

FROM SURREY HILLS TO THE STRAND.



WE are out for a morning walk, in clear, bracing, winter weather—our boots are thick and our feet are warm, but we have not buried ourselves in mufflers and heavy overcoats, for we are anxious to have the free use of our limbs that we may “take a fence,” or throw a stick or a stone at any target that may attract us. The sight of

hounds in full chase would so affect the late Canon Kingsley, that in his enthusiasm he would run a couple of miles. Most of us have feelings of the same sort, and if we have not leisure to carry fishing-rods or guns, nor money enough for stables and hunters, we can satisfy ourselves in a small way by a jump over a ditch, or a furtive aim at a bird on a bough.

We are starting this morning from Purley Downs. The Surrey Hills stretch around us for miles, wooded here and there, and almost as wild in their aspect as parts of Dartmoor. Some of the gorse-bushes have bits of yellow, that stand in strange contrast with the chalk that now and then shows itself above ground. There are mighty, thick-trunked trees, some of which may have shaken summer leaves over the heads of Queen Elizabeth and her gay followers, in times when the politic queen came down here to talk over Church affairs for a little while with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in those days had his palace, not at Addington, but at Croydon. The sturdy old trees still make beautiful nooks in the hot months of the year for such of the holiday folk as may be fortunate enough to obtain permission for their picnic here; but on this winter morn their boughs are bare, and the leaves they have lost lie on the ground, making a crisp and pleasant noise as we pass over them. We meet no people here, nor can we see a building of any kind; and yet within twelve miles is the great wilderness of buildings, with the crowds that are continually surging about them.

When we have spent about half an hour in this fine breathing-place, we seek the lower land, and find ourselves in the road that southward leads to Brighton, and northward to London. In this out-of-the-way place, some of the older people may be reminded of their younger years by the coach that runs in the summer and autumn months between London and

Brighton, with a guard to blow a horn in the old and approved style.

The wind is not frosty, but it is keen enough to bring the blood into our faces, to make us feel that walking is capital exercise, and that we are comfortable. We are making good headway, and soon come across one of those quaint old inns that are so common in Surrey. There are few things that give such quiet comfort to a landscape as an old inn—it should be weather-beaten and have plenty of trees and birds about it; and there should be great gables and bulging, broad windows with seats; a place where by

“—noon and night the panting teams
Stop under the great oaks, that throw
Tangles of light and shade below,
On roofs, and doors, and window-sills.”

We are entering Croydon, the pleasant old High Street of which is before us. We pass through part of it, and then bear down to the left, that we may see what has become of the historic Archiepiscopal Palace. We have some little difficulty in finding it, for it is hidden away behind the fine parish church, as though ashamed of the “base uses” to which it has been reduced. It has been strangely knocked about, and standing here we begin to have a poor opinion of Croydon authorities, who have so neglected perhaps their finest archæological relic, which is now used as a bleaching factory. The great Hall has been spoken of as one of the very finest in England, the roof being very similar to that of Westminster Hall.

Turning townwards we find ourselves passing a large college-looking building. This is the Whitgift School, founded by Archbishop Whitgift in 1586. The funds of this excellent charity have been carefully applied and judiciously administered. The result is a school so well managed that Croydon may well be proud of possessing an institution providing superior education within the reach of persons of moderate means, and the advantages of which may be progressively extended. Croydon has about 65,000 inhabitants, but it does not send a member to Parliament, and it cannot even boast of a mayor.

The population is of a somewhat peculiar kind. There are thousands who only sleep and breakfast here, and who take little or no interest in local affairs. Their business is in London, and when they have done with it they run down to Croydon for fresh air and



THORNTON HEATH POND.

quiet sleep. There are acres of clean, bright-looking villas where these people live.

Having gone a little out of our way to obtain a good idea of the colony of residents, we return to the main road, and soon find a break in the character of it. We are at Thornton Heath Pond. There are some ducks swimming leisurely about, and a horse drinking. There are two or three farmers' men idling in the road with a can of beer, and two strong, sleek horses are resting in the shafts of a great waggon.

Passing on we notice to the right of us the Crystal Palace, with a long line of houses stretching as far as we can see, and being somewhat suggestive of a great kite fallen to ground—the Palace, of course, being the kite, the houses the tail, and the towers the wings. A man old enough to speak of forty or fifty years ago might tell us some strange facts about the changes that have been going on in this part of the country since the days when he "went gipsying, a long time ago." Every year new houses make their appearance, and new roads are cut. Railway companies find new places growing up along their lines, and they make new stations. As far as continuity of building is concerned, Croydon may be almost considered as part of London.

Here we are at Streatham Common, the prettiest place we have met with during the walk. It is clean and quiet, and as we see it now undecorated by tramps, and broken bottles, and grimy pieces of waste and broken paper, a place where one might fix his tent and be at rest, without wishing in a few days to fold it and "quietly steal away." Those painfully new clusters of houses, however, which are springing up in the skirts of the breezy common, warn us that another of the "lungs of London" is being rapidly choked up; and we are tempted to invoke the salutary advocacy of Mr. Ruskin, that we may be spared another irremediable devastation. In a little while, we find we have done with the country part of our walk. We have reached the Brixton Tramway Terminus, and know that we are indeed nearing the Great City. The light is dying, and there is a chill haze hanging about the houses. The pavement gradually becomes busier, and now and then we have to turn out of our way in preference to being knocked down by passing people. There are young men, arm-in-arm, balancing silk hats on the sides of their heads; women with suspicious bottles, and bundles of babies; shouting, whistling boys; and men who hurry along nervously, and talk

to themselves, and twitch their heads occasionally by way of emphasis. Most people look sad and confused, but now and then some laugh in a dry, unhealthy sort of way. There are all kinds of people in all kinds of clothes, mixed and moving together—two great classes of rich and poor. Men wonderfully dressed and faultlessly gloved pass by, avoiding anything that can soil them, and looking almost as pretty and as sensitive as models in a clothier's shop-window. There are well-to-do boys who smoke cigars, and children who smoke pipes, and try to look as though they have been in the habit of smoking for some years. They mingle, and surge past us in bewildering files. Peculiar smells come upon us from frowsy little shops, and our ears are wearied with the sounds of cabs and cars.

We say little, partly because we cannot hear each other, and partly because we are somewhat out of our element. How unreal appear the things about us! The horses seem to have run themselves into machines, and many of the men and women, with expressionless faces and automatic gait, appear like people under the influence of mesmerism, waiting to have another bump touched before they can change the movement. Perhaps we are inclined to moralise and be a little melancholy, because we are becoming tired and hungry. We all agree in the suggestion that we are hungry, and that we will have an acceptable little dinner, or know the reason why. Not even the Thames, as seen from Blackfriars Bridge, can destroy our pleasant anticipation of a good "square meal."

Within half an hour we find ourselves in a cozy little room in the Strand, "smiling lively gratitude" for what we are about to receive.

GUY ROSLYN.



VIEW IN SURREY.

