem most likely to keep a firm hold deep in the hearts of men and women who have made their homes in India, Australia, or America. Perhaps the extreme complexity of their blood makes them stay abroad. As a matter of fact, comparatively few do return to pass their closing years in these delightful villages. Those who attempt it often repent of their romance, because the big horizons to which they have become used pursue them home, and make the English landscape seem small and feeble. But all of them cherish somewhere in their minds the purpose of returning at some period. For the most part old age overtakes them before they

or corner. It is a corner of England over which many clouds fly. The magical disappearance of a landscape some fine day disabuses one of the belief that sea influences do not penetrate so far inland. It is preceded by sights like the paintings of the latter-day impressionists, a lovely vagueness of everything without loss of color, when the sea-fog sweeps up and shuts you in, and suddenly things are not. Singularly enough, the fog seems to muffle most small sounds, like the twitter of birds; but there are others, like loud shouts or the sounding of a horn, which appear to travel farther, or at any rate seem louder against that background of hush.

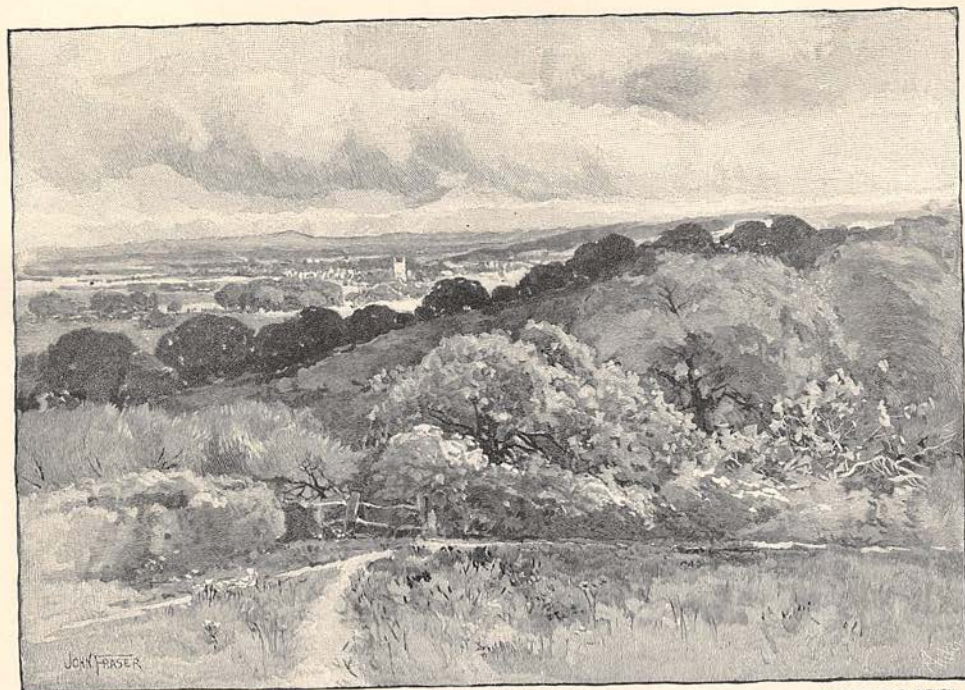
Then it is easier to realize that a good day's march will bring one to Winchelsea, once a great

member of the Cinque Ports, and the bearer of the brunt of many inroads from the Continent, and many valiant sea-fights in the Channel, before it was overwhelmed by water and blotted from the land. In 1616 a map shows a wide estuary where no land exists, and in the mouth of the estuary a shoal marked, "Old Winchelsey Drowned." New Winchelsea, built back on higher land, fared hardly better, for its harbor silted up, and its trade, even to its smuggling ventures, vanished into thin air. Noting this, and listening to the tale of the Cinque Ports and their vicissitudes, Kent and Sussex no longer seem a land of stable country joys. Verily it appears that the violent currents of the Channel may some day carry off piecemeal the whole peninsula, and deposit it bit by bit in the North Sea. Such a record of towns overwhelmed and ports left wastes of sand, of great marshes turned into terra firma, and leagues of arable farms utterly washed away! Only last year the sea ruined the greater part of one town on this coast. As one thinks it over, and notes how little the outpouring of money and labor for eight centuries has availed to stop the ocean from using this seaboard as a plaything, one gets to feel that these peaceful acres are hardly as

secure as the low-lying farms and towns of Holland.

But I do not know that this specter of the future makes Kent any the less enjoyable. Whenever and wherever within its borders one escapes the London smoke, Kent, barring few spots, is a restful, dreamy country. The white cliffs on the Channel, the flat lands of Romney Marsh, the views from the North and the South Foreland, the queer old towns paralyzed by the retreat of the sea, and the loud new towns built to accommodate the modern millions who want sea-air or sea-bathing, have each and all special attractions. But the contemplative man who loves his Spenser and his Gray, and sometimes dips gravely into Cowper and Crabbe for a certain pleasing monotony, a certain level line in their intellectual horizons — such a man had better give up the giddy sights at the watering-places, and the rush of historical reminiscence at the dead towns which once belonged to that great civic family called the Cinque Ports. Let such as he slip down to Chiddingstone, and visit the old churchyard, or seek some retired garden where the roses, grafted on hardy brier stocks, grow to the size of trees, and there absorb the brief but delicious British summer in commune with his favorite poet.

Charles de Kay.



LOOKING OVER THE WEALD OF KENT.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.